

# TEN THINGS WE NEED TO KNOW ABOUT THE ISRAELI-PALESTINIAN CONFLICT

Maciej Huczko PhD  
Warsaw School of Economics, Warsaw, Poland  
mhuczko@sgh.waw.pl

**Abstract:** The Middle East is a geographical region which can be defined in more than one way. Depending on various factors such as security, politics, or economy, the Middle East might stretch from Morocco to Pakistan (the Greater Middle East, coined in the early 2000s) or, according to a more traditional, Orientalist definition, from Egypt to Iran. The definitions also vary as to which countries on the African continent should be interpolated into the Middle Eastern region. While the geographical range of the Middle East is disputable, one criteria of the definition is unchallenged, and this is the lack of stability of the region. At the epicenter of this instability is the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. When Israel was established as a new state in the region in 1948, there was a broader Israeli-Arab conflict. And, while the Israeli-Palestinian conflict applies to merely 20.000 km<sup>2</sup>, in its specificity, it radiates onto the whole region – once a local conflict, then a regional one, and eventually gaining a global inflammation rank (Bojko, 2006). It is also at the heart of the followers of Islam (the religion with the second biggest population) and draws attention of policymakers globally, who for the last seven decades, have failed to find a solution to the conflict.

The Israeli-Palestinian conflict, because of the magnitude of issues involved, is often not fully comprehended but it still evokes stark, polarized opinions. The intricacies of the conflict have their direct root in the previous century, but both sides of the conflict, in reinforcing their rights, go back not decades but centuries. The conflict itself has been also used by third parties e.g. during the Cold War, or as the pretext for carrying out the attacks on 9/11. The Israeli-Palestinian conflict is complex, it affects many people, not just locally but also globally. Therefore, explaining the Israeli-Palestinian conflict through ten basic criteria will allow us to understand the complexity of the conflict and to formulate our own opinions and positions on this difficult subject.

**KEY WORDS:** MIDDLE EAST, ISRAEL, PALESTINE, THE USA, THE MIDDLE EAST CONFLICT.

## 1. Main issues in dispute

Since the establishment of Israel in May, 1948, its citizens have been at war with either one or more Arab neighbors at the same time. Progressively, with extended assistance of third parties such as the USA, Israel has been able to establish positive relations with most of the Arab countries with which it shares borders, starting with Egypt in 1978. Israel failed to establish such a relationship with the Palestinians. From their perspective, the Palestinians had already been stripped of their land and deprived of their self-determination over the course of many events and over many years. Today, and for most of the previous decades, the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is centered around two interrelated core issues: identity and land (Khoury, 2014). Identity and land are inseparable in this context, and equally vital in different ways.

The basic definition of a state stresses occupation of a territory that is sovereign. Therefore, land, and possession of land is crucial for both sides of the conflict. Palestinians accuse international organizations of establishing the State of Israel on their land, and as the map below shows (Ileri, 2011), Israel of continuously building settlements on their land. While growing Israeli settlements are of big concern to the Palestinians, most land losses took place as a result of the wars between Israel and its Arab neighbors, which will be further explained in the following sections.



The loss of land for the Palestinians is central to their identity issue. Since the creation of Israel, (and as a result of wars and Israeli settlement building), the increase in the number of Palestinian refugees is alarming. According to the United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA), today there are about 5 million Palestinian refugees who are eligible to receive UNRWA services. Denied of their identity and basic rights, living in refugee camps scattered in the neighboring Arab countries, psychologically and

emotionally crippled, many generations of Palestinians have become hopeless and perceive the Israelis as omnipotent occupants. Land and identity issues overlap in the city of Jerusalem, creating a milestone of the conflict. Jerusalem, one of the oldest cities in the world, is considered a holy city for the three major Abrahamic religions: Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. And while it should be celebrated universally, today it remains a core issue of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The uniqueness of Jerusalem will be covered and explained in more depth in subsequent sections of the text. For now, it must be emphasized, that a *share Jerusalem then divide* approach taken by both Israel and Palestine is an approach that is most welcomed and appreciated by third parties, the UN included. Yet, today, the city is under Israeli rule, which does grant access to members of all religions to their holy sites. While this Israeli stance is awaited, in practice, according to an EU report (EU Heads of Mission Report on East Jerusalem, 2009), Israel acts with accordance to *facts on the ground* policy – building new settlements, the demolition of Palestine housing, the closure of Palestinian institutions, and, among others, restricting permit regime. Israel's Jerusalem policy makes the city an exemplification of both the land and identity deprivation experienced by the Palestinians.

## 2. Tracing the history

The argument of historical facts is used by both sides of the conflict to claim their rights to the disputed land. The Middle East, historically, has been an unstable region that experienced many wars, conquests, and also mass migration as a consequence. Therefore, both Palestinians and Jews can trace their roots in the region, argue their presence in the region and, sadly, effectively use these arguments as propaganda.

A factual reconstruction of the Jewish origin is challenging and complex since it requires multidisciplinary studies covering more than 3000 years of human history. And while the origin of the Jews is strictly connected to the Middle East, commonly an identity argument reinforces the land one, arguments used in this debate quote records found in the Bible. This Bible narrative incorporates names like Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses, Joshua, and others providing many story and events. These names of Biblical patriarchs and events connoted to them became not only core to Jewish religious heritage but a cultural one as well. Whereas historians trace the presence of the Israelites back to 1200 BCE, they largely discard this Bible rhetoric (Dever, 2001). It is without doubt that the Kingdom of Israel and the Kingdom of Judea existed

and were later conquered by the Assyrian Empire, just like a common ancestral Middle East origin of all Jews.

Palestinians, or the Palestinian people, are linguistically and culturally Arab, yet they are also comprised of Jews. Palestinian national consciousness among the Arabs is a matter of modern history, therefore, if Palestinians are to be treated apart from the Arabs of the region, their history is by far younger than the Jewish one. Palestinian national identity can be traced back to the 1834 Arab Revolt, but scholars also argue that it emerged only after the Mandatory Period, which started after WWI and was transformed into a semi-autonomous region known as Transjordan (Rogan, 2011). As a state, Palestine came to existence together with The Palestinian Declaration of Independence only in 1988. Yet, the term Palestinians itself can be traced back to the 5<sup>th</sup> century BCE under a modestly different name, *the Philistines*, and tracked in the Bible.

Therefore, the historical right to the land of either Israel or Palestine is disputable among scholars, politicians, and also those interested in the Middle Eastern conflict. For the most interested parties, that is Palestine and Israel, it seems an irreconcilable sore point. Both states were established in the 20<sup>th</sup> century (the State of Israel in 1948 while the State of Palestine in 1988), and both have their *ethnomy* rooted in antiquity. And while reaching a consensus might be challenging or even impossible, for the present time both will continue to stay in the Middle East and share land.

### 3. Milestones of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict

The very first milestone of the conflict was the event establishing the State of Israel in the Middle East (Israel declared independence on 14<sup>th</sup> May, 1948) as a consequence of UN Resolution 18, Partition Plan for Palestine of the former British Mandate. The resolution recommended the creation of independent Arab and Jewish States with special regulation concerning Jerusalem, which was to be under special international regulation, as to avoid a conflict over the future of the city which was of great importance to both sides. The day after Israel declared independence, in an attempt to prevent the establishment of an Israeli state, four Arab countries (Egypt, Transjordan, Syria, and Iraq) launched The Arab-Israeli War of 1948. Despite the official goal of the invasion which was to restore law and order and to prevent further bloodshed, the aim declared at the battlefield level was to *drive the Jews into the sea*. The new born State of Israel proved itself against the Arab armies, winning control over the Participant Plan Israeli territory and enlarging it further by 60% of the land proposed to the Palestinian Arabs, the rest was annexed by Egypt and Jordan. At the Jericho Conference in late 1948, no state was created for the Palestinian Arabs.

The first Arab-Israeli war was followed years later by two others which were just as critical in their consequences. The first came in 1967 and is known as *The Six Day War* and the second, known as either *The Yom Kippur War* or *The Ramadan War*, came in 1973. *The Six Day War* was possibly the most significant event concerning Israeli-Arab relations since it reshaped the Middle Eastern states and proved to the Arabs that Israel was strong and determined to maintain its state. The war lasted only six days and as a result of a preemptive Israeli strike against Egypt, Jordan, and Syria, Israel seized the Sinai Peninsula, the Gaza Strip, East Jerusalem, the West Bank, and the Golan Heights. These land grabs caused massive waves of refugees and became one of the vocal points of the conflict. *The Yom Kippur War*, to a point, was a consequence of *The Six Day War*. The Arab countries had hoped to regain territories lost in the previous war, therefore, on the holiest day in Judaism, they launched a coordinated, surprise attack on Israel. After the initial shock and the Arab successes, Israel, heavily resupplied by the USA, managed to organize its forces and stage a counter-attack. The UN efforts resulted in a ceasefire. This war was another humiliating blow to the Arab states, making them realize that Israel, with US support, has become part of the Middle East. And Israel had to recognize that there is no guarantee that it will always dominate its neighbors. While the immediate results of *The Yom Kippur War* were visible in the number of victims, wounded, and refugees, the long-term effects were more positive, since both sides (on the state level) realized that negotiation must

start. Such negotiations, sponsored by the USA, were possible on the Egypt-Israel line, but they did not pertain to the Palestinians who were neglected in the process. For the Palestinians, the aftermath of *The Yom Kippur War* has proven that both Egypt and Syria went into the war more to regain earlier lost territories than to help the Palestinian cause (Bojko, 2006).

The non-war events of great importance to the Middle East and the Israeli-Palestinian conflict were the two Palestinian Intifadas (uprisings) in 1987-1993 and 2000-2005. The two Intifadas differ in many aspects with respect to the intensity or means employed, but both are similar for two vital things. First, the Intifadas were bottom-up civil movements (it is also claimed that they were inspired by political leaders) of Palestinians who felt hopeless and mistreated under Israeli occupation. Second, the Intifadas were a declaration of Palestinians of the desire to have their own sovereign state. This declaration was not only for the Israelis but also heard globally. Both Intifadas succeeded by winning international attention, understanding, and support. While the failure of these uprisings was their outcome, neither intifada accomplished the initial goal: to force Israel to negotiate the establishment of a sovereign Palestinian state. While the State of Palestine exists, in the legal understanding it is more of a quasi-state, without all of the attributes of an official state.

### 4. Disproportion of sides of the conflict

The prolonged character of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict can be explained by two factors which overlap and make it challenging to resolve. The two most important factors are the balance (or imbalance) of hard power between the conflicted sides and also this balance of their soft power. Where hard power can be characterized by the military and willingness to use it; soft power, in this context, is understood as the ability to attract other countries to one's actions and arguments, and also how others identify with such actions and argumentation. Therefore, not only is military power important, but the ability to gain international support for the usage of this power is equally important. *The Gulf War* of 1990-1991 can serve as an example of the above. While Saddam Hussein had the military power to invade Kuwait, his action was internationally criticized and sparked an international intervention under U.S. command, which had both overwhelming hard power and also soft power, the international support to free Kuwait.

Assessing the conflicted parties through such criteria results in arriving at a disproportion in both hard and soft power as well. The Israeli army, Israeli hard power, is among the mightiest in the world, currently ranked 15th out of 133 countries analyzed (Global Fire Power, 2017). The more in-depth comparative analysis of Israel and Palestine, in a hard power context, proves overwhelming Israeli domination since Palestine does not possess an air force, a navy, tanks, or weapons of mass destruction (nuclear, biological, nor chemical) and it does not possess space technology nor ballistic missiles. In contrast, Israel is a regional power in the given categories. To a great extent, which will be further explained in the text, the above Israeli domination was achieved owing to generous U.S. military aid: \$2 billion annual Israeli aid versus slightly over \$160 million Palestinian aid (Comparison of Military Strength of Israel and the Palestinians, 2009).

While overwhelming hard power in an Israeli asset allowing it to defend itself from any attacks, including the hypothetical Iranian one, and their readiness to use it against poorly-armed Palestinians at any occasion, increases Israeli security but has a significant impact on Israeli soft power. Thanks to its hard power, Israel is capable of imposing *facts on the ground* solutions on the Palestinians, mostly in reference to new settlement building on occupied territories. Such actions are perceived by international general public opinion as illegal and inhumane. Therefore, Israel does not enjoy this international support and Israeli soft power, because of their overusing of their hard power, is suffering. In contrast, Palestinians are often seen as victims because of their lack of hard power and their inability to defy Israel. Since their actions are perceived as a struggle to maintain their households and land, they enjoy increasing international moral support. The majority of

countries surveyed, according to the Pew Research Center, show greater sympathy towards Palestine in the conflict (Views of the Middle East Conflict, 2007).

### 5. Negotiating peace

Because the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is complex (and for a long time it was part of a broader Israeli-Arab conflict, involving many actors), negotiating a peace treaty has been historically difficult. Because of this complexity, third party actors and non-regional actors, have had to act as intermediaries. The country that, historically, has had the resources and most potential to foster Middle East peace has been the USA. There are a few factors that make the United States possibly the most effective and potent broker of the Middle East peace process. For a long time, the United States had the strongest soft power which attracted other actors. Because of a strong economy, the USA could be a sponsor of peace deals. And also, among other reasons, it had (and still has) leverage over Israel.

These factors proved to be effective in 1978, when president Carter managed to build a negotiation framework that was attractive to both Egypt and Israel, leading to the first Arab-Israeli peace treaty. History repeated itself in 1994 when, again, U.S. president Bill Clinton, using economic incentives, managed to secure a peace treaty between Israel and Jordan. In the case of Israeli-Palestinian talks however, the USA did not prove effective.

The Israeli-Palestinian talks, aimed at ending the First Intifada, were held in Madrid in 1991. The Madrid Conference of 1991 was an effort by the international community to revive the peace talks between the conflicted parties. They were hosted by Spain and co-sponsored by the USA and the Soviet Union. After a successful campaign in the First Gulf War, the USA believed it had the necessary argument to lead such talks, and the Soviet Union co-sponsored the talks as a symbol of rejoining the international community after the Cold War (the USSR collapsed later in the same year). Both bilateral and multilateral talks were continued after the conference itself. The impact of the Madrid talks (and the following talks as well), were more of a symbolic significance than having achieved specific solutions. The process itself dominated any specific agreement or concession. In such terms the Madrid Conference was successful (since Israel and Palestine did engage in bilateral talks), and even led to an exchange of letters and the subsequent signing of the Oslo I Accord, on the lawn of the White House in 1993. Yet, no final solution to the conflict was found and the exchanged letters did not result in further engagement of peace talks.

The continuing and growing Palestinian frustration about their situation resulted in the Second Intifada (2000-2005) when the Palestinians decided to voice their disapproval of their situation on the streets in a violent manner. The Second Intifada was much more violent compared to the first one. In the First Intifada about 200 Israelis were killed compared to 1.100 Palestinians, while in the Second Intifada, 1.100 Israelis and nearly 5.000 Palestinians were killed (Vital Statistics: Total Casualties, Arab-Israeli Conflict, 2014). This was caused by different, more violent and deadly, fighting methods employed by both sides. The starting point of the Second Intifada can be precisely determined (the visit of the opposition leader Ariel Sharon to Temple Mount in September 2000) but the end date is debatable. There was no clear event that marked the end of the Second Intifada. The death of Yasser Arafat, an iconic and charismatic Palestinian leader, marked a beginning of a new era in the Israeli-Palestinian relations. President Mahmoud Abbas, the new Palestinian leader, negotiated cease-fire conditions with Ariel Sharon resulting in the Israeli withdrawal from West bank Palestinian cities, and the releasing of Palestinian prisoners. Abbas managed to persuade different Palestinian organizations to commit to the truce. The final results of the Second Intifada, in terms of a final peace agreement between the conflicted sides, cannot be assessed as successful. While the violent fighting ended, no final solution was found. Certain concessions were made but the Palestinian state was not established and Israel did not guarantee that there would be no further attacks on the Palestinian side.

### 6. The United States and the conflict

Analyzing the role of the United States in the conflict is essential. From the beginning of the conflict till today, the USA is a unique state with unique attributes on the international scene. The United States, unlike the majority of other states, emerged from WWII as a strong and potent country capable of shaping events globally. It had both the soft and the hard power. At the same time it had showed that it was willing to use its power to secure its interests. Among its most vital interests are ones dealing with its economy and security. The Middle East is central to many American interests because of its geostrategic location, its natural resources, a strategic partnership with Israel, the proliferation of WMDs (weapons of mass destruction), and also due to the rise of anti-Americanism and terrorism (Sasnal, 2009).

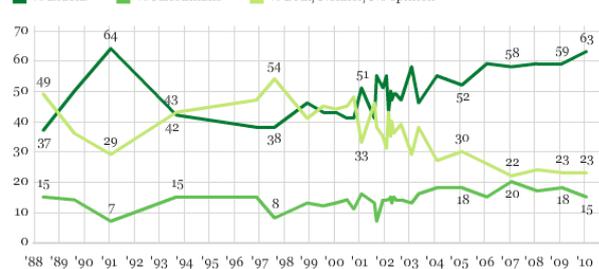
American involvement in the region can be linked to supporting the establishment of Israel after WWII, and their reasons for maintaining a further presence in the Middle East have evolved over time. The early U.S. support of Israel can be linked to pressure by the pro-Israeli lobby in the USA but also to the new post-WWII geopolitics. By 1948 it became clear to president Truman that the relationship with the Soviet Union will be severe and that having a partner (Israel) in the Middle East might prove crucial. With the Cold War growing in intensity and also in terms of geographical locations, the Middle East became another Cold War cutting edge. The abundance of natural resources only amplified the importance of the region. The peak of both American and Soviet engagement in the region came in 1973, during the Yom Kippur War, when Israel was strongly backed by the USA and the Arab countries by the Soviets. Towards the end of the Cold War and the fall of the Soviet Union, the USA was mostly focused on shaping the new world order and the Israeli-Palestinian conflict was of secondary interest. Palestinian backing of Hussein's invasion of Kuwait only won further American support for Israel and further stigmatized Palestinian actions and goals. Israel proved to be on the lawful side of the conflict while Palestine was associated with the aggressive states.

This situation was magnified after 9/11 when Israel was again seen as a country supporting anti-terrorism actions and a country targeted by terrorists, while the Palestinians were seen as terrorists. A great deal of this was attributed to Israeli rhetoric and also the actions of the pro-Israeli lobby in the USA. Also, as can be seen on the Gallup chart below, American public opinion has continually favored Israel over Palestine (Support for Israel in U.S. at 63%, Near Record High, 2010):

Middle East Sympathies, Full Trend

In the Middle East situation, are your sympathies more with the Israelis or more with the Palestinians?

■ % Israelis ■ % Palestinians ■ % Both/Neither/No opinion



GALLUP

### 7. Pro-Israeli and pro-Palestinian lobby in the USA

Lobbying groups in the USA are common and they are present in many fields. Lobbying might be carried out by individuals, influential professionals who are often wealthy with a vast network of connections, or by groups organized around a common goal. These advocates lobby both at the state level and in Washington D.C as well. They serve as a source for advice, expertise, and professional insight for the decision-makers. At the same time, critics describe lobbying as a legal form of bribery, claiming that lobbying does not act in the best interest of the state or society but in the interest of the group they represent. Lobbying is also common in the case of foreign policy shaping and among the most influential lobbying groups is the pro-Israeli lobby. The effectiveness of the

pro-Israeli lobby, in comparison to the pro-Arab/pro-Palestinian one, is believed to be an important factor shaping the U.S. Middle East policy.

There is a manifold of reasons explaining the dominance of the pro-Israeli lobby in comparison to the pro-Arab/pro-Palestinian one in effectively influencing the policy makers in the USA. The immediate goal of both lobby groups is one of the reasons the pro-Israeli one is more effective. While the pro-Israeli lobby group's only goal is to enhance American-Israeli cooperation and supporting Israel, the pro-Arab lobby groups are more complex. Among the pro-Arab groups there are the pro-Egyptian, pro-Turkey, pro-Saudi, pro-Palestinian, and a few others. They each have their own particular goal, making their voices in the USA fragmented and diluted. The Palestinian cause is one of many they might lobby for. The other reason why the pro-Israeli lobby is more effective is the place of American Jews versus American Arabs in American society. This became especially visible after 9/11. American Jews are treated as Americans, they generate sympathy because of their WWII experience and they (through association with Israel) fight terrorism. While American Arabs are considered to be more suspicious, generated no sympathy after 9/11, and are associated with terrorism. Also American Jews hold prominent position in American society, they are wealthy business owners, philanthropists, and politicians, while American Arabs are underrepresented, middle-class citizens and employees, rather than employers. Finally, fighting terrorism is a common goal for both the USA and Israel, therefore what the pro-Israeli lobby is lobbying for is in America's best interest, or is being promoted as such. Israel also enjoys economic, military, and diplomatic support from the USA up through today, making Israel the biggest American foreign aid beneficiary. This American aid, as we know now, and the Israeli reliance on the USA, hinders peace talks instead of promoting them. Israel, thanks to U.S. support, is the strongest state in the region with a thriving economy and does have incentives to negotiate a final solution to its conflict with Palestine.

#### 8. *Donald Trump and Jerusalem*

As mentioned earlier, Jerusalem is one of the focal points of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Jerusalem, for both Israelis and Palestinians, exemplifies land and identity. Since the establishment of Israel in 1948, Jerusalem was to be a city shared and cherished by many religions, cultures, and both nations. Over time, the Israeli presence and activity in Jerusalem has been suppressive towards the Palestinians but just recently (2017) it attracted international attention and caused a local disturbance. This was caused by current American President Donald Trump's declaration recognizing Jerusalem as the capital of Israel and the announcement of plans to move the U.S. embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem.

The UN and the international community regard Jerusalem (East Jerusalem, including the entire Old City, West and East Jerusalem) as an international city, neither the territory of Israel nor the State of Palestine. After the 1967 war, Israel extended its jurisdiction over East Jerusalem. Since then, Israel acted according to the *facts on the ground* policy with new Israeli settlements mushrooming and the further annexation of Palestinian land. This annexing was met with international criticism. Nevertheless, both sides of the conflict claim Jerusalem as their capital, Palestine's in East Jerusalem and Israel's in West Jerusalem, which is contradictory to the UN's stance. Jerusalem is home only to foreign consulates with most countries having their embassies in Tel Aviv.

This rule was violated by Donald Trump, who on 6<sup>th</sup> December, 2017, officially recognized Jerusalem as the capital of Israel and declared readiness to move the U.S. Embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem (this act was skillfully kept delayed by former American presidents). This action was merely executing the 1997 Jerusalem Embassy Act, the act that recognized Jerusalem as the capital of Israel. But, Donald Trump also asserted, that the final Israeli-Palestinian border will be a subject of negotiation between the sides, which at the same time confirmed American support for the two-state solution.

Trump's action was widely criticized, yet the UN will not be able to pass a resolution condemning the USA due to their veto right (Wojnarowicz, 2017). Yet, this decision should be assessed a great success of Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's policy and also the pro-Israeli lobby in Washington. Palestinians declared the decision as disqualifying the U.S. as a future peace broker and radical Palestinian politicians called for a third intifada. While Trump did not exclude the creation of a Palestinian state in the future, his decision concerning Jerusalem imparts the American vision of the future of the conflict. A vision which is shaped by Israel with American assistance despite the international law.

#### 9. *Solutions to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict*

Among the reasons for failed negotiations is one of foremost importance, a reason which is dividing Palestinians, Israelis, and also third parties such as states, experts, and academics. That reason is: the goal of these negotiations, what the solution is, and what is or should be negotiated in the first place. A ceasefire is a temporary solution, and these have been achieved on numerous occasions, but the shape of the ultimate solution is unclear. The two leading alternatives are the one and two-state solutions. That is, should the negotiations lead to forming one state for both Palestinians and Israelis or should establishing two states be the most prospective outcome of the talks. Both solutions have their pros and cons, with one being the more realistic.

The two-state solution has been the one promoted for many years. An independent Palestine and Israel as two sovereign states seems to be the best final solution. That goal has been embraced by the United States, the European Union, and the United Nations. Supporters and proponents say the two-state solution would end hostility between Israel and Palestinians and produce stability in the chaos-prone Middle East. While this solution is rational, the biggest counter argument is that arriving at this solution is exceedingly difficult for several intractable disputes and issues (the crucial ones have been presented above). Israel and Palestine are far apart on where the borders of a new Palestinian state should be: Both claim Jerusalem as their capital, and Israel has expanded settlements on land that the Palestinians also say is theirs, the refugee issue and *the right to return home* is conflicting both sides, and finally, there is the future of Jerusalem. Critics or skeptics of the two-state solution claim that it has been *on the negotiation table* since the very first negotiation talk, and, while being rational with its assumptions, doesn't seem feasible.

The one-state solution has gained support, especially recently, amid failures towards creating a sovereign Palestinian state. The enthusiasts claim, that the two-state solution, by now, has proven not to be viable and another one should be introduced. The one-state solution calls for Israel to annex the Gaza Strip and the West Bank and granting citizenship rights to the Palestinians. At the expertise level, this solution is assessed negatively, idealistic, maybe romantic, but not probable. It also does not appeal to Palestinians and Israelis, with Palestinians wanting their own state and the Israelis not wanting to share their land with other nations. The world community also questions if Palestinians in the one-state would be granted full citizen rights, especially in the situation where they are more numerous than the Israelis, have a higher birthrate and in the future would heavily outnumber the Israelis. Therefore, a two-state solution, despite the difficulties to negotiate it, should be the aim of the negotiations. For those to be successful, it seems, that a third actor, one that is capable of sponsoring the deal and helping it to be enforced, should be engaged. Because only the United States can put pressure on Israel to coerce certain behaviors, only the U.S. can be the patron of the final deal.

#### 10. *Obstacles preventing a Israeli-Palestinian peaceful coexistence*

As presented above, the two-state solution which appears to be the only viable choice, has been present since the very beginning of direct Israeli-Palestinian peace talks. Yet, while the expected outcome is *agreed on*, the process of arriving at it seems very difficult, challenging and at times impossible. Therefore,

understanding the underlying obstacles for future peace is as vital as understanding other elements of this difficult Middle Eastern, Israeli-Palestinian puzzle.

Depending on who is voicing their opinion, among the most common reasons given for the failure of the peace talks are: bad timing; artificial/unrealistic deadlines; insufficient preparation; dishonest American brokering; little or no support from regional states; and dishonest motivations of the leaders. Presumably, different combinations of the above are what caused the Israeli-Palestinian negotiations to repeatedly fail. One, vital criteria should be applied when searching for a variable that is dominant; that is the capability and potential of each state – Israeli and Palestinian. Palestine is a poor state, underdeveloped, with a crippled economy, and illusionary potentials. Israel, on the other hand is a strong state, with a thriving economy, an overwhelmingly powerful military, and all the necessary tools to implement changes. We expect more from the potent ones, ones who are capable of making changes. Sadly, Israel, for its part, has consistently opted for a stalemate rather than some sort of agreement because the deal's cost is much higher than the cost of making no deal (Thrall, 2017). Yet, this concession would presumably guarantee peace and international support.

But, Israel's stance is massively possible because of unconditional American support: economic, military, and diplomatic. This unconditional support is equally destructive for both Israel and the USA (the 9/11 attacks on the USA were partially carried out as revenge for unconditionally supporting Israel) (Mearsheimer, Walt, 2008). Building Israeli supremacy in the region (by military and economic aid as well as diplomatic support in the UN) allows Israel to be dominant and execute a suppressive policy towards the Palestinians. Negotiating peace in these circumstances is difficult for the Palestinians since the *win-win* equilibrium might only take place on Israel's terms, dominating their own state's terms. Simultaneously, a weaker Israel without American support would be more willing to negotiate and find a balance acceptable for both parties allowing them to coexist, prosper and, possibly, in the future establish a healthy relationship.

The Israeli-Palestinian conflict is a conflict that not only destabilizes the two states involved, the region but also has severe consequences globally. Yet, for internal and external reasons it seems difficult to solve or even unsolvable. Israeli need the land for their growing population, and so do the Palestinians. The two nations are doomed to be neighbors but are not likely to live together. The level of mistrust and reluctance is as high now as decades ago. At the same time the conflict itself is a greatly appreciated asset by the politicians on both sides to use for their particular purposes. It is doubtful that with all the decade long burden, Israel and Palestine will be able to find peace themselves. A trustworthy, third party broker is desperately needed, but the one with all necessary assets at hand, the USA, who has proven to be capable of successful brokerage (Israeli-Egypt peace) is currently

lacking political will to make the change. And sadly no other potential broker is emerging.

### **Bibliography and netography**

- Bojko Krzysztof, *Izrael a aspiracje Palestyńczyków 1987-2006*, Polski Instytut Spraw Międzynarodowych, Warszawa 2006
- Khouri Rami, *The Core Issues for Israelis and Palestinians*, Harvard Kennedy School, 2014, <https://www.belfercenter.org/publication/core-issues-israelis-and-palestinians>
- Ileri Kasim, *The Caravan of Recognition: Israel Palestine Stalemate*, Institute of Strategic Thinking, 2011, <http://www.sde.org.tr/en/newsdetail/the-caravan-of-recognition-israel-palestine-stalemate/2610>
- United Nations Relief and Works Agency, *Palestine Refugees*, 2017, <https://www.unrwa.org/palestine-refugees>
- EU Heads of Mission Report on East Jerusalem, Hamoked: Center for the Defense of the Individual, 2009, [http://www.hamoked.org/files/2012/112160\\_eng.pdf](http://www.hamoked.org/files/2012/112160_eng.pdf)
- Dever William G., *What Did the Biblical Writers Know and When Did They Know It?: What Archeology Can Tell Us About the Reality of Ancient Israel*, Cambridge 2001
- Rogan Eugene, *The Arabs: A History*, Penguin, New York 2011
- 2017 Israeli Military Power, Global Fire Power, 2017, [https://www.globalfirepower.com/country-military-strength-detail.asp?country\\_id=israel](https://www.globalfirepower.com/country-military-strength-detail.asp?country_id=israel)
- Comparison of Military Strength of Israel and the Palestinians*, Institute for Middle East Understanding, 2009, <https://imeu.org/article/comparison-of-military-strength-of-israel-and-the-palestinians>
- Pew Research Center, *Views of the Middle East Conflict*, 2007, <http://www.pewglobal.org/2007/06/27/chapter-5-views-of-the-middle-east-conflict/>
- Vital Statistics: Total Casualties, Arab-Israeli Conflict, Jewish Virtual Library, 2014, <http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/total-casualties-arab-israeli-conflict>
- Sasnal Patrycja, *Politka Stanów Zjednoczonych wobec aktorów w konflikcie arabsko-izraelskim. Między Bushem a Obama*, PISM, Warszawa 2009
- Gallup, *Support for Israel in U.S. at 63%, Near Record High*, 2010, <http://news.gallup.com/poll/126155/support-israel-near-record-high.aspx>
- Wojnarowicz Michal, *Konsekwencje decyzji Donalda Trumpa w sprawie Jerozolimy*, PISM, Warszawa 2017, <http://www.pism.pl/publikacje/komentarz/nr-77-2017#>
- Thrall Nathan, *Israel-Palestine: the real reason there's still no peace*, The Guardian, 2017, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2017/may/16/the-real-reason-the-israel-palestine-peace-process-always-fails>
- Mearsheimer John and Walt Stephen, *The Israel Lobby and US foreign Policy*, Penguin, London, 2008