

Symposium: The Future of the Two State Solution After Gaza

Editor's Note: We asked a range of writers whether the two-state solution was viable after the recent conflict in Gaza, and if so what they saw as the obstacles to its realisation.

Michael Walzer argues that two states is in bad shape, but remains the only viable solution and can be advanced by a combination of 'internal unilateralism' on both sides, and greater support by the US and EU. **John Strawson** thinks the time has come for the international community to consider compelling the two parties to reach a compromise. **Ghada Karmi** makes the case for the one-state solution while **Donna Robinson Divine** calls for both sides to go beyond those constitutive narratives around which identities have hardened and which have blocked progress. **Martin Shaw** calls for 1948 to be revisited as well as 1967 and for the idealism of the one-state solution to inform the two-state solution, while **Alex Stein** argues none of the existing 'solutions' remain viable and what's really needed is imagination and radical new ideas. **Menchem Kellner**, **Fred Seigel** and **Sol Stern** warn of the dangers of moving towards two states without a radical change of attitude towards Israel by the Palestinian leaderships.

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Michael Walzer, For the Two-State Solution

No one can say with any certainty that the two state solution was viable before the Gaza war. I can imagine arguments that the war made it more viable, and also less viable. But, really, its viability doesn't have a lot to do with the immediate strategic/political situation. There isn't any other solution; its viability derives from its uniqueness. People keep coming back to it because there's no other way to go. It survives, therefore I guess it's viable.

But it isn't in great shape right now, even though everyone knows what each side would have to do to realize this solution. The Palestinians have to end their civil war, and form a provisional government that recognizes Israel and represses all terrorist activity. The Israelis have to form a government that recognizes the

Palestinians' right to a state of their own, defeats the settler movement, and begins the evacuation of the settlements. The nice thing about these two lists of what-ought-to-be-done is that they don't require any mutual engagement. Settling their civil war and repressing terrorism are things that the Palestinians can do, indeed, have to do, by themselves. And Israelis can defeat the settler movement and move the settlers out of the West Bank without a 'partner' on the other side and without handing over territory. Move the settlers out and the army in. That would be a sufficient indication of a readiness to withdraw, just as the repression of terrorist activity by the Palestinians would be a sufficient indication of a readiness to co-exist. The readiness is all. After that, negotiations would not be difficult (well, they would be difficult, but success would be possible, as it isn't now).

Of course, each side would find the necessary moves much more comfortable if the other side was 'readying' itself at the same time and at the same pace. But it is important to insist that both Israel and the Palestinians can and should act independently, whatever the other is doing. Rabin in 1992 and Barak in 1999 should have moved immediately, the day after their electoral victory, to take on the settler movement. They should have provoked a fight, and won it (as they would have done), and begun the process of bringing the settlers home. The argument against doing this was exactly the same as the argument made by many Palestinians against repressing the terrorists: Why should we start a fight among ourselves when there is no near prospect of a final settlement? In fact, all anyone needs in order to act is the idea of a settlement – and the only idea that can motivate the actions I have described is the two state solution.

What is necessary on each side is internal unilateralism. By contrast, external unilateralism, as in Israel's withdrawal from Gaza (and the original Kadima plan to withdraw in a similar way from the West Bank) is not a good idea. The actual establishment of a Palestinian state and the fixing of its boundaries – that has to be negotiated, and the negotiations must wait until the negotiating partners are sure about each other's readiness. At this moment, they are not sure at all, and each of them is right to be unsure. The zealots on both sides are too strong. This might be the result of the Gaza war, except that the situation was so dark before the war. The next Israeli government will stand considerably to the right of the current one, its leaders unwilling to challenge the settler movement (if they aren't actually supporters of the movement). But that's what the polls were already suggesting in the months before the war. The drift rightward is the inevitable result of Hamas's rocketing of Israeli cities. Among Palestinians, the confusion of 'resistance' and

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terrorism seems deeply entrenched, but that was also true, at least in Gaza where the rockets were coming from, before the fighting began.

It seems that everyone who supports the two state solution – the last Israeli government, the Palestine Authority, the Egyptians, the Jordanians, and the Saudis – hoped that Israel would win a decisive victory in Gaza. The failure to win decisively strengthens the opponents of two states. That's not an argument that Israel should have 'finished' the job; there were good reasons for an early cease fire. In any case, the long-term outcome of the war is unknowable right now. If the rocket fire from Gaza stops and if internationally supported mechanisms are put in place to prevent the smuggling of rockets – that may be victory enough to make Israelis more ready to withdraw from the West Bank. And the experience of the war, the way Hamas fought and the way Israel fought, may undercut Palestinian support for terrorism as a political strategy – as the 2006 fighting apparently did in Lebanon, though that didn't look to be the case immediately after the fighting ended.

I have stressed internal unilateralism, but each side needs more than a little help from its friends. Israel and the Palestinians need heavy and continuous pressure to address the obstacles in their own camp. Clinton and his team tried too hard, I now believe, to bring the two sides together before either of them was ready. Arafat, who probably believed in terrorism as a strategy, was less ready than Barak, who apparently was prepared to challenge the settlers – but not quite yet. It would have been better in the 1990s, and it would be better now, to work on each side separately. A division of labor might make sense, with the Americans concentrating on Israel and the Europeans (with help, perhaps, from Egypt, Jordan, and Saudi Arabia) on Palestine, but the interventions would have to be equally strong and the external partners equally committed to their tasks: the repression of terror by the Palestine Authority and the defeat of the settler movement by the Israeli government. Perhaps the awfulness of the Gaza war will produce a new sense of urgency, if not in Israel and Palestine, then in the US and Europe.

Note that this external assistance could have no other goal than two states. In the international system, states can help make new states and give them legitimacy; they can't abolish states to which they have already given legitimacy (as Israel would have to be abolished for the sake of a one state solution). They can recognize and proliferate entities like themselves, and that is the only 'solution' they can offer to the Palestinians. Once there are two states, and a boundary they both accept, then it will be possible to talk, if anyone wants to talk, about confederations and unions.

But not now. Europeans could form their own union only after the post-World War Two settlement had fixed the boundaries of all the European states. Israel and Palestine need a post-war settlement.

A last note: it is critically important right now to address the suffering of the people of Gaza, and no one seems to have figured out a way of doing that – perhaps there is no way – without strengthening Hamas. So be it. But Hamas is obviously not ‘ready’ for negotiations and not ready to get ready. Its refusal to recognize Israel and its commitment to terrorism are, for now at least, central features of its identity. So, I am afraid, is its rabid anti-Semitism: the Hamas Charter reiterates an ancient hatred that long predates the Zionist project and the wars of 1948 and ‘67. It solemnly insists that the Jews as a people are responsible for the French and Russian revolutions and for the two world wars. And that’s part of the message delivered every day and every week in Hamas schools and mosques – which is not a sign of readiness. Perhaps we need to think about a three state solution, with only two of those states preparing themselves for peaceful co-existence.

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John Strawson, Time to Compel the Parties?

The Gaza war has not changed the basic fault-lines of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. That is the tragedy. Hundreds of innocent Palestinians are dead, large areas of Gaza devastated but Palestinian and Israeli realities remain the same. Palestinians and Israelis remain deeply divided amongst themselves but are unified in their mutual suspicion of each other. The war has certainly added to that sentiment. All opinion surveys in both Palestine and Israel continue to show strong support for a two-state solution. Polls also reveal a lack of confidence in the ability of both Palestinian and Israeli leaders to deliver it. Such findings are a challenge to the international community to develop a more aggressive interventionist policy to create a

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compulsory framework to implement the two-state solution that it opted for more than six decades ago.

The war represents a failure of the policy of a large section of the international community towards Hamas. As soon as the Hamas-led 'reform and change' alliance won the Palestinian Legislative elections in January 2006 the international community reacted as if Palestinians had voted for terrorism and violence and set about to isolate the Hamas government. For over a year the Palestinian Authority was starved of donor-aid. This had no impact on terrorism – which is cheap – but did degrade the public services provided by the Authority (schools, hospitals, social services and the police) and massively increased unemployment. This international policy encouraged the Israeli government to shun all contacts with the Palestinian National Authority and encouraged the view that there were no negotiating partners. The United States and European Union crude designation of Hamas as a terrorist organisation meant that neither understood the politics within Hamas and the opportunities that arose as a result of Hamas's participation in the elections. As a result the pragmatic wing of the organisation lost influence to those who were committed to 'resistance.' In the summer of 2007 the latter bolted from the Authority and opted for a fiefdom in Gaza, for the time being sealing the division of the Palestinian leadership into warring factions.

Unfortunately the international community led by the United States and the European Union failed to understand the lessons of this experience and now turned their attention to supporting Fatah in the West Bank, while maintaining the isolation of Hamas in Gaza. The Israeli government undoubtedly saw this as a green light for imposing the blockage of Gaza – a policy enthusiastically supported by Egypt. But this failed to undermine support for Hamas and actually increased support amongst Palestinians for the provocative rocket attacks on Israeli civilians. The Israeli government resumed discussions with President Abbas and his Fatah government in Ramallah but spun out the talks which have produced very little. Had the Israeli government been more bold and spelt out a realistic timescale for withdrawal for the West Bank – and improved the atmosphere by releasing significant numbers of the 10,000 Palestinian prisoners, removed the checkpoints and dismantled the doubly illegal outpost settlements – then there would have been a political horizon that Palestinians could have gained hope from. Instead the time was wasted and sense of hopelessness nourished support for the Hamas militants. Fatah looked empty-handed compared to the apparent boldness of Hamas.

The policy of isolating Hamas led to war. This should be a salutary lesson to all those who think the way to peace is to isolate Israel. The international community and international civil society have to engage more seriously with all the parties to the conflict, Israeli political parties as well as all Palestinian parties. The United States, the European Union and the Quartet (the US, EU with Russia and the United Nations) must drop their opposition to contacts with Hamas if any movement is to be possible. It is absurd the Quartet envoy Tony Blair and the US mediator George Mitchell are banned from talking with one of the main protagonists.

Clearly the policy of light-touch international involvement has been a failure since Oslo. Israeli and Palestinian leaderships are simply unable, if left to their own devices – and to the pressure of their own constituencies – to resolve the conflict. Mediation has failed because too many central questions of the conflict have been left open. While that remains the case, forces on each side believe they gain more by waiting than by making an agreement. The international community needs to change its entire strategy and foreclose all discussion on the final status issue by producing a detailed plan including a map of the Palestinian state.

The Clinton parameters that emerged in the wake of the failed Camp David talks in 2000 should provide the basis for an international agreement on a clear partition of Palestine and Israel – through a United Nations Security Council resolution under the mandatory powers of Chapter VII. A map which ensures that the Palestinian state recovers the total amount of territory occupied in 1967 and with sovereignty over the Palestinian areas of Jerusalem is a basic requirement. A clear international agreement on the Palestinian refugees which guarantees re-settlement in the Palestinian state and compensation for property lost in 1948 and 1967 is also essential. The failure of Oslo to spell out the destination of the peace process is what has led to the second intifada and the Gaza war. Both Israeli and Palestinians need to be told that there can be no gains by delay and certainly none in yet another round of fighting.

In order to make it clear that this was the will of the international community the areas designated for a Palestinian state should be immediately turned into a United Nations Trust territory. This would clarify the status of the territory and make it clear to Israel and the Palestinians that the scope for negotiations would be the modalities of Israeli withdrawal – the final de-colonisation of Palestine. A United Nations Administration supported by an international implementation force could be deployed in phased manner in coordinating with Israel, the

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Palestinian National Authority and the Hamas government in Gaza. A military implementation force composed of contingents from both NATO and the Arab League would offer confidence to both sides.

A two-state solution remains the only viable way of overcoming the conflict. In 1947 the United Nations adopted such a policy in the teeth of opposition from the Arab League. Since 2002 the League has reversed that policy. The Gaza war undoubtedly has shaken the region and many Arab states could reconsider this position. That is why the international community has to act quickly and decisively while the Arab peace initiative remains on the table. The results of the Israeli elections, and the prospects of a Netanyahu government, make all the more compelling the necessity for reducing the room for manoeuvre of the parties. After over 60 years the time has come for the international community to honor its pledge to both Palestinians and Israelis.

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Ghada Karmi, For the One-State Solution

The idea of two states, one Israeli, the other Palestinian, has become the desired end point of the Middle East peace process. Given the Israeli assault on Gaza in late December 2008, which has left hundreds dead and wounded, extensive physical damage, and a legacy of hatred, finding a solution to the conflict is ever more urgent. The search for a two-state solution has accelerated, just as hopes for its realisation have become dimmer. And yet, it is spoken of as the only way forward

and has widespread support at the official level in the West, and amongst Israelis and Palestinians.

It is good to remember that this was not always the case. The two-state solution was first mooted in 1974 when the Palestine National Council voted to install a 'national authority' on any part of Palestine's land which could be liberated. Until then, the Palestinian aim was one of total liberation of the territory under Israel's control and, once liberated, of setting up a single democratic state with equality for all its citizens, whether Jew, Christian or Muslim. Only with the realisation of Israel's power and invincibility did the Palestinian national movement accept that total liberation at the time was impossible to attain. The two-state idea began to take hold, until in 1988 at the Palestinian National Council meeting in Algiers, the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) formally recognised Israel and called for the creation of a Palestinian state alongside. The putative state would occupy all of the 1967 territories with East Jerusalem as its capital.

Israel never accepted this proposal, and does not do so today. The most that has happened is that the outgoing Israeli prime minister, Ehud Olmert, and his foreign minister, Tzipi Livni, have recently voiced support for the aim of a two-state solution. But they do not spell out where the Palestinian state will be and do not accept that the entire West Bank or East Jerusalem should be ceded for such a state. And in any case they have taken no concrete steps to make any of it happen. On the contrary, the expansion of illegal Jewish settlements is ongoing, and there has been no Israeli action on the Arab peace plan, first presented in 2002 and reiterated in 2008. This offers Israel full normalisation with the Arab states in return for its withdrawal from all of the 1967 territories, including East Jerusalem. If Israel had been remotely serious about the two-state solution, it should have adopted the Arab offer.

Anyone today who still talks about the two-state solution has either not looked at the map or is wilfully blind. Most of the West Bank's territory is under Israeli control. It is transected by Jewish settlements, Israeli-only bypass roads, military closed areas and the separation wall. 80 percent of West Bank water flows directly to Israel, and all major agricultural land is farmed by Israelis. Because of the 550 barriers and checkpoints maintained by Israel's army throughout the West Bank, Palestinian towns and villages are cut off from each other. East Jerusalem is almost wholly judaised, host to over 200,000 Jewish settlers, and is in any case 'non-

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negotiable' in Israeli eyes. Gaza is a prison and totally disconnected from the West Bank and Jerusalem.

If this geographical reality were not enough to convince the sceptic, a review of Israelis history since the war of 1967 should make clear Israel's intentions. Right from the moment when the Six-Day war ended, Israeli leaders were agreed that no Palestinian territory would be returned. A plan for settling the occupied territories was approved by the Israeli cabinet in August 1967, just two months after the war. From that time on, the building of settlements and the acquisition of Palestinian land has been relentless. The only anomaly in this story was Ariel Sharon's decision to remove the Gaza settlements in 2005. But his aim was to strengthen Israel's hold on the West Bank and to expand settlements there. Currently, there are half a million Jewish settlers in the West Bank and Jerusalem. The major settlements, like Maale Adumim or Ariel, are now small towns with an air of permanence. They and others like them serve the purpose they were intended for: to act as insurmountable obstacles to the creation of a viable Palestinian state.

In this scenario, the only Palestinian state Israel could offer would be a collection of enclaves within the West Bank, not contiguous, cut off from Gaza, and minus East Jerusalem. As Elliott Abrams, writing in the Israel daily, *Haaretz* on 24 February commented, no Palestinian leadership could accept that. He rates the chances of a solution to the conflict this year as 'zero.' Israel's latest war on Gaza does not worsen the logistical picture, but the ill will it has sown and the potential for more conflict will make a resolution harder.

The Alternatives

In the situation where facts on the ground make a viable Palestinian state impossible, and where no one is willing to force Israel to take the steps needed to change this, further discussion of the two-state solution is futile and a dangerous diversion. So long as the international community is kept busy pursuing this chimera, Israel will be able to continue taking Palestinian land. So what are the alternatives? There are only two: to leave matters as they are, leading to further Israeli colonisation and a worsening conflict, or to consider the creation of one state. The former is clearly unacceptable, which leave the second as the only possible alternative.

The subject of the one-state solution has gained increasing prominence in the few years. Once upon a time, it was ridiculed as utopian and naïve. But this has

changed. Numerous articles discussing the idea have appeared in a variety of leading newspapers and journals. Groups arguing for the one-state solution have sprung up in different parts of the world, and several major conferences have taken place – another will convene in Boston at the end of March. A major reason for this has been the impasse over the two-state solution, with people searching for an alternative. But others, including this writer, have never believed in the two state solutions. The partition of Palestine has always been a problematic idea. On the practical level, this is a tiny land whose resources would be impossible to divide in any equitable way, and would be best shared. The holy places important to three world religions would likewise be freely open to all. The five million Palestinian refugees currently dispersed outside their homeland would be able to return to a common state, but not to a tiny Palestinian segment of the original land.

However, most important of all, the one-state solution would demolish the current, anti-democratic and regressive set-up of a state erected on exclusivist ethnic/religious lines. Israel was established as a Jewish state; one where, by definition, there had to be a Jewish majority. To attain this end in a land largely inhabited by non-Jews as was the case in 1948, a process of ethnic cleansing by various means had to take place. This continues until today in Jerusalem and other parts of the West Bank and several Israeli political leaders advocate expulsion of the Israeli Arab minority within Israel for the same reason. This ideology has not only destroyed Palestine and its society; it has also endangered the surrounding Arab states with wars, occupation and ongoing conflict. A two-state solution, far from dealing with this ideology, will only help preserve it, albeit in defined borders. Israel's proclivity for land acquisition and aggression will remain unaffected, and sooner or later, renewed conflict will break out. The Palestinians who lost their homes and property in 1948 and thereafter, will remain outside their homeland.

The only humane, just and durable solution for this sixty-year old conflict is to re-create Palestine once more as one, integrated state, whose citizens irrespective of their religious or racial origin can enjoy equal rights before the law. This does not mean the destruction of the Israeli Jewish people, but rather their re-integration into a modern, progressive and peaceful society, where they can be as secure as their neighbours. The obstacles to realising this aim are formidable. But the fight for such a state, as opposed to the truncated non-viable entity necessary to realising the two-state solution, is one worth taking on.

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Donna Robinson Divine, *Beyond the Clash of Narratives*

It is tempting to describe the establishment of two states in Palestine as the end of the Middle East conflict. What started as a struggle between two nations over the same territory would be ended by an agreement on the division of this hotly contested land. Tempting, but unrealistic. Two states may very well be created, but if the identities and interests of the protagonists continue to feed off the narrative of armed-resistance-as-salvation, then two states will not end the violence or eliminate its causes.

To view the Palestinian-Israeli confrontation solely through the prism of a struggle for two nation-states ignores the narratives through which both peoples define their aims and interests. For Israelis, the narrative is concrete and narrow: support for a Palestinian state rests on the belief that it will grant them security and dissolve forever the frustrations engendered by the so-called Middle East Conflict. But how likely is it that a formal treaty would produce the kind of tranquillity anticipated by most Israelis? On the Palestinian side, the narrative is as broad as it is ambitious. Palestinians have embraced the idea of statehood as a means of setting right what they see as the wrong done them by Israel's founding as a Jewish state. Living in the shadow of their humiliation as a people who betrayed their national cause by losing their land, Palestinians insist that sovereignty must redeem their lost honor and restore their full national rights. Their armed struggle has become not surprisingly – even for those not themselves directly drenched in its terror and violence – a sacred duty. But no state, whatever its borders, can support the weight of such high expectations.

Ordinary Palestinians and Israelis are thus caught not only in a crossfire of bombs and rockets, but also in a clash of narratives that encases them in a worldview of false expectations and leaves them without a fresh vocabulary to confront their own shortcomings. Narratives produce a more rigid dialectic for adherents than a set of goals. Negotiations can change goals but they have little impact on narratives. Narratives give rise to the supposition that adherents must submit and that no moral grounds for compromise are available. Consider first the outcome of Israel's general election and the reaction of many to the strong showing of Avigdor Lieberman's Israel Our Homeland Party. Notwithstanding his inflammatory rhetoric or rather because of it, Lieberman backs the establishment of a Palestinian state. That so many involved in trying to end the Middle East Conflict cast this political party as an obstacle rather than as a bridge to peace is less revelation than reminder that the dispute is not simply about granting Palestinians national sovereignty.

Also lost in the commotion over the Gaza war is any analysis of how these narratives became the driving force of three weeks of violence. The Gaza Strip actually became the site not of one but rather of three wars.

Hamas and Israel waged war over the terms of a ceasefire that will, at some point, end the fighting. Israel aimed to stun Hamas and its supporters by substantially raising the costs borne by the movement for its campaign of violence against Israel. Israel posited that the shock and awe of its military operation would show Hamas that launching its rockets threatened its own hold on power. For Hamas, the goal was to withstand the onslaught and terrorise Israel into agreeing to its demand for an end to this round of violence by the opening of the Gaza Strip's blockaded border crossings. Hamas has turned national resistance into a religious cause that seems to offer its adherents moral certainty but also much suffering. The question for Hamas leaders was whether or not their spiritual charge could still be summoned with so many lives lost and so much devastation. The question for Israel was security – could its military operations produce the kind of guarantees the country's population expects?

Also shaping military operations in the Gaza Strip was the struggle between Israel and Egypt over how to monitor and control Gaza's borders. Israel's campaign was intended to send as many messages to Egypt as to Hamas about the risks of militancy. Since Israel's withdrawal from Gaza in 2005, Egypt has allowed weapons to reach Hamas. Hoping to regain its once widely recognised regional power, Egypt has both confronted and supported Hamas in order to be able to mediate between

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Palestinian factions and between the Palestinian Authority and Israel. It allowed smuggling, but it opposed rocket attacks against Israel. It wants to remove Hamas from the iron grip of Iran and Syria and soften what it sees as Israel's hard line positions on how to resolve the Middle East conflict. Paradoxically, Israeli military actions were designed to strengthen Egypt in its mediation efforts and weaken its opposition to taking more vigorous actions against the smuggling of weapons and hence to assuming more responsibility for the Gaza Strip.

Finally, this war was another regional eruption of a global confrontation between those countries aligned with the United States and those non-state movements supported by Syria and Iran determined to oppose any settlement of the Middle East Conflict that accommodates Israel and is forged on terms perceived favourable to American interests. Iranian aid flows to Hamas because the organisation is prepared to direct what it sees as its holy wrath against Israel and against a political process that leaves Israel at peace and America ascendant. Thus, these were disparate wars united on a single battlefield but likely to wind down only by separate, complicated, and prolonged calculations.

Because the humanitarian calamity in Gaza is calibrated only insofar as it reinforces several competing narratives on security, redemption, religious purity, or on national liberation and resistance, it not only justifies, but also produces a belief that things can be worked out through violence. Middle East violence, itself, has become ritualised and driven by narratives that tell different stories about history, identity, and about the sacred and the profane. Only when people are liberated from the stranglehold of these narratives will the Middle East have a chance to become the place where peace can be made.

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**Martin Shaw, A viable two-state solution needs the idealism
and utopianism of the one-state idea**

The Israeli assault on Gaza was an affront to humanity. 1338 Palestinians and 13 Israelis were killed, thousands were wounded, and tens of thousands made homeless. The poor and crowded enclave, whose people were already suffering from restrictions on their movement and the entry of food, medicines and other goods, was pulverised by Israel's modern military machine. Although the total number of deaths is not in dispute, political battle is now being waged over the composition of the Palestinian death toll – mostly civilians according to Palestinian sources, mostly Hamas fighters according to Israel's statistical counter-offensive. But even Israel does not dispute that its forces killed hundreds of civilians, many of them children. And whatever the breakdown, it is clear that this assault deliberately threatened and terrorised civilians on a huge scale. Certainly, Hamas' rockets also threaten and terrorise civilians, and they are called terrorists. By this measure, the Israeli government and armed forces are only bigger and better terrorists. Israel boasts rules of engagement that are supposed to avoid civilian harm, but extensive civilian harm was hardly unintended. Israel claims to have attacked Hamas, but it also attacked the Gazan population as a whole, in a clear continuation of the policy of collective punishment for its temerity in supporting the party. Israel's professed regret for civilian deaths is not really more hypocritical than that of the United States as it bombs yet another wedding party in Afghanistan; but the policy of collective punishment, which we also saw two years ago in Lebanon, is something else.

It is tempting to say that this cannot, must not, go on. But it probably will. Israel has hardly been shamed – its electorate has just returned an even more right-wing Knesset, which seems likely to make Binyamin Netanyahu prime minister. Hamas has hardly been crushed. If Barack Obama was horrified, he did a good job of hiding it. Many European leaders and citizens have shown their indignation, but it is unlikely to be directed effectively towards a solution. The Israel-Palestine crisis is six decades old, and leaderships on all sides have interests in things going on as they are, however awful and unjust. This is much easier than changing, and there are no obvious de Klerk, let alone Mandela, to hand. In the short term, the best hope clearly lies in the determination of the Obama administration to achieve a peace in conjunction with a regional settlement between Israel and the Arab states (and

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between the USA and the Muslim world). The US will have to use sticks – threaten to withdraw political and financial support – as well as carrots, to achieve changes.

I have no special insight into the goals and likely methods of team Obama, or the precise compromises that could bring the sides to agreement. However, I think it's important to emphasise that the Palestinians – in their position of undoubted military, political and economic weakness and division, which the Gaza war has reinforced – should not be pressured to accept too little. A viable two-state solution will have to address the fundamental inequities of the situation, revisiting 1948 as well as 1967 and more recent developments. Israel needs to recognise the injustices that it has perpetrated from its inception, which continue to dog its legitimacy and security. Hamas's provocative Gaza stronghold, after all, is partly populated by the descendents of those Israel forced from their homes in 1948. A two-state solution cannot just be a reversion to the borders before the 1967 war, radical as that will be: it must also address the consequences of the original expulsions from within internationally recognised Israeli territory. Anything less will leave the fundamental Palestinian grievances untouched, and will undermine any settlement.

We need therefore to stop thinking of a two-state solution as 'realistic,' and a single-state solution as 'utopian.' A viable two-state solution needs the idealism and apparent utopianism of the single-state option. Just as a single state would need to be a secular, non-ethnic democracy, so should two separate Israeli and Palestinian states have non-sectarian, democratic constitutions. Israel cannot remain the state of the Jewish nation, in which Arabs are second-class citizens. It is not acceptable that there should be a right of 'return' for Jews who (and whose families) have never lived there, but no right of return for the expelled Palestinians and their immediate descendents. The latter right will have to be acknowledged in principle, even if in practice – in many or most cases – it is commuted to financial compensation. Jews whose family property was expropriated by Nazi Germany in the 1930s and early 1940s have rightly reclaimed ownership or been granted compensation; no less can be accorded to Palestinians whose families lost, in the late 1940s, residence and property in what is now Israel.

Particular attention needs to be paid to the positions of the minorities: of Arabs within Israel, because their second-class citizenship in their own land is intolerable; but also of Jews within Palestine, because a viable Palestinian state needs to include the territory occupied by so many illegal settlements housing hundreds of thousands of Israeli Jews. While many Jews will undoubtedly flee any return of the occupied

territories, and Israel will probably encourage their consolidation in Israel proper, the prospect should be entertained, on both sides, of Jewish settlers continuing to live within the Palestinian state. Palestine needs to incorporate the settlements as functioning townships, not torched ruins: it can only do that with cooperation from the settlers as well as the Israeli state. The right of continued residence in Palestine should be offered to Jews, just as that of return to Israel should be offered to Arabs, even if the numbers who actually take up these offers are small. Creating the arrangements that would make these rights meaningful would constitute a small token of human rights and equality in both states – and of the possibility of cooperation between them.

For a functioning two-state solution cannot be based on two entirely separate states, coexisting only in a state of cold war, with a wall between them. Halting the construction of the security fence is a sine qua non of meaningful discussions, and tearing down what has been built will be an early task of any solution. Managing change in ways which respect individuals' and families' rights will require a sound infrastructure of bilateral institutions. Recognising the human rights of all, and especially of Palestinian families expelled from Israel decades ago, will require Israel to open up the sealed vault of the 1948 events, acknowledging the obliterated Arab names of long-renamed villages and erecting monuments to civilian victims, maybe even creating a Palestinian Museum in Tel Aviv, so that Arabs, whether as Israeli citizens or Palestinian workers and visitors, can be comfortable in Israel. Would it be a step too far to envisage a joint Israeli-Palestinian truth commission, to achieve closure on the crimes and suffering (on both sides) of the last 60 years?

Moreover it is not only in from a political point of view that the two states will require joint institutions. A Palestinian state will only function if reopened to the Israeli labour market; from this point of view, too, bilateral arrangements too are necessary to the functioning of separate states. The two-state solution should be seen, then, as close to a confederal arrangement, nested within regional security arrangements and guaranteed by the UN and the USA as broker of the agreement, which resolves two-thirds of a century of conflict.

It may be objected that much of what I have proposed is so idealistic as to be utopian. What is truly fantastic, however, is the belief that a Palestinian state should be established, let alone can thrive, in the truncated space left by illegal Israeli settlement-, wall- and road-building. Over the last two decades, Israel has annexed an ever-larger area of Palestine, and forced the Palestinians into ever smaller, more

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fragmented pockets. By the same token, it has steadily undermined the viability of the two-state solution, even as its nominal adherence to this idea has grown. The two-state model is an emperor without clothes, and only a radical policy upheaval, leading to large-scale Israeli withdrawals and the recognition of sixty years of deep injustice, can restore its credibility. It is possible to imagine how it could be done, but there are few signs of imagination in the Israeli – or Palestinian – political universes. The writing is on the wall, but is anyone that matters, in team Obama or elsewhere, reading it? If not, this year's Gaza war will certainly not be Israel's last.

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Alex Stein, We Need More Imagination

'In dreams begin responsibilities.' (William Butler Yeats)

Neither the two-state solution nor its primary alternative, the one-state solution, remain viable in today's climate. This is clear from a cursory look at the consequences of Operation Cast Lead, most significantly the results of the Israeli elections, and the concomitant hardening of Palestinian public opinion. However, this reality cannot be used as an excuse to maintain the status quo. It is precisely during these dark times that the primary moral imperative of political action – imagination – kicks in. As Murakami writes in *Kafka on the Shore*, 'Our responsibility begins with the power to imagine ... where there's no power to imagine, no responsibility can arise.' How can we return the imagination to the heart of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict?

This is the case against the viability of the two-state project: In 1993 there were 109,000 Israeli settlers living in the West Bank (excluding East Jerusalem). Today there are 275,000. There are currently over 600 roadblocks, checkpoints, and other barriers strewn across the Occupied Territories. 200,000 Jews live in East Jerusalem, separating the Palestinian areas of the city from their West Bank hinterland. Israel leaders continue to talk the talk of the two-state solution while creating facts on

the ground in such a way as to make meeting even minimum Palestinian demands impossible. According to this logic, Israel will only give the Palestinians 'fried chicken,' as one Netanyahu aide once famously dubbed the Palestinian 'state' that his boss was prepared to countenance.

But if a house can be built, it can be destroyed, or at least its inhabitants can be – to use the Israeli parlance – 'evacuated.' If an army can be installed, it can be withdrawn. If a city can be 'united,' it can be divided. These are the weary arguments offered by defenders of the two-state solution in the face of the undeniable reality. Just a few more months, at most a year or two, they say. The political reality is about to change! These arguments cannot be repeated forever. At a certain point, surely, a fact on the ground does in fact become irreversible – not because it would be practically impossible to reverse, but because it is clear that nobody has the slightest intention of doing so. It is also now clear that a majority of Israelis now oppose a two-state solution, and nor do they believe that withdrawing from territory brings peace. When you consider that every piece of land Israel has withdrawn from has been transformed into the latest staging-post from which to launch attacks on it, these depressing poll results come as no surprise. [1]

The obstacles to a one-state solution, however, are even greater. The hearts of humans are harder to mould than the bricks of a house. Those who propose a one-state solution would do well to apply the test of desirability to two populations increasingly characterised by mutual hate and loathing. What are the chances, given the present circumstances, of them agreeing to live together in a glorious and bi-national future? Whichever way you look at it, the one-state solution fails the most cursory of viability tests.

What about Operation Cast Lead? How has this affected the situation on the ground? Sadly, it primarily demonstrates that nothing much has changed in 60 years. Whatever one's views on the rights and wrongs of the *jus in bello*, this was clearly a fight about the legitimacy of the State of Israel. It is absurd to suggest, as some have tried to do, that the firing of rockets represented some sort of tactical attempt to liberate more Palestinian territory. Hamas are surely the only 'national liberation' movement in history (apart from Hizbollah in 2006) to succeed in liberating territory, only to proceed to try and goad the occupier back in. This is because they remain ideologically opposed to the very existence of the State of Israel, notwithstanding occasional comments to the contrary, picked up and parroted enthusiastically by useful idiots around the world.

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Israel lacks the political policy to ensure that the gains on the battlefield will improve the country's strategic position. Not being Sri Lanka, the world will never – rightly or wrongly – allow Israel to finish the job and defeat Hamas. So Israel needs to use its brain as much as its muscle, by offering a political alternative to the Palestinian people, one that offers them a genuine way out of this ongoing war of attrition without end. In short, something more compelling than fried chicken. Perhaps predictably, though, Operation Cast Lead has alienated Palestinians from Israel more than ever. According to a poll conducted by the Jerusalem Media & Communication Centre, trust in Hamas has risen from 17 percent to 28 percent, while trust in Fatah has dropped from 31 percent to 26 percent. [2] Last April, 39 percent of Palestinians thought that rockets were helping Palestinians to achieve their national goal; now 51 percent say so. Most worryingly, those opposed to peace negotiations with Israel increased from 35 to 41 percent. In real and substantial terms nothing has changed for the better, in either camp.

The prospects for a two-state solution, then, do not look good. As I noted above, the same can be said for the primary alternative – some sort of one-state solution. Any exercise in problem solving has to start with these simple truths. Unfortunately, this is a point primarily being heard in right-wing circles. A good example is a recent article in *Azure* by Moishe Yaalon. [3] This is an explication of Bibi Netanyahu's vague talk of 'economic peace' and offers useful insight into 'moderate' Likudnik strategic thinking. It is an argument constructed on disingenuousness. No amount of gloss can hide the fact that Yaalon and his Likud cronies are determined to maintain Israeli control over the entire land between the river and the sea, a point emphasised by Netanyahu in a recent talk to American Jewish leaders. Without offering the Palestinians political hope, this just won't cut it.

Another version of Yaalon's 'realism' is the idea of conflict management. The adherents of this approach argue that to encourage optimism when there is none is deeply irresponsible, and is liable to end in more bloodshed. Instead, the difficulties must be managed. Look at Cyprus, for example. The problems of that troubled island are far from resolved, yet nobody dies because of it. Is there not some possibility to agree to disagree? Can't Israel/Palestine be 'managed'?

Perhaps this would be possible in the short term. The problem, though, is that we have arrived at squeaky bum time. All the processes that have been pondered for the past few years are beginning to converge. Palestinians will soon outnumber Israeli-Jews in the land of Israel; settlement expansion will soon prevent Palestinian

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contiguity in the West Bank; Iran may soon have a nuclear bomb. Given these circumstances, to shirk responsibility by maintaining the status quo would be deeply irresponsible.

This does not mean that easy answers should be offered. Perhaps the current reality first demands an acknowledgement that we are in uncharted territory, that most of the assumptions of previous peace-making efforts are now redundant. Except for one: the Israeli-Palestinian dispute is a conflict between two warring nationalisms each with legitimate claims to the land between the river and the sea. We do not have to weigh up these claims precisely. But we do need to ensure that peacemaking is driven by this understanding. If the national rights of the two peoples are acknowledged throughout every stage of the process, then a modicum of justice can be achieved. If not, then the only possibility is more violence.

There needs to be new thinking and new ideas to take us beyond the one-state/two-state paradigm. These ideas need to be driven by the morality of imagination. Resting on the laurels of the status quo must be anathema. In the Richard Yates' novel *Revolutionary Road*, the depressed suburban housewife April Wheeler chastises her husband for dismissing her dream of moving to Paris as unrealistic. 'In order to agree with that, I'd have to have a very strange and low opinion of reality. Because you see I happen to think *this* is unrealistic.' And so it goes for Israel-Palestine. Accepting the current reality on the basis of realism represents a gross moral failure. What can be more unrealistic than a future without hope? There is nothing wrong with first answering 'I don't know' to the question of what is to be done. Indeed, perhaps this is the prerequisite for imagining a solution. The time has come to rethink the whole problem; to encourage new ideas not constrained by previous assumptions. We have to destroy before we can rebuild; acknowledge the limitations of past approaches and forge new paradigms. Only a radical rethink can renew the prospects for peace.

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Notes

[1] <http://www.israelpolicyforum.org/blog/poll-israelis-oppose-palestinian-state-51-32>

[2] http://www.jmcc.org/publicpoll/results/2009/67_jan_english.pdf. Another poll suggests a

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contrary picture. See here – <http://www.jpost.com/servlet/Satellite?cid=1233304721441&pagename=JPost%2FJPArticle%2FShowFull>

[3] <http://www.azure.org.il/article.php?id=474>

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Menachem Kellner, For Two States, Ultimately

There is no sane and moral alternative to the (albeit difficult) two-state solution. Anyone who supports the so-called one state solution is either a knave or a fool or both. Creating one state of all its citizens between the Jordan River and the Mediterranean Sea can have only one outcome: the creation of yet another authoritarian Islamic ‘Republic.’ The right of national self-determination, it will turn out, will thus be guaranteed to all peoples but the Jews. In the new state Jews and Christians will at best be reduced to the status of dhimmis, tolerated religious (not ethnic) minorities subject to oppressive restrictions. Women will be forced behind the veil, gays will be persecuted. Anyone perceptive enough to realize this and who nonetheless supports the idea is a knave. Anyone who does not realize this is a fool. There is not a single Arab-majority state in the world in which non-Arabs actually enjoy full civil rights. There is not a single Muslim-majority state in the world in which non-Muslims actually enjoy full equality. An Arab-Muslim State born out of a century of conflict is not likely – to put it mildly – to be the only exception to these sad generalizations.

What is to be done? One option is to absorb the West Bank into Israel. This can lead to only one of two consequences: the end of Israel as a democratic state or the end of Israel as a Jewish state. Another option is to dismantle the settlements, withdraw from the West Bank, and allow or encourage the creation of an independent Palestinian state on the West Bank, with or without Gaza. One of my less temperate colleagues predicts the following consequence of such an act:

Here is what will happen: Israel withdraws, then ‘Palestine’ rains rockets down on Tel Aviv in what makes Sderot look like an April shower; every time Israel retaliates the whole world screams Nazi aggressors; the Israeli Left demands the remaining apartheid Israeli state be taken apart, ‘Palestine’ invades the Galilee and Negev with its army reinforced by divisions from all the Arab countries, and the whole sorrow story comes to an end when –

to the cheers of the entire world – ‘Palestine’ gets its first weapons of mass destruction and uses them. It would be so much neater and simpler just to agree voluntarily to hop on the cattle cars to the nice work camps.

Intemperate? Yes. Deluded? I am not so sure any more. The shameful conformism of the Western media during the recent ‘Operation Cast Lead,’ the willingness to take Hamas propaganda at face value, the wholesale rewriting of recent history (how many readers of *the Guardian* and the *New York Times*, not to mention *Ha’aretz*, know that Hamas took power in Gaza in a violent coup? that the Gaza crossings were closed in response to missile attacks, not the other way round, and that if Gaza was occasionally blockaded, it was blockaded by the Egyptians as much as by the Israelis – if Hamas wants to import medicines, food, and building supplies, why not simply import them from Egypt? that Hamas instituted a reign of terror in Gaza, murdering people identified with the PLO? that Hamas used its tunnels to smuggle arms and not medicine, of which there was never really a shortage anyway, etc., etc. – the list of journalistic malfeasance goes on and on). All these lead one to wonder how deranged my colleague really is.

So what can be done? I am led to the sad conclusion that the only realistic option is as follows: the vast majority of the settlements in the West Bank must be dismantled, just as they all were in Gaza (the world takes it as a given that any Palestinian state should be *Judenfrei* and as illiberal as that position is, I do not believe we can argue against the *consensus omnium* on this matter), and some sort elected Palestinian government will provide civil rule (more or less as envisioned in the Camp David accords). But it would be insane for Israel to withdraw its army from the West Bank without long-term demonstrated change in Palestinian behavior. We must remain there militarily as an occupying force for as many years as it takes for the Palestinians to decide that they want to build their own state more than they want to destroy that of the Jews. Just as the Allied Powers occupied Germany and Japan (despite the fact that unlike the Palestinians they posed no threat to the victorious allies) till they became convinced that the Germans and Japanese could be trusted to manage their own affairs without endangering the existence of their neighbours, so must Israel continue the occupation of the West Bank until we can be sure that military withdrawal will not lead to the nightmare scenario sketched out by my colleague above. To elaborate the World War Two analogy, the Palestinians, per capita, have received vastly more money from Europe and the USA than did Europeans under the Marshall Plan. If Palestinians could be encouraged to use that money to build instead of to destroy, to plant rather than bomb, to raise and

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educate their children rather than sending them on suicide missions, then the independent State of Palestine will come into existence. To allow this state true and complete independence before these changes take place is to demand of Israel that it commit national suicide and of Israelis that they place themselves and their children in grave personal danger. Very few Israelis are that crazy.

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Fred Siegel & Sol Stern, There are no 'solutions' for now

The Gaza War and the results of the Israeli elections have set off a good deal of diplomatic hand-wringing about whether time is running out for a two state solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Even when well intentioned, however, much of this discussion tends to ignore the fundamental reality that for the Palestinians the so-called 'peace process' is not about finding a practical political solution to their current problems. Rather it is about validating their founding national myth of a time before the 'Zionist invasion' when all was right with the world. Even for the 'moderates' among the Palestinian leadership the catastrophe of Israel's founding – what they call their 'Nahkba' – can only be erased from the historical ledger by flooding Israel with their brothers, the 'refugees' from the 1948 war.

That is why the various political alternatives that have been offered, ranging from a one to a three to a five state 'solution,' are all beside the point. From an Israeli perspective any solution involving border swaps leading to a Palestinian state might be reasonably attractive. It's little noticed in the West, but in Israel the left won decisively on the issue of the need for a Palestinian state. In 2006 Kadima won the Israeli general election on a platform which called for the withdrawal from Palestinian areas, beginning with Gaza. In recent years the major figures on the right, from George Bush in the US to the new right wing starlet in Israel Avigdor Lieberman, have adopted the call for a Palestinian state. It's the Palestinians who are at best of mixed-mind on the subject.

Leave aside the split between Hamas and Fatah and the rise of Islamist sentiment among the Palestinians. If the conflict were largely a border dispute then the possibility of renewed negotiation around a two state solution could bear fruit.

But that's not what this conflict is all about. While separation from the Palestinians has become the political byword for a large majority of Israelis, the intifada set off by the failure of the Oslo process and the wars which followed withdrawals from Lebanon and Gaza have also left ordinary Israelis convinced that there's little to be gained by either negotiations or further withdrawals.

And the sentiments on the Israeli 'street' are based on an accurate reading of Palestinian demands. The very notion of 'solutions' is unlikely to be meaningful as long as the Palestinians cling to the central tenet of their collective identity, namely the right of return to Israel for the 'refugees' of 1948. As Faruq Qaddumi, a high ranking PLO official explained in 2002, 'The Right of Return of the refugees to Haifa and Jaffa is more important than statehood.' Similarly, after Arafat's death in 2004 the man hailed by the West as a moderate, Abu Mazen swore to the Palestinian Legislative Council to 'follow in the path' of Arafat's work by 'fulfilling his dream. . . We promise you that our hearts will not rest until the right of return for our people is achieved and the tragedy of the refugees is ended.' This non-negotiable demand guarantees ongoing violence. It means that the best that can be done is to manage the problem that produces Palestinian intransigence.

It was the 'right of return' that transformed the Oslo peace negotiations into a new and more violent intifada. 'To this day,' explained Dennis Ross, one of the key Oslo negotiators, Arafat and his heirs 'have never honestly admitted that what was offered to the Palestinians – a deal that would have resulted in a Palestinian state, with territory in over 97 percent of the West Bank, Gaza, and Jerusalem; with Arab East Jerusalem as the capital of that state (including the holy place of the Haram al-Sharif, the Noble Sanctuary); with an international presence in place of the Israeli Defence Force in the Jordan Valley; and with the unlimited right of return for Palestinian refugees to their state but not to Israel.'

In the wake of the Oslo collapse Abu Mazen explained why the Palestinian leadership had rejected the offer. 'Peace,' he insisted, 'will not be achieved without the refugees getting back their sacred rights, which cannot be touched. It is the individual right of every refugee, and no one can reach an agreement in this matter without his consent.' He explained that 'the right of return means a return to Israel, not to a Palestinian state.'

Every other refugee problem of the 1940s from central Europe to the Indian subcontinent has been resolved. But thanks to the machination of the Arab powers

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and their ability to use the increasingly fetid United Nations as an instrument of their policies, Palestinian refugees became the cat's paws of Middle Eastern power politics. The suffering of the refugees, like the civilian casualties produced by Hamas' aggressions in Gaza became a marketable commodity that could be sold to the supposedly high-minded Western enablers of Arab terrorism. The more miserable the Palestinians the more the Guardian and the BBC were convinced of the virtue of their sacred violence. But the Mussolini-like Egyptian strong man Gamal Abdel Nasser, who was a master of using the squalid refugee camps for his own ends, gave the game away long ago. In 1956 he explained that 'The Palestinians are useful to the Arab states as they are...We will always see that they do not become too powerful.' Today with the resurgence of the Muslim Brotherhood and the danger that they will link up with their cousins in Gaza, some Egyptian leaders, with an eye on the rise of Iran, may have some second thoughts about this strategy but to little effect.

The insistence on the long lost Elysium destroyed in the Nakba by those same evil Jews, castigated in the Koran as the offspring of 'monkeys and pigs,' has frozen Palestinian politics in a permanent rictal smile. A personal note, we were supporters of the Oslo 'Peace' Process. But the closer it came to final negotiations the more our heartfelt hopes began to be shadowed by the reality of an Arafat-controlled Palestinian press which was doing nothing to prepare the public for the necessary compromises to come. Later, some of Arafat's aids hinted that he couldn't do more. If he compromised on the refugee issue they explained, he would have been assassinated. How, it was argued, can you tell people, who have suffered all these years for a redemption born of revenge that their sacrifice had come to nothing. Better to continue the illusion.

What's left need not be total despair. The best that can be achieved for the foreseeable future is to manage the conflict. There are some hopeful signs on the West Bank that the Palestinians under Prime Minister Fayyad are belatedly beginning the process of institution building. That process is undermined not only by the Palestinians mythology of martyrdom and redemption but by the incessant diplomatic focus on final status solutions. With American and Jordanian help Fayyad seems to be building a modern police force of the sort that has provided benefits to Iraq (and hopefully Afghanistan) so that the power of the West Bank's many cliques of gunmen can hopefully be minimised. If this is the beginning of a Palestinian attempt – like the early Zionists – to create the lineaments of a civil society, it should continue to be encouraged. But until this process matures – if

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allowed to by diplomats and gunmen – the best that can be done is to tamp down the conflict as well as possible.

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