

Israelis and Palestinians: Conflict and Resolution

Moshé Machover

Barry Amiel and Norman Melburn Trust Annual Lecture
30 November 2006

Preface

On 30 November 2006 I had the great privilege of delivering the *Barry Amiel and Norman Melburn trust annual lecture*. The event took place at the Brunei Gallery lecture theatre, in London University's School of Oriental and African Studies.

My predecessors in these Annual Lectures have included some very illustrious men and women; and I am deeply grateful to the Trustees for the honour of being added to that distinguished line, and for offering me this invaluable opportunity to share with a large and lively audience thoughts on a subject that has been engaging me these fifty years.

I am indebted to the Trust administrator Willow Grylls, and to the lecture organizer Ariane Severin, for their most efficient work in setting up and organizing the event.

Special thanks are due to one of the Trustees, Tariq Ali, who chaired the meeting with great skill and insight into the subject. No choice of chairperson could be more fitting: in 1969, an article co-authored by the late Palestinian Arab Marxist Jabra Nicola (writing under the pen-name 'A Said') and me, in which some of the main ideas contained in my lecture were first outlined in English, was published in the journal *Black Dwarf* edited by Tariq.

In this connection I would like to pay tribute to the memory of my comrade and friend, Jabra Nicola (1912–74). He joined the Israeli Socialist Organization (*Matzpen*) a few months after its foundation, and his analysis of the impact of Zionism on Palestine and the Arab East greatly influenced our thinking on the subject. In particular, we owe to him the insistence on the regional context of the Palestinian problem and its eventual resolution – which is a central theme of my lecture.

What follows is a somewhat expanded version of the lecture. I have added here a few observations and clarifications – mainly suggested by questions or comments from members of the audience – as well as some source material that I had no time to quote during the lecture. But I have tried to preserve the discursive and informal style of an oral presentation.

I am grateful to Ehud Ein-Gil, Z. Havkin and Tikva Honig-Parnass, who read a draft of this text and made some helpful comments.

Preamble: How to think about the conflict

How should we think about the Israeli–Palestinian conflict? Please note: *how* comes before *what*. Before coming to any substantive conclusions – certainly before taking sides – we must be clear as to how the issue ought to be approached.

It would be a mistake to start in normative mode. A moral value judgment must be made: I would certainly not advocate avoiding it. But we must not *start* with moral value judgments.

Assigning blame for atrocities is not a good starting point. In any violent conflict, both sides may – and often do – commit hideous atrocities: wantonly kill and maim unarmed innocent people, destroy their homes, rob them of livelihood. And of course all these atrocities must be condemned.

Now, it is quite easy to show that Israel commits atrocities on a far greater scale, greater by several orders of magnitude, than its Palestinian (or other Arab) opponents. But this in itself is not a sufficient basis for taking sides. Israel does much greater harm, commits far greater atrocities, because it *can*: it is much stronger. It has an enormous war machine, one of the world’s biggest in absolute terms, and by far the most formidable relative to its size. So the balance of atrocities doesn’t automatically imply that Israel is in the wrong.

Also, asking ‘who started it?’ is not helpful. Each side claims that it ‘retaliates’ for crimes perpetrated by the other. The media refer to it as the ‘cycle of violence’; actually it is not really a cycle but a spiral chain. How far back do you go? And even if we go as far back as ‘far back’ goes, and find who fired the first shot – so what? Perhaps the one who fired the first shot was justified in doing so?

We should first address the issue in descriptive and analytic mode. We must ask: what is the nature of the conflict; what is it about? Understanding ought to precede judgment. When we understand what it is all about, then each of us can apply his or her moral criteria, and pass judgment. And only then, having understood the nature of the conflict and passed moral judgment, we can work out what would constitute a resolution of the conflict, and try to figure out what it would take to achieve that resolution.

1 Analysis of the conflict

1.1 Colonizing project in a regional context

History is important. You cannot understand the conflict by taking a snapshot of its present state: you have to rewind the tape.

The conflict did not begin in 1967; then it only entered a new phase with Israel's military occupation of the West Bank, the Gaza Strip and the Syrian Golan. Nor did it begin in 1956 with the Israeli attack on Egypt, in collusion with France and Britain. And it didn't begin in 1948 with the establishment of Israel and the precipitation of the Palestinian *nakbah* (calamity), in which most of the Palestinian Arab people of what became Israel were turned into refugees.

The conflict began a century ago, and became acute following the first World War. In *general* terms: it is part of the complex of unresolved problems bequeathed to the region by the Western – British and French – imperialist Powers in the way they broke up and carved up the Ottoman Empire. We are witnessing other components of this complex legacy in Iraq, Lebanon and throughout the region.

This all-important regional context will be a leitmotif in what follows.

But *specifically*: it is a conflict between the Zionist project of colonizing Palestine and the indigenous people of that land, the Palestinian Arabs. In 1948 it became a conflict between Israel – the settler state that is a product of the Zionist colonization project – and the Palestinian Arab people.

Saying that Zionism was and is a colonizing project and Israel is a settler state, a colonist state, is not a matter of value judgment but a plain statement of fact. I don't use these terms as invectives. In fact, the Zionist movement, in its internal discourse, used the term 'colonization' (and later its Hebrew equivalents).

It is possible to argue – and some do argue – that colonization and the establishment of a settler state are morally acceptable – in general or in this specific case. This *is* a value judgment, which depends on one's moral criteria. But it is not intellectually tenable to deny the fact that Zionism is a colonizing project and the State of Israel is a settlers' state.

There are of course many settler states, established by colonists from Europe who settled in various parts of the world. Israel is in this sense by no means unique. But Zionism and Israel are exceptional in several important respects, three of which I will point out in what follows.¹

¹See Sections 1.2, 1.5 and 1.9.

1.2 Late to start – and still ongoing

The first exceptional feature of Zionist colonization is that it was historically the last colonization project to get off the ground. And it is the last and currently the only one to remain active – active as in ‘active volcano’, as opposed to an extinct one.

Other settler states have fulfilled their ‘manifest destiny’ (to use an American term, popular during the expansion of the US). Colonization there is over and done with. Not so in the present case.

Present-day Israel is not only a *product* of the Zionist colonization project but also an *instrument* for its further extension and expansion. Colonization is ongoing. It continued in 1948–67 in the territory then ruled by Israel, within the Green Line.² Land belonging to Palestinian Arabs – including those who remained within the Green Line – was expropriated and given over to Zionist colonization. And soon after the 1967 war colonization continued in the newly occupied territories (OTs). This happened under all governments: Labour-led, Likkud-led, and grand coalitions.

There is much controversy about what the Israeli government headed by Yitzhak Rabin really intended when they signed the Oslo Accords of 1993, and what Prime Minister Ehud Barak meant by his so-called ‘generous offer’ in the Camp David (2000) summit. I would advise you: do not listen to politicians’ spin, for politicians generally – not only our own Tony Blair – are presumed prevaricators: they lie when it suits them. Look at facts on the ground, for they do not lie.

Let us look, for example, at the chart on p. 31. It shows the number of Israeli settlers in the West Bank in the years 1976–2004.³ On the time axis, Year 1 is 1976 and Year 29 is 2004. We can see for ourselves that colonization – planned, conducted and subsidized by the Israeli government, and given military protection by its army – was relentless. Now, I have marked on this chart the periods of the Yitzhak Rabin and Ehud Barak Labour-led governments, 1992–95 and 1999–2000/01, respectively. Can you detect any slow-down? any change at all?⁴ Look also at the Settlement Map on p. 32.

²Significantly, Israel never officially defined its own international borders. The green line drawn on its maps during that period was its *de facto* border.

³This excludes the – enormously enlarged – area within the municipal jurisdiction of Jerusalem. In the years 1967–76, the main thrust of Israeli colonization was in the Syrian Golan Heights and in Greater Jerusalem. The major drive of colonization in the rest of the West Bank started in 1976, as shown in the chart.

⁴Similar relentless trends appear clearly in the data on occupied land area given over to colonization, and numbers of settlers’ housing units built. See, for example, *Gezel Haqqarq’ot: Mediniyyut Hahitnahalut Baggadah Hamma’aravit (Robbery of the Lands:*

So what intentions did the Israeli government – *all* Israeli governments – harbour regarding these Israeli-occupied Palestinian territories? Please draw your own conclusions.

1.3 Ben-Gurion's doctrine

On 16 February 1973, General Moshé Dayan delivered a programmatic speech at a meeting of the Israeli Bar Association. The daily *Ha'aretz* (18.2.73) reports that Dayan 'surprised his listeners': the lawyers who had invited him expected that, as Minister of Defence, he would talk about military matters. Instead, he read a prepared ideological lecture in which he expounded the 'doctrine' of his mentor, the founder of the State of Israel, David Ben-Gurion. The latter was still alive at the time – he was to die at the end of 1973 – and it is fair to assume that Dayan was certain of his approval. (Indeed, it is not too fanciful to suppose that Ben-Gurion was delivering a message to the nation through his favourite protégé.)

Dayan quoted what Ben-Gurion had said many years before, in internal debates about the report of the Peel Commission,⁵ but he stressed that those words, spoken in 1937, were 'pertinent also today'. This is the gist of Ben-Gurion's doctrine, as quoted by Dayan:

Among ourselves [the Zionists] there can be no debate about the integrity of the Land of Israel [i.e. Palestine], and about our ties and right to the whole of the Land... .

When a Zionist speaks about the integrity of the Land, this can only mean colonization [*hityashvut*] by the Jews of the Land in its entirety.

That is to say: from the viewpoint of Zionism the real touchstone is not confined to [the question as to] whom this or that segment of the Land belongs to politically, nor even to the abstract belief in the integrity of the Land. Rather, the aim and touchstone of

The Policy of Colonization in the West Bank) Hebrew Report by B'Tselem – The Israeli Information Center for Human Rights in the Occupied Territories, May 2002.

⁵The Palestine Royal Commission of Inquiry, headed by Lord Peel, was set up by the British government in 1936, following the outbreak of the Great Uprising of the Palestinian Arabs, and asked to propose changes in the status of Palestine. In 1937 the Commission recommended partition of the country between Arabs and Jews. Ben-Gurion reluctantly accepted the plan; but – as Dayan clearly implies – did so for tactical reasons, with the expectation that Zionist colonization could continue in the whole of Palestine.

Zionism is the actual implementation of colonization by the Jews of all areas of the Land of Israel.⁶

This is the Zionist counterpart of the doctrine of ‘manifest destiny’. Let me spell out what it implies: *any partition of Palestine, any ‘green line’, any accord or treaty that shuts off any part whatsoever of the ‘Land of Israel’ to Jewish colonization is from the viewpoint of Zionism at best a transient accommodation – accepted temporarily for tactical or pragmatic reasons, but never regarded as final.*

Of course, this does not mean that the expansion of Zionist colonization is unstoppable. What it does mean is that it will be pursued – as a matter of highest priority – so long as the balance of power makes it possible.

1.4 Writing on the wall

Zionist colonization of Palestine is the root cause of the conflict; ongoing colonization is the persisting impetus that drives the conflict on. For this reason I confine myself in this analysis to discussing the Zionist project, which is the proactive side in the conflict. For lack of time, I shall say very little about the Palestinian struggle, which was a predictable reaction.

That the implementation of Zionism’s political project would inevitably provoke resistance by the indigenous Palestinians, and inexorably lead to a violent conflict, was obvious from the outset. It was recognized by the most clear-sighted and openly admitted by the most uninhibited and outspoken Zionists.

None was less inhibited than Vladimir Jabotinsky (1880–1940), the political and spiritual progenitor of five Israeli prime ministers: Menahem Begin, Yitzhak Shamir, Binyamin Netanyahu, Ariel Sharon and Ehud Olmert.⁷

The following are extensive excerpts from his justly famous article, ‘The Iron Wall’ (*O Zheleznoi Stene*), published in 1923 in the Russian-language journal *Rassvyet* (‘Dawn’).

⁶Ha’aretz, 18.2.73. Words in [square brackets] here and in subsequent quotations are added by me.

⁷Begin was founder of the Herut (‘Freedom’) party, the direct post-1948 incarnation of the ‘Revisionist’ Zionist movement founded by Jabotinsky. Herut combined with smaller parties in 1973 to form the Likkud (‘Consolidation’). Following Begin’s resignation, Likkud was led by Shamir, Netanyahu and Sharon. In 2005 Sharon broke away from Likkud to form a new party, now led by Olmert. The new party’s name, ‘Qadimah’ – meaning in Hebrew both ‘forward’ and ‘eastward’ – was an homage to Jabotinsky, who had founded in 1904 a Zionist publishing house by that name. The same Hebrew word was also inscribed in the insignia of a Jewish volunteers unit – set up after much lobbying by Jabotinsky – in the British Army during the First World War.

Compromise between the Palestinian Arabs and us is out of the question at present, and in the foreseeable future. I express this inner conviction of mine so categorically not because of any wish to distress nice people [ie, moderate Zionists] but, on the contrary, because I wish to save them distress. All those nice people, except the congenitally blind, have long since understood the utter impossibility of ever obtaining the willing consent of Palestine's Arabs to transforming that same Palestine from an Arab country into a country with a Jewish majority.

Every reader has some general idea of the history of the colonization of other countries.⁸ I suggest that he recall all known instances; let him go through the entire list and try to find a single instance of a country colonized with the consent of the natives. There is no such instance. The natives – whether they are civilized or uncivilized – have always put up a stubborn fight against the colonizers – whether they are civilized or uncivilized.

...

Any native people, whether civilized or savage, view their country as their national home, of which they will be the complete masters. They will never voluntarily accept not only new masters but also new co-owners or partners.

This applies also to the Arabs. Compromisers amongst us try to convince us that the Arabs are fools who can be tricked by a 'toned down' formulation of our true goals, or a venal tribe who will abandon their birthright to Palestine for cultural and economic gains. I flatly reject this view of the Palestinian Arabs. Culturally they are 500 years behind us, spiritually they possess neither our endurance nor our willpower; but apart from this there are no inherent differences between us. They are as subtle psychologists as we are, and exactly like us have had centuries of training in crafty casuistry [Hebrew: *pilpul*]. Whatever we tell them, they can see through us as well as we can see through them. And they have for Palestine the same instinctive love and intrinsic fervor that the Aztecs had for their Mexico or the Sioux for their prairie. ... Every people will struggle against colonizers as long as there is a spark of hope of ridding itself of the danger

⁸Some current English translations of this article say (here and in the sequel) 'settlement' instead of 'colonization'; but the Russian original is unmistakable: *ob istorii kolonizatsii drugikh stran*.

of colonization. This too is what the Palestinian Arabs are doing and will go on doing as long as there is a spark of hope. . . .

Colonization has only one goal; this goal is unacceptable to the Palestinian Arabs. This is in the nature of things. To change that nature is impossible. . . .

Even if it were possible (which I doubt) to obtain the consent of the Arabs of Baghdad and Mecca, as if Palestine were for them some kind of small, insignificant borderland, then Palestine would still remain for the Palestinian Arabs not a borderland, but their only homeland, the centre and basis of their own national existence. Therefore it would be necessary to carry on colonization against the will of the Palestinian Arabs, which is the same condition that exists now. But agreement with non-Palestinians Arabs is also an unrealizable fantasy. In order for Arab nationalists of Baghdad and Mecca and Damascus to agree to pay what would be for them such a high price, agreeing to forego preservation of the Arab character of Palestine – a country located at the very centre of their [future] ‘federation’ and cutting it in the middle – we would have to offer them something just as valuable. Clearly, this could mean only two things: either money or political assistance or both. But we can offer neither. As for money, it is ludicrous to think we could finance Mesopotamia or Ḥejaz, when we do not have enough for Palestine. . . . And political support for Arab nationalism would be totally dishonest. Arab nationalism sets itself the same aims as those set, say, by Italian nationalism before 1870: unification and political independence. In plain language, this would mean expulsion of England from Mesopotamia and Egypt, expulsion of France from Syria and then perhaps also from Tunisia, Algeria and Morocco. For us to support such a movement, even remotely, would be suicide and treachery. We are operating under the English Mandate; in San Remo France endorsed the Balfour Declaration. We cannot take part in a political intrigue whose aim is to expel England from the Suez Canal and the Persian Gulf, and totally annihilate France as a colonial power. We cannot play such a double game; we must not even think about it. They will crush us – with well-deserved disgrace – before we can make a move in that direction. . . .

Conclusion: we cannot give anything to the Palestinian or other Arabs in exchange for Palestine. Hence their voluntary agreement is out of the question. Hence those who hold that such

an agreement is an essential condition for Zionism can right now say ‘no’ [French: *non*] and renounce Zionism. Our colonization must either be terminated, or proceed in defiance of the will of the native population. This colonization can therefore continue and develop only under the protection of a force independent of the local population – an iron wall which the native population cannot break through.

This is the sum total of our policy towards the Arabs. . . . What is the Balfour Declaration for? What is the Mandate for? To us they mean that an external power has committed itself to creating such security conditions that the local population, however much it would have wanted to, would be unable to interfere, administratively or physically, with our colonization.

1.5 Rampart against Asia

A second rather exceptional feature of Zionist colonization is that the settlers were not nationals of a European Power who sent them on their colonizing mission and protected them. It was therefore clear from the outset to the founders of political Zionism that it was vital for their project to obtain the sponsorship of a Great Power – whichever Great Power was dominant in the Middle East – that would provide them with an ‘iron wall’, behind which Zionist colonization could proceed. Without such sponsorship – which early Zionist discourse referred to as a ‘charter’ – colonization of Palestine would be a non-starter.

Of course, Great Powers are no philanthropists. Their protection is not given for nothing, but in exchange for services. And from the outset it was clear what these services would be. The founder of political Zionism, Theodor Herzl (1860–1904), put it like this in his programmatic book *Der Judenstaat* (The Jewish State) published in 1896:

For Europe we would form there part of the rampart against Asia, serving as an outpost of civilization against barbarism. As a neutral State, we would remain in contact with all Europe, which would have to guarantee our existence.

Not so much a ‘clash of civilizations’ as a clash of the one-and-only civilization with barbarism.

So it’s a deal, a matter of quid pro quo. In exchange for the vital protection of the ‘iron wall’ against the Palestinian Arabs that Western imperialism would help to erect, the Zionist colonizers – and eventually their settler state

– were to provide their sponsors with a ‘rampart’ against the ‘barbarians’ of the Middle East. (The practice of Zionism is replete with walls and ramparts; but they appear even earlier in Zionist discourse: in the beginning was the word.)

A necessary consequence of this historic deal has been that it *regionalized* the conflict. The clash of the Zionist project (and eventually Israel) with the indigenous Palestinians was extended into a conflict with the people of the entire region. This is due not only to the national solidarity of Arabs throughout the region with their fellow Arabs in Palestine, but also to the active role of Zionism (and Israel) as partner of Western exploitation and domination of the Middle East.

By the 1880s Germany under Kaiser Wilhelm II had replaced France and Britain as ‘friend and military advisor’ of the decaying Ottoman Empire. Palestine was then part of that Empire, so Herzl tried to sell his idea to the German Kaiser. But he was rebuffed; the Kaiser passed on the proposed deal.⁹

1.6 ‘A little loyal Jewish Ulster’

Chaim Weizmann had much better luck with the Lloyd-George government towards the end of the first World War. The Charter of Zionist aspirations was granted in the form of the Balfour Declaration (2 November 1917).¹⁰

In his memoirs, Sir Ronald Storrs – the brain behind Lawrence of Arabia, and the first British Governor of Jerusalem – made the following comment on the logic behind the Balfour Declaration:

Even though the land could not yet absorb sixteen millions, nor even eight, enough could return, if not to form The Jewish State (which a few extremists publicly demanded), at least to prove that the enterprise was one that blessed him that gave [Britain] as well as him that took [Zionism] by forming for England ‘a little loyal Jewish Ulster’ in a sea of potentially hostile Arabism.¹¹

⁹See photograph – from the Zionist Archive – on p. 33: Herzl (left) propositioning the Kaiser during the latter’s visit to Palestine, 1898. Actually this famous photo is a fake, a photomontage; but it is significant as wishful thinking.

¹⁰Arthur James Balfour was Foreign Secretary. The ‘Declaration’ was in a form of a letter addressed to Lord Rothschild (Walter Rothschild, 2nd Baron Rothschild), a leader of the British Jewish community, for transmission to the Zionist Federation. Other British Jewish leaders were opposed to Zionism and to the Declaration; they included Edwin Samuel Montagu, Secretary of State for India, who was the only Jewish member of the British Cabinet.

¹¹Ronald Storrs, *Orientations*, definitive edition, London, 1943, p. 345.

The Balfour Declaration was part of a package. Another part of the package was the sculpting of Palestine as a separate political entity.

During nearly thirteen centuries of Muslim rule – interrupted only by the Crusades – Palestine had never been a distinct, let alone separate, administrative entity, but was an integral part of Greater Syria (consisting roughly of present-day ‘little’ Syria, Lebanon, Jordan, Israel, the West Bank and the Gaza Strip). In the Ottoman Empire, the southern half of Palestine constituted a special District of Jerusalem, subject directly to the High Porte in Istanbul; the northern half consisted of two districts, which were part of the Province of Beirut.

Now, when the ravenous imperialist Powers tore up the carcass of the Ottoman Empire, Palestine was one of the limbs grabbed by Britain. In 1922 Britain got the League of Nations to grant it a Mandate over Palestine; and the Balfour Declaration was included verbatim in the text of the Mandate, together with several detailed provisions for facilitating Zionist colonization.¹²

It would hardly be an exaggeration to say that Palestine, carved out of the Arab East, was purpose-made for Zionist colonization, irrespective of the wishes of its actual inhabitants. Indeed, as the American King–Crane Commission discovered in 1919, these inhabitants had no particular wish for a separate Palestine, but were quite content to be included in Greater Syria. Moreover, this carving out involved considerable trimming. The Palestine Mandate originally embraced also a large mostly arid territory to the east of the Jordan River, but Britain was allowed to ‘postpone or withhold’ application of the provisions promoting Zionist colonization to this eastern territory. Thereupon Britain instituted it as a separate Emirate of Transjordan, under its Hashemite protégé ‘Abdallah. This later became the Kingdom of Jordan. From 1923, ‘Palestine’ meant the territory west of the Jordan, to which the Balfour Declaration applied fully under the League of Nations Mandate. It existed as a distinct and separate political entity for 25 years.

1.7 ‘A kind of watchdog’

In the 1930s the relations between the Zionist movement and its erstwhile British protector cooled down. Their aims and interests began to diverge. Eventually a serious rift opened up between them, developing after the second World War into a violent conflict. I cannot go here into the detailed causes of

¹²The Mandate was drafted two years earlier at the League of Nations conference held in San Remo. Hence the reference to San Remo in the passage quoted above from Jabotinsky’s *Iron Wall*.

this conflict. Suffice it to say that – among other things – the Great Uprising of the Palestinian Arabs made it clear to Britain that the cost of imposing the terms of the Mandate would take too great a toll of its limited power and influence. Meanwhile, the Zionist project had outgrown the role of a mere 'little loyal Jewish Ulster' and was ripe for assuming state sovereignty. But in any case Britain was losing its dominant position in the Middle East; Zionism needed a new imperial patron.

Michael Assaf, a Labour-Zionist Orientalist put it as follows:¹³

In those very years of struggle [between Zionism and British imperialism] there took place a process of a beginning of a new attachment: instead of England–Zion, America–Zion – a process which depended on the fact that the US was penetrating the Middle East as a decisive world power.

From the moment of its establishment in 1948, Israel continued this process of re-attachment. It was seeking a new alliance – protection in exchange for services – with the US. But the shift to the new imperialist sponsor was gradual and went through several stages. At first, Britain still retained some influence in the Middle East. This is reflected in the following assessment of Israel regional role:¹⁴

The feudal regime in these [Middle-Eastern] states must be mindful to such a great extent of (secular and religious) nationalist movements that sometimes also have a decidedly leftist social hue, that these states are no longer prepared to put their natural resources at the disposal of Britain and America and allow them to use their countries as military bases in case of war. True, the ruling circles in the countries of the Middle East know that in case of a social revolution or Soviet conquest they will surely be physically liquidated, but the immediate fear of the bullet of a political assassin outweighs for the time being the impalpable fear of annexation to the Communist world. All these states are . . . militarily weak; Israel has proved its military strength in the War of Liberation against the Arab states and for this reason a certain strengthening of Israel is a rather convenient way for the Western Powers for keeping a balance of political forces in the Middle East. According to this supposition Israel has been assigned the role of a kind of watchdog. It is not to be feared that it

¹³Article in the Histadrut daily *Davar*, 2 May 1952.

¹⁴Op Ed article 'The Harlot from the Cities Overseas and We – Thoughts on the Eve of [Jewish] New Year 5712', *Ha'aretz*, 30 September 1951.

would apply an aggressive policy towards the Arab states if that would be clearly against the wishes of America and Britain. But if the Western powers will at some time prefer, for one reason or another, to shut their eyes, Israel can be relied upon to punish properly one or several of its neighbouring states whose lack of manners towards the West has gone beyond permissible limits.

The period 1948–67 was a delicate phase for Israel in its quest for attachment to the new dominant imperialist power: the US was interested, agreeable, but not too enthusiastic. It gave Israel significant financial and political support, but its commitment to Israel was by no means total. The usefulness of Israel as a regional enforcer was by no means proven; it was not obvious to US policy-makers.

For closer political alliance and for military equipment, Israel turned in the 1950s to France, which was then fighting a colonial war in Algeria. Arab nationalism – led by the charismatic Egyptian President Gamal ‘Abd-al-Nasser – was the common enemy.

In the 1956 Suez War Israel indeed proved its military prowess, its usefulness as a local Rottweiler – but to the wrong imperialist boss. France and Britain were spent forces as colonial Powers. The US was not amused by their gauche unauthorized attempt at a comeback and imperiously scotched it. Israel too was told in no uncertain terms to withdraw from its conquests, which Prime Minister Ben-Gurion had been too hasty to declare ‘part of the Third Kingdom of Israel’.¹⁵ However, Israel did make a considerable gain from the episode. At the secret conclave at Sèvres, where the Suez collusion was hatched, Ben-Gurion, Dayan and Peres extracted from France a prize for Israel’s crucial role in starting the war: a French promise to build a nuclear reactor in Israel and supply it with fissile material. This eventually led to Israel becoming the world’s fifth nuclear power.¹⁶

In 1967 Israel made sure to obtain prior US approval for its attack on Egypt and Syria. It used this opportunity also to occupy the remaining part of Palestine, which ‘Abdallah had grabbed in 1948, by a secret agreement with Ben-Gurion’s government.

¹⁵Message to the Israeli forces in Sharm al-Sheikh, 6 November 1956, quoted in *Davar*, 7 November. Amazingly, Ben-Gurion was oblivious to the sinister connotations of the term ‘Third Kingdom’.

¹⁶See *Yedi‘ot Aḥaronot*, 23 December 2005. Shimon Peres hinted at this deal in an article entitled ‘This war has taught us that Israel must revise its military approach’ published in the *Guardian* on 4 September 2006: ‘Fifty years ago I had the privilege of introducing new arms systems to the Israel Defence Forces that provided Israel with a powerful deterrent that is still valid.’

Israel has rendered many important services to the West, particularly to the US; but the most valuable of these was its help in defeating secular Arab nationalism, which was rightly regarded by the West as a danger to its interests, and which never recovered from its 1967 military debacle. Israel has become the staunchest and most reliable US ally and enforcer in the region.¹⁷

1.8 Is it apartheid?

Israel is often compared to South Africa as it was under apartheid. The term ‘apartheid’ is widely used to characterize the Israeli settler state, and especially the Israeli regime in the territories occupied since 1967.

I think the reason for this widespread usage is that South Africa under apartheid is the only other settler state that was actively pursuing its colonizing project until recently, in most peoples’ living memory. It is the only other active settler state that most people can recall. So they use the term ‘apartheid’ as an invective, or as a generalized label for an oppressive regime of racist discrimination.¹⁸

But, analytically speaking, this label does not strictly apply to Zionist colonization. And it can be misleading: using ‘apartheid’ as invective may be a satisfying way of venting one’s feelings, and can perhaps serve as effective propaganda shorthand, but it is dangerous because people begin to believe that Israel is another South Africa, and therefore the Israeli–Palestinian conflict is similar and can be resolved in a similar way.

There *are* of course many similarities: South Africa under apartheid and Israel belong to the same genus: *colonial settler state*. Colonization necessarily involves dispossession of the indigenous people, harsh racist discrimination against them, and brutal measures to suppress their resistance. In actual fact, while the Palestinian Arabs inside the Green Line (who are citizens of Israel) suffer from severe institutionalized discrimination, they are not quite as badly off as were the non-whites under apartheid. On the other hand, the Palestinians in the 1967 OTs are in many ways more brutally treated by the Israeli military and settlers than were the non-whites under apartheid.

But my point is not about a comparison of the *degree* of oppression. There is an important *qualitative*, structural difference between the two settler states: they belong to the same genus but to different species of the genus. Precise

¹⁷On Israel’s importance as a Western strategic asset, see Appendix, p. 27ff.

¹⁸In much the same way, the term ‘fascism’ is often misused as a generalized label for any authoritarian right-wing regime.

characterization must not only state the proximate genus but also pinpoint the specific difference.¹⁹

Here I invoke Karl Marx's profound insight: the key to understanding a society, a social formation, is its political economy, its mode of production.²⁰ And this means primarily the source of surplus product, and the form of its extraction.²¹

In all colonizations, the indigenous people were dispossessed. But what was to become of them?

Speaking somewhat schematically, we can distinguish two species, two main models, of colonization and settler societies. The crucial difference is whether the indigenous population is harnessed as a labour force to be *exploited*, a source of surplus product; or *excluded* from the settlers' economy – marginalized, exterminated or expelled, ethnically cleansed.

South Africa belonged to the former species. It didn't start this way, but with the development of capitalist industry and mining it evolved into a system in which black Africans were the main source of surplus value. Apartheid was a system designed to keep the non-whites at hand, as an essential resource of the economy – but without civil rights.

Zionism deliberately, consciously and explicitly chose the other model: use of indigenous labour power was to be avoided. The Palestinian Arabs are not regarded as a useful exploitable *source* of surplus labour – but are *themselves* surplus to requirement. They are not needed to be at hand or even at arm's length, but are to be moved out of the way. They were to be ethnically cleansed or – in Zionist parlance – 'transferred'.

Transfer was envisaged right from the very beginning of political Zionism. On 12 June 1895, Theodor Herzl confided to his diary:

We shall try to transfer the poorer section of the [indigenous] population across the border, without raising noise, by giving them employment in the transit countries, but in our own country we shall deny them all work.

It would be tedious to quote here the vast stack of evidence for the planning of transfer, and accounts of its implementation – by pressure, intimidation

¹⁹According to the classical maxim: *Definitio fit per genus proximum et differentiam specificam*.

²⁰'The mode of production of material life conditions the general process of social, political and intellectual life.' (Karl Marx, *Preface to the Critique of Political Economy*)

²¹This point is made forcefully by G E M de Ste. Croix, *The Class Struggle in the Ancient Greek World*, Cornell University Press, 1981.

or forcible expulsion – when the opportunity arose. I refer you to the literature.²²

In this respect – in excluding the indigenous Palestinians from the settlers' economy before 1948, and in planning and implementing their transfer – 'left-wing' or 'labour' Zionists were the most diligent.²³ They thought in class terms and so knew perfectly well that, as in any other political economy, the direct producers would be the majority. Zionism could not achieve a Jewish state, with a predominant Jewish majority, except by excluding the Arabs. The work had to be done by Jews: by idealistic European Jewish pioneers, and (since there were not enough volunteers) by destitute, mostly darker-skinned, Jews ingathered from the four corners of the earth.

On the whole, Zionism and Israel adhered to this model, minimizing reliance on Palestinian labour, with only a partial and brief deviation in the 1970s and 80s.²⁴ At present, Israeli capitalist hi-tech enterprises established in the OTs on colonized Palestinian land prefer to employ super-exploited Israeli-Jewish workers rather than Palestinian Arabs.²⁵

Zionist/Israeli strategy has always had a twofold aim: *maximize Jewish colonization of land, minimize its Arab population.*

There is a degree of tension between these two goals. Yosef Weitz – a 'labour' Zionist, a most ardent architect of transfer plans before the 1948 war, and one of the chief practitioners who engineered it during that war

²²See, for example, Nur Masalha, *Expulsion of the Palestinians: The Concept of 'Transfer' in Zionist Political Thought, 1882–1948*, Institute for Palestine Studies, Washington, 1992; Ilan Pappé, *The Ethnic Cleansing of Palestine*, Oneworld, 2006.

²³'Labour' Zionism dominated the Zionist movement from the early 1930s and led all Israeli governments until 1977.

²⁴By the end of that period, well over 100,000 (possibly twice as many) workers from the West Bank and the Gaza Strip were employed inside the Green Line, mostly in menial and badly-paid jobs. See Emmanuel Farjoun, 'Palestinian workers in Israel: A reserve army of labour' in Jon Rothschild (ed.), *Forbidden Agendas*, Al Saqi Books, 1984. Since the outbreak of the first intifada (end of 1987), these workers have largely been replaced by migrant workers from far-away countries.

According to *Kav La'oved* (Worker's Hotline) estimates, the number of West-Bank Palestinians currently employed by Israelis in the West Bank itself (excluding Jerusalem) is 20,000: most of them in industrial parks, the largest of which is Barkan near Ariel. There are also up to 10,000 employed in construction according to demand, inside settlements (mainly the urban ones) but also in roads and even in constructing the notorious separation wall. These current numbers are very small in proportion to the total Palestinian work force, let alone the Israeli one.

²⁵For an excellent eye-opening case study, involving the exploitation of docile ultra-orthodox Jewish women, see Gadi Algazi, *Matrix in Bil'in – Capital, settlements and civil resistance to the separation fence, or: A story of colonial capitalism in present-day Israel*, <http://www.taayush.org/new/fence/matrix-bilin-en.html>

and its aftermath – got worried after the the 1967 war:

[W]hen the UN resolved to partition Palestine into two states, the [1948] War of Independence broke out, to our great good fortune [sic!], and in it there came to pass a double miracle: a territorial victory and the flight of the Arabs. In the [1967] Six Days' War there came to pass one great miracle, a tremendous territorial victory, but the majority of the inhabitants of the liberated territories remained 'attached' to their places, [a fact] which is liable to destroy the foundation of our State. The demographic problem is the most acute, especially when to its numerical weight is added the weight of the refugees.²⁶

The wet dream of expanded colonization is troubled by a nightmare of demographic danger.

Different Zionist currents balance the two aims in different ways. Some prioritize the imperative of territorial expansion above absolute ethnic purity; others are petrified by the demographic peril: there are too many Arabs in Palestine, and they have a high birth rate.

Ideally – they all agree – if the Palestinians were somehow to disappear, the problem would disappear with them. But major ethnic cleansing can only be perpetrated at what Zionist discourse calls an 'opportune moment' (*she'at kosher*). Pending such opportunity, the dominant strategy is to confine the Palestinians to easily contained, preferably self-policing, pockets. These differ from concentration camps inasmuch as the inmates are very welcome to leave, provided they emigrate. Nor are they Bantustans, because the main purpose of the Bantustans was to serve as nominally independent dormitories for a reserve labour force on which the settlers' economy depended.

What they most resemble are Indian Reservations in the US. And the various Israeli 'peace plans' and accords with willing Palestinian leaders are not unlike the famous Indian Treaties.

The fact that Zionist colonization follows this model – based not on exploiting the labour of the indigenous people but aiming to exclude and expel them – has some very important consequences.

First, the danger of further massive transfer is never far away. An 'opportune moment' may arise, for example, during an extreme emergency or war – a prospect that is ever present in this volatile region.²⁷ Israel may

²⁶Yosef Weitz, 'Solution to the refugee problem: The State of Israel with a small Arab minority', the Histadrut daily *Davar*, 29 September, 1967.

²⁷For a detailed scary scenario of this sort, see 'Sharon's plan is to drive Palestinians

even help to provoke such an opportunity. Meantime, slow-motion transfer proceeds by the salami method, using economic, administrative and physical harassment.

Moreover, ethnic cleansing, expulsion, is evidently much harder to undo than relations of exploitation and racial discrimination.

Therefore those of us who are opposed to this injustice must act *with great urgency* to arouse world public opinion and mobilize civil society, so as to make it as difficult as possible for Israel to expand its colonization and perpetrate transfer.

1.9 The national dimension

Another extremely important consequence that follows from the specific nature of Zionist colonization is that the conflict crystallized as a *national* one.

Whereas in the exploitative model of colonization the conflict between settlers and indigenous people assumes the form of a quasi-class struggle, in the other model – the one followed by Zionism – the colonists form a new settler nation.

So also Zionist colonization resulted in the creation of a new nation: the *Israeli Jews*, or modern *Hebrews*.²⁸ They have the essential attributes of a nation in the modern sense of this word: territorial contiguity; a complete class structure (similar to that of other modern capitalist nations); a common language of everyday discourse (which is unique to them!); and a secular culture, both ‘high’ and popular.

Note that the Jews at large – those of today’s Diaspora – lack *all* these attributes.²⁹ They do not constitute a nation in the current modern sense of this term.³⁰

across the Jordan’ by the leading Israeli military historian Martin van Creveld, *The Sunday Telegraph*, 28 April 2002.

²⁸I prefer the latter term, as it avoids any religious connotation and focuses on the most salient attribute of this group: their language.

²⁹Arguably, the Jews of Eastern Europe before the Nazi genocide did possess these attributes to a considerable extent, and constituted something like a national community.

³⁰What then *do* they constitute? This is a notoriously complex question, into which I cannot and need not enter here in any depth. Let me just make two fairly simple observations. First, the term ‘Jewish’ has several different, albeit partly overlapping, meanings. Second, although Diaspora-Jewishness cannot be *analytically* reduced to Judaism (the Jewish religion), the latter is, *empirically speaking*, a vital constituent of the former, in the following sense. Without Judaism, Jewishness somehow dissipates after a couple of generations: outside Israel you would be hard put to find a person who self-identifies or is regarded by others as a Jew but does not practise Judaism and has no parent or grandparent who practised Judaism. Among the Hebrews, on the other hand, you will find quite a

Adoption of the new national identity is as rapid as in the case of other immigrant settler nations. Those born in Israel to Jewish immigrants from Russia or an Arab country are members of the Hebrew nation: they are no more Russian or Arab than an American of Italian or Polish descent is an Italian or a Pole. Their parental origin is not erased, but recedes into the background.

Ironically, Zionism – like a father denying the existence of his unwanted child – denies the existence of this Hebrew nation, newly created by Zionist colonization. For according to Zionist ideology, all the Jews around the world constitute a single nation. The true homeland of every Jew is not the country in which s/he may have been born and in which his or her family may have resided for generations. The homeland of this alleged nation is the Biblical Land of Israel, over which it has an ancient inalienable – indeed God-given – national right.³¹ Non-Jews living in the Jewish homeland are mere foreign interlopers. Zionist colonization is justified as ‘return to the homeland’ – a right possessed by Jews but denied to those foreign interlopers, the Palestinian refugees, who have been legitimately evicted from the Jewish homeland. There is no Hebrew nation but merely members of the worldwide Jewish nation who have already returned to their homeland, an advance guard of their brethren in the Diaspora, who have a right – indeed a sacred duty – to follow the vanguard and be ‘ingathered’ in the Land of Israel.

Here I wish to point out yet another exceptional feature of Zionist colonization. In the exploitative model of colonization, the colonists ended up as a relatively small minority, an upper crust or quasi-class exploiting the labour-power of the indigenous people. The latter comprise the bulk of the direct producers, and therefore remain the great majority of the population. On the other hand, in most colonizations that followed the other model, in which the colonists formed a new settler nation, the indigenous peoples, if not completely pulverized, were swamped or at any rate marginalized. Their distinct separate national identities have been overlaid by that of the settler nation. Their languages and cultural traditions, if not obliterated, have persisted as folk relics – ‘underground’ or in remote rural areas – while the language and culture of the settler nation predominates elsewhere.

Not so in the case of Zionist colonization: here the clash between oppressor and oppressed – colonists and indigenous people – has assumed the form of a *national conflict between two discrete and quite well-defined national*

few third-generation atheists.

³¹As someone – I can’t remember who – observed: a Zionist doesn’t have to believe that God exists; but does have to believe that He promised Palestine to the Jews.

groups, of roughly equal size.³²

Despite its efforts, the Israeli state has so far been only partly successful in ‘transferring’ the Palestinian Arabs from their homeland. The 1967 war was too brief for ethnic cleansing to be repeated on anything like the massive scale of 1947–49. Besides, the Palestinians had learnt the bitter lesson of that *nakbah*, and – as Yosef Weitz ruefully notes (p. 18) – remained tenaciously ‘attached’ to their places. At the same time, the Arabs’ higher rate of natural increase has to some extent balanced the influx of Jewish immigration to Israel.

The Palestinian Arabs’ national identity, far from dissolving under the impact of colonization, crystallized and has been reinforced through the conflict with it. They have kept their language and developed a lively national cultural production.

This remarkable vitality is largely due to the regional context. Most Palestinians are located in close proximity to, or are dispersed as refugees in, a vast and populous Arab World sharing a common literary language (as well as its less formal version used by the media) and a glorious cultural heritage. Their spoken dialect is very close to those of other parts of the former Greater Syria, and not too distant from those of neighbouring countries of the Arab East. Cultural exchanges are easy. Even the Palestinian Arabs who eluded the ethnic cleansing of 1948 and remained as an oppressed minority in Israel were able to tune in to broadcasts from the Arab World. Conversely, a poem or novel composed by a Palestinian in Haifa can be read and appreciated by many millions, from the Atlantic Ocean to the Arabian Sea.

Moreover, due to the historical ‘lateness’ of Zionist colonization (see Section 1.2), by the time it got going it encountered Arab national identity and a nascent Arab nationalism, which emerged at about the same time. Exceptionally, a colonization project was confronted from its very beginning by an emergent national movement. Note the worried reference to Arab nationalism and its aspiration to a regional federation in Jabotinsky’s *Iron Wall* (Section 1.4).

The analogy Jabotinsky draws between Arab nationalism and pre-1870 Italian nationalism is also quite apt. In Italy, alongside ‘pan-Italian’ national identity and nationalism – which had yet to achieve political unification – there existed distinct local mini-national identities and local patriotisms: Venetian, Tuscan, Roman, Neapolitan, Sicilian, etc. In fact, they survive to

³²This exceptional feature of the present conflict is pointed out by Nira Yuval-Davis in her ‘Conclusion’ to Ephraim Nimni (ed.), *The Challenge of Post-Zionism*, Zed Books, 2003, pp. 182–196.

this day.³³ Likewise, in the Arab World there are two tiers of national identity and nationalism: alongside all-Arab identity and aspiration for unification or federation, there are local identities and patriotisms: Egyptian, Iraqi, Syrian, etc. – and of course Palestinian, formed through a common calamitous experience and in the struggle to survive and overcome. There is some tension between these two tiers of national identity, but they need not be mutually antithetical; they are capable of being compatible and even complementary.

While Arab governments and ruling elites merely pay lip service to the ideal of Arab unity, genuine commitment to it is widespread among the masses; and a central component of this commitment is a deep-seated solidarity with the Palestinians.

Any cogent projection of a resolution must start from this understanding of the nature of the conflict. It is a violent colonial confrontation between two nations that have taken shape through this very conflict: a colonizing Hebrew nation and its oppressing Israeli settler state, and an oppressed indigenous colonized Palestinian Arab nation. The former is allied to the imperialist Power dominating the entire region; the latter is a component part of the greater Arab nation of the region.

2 Resolution – principles and preconditions

2.1 Normative principles

In thinking about *resolution* of the conflict, we ought to start in normative mode. It is pointless to try to evaluate any proposed specific formula before establishing some general principles that a genuine just resolution must satisfy.

In several other settler states belonging to the same species of colonization, the settlers have succeeded in eliminating the entire indigenous population or in reducing it to small and relatively insignificant remnants. The conflict between colonizers and colonized ended with the overwhelming and virtually total victory of the former, and was in this sense ‘resolved’.

Such an outcome is very unlikely in the case of the Israeli settler state. To be sure, the historical record suggests that Israel’s Zionist leaders will exploit any opportunity for further territorial expansion and ethnic cleansing. Moreover, the more daring among them will attempt actively to create such opportunities. But however far this process may realistically be pushed,

³³Arguably, they are further reinforced thanks to the EU’s Principle of Subsidiarity.

Israel will always find itself surrounded by Arabs, by the Arab nation, of which the Palestinian Arab people is a constituent part.

In the end, the conflict in this case can only be resolved by accommodating the two national groups directly involved: the Palestinian Arabs and the Hebrews.

Note that what I propose to discuss here is *resolution* rather than palliatives. There are of course various steps that can be taken to ameliorate the present dire situation, in which great suffering is caused to millions of human beings – mostly to Palestinians, but also to many Israelis. I am certainly not arguing against such palliative measures; on the contrary, I think public opinion should be mobilized to demand them. Above all, pressure must be applied on Israel to end its military occupation of the West Bank, the Gaza Strip³⁴ and the Syrian Golan Heights. But we must not confuse palliatives with cure and amelioration with resolution: that would be a dangerous illusion. So long as its causes are not eliminated, the conflict will persist; any amelioration is likely to be no more than a lull, followed by another violent eruption.

What then are the essential elements that a lasting resolution must embody?

First and foremost, *equal rights*. By this I mean not only equal *individual* rights for all – this goes without saying. But also, no less important: equal collective rights, *national* rights, for the two national groups actually involved: the Palestinian Arabs and the Israeli Hebrews. This is a minimal necessary condition because its absence means, by definition, that one of these groups will be underprivileged, subjugated and oppressed. National oppression inexorably leads to national struggle – the very opposite of resolution.

Second, *the right of return*: recognition of the right of the Palestinian refugees to return to their homeland, to be rehabilitated and properly compensated for loss of property and livelihood. This is so self-evidently just that it needs no elaborate justification. Indeed, the only argument voiced against it is that it would jeopardize the ‘Jewish character’ of Israel, or, in plain language, its ethnocratic constitution as a settler state. But to accept this argument would amount to capitulation to Zionist ideology. Which brings me to my next point.

The third and most fundamental element in a genuine resolution is removal of the fundamental cause of the conflict: *the Zionist colonization project must be superseded*. This means not only de-Zionization of Israel,

³⁴Israel’s ‘withdrawal’ from the Gaza Strip in 2005 did not end its military occupation, but merely changed its form – mostly for the worse.

but also repudiation of the Zionist claim that the Jews at large, constituting a ‘diasporic nation’, have a special right in – let alone over – the ‘Land of Israel’. For this claim amounts not only to a retroactive legitimation of past Zionist colonization, but, in effect, demands an acceptance of an alleged *continuing* right to future further ‘ingathering’ – which implies further colonization and expansion. Such an impossible claim precludes a true resolution of the conflict.

2.2 Two states? One state?

In principle – that is, conceived abstractly, without regard to actual realities such as the present balance of power – an equitable resolution satisfying the principles I have just outlined could be implemented within various state-institutional frameworks.

One can imagine Palestine divided into two states: Israel and a Palestinian Arab state. Or one can envisage a single state in the whole of Palestine. And one can think of other setups, which I will mention later. But clearly the crucial point is not the number of states, but whether the essential principles of genuine resolution are satisfied. For a two-state setup to satisfy them, Israel would have to be de-Zionized: transformed from an ethnocratic settler state into a democratic state of all its inhabitants. Also, resources – including land and water – would have to be divided justly and shared equitably by the two states. And neither of them should be allowed to dominate the other. On the other hand, a single state would have to be not merely democratic (and hence secular) but have a constitutional structure that recognizes the two national groups and gives them equal national rights and status.³⁵

But in fact none of this is feasible at present. Indeed, no genuine resolution is possible in the short or medium term, because of the enormous disparity in the balance of power. The Palestinians, economically shattered, lightly armed and enjoying little effective international support, are facing a dominant modern capitalist Israel, a regional hegemonic nuclear super-power, a local hatchet man and junior partner of the global hyper-power. So long as such gross imbalance of power persists, any settlement will inevitably impose harsh oppressive conditions on the weaker side. To expect anything else would be wildly unrealistic.

³⁵As I have shown elsewhere, the formula that proposes a unitary ‘secular democratic Palestine’ is inadequate and was devised in order to evade the national dimension of the conflict (analysed above, in Section 1.9) and present it as an inter-confessional conflict. See my article ‘Zionism – A Major Obstacle’, September 2005, <http://www.flwi.ugent.be/cie/Palestina/palestina193.htm>

In these circumstances any ‘two-state settlement’ is bound to be a travesty: not two real sovereign states (let alone two equal ones) but one powerful Israeli state dominating a disjointed set of Palestinian enclaves similar to Indian Reservations, policed by corrupt elites acting as Israel’s proxies. This was the real prospect even under the Oslo Accords of 1993; and since then the situation has deteriorated much further, with the virulent malignant metastasis of Israeli colonization, and the weakening of the Palestinian Authority under Israeli pounding and international strangulation.³⁶

Faced with the evident present infeasibility of an equitable two-state setup, many people of genuine goodwill have reverted to the ‘one-state’ formula. This is, abstractly speaking, an attractive proposition. The trouble with it, however, is that a truly equal one-state setup is no more feasible in the short or medium term than an equal two-state one – and for exactly the same reason. Given the actual imbalance of power, a single state embracing the whole of Palestine will be no better than an extension of direct Israeli military occupation and subjugation.

A flaw common to both ‘two-state’ and ‘one-state’ formulas is that they are confined to the ‘box’ of Palestine – the territory of the British Mandate from 1923 to 1948. They differ in that the former proposes to re-partition it, while the latter proposes to resurrect it as a single distinct political entity. Ironically, as I pointed out in Section 1.5, this box was purpose-made for Zionist colonization, the root cause of the conflict. Can it serve as an insulated container for the conflict’s resolution?

2.3 Resolution in a regional context

No balance of power lasts forever. A genuine resolution of the conflict will become possible in the longer term, given a change in the present balance of power. It is impossible to foresee *exactly* how this change may come about. But it seems quite certain that it will not be confined to the relationship between Israel and the Palestinians, while all else remains as it is: it will necessarily involve tectonic movements in the entire region, as well as international global shifts.

Two interconnected and mutually reinforcing processes will be vital for changing the present balance of power. First, decline in American global dominance, and in particular in the ability of the US to go on backing Israeli

³⁶Some advocates of a ‘two-state settlement’ argue that even this travesty is preferable to the continuation of the present direct military occupation. Arguably, it is a lesser evil; and there are situations of extreme duress in which a lesser evil must be accepted. But what is imposed under duress ought to be met with protest – not embraced, advocated and recommended as though it were the greatest good or a genuine resolution.

regional hegemony without incurring unacceptable economic and political costs. Second, a radical-progressive social, economic and political transformation of the Arab East, leading to a degree of unification of the Arab nation – most likely in the form of regional federation.

It is pretty pointless to discuss the resolution of the Israeli–Palestinian conflict as though it would take place in an isolated Palestine box – whether partitioned or in one piece – while ignoring the rest of the region, and failing to factor in its transformation, without which that resolution is in any case impossible. Set in its proper regional context, our vision of resolution involves a change of focus. It would be a mistake to insist on a piece of ‘real estate’ – Israel in its 1948–67 borders or Palestine in its 1923–48 borders – as the data given once and for all. Rather, the true primary data are human: the two national groups that are directly involved in the conflict, and that will continue to exist for a very long time to come: the Palestinian Arabs and the Israeli Hebrews. And the task will then be to accommodate these two groups in the regional union or federation. Borders will become internal demarcations within the federation, and will be drawn accordingly. We cannot foresee what they will be, but they need by no means conform to those that have existed so far.

It would be foolish to claim that at present the prospect looks bright. American dominance still seems solid, as is total US backing for its Israeli regional enforcer. The Arab East is ruled by corrupt and craven elites. It has not as yet recovered from the defeat of secular Arab nationalism. Even in its relatively progressive Nasserist form, Arab nationalism was unable to break out of its petty-bourgeois limitations and mobilize truly active mass democratic self-organization. Its later degeneration under murderous rival Ba‘thi regimes, pretending to uphold ‘socialism’ and ‘Arab unity’, managed to give both ideals a bad name in the region. The subsequent emergence of Islamism holds a false promise. While it poses a challenge to Western domination, it is backward looking and inherently unable to deliver progress. Nor can it possibly be a uniting force: on the contrary, it is deeply divisive as between Sunnis and Shi‘is, and has no attraction whatsoever for non-Muslim and secular Arabs (including Palestinians), let alone Hebrews.

While there are few grounds for immediate optimism, there are some hopeful signs pointing to the longer term. American economic and political power, outwardly robust, is beset with symptoms of decline. US Military power is of little avail and is overreaching itself. Meantime, a new radical progressive counter-globalization movement is gathering momentum in parts of the Third World. It is yet to take off in the Arab East. But much depends on all of us.

Appendix: Israel as US strategic asset

The following are excerpts from an article by General Shlomo Gazit, former head of Israel's Military Intelligence, published in the daily *Yedi'ot Aḥaronot* on 27 April 1992 under the title 'No demise as a strategic asset'.

Israel's main task has not changed at all [despite the end of the Cold War], and it remains of crucial importance. The geographical location of Israel at the centre of the Arab-Muslim Middle East predestines Israel to be a devoted guardian of stability in all the countries surrounding it. Its [role] is to protect the existing regimes: to prevent or halt the processes of radicalization, and to block the expansion of fundamentalist religious zealotry. . . .

[One of Israel's 'red lines' is to foil] threats of revolt, whether military or popular, which may end up by bringing fanatical and extremist elements to power in the states concerned. The existence of such threats has no connection with the Arab-Israeli conflict. They exist because the regimes [in the region] find it difficult to offer solutions to their socio-economic ills. But any development of the kind described could subvert the existing relations between Israel and one or another of its neighbours. . . . Israel's red lines signal to its neighbours that Israel will not tolerate anything that might encourage the extremist forces to go all the way, following in the footsteps of the Iranians in the east or the Algerians in the west. . . .

In the aftermath of the disappearance of the USSR as a political power with its own interests in the region, a number of Middle-East states have lost a patron guaranteeing their political, military and even economic viability. A vacuum has thus been created, with the effect of adding to the region's instability. Under such conditions, the Israeli role as a strategic asset in guaranteeing a modicum of stability in the entire Middle East, far from dwindling or disappearing, has been elevated to the first order of magnitude. Without Israel, the West would have to perform this role on its own, when none of the existing superpowers could really perform it due to various domestic and international constraints. For Israel, by contrast, the need to intervene is a matter of survival.

The following article was published on 12 May 2005 in the English-language online version of *Yedi'ot Aḥaronot*, under the title 'Two-way independence'.

The writer, Yoram Ettinger, is a consultant on US–Israel relations, Chairman of Special Projects at the Ariel Center for Policy Research and frequent contributor to *Yedi‘ot Aḥaronot*.

In many ways, Israel is the giver and the US is the receiver

Statements made by, and the conduct of, Israel’s leaders since 1993 create the false impression that Israeli–American ties constitute a one-way relationship.

The presumption is that America gives and Israel receives, leading to Israel’s inferior position and the alleged compulsion to follow the State Department dictates.

However, former Secretary of State and NATO forces commander Alexander Haig³⁷ refuted this claim, saying he is pro-Israeli because ‘Israel is the largest American aircraft carrier in the world that cannot be sunk, does not carry even one American soldier, and is located in a critical region for American national security’.

On our 57th Independence Day, Israel and the United States enjoy a two-way relationship. Israel is like a start-up company that enjoys the kindness of the American investor, but yields much greater profits than the investment.

Every day, Israel relays to the US lessons of battle and counter-terrorism, which reduce American losses in Iraq and Afghanistan, prevent attacks on US soil, upgrade American weapons, and contribute to the US economy.

Senator Daniel Inouye recently argued Israeli information regarding Soviet arms saved the US billions of dollars. ‘The contribution made by Israeli intelligence to America is greater than that provided by all NATO countries combined,’ he said.

Innovative Israeli technologies boost US industries

Meanwhile, the vice-president of the company that produces the F16 fighter jets told me Israel is responsible for 600 improvements in the plane’s systems, modifications estimated to be worth billions of dollars, which spared dozens of research and development years.

³⁷[Alexander Haig was Richard Nixon’s White House Chief of Staff (1973–74), NATO Supreme Allied Commander (1974–79), and Ronald Reagan’s Secretary of State (1981–82).]

Israel's utilization of American arms guarantees our existence, but at the same time gives US military industries a competitive edge compared to European industries, while also boosting American military production, producing American jobs, and improving America's national security. Japan and South Korea, for example, preferred the Hawkeye spy plane and the MD-500 chopper, both purchased and upgraded by Israel, over comparable British and French aircraft.

Indeed, innovative Israeli technologies have a similar effect on American civilian and agricultural industries, which view Israel as a successful research and development site.

As early as 1952, US Army Chief-of-Staff Omar Bradley called for the integration of Israel into the Mediterranean basin area, in light of the country's location and unique capabilities.

In 1967, Israel held back a radical Arab, pro-Soviet offensive, which threatened to bring about the collapse of pro-American Arab regimes and disrupt oil supply, thus severely undermining the American standard of living.

In 1970, Israel brought about the withdrawal of Syrian forces from Jordan, at a time when the US was tied up by wars in Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia, thus preventing the fall of the pro-American Hashemite regime and a possible domino effect that could have reached Saudi Arabia and the Gulf states.

Israel shares counter-terror lessons

The 1976 raid in Uganda that freed Israeli passengers of an Air France flight hijacked by terrorists provided America with a backwind in the war on international terror, while in 1977 Israeli intelligence provided the intelligence information that foiled Libyan leader Muammar Gaddafi's plan to assassinate Egyptian President Anwar Sadat.

Notably, Sadat would later go on to make peace with Israel, paving the way for other agreements between Israel and the Arabs.

In 1982, Israel destroyed Soviet anti-aircraft batteries in Lebanon that were considered immune to American weapons. Israel promptly shared the operation's lessons, estimated to be worth billions of dollars, changing entirely the global balance of power in the process and contributing to the Soviet Union's eventual disintegration.

In 1981, Israel bombed the Iraqi nuclear reactor, providing the US with the option of engaging in conventional wars with Iraq in 1991 and 2003 and preventing a possible nuclear war and a terrible price of thousands killed. In 2005, Israel provides America with the world's most extensive experience in homeland defence and warfare against suicide bombers and car bombs.

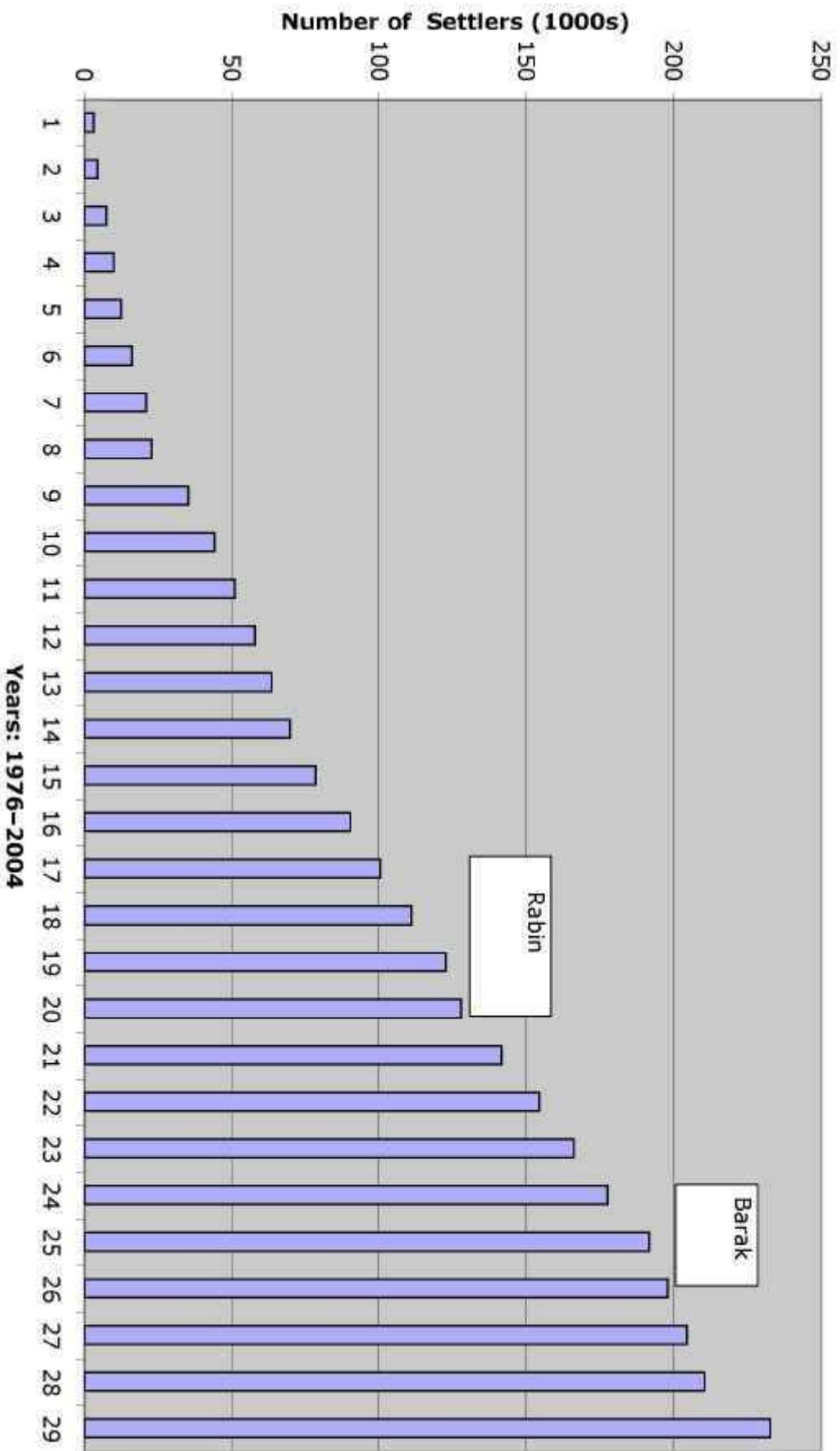
American soldiers train in IDF facilities and Israeli-made drones fly above the 'Sunni Triangle' in Iraq, as well as in Afghanistan, providing US Marines with vital intelligence.

Without Israel, the US would have been forced to deploy tens of thousands of American troops in the eastern Mediterranean basin, at a cost of billions of dollars a year.

Had Israel been located in the Persian Gulf, the US would have been spared the need to send hundreds of thousands of soldiers to the region, thanks to Israel's deterrence and operational capabilities.

Indeed, Congress leaders, Vice-President Cheney, and Secretary of Defense Rumsfeld are aware of Israel's unique contribution to US interests. In fact, they all wonder why the post-1993 Israel does not use its impressive contribution as leverage, in sharp contrast to the pre-1993 Israel.

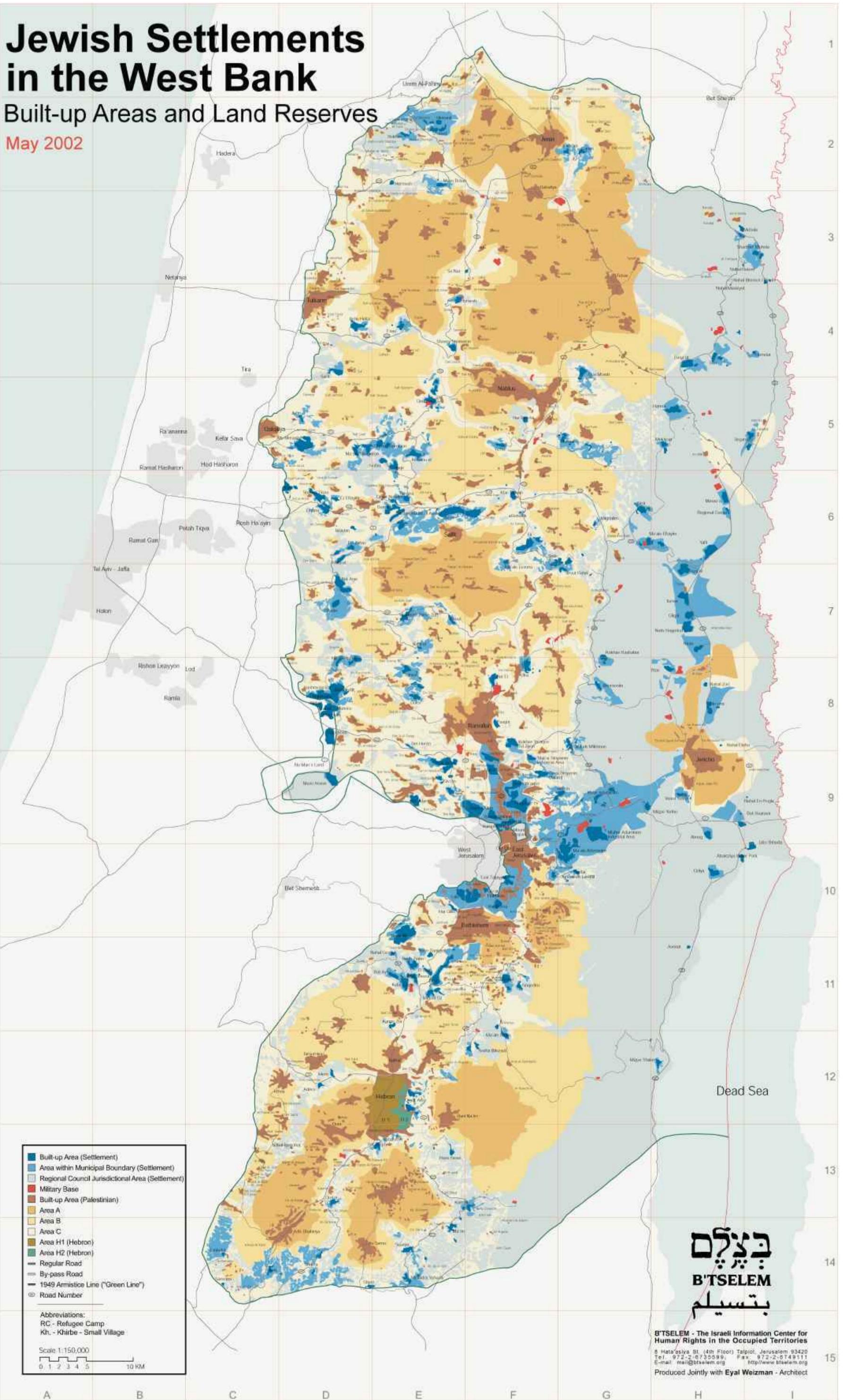
West Bank Settlers



Jewish Settlements in the West Bank

Built-up Areas and Land Reserves

May 2002



	Built-up Area (Settlement)
	Area within Municipal Boundary (Settlement)
	Regional Council Jurisdictional Area (Settlement)
	Military Base
	Built-up Area (Palestinian)
	Area A
	Area B
	Area C
	Area H1 (Hebron)
	Area H2 (Hebron)
	Regular Road
	By-pass Road
	1949 Armistice Line ("Green Line")
	Road Number

Abbreviations:
 RC - Refugee Camp
 Kh. - Khirbe - Small Village

Scale 1:150,000
 0 1 2 3 4 5 10 KM

בִּתְּסֵלֵם
B'TSELEM
بتسيلم

B'TSELEM - The Israeli Information Center for Human Rights in the Occupied Territories
 8 Hata'asiya St. (4th Floor) Talpoc, Jerusalem 93420
 Tel. 972-2-6735599; Fax. 972-2-6749111
 E-mail: mail@btselem.org; http://www.btselem.org
 Produced Jointly with Eyal Weizman - Architect

Herzl and the Kaiser
in Palestine, 1898
(photomontage)

