

Israel and Palestine

Competing Histories

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Introduction

This book was developed from work that we originally undertook for our study of TV news coverage of the Israeli/Palestinian conflict.* When we began that research we thought it would be useful to give a brief history partly because there was a great deal of public interest in the area and also because we wanted to show the complex arguments through which journalists had to pick their way when making news programmes. It quickly became apparent to us that there was not one history of the conflict but many, since almost every historical fact was contested by one or other of the parties. There were many deep divisions of opinion, not only between the Israeli and Palestinian historians but also within each side. Such divisions always to some extent characterise academic debate, but in this case there was also a strong ideological dimension, since the different interpretations and historical accounts could be used to justify and legitimise political positions. The Israeli historian Avi Shlaim has written of the 'history wars' in which the traditional Zionist account of the birth of Israel was challenged by a new group of Israeli historians who were much more critical of the role of Israel in the generation and continuation of the conflict. These historians, including Ilan Pappé and Shlaim himself, were attacked publicly in Israel. As Avi Shlaim writes of his critics:

They would like school history books to continue to tell only the heroic version of Israel's creation. In effect they were saying that in education, one has to lie for the good of the country. (2003: 9)

What concerned the conservative critics was their belief that the new historians had undermined patriotic values and

* This was published as *Bad News from Israel* (Pluto Press, 2004).

young people's confidence in the justice of Israel's cause. Six months before the Israeli election of January 2001 Ariel Sharon commented that 'the new historians should not be taught'. When the new right-wing government came to power under Ariel Sharon in 2001 the education minister ordered changes. As Shlaim notes:

One of the first things Ms Livnat did on becoming Minister of Education was to order new history textbooks for secondary schools to be written, removing all traces of the influence of the new historians. (2003:10)

It is clear, then, that there are many different narratives and that they are sometimes bound up in attempts to defend the moral certainties of the contending parties. In this book we have outlined the range of different positions and arguments on all the major events in the history of the conflict. However, we have not simply repeated these without comment. We are not 'post-modern' in our approach and we do not believe that all accounts should be seen as equally valid. There is a difference between those who make statements without apparent recourse to evidence and others who spend long hours in archives, researching and checking their conclusions. There will always be contestation, but as far as possible we have indicated which views are best supported by available evidence and where there are contradictions or inaccuracies in what is being said. We have, however, tried to do this with a light touch because in the end it is up to our readers to make their own decisions on the validity of accounts and on what they believe. Finally, we hope that in laying out the range of arguments in a clear and accessible fashion, we may contribute to a better-informed public debate in an area that has so often been full of propaganda and confusion.

1956: THE SUEZ CONFLICT

In Egypt in 1952, Gamal Abd al-Nasser and his 'free officers' took power, following a bloodless coup, and turned the state into a republic. In 1954 Nasser became president and attempted to make himself the champion of a pan-Arabic renaissance and the leader of the decolonisation movement across the Middle East and Africa. Ovendale (1999) notes that the European colonial powers feared the effects of Nasser's Arab nationalism on their oil interests and geostrategic control of the Middle East and Africa. France was also hostile because of Nasser's support for Algerians fighting for independence. In July 1956 Nasser nationalised the Suez Canal after the US and Britain refused to fund the Aswan Dam Project, which Nasser saw as a means to develop Egypt as a modern nation. Britain and France, who were shareholders in the Canal, decided he had to be removed from power. Israel also wanted to see Nasser deposed, and between 22 and 24 October 1956 British, French and Israeli representatives met at Sèvres on the outskirts of Paris to devise a military plan to achieve that end (Shlaim,

2000). At this meeting the Israeli delegation also secured final approval for the supply of a nuclear reactor from France, which was delivered the following year and soon used to develop nuclear weapons.¹⁵

On 29 October 1956, the IDF launched an attack on Egyptian forces in the Sinai peninsula. The next day Britain and France issued an ultimatum to Egypt and Israel to withdraw their forces to a distance of ten miles from the Suez Canal. Israel complied, Egypt refused and the following day Britain and France began an aerial bombardment of the Egyptian airfields. Israel quickly secured an overwhelming military victory, capturing Gaza on 2 November and the whole Sinai peninsula three days later. On 7 November, Ben-Gurion delivered a speech to the Knesset where 'he hinted that Israel planned to annex the entire Sinai peninsula as well as the Straits of Tiran' (Shlaim, 2000: 179). However, under strong pressure from the USA and USSR and threats of UN sanctions, Israel was eventually forced to withdraw from all of the Sinai after six months.

Israel's motivations have been the subject of much controversy. One version maintains that Israel was driven to attack Egypt for three main reasons. First, it is argued the Egyptian leader Nasser was planning to lead a combined Arab force (Egypt, Jordan, Syria) in an attempt to destroy Israel, and the Suez conflict was necessary as a pre-emptive military strike to prevent this. Sachar (1977) points to belligerent speeches made by Arab leaders in the months preceding the war, which he argues were proof of imminent Arab plans to destroy Israel. He also suggests that Egypt's acquisition of a large shipment of arms from Czechoslovakia in 1955 had shifted the balance of power against Israel. Sachar also claims that Israel wanted to break Egypt's blockade of the Suez Canal, and stop Palestinian guerrilla attacks on Israel. This perspective on Israeli motivations sees the attack on Egypt as defensive in orientation and concerned only with strengthening the country's security situation.

Other historians have pointed to different reasons for the attack. Shlaim (2000) argues that Israel's military establishment, led by Ben-Gurion and Moshe Dayan, was determined to goad

Nasser into a war by carrying out provocative raids against Egyptian forces, despite Egyptian attempts to curb infiltration. The most serious of these raids occurred in February 1955 when an Israeli unit led by Ariel Sharon attacked the Egyptian army headquarters on the outskirts of Gaza, killing 37 Egyptian soldiers. Hirst claims that Nasser had consistently tried to avoid military confrontation with Israel, and had only 'unleashed the *fedayeen* [Palestinian guerrillas] under pressure from his own public opinion in the wake of further provocations from Israel' (1977: 200). Both Hirst (1977) and Shlaim argue that there was no credible evidence that Nasser was planning a war with Israel, nor that the balance of power had shifted in Egypt's favour. They suggest that the war was undertaken to expand the borders of Israel and overthrow Nasser's regime. Shlaim maintains that Israel hoped to absorb the whole of the Sinai peninsula, the West Bank and part of the Lebanon. He argues that Ben-Gurion 'exposed an appetite for territorial expansion at the expense of the Arabs and expansion in every possible direction: north, east and south' as well as 'a cavalier attitude toward the independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity of the neighbouring Arab states' (2000: 178).

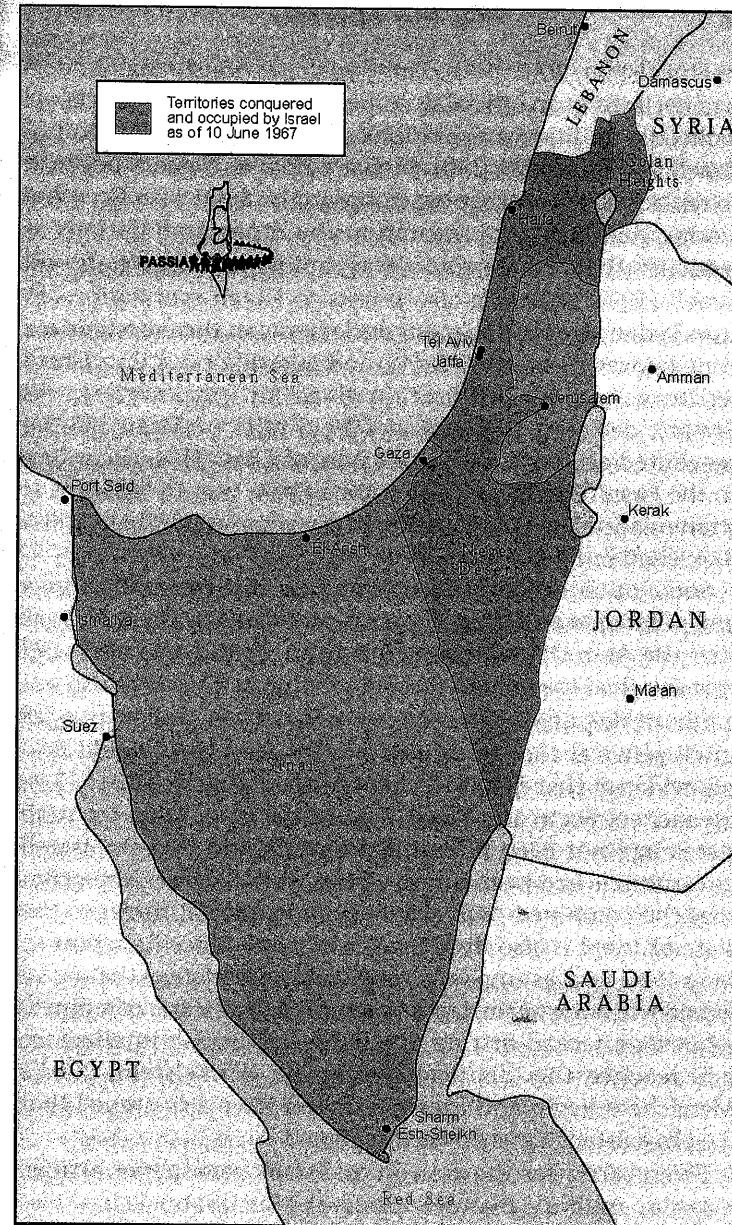
1967: THE SIX-DAY WAR

During the 1960s the Middle East became a site of Cold War rivalry between America and the Soviet Union, both of whom were supplying the region's states with weapons. In spring 1967 the Soviet Union informed the Syrian government that Israel was massing troops on its northern border in preparation for an attack on Syria. Whether such troop movements had actually taken place is a matter of dispute among historians (see Shlaim, 2000 and Hirst, 1977 for conflicting views). However, the previous year had seen a number of border clashes between the two nations and tensions had been running high. Israel had threatened publicly to overthrow the Syrian regime unless it stopped Palestinian guerrilla attacks launched from Syrian territory. Syria, alarmed by the Soviet reports, turned to Egypt with whom it had a mutual defence pact. Egypt then sent a

number of troops into the Sinai, bordering Israel and asked the UN troops who formed a buffer between the two countries to evacuate their positions. The Egyptian troops then moved into Sharm al-Shaykh and proclaimed a blockade of the Israeli port of Eliat, which was accessible only through Egyptian waters.

Two weeks later, at 7.45 a.m. on 5 June 1967, Israel launched an aerial attack on Egyptian airfields, destroying 298 warplanes, the bulk of the Egyptian air force, in a single day. Israeli ground forces also launched an almost simultaneous land invasion of Egyptian territory, forcing their way to the Suez Canal and capturing the Sinai peninsula in two days. At noon on 5 June, as part of a defence pact with Egypt, Syrian, Jordanian and Iraqi forces attacked targets inside Israel. Within two hours the air forces of all three were destroyed by the Israeli air force, as well as an Iraqi military base near the Jordanian border. Jordanian land forces also intervened in support of Egypt. Jordanian artillery shelled Israeli towns and moved troops into Arab East Jerusalem. Israel then drove the Jordanian army out of the West Bank and East Jerusalem, occupying them both by 7 June. The following day Israeli warplanes attacked the American spy ship, the *USS Liberty*, with cannon, missiles and napalm, killing 34 US service personnel and injuring 171.¹⁶ On 9 June, Israel attacked Syria, despite strong UN pressure, and occupied the Golan Heights. There have been allegations in the Israeli press that about a thousand unresisting Egyptian soldiers, as well as dozens of unarmed Palestinian refugees, were killed by the Israeli army during the war (*Ha'aretz*, 17 August 1995, cited in *Washington Report on Middle East Affairs*, February/March 1996).

The war was an overwhelming military success for Israel. In six days it had destroyed three Arab armies and made large territorial gains, capturing the Sinai peninsula, the Golan Heights, the West Bank, Gaza Strip and Arab East Jerusalem. The reasons behind Israel's decision to launch the offensive are disputed. The official Israeli cabinet documents stated that the 'Government [of Israel] ascertained that the armies of Egypt, Syria and Jordan are deployed for immediate multi-front aggression, threatening the very existence of the state' (cited



Map 3 The Near East After the 1967 June War

in Finkelstein, 2001: 130). Three years previously Arab leaders had declared in an official document their intention to achieve 'collective military preparations' for the 'final liquidation of Israel' (Shlaim, 2000: 230). Sachar points to Nasser's decision to replace UN peacekeeping troops in the Sinai with Egyptian troops, and military preparations by other Arab nations as evidence that 'the garrot ... was rapidly tightening around Israel' (1977: 632). He also points to Israeli motivations to stop Syrian shelling of Israeli settlements in the demilitarised zone between Israel and Syria, and guerrilla raids into Israeli territory. Another justification given for Israel's attack was Egypt's decision to blockade the Straits of Tiran, which prevented access to the Israeli port of Eliat. This, according to the Israeli Foreign Minister Abba Eban, was an 'attempt at strangulation', which constituted an 'act of war' (Eban, 1992: 334, cited in Finkelstein, 2001: 137).

Some other historians have questioned these explanations and pointed to an alternative set of motivations. The assertions that the Arab states were planning an imminent attack and that they had the military strength to threaten Israel's existence are both disputed. Finkelstein notes that an 'exhaustive US intelligence at the end of the month [May 1967] could find no evidence that Egypt was planning to attack' (2001: 134). Menachem Begin and Yitzak Rabin later argued that the Arab states had not been planning an attack and that the Israeli government had been aware of this at the time.¹⁷ The claim that the combined Arab armies posed a mortal threat to the state of Israel is also disputed. The CIA produced a report in May 1967 forecasting, with remarkable prescience, that Israel would win a war against one or all of the Arab states combined, whoever attacked first, in about a week. British intelligence had reached the identical conclusion (Finkelstein, 2001). Menachem Begin and Ezer Weizmann have also argued that Israel's existence was never threatened.¹⁸

Five years after the war, in an Israeli newspaper article, a senior military planner, General Mattityahu Peled, was dismissive of the Arab threat in 1967:

There is no reason to hide the fact that since 1949 no one dared, or more precisely, no one was able to threaten the very existence of Israel. In spite of that, we have continued to foster a sense of our own inferiority, as if we were a weak and insignificant people, which, in the midst of an anguished struggle for its existence, could be exterminated at any moment ... it is notorious that the Arab leaders themselves, thoroughly aware of their own impotence, did not believe in their own threats ... I am sure that our General Staff never told the government that the Egyptian military threat represented any threat to Israel or that we were unable to crush Nasser's army, which with unheard of foolishness, had exposed itself to the devastating might of our army ... To claim that the Egyptian forces concentrated on our borders were capable of threatening Israel's existence not only insults the intelligence of anyone capable of analysing this kind of situation, but is an insult to the Zahal [the Israeli army]. (*Ma'ariv*, 24 March 1972, cited in Hirst, 1977: 211)

Other posited explanations for Israel's decision to attack its Arab neighbours include a desire to safeguard the deterrent image of the IDF. Shlaim (2000) suggests that the Egyptian blockade represented a threat to Israel's 'iron wall' of militarised strength. Others suggest different motivations. Neff writes that on the eve of the 1967 War the CIA had identified three Israeli objectives: 'the destruction of the centre of power of the radical Arab socialist movements' [i.e. Nasser's regime], 'the destruction of the arms of the radical Arabs', and the 'destruction of both Jordan and Syria as modern States' (Neff, 1985: 230, cited in Finkelstein, 2001: 143). Hirst (1977) argues that Israeli military planners had been preparing the attack since they were forced to leave the Sinai in 1956, and cites comments from General Burns, the chief of staff of the United Nations Truce Supervision Organization (UNTSO) in the early 1960s, that Israel would probably seek to go to war again soon to break the Arab economic blockade and overcome its own economic difficulties.

Another explanation that has been cited as a motivation for Israel's decision involved a desire to expand the boundaries of the state. Proponents of this view point to comments made by the Israeli commander Yigal Allon on the eve of the 1967 war that 'in the case of a new war' Israel must seek as a central

aim 'the territorial fulfilment of the land of Israel' (cited in Finkelstein, 2001: 143). There is evidence since the 1950s in the writings of David Ben-Gurion and other Israeli leaders that there had been a desire to expand Israel to incorporate all of Jerusalem and the West Bank. The Israeli historian Benny Morris notes:

A strong expansionist current ran through both Zionist ideology and Israeli society. There was a general feeling shared by prominent figures as Dayan and Ben-Gurion, that the territorial gains of the 1948 war had fallen short of the envisioned promised land. *Bechiya Le Dorot* – literally a cause for lamentation for future generations – was how Ben-Gurion described the failure to conquer Arab East Jerusalem; leading groups in Israeli society regarded the Jordanian controlled West Bank with the same feeling. (Morris, 1989: 410–11, cited in Finkelstein, 2001: 221)

The conflict triggered a second mass exodus of Palestinians, many of whom became refugees for a second time, as they had sought refuge in the West Bank and Gaza after having to abandon their homes in 1948–49. Nur Masalha, senior lecturer at the Holy Land Research Project at the University of Surrey, argues that 'there is no evidence to suggest that there were wholesale or blanket expulsion orders adopted or carried out by the Israeli army in June 1967, although the policy of selective eviction, demolition and encouragement of "transfer" continued for several weeks after the Israeli army occupied the West Bank and Gaza Strip' (Masalha, 1999: 100). Masalha maintains that in 1967 'evictions and demolitions were evident in numerous geographical locations in the West Bank' and that 'young men from several cities and refugee camps were also targeted for deportation' (1999: 101). Peter Dodd and Halim Barakat in their study of the 1967 exodus, *River without Bridges*, provide similar explanations for the exodus:

The exodus was a response to the severe situational pressures existing at the time. The situational pressures were generated by the aerial attacks upon a defenceless country, including the extensive use of napalm, the occupation of the West Bank villages by the Israeli army, and the actions of the occupying

forces. Certainly the most dramatic of these was the eviction of civilians, and the deliberate destruction of a number of villages [Imwas, Yalu, Bayt Nuba, Bayt Marsam, Bayt Awa, Habla, al-Burj and Jiftlik]. Other action, such as threats and the mass detention of male civilians, also created situational pressures. (Dodd & Barakat, 1969: 54, cited in Masalha, 1999: 96)

William Wilson Harris (1980), who reached similar conclusions in his analysis of the exodus, estimates that 250,000 residents of the West Bank, 70,000 residents of the Gaza Strip and 90,000 residents of the Golan Heights were forced to flee their homes during 1967. The displaced residents of the West Bank were prevented from returning to the area by harsh measures. Testimony in the Israeli press, from an unnamed soldier serving in the 5th Reserve Division on the Jordan River, details the fate of displaced Palestinians attempting to return to their homes:

We fired such shots every night on men, women and children. Even during moonlit nights when we could identify the people, that is distinguish between men, women and children. In the mornings we searched the area and, by explicit order from the officer on the spot, shot the living, including those who hid or were wounded, again including the women and children. (*Haolam Haze*, 10 October 1967, cited in Masalha, 1999: 99)

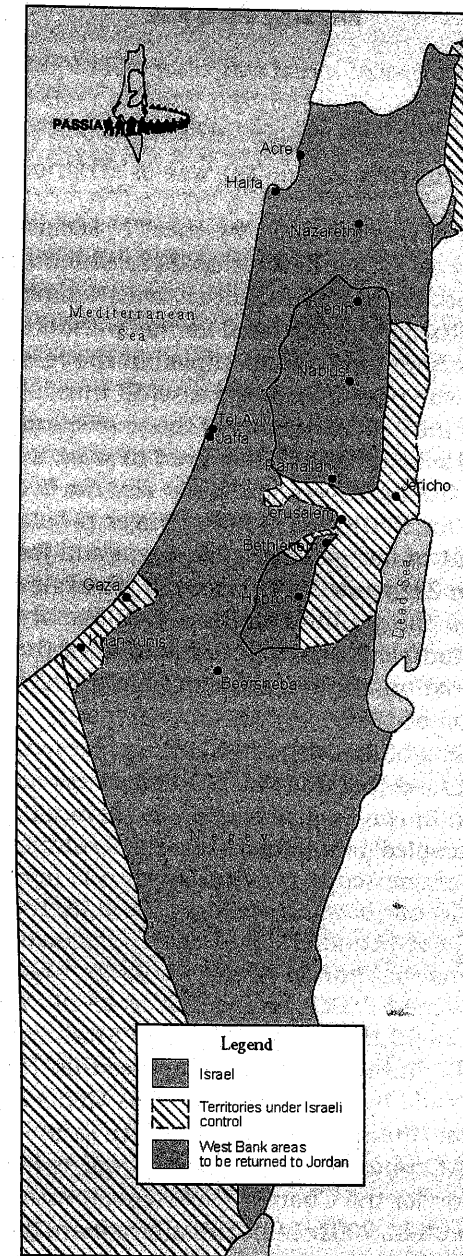
There were reports that after the war Israel began destroying Palestinian homes in the newly occupied territories. The American historian Alfred Lilienthal claims that

according to UN figures, the Israelis destroyed during the period between 11 June 1967 and 15 November 1969 some 7,554 Palestinian Arab homes in the territories seized during that war; this figure excluded 35 villages in the occupied Golan Heights that were razed to the ground. In the two years between September 1969 and 1971 the figure was estimated to have reached 16,312 homes. (1978: 160)

On 19 June 1967, Israeli leaders formulated an offer to hand back the Golan Heights, the Sinai and the Gaza Strip in return for demilitarisation agreements, peace treaties and assurance of

navigation rights from Egypt, Syria and Jordan. Bregman (2003) suggests that the decision, taken two months later, by Arab leaders meeting in Khartoum to issue the famous 'three nos' to peace, recognition and negotiations with Israel led to the Israeli decision taken on 30 October to officially withdraw the offer, and harden its attitude. Shlaim (2000) disagrees, arguing that there was no evidence that the conditional offer of withdrawal was ever presented to the Arab states, and that the offer was almost immediately killed by political and military leaders in Israel who wanted to retain a large part of the captured territories, and who began in mid-July to approve plans for constructing settlements on the occupied Golan Heights. He maintains that the 'three nos' at Khartoum referred to 'no formal peace *treaty*, but not a rejection of a state of peace; no *direct* negotiations, but not a refusal to talk through third parties; and no *de jure* recognition of Israel, but acceptance of its existence as a state' (2000: 258). Shlaim suggests the conference was 'a victory for Arab moderates who argued for trying to obtain the withdrawal of Israeli forces by political rather than military means' (2000: 258). There have also been claims that Israel turned down a peace treaty with Egypt and Jordan at the conference.¹⁹

Shlaim notes that there was no Israeli debate about handing back East Jerusalem, but that Israeli leaders were split on how much of the West Bank they wanted to retain. He suggests outright annexation was favoured by only a few, because it would mean absorbing large numbers of Arabs into the Jewish state. Most of these leaders preferred one of two options. The 'Allon Plan', put forward by the Israel Deputy Prime Minister Yigal Allon, proposed limited autonomy for Palestinians in part of the West Bank (Israel would still own the land and control security in the autonomy area), with Israel taking control of a large strip of the Jordan Valley, much of the area around Jerusalem and the Judean desert. These parts of the West Bank would then be colonised with Jewish settlements and army bases. The second option involved handing back to Jordan part of the West Bank, with Israel keeping approximately a third



Map 4 The Allon Plan, July 1967

of the area. Neither proposal was acceptable to King Hussein or the Palestinians.

RESOLUTION 242 AND THE WAR OF ATTRITION

The 1967 War was followed by the UN Security Council unanimously adopting Resolution 242, which has become the framework document for successive attempts to resolve the conflict. The resolution called for the 'withdrawal of Israeli armed forces from territories occupied in the recent conflict' in line with the principle 'emphasise[d]' in the preambular paragraph of the 'inadmissibility of the acquisition of territory by war'. It also 'emphasised' the 'need to work for a just and lasting peace in which every State in the area can live in security' as well as a 'just settlement of the refugee problem' and the establishment of navigation rights. Egypt and Jordan agreed to Resolution 242 while Syria rejected it. The Palestinians also rejected it on the grounds that it only spoke of their plight as a refugee problem, making no mention of their rights to self-determination and national sovereignty. Israel accepted the resolution in 1970.

The meaning of the withdrawal clause has been contested. Israel has argued that because the definite article 'the' was not included in the English version of the resolution ('from territories occupied' rather than 'from the territories occupied') it means that the scope of withdrawal was left vague and that Israel did not have to withdraw from all the territories it occupied in the conflict. Israel has also argued that many of the nations that endorsed the resolution, including the US, UK, USSR and Brazil, agreed that Israel did not have to withdraw from all the territories (Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 1999). Finkelstein (2001) disputes this. He points to statements made by the United Nations General Assembly president that 'there is virtual unanimity in upholding the principle that conquest of territory by war is inadmissible in our time under the Charter' (UN General Assembly 1967, cited in Finkelstein, 2001: 145). This affirmation, the president continued, was 'made in virtually all statements' and noted that

'virtually all speakers laid down the corollary that withdrawal of forces to their original position is expected' (UN General Assembly 1967a, cited in Finkelstein, 2001: 145). The debates at the UN Security Council, Finkelstein argues, were similarly unambiguous, with almost all representatives stressing both the inadmissibility clause and the need for a complete Israeli withdrawal.²⁰ He also argues that the American position was for a full Israeli withdrawal.²¹

Having failed to secure such a withdrawal from the occupied territories, Egypt fought the 'war of attrition' against Israel between 1967 and 1970. Shlaim argues that President Nasser's immediate purpose was to 'prevent the conversion of the Suez Canal into a de facto border, while his ultimate goal was to force Israel to withdraw to the pre-war border' (2000: 289). Egypt bombed Israeli troop concentrations in the occupied Sinai and Palestinian guerrillas launched cross-border attacks against Israel. Israel then attacked military and civilian targets within Egypt and Jordan. Numerous Egyptian coastal towns and cities were heavily damaged by Israeli air attacks. The Israeli commander Ezer Weizman recalled the fate of Egyptian border city Ismailia, which the Israeli army bombarded 'incessantly, devastating it from the air as well as with land-based artillery', so that aerial photographs 'showed its western portions resembling the cities at the end of World War II' (Weizman, cited in Gilbert, 1999: 410). Moshe Dayan was later to claim that Israeli attacks during the war of attrition had created one and a half million Egyptian refugees as well as emptying the entire Jordan Valley of its inhabitants (*Al Hamishar*, 10 May 1978). The war was finally brought to a halt in August 1970 when both sides agreed to a US-sponsored ceasefire. Morris (1992) estimates that in the three years of conflict, 367 Israeli soldiers and more than 10,000 Egyptian soldiers and civilians were killed.

SETTLEMENT-BUILDING, ECONOMIC INTEGRATION AND THE OCCUPATION

In the aftermath of the 1967 War Israel established settlements on the newly captured territories and placed the Palestinian

residents under military rule. Two major reasons were given for the creation of settlements. One stressed their security value:

There was also a strategic justification for not wanting to give up the occupied West Bank and that was that it turned Israel's 'narrow waist' into something wider. Before seizing the West Bank Israel's width at some parts measured scarcely nine miles from the Jordan bulge to the Mediterranean, and by clinging to the occupied territories west of the Jordan river Israel made it more difficult for a potential Arab invasion force coming from the east to cut in two. (Bregman, 2003: 126-7)

Some Israelis were dismissive of the security argument, alleging it was a pretext to satisfy international public opinion. One official, writing in the Israeli press, claimed that 'we have to use the pretext of security needs and the authority of the military governor as there is no way of driving out the Arabs from their land so long as they refuse to go and accept our compensation' (*Ha'aretz*, 23 November 1969, cited in Hirst, 1977: 241).

A second strand of thought justified settlement-building and retention of the occupied territories, on the basis of divine rights. Victory in the Six-Day War was seen by many religious Jews as a sign of support from God and evidence that the messianic era was at hand, leading to a surge in support for religious nationalism. A number of new parties and organisations were formed that advocated permanent control and settlement of the West Bank and Gaza Strip because, it was argued, these areas were a central component of the biblical land of Israel.

Harold Fisch, the former rector of Israel's Bar-Ilan University, argues that God promised Abraham the land of Israel as an eternal possession, and this provides justification for sovereignty over the West Bank and Gaza Strip:

The covenant between the people of Israel and its God, which includes the promised land as an integral part, is an important objective within the entire scheme of creation. It is from this fact that the linkage between the people of Israel and its land is rooted – in the transcendental will of God who created all in his honor. (Fisch, 1982: 189)

These arguments are echoed in more contemporary comments. In an interview in the *Observer*, Ariel Sharon, the Israeli prime minister, was quoted as saying 'Israel is the promised land – promised to Jews and no-one else' (13 July 2003). The viewpoint has also gained ground in the US via the Christian fundamentalist movement, who are key supporters of George W. Bush and the Republicans. In a 2002 programme the BBC interviewed the pastor of a major church in Texas who explained his view that:

Well, you understand that the Jewish state was something that's born in the mind of God and we are a people who believe the scripture and the scripture says very clearly that God created Israel, that God is the protector and defender of Israel. If God created Israel, if God defends Israel, is it not logical to say that those who fight with Israel are fighting with God? (BBC Radio 4, *A Lobby to be Reckoned With*, 7 May 2002)

Other arguments for Israel's rights to keep and settle the lands captured in 1967 included the position that since the land has changed sovereignty many times over the last 2,000 years, the Jews have as much claim as any others who had controlled it since they were exiled.²² Some Israelis have also argued that because the Palestinians rejected partition in 1947 they have given up their rights to a share of mandatory Palestine. Others point to the legal status of the Balfour Declaration or argue that since Israel won the territories in a 'war of self-defence' they have a right to keep them. Binyamin Netanyahu argues that to prevent Jews from building settlements in the occupied territories is a form of apartheid:

Careful manipulation of the media by the Arabs has left many Westerners with the indelible impression that Arab paupers are being kicked off their hovels in droves to make way for Jewish suburbs in the 'densely populated West Bank.'... For what is manifestly occurring is that the West, which so sharply condemned anti-black apartheid in South Africa, is being used by the Arabs as an enforcer of anti-Jewish apartheid that pertains in the Arab's own countries. (2000: 189-92)

In a review of Israel's settlement-building programmes Israel Shahak and Norton Mezvinsky (1999) note that until 1974 Moshe Dayan oversaw settlement activity. His policy was to limit settlements primarily to Hebron, northern Sinai and the Jordan Valley, as part of a bargain he made with the Palestinian feudal notables who controlled the villages. After 1974, Shahak and Mezvinsky note that religious settler groups, primarily Gush Emunim, and their political allies in the Knesset came to the fore in determining settlement policy, with the support of both Labor and particularly the Likud party. In 1973 Israel introduced the Galili Plan, which Shafir suggests transformed the Allon plan's '*military frontier* to a combination of a *messianic frontier* and a *suburban frontier*' (1999: 92). Some commentators have pointed to the extreme ideological views of many religious settlers, which justify attacks on Palestinians and attempts to expel them from their homes and land in what is seen as a process of 'purification' or 'sanctification' of the land.²³ Hirst has suggested that even prior to 1974, the creation of settlements was at the expense of Palestinians:

Sometimes it was necessary to uproot an entire village – though not necessarily all at once. For years the impoverished inhabitants of Beit Askariyah watched in impotent dismay as the great cantonments of the Kfar Etzion settlement went up around them, relentlessly encroaching on their agricultural and grazing land before swallowing up their homes too. In January 1972, the army expelled 6,000 Bedouins from Rafah in north-east Sinai. It demolished their houses, poisoned their wells, and kept them at bay with a barbed wire fence. The Bedouins were eventually employed as night watchmen or labourers – on their own property and in the service of those who had taken it from them. (1977: 242)

In 1981 the Likud administration introduced the Drobless Plan. Shafir suggests that its purpose was to 'scatter Jewish settlements among Arab towns and villages in order to ensure that no homogenous Palestinian inhabited area, the potential core of a Palestinian state would remain' (1999: 92). In a more recent study Amnesty International (1999c) examined how settlement-building and Palestinian house demolitions are

'inextricably linked with Israeli policy to control and colonize areas of the West Bank', a policy that has been 'energetically followed for over 30 years by all administrations from 1967 until the present time'. The process of colonisation, the report continues, depends 'not just on finding land that is physically "suitable", but on alienating it from the Palestinians, defending it against Palestinian use, and ensuring through such processes as registration and leasing that Palestinians are disqualified from having any future benefit from that land'. Amnesty International argues that the damage to the 'tight knit pattern of Palestinian villages' has been 'pervasive'. Settlement-building is prohibited by the Fourth Geneva Convention, article 49 of which stipulates that 'the occupying power shall not deport or transfer parts of its own population into the territory it occupies'. The Israeli government has disputed this, arguing that the area is 'administered' rather than 'occupied' and that article 49 of the convention has 'no bearing' on the Israeli settlements because the convention was intended to cover forced transfers during the Second World War, whereas 'the movement of individuals to these areas is entirely voluntary, while the settlements themselves are not intended to displace Arab inhabitants, nor do they do so in practice' (Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 1996).

The practice has, however, been repeatedly condemned by the European Union and the United Nations, who in multiple resolutions have deemed the settlements illegal and in need of removal. The practice was condemned in December 2000 (UN Resolution 55/132) by 152 votes to 4 (Israel, United States, Micronesia, Marshall Islands).

In Jerusalem, Israel initiated a policy of 'Judaisation' in an attempt to change the demographic, physical, cultural, legal and economic status of the city. It appropriated Arab land in the city and demolished Arab housing. In the Jewish Quarter prior to 1948, approximately 20 per cent of the property was Jewish-owned. After 1967, Hirst writes, Israelis 'relentlessly forced out the 5,500 [Arab] inhabitants who lived there' (1977: 235). The demolitions and evictions occurred all over the city, with the victims of land expropriations receiving either inadequate

levels of compensation or sometimes none. Moves to change the legal and demographic structure of Jerusalem have drawn criticism from the international community. In 1999 the UN condemned such actions by 139 votes to 1 (Israel).²⁴ Hirst also notes that Arab culture was suppressed or denigrated, especially in schools.²⁵

The Israeli state quickly moved to integrate the Arabs living in the occupied territories into the Israeli economy. Some historians, for example Sachar, suggest that for Palestinians this was a generally beneficial process, creating 'unprecedented affluence' as part of a 'comparatively painless' occupation (1977: 688-9). Other Israelis were critical of this process, arguing that Israel was instituting colonial policies in which a powerful Israeli minority was exploiting a captive Arab population for the use of its cheap labour and its role as a market for Israeli products:

Better men than I have enlarged on the grim paradox that threatens the Zionist vision, the social and moral failure of that vision, which are to be expected from the transformation of the Jews into employers, managers and supervisors of Arab hewers of wood and drawers of water, and all of it plus the slogan of 'Integration' ... There is an inescapable process in a population that is divided into two peoples, one dominant, the other dominated. No! The State of Israel will not be such a monstrosity. (Ya'akov Talmon, cited in Sachar, 1977: 713)

There has also been commentary in the Israeli press suggesting the conditions under which the Palestinians were obliged to work for Israelis were exploitative and humiliating. Palestinians with jobs in Israel were not legally allowed to spend the night there so that many had to be bussed in over long distances from the occupied territories. This sometimes extended their working day to 17 hours. The Israeli magazine *Haolam Haze* reported on those that were permitted to sleep illegally on Israeli farms: 'Too far away for the eye to see, hidden in the orchards, there are the sheep pens for the servants, of a sort that even a state like South Africa would be ashamed of' (22 December 1982, cited in Chomsky, 1999: 141). In a *Jerusalem Post* interview, the

Israeli journalist Aryeh Rubinstein asks Amos Hadar, secretary general of the Moshav [agricultural] movement, whether he agrees with the use of Arab labour, 'but only on condition that they will live in subhuman conditions, degraded, and not under human conditions, more or less?' 'Correct', replies Hadar stressing that 'there is a difficult question here'. 'There is no choice but to employ Arabs', but they must be bussed in and out of Israel every day. 'It is hard, it is costly, it is problematic from an economic standpoint but there is no other solution' (26 December 1982, cited in Chomsky, 1999: 141).

There has also been criticism of Israeli use of Arab child labour. Israel's Arabic-language communist newspaper *Al-Ittihad* described a child labour market at Jaffa:

In this market foremen get rich by exploiting the labour of children and young men from the occupied areas. Every morning at 4 a.m. cars from Gaza and the Strip start arriving there, bringing dozens of Arab workers who line up in the street in a long queue. A little later at 4.30 a.m. Arab boys who work in restaurants in the town begin to arrive. These boys work in restaurants for a month on end, including Saturdays ... Dozens, indeed hundreds of boys, who should be at school come from Gaza to work in Israel. The cars can be seen coming and going from earliest dawn. At about 6 a.m. Israeli labour brokers start arriving to choose 'working donkeys' as they call them. They take great care over their choice, actually feeling the 'donkeys' muscles. (30 April 1973, cited in Hirst, 1977: 246)

MILITARY OCCUPATION/ADMINISTRATION

Israel imposed a military administration on the occupied territories, which seriously restricted the social and political rights of its residents. According to the United Nations and human rights groups, it also involved extensive human rights violations. Israel argued that the policies were necessary to protect the state from attacks by infiltrators or Palestinians in the occupied territory, who they claimed were susceptible to PLO incitement. Morris suggests that severe repression coupled with 'massive use' of informers and collaborators by the Israeli security service Shin Bet meant that armed activity by the PLO

in the occupied territories was 'virtually eradicated' by 1971 (1992: 279). Some commentators, including Chomsky, have suggested that the imposition of such policies had another objective. This was to make life difficult for the Palestinians in the occupied territories, so that they would emigrate and allow Israel to absorb the parts of the occupied territories that it wanted, without having to worry about a large Arab population that would 'dilute' the Jewish character of the Israeli state. Chomsky points to the official government records of a meeting at the start of the Israeli occupation in September 1967, when Moshe Dayan urged government ministers to tell the Palestinian residents of the occupied territories that 'we have no solution, that you shall continue to live like dogs, and whoever wants to can leave – and we will see where this process leads ... In five years we may have 200,000 less people – and that is a matter of enormous importance' (Beilin, 1985, cited in Chomsky, 1992: 434). Professor Ian Lustick suggests that Israel also wanted to break up the territorial continuity of Israeli Arab villages in the Galilee and points to the 1976 Koenig memorandum in which the Israeli minister of the interior recommended the 'coordination of a smear campaign against Rakah activists ... the harassment of "all negative personalities at all levels and at all institutions" and the employment of techniques for encouraging the emigration of Arab intellectuals, and for downgrading the effectiveness of Arab university student organizations' (1980: 56). It is widely argued that the policies Israel instituted breached international law. They also led to it being frequently condemned at the UN General Assembly and Security Council by near unanimous votes.²⁶ These policies included the systematic torture of prisoners,²⁷ imprisonment without trial,²⁸ collective punishments,²⁹ the taking of natural resources, curfews and searches,³⁰ house demolitions and deportations. The practices have also attracted criticism from human rights groups:

Amnesty International has for many years documented and condemned violations of international human rights and humanitarian law by Israel directed against the Palestinian population of the Occupied Territories. They include

unlawful killings; torture and ill-treatment; arbitrary detention; unfair trials; collective punishments such as punitive closures of areas and destruction of homes; extensive and wanton destruction of property; deportations; and discriminatory treatment as compared to Israeli settlers. Most of these violations are grave breaches of the Fourth Geneva Convention and are therefore war crimes. Many have also been committed in a widespread and systematic manner, and in pursuit of government policy; such violations meet the definition of crimes against humanity under international law. (Amnesty International, 2002a)

NATIONALISM AND THE RISE OF THE OPPOSITION MOVEMENTS

In the aftermath of 1948, the refugees who were displaced had begun to formulate a vision of 'the return'. Initially it was hoped that the United Nations or the Arab states themselves would help the refugees to achieve this objective. However, as the years passed the lack of concrete progress began to frustrate the refugees and they became increasingly disillusioned by the leaders of the Arab states. By 1964 Yasser Arafat had established a small guerrilla organisation, Fatah, which was granted a secure base by Syria's radical Ba'athist regime. Fatah's philosophy from the outset was to mobilise popular Arab support behind guerrilla operations of increasing scale and intensity conducted against Israel. Prior to the 1967 War, Hirst (1977) alleges that Egypt, Jordan and Lebanon had all tried to prevent guerrilla incursions into Israel, but that after the war this became more difficult as popular support for guerrilla operations increased. By February 1968 Fatah members had taken control of the National Council of the PLO and Arafat became chairman. The aftermath of the war also saw the formation of Dr George Habash's PFLP (Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine), which began to build a strong base of support in the refugee camps of the Gaza Strip.

In March 1968, Israeli forces launched an attack on the Karameh refugee camp in Jordan. Israel claimed the attack was in retaliation for PLO attacks, which had killed six people and wounded 44. Fifteen thousand troops backed by tanks attacked the camp. Rather than retreat to the hills the guerrilla forces

stayed, fought and suffered huge losses. Half the Palestinian guerrillas, 150 in all, were killed, together with 128 members of the Jordanian army and 29 Israeli soldiers (Hirst, 1977). Although the guerrillas had lost many fighters it was considered a significant victory because the Israelis had suffered unusually high casualties and met fierce resistance. The battle of Karameh led to an influx of volunteers from across the Arab world to join the guerrilla movements. In the years after 1967, as well as engaging in a guerrilla war, the Palestinians began to formulate a view of what a future Palestinian entity would look like. The result of this was the vision of the 'Democratic State of Palestine' put forward by the PLO planner and negotiator Nabil Shaath in 1969. The new state, it was hoped, would involve the dismantling of the Israeli state and its replacement with a non-sectarian Palestine in which Christian, Muslim and Jew would live together in equality (Hirst, 1977). It would include the Jews already residing there and the Palestinians who had been displaced in 1948 and 1967.

These proposals were not immediately or universally accepted by Palestinians. Hirst (1977) suggests that some saw them as capitulation to the enemy or at best premature considering that Israel was still militarily dominant. Others feared that the more technologically advanced Israelis would dominate them, while some considered it a tactical propaganda move aimed at international opinion.³¹ The concept was a complete non-starter for almost all the Jewish population of Israel. The country had been constructed out of Palestine with huge military and diplomatic effort, and there was no desire to dilute its Jewish character. Furthermore Israelis were fearful of the extreme anti-Jewish rhetoric emanating from its Arab neighbours and worried that any returning refugees might want to take revenge for being displaced from their lands. The former head of Israeli military intelligence, Yehoshavav Harkabi, argued that the concept was a propaganda device designed to mask a struggle that was still 'genocidal' in intent. The idea was eventually dropped after 1974 when the PLO moved towards a two-state solution.

In the two years after the 1967 War the forces of Fatah and the other guerrilla movements had grown from 300 to more than 30,000, and substantial funding was coming in from the Arab world. The number of operations also increased dramatically. Fatah records claim that 98 per cent of these occurred outside the State of Israel with two-thirds of them occurring in the West Bank. Fatah regularly insisted that the army and 'Zionist institutions' were its real targets, not civilians (especially women and children), and if these were attacked it was in response to attacks on Palestinian civilians, and was selectively done. However, Hirst (1977) points out that although the 'great bulk' of attacks were aimed at military targets, civilians were unquestionably targeted. Bombs were planted in supermarkets in Jerusalem and bus stops in Tel-Aviv and rockets were fired on settlements in Kiryat Shmoneh and Eilat. While Fatah confined its actions to historic Palestine, the PFLP did not. It attacked targets all over the world. It hijacked foreign airliners. It firebombed branches of Marks & Spencer because of their fundraising for Israel. It blew up an Arab oil pipeline because the extraction was by an American oil company on behalf of a 'feudal' Arab monarchy. The main purpose of these actions, George Habash maintained, was publicity:

When we hijack a plane it had more effect than if we killed a hundred Israelis in battle. For decades world public opinion has been neither for nor against the Palestinians. It simply ignored us. At least the world is talking about us now. (*Der Stern*, 19 September 1970, cited in Hirst, 1977: 304)

However, the opposition movements were to suffer a major blow in 1970. The PLO had established its headquarters in Jordan, where many Palestinian refugees who had been displaced in the wars of 1948 and 1967 had fled. There, the organisation had formed a state-within-a-state, which openly threatened the rule of the Hashemite monarchy. Following an assassination attempt on King Hussein and a series of hijackings carried out by the PFLP, the king set his army upon the guerrillas. In ten days of bloody struggle, thousands of guerrillas were killed, and within a year most of the fighters and

political elements of the Palestinian movement were expelled and ended up in Lebanon. 'Black September', as it became known among Palestinians, produced an organisation bearing the same name. Its most well-known operation was the taking of Israeli athletes as hostages at the 1972 Munich Olympics. Eight members of Black September took eleven Israelis hostage at the Olympic village in Munich, demanding the release of 200 Palestinians imprisoned in Israel. In the German rescue operation four of the Palestinians and all eleven Israeli hostages were killed. Three days later Israel launched attacks on Syria and Lebanon. There were reports that up to 500 people, many of them women and children, were killed in nine separate simultaneous Israeli air attacks (*Al-Nahar Arab Report*, 18 September 1972):

The Phantoms and Skyhawks swooped on the suburban Damascus resort of al-Hama; the bombs fell indiscriminately on Palestinians in their hillside dwellings and on Syrians, in their cars or strolling by the river Barada on their weekend outing. Survivors recounted how they were machine-gunned as they ran for cover. (Hirst, 1977: 251)

In 1973 there were further hijackings by militant Arab groups. In that year Israel had also shot down a Libyan airliner that had strayed over the occupied Sinai peninsula, killing all 106 passengers. Later, Black September militants took over the Saudi Embassy in the Sudanese capital, demanding the release of Palestinian prisoners held in Jordanian jails. The authorities refused, and a Jordanian together with an American and a Belgian diplomat were killed. There followed, in quick succession, hijackings of Japanese, American and Dutch airliners. The worst loss of life occurred at Rome airport in December 1973 when Palestinian militants killed 34, mainly American, civilians. Eleven months later a British Airways VC10 was hijacked by the Martyr Abu Mahmud Group, who called on the British government to 'declare its responsibility for the greatest crime in history, which was the establishment of the Zionist entity, and forswear the accursed Balfour Declaration, which brought tragedies and calamities to our region' (cited in

Hirst, 1977: 321-2). In the wake of this hijacking Yasser Arafat very publicly attempted to rein in the militants by arresting a number and amending the PLO criminal code to make hijacking that resulted in loss of life a capital offence.

The early 1970s had also seen the PLO begin to make diplomatic headway at the United Nations in its quest for institutional legitimacy and support for Palestinian nationalism. It received support at the UN from the Arab, non-aligned and newly decolonised states, which tended to vote as a block in support of Palestinian rights. In 1970 a General Assembly resolution was passed recognising the need for Palestinian self-determination. General Assembly Resolution 2649 'condemns those Governments that deny the right to self-determination of peoples recognised as being entitled to it, especially of the peoples of southern Africa and Palestine'. In 1974, UN Resolution 3246 was passed, which again stressed the need for Palestinian self-determination and added as a corollary that it was legitimate to 'struggle for liberation from colonial and foreign domination and alien subjugation by all available means, including armed struggle'. In November 1974, the UN adopted Resolution 3236, which established UN support for the creation of a Palestinian state: 'The General Assembly ... reaffirms the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people in Palestine, including (a) the right to self-determination without external interference (b) the right to national independence and sovereignty.'

Many Israelis, especially those on the political right, disputed the whole notion of Palestinian nationalism. They argued that it was a post-1967 invention created by the Arab states in order to wage a surrogate war against Israel. In 1969, the Israeli Prime Minister Golda Meir stated that 'It was not as though there was a Palestinian people in Palestine considering itself as a Palestinian people and we came and threw them out and took their country away from them. They did not exist' (*Sunday Times*, 15 June 1969, cited in Shlaim, 2000: 311). Similarly Netanyahu has argued that both Palestinian nationalism and Palestinian refugees are post-1967 fabrications:

Indeed, most Palestinian Arabs have homes. Many of them, in fact, live as full citizens in Eastern Palestine – today called the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan. Similarly, most of the Arabs of Judea-Samaria are not homeless refugees; they live in the same homes they occupied before the establishment of Israel. The number of actual refugees is close to nil. (2000: 156–8)

This view is disputed by multilateral bodies such as the United Nations, who have explicitly recognised in many resolutions the existence of a distinct Palestinian people, their rights to national self-determination, and the existence of over three and a half million refugees.

1973: THE OCTOBER WAR/THE YOM KIPPUR WAR

The War of Attrition had failed to secure the return of the occupied Sinai for Egypt but had instead left many of the Suez coastal cities devastated by Israeli raids. Shlaim claims that in the early 1970s Egypt made numerous attempts to regain the occupied Sinai through diplomacy but her peace overtures were rejected by Israel.³² Shlaim suggests Israel's 'diplomacy of attrition' together with statements indicating that it intended to annex the Sinai left Sadat with no diplomatic option and made war inevitable.

On 6 October 1973, Egyptian and Syrian forces attacked Israeli troop concentrations in the occupied Sinai peninsula and Golan Heights. The Arab armies achieved early successes, with the Egyptian army crossing the Suez Canal and advancing into the Sinai, and the Syrian army forcing back the Israelis on the Golan Heights. Eventually the Israeli army turned the tables and regained the territorial losses it initially sustained. The war cost the lives of 2,832 Jews and 8,528 Arabs (Shlaim, 2000). There have been suggestions that the conflict nearly precipitated both a nuclear exchange between the superpowers and an Israeli nuclear strike on Egypt.³³

The nature of the attack and the motivations of Syria and Egypt are contested. Netanyahu argues that the Arab forces had 'enormous advantages' over the Israelis, and the Israeli army had fought a 'pulverizing battle to keep the front from

collapsing in the face of overwhelming numbers' (2000: 282). He claims that 'Israel's army was able, albeit by a hair's breadth, to prevent defeat in the face of a surprise attack' and that having 'so little to show for an onslaught stacked so decisively in their favour' was what brought Sadat to the negotiating table to sign a peace treaty with Israel at Camp David in 1979 (2000: 282). In contrast, Shlaim suggests that the Egyptian/Syrian attack was a limited venture designed to bring Israel to the negotiating table and force a political settlement in which the lands captured in 1967 would be returned. In an exact reversal of Netanyahu's thesis, Finkelstein (2001) argues that it was Israel that finally agreed to come to the negotiating table at Camp David after Egypt and Syria demonstrated that they possessed a 'military option'.

Following the Yom Kippur War the Arab world led by Saudi Arabia instituted an oil embargo on the West, leading to a sharp rise in oil prices, which it is argued precipitated a major global recession. This again had the effect of focusing international attention on the need to resolve the conflict, or at least to neutralise some of its more dangerous elements.

CONFLICT IN LEBANON

Having been forced out of Jordan in 1970, the PLO relocated to Lebanon from where it fought a guerrilla war against the Israeli state, attacking both military and civilian targets. Sachar (1977) lists numerous deadly attacks by Palestinian infiltrators on Israelis and argues that during the mid-1970s the 'violence continued almost without respite' (1977: 810). Netanyahu notes that the PLO were using Lebanon as a base from which to fire Katyusha missiles across the border into Israel, which he maintains had a very damaging effect on the lives of those in Israel's northern towns and villages:

The PLO used the territory of its de facto state to shell Israeli cities and towns. For years, the entire population of the northern border towns and villages were regularly driven into underground bomb shelters by barrages of PLO launched Katyusha missiles, the little brothers of the Scud missiles that

Iraq launched against Israel in 1991. By 1982, the population levels of Kiryat Shemona and Nahariya had fallen ominously; factories, schools and beaches were being closed repeatedly to avoid mass casualties during the shelling; and fear of economic ruin and depopulation had spread. (2000: 218–19)

During this period Israel bombed PLO positions, Lebanese villages and Palestinian refugee camps. The Israeli military analyst Ze'ev Schiff justified attacks on civilians on the basis that guerrillas used the villages and refugee camps for shelter:

In south Lebanon we struck the civilian population consciously because they deserved it ... the importance of [Mordechai] Gur's [Israeli chief of staff] remarks is the admission that the Israeli army has always struck civilian populations, purposely and consciously ... the army, he said, has never distinguished civilian [from military] targets ... [but] purposely attacked civilian targets even when Israeli settlements had not been struck. (*Ha'aretz*, 15 May 1978, cited in Chomsky, 1999: 181)

Israeli Foreign Minister Abba Eban argued that 'there was a rational prospect ultimately fulfilled that affected populations would exert pressure for the cessation of hostilities' (*Jerusalem Post*, 16 August 1981, cited in Chomsky, 1999: 182). The Lebanese villagers, however, were unarmed and in practice could do little to stop the armed guerrillas. The Lebanese army was too weak to remove the Palestinians, who had virtually formed a state-within-a-state. Official government casualty statistics suggest that the scale of Israeli raids was disproportionate to the Palestinian attacks. The Israeli authorities estimated that 106 Israeli civilians were killed by Palestinian guerrillas on Israel's northern border in the period between 1967 and 1982, at a rate of approximately seven a year (*Ha'aretz*, 22 June 1982, cited in Chomsky, 1999: 74). The American journalist Judith Coburn reported that diplomats in Beirut and UN officials estimated 3,500 Lebanese citizens were killed between 1967 and 1975, and at least twice as many Palestinian civilians, giving a rate of more than a thousand per year. Touring Southern Lebanon in the mid-1970s, Coburn found many villages 'attacked almost daily in recent months ... by airplane, artillery, tanks

and gunboats', with the Israelis employing 'shells, bombs, phosphorous, incendiary bombs, CBUs [cluster bombs] and napalm' against Lebanese villages and refugee camps as part of what she claimed was a 'scorched earth' policy to remove the population and create a demilitarised zone (*New York Times*, 7 March 1975, cited in Chomsky, 1999: 190). By 1977 it was estimated that 300,000 Lebanese Muslims had been turned into refugees by the Israeli attacks (*New York Times*, 2 October 1977, cited in Chomsky, 1999: 191).

The PLO continued its diplomatic offensive at the United Nations. In November 1974, the UN officially granted the PLO observer status. Later that month Yasser Arafat addressed the UN General Assembly for the first time, giving his 'gun and olive branch' address. The leadership of the PLO argued for the ending of the armed struggle, in return for the creation of a mini-Palestinian state in the West Bank and Gaza Strip and a settlement of the refugee issue. This move was not accepted by all factions within the organisation, the PFLP leading the rejectionist wing, which was against the concept of the mini-state and the recognition of Israel. These moves did not impress the Israelis. Israel's foreign minister claimed that 'the voice of Arafat was, and remains the voice of indiscriminate terror, the voice of the gun, with nothing in it of the olive branch of peace' (cited in Hirst, 1977: 335). The call for the creation of a Palestinian mini-state between Israel and Jordan was similarly dismissed as a platform from which the PLO would attempt to destroy Israel. The Israeli daily *Yediot Aharonot* argued that 'no reasonable person ... can ask us to hand over these regions to the PLO, unless it expects Israel to commit suicide' (14 November 1974, cited in Hirst, 1977: 336).

In the mid-1970s both sides as well as Syria became involved in the Lebanese civil war. The 1943 power-sharing National Pact broke down in the mid-1970s, culminating in the all-out civil war of 1975–76. The conflict broadly concerned two rival groupings: first, the right-wing Christian-Maronite-Phalangist alliance, backed by Israel, which was economically dominant in the country, and second, the predominantly poor majority, which consisted of leftist Muslim-Lebanese and Palestinian

groupings. In mid-1976, with the leftist Muslim coalition gaining the upper hand in the conflict, the Syrians intervened on the side of the Christians, occupying most of Lebanon apart from a southern strip bordering Israel. The intervention of the Syrian army at the behest of the Christians (and with the tacit support of Israel) brought a truce and relative calm to all but Southern Lebanon. The 18 months of civil war had devastated Beirut, which became partitioned, and killed tens of thousands of Palestinians and Lebanese. In April 1976, Israel and Syria reached a secret agreement with American mediation, splitting the area into 'spheres of influence'. Syria agreed to keep its troops north of the Litani River and not to install surface-to-air missiles there, recognising Southern Lebanon as Israel's security buffer.

In the mid-1970s, Israel began supplying the two major Christian Maronite militias, the Phalangists and Chamouns, with weapons. Jonathan Randal (1983), the former senior foreign correspondent of the *Washington Post*, suggests the conflict was strategically useful for Israel because it tied down two enemies, the Syrians and Palestinians, both of whom had come into conflict with the Christians by 1977. Israel was also backing General Haddad's South Lebanon Army (SLA), which was acting as its proxy force in South Lebanon. Randal (1983) notes that this was controversial because Haddad's forces had been involved in serious abuses including many instances of large-scale killings of civilians and were accused of involvement in the unlawful deaths of UN personnel. In 1978, Israel mounted a large-scale invasion of Southern Lebanon, claiming that it was in response to a Palestinian attack in Israel, which had left 37 Israelis and nine Palestinians dead.

The scale and effects of the invasion are disputed. Gilbert claims that 'several dozen PLO soldiers were killed or captured' and 'all PLO installations were systematically destroyed' (1999: 490). Randal claims it was civilians rather than guerrillas who bore the brunt of the attack:

The destruction was on a scale well known in Vietnam. Aping the prodigal use of American firepower in Indo-China, the Israelis sought to keep their

own casualties to a minimum – and succeeded. But they failed to wipe out the Palestinian commandos, who had plenty of time to scamper to safety north of the Litani River. Piling mattresses, clothes and families in taxis and overloaded pickup trucks, more than two hundred thousand Lebanese also fled north out of harm's way. They became exiles in their own country, squatters seizing unoccupied apartments, the source of yet more tension in West Beirut. The Israelis did succeed in massive killing: almost all the victims were Lebanese civilians – some one thousand according to the International Committee of the Red Cross. More than six thousand homes were badly damaged or destroyed. Half a dozen villages were all but levelled in a frenzy of violence in which Israeli troops committed atrocities. (1983: 209)

After three months under pressure from the United Nations, who condemned the attack, the IDF withdrew from Southern Lebanon and was replaced by a UN force. Most of the positions abandoned by the IDF were taken by the SLA. In January 1979, Ezer Weizman, the Israeli defence secretary, announced a controversial pre-emptive policy against Palestinian guerrillas in Southern Lebanon. He declared that Israel would not only strike in retaliation but 'at any time and any place that Israel deemed desirable' (cited in Randal, 1983: 220). In 1981 hostilities escalated in Lebanon. On 17 July Israel launched a major bombing raid on Southern Lebanon, hitting refugee camps, ports, Lebanon's main oil refinery and all but one of the bridges over the Litani and Zahrani rivers (Randal, 1983). The Israelis claimed that the raids were necessary to deal with a PLO arms build-up in Southern Lebanon. The Palestinians held fire for three days and then began shelling and rocketing northern Israel. On 17 July Israel bombed the Fakhani district in West Beirut, home to the PLO offices. More than 120 Palestinian and Lebanese civilians were killed, leading to international condemnation of the raid. The Palestinians then launched artillery attacks on 28 Israeli towns and settlements, damaging homes, crops and orchards, while tens of thousands of Israelis were temporarily forced to flee their homes in northern Israel (Randal, 1983). In the wake of this exchange both sides agreed to an American-brokered ceasefire.

DIPLOMACY AND THE CAMP DAVID ACCORDS

During this period, a number of attempts had been made by the Palestinians to push for a peace settlement. Palestinian representatives put forward a United Nations Security Council resolution in January 1976, which called for a two-state solution based on the 1967 borders, 'with appropriate arrangements ... to guarantee ... the sovereignty, territorial integrity and political independence of all states in the area and their right to live in peace within secure and recognised boundaries' (UN Security Council Resolution S/11940). The resolution received nine votes in favour, including France and the Soviet Union, but was blocked by a single vote against from the United States. Chomsky (1999) points to PLO acceptance of the Soviet-American peace plan of October 1977, the Soviet peace plan of 1981 and the Saudi 1982 peace plan as well as a number of public statements by PLO representatives in the late 1970s that the Palestinians were proposing to end the armed struggle in exchange for the creation of a mini-state in Gaza and the West Bank.³⁴ He notes that all such overtures were rejected by Israel. But some Israelis such as Binyamin Netanyahu have dismissed all such Palestinian peace overtures. These are seen as part of an attempt to force Israel to accept a PLO 'Trojan horse', whose purpose is to destroy the Israeli state. Netanyahu argues that after the 1973 War the Palestinians realised that they couldn't destroy Israel with a 'frontal military assault' but were planning 'an interim phase in which Israel would be reduced to dimensions that made it more convenient for the coup de grace'. This would be achieved in two phases: 'first create a Palestinian state on any territory vacated by Israel', and 'second mobilize from that state a general Arab military assault to destroy a shrunken and indefensible Israel' (2000: 239). Netanyahu claims that the Arabs have been deceiving the Western nations with a moderate front:

For the PLO is a Pan-Arab Trojan Horse, a gift that the Arabs have been trying to coax the Arabs into accepting for over twenty years, so that the West in turn can force Israel to let it in at the gates. The Arabs paint

their gift up prettily with legitimacy with the pathos of its plight, with expressions for the cherished ideas of freedom, justice, and peace. Yet no matter how it is dressed up to conceal the fact, the ultimate aim of the gift remains: to be allowed within Israel's defensive wall, to be parked on the hills overlooking Tel-Aviv, where it can perform its grisly task. Every inch of Western acceptance – the cover stories, the banquets, the observer status, the embassies, and any territory the PLO has been able to get its hands on – it uses to push ever closer to its goal. (2000: 256)

In March 1978, 350 Israeli reservists sent a letter to Prime Minister Begin that accused the government of preferring to build settlements and create a 'Greater Israel' rather than make peace with the Arab world. This was partly in response to Begin's decision to support the creation of a number of new Gush Emunim settlements deep in the occupied territories. The letter marked the creation of the 'Peace Now' movement, which in September 1978 organised a mass rally of 100,000 Israelis in Tel-Aviv, the largest political demonstration in the state's history. The European Economic Community also pushed for a solution to the conflict during 1979. Leaders of the EEC meeting in Venice in June issued statements supportive of Palestinian statehood, and the president-elect of the European Commission, Gaston Thorn, travelled to the Middle East and met Yasser Arafat. The PLO was recognised by Ireland and Austria, while French President Giscard d'Estaing recommended the group be accepted as a partner in peace negotiations. The Europeans also attempted to widen Resolution 242 to include Palestinian self-determination. Ovendale (1999) claims that the United States made it clear that it would veto any European resolution in the Security Council that supported Palestinian rights.

In March 1979, Israel signed a peace agreement with Egypt in Washington, on terms very similar to the ones rejected by Israel in 1972. The progress to the final settlement had been long and tortuous, involving diplomacy stretching over several continents and many years. Israel agreed to hand back the Sinai peninsula in exchange for a comprehensive peace treaty, and demilitarisation of most of the Sinai. Both parties

had compromised. Israel agreed to remove the settlements and airfields. Egypt dropped the issue of Jerusalem, and the two sides agreed on only a vague autonomy plan for the Palestinians, which would be implemented in stages over a number of years. The two signatories were subject to a great deal of criticism over the conclusion of the peace treaty. Begin was attacked by the right and religious parties for returning the Sinai. Sadat was criticised for breaking Arab unity by signing a peace treaty with Israel, without having achieved a deal on the key issues of Jerusalem, Palestinian statehood or a full Israeli withdrawal from Arab territory. Finkelstein (2001) suggests that the Israeli government agreed to peace with Egypt because it would neutralise the most powerful Arab military force threatening it, and subsequently allow it to break the core of the Palestinian national movement in Lebanon.

On 30 July 1980, the Israeli government formally annexed all of Jerusalem, and the following year the Golan Heights were annexed in violation of the Israel–Egypt peace agreement and Resolution 242. Both annexations drew immediate condemnation from the UN Security Council (Resolutions 478 and 497), which declared them to be illegal, and demanded their reversal. The plans for Palestinian autonomy were not developed, and Shlaim suggests that the Begin administration deliberately sabotaged the autonomy negotiations and expanded expropriations of Palestinian land and settlement-building, because it wanted to retain control over the West Bank and Gaza Strip:

Begin managed the autonomy talks in such a way that nothing could possibly be achieved. The first sign was Begin's appointment of Dr Yosef Burg, the minister of the interior, to head Israel's six-man negotiating team. Burg was the leader of the National Religious Party, which saw Israel's right to Judea and Samaria as embedded in Scripture and supported the settlement activities of Gush Emunim. (2000: 381–2)

1987: THE FIRST INTIFADA

On 9 December 1987, following the death of four Gazans in a road traffic incident, Palestinians from the Jebalya refugee camp began throwing stones at an Israeli army compound. Within days unrest spread to the West Bank. Unarmed Palestinian men, women and children attacked Israeli soldiers and armoured personnel carriers. Benny Morris notes that the intifada was 'not an armed rebellion but a massive, persistent campaign of civil resistance, with strikes and commercial shutdowns accompanied by violent (though unarmed) demonstrations against the occupying forces' (1992: 561). The intifada lasted six years until it was called off by the Palestinian leadership in the wake of the Oslo agreements. The factors behind it are contested. Netanyahu has argued that the Israeli administration in the occupied territories had instituted a 'liberal policy aimed at radically improving the lives of the Palestinians' and that material and educational prosperity had gone hand in hand with political rights, including 'a press

consisting of newspapers representing various factions (some openly sympathetic to the PLO) and the right to directly appeal all decisions to the democratic court system' (2000: 176). He maintains that the impetus for the intifada was 'virulent PLO agitation', which led the population in the occupied territories to adopt 'ever more extreme and implacable positions' (2000: 177). He also claims that the PLO had forced children out of their schools to take part in confrontations with Israeli forces. Gilbert blames Jordan for not integrating the Palestinians living in the West Bank into Jordanian society before 1967, and argues that the impetus for the intifada came from a 'bitter hard core of extremists who were prepared to face Israeli bullets in order to defy the occupiers and assert their national identity' (1999: 525). Some Israelis blamed outside agitation for the intifada. Yitzak Rabin accused Iran and Syria of fomenting unrest. Others have questioned whether Israeli policy in the occupied territories was really liberal and suggest that the intifada was the result of severe and persistent human rights abuses. This is made clear in a report by the Israeli Committee for Solidarity with Bir Zeit (the West Bank University periodically closed by the Israeli authorities). It described the Israeli administration in the occupied territories as an 'attempt to revive an old well-known colonial method in a new "original" Israeli form' in order to create 'an Israeli Bantustan, which imposes on the Palestinians the role of hewers of wood and drawers of water for Israeli society'. To achieve this, the report suggested that there was widespread and violent suppression of all forms of political activity, and that 'quislings from the Village Leagues' together with settler groups inflicted 'humiliation, harassment and terror' on the local population.³⁸ The United Nations also produced a number of reports in the mid-1980s that were critical of Israeli human rights abuses in the occupied territories and pointed to widespread acts of violence committed against Palestinians by armed settlers.³⁹ Israel Shahak argues that such abuses were the main factor behind the intifada and cites examples from the Israeli press:

In fact, before the intifada, the daily oppression, humiliations, land confiscations and arbitrariness of the Israeli regime were steadily increasing. This increase, duly recorded by the Hebrew press, was the chief reason for the outbreak of the intifada. Readers of Israel's Hebrew-language press are aware of how outrageously the Israeli armed forces were behaving before the intifada. On June 19, 1987, Eyal Ehrlich reported in an article in *Ha'aretz* headlined, 'An occupier against his will,' the testimony of a young Israeli soldier assigned to serve in the border guards. Whenever a Palestinian is accosted to show his I.D., the soldier wrote, its checking is always accompanied by 'a slap, a punch, a kick.' 'The border guards usually enjoy beating the Arabs,' the account continues. 'They derive pleasure from it ... Sometimes I feel like a Nazi when I watch my friends in action. I try hard to stay away from one of my commanders ... He always behaves very badly toward the locals: with violence, beatings, and the like ... The soldiers spit in the faces of the Arabs, or they kick them in the testicles. And there is always that slap in the face.' An article in *Hadashot* of July 7, 1987 by Menahem Shizaf was headlined, 'Border guards order the Arabs to masturbate and to lick the floor.' It described the treatment meted out to Palestinian workers from the occupied territories who were found spending the night in shacks in Israel rather than returning to their homes. (*Washington Report on Middle East Affairs*, March 1991)

The Israeli minister of defence Yitzak Rabin explained that the Israeli response to the intifada would consist of 'force, might, beatings' (*New York Times*, 23 January 1988, cited in the *New York Review of Books*, 17 March 1988), while Prime Minister Shamir was reported in the Israeli publication *Hadashot* as warning those protesting against the occupation that they would be crushed 'like grasshoppers' with their heads 'smashed against the boulders and walls' and that 'we say to them from the heights of this mountain and from the perspective of thousands of years of history that they are like grasshoppers compared to us' (6 January 1988, cited in Chomsky, 1999: 482). By February 1988 the intifada became formalised with the establishment of the United National Leadership of the Uprising. The organisation encouraged strikes among those who worked in Israel and attacks on the Israeli administrative structure. Taxes were withheld, those who worked as administrators and tax collectors resigned and Israeli goods

were boycotted (Ovendale, 1999). Roadblocks were set up to keep out the Israeli army, and Palestinians tried to create an alternative system of local self-government independent of the military authority.

In February 1988, the United States attempted to put forward a peace plan based on Palestinian autonomy in the occupied territories. The plan was rejected by Israel and the PLO, who noted that it made no mention of statehood. In April, Abu Jihad, the PLO second-in-command, was assassinated by Israel in Tunis. The Tunisian government complained to the UN Security Council. The Israeli daily *Ma'ariv* later reported that the future prime minister Ehud Barak had directed the assassination from a navy ship off Tunis (4 July 1988). In July, King Hussein of Jordan announced that his country was severing its links with the West Bank, effectively killing the 'Jordanian option' that had long been favoured by the US and some Israeli leaders. In September, Yasser Arafat told the European Parliament in Strasbourg that the PLO would accept Israel's right to security if Israel recognised a Palestinian mini-state. In November the Palestinian National Council meeting in Algiers agreed to recognise Israel, as well as all UN resolutions dating back to 1947 and to forswear its claim to all of mandatory Palestine. It also proclaimed the establishment of the state of Palestine with East Jerusalem as its capital. The Israeli prime minister, Shamir, dismissed the resolutions as a 'deceptive propaganda exercise, intended to create the impression of moderation and of achievements for those carrying out violent acts in the territories of Judea and Samaria' (cited in Shlaim, 2000: 466). Yasser Arafat wanted to appeal to the UN General Assembly, but despite being recognised by more than sixty nations the United States refused him an entry visa (Ovendale, 1999). The General Assembly then voted to hold its plenary session in Geneva. Arafat, under strong pressure from the American secretary of state George Shultz, announced that the PLO accepted Resolutions 242 and 338, as well as Israel's right to exist, and renounced 'terrorism'.

Meanwhile Israel's response to the intifada was attracting widespread international criticism. By January 1989 the US

State Department reported that the unrest had claimed the lives of eleven Israelis and 366 Palestinians. Some on the Israeli right argued that the criticism of Israel and media coverage of the intifada was biased and unfair, and that the Israeli response was restrained and proportionate. Netanyahu, for instance, commented that:

Ignoring the Arab reign of terror in the Palestinian streets, the media created for themselves nightly instalments of a popular romance drama: heroic underdog in search of self-determination taking on a terrifying Israeli tyrant ... Since viewers were being told this was an 'army of occupation' – that is, it had no right to be there in the first place – the media managed to transform even the most necessary aspects of maintaining law and order into unforgivable crimes. Utterly lost from the images on the screen was the organised nature of the rioting, the internecine violence, and the terrorised lives of the innocent Arabs (and Jews) who were ground under the intifada's heel. Similarly lost were the restrictive firing orders that stayed the hand of every Israeli soldier, and the swift trial of the 208 Israelis who in any way disobeyed these orders – as against the tens of thousands of Israeli soldiers and reservists who followed the regulations with impeccable restraint. (2000: 181–2)

The United Nations, NGOs, human rights groups and some Israeli soldiers disputed this. In December 1988, the UN General Assembly passed a resolution by 106 to 2 (Israel, United States), which condemned the conduct of the IDF and settlers during the intifada. The resolution 'declare[d] once more that Israel's grave breaches of that Convention are war crimes and an affront to humanity'. Among many criticisms the resolution 'strongly condemned' the 'implementation of an "iron-fist" policy against the Palestinian people ... the escalation of Israeli brutality since the beginning of the uprising ... the ill-treatment and torture of children and minors under detention and/or imprisonment ... the killing and wounding of defenceless demonstrators ... the breaking of bones and limbs of thousands of civilians ... the usage of toxic gas, which resulted, inter alia, in the killing of many Palestinians' (United Nations, 1988). Israel was particularly criticised for its treatment of children during the intifada. A thousand-page study from

Save the Children documented the 'indiscriminate beating, tear-gassing, and shooting of children'. The report found that the average age of the victims was ten years old and that the majority of those who were shot were not participating in stone throwing. The report also alleged that in 80 per cent of cases where children were shot the Israeli army prevented the victims from receiving medical attention. The report concluded that more than 50,000 children required medical attention for injuries including gunshot wounds, tear gas inhalation and multiple fractures (report cited in Finkelstein, 1996: 47). The August 1989 bulletin from the Israeli League for Human and Civil Rights was entitled 'Deliberate Murder' and reported on the targeting of Palestinian children in leadership roles. It found that the Israeli army and snipers from 'special units' had 'carefully chosen' the children who were shot in the head or heart and died instantaneously (report cited in Finkelstein, 1996: 47). Other reports from Israeli human rights groups and articles in the Israeli press also allege that torture, including severe beating and electric shocks, was used extensively against detainees including children.⁴⁰

The intifada also saw the birth of Hamas, the Islamic opposition movement formed by Sheik Yassin in February 1988. The organisation, which emerged out of the Muslim Brotherhood, stressed a return to conservative Islamic values and provided a network of health and social services for Palestinians in the occupied territories. For many years the organisation received extensive funding from Israel (Shlaim, 2000; Chomsky, 1999; Mishal & Sela, 2000). Shlaim claims that this was done 'in the hope of weakening the secular nationalism of the PLO' (2000: 459). Chomsky (1999) suggests such a weakening would be beneficial to Israel because it would allow them to evade a political solution to the conflict that might involve returning the occupied territories. The Hamas charter issued in August 1988 argued that all of Palestine belonged to the Muslim nation as a religious endowment and that it was each Muslim's duty to engage in jihad ('struggle') to 'liberate' Palestine. The degree to which its intentions match its rhetoric is disputed. Most Israelis regard the organisation

as fundamentalist and uncompromising, dedicated to killing Jews and destroying the Israeli state. But two Israeli academics, Shaul Mishal and Avraham Sela, suggest that the organisation is more complex and pragmatic than this. They suggest that Hamas utilises 'controlled violence' as a 'means rather than an end' to mobilise political support and is 'cognizant of power relations and political feasibility' (2000: viii). They argue that its main purpose has been to establish itself as the major force in Palestinian political life and that in the future it 'may find it can accept a workable formula of co-existence with Israel in place of armed struggle' (2000: ix). In 1989, the group's founder Sheik Yassin was arrested by Israel, and in the occupied territories the Israelis increased their use of deportations and curfews in an attempt to suppress the intifada. They also outlawed the committees administering the uprising. This was a serious problem for Palestinians as they saw the committees as the nucleus of the self-governing institutions they hoped to build, once the occupation ended.

In 1989, Yitzak Shamir put forward an initiative that proposed elections and expanded Palestinian autonomy in exchange for the ending of the intifada. Shamir set down certain preconditions. They were that there would be no Palestinian state, no PLO involvement (even if its representatives triumphed in the elections) and no participation in the elections for the inhabitants of East Jerusalem. The plans were eventually derailed by members of Shamir's own cabinet, principally Ariel Sharon, David Levy and Yitzhak Moda'i, who argued that Israel was giving too much away, and was adopting too liberal an attitude to the intifada (Shlaim, 2000). Egypt and the United States then put forward their own peace initiatives. These precipitated a split in what was then a National Unity government in Israel, which led to its downfall. One part of the government, the Labour Alignment, unsuccessfully urged Shamir to accept the American initiative, while some members of the right-wing Likud party felt Israel was making too many concessions and not cracking down sufficiently hard on the intifada. For six weeks the Labor party's Shimon Peres tried unsuccessfully to form a new coalition; eventually Yitzak Shamir formed one

in which his Likud party linked up with ultra-nationalist and religious parties. This new coalition, which Shlaim suggests was the most right wing and hard-line (in its attitudes to the Arabs) in Israel's history, immediately announced that it would end the intifada, create new settlements and expand existing ones (2000). It also insisted there would be no Palestinian state, no negotiation with the PLO and no sharing of Jerusalem.

The intifada, which continued to smoulder during this period, was reignited in October 1990 when Israeli troops killed 21 Palestinians on the Temple Mount in Jerusalem. The Israelis claimed they had responded to acts of stone throwing directed at Israeli worshippers. The Palestinians claimed that the stone throwing only began after the Israelis started shooting. The UN Security Council condemned the killings, but Israel managed to prevent the UN from acting on Palestinian demands to replace the Israeli military government in the occupied territories with a UN force (Ovendale, 1999).

In August 1990, the Iraq War intervened when Saddam Hussein invaded Kuwait and occupied the country. Five months later an American-led coalition attacked Iraq forcing its withdrawal from Kuwait. Both the Palestinians in the occupied territories and the PLO leadership allied itself with Saddam Hussein because of the Iraqi dictator's attempt to make a 'linkage' between Iraqi withdrawal from Kuwait and Israeli withdrawal from the occupied territories, and because he struck at the Israeli state with Scud missiles. In doing so the Palestinian leadership effectively lost much of the political capital it had built up over many years, while Israel benefited internationally by not responding to the Iraqi attacks. In the aftermath of the war the US moved to bring Israel and its Arab adversaries together in an international peace conference.