

THE COFFEE CAN PORTFOLIO

ISRAEL'S 9/11 Making sense of the senseless

“The system of limited government and private property is the only system that tends to debarbarize all those who have the innate capacity to acquire personal culture.”

~ Ludwig von Mises, *Liberty and Property*

On October 7, fifty years and one day after the start of the Yom Kippur War, the Palestinian Islamist militant group Hamas launched an attack from the Gaza Strip on Israel and its citizens. According to *Wikipedia*,

The attack began in the early morning with a [rocket barrage](#) of at least 3,000 missiles against Israel and vehicle-transported incursions into its territory. Palestinian militants breached the [Gaza–Israel barrier](#), slaughtering civilians in neighboring Israeli communities and attacking military bases. In a single day, over 1,200 Israelis, primarily civilians, including women and children, were killed in several towns and kibbutzim and at a [music festival](#) near the kibbutz of [Re'im](#), where over 270 party-goers were murdered. Around 200 Israeli civilians and soldiers were [taken as hostages](#) to the Gaza Strip of which the number of kidnapped children is slightly under 30. The day was described by multiple spectators and public figures, including US President Joe Biden, as the bloodiest in Israel's history and the deadliest for Jews since The Holocaust.

Five days later, *The Economist* [asked](#), “Will Israel’s agony and retribution end in chaos or stability?”

Israel’s belief that it could indefinitely manage Palestinian hostility with money and air strikes

crumpled early on October 7th, as the first Hamas bulldozer breached the security fence. Hamas has chosen mass murder and there is no going back.



October 14, 2023



October 21, 2023

The reaction of the Israeli government and its U.S. ally was swift and predictable. Israel’s defense minister, Yoav Gallant said, “There will be no electricity, no food, no fuel, everything is closed. We are fighting human animals and we will act accordingly.” President Biden pledged unwavering [support](#) of Israel and asked Congress for \$14 billion in aid.

Western mainstream media rallied around the U.S.-Israel alliance. *The Economist* [pleaded](#) for America to come to the rescue. As bombs started raining down on Gaza, the media prepared viewers for disturbing images of civilians being killed. This was simply “the tragedy of war,” they assured us.

The historical roots of the longstanding violence in the land formerly known as Palestine is the subject at hand. With the potential to spark World War III, is there any

hope for mankind? In preview, I believe foreign meddling in the Middle East has been a destabilizing force, particularly over the past century. On the bright side, that force is receding as American hegemony gives way to a decentralized, multipolar world order. The interventionists, however, will not go away quietly. As a result, the transition will be bloody and costly.

Starting point

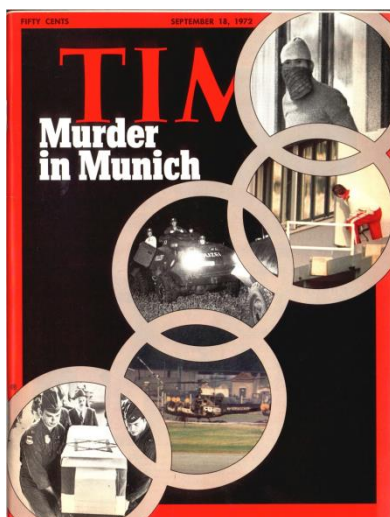
“In war, truth is the first casualty.”

~ Aeschylus, father of Greek tragedy

“I have certain rules I live by. My first rule: I don’t believe anything the government tells me.”

~ George Carlin, comedian

For anyone who is alive today, the blood feud between Jews and Arabs in the Middle East has been a permanent blot on humanity. My earliest recollection was the 1972 Summer Olympics when eight members of a Palestinian militant group called Black September broke into the Olympic Village, killed two members of the Israeli Olympic team and took nine hostages. The Israeli government refused to negotiate (the hostage-takers demanded the release of 234 Palestinian prisoners); all of the hostages, five of the terrorists and one German police officer were later killed in a failed rescue attempt.



September 18, 1972

The Israel-Palestine conflict has so many layers of complexity, I won’t pretend to grasp all of them or do


the subject justice in so limited a space. Where does one even begin?

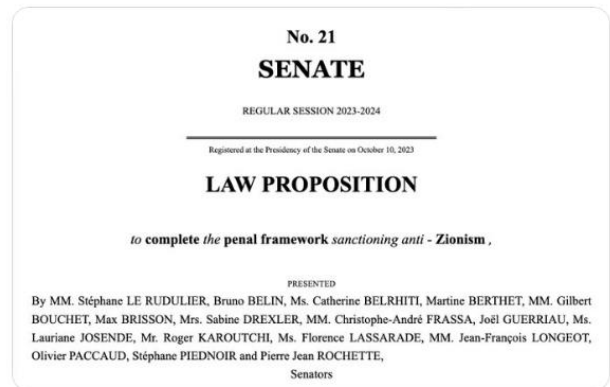
If you want to get to the truth, first identify who is lying. Official propaganda, [censorship](#) and [smearing](#) can all provide clues. Follow the wave of disinformation.



David Adler
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New bill in the French  Senate: 'An insult committed against the State of Israel is punishable by two years of imprisonment and a fine of 75,000 euros.'



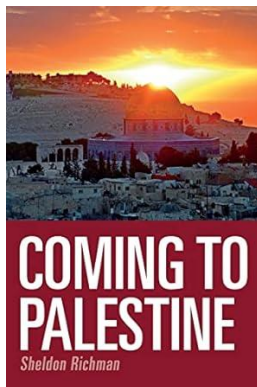
Let’s start with the official narrative. We are told this endless conflict is a classic case of good vs. evil. Hamas is a terrorist organization that must be destroyed at all costs. The nation of Israel is the victim and has the right to defend itself, doing “[whatever it takes](#),” even if that means carrying out a [disproportionate response](#) to the October 7 attack which would surely inflict significant harm on civilians. Besides, Palestinians support Hamas and the young are brought up to hate Jews and become martyrs, so they are not exactly innocent bystanders. Israel is a beacon of democracy in the Middle East, deserving of unwavering support from the United States.

RULE #15:
BEWARE SIMPLE NARRATIVES.

The first obvious flaw in this narrative is the [reification fallacy](#): lumping everyone together into homogenous groups. Any important nuance goes out the window. As David Bergland wrote in *Libertarianism in One Lesson*, “One purpose for engaging

in this fallacy is to depersonalize people you want to mistreat.” For starters, there is a big difference between the people and their government. Roughly 2,000 individuals committed a [heinous crime](#). Labeling 2.2 million Gazans, half under the age of 18, accomplices is using guilt by association to justify collective punishment.

Secondly, the failure of the Israeli government to prevent the attack has two possible explanations: [gross incompetence](#) or [complicity](#) (“let them in”). If the former, any response would be clumsy and ineffective, devastating the civilian population of Gaza while failing to meet the Israeli’s goal of rooting out Hamas. In fact, terrorizing Palestinians would surely [swell the ranks](#) of Hamas, more than replacing those who are killed. If the latter, the state of Israel would be revealed as evil, thus the good vs. evil narrative gets completely blown out of the water.



2019

Lastly, the hatred between [Arabs and Jews](#) is a fairly recent phenomenon. According to Sheldon Richman, author of *Coming to Palestine*, “It’s an undeniable fact that Jews over the centuries had a much easier time in the Arab world and the Muslim-controlled world than in Europe. It’s no contest.” If Richman is right, the roots of today’s antipathy may have less to do with religion than other, more recent factors.

Propaganda and bias

In researching this conflict, I have encountered wildly conflicting accounts from both sides, evidence that each resorts to cradle-to-grave [propaganda](#). (Thus, dissidents like [Avi Shlaim](#), [Ilan Pappé](#) and [Gideon Levy](#) may be of value.) Few, if any, commentators are

unbiased. Most of the mainstream media is pro-Israel and statist, many of the podcasters are pro-Palestinian and progressive. Geopolitical experts, such as [Fareed Zakaria](#), [Peter Zeihan](#) and [Ian Bremmer](#) can offer valuable insights, but at the end of the day are interventionists, i.e. they generally fear chaos will ensue if the United States abdicates its role as the world’s policeman.

I, too, have a bias: towards non-intervention in human affairs – personal, economic, and regarding foreign policy. Like Switzerland, I refuse to take sides. Like Miss America, I only wish for human flourishing and world peace. As an Austrian economist, I know the only way to get there is to reduce government intervention and promote free trade. As a long-term optimist, I believe this benevolent path will ultimately prevail. As an investor, I prefer not to bet against it.



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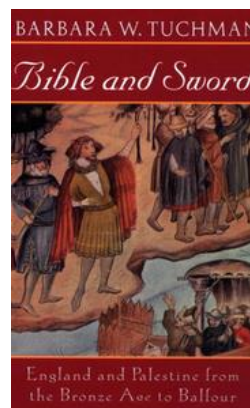
I am making a simple observation here. I'm not "picking sides" except for the side of "Killing innocent people is always wrong."

The people responsible for the attack on Israel *want* the response to be "over the top." They want the propaganda to then turn public opinion and recruit more to Hamas.

The Zionist movement

“Historically the occupier of Palestine has always met disaster, beginning with the Jews themselves. The country’s political geography has conquered its rulers. But now that the original occupant has returned, perhaps the curse will run its course, and the most famous land in history may some day find peace.”

~ Barbara W. Tuchman, *Bible and Sword*



1956

A week after the Hamas attack, Clyde Prestowitz, a former trade official in the Reagan administration and author of the 2003 book, *Rogue Nation: American Unilateralism and the Failure of Good Intentions*, lamented the superficial coverage of the atrocities:

The reporting admits of no history, of no possible causes other than sheer barbarism, and of no solutions other than completely wiping the “barbarians” and the people of their lineage out.

He responded by writing an outstanding [brief history](#) of the Israel-Palestine conflict:

Let me take you back to the beginning of the Arab/Palestinian-Jewish/Israeli conflict. Some may say, with justification, that it goes all the way back to Abraham and his two sons – Ishmael (father of the Arabs) and Isaac (father of the Jews). But today’s conflict really began in the [late 19th century](#) when Jewish leaders in Europe like [Theodore Herzl](#), Leo Pinker, and Moses Hess began promoting the idea of enabling Jews to escape the discrimination they often suffered in Europe by emigrating to Palestine, the ancient homeland of the Jews around Jerusalem which was then part of the Turkish Ottoman Empire. In reading their early writings, it is fascinating to observe that they seemed completely unaware that the area had long been and was then occupied by Arabs. Indeed, they ventured to speak of “a land without people for a people without land.”

Consider that for just a moment. Either they just did not know that in fact there were a lot of people there or they did not consider the then present inhabitants to be people.

As the project proceeded, friction between immigrant Jews and resident Arabs quickly arose as it became ever clearer that the newcomers had no intention of becoming part of the local life, but aimed rather to build their own separate and very different society. Indeed, Chaim Margalit Kalvarisky, a one time Jewish Colonization Association manager, once noted that he felt “compassion” for the Arabs and that twenty five years of dispossessing them had been hard, but he had had no choice because the Jewish public demanded it. The Jewish philosopher and

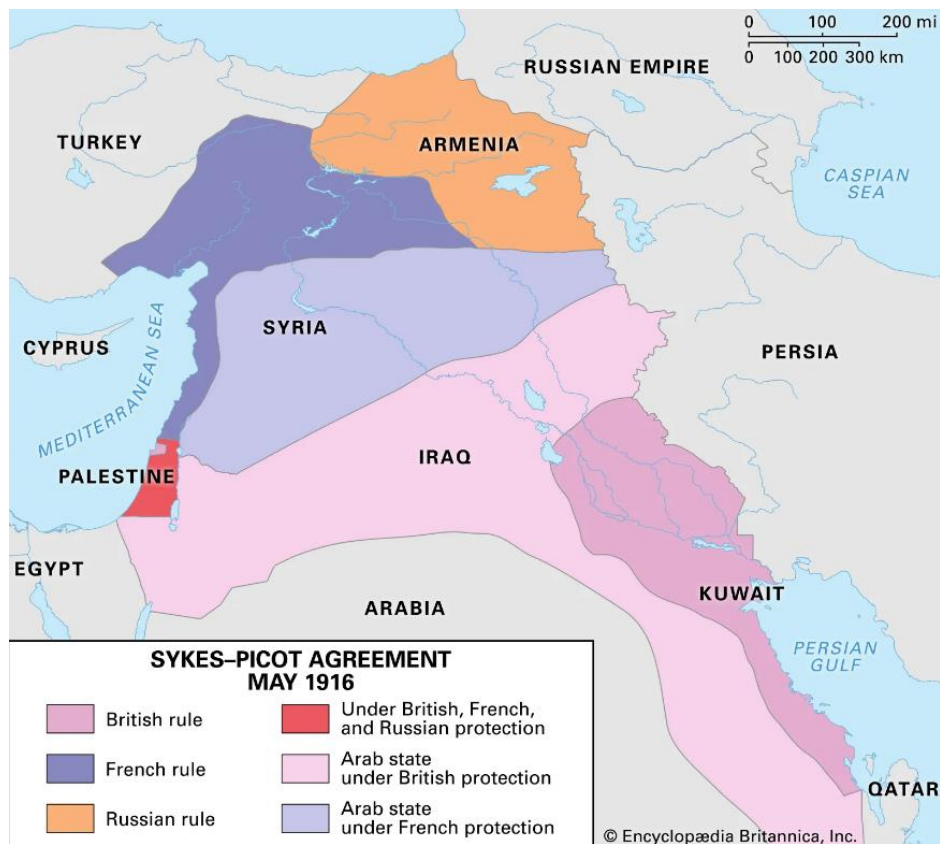
writer Ahad Ha’am noted prophetically, “We have to treat local populations with love and respect... and What do our brethren in the Land of Israel do (note that even at this early date when there were virtually no Jews there, it was being called the Land of Israel)? Exactly the opposite. Should the time come when the life of our people in Palestine imposes on the natives, they will not easily step aside.”



Indeed, from 1890 to 1914, the Jewish population of the area known as Palestine [grew](#) from 8% to 14%. Then the Great War broke out:

World War I brought a pregnant moment when, in an effort to marshal Jewish support for the allied cause in Europe and the U.S., British Foreign Minister Lord Balfour issued the “Balfour Declaration” which called for eventual “establishment in Palestine of a national home for the Jewish People.” He added that “Zionism, good or bad, is of far profounder import than the desires and prejudices of the 700,000 Arabs who now inhabit the ancient land.”

Of course, this happened to be at odds with the views of Henry McMahon, Britain’s High Commissioner for Egypt who was trying to incite an Arab revolt against Germany’s allies, the Ottoman Turks. He went so far as to send a letter to Arab leader Sharif Hussein promising independence to the Arabs in the Ottoman-ruled provinces if they would rise up against the Turks. Indeed, he even sent the letter along with a person charged with assisting such an uprising – one [T.E. Lawrence](#) (of Arabia).



The [correspondence](#) between McMahon and Hussein comprised ten letters and took place from July 1915 to March 1916. The British government agreed to recognize Arab independence after the war if the Arabs launched a revolt against the Ottoman Empire (see [Damascus Protocol](#)). In May 1916, the British and French secretly broke that promise by signing the Sykes-Picot Agreement, which mapped out how the Middle East was to be carved up once the Turks were kicked out.

These promises collided at the Versailles Peace Conference where President Woodrow Wilson allowed his prejudices to overcome his devotion to national self-determination noting that “undeveloped peoples” would need “guidance” from administering powers under mandates from the League of Nations. London, having long forgotten Lawrence and the Arab revolt, pushed hard to be awarded the Mandate for Palestine. Wilson’s [King-Crane Commission](#) was sent to investigate local sentiment and found strong opposition to the Zionist program among the area’s Christian-Muslim majority [of the 3,730 surveyed, 1% were for and 72% against] as well as a desire for an American Mandate.

The Zionists, who surmised that America would insist on majority rule that would put Arabs in control, strongly opposed any American presence. (the Zionists did not “stand with America”). Rather, they strongly preferred Britain and the Balfour Declaration. Wilson went along, and the Brits wound up in charge of Palestine. (France got Lebanon.)

The Mandate turned out to be unhappy and nothing but trouble for Britain. As immigrants poured in from Europe with financing from the Colonization Association, tensions with the Arab population led to frequent riots.

Several factors led to the [increase in immigration](#) after World War I. According to *Canadians for Justice and Peace in the Middle East (CJPME)*,

The increase in anti-Semitism in Europe led many Jews again to leave their countries. At the same time, the US Immigration Act of 1924 would greatly slow immigration from Europe by setting strict quotas per country. Diverse limitations on immigration were also implemented in Europe. This also explains in part Jewish migrants’ choice of Palestine.

From 1932 on, with the Nazi victory in Germany and the intensification of persecution in Austria and Czechoslovakia, Jewish immigration to Palestine increased dramatically. Between 1932 and 1939, Palestine absorbed 247,000 newcomers, 46 percent of Jewish emigration from Europe. In the European political context, this fifth *aliya* constituted a flight rather than a “Zionist choice.”



Synagogue desecrated in Hebron, 1929

Riots began in 1920 and flared up again in 1929. According to the *Balfour Project*,

By May 1936, Palestine was in open rebellion and it was not just Jewish communities who were being attacked. It was the British, too. Increasingly losing control, the British authorities resorted to ruthless methods to put down the revolt including hangings, house demolitions and the use of civilians as human shields. For a period, British and Jewish men fought jointly in a counter-insurgency force known as the [Special Night Squads](#). By 1939, the rebellion was suppressed, leaving the Palestinian leadership weakened for years to come.

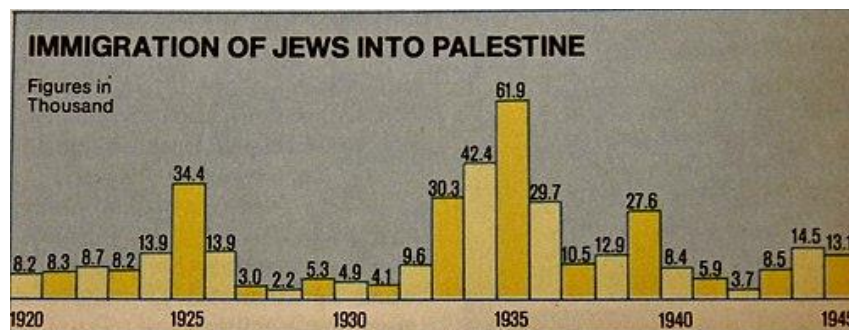
To try to address the underlying deadlock between Arabs and Jews, London had

responded with a succession of inquiries and commissions through the 1930s. Their dilemma was that any attempt to placate one community would provoke the anger of the other. At a loss for a solution, the Peel Commission of 1937 proposed to partition Jews and Arabs into two states. But Arab opinion, led by the anti-Zionist Grand Mufti of Jerusalem, Amin al-Husseini, denounced any idea of conceding territory to Jews as “unthinkable.”

However, as Europe slid towards war the British government changed course. A government white paper of 1939 abandoned partition and proposed that in ten years Palestine would become independent, representatively governed by Arabs and Jews. Controls were now put in place over how many Jews could immigrate to Palestine and how much land could pass into Jewish hands. For the first time Arabs were to be given a say over Jewish immigration.

The reason Neville Chamberlain's government swung in favor of Arab opinion at this point was the prospect of war. London feared that in a global conflict the Arab world might turn against Britain while the support of Jews would be guaranteed in view of their persecution by the Nazis.

Jewish opinion immediately condemned the white paper as an act of British betrayal and retreat from the Balfour Declaration. There was fury that Jewish people would be restricted from finding sanctuary at their hour of greatest need. Nevertheless, Britain upheld the limits on Jewish immigration into Palestine right through the war. As refugees fleeing the Holocaust were arrested trying to enter Palestine, [some were] even sent back to Germany, in the case of the *Exodus* [in 1947].



Despite the British restrictions, [illegal immigration](#) flourished. 118,228 Jews reached Palestine from 1939 to 1948, according to *CJPME* and by 1947, Jews made up 32% of the population. Prestowitz continues:



Bombing of the King David Hotel, 1948

This all got lost in the tumult of WWII, but with the end of the war, millions of Holocaust survivors turned their steps toward Palestine. Fearful of massive displacement, the Arabs resisted further Jewish immigration, and the Brits again imposed restrictions. But now a new player named the [Irgun](#) entered the game. A Jewish underground army (the father of today's Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu was a key Irgun leader) that had been fighting Arabs, it now turned its guns and bombs on the British, blowing up, among other things, the King David hotel which served as the British army's headquarters in Palestine. Deciding that the game was no longer worth the candle, the Brits gave their Mandate back to the United Nations and left Palestine in 1948.

The UN proposed a two state solution with Jerusalem internationalized. This was rejected by the Arabs who declared war on the newly formed Israel and promptly lost the fight, leaving Palestine and Jerusalem along an armistice line that now constitutes the internationally recognized Israeli border. About 750,000 Palestinian refugees from the area that was now Israel were left stranded in camps in the West Bank, Gaza, and other countries like Jordan and Lebanon. Nothing fundamental changed until 1967 when the Six Day War left Israel in charge of the West Bank and Gaza and gave rise to the Israeli settler movement setting the stage for decades of struggle, terrorist attacks, war in Lebanon, UN resolutions calling for peace negotiations and various more or less aimless “peace talks.”



Stamp of Israel – Coins Doar Ivri, 1948



Demographic History of Palestine Region

Year	Total Population (thou)	Dominant Rule	Jews	Christians	Muslims
1 st c.	~1,250	Roman Empire	Majority	–	–
4 th c.	> 1 st c.	Eastern Roman Empire	Majority	Minority	–
5 th c.	> 1 st c.	Eastern Roman Empire	Minority	Majority	–
End 12 th c.	> 225	Arab Muslim tribes	Minority	Minority	Majority
14 th c.	150	Arab Muslim tribes	Minority	Minority	Majority
1533-39	156	Ottoman Empire	3%	4%	93%
1690-91	232	Ottoman Empire	1%	5%	94%
1800	275	Ottoman Empire	3%	8%	90%
1890	532	Ottoman Empire	8%	11%	81%
1914	689	Ottoman Empire	14%	10%	76%
1922	752	British Mandate	11%	9%	78%
1931	1,033	British Mandate	17%	9%	74%
1947	1,970	British Mandate	32%	7%	60%
2019	14,122	Israel	51%	1%	48%

The creation of Israel

The events of 1947-1949 will differ dramatically based on which side is telling the story. To the pro-Israel side, the Arabs attacked, [they lost](#), end of story. To the pro-Palestinian side, nearly two-thirds of the indigenous inhabitants were driven off their lands in what they refer to as the Nakba, or “catastrophe,” while most of the fighting took place on [Arab lands](#). I believe what transpired is a bit messier and more nuanced.



Palestinian refugee crisis, 1948

First is the issue of land ownership. One side calls the alleged land theft and expropriation of Arabs a [myth](#). Jews bought much of the land legally, but also homesteaded swampland, turning it into arable land and “making the desert bloom.” The other side claims that Jews owned no more than 10% of Palestine prior to 1948. They contest the legitimacy of [land purchased](#) from absentee feudal [landlords](#), mainly Lebanese and Syrian, and bought from the [Ottoman](#) administration through public auction under in which the lands of Palestinian peasants who were unable to pay their taxes were sold.

Confusing matters even further, most Israeli Jews [believe](#) the land was [given to them](#) by God, *they* were its [original owners](#) from over [3,000 years ago](#) and it is the Palestinians who are trespassing on their lands.

Second is the reification fallacy. By 1948, the conflict was not as simple as Jewish Zionists vs. Palestinian Arabs, each a homogenous group with unified views. (In a war, there are always at least four parties involved: the people on each side and their governments. There is only one winner: the victorious government. The

people always lose, as does the defeated state.) With the ascent of the Irgun and even more extreme LEHI, Zionist leadership became increasingly militant and so fractured that they came close to civil war. Meanwhile, the Palestinian Arabs were dominated by the militant Husseini family (not democratically elected) which was led by the charismatic Amin al-Husseini and backed by the Arab League. According to [Moshe Ma'oz](#), professor emeritus of Islamic and Middle Eastern studies at Hebrew University,

Denying the right of the Jewish-Zionist community to national self-determination even in part of Palestine, the Husseinis periodically used violence and terror against Jews, as well as against the moderate Palestinian Nashashibi faction that for many years cooperated with the Jewish community and acknowledged its national aspirations. But this moderate faction, although supported by many families and notables throughout the country, was not as organized, armed, motivated or influential among the younger generation as the Husseinis. Consequently, the moderate/pragmatic Palestinians were unable to neutralize the powerful militant Palestinian nationalist leadership or induce it to accept a political settlement.

The Nashashibis were politically supported by King Abdallah of Transjordan and also, for a period, by his patron – the British government in Palestine. But neither the British government nor King Abdallah helped the Palestinian moderates; in 1947, both objected to the UN partition resolution, while Abdallah also sought to annex Arab Palestine to his kingdom. As for the leaders of the other neighboring Arab nations, they shared, indeed molded and reinforced, the militant-negative Palestinian attitude to the 1947 resolution, as well as to the Jewish-Zionist national movement and political aspirations.

As Ma'oz implies, the neighboring states may have had [alternative motives](#) for getting involved in the conflict. There is [evidence](#) that Arab leaders gave orders to evacuate; how much this contributed to the Nakba is an open question. As fate would have it, a significant number of Palestinians in the north rejected these orders, and the Israelis allowed them to stay on their

lands. (Their [descendants](#) today enjoy full Israeli citizenship and by far the highest living standards of any Arabs in Israel/Palestine.)

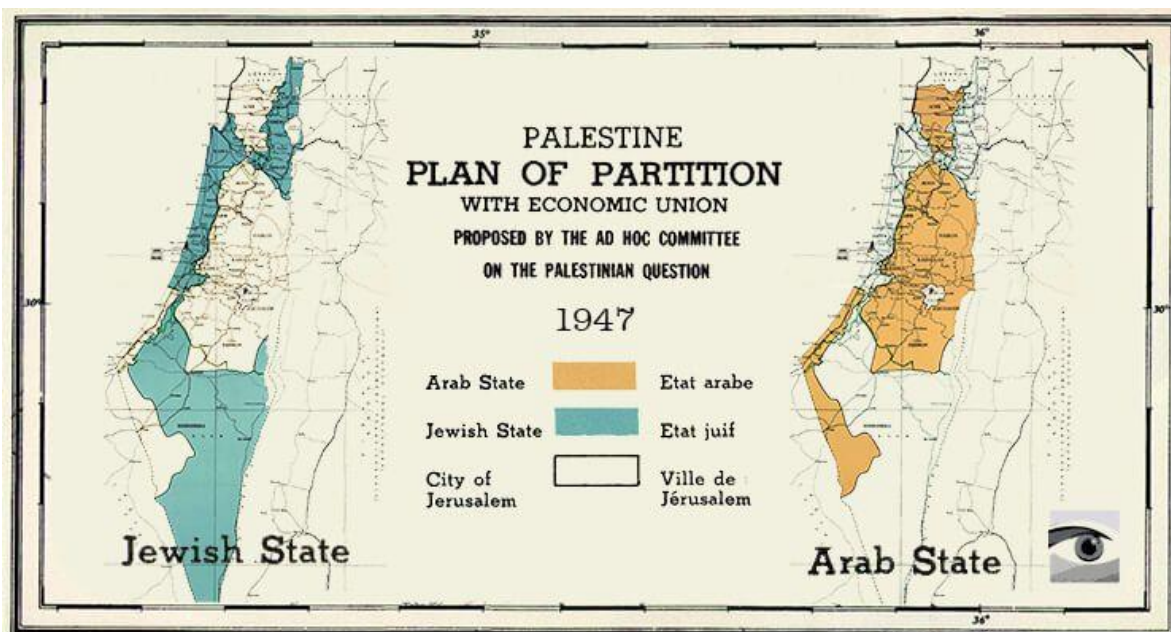
It was into this tinderbox that the fledgling United Nations, formed just three years earlier, tried to act as mediator. In a comprehensive [policy analysis](#) of U.S. conduct in the Middle East from 1945-1991, Sheldon Richman elaborated on the UN partition plan:

In November 1947 the UN General Assembly voted overwhelmingly to recommend partition of Palestine into Arab and Jewish states. The two states were to be joined in an economic union, and Jerusalem would be administered by the United Nations. The Arabs would get 43 percent of the land, the Jews 57 percent. The proposed apportionment should be assessed in light of the following facts: The Jewish portion was better land; by the end of 1947 the percentage of Palestine purchased by Jews was less than 7 percent; Jewish land purchases accounted for only 10 percent of the proposed Jewish state; and Jews made up less than one-third of the population of Palestine. Moreover, the Jewish state was to include 497,000 Arabs, who would constitute just under 50 percent of the new state's population. [Editor's note: Land area alone can be misleading because 60% of Israel today is the Negev desert, home to just 8% of the population.]

The U.S. backed the plan despite objections from most of its foreign policy advisors:

The United States not only accepted the UN plan, it aggressively promoted it among the other members of the United Nations. [Truman](#) had been personally moved by the tragedy of the Jews and by the condition of the refugees. That response and his earlier studies of the Bible made him open to the argument that emigration to Palestine was the proper remedy for the surviving Jews of Europe. Yet he acknowledged later, in his memoirs, that he was "fully aware of the Arabs' hostility to Jewish settlement in Palestine." He, like his predecessor, had promised he would take no action without fully consulting the Arabs, and he renege.

Truman's decision to support establishment of a Jewish state in Palestine was made against the advice of most of the State Department and other foreign policy experts, who were concerned about U.S. relations with the Arabs and possible Soviet penetration of the region. Secretary James Forrestal of the Defense Department and Loy Henderson, at that time the State Department's chief of Near Eastern affairs, pressed those points most vigorously. Henderson warned that partition would not only create anti-Americanism but would also require U.S. troops to enforce it, and he stated his belief that partition violated both U.S. and UN principles of self-determination.



Over the ensuing months, the [UN partition plan](#) started to unravel.

The Zionists accepted the partition reluctantly, hoping to someday expand the Jewish state to the whole of Palestine, but the Arabs did not. Violence between Jews and Arabs escalated.

The Arabs were desperate to find an alternative, but to no avail. U.S. policymakers started having second thoughts.

On April 16 the United States formally proposed the temporary trusteeship [under the UN]. The Arabs accepted it conditionally; the Jews rejected it. The General Assembly was unenthusiastic. Meanwhile, the Zionists proceeded with their plans to set up a state. Civil order in Palestine had almost totally broken down. For example, in mid-April, the Irgun and LEHI (the Stern Gang), two Zionist terrorist organizations, attacked the poorly armed Arab village of [Deir Yassin](#), near Jerusalem, and killed 250 men, women, and children. The Arabs retaliated by killing many Jews the next day. [The Hadassah medical convoy in Jerusalem was attacked, killing 78 Jews, most of whom were medical staff.] Before the British left in May, the Jews had occupied much additional land, including cities that were to be in the Palestinian state.

The administration's trusteeship idea soon became academic. On May 14 the last British officials left Palestine, and that evening the Jewish state was proclaimed. Eleven minutes later, to the surprise of the U.S. delegation to the United Nations, the United States announced its de facto recognition.

The Soviet Union under Joseph Stalin also recognized the state of Israel, "apparently believing that the new country would be socialist and would accelerate the decline of British influence in the Middle East," according to *Wikipedia*.

On the evening of May 14, the Arabs launched an air attack on Tel Aviv, which the Israelis resisted. An invasion by Arab armies from Lebanon, Syria, Iraq and Egypt followed. Saudi Arabia sent a formation that fought under the Egyptian command. Transjordan later intervened, but only in areas that had

been designated as part of the Arab state under the UN partition plan. Israel was quickly victorious and formal armistice agreements were reached in February 1949. As a result, Israel added territory (e.g. the Arab cities of Jaffa and Beersheba), Egypt gained control over the Gaza Strip and Transjordan annexed the West Bank. Israel now controlled 78% of Palestine as opposed to the 56% recommended by the UN proposal.



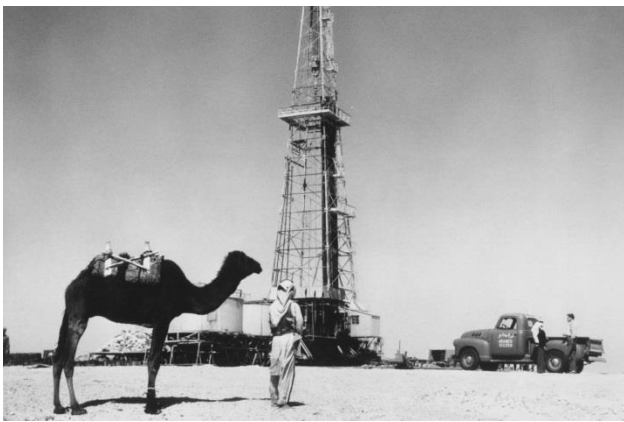
Raising the Ink Flag at Umm Rashrash, end of war

The 1948 Arab-Israeli War had many consequences: the creation of a new military power in the Middle East, rise of Arab nationalism and resulting [exodus](#) of Jews from the Muslim world. According to *Wikipedia*, "Few Jews immigrated during the existence of the British Mandate for Palestine. Prior to Israel's independence in 1948, approximately 800,000 Jews were living in lands that now make up the Arab world." For example, 75,000 Jews lived in Egypt under King Farouk and played an important role in the economy, rising to prominence in journalism and the entertainment industry. Many Jewish families, such as the Qattawi family, had extensive economic relations with non-Jews. By 1950, nearly 40% had emigrated, 14,000 of them to Israel.

Tragically, the post-World War II refugee crisis in Europe led to a far greater refugee crisis in the Middle East.

Post-war geopolitics

World War II not only rearranged the geopolitical map, but reshuffled its imperial overlords. As the British and French empires folded, the Americans were eager and ready to play a winning hand. In 1938, vast [oil riches](#) were [discovered](#) in Saudi Arabia, Bahrain and Kuwait. U.S. officials were concerned about eventually [running out](#) of oil, making the Middle East a strategic priority. As the Soviet Union assumed the role of America's chief rival, preventing the spread of communism became a foreign policy obsession. An alliance with Israel served America's [objectives](#) abroad as well as politics at home.



Oil well in Saudi Arabia, 1940s

Since toppling the Hawaiian monarchy in 1893, the United States had traveled a long way from its [roots](#) of non-intervention in foreign affairs. And yet the American people still needed to believe their cause was just, that they were liberators, not invaders. Murray Rothbard was arguably the foremost libertarian proponent of non-intervention in foreign affairs in the 20th century. (I highly recommend “War and Foreign Policy,” a chapter in his 1973 book, *For A New Liberty: The Libertarian Manifesto*.) Rothbard, who passed away in 1995, explained how U.S. foreign policy since the late 1930s has been guided by the concept of [collective security](#):

The collective security thesis assumes that, at whatever moment of time one happens to be

in, the territorial distribution of States on the world's surface is just and proper. Any forcible disturbances of any governmental boundary anywhere, then, automatically becomes “aggression” which must be combated either by all other nations or by the United States itself, acting as “world policeman.”

And yet, what were Israel's foreign policy aims? Expansion. The Zionist dream, according to Rothbard, is

a “Jewish state” in the lands allegedly “given” to them by God several millennia in the past. To [the] “hard,” or consistent, Zionists, the areas designated for a Jewish State are all the lands allegedly governed by Jews at some point in the Bible, and they include the now heavily Arab “West Bank,” which the Zionists designate as “Judea” and “Samaria.” The State is also supposed to include the Golan Heights plus a larger chunk of southwestern Syria, as well as the now Jordanian “East Bank” of the Jordan River.

These contradictory aims meant that Uncle Sam would at times [enable](#) Israel's behavior, while at other times provide restraint. At the same time, both the U.S. and Israel shared a common obstacle to achieving their goals, as Richman explains:

What threatened American access to [oil fields in] the region? Although much was made of the Soviet threat, there is reason to believe that throughout the cold war Washington did not take it seriously in the Middle East. The primary perceived threat was indigenous--namely, Arab and Iranian nationalism, which appears to have been the dominant concern from 1945 on.

Israel: dominant themes

In the interest of time, I'm going to give a brief overview of the 75-year history of Israel which is largely a struggle against the indigenous natives and their neighboring cousins.

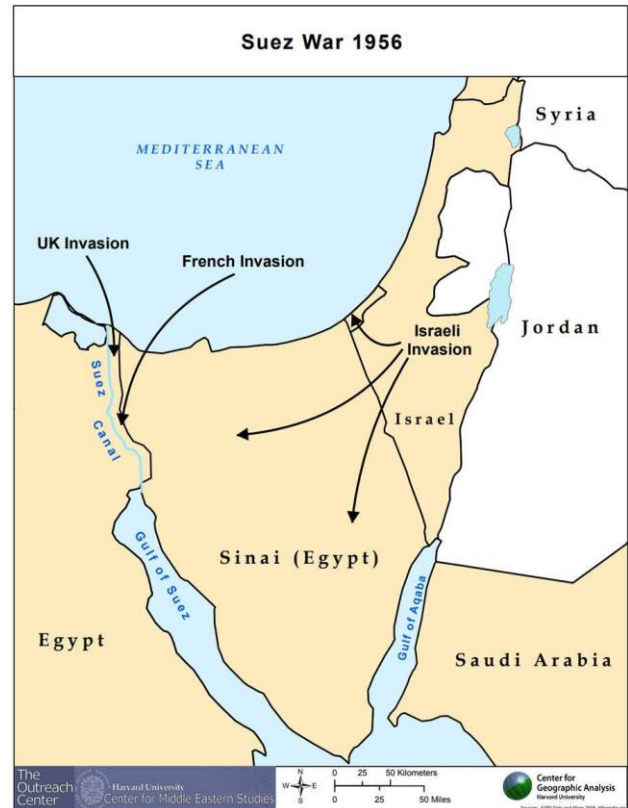
Resistance movement – The rise of Arab nationalism was led by Egypt's charismatic leader, Gamal Abdel Nasser, in the 1950s. The Six-Day War of 1967, in which Israel launched a "[preemptive strike](#)" against Egypt, Jordan and Syria, destroyed Nasser's military power and gave rise to Islamic fundamentalism.

U.S. support – The U.S.-Israel relationship got off to a rocky start in 1954 when an Israeli false flag operation called the [Lavon affair](#) went wrong. (American offices in Cairo were bombed, but no one was killed.) From that low point, the alliance has strengthened to the point of virtually unconditional support from the United States. In addition to providing advanced weapons and aid (about \$3 billion annually), U.S. propaganda has routinely [softened](#) any unsavory aspects of Israeli aggression. The United Nations has voted on countless resolutions condemning Israel's human rights abuses which the U.S. consistently vetoed.

Wars – Since its birth, Israel has been in a state of perpetual war, including the 1956 [Suez Crisis](#), 1967 [Six-Day War](#), 1973 [Yom Kippur War](#), 1982 [Lebanon War](#), 2006 Lebanon War, two intifadas (1987-1993 and 2000-2005) and a handful of military campaigns in Gaza since Hamas took control ([2009](#), 2012, 2014, 2021 and [2023](#)). Israel is believed to have completed its first operational nuclear weapon by 1967, with the help of the U.S. and France. After the Six-Day War, Israel had established itself as the dominant military power in the Middle East.

Internal politics – Politically, the more militant and nationalistic forces have [risen](#) to the top. Yes, "war is the health of the state." The Herut party was founded in 1948 by former Irgun leader, Menachem Begin. (Outraged, Albert Einstein and Hannah Arendt were signatories to a [scathing letter](#) to *The New York Times*.)

The Herut has since morphed into the current ruling party, the Likud. Israel has been under Herut/Likud rule for 33 of the past 46 years.



Human rights abuses – One of the world's longest ongoing occupations (56 years and counting) has attracted harsh criticism from human rights groups such as [Amnesty International](#), Human Rights Watch, B'Tselem, [Breaking the Silence](#), [Addameer](#) and Yesh Din.

Peace talks – Extremists on both sides have dominated negotiations, which have gone nowhere. When the rare moderate appears, he is either accused of selling out, undermined or assassinated. After the Camp David Accords, Egypt's Anwar Sadat was gunned down by fundamentalists in 1981. Following the Oslo Accords, Israel's Yitzhak Rabin was murdered by a right-wing extremist in 1995. Both Sadat and Rabin received the Nobel Peace Prize for their efforts.

Hard-Line Prime Ministers of Israel

Prime Minister	Start Date	End Date	Political Party	Age in 1948	Military Roots/Influences
Menachem Begin	Jun-77	Oct-83	Herut	35	Leader of the Irgun
Yitzhak Shamir	Oct-83	Sep-84	Herut	33	Leader of LEHI, served in Irgun under Begin
Yitzhak Shamir	Oct-86	Jul-92	Herut/ Likud		
Benjamin Netanyahu	Jun-96	Jul-99	Likud	Born 1949	Father was an Irgun leader
Ariel Sharon	Mar-01	Apr-06	Likud/ Kadima	20	Leader of Unit 101, "greatest field commander in Israel's history"
Benjamin Netanyahu	Mar-09	Jun-21	Likud		
Benjamin Netanyahu	Dec-22	?	Likud		

The rise of Hamas

[After](#) the Six-Day War, Israel had the land it wanted, but people it did not. This left the leaders of Israel with an immense challenge: How does one operate an exclusivist Jewish democracy when 36% of the four million inhabitants are non-Jews? Add to their quandary the [high birthrate](#) of the Palestinians. Israel chose to [occupy](#) the land, but deny its inhabitants citizenship (much to the [consternation](#) of the international community). This led to a [second exodus](#), or Naksa ("setback"), in which 280,000 to 325,000 Palestinians fled the captured territories.

From 1967 onward, Israel's strategy towards the Palestinians appears to be as follows:

- 1) Limit those who live in Israel proper to a manageable level. (Today, 21% of Israelis are Arab, or about 2 million, and three-quarters enjoy citizenship.)
- 2) Promote Jewish settlements in the West Bank in order to gain a majority. Never allow a Palestinian state in the West Bank.
- 3) Keep West Bank and Gaza Palestinians divided politically in order to undermine negotiations for a two-state solution.
- 4) Hold Gaza and the Sinai Peninsula as bargaining chips. (Remember, these were never a part of the original Zionist vision.)
- 5) Make life in Gaza and the West Bank as miserable as possible in order to force Palestinians to either leave or resist violently,

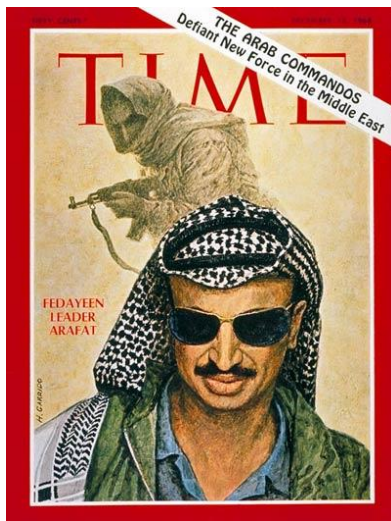
thus creating an external enemy (always good for the state) and sabotaging peace talks.

The occupation gave rise to two forms of resistance: secular and violent, religious and non-violent. The Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO), led by Yasser Arafat, emerged as the face of the secularists only to fade in the mid-1990s and be replaced by the Islamists. In 1994, Rothbard described the shift as it neared completion:

The P.L.O., child of the 1960s, was the last major organization born of the Old Islam: that is, led by secularists who were genuinely devoted to a unitary secular state in Palestine, with complete freedom to be enjoyed by all religions, Jewish and Christian, as well as Muslim. At the same time that Israeli leaders were demonizing the P.L.O. as eager to hurl all Jews into the sea, the P.L.O. always insisted on distinctions between the aggressive "Zionist entity," which they hated, and the Jewish religion, which they had nothing against.

But that was Old Islam. Within the last decade or so, as everyone knows, a militant New Islam has emerged, determined, "fundamentalist," and heaping only scorn on "Western" ideals such as religious freedom that had so influenced older groups like the P.L.O. And so the upsurge of the New Islam, the "hard right" such as Hamas and Islamic Jihad, hard-core Muslims who have no use for secularism or religious freedom. And never,

ever are they in a spirit to compromise, to surrender, to the hated Zionist entity. The Palestinians of the poor, wretched Gaza Strip are almost totally devoted to Hamas, as are much of the Palestinians on the West Bank and among the remainder of the Palestinians, the P.L.O.'s only trumpcard has been the person of Yasser Arafat, beloved by rank-and-file Palestinians as the George Washington of his people. But even that devotion began to erode a few years ago when the Muslim Arafat displayed the temerity to marry a Christian wife.



December 13, 1968

Central to New Islam is the [Muslim Brotherhood](#), described by *Wikipedia* as,

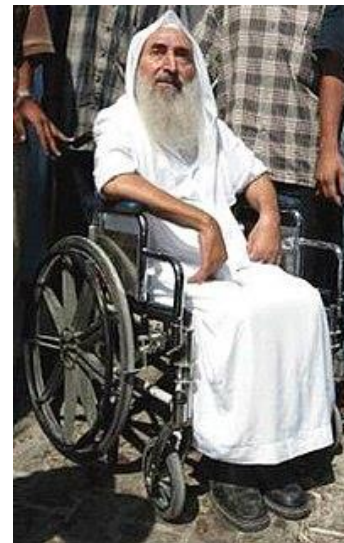
a transnational Sunni Islamist organization founded in Egypt by Islamic scholar and schoolteacher Hassan al-Banna in 1928. Al-Banna's teachings spread far beyond Egypt, influencing today various Islamist movements from charitable organizations to political parties... It remained a fringe group in the politics of the Arab World until the 1967 Six-Day War, when Islamism managed to replace popular secular Arab nationalism after a resounding Arab defeat by Israel.

Brutally repressed in Egypt under Nasser, the Brotherhood abandoned violence in the 1970s only to later spawn the militant Hamas:

Between 1967 and 1987, the year Hamas was founded, the number of mosques in Gaza tripled from 200 to 600, and the Muslim Brotherhood named the period between 1975

and 1987 a phase of "social institution building." During that time, the Brotherhood established associations, used zakat (alms giving) for aid to poor Palestinians, promoted schools, provided students with loans, used waqf (religious endowments) to lease property and employ people, and established mosques. Likewise, antagonistic and sometimes violent opposition to Fatah, the Palestine Liberation Organization and other secular nationalist groups increased dramatically in the streets and on university campuses.

In 1987, following the First Intifada, the *Islamic Resistance Movement*, or Hamas, was established from Brotherhood-affiliated charities and social institutions that had gained a strong foothold among the local population. During the First Intifada (1987–93), Hamas militarized and transformed into one of the strongest Palestinian militant groups.



Ahmed Yassin in Gaza, 2004

Hamas was co-founded by [Sheikh Ahmed Yassin](#), a quadriplegic who was nearly blind. Yassin was born in a small village near the city of Ashkelon in Mandatory Palestine. His family fled to Gaza after the 1948 Arab-Israeli War, settling in the al-Shati refugee camp. Actively involved in setting up a Palestinian branch of the Muslim Brotherhood, in 1973 Yassin established the Islamic charity Mujama al-Islamiya (recognized by Israel in 1979) which played a key role in providing social care, particularly for those living in refugee

camps. In 1987, Yassin and six other Mujama members launched Hamas, calling it the “paramilitary wing” of the Palestinian Muslim Brotherhood. Yassin became its spiritual leader, but was killed in 2004 in an Israeli helicopter missile attack after he was wheeled out of an early-morning prayer session in Gaza City. Both of his bodyguards and nine bystanders were also killed.

In its early days, Hamas received [support](#) from an unexpected source: Israel. In 2009, *The Wall Street Journal* reported on how [Israel helped spawn Hamas](#):

“Hamas, to my great regret, is Israel’s creation,” says [Avner] Cohen, a Tunisian-born Jew who worked in Gaza for more than two decades. Responsible for religious affairs in the region until 1994, Mr. Cohen watched the Islamist movement take shape, muscle aside secular Palestinian rivals and then morph into what is today Hamas, a militant group that is sworn to Israel’s destruction.

Instead of trying to curb Gaza’s Islamists from the outset, says Mr. Cohen, Israel for years tolerated and, in some cases, encouraged them as a counterweight to the secular nationalists of the Palestine

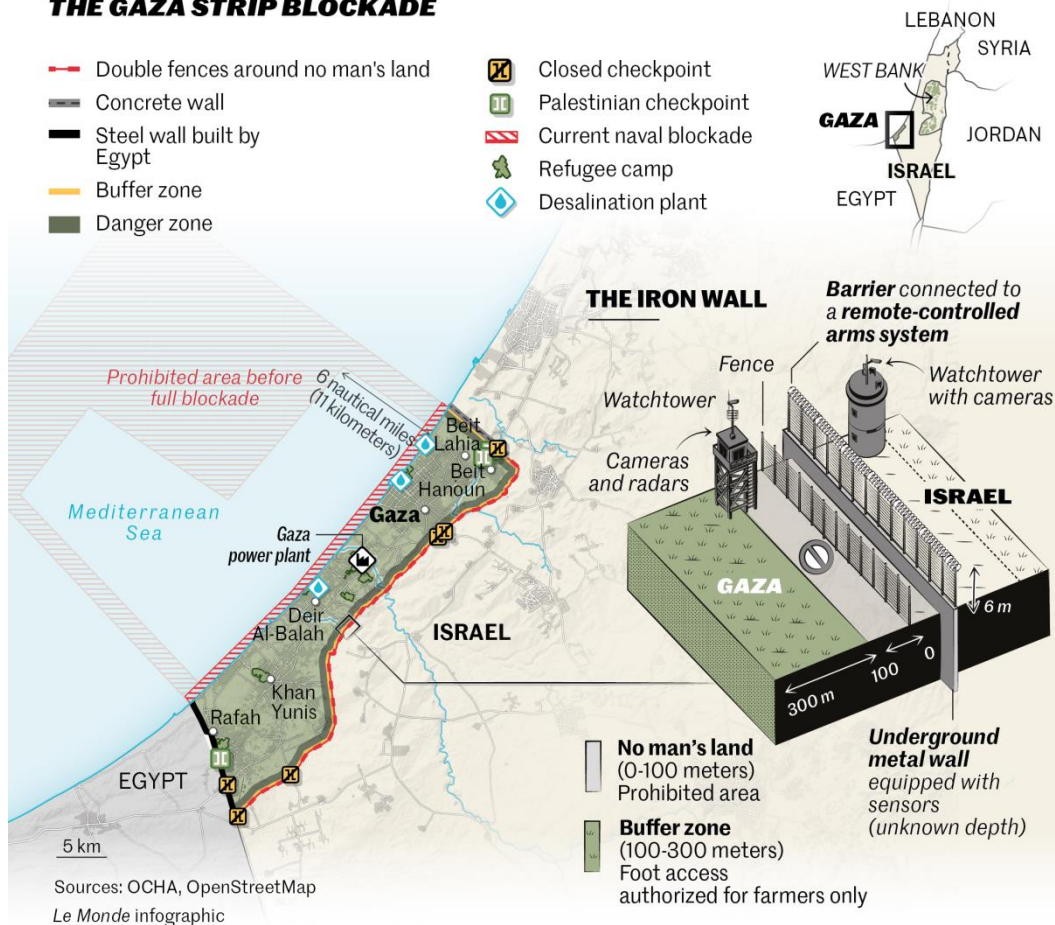
Liberation Organization and its dominant faction, Yasser Arafat’s Fatah. Israel cooperated with a crippled, half-blind cleric named Sheikh Ahmed Yassin, even as he was laying the foundations for what would become Hamas.

Even after the Gaza election in 2006, in which Hamas surprisingly took control of the government with 44% of the popular vote, Israel and the United States ramped up financial support. Between 2008 and 2017, the U.S. poured \$6.0 billion into the West Bank and Gaza. Between 2012 and 2021, Israel funneled \$1.8 billion to Hamas via Qatar, a longtime sponsor of jihadi groups, according to the Israeli newspaper, *Haaretz*. In March 2019, [Benjamin Netanyahu](#) addressed the Israeli cabinet, explaining the [method to his madness](#):

Anyone who wants to thwart the establishment of a Palestinian state has to support bolstering Hamas and transferring money to Hamas. This is part of our strategy, to isolate the Palestinians in Gaza from the Palestinians in the West Bank. It’s impossible to reach an agreement with them. Everyone knows this. But we control the height of the flame.



THE GAZA STRIP BLOCKADE



The Gaza blockade

From the Oslo Accords (September 1993) until September 2000, nearly 300 Israelis were killed in [terrorist attacks](#). The Israeli government responded in 1994 by beginning construction on a 37 mile security fence with five points of entry (three since closed). In 2003, Palestinians in Gaza were heavily restricted from entering Israel for work ([exits](#) for day laborers are 88% below 2000 levels). In 2005, Jewish settlements in Gaza were abandoned. In 2007, after the election of Hamas, a land, air and sea blockade was imposed.

Defenders of the blockade argue that Israel still allows goods to pass through two checkpoints. True, but the volume and scope have been restricted significantly while the population of Gaza has grown by 50%. (Egypt controls the flow of people through its Rafah border crossing, but not goods.) Over 1,500 [smuggling tunnels](#) were built along the border with Egypt to bypass the blockade, but in 2009 Egypt

began constructing an underground barrier and by 2014 the Egyptian army had destroyed most of the tunnels, even resorting to pumping in sewage. (Egypt has no interest in taking in Palestinian [refugees](#), but could change course in exchange for [debt relief](#) and financial aid.)



Smuggling tunnel in Rafah, 2009

The devastating impact of the blockade cannot be overstated. According to *Fortune*,

More than 53% of Gaza residents were considered below the [poverty](#) line in 2020,

and about 77% of Gazan households receive some form of [aid](#) from the United Nations and other groups, mostly in the form of cash or food... About 64% of people in Gaza are considered food insecure, meaning they do not have reliable access to sufficient amounts of food. Food as a percentage of Gaza's total imports has skyrocketed by 50% since 2005, when Israel first imposed a temporary blockade. And the amount of food the West Bank and Gaza actually produce has tumbled by 30% since then.

It is hard for Gaza to produce food within its own borders. One factor is that Israeli airstrikes hit Gaza's only power generation plant and main sewage treatment plant in 2008 and again in 2018. These attacks resulted in the spread of sewage waste on land and in the water, destroying farmlands and food crops and threatening fish stocks in the ocean as well.

Today, UNRWA [United Nations Relief and Works Agency] is the [second-largest employer](#) in Gaza, following Hamas. It provides the bulk of the education, food aid and health care services for people in Gaza, in addition to 3 million other people registered as Palestinian [refugees](#) who live in Jordan, Lebanon, Syria, the West Bank and other places.



Rafah border crossing, 3 November 2023

After the blockade went into effect, [fishermen](#) were limited to 6 nautical miles offshore, even though most of the fish are at least 9 miles out at sea. In 2018, the fishing zone was temporarily restricted to 3 miles, resulting in 90% of fishermen (prevented from accessing 85% of the area agreed under the Oslo Accords) requiring international aid.

Between 2006 and 2022, Gaza's real GDP per capital shrank by 37%, according to [UNCTAD](#). Per capita GDP in Gaza is \$1,250, a quarter of that of the West Bank and just 2% of Israel's \$55,000. "The Gaza-Israel border straddles one of the starkest economic contrasts in the world (the Korean Demilitarized Zone is the other)," says *Wikipedia*.

Amidst the rubble, one group in Gaza appears to be thriving: Hamas. According to the [Mackenzie Institute](#),

A recent [social media post](#) shared by Israel's Embassy in the U.S. underscores the vast reserves of wealth in the hands of the Hamas terror group, and the disparity between its leaders and the Palestinian people they claim to represent...

It also estimates the [net worth of several Hamas leaders](#) — all of whom, it notes, live hundreds of kilometres from Gaza, in Qatar. Abu Marzuk, deputy chair of the Hamas Political Bureau is worth \$3 billion, while senior leaders Khaled Mashal and Ismail Haniyeh are each worth about \$4 billion...

[The [website i24news](#)] suggests that hundreds of mid- to high-level Hamas leaders have become millionaires, often due to the 20 per cent tax on all smuggled goods brought through the organization's network of [underground tunnels](#), and through international donors, primarily Qatar.

[Uri Avnery](#), who died in 2018, was a prominent dissident throughout most of Israel's history. His family emigrated from Germany to Mandatory Palestine in 1933 shortly after the Nazis rose to power. He joined the Irgun in 1938 at the age of 15, but left four years later, disillusioned by its tactics. Avnery served in the 1948 Arab-Israeli War, was the owner and editor of news magazine *HaOlam HaZeh*, sat for two terms in the Knesset and founded the Gush Shalom peace movement. In March 2009, as the first Gaza War (Operation Cast Lead) raged, he [wrote](#):

The blockade on land, on sea and in the air against a million and a half human beings is an act of war, as much as any dropping of bombs or launching of rockets. It paralyzes life in

the Gaza Strip: eliminating most sources of employment, pushing hundreds of thousands to the brink of starvation, stopping most hospitals from functioning, disrupting the supply of electricity and water...

Some time ago I wrote that the Gaza blockade was a scientific experiment designed to find out how much one can starve a population and turn its life into hell before they break. This experiment was conducted with the generous help of Europe and the US. Up to now, it did not succeed. Hamas became stronger and the range of the Qassams [rockets] became longer. The present war is a continuation of the experiment by other means.

Avernoy's article could have easily been written today. Little has changed in Gaza the past 14 years except the level of pain and misery.



Uri Avernoy and wife Rachel, rally against occupation of West Bank and seige of Gaza

Modern warfare has increasingly put civilians in harm's way. Interfering in trade through tariffs, regulations, [sanctions](#) or [blockades](#) is a logical extension of this trend. As trade benefits both parties to each transaction, any interference can only make them poorer. In other words, trade wars target civilians on both sides. At the same time, they strengthen *both* governments by creating the perfect external enemy to blame for the peoples' suffering.

[Foreign aid](#) can only exacerbate matters as funds are administered through the government (which takes its cut), creating a dependency on the state while weakening the voluntary bonds of free enterprise and charity that hold civilized society together. Since 9/11,

the U.S. has poured a total of \$223 billion into the Middle East, not including \$140 billion sent to Afghanistan and Pakistan.

U.S. Foreign Aid, 2002-2022

Country	\$ Millions
Afghanistan	122,057
Iraq	72,106
Israel	61,623
Egypt	32,527
Jordan	23,745
Pakistan	18,396
Syria	8,429
West Bank & Gaza	7,523
Lebanon	7,186
Turkey	1,900
Oman	464

Source: www.foreignassistance.gov

Some promoters of the Palestinian cause have called for boycotts of Israeli products or divesting of stock in companies that do business with Israel. There is a long history of boycotts targeting Israel, from the [Arab League boycott](#) of 1945 (which mostly lasted until 1994) to the Palestinian-led [BDS movement](#) of 2005. While calling out companies like Boeing that supply the IDF may be justified, most of these measures are counterproductive.



Pro-Palestinian demonstration in Paris, July 2014

Ideology: how the conflict is viewed

Like all world events, how one sees the Israel-Palestine conflict depends largely on ideology:

Progressives – The left tends to lump people into groups or classes: oppressors and victims. Basic human rights – life, liberty and property – only apply to the victim group while employing violence via the state is justified to correct any *past* injustices.

For most of its existence, Israel was seen by progressives as the victim. Today the script is flipped: Israel is increasingly seen of the oppressor and Palestinians the [oppressed](#).



Pro-Israel protest in London, 9 October 2023

Conservatives – The right tends to look back at some idyllic past. When that past is threatened, they react. While they talk a good game about natural rights and the rule of law, if an idyllic past is under attack, employing violence via the state is justified to correct such a *current* injustice.

Those on the right have traditionally supported the Israel project, in large part because they support an expansive American foreign policy which itself is modeled on protecting the status quo. Importantly, from the conservative perspective, the history of Palestine begins in 1948, not 1914.

Libertarians – Libertarians are not a homogenous group. The two main strands are limited government classical liberals, or minarchists, and no government anarchists, or anarcho capitalists. Both believe in

natural rights. Minarchists wish to limit the violence of the state to protecting those rights whereas anarchists reject the state entirely as its existence and methods require violence.

Libertarians reject all violence directed at civilians on both sides of this conflict. That applies to Hamas terrorist attacks and Israeli [settler violence](#) as well as Israel's invasion and blockade of Gaza.

The global left has been galvanized by Israel's disproportionate response to the October 7th Hamas attack: the utter destruction of Gaza (70% of its buildings), massive [civilian casualties](#) (22,000 [deaths](#), [two-thirds](#) women and children), lack of [humanitarian aid](#), killing of 77 [journalists](#), doubling of the Palestinian prison population and [expulsion](#) of 1,000 Palestinians from their homes in the [West Bank](#) as Jewish settlers act with impunity.

Thousands of [protests](#) have taken place worldwide over the conflict (many organized by [Jews](#)), including in New York, Washington, London, Berlin, Paris, Amsterdam, Madrid, Vienna and Rome. According to a study by Israel Research Institute in November, [95%](#) are pro-Palestinian. In the U.S., a stronghold of Israel support, 69% of the demonstrations are pro-Palestinian.

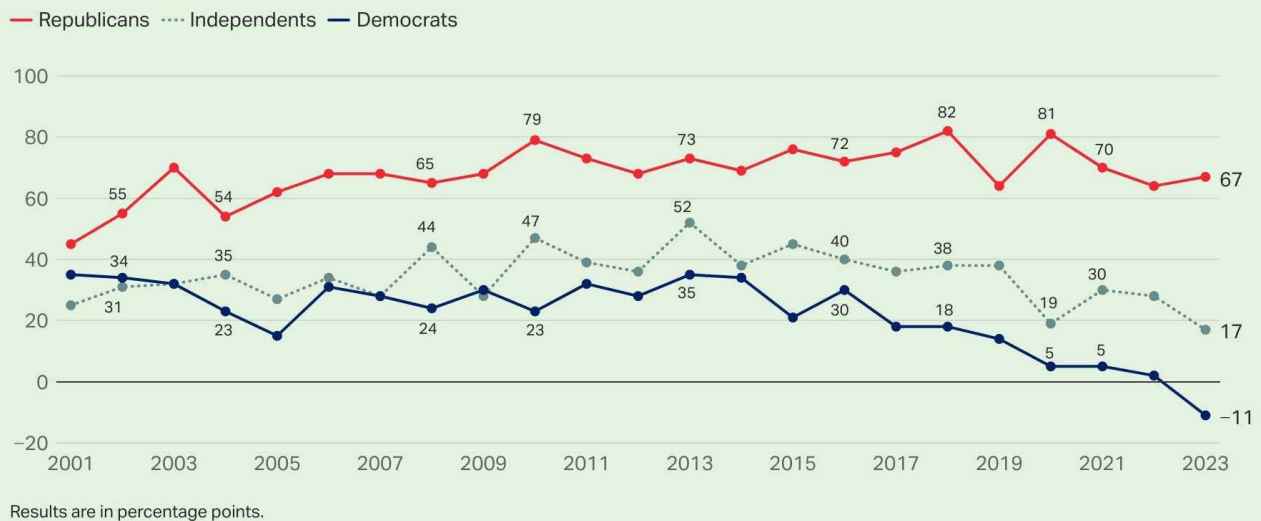


Pro-Palestinian protest in London, 21 October 2023

International support for a [ceasefire](#) is increasing. On December 12, the UN General Assembly voted overwhelmingly for a ceasefire, with 153 votes in favor, 10 against and 23 abstentions. The U.S. voted against the resolution.

Net Sympathy for Israel in the Middle East Situation, by Party ID

Net sympathy for Israel is % more sympathetic toward Israel minus % more sympathetic toward the Palestinians.



GALLUP

Conclusion

“Men are fighting one another because they are convinced that the extermination and liquidation of adversaries is the only means of promoting their well-being.”

~ Ludwig von Mises, *Human Action*

“Whoever wishes peace among peoples must fight statism.”

~ Ludwig von Mises, *Nation, State and Economy*

Those choosing sides in a conflict between 7 million Jews and 7 million Arabs over a piece of land the size of Massachusetts offer no solutions other than to escalate the violence. Tragically, this was Israel’s reaction to the October 7th atrocities. Hopefully, external forces will not allow themselves to be drawn into the conflagration, which would only throw gasoline on the fire.

The good news is that U.S. intervention in foreign affairs is on the decline; its failures are too stark to miss. The interventionists are out of bullets, both literally and figuratively. Contrary to their claims that

withdrawal will reveal a world of chaos and violence, the opposite will happen. Globalization (expanding trade promoting peace and prosperity) will wax as globalism (world government elites fomenting conflict) wanes.

The only long-term solution to the conflict between Israelis and Palestinians is to de-escalate and allow [the people](#) on both sides to build bridges through trade, employment, dialogue and ultimately reconciliation and friendship. People who were once sworn enemies need to see each other not just as human beings, but vital for their own well-being. Trade is, after all, mutually-beneficial, a path to [material progress](#). Palestinians impoverished in Gaza and the West Bank need jobs. They need to have something to live for – skin in the game – and trade with the far wealthier Israelis can make everyone better off (law of comparative advantage). A [40-year old woman](#) from Tel Aviv stated it beautifully: “I don’t want peace. I want them to have a life. I want them to have too much to lose, to care for their life.” Time and trade heal all wounds.

The Coffee Can Portfolio

Kevin Duffy, editor
West Chester, PA

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