

# The Changing Paradigm of Israeli-Palestinian Relations in the Shadow of Iran and the War against Hizballah

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## ABOUT THE AUTHORS



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**O**n January 22, 2007, former Israel Defense Forces chief of staff Lt. Gen. (ret.) Moshe Yaalon addressed the **Seventh Annual Herzliya Conference (<http://www.herzliyaconference.org/Eng/Articles/Article.asp?CategoryID=33&ArticleID=1596>)** on the balance of Israel's national security. General Yaalon was a Washington Institute visiting fellow in 2006 and is the author of the Institute monograph **[Lessons from the Palestinian 'War' against Israel \(http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/templateC04.php?CID=263\)](http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/templateC04.php?CID=263)** These are his remarks.

There are some who believe that the resolution of the Arab-Israeli conflict will bring stability to the Middle East. Many believe that the problem is "the occupation" –the holding of the territories conquered in 1967 -- and that leaving these territories will bring an end to the conflict. These two mistaken assumptions prevent the emergence of a new paradigm for the resolution of the conflict. In spite of the endless attempts to solve the conflict in the past fifteen years, nothing has been solved. We are so busy arguing about the solution that we have lost sight of the problem.

The Oslo Agreements, and Yasser Arafat's decision to launch his intifada in 2000 after being responsible for the failure of the Camp David Summit, proved that Arafat did not want a two-state solution and peace with Israel. He wanted to avoid recognizing Israel as a Jewish and independent state. Arafat's wavering is in line with the wavering of the Palestinians in the past generations. The Palestinians have always rejected the two-state solution: they rejected the 1937 Peel Commission and the UN partition plan of 1947. The most significant rejection was the one that occurred in Camp David in 2000, when Ehud Barak basically offered to withdraw to the 1967 lines. Indeed, after every Palestinian rejection of a political solution, a violent aggression against the Jews ensued.

The Palestinian leadership admitted that the Oslo Agreements were a Trojan horse. Faisal Husseini said that "in 2000 we came out of the horse." Today, Hamas does not hide its true intentions: there is no room for an independent Jewish state between the Jordan River and the Mediterranean. Most Israelis and their leaders were willing to make a territorial compromise and accepted the two-state solution. A majority of Israelis supported the Disengagement Plan, as it became obvious that there was no partner. The fact that last summer we were attacked on two fronts reinforced the feeling that we are in a dead-end, but mostly it proved that that the root cause of the conflict is not occupation. Hizballah's goal is not the liberation of Lebanon but the destruction of the State of Israel, as part of a jihadist Islamic strategy. The Palestinian organizations aspire to destroy the State of Israel and not to coexist with it. The conflict after the 1979 Iranian Revolution turned into a clash of civilizations. This is the Third World War.

The Iranian Revolution of 1979 did not happen because of the Arab-Israeli conflict, and indeed al-Qaeda and the Muslim Brotherhood are not the byproduct of that conflict. There is a cultural war here, and the Arab-Israeli conflict is its consequence, not its cause.

I do not see a peace solution in the short term. Israeli unilateral withdrawals will only reinforce Islamic jihad. Since there is no effective Palestinian leadership capable and willing to implement the two-state solution, and since the younger generations of Palestinians are raised in a culture of hatred and death, the two-state solution is irrelevant now and in the foreseeable future, and therefore we need to look for a new paradigm.

Not only that, but even if there was a solution to the Arab-Israeli conflict, that wouldn't solve the clash of civilizations with the West. We cannot run away from the confrontation with jihadist Islam, first and foremost with the Iranian regime. The same Iran that supports, funds, and arms terrorism in Iraq and in the Palestinian Authority and that is about to acquire nuclear weapons. The Iranian regime simply ignores the injunctions of the international community and considers the West to be weak and not threatening.

And so we simply have to stop asking ourselves what the solution is and stop looking for an immediate solution. There are no immediate solutions. We have to think in terms of long-term strategic concepts. There is no immediate victory, and we have to win. The road will be long. We've had enough golden calves from successive Israeli governments, enough hopes that turned out to be vain. What we need at this point is a leadership that does not fear to say the truth, a leadership that acts according to moral clarity and not moral confusion, a leadership that prefers truth to spin. We need a strategy with a vision, a way to implement it, and not illusions. While our society's strength is at stake, what we need is work on the education of future generations, based on Jewish, Zionist, and democratic values. This is what will reinforce our national and social cohesion, and its contribution to our strength will be greater than yet another jet or tank.

Faced with Palestinian terrorism, we need to fight without concessions or surrender. We need to conduct the fight in Gaza the same way that we're successfully conducting it in Judea and Samaria; we need to fight Kassam missiles by recontrolling the launching sites and by causing heavy losses to the Palestinians. In the long term, we have to think out of the box of the "two-state solution", and simply let go of this way of thinking.

We have to undo the conventional wisdom of the solution to the Arab-Israeli conflict as the source of stability in the Middle East, and reinforce the willingness of the West to deal with Iraq and Iran. Israeli concessions will only reinforce jihadism, and therefore the "sanctification" of the 1967 lines also has to go, especially in light of our bitter experience with the outcomes of Israeli concessions vis-a-vis the Palestinians, including the launching of missiles. We need defensible borders. For this to happen we need to reinforce and improve our public diplomacy in the West. Western public opinion is brainwashed with a propaganda that denies the very legitimacy of the State of Israel.

We can't get away with not confronting the Iranian regime. There will not be stability in Iraq, in Lebanon, and in the Palestinian Authority as long as we do not defeat the Iranian regime. The Iranian leaders feel safe because they're being left off the hook in spite of their actual weakness. The government of the ayatollahs is not a natural one, nor does it enjoy wide popular support. It will not last forever. But without external pressure, change will not happen. The Iranians and the Syrians, who fund terror and challenge the international order, must be punished by the international community. The fact that they got away with the last Lebanon war shows a lack of determination in the West.

In light of the ongoing conflict between the Sunnis and Shiites in our region, Israel and the West can find common interests with moderate Muslims against radicals. This might open new political opportunities. This requires a coordinated international action with countries that are also aware of the Iranian threat.

The conflict is also within Muslim and Arab societies in our region. Not everyone is a jihadist, and there are those

who prefer democracy and human rights, who prefer life to death. The culture of death is turning into self-destruction. The West has to strengthen those moderate Muslims, in order for them to gain in political strength, and to undertake the required reforms in education.

A strong Israel Defense Forces (IDF) is an important element in the security of Israel. Recent failures are not the result of fundamental problems but of incompetent leadership, and therefore the IDF will be back once we have a new leadership.

In sum, leadership and education are the key to Israel's strength and to the West's victory in the Third World War. ❖

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