IS A CONFEDERATION BETWEEN ISRAEL AND PALESTINE WITH JORDAN A VIABLE ARRANGEMENT?

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The present article considers the viability of a confederation between Israel and the Palestinian Authority with Jordan as a realistic solution to the ongoing conflict between Israeli Jews and Palestinians. It presents the background and the course of the Israeli–Palestinian conflict, with a description of the present situation in order to understand the possible solutions to the conflict. I also explore several ideas of how to peacefully resolve the conflict that is entertained at present. A special focus is on the proposal of Alon Ben-Meir (2022) about building a confederation delineated in the Spring issue of this journal. Thus, in the second part, the concept of confederation is described and three barriers to its implementation are elaborated. The first discusses the approach of presenting a rational plan, whereas in reality, participants in conflict develop a sociopsychological repertoire that serves often as a barrier to the solution. The second comment elaborates on the complex nature of reconciliation that cannot be required as a necessary precondition for the solution of the conflict. The third comment pertains to the asymmetry of the parties in the Israeli–Palestinian conflict that is a serious barrier to the implementation of the phases of the proposed confederation. Finally, I describe briefly the different proposals that are on the table at present and evaluate their feasibility.

Keywords: Middle East, Israel, Palestine, Jordan, Confederation, Two-State solution, Peacemaking, Peacekeeping, Policy proposal, Conflict mitigation.
¿Es una confederación entre Israel y Palestina con Jordania un arreglo viable?

El presente artículo considera la viabilidad de una confederación entre Israel y la Autoridad Palestina con Jordania como una solución realista al conflicto en curso entre judíos, israelíes y palestinos. Presenta los antecedentes y el curso del conflicto israelo-palestino, con una descripción de la situación actual para comprender las posibles soluciones al conflicto. También explora varias ideas de cómo resolver pacíficamente el conflicto que se barajan en la actualidad. Se presta especial atención a la propuesta de Alon Ben-Meir (2022) sobre la construcción de una confederación delineada en la edición de primavera de esta revista. Así, en la segunda parte, se describe el concepto de confederación y se elaboran tres barreras para su implementación. El primero discute el enfoque de presentar un plan racional cuando en realidad los participantes en un conflicto desarrollan un repertorio socio-psicológico que a menudo sirve como una barrera para la solución. El segundo comentario elabora sobre la naturaleza compleja de la reconciliación que no puede exigirse como condición previa necesaria para la solución del conflicto. El tercer comentario se refiere a la asimetría de las partes en el conflicto israelo-palestino que es una barrera seria para la implementación de las fases de la confederación propuesta. Finalmente, descripto brevemente las diferentes propuestas que están sobre la mesa en la actualidad y evalúo su factibilidad.

Palabras clave: Medio Oriente, Israel, Palestina, Jordania, Confederación, Solución de dos estados, Establecimiento de la paz, Mantenimiento de la paz, Propuesta de política, Mitigación de conflictos.

让约旦在以色列和巴勒斯坦之间建立联盟是一个可行的安排吗？

本文考量了将约旦在以色列和巴勒斯坦当局之间建立联盟的可行性，将约旦作为以色列犹太人和巴勒斯坦人之间持续冲突的现实解决方案。本文介绍了以巴冲突的背景和过程，并描述了当前局势，以理解冲突的潜在解决方案。我还探究了几个观点，后者有关于如何和平解决当前冲突。特别聚焦于Alon Ben-Meir (2022)在本杂志春季期刊中提出的关于建立一个联盟的提议。因此，在第二部分中，描述了该联盟的概念，并阐述了联盟实施所面临的三个阻碍。第一个评论探讨了提出合理计划的方法，而实际上，冲突参与者通常会施展一切社会-心理本领来阻碍解决方案。第二个评论阐述了和解的复杂性质，而和解不能作为解决冲突的必
The present article will try to consider the viability of the confederation between Israel and the Palestinian Authority (PA) with Jordan as a realistic solution to the ongoing conflict between Israeli Jews and Palestinians. This conflict has raged for over 100 years with 55 years of West Bank occupation and the surrounding siege of the Gaza Strip without any solution in sight. The article proceeds in three parts. The first presents the background and the course of the Israeli–Palestinian conflict with a description of the present situation for the understanding of the possible solutions to the conflict. This presentation facilitates comprehension of the analysis that comes in the next two parts. The second part presents the ideas proposed by Alon Ben-Meir about building a confederation, delineated in the spring 2022 issue of World Affairs. Thus, in the second part, the concept of confederation is described and then barriers to its implementation are elaborated. Finally, a conclusion describes, in short, the different proposals that are on the table in present and evaluates their feasibility to be implemented.

The Background and the Course of the Israeli–Palestinian Conflict

Course of the Israeli–Palestinian Conflict

The Israeli–Arab/Palestinian conflict has already lasted for over a century. It began as an intercommunal conflict between Jews and Arabs who started to immigrate to Ottoman Palestine within the frame of the Zionist movement. This movement aspired to bring Jews to their ancient homeland, to establish their national state. However, the ancient homeland of the Jews had already been settled by an Arab population who were also developing national aspirations at roughly the same time, and they too wanted to realize those aspirations in the same territory (Morris 2001).

After World War II, in which the Holocaust took place, on November 29, 1947, the United Nations General Assembly voted on the division of
the land and the establishment of Jewish and Arab states. In this division, the Jewish state received 56 percent of the western Land of Israel, even though Jews constituted only about 33 percent of the total population of the country. Jews accepted the division and established their own state. However, the Arabs rejected it and the 1948 War broke out, which Israel won and even expanded the territory it received by 22 percent. In this war, the conflict turned into an interstate one, with the participation of Arab states. In 1967 another war erupted with the involvement of Egypt, Syria, and Jordan. Israel won and conquered the Sinai Peninsula and Gaza Strip from Egypt, the West Bank from Jordan, and the Golan Heights from Syria. But since the peace agreement with Egypt in 1979 and the withdrawal of Israel from the Sinai, the conflict again has become increasingly focused on the Jewish–Palestinian relationship with regard to the fate of the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

On September 13, 1993, a Declaration of Principles (the Oslo I Accord) was signed between Israel and the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO), with each side recognizing the other. The accord included Israeli withdrawal from the Gaza Strip and from Jericho, and the creation of the Palestinian National Authority. The Oslo II Accords were signed in Taba, Sinai, on September 27, 1995, giving the Palestinians independent authority over Palestinian cities in the West Bank and Gaza, as well as 450 Palestinian villages. It was agreed that elections would be held in the areas controlled by the PA. The West Bank was divided into three temporary administrative sectors, Areas A, B, and C, which would exist until a final agreement would be signed. The three areas do not have territorial contiguity; they are separated from each other and the division was made on the basis of the location of the Jewish settlement in the West Bank, the concentration of the Palestinian population in the cities, and Israeli security demands: Area A (18 percent of the West Bank) includes all of the Palestinian cities and their surroundings, with no Israeli settlements. It is under full civilian and security control by the PA. Area B (21 percent of the West Bank) includes areas of many Palestinian cities, towns, and villages, with no Israeli settlements. It is under civilian Palestinian control and under Israeli–Palestinian security control. Area C (61 percent of the West Bank) includes all Israeli settlements (cities, towns, and villages) as well as 150,000 Palestinian residents (Arieli 2020). It is under full civilian and security control of Israel, except for Palestinian citizens (Tessler 2009).

Despite these significant achievements, it is important to note that the Oslo Agreements did not relate to central issues that constituted the heart
of the conflict and did not solve them, such as the establishment of a Palestinian state, its borders, the final status of Jerusalem, the security safeguards, the question of the return of refugees, and the status of the Jewish settlements in the occupied territories, among others. It was determined that discussions about these central issues would begin no later than 1996 and would end before May 1999. These discussions never took place and the division to the three administrative sectors remains until today. In reality, the occupation with all its negative implications has continued over all the West Bank since the Israeli military forces enter also Area A, and the PA collaborates with Israel on security matters (Bar-Tal and Schnell 2013).

In September 2000, a Palestinian uprising erupted that brought heavy losses to Palestinians and Israeli Jews. It ended in 2005, but all the attempts to negotiate a peaceful settlement of the conflict failed. In 2005, Israel unilaterally withdrew from Gaza and destroyed 22 Jewish settlements established in its territory. But, in 2007, Hamas gained ultimate control of the entirety of Gaza and as result two rival Palestinian entities emerged—the PA in the West Bank led by Fatah\(^1\) and Hamas\(^2\) in Gaza Strip (Bar-Tal in press).

**The Present Situation**

Of importance for our case is the fact that, immediately following the conquest of the West Bank in 1967, Israel began to settle it with Jews (Hellinger, Hershkowitz, and Susser 2018). With Likud coming to power in 1977, Jewish settling was increased along the Israeli borders, on the back of the mountain, and along the main roads’ axes in order to cut off the West Bank and prevent a territorial contiguity of Palestinian residential areas (Zertal and Eldar 2007). Jewish settlement in the West Bank continued to expand during the tenure of all Israeli governments. Thus, by 2022, approximately 475,000 Jews have settled in the West Bank in approximately 125 settlements and 135 illegal outposts

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\(^1\)Fatah—formerly the Palestinian National Liberation Movement, is a Palestinian nationalist social democratic political party and the largest faction of the confederated multi-party Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) and second-largest party in the Palestinian Legislative Council (PLC). Mahmoud Abbas, the President of the Palestinian Authority, is a member of Fatah.

\(^2\)Hamas [Islamic Resistance Movement)] is a Palestinian Sunni-Islamic fundamentalist but pragmatic, militant, and nationalist organization. It opposes the secular approach of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and rejects attempts to cede any part of Palestine.
scattered throughout the West Bank, mainly in Area C. In addition, approximately 200,000 Jews live in neighborhoods built in East Jerusalem, which was under Jordanian control until 1967. Israel took over 85 percent of the West Bank with various arguments such as state lands that were registered in the taboo during British rule, military seizure of territory for security, land expropriation while taking advantage of the lack of clarity in the Ottoman law, and more (Kedar 2001). It should be noted that approximately 2,750,000 Palestinians live in the West Bank and approximately 350,000 live in East Jerusalem. It is clear today that no Israeli government intended to return the entire West Bank to Palestinian hands, and currently there is no intention to change the status of the occupied territories on the grounds that there is no negotiating partner on the Palestinian side. Many right-wing leaders in Israel intend to annex all the West Bank, or part of it.

Thus, in spite of the Oslo agreement and the present security coordination between Israel and the PA in the West Bank, the Israeli–Palestinian conflict is considered as an archetype of being intractable (Bar-Tal 2013). The conflict is total, viewed by both sides as being beyond existential goals. It is violent and central to the lives of the two involved societies. It is decades-long and requires enormous resources, determination, and goodwill to resolve. In addition, with sociopsychological foundations, it is considered unsolvable and evolves around goals that both sides perceive as vital to their very existence. When aims like these are considered existential, there is no room for compromise—not even the smallest and most inconsequential concession. Both sides constructed supporting narratives, froze with them, and have been digging in their positions. Thus, their worldviews lead to the disregard of the needs of the other, to the negation of the identity and narrative of the opponents, and to the systematic practice of mutual delegitimization.

The Grand Idea behind the Oslo agreement and the other attempts to solve the conflict was to divide the territory between the Jordan River and the Mediterranean Sea into two states: an Israeli state and Palestinian state (Kelman 2011). Along these lines, a number of negotiations were carried out: in Taba in January 2001 by Israeli and PA delegations, then again by Olmert, the then-Israeli Prime Minister, and Abu Mazen, the president of the PA, in December 2006 and 2008. In addition, there was the Clinton Plan with parameters to settle the conflict in 2000, the Arab Peace Initiative proposed in 2002 that was endorsed by all the states of the Arab League, Kerry’s attempts to mediate an agreement in 2013–2014, and the Trump peace plan in 2020. All attempts failed. In reality, the vision of the two-state solution is gradually disappearing.
from the Jewish and the Palestinian public discourse as an achievable goal. The concrete signs of its disappearance are the increasing acrimonious rhetoric, as well as concrete steps being taken toward the annexation of Area C to Israel. Moreover, there seems to be an emerging and overarching agreement among the Israeli right-wing and center parties about annexing the Jordan Valley. But the most vivid barrier to the two-state solution is the widespread Jewish settlements across the West Bank that prevent contiguity, viability, and sustainability of the Palestinian state. Furthermore, because the Jewish settlers are dispersed across the West Bank, in order to realize the establishment of the Palestinian state, there is a need to move at least about 80,000 Jews residing in the West Bank back to the state of Israel. Such a move will allow the great majority of the Jewish settlers to stay in their present resided places along the border, with the swap of territories with the Palestinians (Arieli 2022).

In order to fully understand the situation with regard to resolving the conflict, we need to realize that, at present, Palestinians living in the West Bank beside the Jewish settlers are subjected to very different systems (Kretzmer and Ronen 2021). A series of military decrees, legal rulings, and legislative amendments have resulted in a situation whereby Israeli Jewish citizens living in the Occupied Territories remain under the jurisdiction of Israeli law and the Israeli court system, with all the benefits that this confers to Israeli citizens because of the beneficial subsidies granted to them to encourage their settlement. By contrast, Palestinians in the West Bank are subject to much stricter military legal law—military orders that have been issued by IDF Generals since 1967. Unlike Israeli citizens, Palestinians are tried in military tribunals for every crime—from traffic violations to the theft of a carton of milk from the grocery store. The fact that two populations live under two different systems in the same place leads people to view it as apartheid (Palestine-Israel Journal 2022). In addition to the two military, political, and legal systems, there is also economic discrimination that includes the division of water and control of resources.

This situation poses a serious dilemma for the Israeli Jews. Leaving the present state of affairs endangers the democratic nature of the state, while giving Palestinians equal rights endangers the Jewish nature of the state. This dilemma is becoming clearer and clearer in all its complexity, because the implementation of the alternative (the two-state solution) which could have ensured a significant Jewish majority in the old borders of Israel, has been eroding. The main reason for this situation, as already noted, is the Jewish settlement practices in the West Bank,
stemming from the desire to expand the Jewish population into all of the territory of “Greater Israel” because of security, religious, cultural, historical, and societal reasons (Naor 2001). In any case, the erosion of support for two states empowers the movement that calls for annexation. This came also after years during which the right-wing political leadership “chose not to choose” on this issue and was inclined to continue to accept the occupation as an existing reality, repressing its future ramifications, as was noted.

The Views of the Israeli Jews and Palestinians

The present situation eroded the support for the two-state solution among Israeli Jews and Palestinians alike. In a very recent survey poll of the Peace Index in July 2022, the findings show that only 18 percent of the national sample of Israeli Jews believe that negotiations between Israel and the PA will lead to peace between Israel and the Palestinians in the coming years, while 79 percent do not believe that they will lead to peace. A great majority (71 percent) of them also believe that Palestinians oppose negotiations between Israel and the PA and that 86 percent of the Palestinians do not believe that negotiation will lead to peace. Furthermore, when asked separately about the support of each solution: only 33 percent of the Israeli Jews support two-state solution, 35 percent support annexation of the occupied territories and the creation of one state under Israeli rule with limited rights for Palestinians, 32 percent support the continuation of the present situation, and 13 percent support a binational state between the Jordan and the Mediterranean Sea with full and equal rights for Jews and Palestinians. Of special interest are the responses to the question that asks which of these solutions do you believe has the best chance of being achieved in the foreseeable future: in a two-state solution (only 14 percent), creation of a binational state between Jordan and the sea with full and equal rights for Jews and Palestinians (18 percent), annexation of the territories and the creation of one state under Israeli rule with limited rights to Palestinians (14 percent), and continuing the existing situation (58 percent). Thus, a majority of Israeli Jews believe that the continuation of the present situation is most likely.

Looking at the Palestinian side, a poll conducted by the Palestinian Center for Policy and Survey Research (PCPSR) in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip between March 14 and 19, 2021, shows the following: Support for the concept of the two-state solution stands at 40 percent
and opposition stands at 57 percent. A majority of 55 percent believe that the two-state solution is no longer practical or feasible due to the expansion of Israeli settlements, while a minority of 38 percent believe that the solution remains practical. Moreover, 77 percent believe that the chances for the creation of a Palestinian state alongside the state of Israel in the next five years are slim or nonexistence, while 20 percent believe the chances to be medium or high (EU Peacebuilding Initiative 2021). These findings stand in contrast to mild support of the two-state solution that was expressed by Palestinians and Israeli Jews during the late 90s and beginning of the 2000s.

In this statistical analysis, there is the need to note that, on the Israeli Jewish side, the annexation of part or the whole West Bank began to secure increasing support, while, on the Palestinian side, struggle for independence is getting increasing support. Also, polls show that Palestinians and Israeli Jews have very high distrust of each other and the young generation on both sides has become more militant and mistrustful (EU Peacebuilding Initiative 2021). Finally, it is important to bear in mind that the Israeli Jewish views of the conflict went through a significant transformation. Although in the 1980s and 1990s, the strength of the right (hawkish attitudes regarding the conflict) and left (dovish attitudes regarding the conflict) was more-or-less equal, after the events of 2000 the political map changed and remained stable. That is, about 60 percent of Israeli Jews view themselves as rightists, while only about 10–15 percent view themselves as leftist. The rest view themselves as centrists who are more similar to the rightists than the leftists. With this political map, it is not surprising that since 2001 almost all the coalitions were led by a rightist leader (Bar-Tal in press). In view of this situation, there have appeared different plans to solve the conflict. I focus in this part on the ideas of confederation as proposed by Ben-Meir (2022).

Confederation: A Plan to Resolve the Conflict

Professor Alon Ben-Meir published an elaborated plan for the formation of a confederation between the PA and the State of Israel with Jordan that can be found in the spring issue of World Affairs 185th volume. I will note here only the general lines of the plan. According to Ben-Meir (2022, 13), the Encyclopedia Britannica defines confederation as “voluntary associations of independent states that, to secure some common purpose, agree to certain limitations on their freedom of action and establish some joint machinery of consultation or deliberation.”
Thus, in a voluntary confederation, the states that maintain their sovereignty require coming together to create a “loose union” for the matters of security, economic development, and some administrative collaboration in connection with Jerusalem. They have their political, economic, and autonomous policies even after the formation of the confederation. In a confederation, there is no common military, unitary budget, common diplomatic representatives, common foreign policy strategy, and common legal system. The central government has no power, but it facilitates the decision-making process and speeds up communication. Ben Meir assumes that the “independent Israeli and Palestinian states can peacefully coexist and be sustained only through the establishment of an Israeli–Palestinian confederation that would subsequently be joined by Jordan, which has an intrinsic national interest in the solution of all conflicting issues between Israel and the Palestinians” (Ben-Meir 2022, 12).

First of all, the plan calls for a reconciliation process for a period of five-to-seven years. “It will involve government-to-government and people-to-people interactions (confidence-building measures) on sociological, political, economic, cultural, and all other levels, will be required to alleviate the deeply entrenched distrust and resentment between the two sides and create a new atmosphere conducive to peaceful coexistence” (Ben-Meir 2022, 13–14). Then there will be established a Palestinian state in agreement with Israel. The plan then details the agreement of the standing issues for the resolution that, in his opinion, will be optimal and acceptable by Israel and the Palestinians to settle the conflict between them with the goal to establish the Palestinian state: interspersed Israeli and Palestinian populations, borders, security, Jerusalem, Palestinian refugees, and custodianship of the Muslim Holy Shrines. Finally, Ben-Meir (2022) specifies the role of different relevant states in this process: the United States, Germany, Saudi Arabia, and Egypt. At the end of the process, a confederation can be set with the participation of Israel, an independent Palestinian state, and Jordan (see also Lukacs 1996).

Since the detailed proposal is presented in the spring issue of this journal, I would like to discuss it with three focal comments. The extensive discussions of the components of the Ben-Meir plan to resolve the Israel-Palestinian conflict have been presented in many different writings, I’ll just note it shortly. My three comments are as follows: The first discusses, in general, the approach of presenting a rational plan whereas in reality participants in conflict develop a sociopsychological repertoire
that serves often as a barrier to the solution (Bar-Tal and Halperin 2011). The second comment elaborates on the complex nature of reconciliation that cannot be required as a necessary precondition for solving the conflict. Finally, the third comment pertains to the asymmetry of the parties in the Israeli–Palestinian conflict that is a serious barrier to the implementation of the phases of the proposed confederation.

Sociopsychological Analysis of People’s Thinking and Acting in the Context of Intractable Conflict

The proposal and the analysis of Ben-Meir (2022) are based on a rational approach of benefits that each side gets as a result of the solution and then confederation. But we know well that human beings as leaders and as society members do not act in a rational way; that is, they do not vote, support ideas, back policies, embrace goals, hold ideologies, or revere leaders as a result of rational choice of rewards and losses (Kahneman and Tversky 1984). Based on their research, two well-known political scientists in the United States, Taber and Lodge (2006), have concluded that *homo politicus* do not have the cognitive abilities or motivations to fulfill the demands for rational behavior in a democratic regime. Their decisions are based on the psychological repertoire that individuals hold, which is a consequence of familial socialization, schooling, leaders’ messages, mass media indoctrination and persuasion, social media influence, the context in which individuals live—with absorption of information, influence of populism, idolization of leaders and persuasion of ideological platforms, as well as with motivational and cognitive biases and errors. In short, human beings are absorbed in narratives that they learn and that are maintained by their leaders and agents of socialization which construct their world views.

All these factors shape individuals’ values, attitudes, needs, perceptions, and beliefs systems. But in this analysis, there is a need to emphasize individuals as members of groups, movements, political parties, and societies are also greatly influenced by the position of other members of the social–political entities which are their positive reference group (Bar-Tal 2000). In this equation, revered leaders play a major role in the influence of their constituency. Eventually, in the context of intractable conflict we need to look at the collective memory of the group, the dominating ethos, the experiences, and flowing information.

This short analysis is intended to convince the readers that the decisions with regard to the future of the Israeli–Palestinian conflict have not been taken on the basis of rational analysis of decision-making that
could have brought peace years ago, but on the basis of the delineated factors that brought the two sides to a stalemate, continuation of violence, and rejection of different proposals that could bring individual and collective prosperity and a calm life, without human losses and traumatized mental health. In contrast to the possible enlightened horizon, we witness an extension of practical annexation in Area C, growing Jewish settlements all around the West Bank that try to erase the possibility of founding Palestinian state, continuous violence of Jewish settlers who try to extend their domination over the Palestinian land, advancement of legislation and policies that expands Jews supremacy in the West Bank, and Israeli Supreme Court decisions that give legitimacy to the Jewish control of the land, and of course Palestinian resistance in the form of terror and other types of violent and non-violent ways. These are met naturally with Israeli containment, surveillance, and violence to preserve the occupation.

Why? This is based on unwritten human law across all the ages of the human history: \textit{Groups do not yield voluntarily territories, power, wealth, or resources, even if it is clear that the territory they occupy, the advantage they have, the dominance they hold, the commodities they took were acquired in ways that are contradicting the contemporary moral standards.} Thus, we observe also today that the world is still plagued with injustices, inequalities, restrictions of freedom, and immoral acts that should be at least reduced, if not eliminated. We see, for example, in the last decades the behavior of Russia, the United States, India, China, Great Britain, France, Serbia, Rwanda, Congo, Syria, Iran, and including Israel, and so on. Superpowers and regional powers often behave according to their needs, interests, or wishes and not in line with moral codes, justice, peace, or even international laws and conventions.

Looking at the Israeli–Palestinian conflict from the sociopsychological perspective, conflict-supporting narratives play a major role in their long continuation, in the difficulties to solve them peacefully, and in the use of violent means that often violate moral codes of accepted behaviors. They penetrate into the fabrics of the societal sociopsychological infrastructure and serve as pillars of the developed culture of conflict (Bar-Tal, Oren, and Nets-Zehngut 2014). These narratives, constructed to appeal to the capillaries of the collective, maintain the conflict. They provide all the themes that are needed, on one hand, to illuminate the conflict in a meaningful way to satisfy the individual and collective needs and, on the other, to maintain the conflict.

Society members who eventually acquire the conflict-supporting narratives, and especially the master narrative, adhere to it as it serves them as
an ideology that guides their behaviors including the performance of the most immoral acts. Together with the accompanied emotions, it leads to psychological closure that prevents exposure and examination of information that may undermine its basic assumption. This repertoire becomes hegemonic and is maintained by societal institutions and channels of communication. Moreover, authorities of societies engaged in intractable conflicts make all the efforts to close the societies before alternative information that may discredit the dominant narratives supporting the conflict. They are easily ready to sacrifice all the principles of freedom of expression and flow of information to preserve “patriotic information.” They frequently employ in a different degree of a variety of methods including control of channels of communication, use of censorship, or delegitimization of sources and messages that provide alternative information. In this context, society members have great difficulty in identifying manipulations, indoctrinations, and propaganda that underlie the acquisition of conflict-supporting narratives.

The above description is exactly what happens in the internal context of the Palestinian and the Israeli Jewish society. The majority of the Israeli Jews maintain the mantras that Palestinians are not partners for negotiation, that the ultimate desire of the Palestinians is to destroy the state of Israel, that there is a constant existential danger to Israel, that the land of Israel is the exclusive homeland of the Jewish people, and that the Jewish nation is the sole victim of the conflict. Finally, considering the difficult situation in the region, and the characteristics of neighboring nations and their actions, Israel must avoid any steps which may involve risk-taking and uncertainty, including advancing peace negotiations with the Palestinians. With these hegemonic beliefs that are maintained by at least 70 percent of the Israeli Jewish population, it is hard to find a leader that will lead Israelis to the plan proposed by Ben-Meir in the near future, especially given that the key ideas for the necessary phase of solving the conflict peacefully presented by Ben-Meir were considered already by the parties to the conflict without reaching an agreement.

This premise is also based on the general assumption stated earlier about the practice of nations in the case of the conquest of a territory. In addition, through the years the political forces that support the peaceful solution to the conflict in Israel say that Israel will pay a price for maintaining the present situation. But, in reality, no pressures have appeared in the present decade. On the contrary, Israeli leaders in the last decade point to the stable and positive standing of Israel in the world vis-à-vis Russia, China, the EU, India, the Arab states, and even the United States. No significant pressure appears and Israeli maintains its policies
and actions in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. The United States is busy with other burning internal issues and external events like the Ukrainian war and climate change. The EU cannot play a meaningful role without the United States and because of the unequivocal support of Israel by Germany. Although a great majority of American Jews are in principle liberal with domestic issues, with regard to Israel, the majority of them support in general the assumptions of the center-right views. In other states such as Germany, France, and Great Britain the Jews are conservative in their view of the Israeli–Palestinian conflict. All this means that, at present, no change in the present state of affairs is in sight. But it must be considered that major events cannot always be predicted. The fall of the Berlin Wall or the Arab Spring was not predicted. Thus, we do not know what kind of major events may lead to a dramatic change in the Israeli–Palestinian conflict. I leave these possible dramatic events aside because they are unpredictable.

Within more predictable processes, we need to remember that it took more than 30 years to dismantle apartheid in South Africa. In the Israeli case, only in the last two-to-three years appeared a trend to accuse Israel of maintaining apartheid in the West Bank. Thus, the Association for Civil Rights in Israel, the leading Israeli NGO for human rights—B’telem—International Human Rights Watch, the British Labor Party, Amnesty International, and the UN Special rapporteur as an independent human rights expert submitted elaborated reports accusing Israel of constructing in the West Bank a discriminatory dual legal and political system that privileges the Jews. How long this struggle will last, nobody can accurately predict because states are driven first of all, as noted, by interests and needs. But if the leading liberal states will join the struggle, it may affect greatly the struggle to end the apartheid as it appears in the occupation of the West Bank.

In sum, the present climate in Israel and the geopolitical conditions do not favor peaceful settlement of the Israeli–Palestinian conflict. Thus, under these circumstances, it is hard to think about reconciliation that requires goodwill, cooperation, coordination, face-to-face meeting, etc.

Reconciliation as Preparatory Phase

In an additional remark, I would like to refer to the subject of reconciliation that Ben Meir wrote about. This is a very important necessary preliminary phase that both nations will have to go through. Ben-Meir (2022) concretely proposed a number of ways that can advance reconciliation and I assume that many will agree with the proposal. The
challenges are how to begin it and how to create the facilitating conditions in both societies that can move the process (Bar-Tal 2013)?

There is a disagreement among scholars of reconciliation with regard to when it can begin and what are its necessary steps. Regarding the first disagreement, some suggest that it can begin only after a peace agreement. Others think that it may begin in any phase of the conflict when the civil societies of both sides begin to carry it through the people-to-people process. I hold the latter view, observing different processes of peacebuilding between societies engaged in intractable conflict such as in Northern Ireland or between Greek and Turkish Cypriots. In both cases, the process of bringing together people from rival sides showed that sometimes people are capable of constructing a reality of peacebuilding without the leaders. They cannot establish a formal agreement, but they can create a favorable climate and put pressure on leaders to negotiate a resolution to the conflict.

In Israeli–Palestinian relations, we are in the process of distinctive regression, even from the pre-Oslo era when 300,000 Palestinians worked in Israel and many formed friendly relations with Jews, in addition to formal meetings that carried peace NGOs like the Peace Now movement. During the Oslo negotiations, there were a number of distinguished people-to-people projects that were financed mostly by European and American sources, in addition to many meetings between Israeli and Palestinian functionaries and initiated projects by the authorities. Today the climate is very different. Many of the Israeli formal leaders avoid meeting Palestinian leaders; the Israeli authorities make limitations of such processes and discourage them. For example, two Israeli–Palestinian organizations hosted for over 20 years a joint Memorial Day ceremony that brings together Israeli Jews and Palestinians. But three years ago, the Israeli military forces banned the arrival of Palestinians from the West Bank to the ceremony that usually takes place in Tel Aviv. Further, support for Israeli–Palestinian rapprochement is punished by the Israeli public as it is seen as unpatriotic. In addition, many Palestinians favor the anti-normalization movement that prohibits cooperation between Jews and Palestinians. The Palestinian Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions (BDS) movement promotes various sanctions of Israel including avoidance of Israeli–Palestinian cooperation and the appearance of artists in Israel. In spite of this climate, there are few Israeli–Palestinian NGOs and different projects that facilitate reconciliation steps at present.

The other dividing question regarding reconciliation is its nature. Many agree that the essence of the process of reconciliation within the
frame of peacebuilding is changing the sociopsychological repertoire by the majority of society members and the societal culture into a new one (Kelman 1999; Lederach 1997). The construction of a new sociopsychological repertoire is a necessary condition for the establishment of lasting peaceful relations between former rival groups because then stable foundations are formed that are rooted in the psyche of the people.

With this necessary requirement, it is clear that the major sociopsychological change in Israel and Palestine cannot take place without real structural changes and observable acts that lead to satisfaction of the needs of both societies involved in the intractable conflict. Thus, on one hand, the criteria for the successful establishment of reconciliation is within the realm of psychology, as society members have to hold and express their views about the new relationship and about the rival. But, on the other hand, it is clear that these views cannot be based on imagined situations or formed images without a solid basis in reality. To establish stable and crystallized new views, they have to be based on real and experienced changes in the living conditions of the individuals and collective, as well as acts that directly rectify the immoral behavior carried out during the conflict.

Although some of the structural changes or formal projects can be decided, ordered, and implemented relatively quickly, the sociopsychological changes do not occur in the same way. They take place through the slow psychological processes of information processing, persuasion, learning, reframing, recategorization, and formation of a new sociopsychological repertoire. The changes are based on an unfreezing process that eventually leads to the formation of the new repertoire. These processes are slow because the psychological repertoire formed during the conflict is central and held with high confidence. Therefore, its change, which must encompass the majority of society members, is a complex, arduous, prolonged, and multi-faceted task that needs to overcome many inhibiting factors.

In addition, it became clear that violent conflict that involved extensive harm doing and especially atrocities, as in the Israeli–Palestinian case, cannot be easily resolved. Both societies experienced severe harm and have difficulty in forgetting it and moving forward to build new relations. This case requires various processes that go beyond the peaceful settlement of the conflict to forgiving or healing, on one side, and to recognition, compensation, apology, or even punishment on the other. Finally, and not the least, to achieve a meaningful change in intergroup relations, some of the peace agreements also require restructuring of society in order to address the needs of society members. Thus, the new major challenge does not only refer to the necessity to resolve the
conflict peacefully but of special importance is the goal of changing completely the nature of the relationship between the formal rivals in order to construct lasting satisfactory peace for both parties. This change is in fact major societal change.

There is no doubt that the first condition for reconciliation is a complete change of the view with regard to the rival group: Palestinian and Israeli. The rival has to be legitimized, personalized, humanized, and differentiated (Bar-Tal and Teichman 2005). This change allows viewing the rival as a partner to peace and as a human entity that deserves humane, equal, and just treatment, as well as being a partner for building new peaceful lasting relations. In addition, reconciliation goes beyond the peaceful conflict resolution to the desire to transform the relations into new ones that place cooperation and peace at the center together with sensitivity and care about the needs of the other group. This transformation is based on the recognition that Israelis and Palestinians have legitimate contentions, goals, and needs and there is a need to satisfy them in order to solve the conflict and then establish peaceful relations, though this recognition does not have to be completely symmetrical.

As the process of reconciliation proceeds, there is wide agreement that a successful outcome requires the formation of a new common outlook on the past (Gardner Feldman 1999; Kriesberg 1998; Lederach 1998). This requirement, first of all, is based on the demand to reach the truth. During the conflict, Israelis and Palestinians have accumulated many grievances toward each other. Years of violence have left deep scars of anger, grief, a sense of victimhood, a will to revenge, and so on. Furthermore, both parties propagated and internalized opposing collective memory that focused on the evilness and the wrongdoing of the rival (Adwan, Bar-Tal, and Wexler 2016). Indeed, there is a substantial body of research suggesting strong views that truth-telling about past human rights violations can contribute to the process of reconciliation (see Gibson 2006; Minow 1999). The revelations concern discrimination, oppression, massive atrocities, and acts of moral transgressions. These types of truth-telling may lead to the formation of a new shared narrative about the past. Once there is a shared knowledge of the past, both parties take a significant step toward achieving reconciliation.

Reconciliation implies that both parties do not just get to know what did happen to the parties that were in conflict, but truly acknowledge what happened in the past (Gardner Feldman 1999; Lederach 1998; Norval 1999). Acknowledgement of the past implies at least going beyond knowledge of the two narratives of the conflict to the recognition
in the performed misdeeds (Norval 1999; Salomon 2004). This is an important factor in reconciliation, since the collective memories of each party about its own past underpin the continuation of the conflict and obstruct peacemaking. Reconciliation thus necessitates changing the narratives of collective memories by learning about the rival group’s collective memory and recognizing one’s own past misdeeds and taking responsibility for them. Through the process of negotiation about the collective memories, in which the own past is critically revised and synchronized with that of the other group, a new narrative emerges (Hayes 1998; Norval 1998). With time, this new historical account of events should substitute the reigning past collective memory.

The process of transitional justice is a necessary part of reconciliation. It requires political change, characterized by different legal responses to confront the wrongdoings of repressive predecessor regimes and generally mass violations of human rights during the conflict (Deutsch 2000; Freeman 2006; Teitel 2000). The restoration of justice depends much on the nature of the particular conflict and the nature of transgressions performed during its duration. The transitional justice process thus has directed its focus on the legitimized and institutionalized exploitation, discrimination, wrongdoing, and oppression of a group or groups. It concerns the correction of inequalities; punishing those responsible for the unjust system; prosecution of perpetrators; establishing inquiries into specific atrocities; undertaking a truth commission to investigate patterns of abuse; and development of reparations and compensation programs to assist victims.

At present, I do not see a possibility of reconciliation in line with the outlined conditions and requirements. In the present phase of the Israeli–Palestinian conflict, each side denies wrongdoing and does not acknowledge immoral acts of the past. Palestinians for example do not see terror attacks as illegitimate ways of resisting occupation. In their view, many of the freedom fighters carried out terror attacks, including by Jews during the British mandate. Also, they view Israeli use of force against Palestinians as terror, arguing that also states can be terroristic. For them, the most traumatic event took place in the 1948 war, the Nakba.3 But they believe that the Nakba continues under the decades of Israeli occupation. Israelis refuse to

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3Nakba is an Arabic word meaning “catastrophe” that refers to Israel’s acts toward Palestinians during and after 1948: making them into refugees also through expulsion, destroying about 450 Palestinian villages, dispossessing Palestinians of their properties and confiscating their land.
take any responsibility for the Palestinian Nakba. They even enacted “Nakba Law” that authorizes reducing state funding or support to an institution if it holds an activity that notes the day on which the state was established as a day of Nakba. The 1948 war is also a traumatic event for the Israeli Jews. During this war, one percent (6,000) of the Jewish population fell at that time. It took place after the Holocaust in which six million Jews perished in Europe, exterminated by Nazi Germany.

In sum, reconciliation cannot be limited by time. Although some of the activities that facilitate reconciliation are determined by formal authorities and organizations of civil society, the key process pertains to major societal change. The essence of reconciliation is sociopsychological because it requires a change of beliefs, attitudes, values, and practices. Thus, it depends much on the constructed climate that is created by leaders, media, teachers, civil society, and lay society members. Some of its components, such as change of narratives of ethos of conflict and collective memory, are very difficult to carry because they were imparted by all the epistemic sources for decades and they crystalized well in the mindset of the society members. In addition, there are always spoilers on the leadership level and organizations that resist peacemaking, especially when it begins before peaceful settlement of all the issues of the conflict.

In view of these premises, it is impossible to determine the length of the reconciliation. It may take decades to mobilize society members to support peacebuilding and then carry out the societal process of change. The difficulties that encountered reconciliation processes in Northern Ireland, Bosnia, Rwanda, or Sri Lanka show that the reconciliation process is complex and unpredictable. In my view, the building of a confederation between Israel and the PA cannot be a condition for resolving the conflict and then build a confederation. Moreover, because the confederation must be preceded by a peaceful resolution of the Israeli–Palestinian conflict and the establishment of the Palestinian independent state, these two steps look very remote. Building a confederation is a voluntary process; in view of the present state of the conflict, attitudes of the Palestinians and Israeli Jews, and the geopolitical situation it is hard to imagine the implementation of the idea. The history of peacemaking between Israeli Jews and Palestinians and the views of the Israeli leaders do not provide evidence to indicate successfully reaching a peaceful settlement of the conflict. The short analysis in the present article delineates the arguments for this claim.
Asymmetry of the Conflict

The asymmetrical nature of the two antagonistic entities—the state of Israel and Palestinian entities—contributes greatly to the impossibility of founding a confederation. Israel has grown to be a regional power with military, political, economic, and technological might, while Palestine under occupation is still a developing entity that does not have independence and is dependent in almost every aspect on Israel. The Palestinian economy is positioned at the lower middle level and its technological development only begins its first steps. It does not have an army, air force, or navy. In contrast, Israel has one of the world’s most modernized armies with an advanced air force, intelligence, drones, tanks, artillery, missiles, and even a nuclear arsenal, and is one of the world’s top weapons exporters. For 2022, Israel is ranked 18 of 142 out of the countries considered for the total available active military manpower. It is a strong military power revered by many states that are dependent on its intelligence and developed weapons.

The U.S. Central Intelligence Agency estimated Israel’s per capita GDP at about ten times (or 1000 percent more) that of the Palestinians. In contrast, Israel has established itself as one of the most technologically advanced countries in the world. In 2019, Israel was ranked the world’s fifth most innovative country by the Bloomberg Innovation Index and ranks 14th among the 51 high-income group economies as of 2021. It ranks 13th in the world for scientific output as measured by the number of scientific publications per million citizens.

First, in this very extensive asymmetry, it will be very difficult to negotiate a peaceful settlement of the conflict, as previous attempts showed and later the confederation principles demonstrate. Many states, including European ones, are dependent on Israeli technological, intelligence, and military assistance. Therefore, Israel feels strongly that it does not need to yield to external pressure to solve the conflict or change its expanding policies or treatment of the Palestinians. Second, even if the negotiations will miraculously end successfully, it is hard to think about the implementation of the confederation principles. Israel, the much

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4See https://www.globalfirepower.com/country-military-strength-detail.php?country_id=israel.
5See https://www.timesofisrael.com/israel-surges-to-take-fifth-place-in-new-bloomberg-innovation-index/.
6See https://www.wipo.int/edocs/pubdocs/en/wipo_pub_gii_2021/il.pdf.
7See https://www.haaretz.com/2013-09-02/ty-article/.premium/israeli-scientific-studies-declining/0000017f-df8e-db5a-a57f-dfec87e50000.
stronger party, will have difficulty in honoring equality in the management of the confederation. We observe in every union the stronger party uses its power to its benefit. This can be seen in the EU where the more powerful states such as Germany and France exert a stronger influence. It is hard to imagine harmonious or even workable cooperation between two entities that were in violent conflict for many decades.

The two entities do not have much in common—the different religions, culture, goals, collective memories, aspirations, and contentions will contribute to the disharmony and discord between them. The heritage and memory of the long bloody conflict will not disappear quickly but will be maintained for decades as it happens in different states that were involved in such conflict—India and Pakistan, Turkey, Greece, and so on. Even relations between France and Germany after the latter was defeated completely have been restored through a long process (Gardner Feldman 1999).

With regard to the preceding phase—peaceful settlement of the conflict—history shows that both sides missed opportunities because of a lack of determination and human shortcomings (Podeh 2015). Since these attempts, they have been recrystallized and solidified the ethos of conflict in the wide spectrum of societal layers in the Israeli Jewish society. The rightist ideology dominates the Israeli Jewish society with the following premises: the West Bank, as the homeland of the Jewish nations, belongs solely to Jews, the Jewish settlements in the West Bank exercise the rights of Jews, Palestinians are not partners to any peace agreement, Israel lives in continuous existential insecurity, and Israel has the legitimate right to use all the means, including violence, to defend itself. The decisions taken by the Israeli government in the last decade reflect these premises. The majority of the Israeli Jews support them and they serve as a basis to future political steps (Bar-Tal, in press).

In sum, the tremendously wide asymmetry with the clear rightist direction the Israeli Jews take will be a very strong barrier to moving through the phases of plan suggested by Ben-Meir.

Conclusions

This discussion deals with one of the most complex challenges of the present time: to bring an end to the bloody conflict between Israeli Jews and Palestinians. Since 1948, the conflict was fully intractable, but in the early nineties, the Oslo Accord appeared a light at the end of the black conflict tunnel that signaled hope that the conflict can be resolved peacefully and bring security and prosperity to both nations. However, the
murder of Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin by a Jewish extremist and the major events in 2000 (failure of the Camp David Summit and eruption of the second bloody Palestinian rebellion) re-escalated the conflict and brought it to the present hopeless abyss (Bar-Tal in press).

The ideas of Alon Ben-Meir (2022) should be complimented and serve as a sign that there are intellectuals who care about the continuation of the conflict and make sincere efforts to contribute plans to its resolution. I hope when the conditions allow, politicians and policy practitioners will read the plan and adopt its ideas. Nobody knows what the future will bring and thus every contribution to the solution of the conflict should be encouraged.

I will not escape from the impossible mission and try to be realistic and evaluate the situation and the different proposals of the Israeli–Palestinian conflict on the table in this frame. In this view, there are at present, at least on paper, six possible solutions to the conflict (Engel et al. 2021).

Option 1: Two-State Solution: One option to solve the conflict is to divide the territory between the Jordan River and the Mediterranean Sea into two independent states: An Israeli state in more or less the 1967 Green Line and a Palestinian state, through mutual agreement after negotiations. This solution, as was already noted, is losing support because of the extensive Jewish settlements over the West Bank that seriously hamper the possibility of establishing a viable Palestinian state. Similarly, various proposals that were discussed through the last decades based on this option failed and the Jewish settlements expanded considerably (Arieli 2022).

Option 2: One-State Solution: One advanced solution is one-state (Sharvit-Baruch 2021). This solution requires a major decision whether the Palestinians of the West Bank and East Jerusalem will get equal rights to Jewish citizens of the state or will be second-class citizens without equality. About 70 percent of Israeli Jews object to the one-state solution in which Palestinians will get equal rights. However, this solution was even supported by some individuals on the Israeli right. After the disengagement from Gaza and the Hamas takeover of the territory, most of the supporters of the one-state idea on the right do not include Gaza as part of the territory designated for one state, and because of this exclusion, some of them are not afraid of granting citizenship to all the Palestinians of the West Bank in light of the demographic changes that have taken place in the last
decade. Prominent figures on the right (members of the Likud party) such as the late Moshe Arens (former defense minister), Reuven Rivlin (former president), Tzipi Hotovely, and Uri Ariel (former ministers) expressed support for a one-state solution that would include granting full Israeli citizenship only to the Palestinians of Judea and Samaria. According to the leading Israeli demographer Arnon Soffer of Haifa University and other experts, between the Jordan River and the Mediterranean Sea live 7,454,000 Jews and other citizens and 7,503,000 Arabs. In contrast, the Jewish supporters of the “one-state solution” in the left camp aspire to the establishment of a democratic state equally committed to all its citizens (“the state of all its citizens”), devoid of any special commitment to one nationality or another. With time this group gained legitimacy, believing that it is infeasible at present to accept the two-state alternative and this position gained even support from some Palestinians.

In this option, there is an unsolved question with regard to the Palestinians of Gaza: will they be part of the one-state solution and included in it? This solution poses a dilemma that was already presented: whether Israel will be democratic but with a possibility of losing its Jewish nature, or it will turn to be undemocratic apartheid with Jewish supremacy?

Option 3: Formation of Confederation: The third possibility is the formation of a confederation that will be established after founding an independent Palestinian state (Husseini and Beilin 2022). This option requires the first implementation of Option 1 with all its difficulties. The present article also elaborated a number of critical difficulties.

Option 4: Formation of Federation: The fourth possibility is the formation of a federation (The Federation Plan 2017). In this system members’ entities do not have much political power, given the fact that sovereignty is exclusively vested in the federation (federal state). The membership is mandatory and participating states lose part of their authority. The major authority of a federation is a central government that governs the member states. It makes all the decisions regarding foreign policy, national security, military, and diplomacy. In my view, because of the wide asymmetry of the two entities, it is unthinkable that Palestinians will agree to this solution.

8https://www.middleeastmonitor.com/20220831-israel-jews-now-minority-in-state-and-occupied-territories-says-demographer/.
**Option 5: Unilateral Withdrawal of Israel from the West Bank**: The fifth option is a one-sided withdrawal of Israel from the West Bank to lines that it decides as secure with an inclusion of the great majority of the Jewish settlers.

**Option 6: Leaving the Present Status as-is**: This option is based on the assumption that no external forces will yield pressure on Israel and it can continue the present policies and actions. This line can take place with formal annexation of part of the West Bank (Area C) or the continuation of carrying out practical annexation as it is happening at present, with the present policies of the occupation that are, by their nature, brutal and violating human rights.

My view is that options three and four are impractical in the near future. Israel will neither agree to solve the conflict by creating two negotiated states that enable the foundation of viable independent states nor establish one state, granting Palestinians equal rights. At present, without meaningful strong pressure, Israel has the power to resist these two solutions. The confederation and federation require first of all the establishment of the independent negotiated Palestinian state. Thus these two options cannot be realized because of the presented necessary condition to establish a free Palestinian state. The fifth and sixth options do not require negotiation with the Palestinians and are the most feasible among all the present options in the short term of the coming years.

With regard to the fifth option, since the majority of Israeli Jews desire separation from Palestinians, a determined, charismatic, and security-oriented leader may realize such a separation. This option is already discussed in public discourse and proposed by leaders of center-left and center-right. I can envision leaders such as Benny Gantz and Gadi Eizenkot (two ex-chiefs of staff who entered the political arena) with the support of the Israeli Jewish NGO “Commanders for Israel’s Security” that includes over 200 retired Israeli generals with the aim to promote a regional political-security initiative to resolve the Israeli–Palestinian conflict, with political leaders, can realize this option. The prevailing idea as expressed by “Commanders for Israel’s Security” (2020) is that

The illusion of a status quo, and the current stalemate are detrimental to Israel’s security, wellbeing and character as a Jewish democracy. The strength of Israel’s security agencies provides the government with the required space for independent initiatives, involving... gradual civilian separation from the Palestinians... until conditions ripen for a two-state agreement.
This move can be encouraged and even applauded by a number of states in the world including in Europe and in the Arab League. Palestinians will probably object to this move because Israel will take a large territory of the West Bank with the Jordan Valley without negotiations. In my view, this move will not end the conflict and it may continue to be unsettled even with violence. I can also envision that there will be states, civil societies, and international organizations that will object to this move and support the Palestinians’ contentions.

Similarly, Option 6 will not bring peace to the area. The annexation with apartheid will continue the conflict and may even escalate it. But it will increase the awareness of governments, people, and organizations around the world that the apartheid exists. Both options will increase animosity between Jews and Palestinians. The young generation in both nations will be extremized. And the conflict will escalate.

I do not detect at present concrete and practical signs that signal a peaceful negotiated resolution of the Israeli–Palestinian conflict. The powerful side of Israel in the present international climate has the cards to dictate the nature of Israeli–Palestinian relations. In my view, a satisfactory solution to the conflict that fairly takes into consideration the needs of the Palestinians and Israeli–Jews depends mostly on the steps of the international community.

The question is whether superpowers such as the United States, the EU and Arab League, India, Russia, and China will disregard the legitimate needs and aspirations of the Palestinians and overlook the established apartheid. The answer to this question depends on the direction Western civilization is developing. Does it continue to develop in the light of democracy, morality, justice, and up-keeping international law, or in the direction of ethnocentrism and narrow nationalism that considers first of all national interests and needs? Sometimes, it seems that the progress is linear from the 17th century (e.g., John Locke’s work on Liberalism and Freedom in the 17th century, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in 1948, the Geneva Convention of Legal standards for humanitarian treatment in wars 1949, and the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court that established the International Criminal Court (ICC) in Rome 1998). In this respect, it should be noted that on December 20, 2019, the International Criminal Court determined that there was a basis for investigating Israel for war crimes against the Palestinians due to its activities in the West Bank, the Gaza Strip, and East Jerusalem. On February 5, 2021, the court “decided, by the majority, that the Court’s territorial jurisdiction in the Situation in Palestine, a State party to the ICC Rome Statute, extends to the territories occupied by Israel since 1967, namely Gaza and the
West Bank, including East Jerusalem.” Judges ruled that the court does have jurisdiction, rejecting Israel’s argument that it lacks such authority to do so. The next stage was transmitted to the court, which would have to decide about the question of its judicial authority in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. But, sometimes it looks that, in spite of the progress made, many of the individuals who climb to be political leaders, are populist, self-interested, authoritarian, manipulative, militaristic, and nationalistic. They often establish the tone in the political arena. Then it looks like the world moves steps backward (see the present developments in the United States, Hungary, India, Russia, Turkey, Poland, Brazil, or Israel in many states of Africa and Asia, including the Middle East). This is my observation.

Although all the directions can be noticed in the way leaders of states act today, I hope that enlightened civilization will prevail. In such a case, it is possible to assume that in the future the leaders of states with the international organization will put pressure on Israel that will lead to fair and just negotiation to settle the conflict. Such attempts were seen during Carter’s leadership leading actively to the peaceful resolution of the Egyptian–Israeli negotiations or even during Eisenhower’s terms when he demanded Israel’s withdrawal from the Sinai Peninsula in 1956. Such a new approach may take decades. Otherwise, the conflict may last 500 years: the Irish–English conflict lasted nearly as long and eventually was resolved after the Irish war of independence in 1921. We see in the historical cases that nations violently resisted unwanted occupation, as Jews did struggling against Greek occupation many centuries ago and then in the 20th century against British rule. So did Poles, Americans, Serbians, Argentinians, Hungarians, Greeks, Algerians, Indonesians, Hindus, Vietnamese, Kenyans, and many others in the last centuries. All the nations revere this struggle for independence and the leaders who led them. Today there remain in the world only two unwanted occupations where the occupied population did receive civil rights: the Berbers in Western Sahara by Morocco and the Palestinians by Israel.

The Palestinian–Israeli conflict will have to be eventually resolved peacefully because Palestinians and Israeli Jews will not disappear from the region, and unwanted occupation, and especially apartheid, is not tolerated anymore in the present world.

About the Author

Daniel Bar-Tal is professor emeritus at the School of Education, Tel Aviv University. His research interests lie in political and social psychology, studying sociopsychological
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