

AFTER SEPT. 11 and the subsequent bombings in Madrid and London, many have asked, "Why do they hate us?" There is, of course, a ready answer: It is the way the West interacts with the Islamic world and, most importantly, it is our policy of supporting Israel and repressive Arab governments. Never mind that the policies of Great Britain and Spain—two countries that have been bombed by Islamic radicals—do not particularly favor Israel, nor does public sentiment in these nations. Moreover, excluding some of the Emirates, there are no nonrepressive Arab governments to support—the regimes of the most important countries being the most repressive.

From the rhetoric, one would think that, if Israel ceased to exist, peace

would reign in the Middle East. This is nonsense. While the Israeli-Palestinian conflict may be irrelevant to the problems facing most countries in the Middle East, it is used by all of their governments to deflect the discontent of the "Arab Street" from themselves. As put by Sir Lawrence Freedman of King's College in London, should decent, moderate governments ever appear in the Middle East, they "will not be embraced by the radicals, who seek theocracies rather than democracies. Nor, as is often fondly believed, would terrorism stop if only a two-state solution could be found to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The radicals aim for no Jewish state at all."

Given that the Palestinians have brought Hamas to power—in the opinion of most nations, a terrorist organization whose *raison d'être* is the destruction of Israel—the sincerity of that group must be questioned after Khaled Meshaal of the Hamas political section stated that, "If Israel officially announces that it will leave all territory occupied since 1967, returns refugees, frees those arrested, then our discussions can take serious steps to achieve peace."

Dept. of Defense photos

Desert Diplomacy

No End in Sight to the Israeli-Palestinian CONFLICT

BY GERALD E. MARSH

"A full acceptance by the Israelis and Palestinians of the legitimate presence of the other and their right to exist in peace is a precondition that is unlikely to be accepted by either party any time soon."



The breakup of the Ottoman Empire after World War I set the stage for the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. In particular, the politically expedient divisions of the territory of the Palestine Mandate made the conflict almost inevitable. It is by no means the only factor but, without this unfortunate history, relations between the Palestinians and Jews might have been very different.

The story leading to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict begins in what is now known as Saudi Arabia with the birth of Wahhabism. Muhammad ibn Abdul Wahhab was an 18th-century religious leader whose alliance with the House of Saud in 1745 had been strengthened over the years by frequent intermarriage between the two families. The Wahhabis were severe puritanical reformers who were seen by their adversaries as fanatics. The movement later came to be known as the Ikhwan, or Brethren. As put by Robert Lacy in *The Kingdom*: "The Ikhwan movement was a twentieth-century revival of the religious reform preached by Muhammad ibn Abdul Wahhab, purification according to the literal word of God, and the Ikhwan found in the Hadith (the collected doings and sayings of the Prophet and of his Companions) a treasure chest of advice and instruction to regulate every detail of their existence in a holy fashion. They followed it slavishly." By 1912-13, Ibn Saud—the founder of Saudi Arabia—had established himself as the leader of the Ikhwan.

Wahhabism is a rigid form of antimystical puritanism. Any changes in belief and ritual after the pure and primitive Islam of the century after Muhammad are rejected. The Wahhabi strain of Islam has, for many years, been a source of friction in the Muslim world. In the early 19th century, the Turco-Egyptian army, sent by the pasha of Egypt, defeated the Wahhabi empire and confined Wahhabism to its native Nejd, the large plateau in the central portion of what presently is known as Saudi Arabia. While Wahhabism again played a political role in the mid 19th and 20th centuries, it now

is flourishing as never before because of heavy financial support by the Saudis, and is a major factor in the worldwide spread of intolerance in Islam. Actually, the Saudis object to the term Wahhabism, believing their form of Islam to be the only true Islam. If Wahhabism is acknowledged as a distinct branch of Islamic thought, they prefer this school to be called Salafism, which refers to the beliefs and practices of the earliest followers of Islam.

At the end of the Ottoman Empire, Hussein ibn Ali ruled the Hejaz (the northwest of present Saudi Arabia bordering the Red Sea) on behalf of the Ottoman Sultan and was known as the Sherif of Mecca and its Emir. He referred to himself and his family as "Hashemites" since he was a member of the House of Hashem, as was Mohammed himself. It was the spread of Wahhabi puritanism from Nejd into the neighboring Hejaz that threatened to undermine the authority of Hussein, so he decided to use force to put an end to the spread of the Wahhabi interpretation of Islam, and eliminate the threat to his rule.

Preparations for the battle, and the unfortunate outcome, have been described by David Fromkin in *A Peace to End All Peace*: "The final expedition was mounted in the spring of 1919. . . . Led by Hussein's son Abdullah, the trained Hejazi army of 5,000 men brought along the modern equipment which the British had supplied during the war. . . . But the pitched battle for which both sides had prepared never took place. A Brethren force of 1,100 camel-riders, who had

gone ahead of Ibn Saud's forces as scouts, came upon Abdullah's camp on the night of 25 May. Armed only with swords, spears, and antique rifles, they swooped down upon the sleeping Hejazi army and destroyed it. Abdullah, in his nightshirt, escaped; but his troops did not."

Despite subsequent British help, Ibn Saud captured the Hejaz and, by 1924, had driven Hussein into exile.

Before continuing the story, we need to explain how the British came to control Palestine and how the Balfour Declaration of November 1917, promising the Jews a homeland in Palestine, came to be. Lord Arthur James Balfour was Britain's Foreign Secretary when he issued the declaration in a letter to Lord Rothschild. It contained the key paragraph: "His Majesty's Government view with favour the establishment in Palestine of a national home for the Jewish people, and will use their best endeavours to facilitate the achievement of this object, it being clearly understood that nothing shall be done which may prejudice the civil and religious rights of existing non-Jewish communities in Palestine, or the rights and political status enjoyed by Jews in any other country."

While Jews have had a continuous presence in the Holy Land since biblical times, and in the Diaspora have uttered the phrase, "next year in Jerusalem," for 2,000 years, the movement of Jews in significant numbers to land purchased in Palestine only began in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. It was driven by rampant anti-Semitism in Russia and much of the rest of Europe. The history of the Zionist movement is interesting, but it is peripheral to the issues that concern us here. It is enough to say that the British believed in a national solution to the "Jewish problem," and the Balfour Declaration had its origin in this belief. The Jews, despite their conflict with the British over immigration into Palestine after the birth of the Nazi party, owe the legitimate existence of the state of Israel to Great Britain and its promulgation and support of the Balfour Declaration.



English control of Palestine came about after World War I and the fall of the Ottoman Empire when the mandates for Mesopotamia, Syria, and Palestine were assigned by the Supreme Court of the League of Nations at its San Remo meeting in April 1920. Negotiations between Great Britain and the U.S. with regard to the Palestine Mandate were concluded successfully in May 1922, and approved by the Council of the League of Nations in July 1922. The mandates for Palestine and Syria came into force simultaneously on Sept. 29, 1922.

The key paragraph of the mandate for Palestine states that the Principal Allied Powers have agreed that the Balfour Declaration should be put into effect and repeats the paragraph quoted earlier.

At the end of 1918, the Hashemite Emir Feisal bin Hussein set up an independent government in Damascus. For a brief period, Feisal assumed the throne in Syria while his brother, Emir Abdullah bin Al-Hussein, intended to assume the crown of Iraq. However, the colonial powers rejected this arrangement in the 1919 Paris Peace Conference. When the French forced Feisal to withdraw in November 1920, Abdullah led forces from the Hejaz to restore his brother's throne in the Kingdom of Syria. By March 1921, he had advanced as far as Amman and was about to invade the French Mandate of Syria. To prevent this, the British decided to entice Abdullah to remain in Transjordan—the area east of the Jordan River—temporarily. T.E. Lawrence, the famous “Lawrence of Arabia,” was instrumental in convincing Secretary of State for the Colonies (and future Prime Minister) Winston Churchill to follow this strategy.

Churchill's staff prepared a memorandum for the 1921 Cairo conference that dealt with the claims of Arabs and Jews to Palestine. The memorandum interpreted the 1915 correspondence between Sir Henry McMahon and Sherif Hussein of Mecca as defining the area of Arab independence to extend only as far west as the Jordan River. Because the Balfour Declaration did not define the borders of the Jewish homeland explicitly, Churchill's advisors concluded that England could establish a Jewish National Home in that part of Palestine west of the Jordan River, with the Arabs, led by Abdullah, having Transjordan—the rest of Palestine east of the Jordan.

League of Nations Mandate

However, Sir Herbert Samuel, the High Commissioner for Palestine, and his Chief Secretary, Wyndham Deedes, objected. They felt that, since The League of Nations Mandate being offered to Britain included Transjordan, England could not separate it unilaterally from the rest of Palestine. To objections raised by Samuel and Lloyd George—the British Prime Minister from 1916-22—Churchill said that Abdullah would not be expected to stay in the country for more than a few months to help bring order to this lawless region.

Slicing Up the Ottoman Empire Pie

To a large degree, today's Israeli-Palestinian conflict is the result of the politically expedient and arbitrary manner in which the Ottoman Empire was broken up following World War I. A flavor of how decisions were made regarding this division is captured in the following vignette:

Dateline: Uqair, the Arabian Desert, November 1922—Sir Percy Cox picked up a red pencil and carefully drew a line on the map of Arabia from the Persian Gulf to Jabal 'Anaizan near the Transjordan frontier. Sir Percy was the British High Commissioner for Iraq and, in drawing this boundary, he gave Iraq a large section of the territory claimed by Ibn Saud as part of Nejd, a region that later was to become the territorial core of Saudi Arabia. So, as to placate Saud, he added to Nejd almost two-thirds of the territory of Kuwait, which was squeezed between Nejd and Iraq on the Persian Gulf.

Nonetheless, Saud was not happy. “My friend,” he moaned, “you have deprived me of half my kingdom. Better take it all and let me go into retirement.” As Ibn Saud burst into tears, Sir Percy took his hand and also began to weep, saying, “My friend, I know exactly how you feel, and for this reason gave you two-thirds of Kuwait's territory. I don't know how Ibn Sabah will take the blow.”

Sheik Ahmad—Ibn Sabah was the desert title of the Sheik of Kuwait—did not like the arrangement in the least, and later asked, “If some day Ibn Saud dies and I grow strong like my grandfather, Mubarak, will the British government object if I denounce the unjust frontier line and recover my lost territories?”

“No!” laughed Sir Percy. “And may God bless your efforts.” Ahmad signed the agreement. [Abdul Aziz bin Abdul Rahman Al-Saud, the founder of Saudi Arabia, was known as Ibn Saud. Ibn Sabah was Sheik Ahmad Al-Jabir who became ruler in 1921 and led Kuwait through one of its most difficult historical periods.]

A year later, Major J.C. More, who was the British political agent for Kuwait, placed a large notice at the northern Iraq-Kuwait border, just south of some date palms, that read, “Iraq-Kuwait Boundary.” The board subsequently was removed by the Iraqis on several occa-

Of course, Abdullah did not stay for only a few months, and he later became the King of Jordan and his brother, Feisal, the King of Iraq. They could not return to an Arabia controlled by Ibn Saud.

The Wahhabis did not accept the arrangement and, according to Fromkin, “In 1922, only about a year after Abdullah's arrival, the fanatical Wahhabi Brethren, the spearhead of Ibn Saud, rode across the undefined desert frontier to attack Abdullah. An estimated 3,000 to 4,000 Brethren raiders came within an hour's camel ride of Aman . . . before being crushed by British airplanes and armored cars. . . . The Arabian prince with his foreign retinue settled in Amman and became a permanent new factor in the complex politics of the Palestine Mandatory regime. The recurring suggestion that Palestine be partitioned between Arabs and Jews ran up against the problem that 75 percent of the country had already been given to an Arab dynasty that was not Palestinian. The newly created province of Transjordan, later to become the independent state of Jordan, gradually drifted into existence as an entity separate from the rest of Palestine; indeed, today it is often forgotten that Jordan was ever part of Palestine.”

Britain achieved its policy goals in July 1922 when the League of Nations formally approved the reinterpretation of the Palestine Mandate, directing that the Balfour Declaration be put into effect west of the Jordan River.

The Palestinians, as well as some political blocs in Israel, have questioned the legitimacy of this, leading to what is known as Black

September. (The name Black September also is used for the terrorist group established by Yasir Arafat's Fatah organization, named after the events of September 1970. This group has been responsible for many violent acts, including the 1972 massacre of members of the Israeli Olympic team in Munich. In September 1970, the Hashemite King Hussein quashed an attempt by Palestinian organizations to overthrow his monarchy. This is when Arafat became a Palestinian hero and, as a consequence, many young Arabs joined his Fatah group. When Ahmad Shukeiri resigned from the Palestinian Liberation Organization leadership, Fatah soon joined—in July 1968—and quickly took control of the PLO.)

Armed Palestinians set up a parallel de facto government in Jordan and, on Sept. 1, 1970, an attempt was made to assassinate the king. Events soon got out of hand and, on Sept. 16, Hussein declared martial law. On Sept. 18, Syrian armored forces invaded Jordan in support of the Palestinians (at least that was the claim, after these events, by Hafez al-Assad, later president of Syria, who was the Syrian defense minister at the time) and only withdrew when the Israeli air force made low flights over its tanks. Unrest continued and, on June 5, 1971, several leading Palestinian organizations, including Fatah, called for the overthrow of King Hussein as the only way to prevent a peace agreement between Israel and Jordan.

In the end, the PLO was driven out of Jordan and there were tens of thousands of casualties in what only can be called a civil war between the Palestinians and the Hashemites of

sions and incorrectly replaced by the British. To further confuse the issue—or perhaps because they wanted the dates—the Iraqis planted additional date palms south of Safwan in the mid 1940s. The border location was lost and remained a continual source of controversy for the next 50 years.

No more thought went into the placing of the other borders. Iraq, with an estimated population of 16,000,000, was given a coastline of some 30 miles, with its outlet to the Gulf almost blocked by the Kuwaiti islands of Warba and Bubiyan. Kuwait, little more than a city-state of under 2,000,000



At the dawn of the 17th century, to the east, in central Asia, lay the Persian Empire; to the west and north, the Ottoman Empire.

people, was given 310 miles of coastline. In the 1930s, Iraq refused to come to an agreement with Kuwait over their border dispute unless Kuwait gave up control of Warba and Bubiyan. Kuwait refused to make any concessions and, in 1938, Iraq officially laid claim to Kuwait on the basis of the fact that, in 1875, it had been attached to the Ottoman province of Basra. Saddam Hussein thus was not the first to declare that Kuwait was legitimately a province of Iraq.

Jordan. There may, however, have been some positive results from Black September in that, over the succeeding years, the Hashemites responded by trying to have people identified as Jordanians rather than by tribe, sect, or clan. Yet, if recent statements by King Abdullah are any indication, this has met with only very limited success.

In May 1947, the United Nations attempted to resolve the growing dispute between the Arabs and Jews of Palestine by creating the UN Special Committee on Palestine to partition the remaining portion of the British Mandate west of the Jordan River; the Great Powers were excluded in the interests of neutrality. After a few boundary adjustments, the partition plan was passed in November as Resolution 181 by the UN General Assembly. While some of the more extreme Jewish groups objected to the plan—believing that the League of Nations had intended in their 1922 direction that the Balfour Declaration was to be implemented in all of the land west of the Jordan River—in the end, it was accepted, although they did express some concern over the lack of territorial contiguity. However, it roundly was condemned and rejected by the Arabs, who then initiated hostilities leading to the 1948 Arab-Israeli war.

The statement by Jamal Husseini, the Arab High Committee's spokesman, before the UN Security Council in April 1948, leaves no room for doubt that the Arabs were the aggressors: "The representative of the Jewish Agency told us yesterday that they were not the attackers, that the Arabs had begun the fighting. We did not deny this. We told the whole world that

we were going to fight." The tragedy of the Palestinian people began with this first Arab rejection of the partition of what was left of the Palestine Mandate.

Jordan captured the West Bank and eastern Jerusalem in the war of 1948, and subsequently annexed both in 1950. After the Arab-Israeli war of 1967, Israel took control of the West Bank from Jordan, which gave up its claim to the area in 1988. Shortly after the 1967 war, the United Nations Security Council formulated and adopted UN Resolution 242, which was to form the basis for the future of the West Bank.

Repercussions of Six-Day War

Many have argued that, if Israel abided by Resolution 242, which they claim requires Israel to withdraw from the territories captured in the 1967 Six-Day War, the Israeli-Palestinian conflict would be resolved. That is ridiculous. Eugene V. Rostow, who helped write Security Council Resolution 242 and, in 1967, was U.S. Under-Secretary of State for Political Affairs, has stated that there can be no disagreement among lawyers about the rights "of 'the Jewish people' under the Palestine Mandate to make 'close settlement' in all parts of Palestine except what is now Jordan. Security Council Resolution 242, approved after the 1967 war, stipulates not only that Israel and its neighboring states should make peace with each other but should establish 'a just and lasting peace in the Middle East.' Until that condition is met, Israel is entitled to administer the territories it captured—the West Bank, East

Jerusalem and Gaza Strip—and then withdraw from some but not necessarily all of the land to 'secure and recognized boundaries free of threats or acts of force.'"

He goes on to say that "The West Bank Arabs are mainly Jordanian citizens and should have the right to live in Jordan if they wish; today, Jordan denies this right." Given the events of Black September, we can understand why King Hussein—and King Abdullah after him—has refused to allow West Bank Arabs to have this right, given its potential impact on the demography of Jordan.

Rostow is not alone in his interpretation. The British position on Resolution 242 was given by George Brown, who was the British Foreign Secretary in 1967: "The phrasing of the Resolution was very carefully worked out, and it was a difficult and complicated exercise to get it accepted by the UN Security Council. I formulated the Security Council Resolution. Before we submitted it to the Council, we showed it to Arab leaders. The proposal said, 'Israel will withdraw from territories that were occupied,' and not from 'the' territories, which means that Israel will not withdraw from all the territories."

What really governed relations between the Arab states and Israel after the June 1967 Six-Day War were the Khartoum Resolutions adopted by the Arab governments in Khartoum, Sudan, the following September. The third resolution stated in no uncertain terms that there would be "no peace with Israel, no recognition of Israel, [and] no negotiations."

Yet, there is another ugly bit of history needed to understand Arab-Jewish relations. One of the great tragedies in the period before the creation of the state of Israel was the appointment in 1921 by the British of Amin al-Husseini as Grand Mufti and leader of the Palestinian Moslems. During his tenure, this Grand Mufti made an alliance with Adolf Hitler, adopting a good deal of Nazi ideology. This transformed his—and, to a significant extent, the region's—anti-Zionism into anti-Semitism. I use this term in its common meaning despite the fact that it makes little sense, given that both the Arabs and Jews are classified as Semites. The Germans and, indeed, Europeans as a whole, often consider Jews to be a separate race. This confused legacy of the 19th century continues into contemporary times where, not only Europeans, but many others often use "race" in place of "ethnicity."

Amin al-Husseini often is blamed for the Palestinian refugee situation, but here the evidence is quite ambiguous. In the end, as put by Benny Morris in his extensive study, "The Birth of the Palestinian Refugee Problem, 1947-1949," the Palestinian refugee dilemma "was born of war, not by design, Jewish or Arab. It was largely a by-product of Arab and Jewish fears and of the protracted, bitter fighting that characterized the first Israeli-Arab war; in smaller part, it was the deliberate creation of Jewish and Arab military commanders and politicians."

It is interesting that though much is made of this situation, little ever is said about the Jews who were forced to flee Muslim states. Their numbers roughly were equal to the number of Arabs that left Palestine. Of the approximately 820,000 Jewish refugees, some 586,000 were resettled in Israel without any compensation from Arab governments who confiscated their property and other assets. They have come to play an important role in present-day Israeli politics.

History shows that much of the Israel-Palestine situation resulted from the politically expedient division of the Ottoman Empire following World War I. Rest assured, however, that the answer to the current Israeli-Palestinian problem cannot be found there, nor in the history going back to biblical times. If there is an answer, it only can be found by a pragmatic approach that accepts the reality that the Israelis and Palestinians are going to live in roughly the areas that they now find themselves. The Palestinians are not going to leave the West Bank and major Israeli developments around Jerusalem are not going to be undone. The land is not a gift from God to either of the claimants, and any solution has, as a necessary precondition, a true acceptance by both parties of the legitimate presence of the other and their right to exist in peace.

This means that the Jews cannot occupy all of the biblical lands they once held; fundamentalist Christians will find this disappointing since such occupation is a precondition for the final conflict in the valley of Armageddon. Radical Palestinians belonging to Hamas and Islamic Jihad will have to accept, to borrow some of the phraseology of the eminent scholar Bernard Lewis, that, despite Muslim religious teaching, the world is not divided into dar al-Islam, or the House of Islam, where Muslims rule and the law of Islam prevails, and dar al-Harb, or the House of War, comprising the rest of the non-Islamic world—that between them there is not a morally necessary, and religiously obligatory state of war, one that will continue until the final and inevitable triumph of Islam over unbelief. Moreover, the Islamist elements of the Palestinians also will have to accept that, contrary to Koranic law, all the lands conquered by Muhammad and his caliphs in the seventh century, including Palestine, Spain, and Portugal, are not inalienable Islamic territory.

Jews in the Holy Land

Jewish population in the Holy Land increased significantly only in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. As Jews developed the area, and better conditions arose under the British administration during the mandate, many Arabs from surrounding regions migrated and settled in the region. Those west of the Jordan River and in the Gaza Strip came to constitute the core of what today is known as the Palestinian people, welded together largely by the efforts of Yasir Arafat who, it should be

remembered, originally maintained that Jordan was Palestine. Taken together, the number of Palestinians living in Jordan and Israel today exceeds the sum of the populations of the Gaza Strip and the West Bank.

Israel and Jordan gained their independence within two years of each other. Abdullah negotiated a new Anglo-Transjordanian treaty, ending the British Mandate and gaining full independence for Transjordan, on March 22, 1946; on May 25, 1946, the Transjordanian parliament proclaimed Abdullah king, while officially changing the name of the country from the Emirate of Transjordan to the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan. Israel was created by the United Nations in 1948.

While the Hashemites constitute a non-Palestinian dynasty occupying some 75% of the original Palestine Mandate, today Jordan has legitimacy with most Moslems in the world and Israel does not. This is true even though Jordan continues to deny Palestinians living in the West Bank, many of whom hold Jordanian passports, the right to live in Jordan. The illegitimacy of Israel is due to the Jewish

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character of the state and the belief that, since the entire region once was under Muslim rule, it should be so again. This is a principal motivation for radical Palestinians who represent a large enough proportion of Palestinian society to make a settlement impossible.

A full acceptance by the Israelis and Palestinians of the legitimate presence of the other and their right to exist in peace is a precondition that is unlikely to be accepted by either party any time soon. On the Israeli side, there is the change in demographics that has contributed to the reduced influence of the Labor Party. It also was noted earlier that some 586,000 Jewish refugees from Arab countries were resettled in Israel without any compensation from the Arab governments who confiscated their property and other assets. These people and their descendants are unwilling to lose anything more in any settlement with the Palestinians—and, although they lost nothing to the Arab world, this also is true of many of the roughly 1,000,000 Jews who emigrated from the Soviet Union, a significant number of whom have settled in the West Bank. Together, they now form a substantial “hard line” political bloc. More important, this bloc carries

along with it the Israeli silent majority who fear that giving up more territory threatens security. The idea that further territorial concessions can lead to peace essentially is moribund.

On the Palestinian side, Hamas (formed by the Palestinian branch of the Muslim Brotherhood in 1988) and Islamic Jihad (formed by militant Palestinians in the Gaza Strip during the 1970s) represent factions that, for Israel, make it impossible to reach an agreement in the foreseeable future. Islamic Jihad, like Hamas, is committed to the creation of an Islamic Palestinian state and the destruction of Israel. The group’s primary leadership resides in Syria, though other leadership elements can be found in Lebanon, as well as various parts of the Middle East.

The last chance for a near-term settlement was lost with the collapse of the Oslo talks at Camp David in July 2000, and the last-ditch round of negotiations that extended to January 2001, when Pres. Bill Clinton intervened and offered Yasir Arafat a deal that would have given the Palestinians all of Gaza and more than 94% of the West Bank, full sovereignty over Arab neighborhoods in Jerusalem, and air rights over Israel. In the end, Arafat—who had lost Jordan during the events of Black September—was unwilling to go down in history as the leader that betrayed the vision of a single Palestinian state in all of the land west of the Jordan River, for that is what it means to have the refugees and all their progeny since 1948 given the right to return to Israel, the so-called “right of return” demanded by Arafat and now Hamas. The influence of Hamas and Islamic Jihad increased greatly after Arafat’s death and culminated in Hamas winning the recent Palestinian elections.

If there is to be any permanent resolution to the Israeli-Palestinian issue, the Palestinians must develop a civil society that exists under the rule of law, one that will abide by agreements even as governments change. Only then will the Israelis have a credible partner for negotiations. Until that time, Israel most likely will continue to follow the policy of disengagement initiated by Prime Minister Ariel Sharon.

The prospects for peace any time soon are slim. When the Palestinians entered the Gaza settlement of Neve Dekalim after the Israelis left, they set the synagogue on fire; atop the building a huge green flag of Hamas was flying, with a smaller Palestinian flag below it. A few minutes later, a large black flag of Islamic Jihad was placed just under the Hamas flag, above the Palestinian one. Five minutes later, the Palestinian flag had been taken down altogether. ★

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