

ABDEL MONEM SAID ALY

SHAI FELDMAN

KHALIL SHIKAKI

ARABS & ISRAELIS

From

OCTOBER 7

To

PEACEMAKING



CROWN CENTER
for Middle East Studies

ABDEL MONEM SAID ALY

SHAI FELDMAN

KHALIL SHIKAKI

ARABS & ISRAELIS

————— *From* —————

OCTOBER 7

————— *To* —————

PEACEMAKING

Abdel Monem Said Aly is the chairman of the Board and CEO of Al Masry Al Youm Publishing House in Cairo, and the former chairman of the Board, CEO, and director of the Regional Center for Strategic Studies in Cairo. He has served as president of Al Ahram Center for Political & Strategic Studies in Cairo, chairman of the Board and CEO of Al Ahram Newspaper and Publishing House, and was a member of the Board at Al Ahram Institutions and the director of Al Ahram Center for Political and Strategic Studies in Cairo. He was also a research fellow at both the Brookings Institute and the Belfer Center at Harvard University. In 2014, he founded The Gulf Arab States Institute in Washington. He served as a Senator in the Egyptian Shura Council and has published books, articles, and chapters on world systems, Arab relations, European integration, the Arab–Israeli conflict, Egypt’s political system, national security, and arms control. He contributes regularly to newspapers and media forums. His most recent publications are *State and Revolution in Egypt: The Paradox of Change and Politics* (Brandeis University, Crown Center for Middle East Studies, January 2012), and *Arabs and Israelis: Conflict and Peace Making in the Middle East* (London, MacMillan & Belgrave), co-authored with Shai Feldman and Khalil Shikaki. He obtained his BA from Cairo University and his MA and PhD in political science from Northern Illinois University.

Shai Feldman is the Raymond Frankel Chair in Israeli Politics and Society at the Crown Center for Middle East Studies and Professor of Politics at Brandeis University. From 2005 to 2019, Shai was the founder and Crown Family Director of the Crown Center. From 1997 to 2005, he served as head of Tel Aviv University’s Jaffee Center for Strategic Studies. He was a senior research associate at the Jaffee Center since its establishment in late 1977. In 2019–2022, he served as President of Sapir College in Sha’ar Hanegev, Israel. Since 1997, he has also served as Board Associate of Harvard University’s Belfer Center for Science and International Affairs. In 2001–2003, Shai served as a member of the UN Secretary General’s Advisory Board on Disarmament Matters. Shai’s numerous publications include six books, the most recent of which is *Arabs and Israelis: Conflict and Peacemaking in the Middle East*, with Abdel Monem Said Aly and Khalil Shikaki (second edition, London: Bloomsbury, 2022). He holds a PhD in political science from the University of California at Berkeley.

Khalil Shikaki is a professor of political science, director of the Palestinian Center for Policy and Survey Research (PSR) in Ramallah, and member of the steering committee of the Arab Barometer. He is also a senior fellow at the Crown Center for Middle East Studies at Brandeis University. He finished his Ph.D. in Political Science from Columbia University in 1985. A world-renowned expert on Palestinian public opinion and a widely published author, he has conducted, since 1993, hundreds of public opinion polls among Palestinians and dozens of joint Palestinian–Israeli polls. He taught at several Palestinian and American universities including al-Najah University, Birzeit University, the University of Wisconsin (Milwaukee), the University of South Florida (Tampa), the University of Utah, and the University of Michigan. Together with Yaacov Shamir, Khalil co-authored *Public Opinion in the Israeli–Palestinian Conflict: The Public Imperative During the Second Intifada*, with Yaacov Shamir (Indiana University Press, 2010). His most recent publications include *Arabs and Israelis: Conflict and Peacemaking in the Middle East*, (Palgrave Macmillan, 2022, second edition) with Abdel Monem Said Aly and Shai Feldman.

Table of Contents

Preface	1
Introduction	5
Chapter 1: What Led to October 7	9
The International Scene	10
The Regional Scene	12
The Palestinian Scene	17
The Israeli Scene	21
Chapter 2: October 7 and Its Aftermath	25
The War	28
The International Environment	30
The Regional Environment	33
Israel and the Palestinian Authority	36
Israel's Domestic Scene	36
The Palestinian Domestic Scene	39
Chapter 3: The Peace Vision	41
Resolving the Bilateral Conflict	43
A Regional Support System	44
How Do We Get There? Transitioning to Long-Term Peace	47

Chapter 4: Impediments to Implementing the Proposed Peace Plan	51
The International Scene	52
The Regional Scene	54
Israel's Domestic Scene	57
The Palestinian Domestic Scene	59
The Leaders: Netanyahu	60
The Leaders: Abbas	63
 Chapter 5: Confronting the Impediments to Peace	 65
Measures to Improve Decision Environments	66
Reciprocal Messaging	69
Help Thy Neighbor	70
 Chapter 6: Summary and Concluding Observations	 79
Motivating Palestinian-Israeli Accommodation	81
Transitioning to a Positive Change	82
Institutions Implementing Positive Change	84
Addressing the Impediments to a Positive Change	85
The Politics of Peacemaking: Liabilities and Assets	88
 Annex	 91
 Endnotes	 95

Preface

This monograph is the product of the work of three scholars—an Egyptian, an Israeli, and a Palestinian—who have been following the Arab-Israeli conflict and the efforts to resolve it for some four decades. Two of us served in our countries' respective armed forces more than five decades ago. Since the late 1980s, we have also taken part—sometimes in leading roles—in informal and unofficial conversations between the conflict's protagonists. Sometimes, our understanding of these conversations also produced policy recommendations that we conveyed, together and separately, to our nations' leaders.

Two decades ago, the three of us came together to establish the Crown Center for Middle East Studies at Brandeis University. Since then, almost every fall semester, we've team-taught a class entitled "Conflict and Peacemaking in the Middle East"—a one-of-a-kind effort to sensitize students to the competing Arab and Israeli narratives about the conflict and to provide them with a framework for explaining its evolution. Thanks to the generous support of Marcia Riklis (New York), we soon began to translate this unique teaching experience into a team-authored university textbook about the conflict. The first edition of this product, *Arabs and Israelis: Conflict and Peacemaking in the Middle East*, was published by Palgrave Macmillan in 2013 and the second edition, by Bloomsbury Academic, in 2022.

Shocked by the magnitude of Hamas's attack on October 7, 2023, and by Israel's response to that attack—and horrified by the possible further escalation of such violence to a full-scale regional war—the three of us decided to cooperate once more, this time in an effort to understand what happened and to explore ways of preventing it from ever happening again. Encouraged and supported again by Marcia Riklis, this monograph is the product of this joint effort, beginning over Zoom conversations from Cairo, Tel Aviv, and Ramallah over the summer of 2024 and continuing on the Brandeis campus during the fall.

In addition to this Preface and the Introduction, the monograph comprises six chapters. The first chapter attempts to explain what led to October 7, 2023. The second ascertains what occurred on October 7 and what has happened during the first year since that date, as Israel launched its effort to eliminate Hamas in Gaza; as Hamas's allies—Hezbollah in Lebanon, the Houthis in Yemen, and the pro-Iranian militias in Iraq—joined the fighting; and as the war gradually escalated, reaching a peak in three first-ever direct military confrontations between Israel and Iran.

The third chapter presents how we think the horrors of October 7 and of the war that ensued might lead to a more stable, peaceful, and prosperous Middle East in similar (though not identical) fashion to the way that the horrors of the Second World War led to the creation of the United Nations, NATO, and the European Union and more than seven decades of peace and prosperity in Europe. We propose a vision and suggest not only what this new chapter in Arab-Israeli relations might look like, but also how the transition could proceed from today's death and destruction to the proposed new era in Middle East history.

The monograph's fourth chapter ascertains what factors might prove to be impediments to implementing the plan proposed in the third chapter, which international and regional parties might attempt to prevent such implementation, and how domestic constituencies and individual leaders might act to undermine the suggested transformation from war to peace. The fifth chapter proposes ways of overcoming the impediments identified in the previous chapters, with particular emphasis on how the parties to the suggested transformation could help one another by creating an environment that might prove more conducive to positive changes. And in the sixth chapter, we share some concluding remarks and observations.

We completed writing the monograph only a few days after the November 5, 2024, U.S. presidential and congressional elections. While it is difficult to ascertain with any confidence the future direction of the second Trump administration's policy in the Middle East, it is clear from Trump's previous term in office, and from the senior appointments he made soon after his 2024 reelection, that U.S. policy on the Israeli-Palestinian issue will continue to pose a serious challenge to sustainable peacemaking, thereby possibly adding another significant impediment to those addressed in Chapter 4.

This monograph could not have been produced without the enthusiastic support we received from the Crown Center's leadership, primarily the Center's Director, Gary Samore, and its Senior Associate Director, Kristina Cherniahivsky. And without the initiative, encouragement, and financial support of Marcia Riklis, this monograph could not have been written and published. Also indispensable were Lester Crown (Chicago) and former Brandeis University president Jehuda Reinharz. Without their vision and support, the Crown Center would not have been created, and could not have sustained its commitment to balanced and dispassionate research on the Middle East.

It is this commitment that enabled our joint teaching, the writing and publishing of our textbook, and the production of this monograph.

We also thank the Norwegian Ministry for Foreign Affairs for its generous support of Track II talks held by a group of Palestinians, Israelis, and Americans in Istanbul and Oslo in 2012. These meetings were cosponsored by Brandeis University's Crown Center, Harvard University's Program on Negotiations (PON), and the Palestinian Center for Policy and Survey Research (PCPSR). Many of the suggestions made in Chapter 5 are based on ideas that were discussed in these conversations.

We are also grateful to Steven Andrea Berchin, who personifies the best among Brandeis University's undergraduate students, for helping with the research required for this monograph. Finally, many thanks to Robert L. Cohen, the Crown Center's legendary line editor. For almost twenty years, Robert's insistence on perfection has contributed significantly to the high quality of the Center's publications.

During the past year, Israelis and Arabs have experienced the most horrific forms of bloodshed. Many have seen atrocities firsthand, and some even took part in creating death and destruction. We realize that in such an environment, the suggestions made here to transform the current high levels of violence into a new era of peace and prosperity may seem unrealistic. But the three authors of this monograph, who have observed both the Arab-Israeli conflict and peacemaking efforts through more than four decades of trials and tribulations, have not given up. When reading this monograph, we hope our readers will put aside their perfectly understandable doubts and skepticism and bear with us one more time.

Abdel Monem Said Aly (Cairo)

Shai Feldman (Tel Aviv and Boston)

Khalil Shikaki (Ramallah)

December 2024

INTRODUCTION

The October 7 attack and the subsequent Israel– Hamas Gaza War are the most horrific developments in the history of the Arab– Israeli conflict since the 1948 War. Moreover, what began as a very violent bilateral clash between Hamas and Israel soon escalated to involve Lebanon’s Hezbollah and Yemen’s Houthis, as well as pro– Iranian Iraqi militias. This escalation reached a peak in April 2024 with the first direct Iranian missile and drone attack on Israel, thwarted by a U.S.– led coalition that intercepted all incoming ordnance.

These dramatic events evolved within a highly complex region, in which the repeated collapse of peacemaking efforts allowed religiously driven movements and sub– state actors, in Israel as well as in Arab states—many of the latter supported and guided by Iran—to engage in significant efforts to further destabilize the Middle East. This regression threatens to revert the Arab– Israeli conflict back to the existential phase that characterized the early decades of the conflict.

It is noteworthy, however, that on more than one occasion in world history, a great calamity has brought about a much better future. One salient example was the Second World War, probably the deadliest in mankind’s history. Yet, it was followed by the establishment of the United Nations and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) as well as the pacification of Japan, along with the subsequent creation of the European Union (EU). The result has been more than seventy– five years of peace and prosperity in Europe and the Far East. Similarly, the very violent Vietnam War, which spread to Laos and Cambodia in the late 1960s, eventually led to an era of peace and the expansion of the ASEAN multilateral regional framework, which includes some of the world’s fastest growing economies.

Could the horrors of October 7 and the subsequent war be transformed into a better future for Palestinians and Israelis alike? Might these horrors become a turning point in the Palestinian– Israeli conflict and help create the conditions for peace? This monograph will examine this possibility by ascertaining what led to the October 7 attack, what were the main characteristics of the attack and of the war that ensued, and what an Israeli– Palestinian peace might look like in the aftermath of both sides’ recent horrific experiences. What would likely be the impediments to implementing such a peace, and how such impediments might be overcome, will also be explored and elaborated.

In attempting this analysis, we will be guided by five premises. First, that the current deadly conflict between Israel and Hamas can be brought to a stable and enduring conclusion only in the context of a broader, comprehensive resolution of the Palestinian–Israeli conflict. Indeed, any effort short of that to implement some form of conflict management or “mowing the grass” arrangement without addressing the basic requirements of both Palestinians and Israelis will sooner or later blow up in the two peoples’ faces.

Our second premise is that as important as were the imperfect specific formulas of different peace proposals offered over the years, much more significant in determining their fate were the international, regional, and domestic impediments to adopting those proposals. Hence, a much greater effort will be made in this monograph to ascertain the likely impediments to achieving the peace proposed here—and, to an even greater degree, to explore how these impediments can be overcome.

Our third point of departure is that notwithstanding the horrors of Hamas’s October 7 attack and the subsequent war—developments that, in the short run, engendered an understandable hardening of views among both Israelis and Palestinians—as the violence reached the end of its first year, significant numbers of both Israelis and Palestinians indicated a strong desire to reach some form of accommodation that might avert the even greater horrors of a full-scale region-wide war.

Fourth, parallel to the negative trajectories that led to October 7 as described, analyzed, and assessed here, the past two and a half decades have also witnessed important positive developments in the Middle East that make Palestinian–Israeli peace at least possible.

Finally, as the support of outside powers—primarily the United States—as well as that of key regional players is essential if the current horrors of war are to yield some form of Arab–Israeli peace, there is no substitute for the parties’ communicating directly with one another in an effort to resolve the conflict. Such direct interactions are essential for overcoming the ignorance and lack of empathy that Arabs and Israelis continue to demonstrate with regard to each other.



Bahraini Foreign Minister Khalid bin Ahmed Al Khalifa, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, U.S. President Donald J. Trump, and Emirati Foreign Minister Abdullah bin Zayed Al-Nahyan at the signing of the Abraham Accords in Washington D.C. on September 15, 2020. (AP Photo/Alex Brandon, File)

CHAPTER 1

WHAT LED TO OCTOBER 7

The International Scene

At the international level, the October 7 attack was at least in part the result of the neglect of the Palestinian–Israeli conflict in recent years by the world’s most influential players, primarily the U.S. This neglect resulted at least partly from the cumulative effect of the failure of recent American administrations, from Bill Clinton to George W. Bush and Barack Obama, to achieve a breakthrough in this realm despite the considerable efforts they made. In most cases, these failures were tied less to the substance of the respective peace initiatives and more to the reluctance of these administrations to exercise direct and indirect leverage to press Israel and the Palestinians to accept the compromises required.

In contrast, the failure of the Trump administration to implement its vision for Israeli–Palestinian peace (the so-called “Deal of the Century”) resulted largely from its one-sided approach, producing a plan that did not meet the minimal requirements of the Palestinians. Not less important was that prior to the publication of his plan, President Trump took a number of unilateral steps that created an environment in which his plan would not even be considered. In addition to closing the PLO office in Washington, DC, these steps included the recognition of Jerusalem as Israel’s capital, the relocating of the U.S. Embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem, and the issuing of policy statements acknowledging Israeli sovereignty in the Golan and stipulating that Israeli settlement construction in the West Bank was not illegal.

Following the failure of its peace plan, the Trump administration refocused its efforts on the regional realm, negotiating normalization agreements between Israel and the UAE, Bahrain, Morocco, and Sudan—the so-called Abraham Accords. These agreements ignored the conditionality embedded in the Arab League’s 2002 Arab Peace Initiative (API),¹ avoiding connections between the agreed normalization and the unresolved Palestinian–Israeli conflict.

When the Biden administration assumed office in early 2021, it judged that neither the Palestinians nor Israel were prepared for a major peace drive. Hence, it refrained from burdening Israel’s so-called Government of Change, headed by Naftali Bennett and Yair Lapid, and subsequently positioned itself in opposition to the new Likud-led government, headed by Benjamin Netanyahu, that was formed in late December 2022. In President Biden’s words, the new government was “the most conservative . . . in Israel’s history”—ergo not leaving much hope for a peace breakthrough.²

Additionally, in Biden's view the new Israeli government's attempt in early 2023 to change the balance of power between the legislative branch and the judiciary was a threat to the country's democracy—and, importantly, to the values that Israel and the U.S. share, which has constituted the basis for the close ties between the two countries. In this context, it did not seem to President Biden that he had a partner for peacemaking in Jerusalem. Instead, his administration focused on a more modest objective: extracting from the Israeli government a minimally positive statement regarding the Palestinian issue that might allow “normalizing” Israeli–Saudi ties. Yet it failed to achieve even this more modest goal.

On the Palestinian front, the Biden administration also failed to reverse most of the negative measures taken by the Trump administration: It did not reopen the U.S. Consulate in East Jerusalem, and it did not allow the reopening of the PLO office in Washington. It also refrained from taking measures to encourage reforms in the Palestinian Authority (PA) or to persuade it to hold the elections that have not been held since 2006. Even when the PA leadership seemed willing to hold parliamentary elections in 2021, the Biden administration showed no sign of support for such a move and may even have lobbied against it.³ It also did not support the PA demand that the Israeli government allow the holding of such elections in East Jerusalem.

What is often overlooked is that, to a considerable extent, Russian conduct in the Middle East during this same period also continued as if the Palestinian–Israeli conflict did not exist. Russia's quest for armaments and munitions, generated by its invasion of Ukraine and the sanctions placed upon it by the United Nations and the European Union, required closer ties between Moscow and Tehran. Yet during the same period, Israel continued its military operations in Syria (in the framework of the so-called Operations between Wars doctrine) in an attempt to thwart Iranian arms transfers to Hezbollah through Syria. These operations demanded continuous tactical coordination between the Israeli and Russian air force units stationed in Syria's western coast since 2015. The importance of these “deconflicting” arrangements demanded, however, that Israel refrain from joining the Western alliance in support of Ukraine.

The Regional Scene

The most important aspect of the Middle East regional scene that led to October 7 was a non-event: the absence of any meaningful Palestinian-Israeli peace process. This has been the case for at least ten years since the Obama administration's "Kerry mission" failed in 2014, leaving Palestinians and Israelis without much hope of any positive change in their relations. The conditions for solving the conflict only worsened during the ensuing decade, with Israeli settlement construction in the West Bank continuing, making it more difficult to ever establish a territorially contiguous Palestinian state.

This already grim situation was further exacerbated by a number of other negative developments. Coupled with the Palestinian Authority's incompetence and corruption, Israeli policies further weakened the PA and its quest for independent statehood. These included limitations on the PA's ability to exercise governance in areas of the West Bank that were supposed to be under its full or partial control according to the Oslo Accords, as well as the repeated incursions of Israel's security services into these areas, resulting in the PA's loss of legitimacy in the eyes of its constituents. Thus, instead of creating the conditions that would enable the creation of a Palestinian state, developments on the ground accelerated the slide toward a "one-state reality," thereby reducing the odds of a Palestinian state ever emerging.⁴ Inevitably, this also led to the strengthening of Hamas, whose leaders had argued since the PLO's signing of the Oslo Accords that Israel would never allow Palestinian statehood.

Another very important trajectory in the regional environment that led to October 7 was the dramatic decline in the importance attached by Arab states to the Palestinian issue. A key cause of this decline was the eruption of the Arab Spring in 2010–12. The priority attached by Arab regimes to their stability and survival caused them to turn inward—that is, to their domestic fronts—and to treat the Palestinian issue as a second-order priority.

This was particularly so in the case of Syria, where clashes that began in Daraa, inspired by the earlier protests in Tunisia and Egypt, soon led to a full-scale civil war. The horrors of that war, with over 600,000 dead and 14 million people displaced internally and externally,⁵ exceeded by far the cumulative costs suffered by all Arab countries and Israel during the entire history of the Arab-Israeli conflict.⁶

Not only did the Arab Spring influence the priority attached by the affected countries to the Palestinian issue, but that was also impacted by positions that Palestinians took with regard to the Arab Spring. Thus, Egypt's attitude toward Gaza was altered by its perception that Hamas took the Muslim Brotherhood's side in the 2010–12 upheavals, and that Hamas members entered Egypt from Gaza and participated in the storming of Egyptian jails and the release of prisoners. In later years, the Egyptian intelligence services have reportedly also identified Hamas's cooperation with ISIS-related terrorists in northeastern Sinai. As a result, Egypt had its own security interest in isolating Gaza, so as to limit any possible negative impact of Hamas on Egypt's domestic stability.

Another example of the Arab Spring's impact on Arab attitudes regarding the Palestinian issue occurred following the eruption of the protests in Syria. Hamas decided to take the protesters' side and relocated its leadership from Damascus to Doha (Qatar). Not surprisingly, Bashar al-Assad saw the decision as a sign of ingratitude if not betrayal. This added to the indirect impact of the Arab Spring on Syria's stance with respect to the Palestinians: With the fragmentation of his country, Assad became completely preoccupied with the survival of his regime. At the same time, he became even more dependent on Hezbollah, as Hassan Nasrallah made a very different call, by mobilizing and deploying his troops into Syria to save the Assad regime.

Another important change in the Middle East during the years leading to October 7 was the relative rise in the power of Iran. This increased influence began soon after the U.S.-orchestrated invasion of Iraq in 2003, as the invasion eliminated any chance of maintaining the strategic balance in the Gulf. With Saddam's Ba'ath party and his security enforcement arms gone, the very large Iraqi military shredded, and the country divided by sectarianism, factionalism, and militias, the most important counter-power to Iran's hegemonic ambitions was now gone.

More recently, the ascent of Iran was further accelerated by two dramatic developments that it did not initiate but from which it benefited considerably. The first was the decision of the Trump administration to abandon the JCPOA—the nuclear agreement signed on July 14, 2015 by the five permanent members of the United Nations Security Council, Germany, and Iran (5+1+Iran). The imperfect limitations on Iran's nuclear activities stipulated in the JCPOA were thus abandoned without an effective Plan B to replace them.

Angered by America's unilateral action, the other four members of the UNSC refused to cooperate in rebuilding the coalition that the Obama administration had constructed to compel Iran to accept the compromises required by the JCPOA. Without their support, the Trump administration could only exercise its own "maximum pressure"—not enough to dissuade Iran from resuming its uranium enrichment and plutonium production efforts. A Biden administration attempt in 2021 to persuade Iran to accept a "new and improved" substitute for the JCPOA failed miserably. As a result, by early 2024, Israel and the U.S. both assessed that Iran had reached the status of a "nuclear threshold" state—a status defined as the ability to acquire within a few months enough fissile material to produce a nuclear device, and within two to three years, a deliverable nuclear warhead.⁷

The second cause of Iran's improved position was Russia's invasion of Ukraine. Remarkably, a former world superpower became dependent on Iran as a manufacturer of various types of munitions, especially unmanned aerial platforms. The Russia-Ukraine war also introduced another layer of regional tension as other Middle East countries, notably Egypt, became dependent on importing wheat from Ukraine and suffered the consequences of the substantial general increase in the price of wheat.

An additional dimension of the increase in Iran's regional profile resulted from its own meticulous efforts to build an effective "axis of resistance" in the Middle East. The architect of these efforts was Qasem Soleimani, the commander of Iran's Quds Force, who was assassinated by the U.S. on January 3, 2020. The "axis of resistance," comprising Hamas in Gaza, Hezbollah in Lebanon, the Houthis in Yemen, and armed militias in Syria and Iraq, enabled Iran to mobilize them after October 7, to great effect. The unity of purpose established among these groups and the close coordination among them likely played a role in Hamas's assessment that the risks associated with the October 7 attack were tolerable.



The reach of Iran's "Axis of Resistance" across the Middle East.

That unity of purpose was based on a concern that Iran shared with its allies about certain regional developments, the cumulative effect of which was a move away from almost exclusive reliance on hard power and geopolitics to soft power and geoeconomics. In this context, important players in the Middle East were making an unprecedented effort to prevent the region's sliding into even greater region-wide violence, and to contain Iran's attempts to further destabilize the Middle East. This turn to geoeconomics began in 2016, when Egypt signed a maritime border agreement with Saudi Arabia that led to deeper economic cooperation between the two countries. It continued in 2020, when the Abraham Accords states joined Egypt and Jordan in establishing diplomatic and economic ties with Israel. At the same time, Egypt initiated a process of regional integration, inspired by EU experience that was built initially around iron and steel. In the Middle East the attempt has revolved around oil and gas, with the creation of the East Mediterranean Gas Forum,⁸ which includes Egypt, the PA, Israel, Jordan, Cyprus, Greece, France, and Italy.

Regardless of the precise nature of the communications that were exchanged between Iran, Hamas, Hezbollah, the Houthis, and the Popular Mobilization Front in Iraq during the months and weeks preceding the October 7 attack, one specific regional development during this period likely contributed to a common sense of urgency, as well as to Hamas's estimate that it could expect support from Iran and the other members of the "axis of resistance" if it launched an October 7-type attack. That development was the increased reference in the region's political and diplomatic circles, as well as in the regional media, to the possibility that the U.S. would succeed in its efforts to facilitate an Israeli-Saudi agreement on normalization. As the agreement was expected to contain significant measures of improved U.S.-Saudi defense relations, including in the realm of nuclear energy, it would not be surprising if Hamas expected to obtain Iran's backing for an attack that could lead to considerable chaos, thus impeding the predicted normalization.⁹ All the more so if the feared U.S.-facilitated security-economic bloc discussed at a recent G-20 meeting, comprising India, Israel, and a number of Gulf states, could also be derailed.¹⁰

In a region now split between Iran and its allies, on the one hand, and its competitors seeking peace and prosperity on the other, the pro-Palestinian camp was torn, and the relative importance of the Palestinian issue declined. Key regional players—notably Saudi Arabia—blamed both the PA and Hamas for the Palestinians' fragmentation, and for the failure of all regional and international (Russian and Chinese) efforts to mediate Palestinian internal reconciliation. Egypt alone made eleven such attempts. Their general support for the Palestinians was also negatively affected, as they expressed frustration and fatigue in the face of these domestic divisions.

Egypt, which viewed the Gaza Strip as a major security liability and considered Hamas's post-2007 control over it a threat to peace and stability in the Sinai, sought to restore PA control of the Gaza Strip through a Fatah-Hamas reconciliation. Egypt viewed Hamas as an extension of the Muslim Brotherhood movement and therefore a threat; yet, failure to restore PA control over Gaza forced Egypt to serve as the most important back channel, along with Qatar, for all Israel-Hamas negotiations. Viewing Hamas's control over the Gaza Strip as a *de facto* reality, Egypt sought to stabilize that area by stabilizing Israel-Hamas relations. Consequently, all cease-fire agreements between Hamas and Israel between 2008 and 2021 were mediated by Egypt. In turn, improved Egypt-Hamas relations led to a significant Egyptian removal of restrictions on the movement of people and goods through the Rafah Crossing.¹¹ Until 2018, Hamas may have also operated dozens of tunnels underneath Egypt's borders with Gaza.¹²

In the immediate aftermath of the PA's April 2021 cancellation of elections—elections to which Hamas was invited and in which it intended to participate—Egypt seemed to have concluded that the president of the PA was unwilling to pay the price for the PA's return to controlling the Gaza Strip. That conclusion and Hamas–Israel's fourth Gaza war in May 2021 led Egypt to mediate talks between Hamas and Israel over what came to be known as “a long term *hudna*,” one in which Hamas would gain greater control over the Gaza Strip, along with a significant easing of the Israeli siege and blockade over it, in return for ten or even up to twenty years of peace and quiet.¹³ The talks, which continued until June 2023, were unsuccessful. Egypt reportedly warned Israel that such failure would inevitably lead Hamas to launch a major offensive, but Israel chose to ignore Egypt's warnings.¹⁴

The Palestinian Scene

The refusal of Israel, the U.S., the international community, and many among the PA ruling elite to respect the outcome of the 2006 elections contributed significantly to ruining the nascent Palestinian transition to democracy. As importantly, this failure created two major domestic dynamics: first, a split within the PA, with the Gaza Strip coming under Hamas's control and the West Bank remaining under the control of Abbas's Fatah movement; and second, a slide toward authoritarianism in the entire Palestinian political system that gradually destroyed the legitimacy of the PA and deprived it of public support. Meanwhile, Israeli punitive measures against the PA along with increasing settlers' violence contributed to weakening the PA, and to the rise of Palestinian armed groups that constrained the PA's ability to enforce law and order or ensure security in the northern parts of the West Bank.

With its control over the Gaza Strip fully secured as it neutralized all opposing forces soon after its 2007 takeover, Hamas focused most of its efforts on two goals: assembling an effective governing administration and creating a strong military capacity, in what appeared to be an effort to build a ministate in the Gaza Strip. Hamas succeeded greatly in achieving these two objectives, which enabled it to plan and execute the October 7 attack.

During that period, however, Hamas had much less success in grappling with the desperate socioeconomic conditions in the Gaza Strip. Improvement of these conditions was impeded by three players: first, the siege and blockade

imposed by Israel immediately after its unilateral withdrawal from Gaza in 2005 and significantly tightened after Hamas's violent takeover of the Strip in 2007; second, Egypt's closure of the Rafah crossing between Egypt and Gaza to the ordinary movement of people and goods; and third, the PA's imposition of financial and other sanctions on the Gaza Strip. These significantly reduced the funds transferred to that area and the social services provided to Gazans.

Hamas's search for a way out of this predicament was conducted over three phases. During the first seven years, Hamas sought to build an economy based on an extensive network of tunnels it built under the Egyptian border. These tunnels provided a lifeline that helped sustain Hamas's control over the Gaza Strip, especially during the 2011–13 period of the Arab Spring and the Muslim Brotherhood presidency in Egypt. It also led Hamas to think that it could control Gaza for a prolonged period without having to compromise with its rival, Fatah, or with Israel.

During the second phase, which began in 2014 and continued until April 2021, Hamas's efforts to strengthen its control over the Gaza Strip received a serious blow from the decision taken by Egypt's President el-Sisi to eliminate the threat of terrorism in the Sinai by destroying Hamas's tunnels. As a result, Hamas was forced to make significant concessions to Egypt and to President Abbas. By 2017 it had agreed to dismantle its separate government in Gaza and to accept the PA's governing control under Abbas. The latter's acceptance of a reconciliation government and the holding of elections, Hamas hoped, would create the conditions for its reintegration into the PA.

Abbas's decision in April 2021 to cancel the Palestinian parliamentary elections that were scheduled to take place in May ended this phase of Hamas's search for an exit strategy. The following two years witnessed efforts by Hamas and Israel under three Israeli prime ministers—Naftali Bennett, Yair Lapid, and Benjamin Netanyahu—to reach a long-term *hudna*.¹⁵ Such an agreement would have required Hamas to stop violence against Israel and prevent such violence, while Israel was to have allowed the Gaza Strip access to resources, to Egypt, and to the rest of the world. These negotiations failed, mostly owing to Hamas's very high demands regarding the prisoners exchange that would have accompanied such an agreement. Without an alternative option to sustain its control over the Gaza Strip or to reintegrate into the PA, Hamas's attack on October 7 now became only a matter of time and opportunity.

Meanwhile, conditions in the West Bank were gradually worsening. The PA faced three major challenges: a loss of popular legitimacy and trust; increasing Israeli pressure intended to weaken the PA; and an ongoing *de facto* annexation of the West Bank along with an increase in Israeli settlers' violence, targeting vulnerable Palestinian communities in Area B and Area C. As a result, by the eve of October 7, shifts in Palestinian public opinion had reached a level whereby Hamas was now seen as more worthy of representing and leading the Palestinian people. The vast majority of respondents in polls demanded the resignation of President Abbas, and a majority of these respondents also expressed the conclusion that "armed struggle" was the most effective means of ending the Israeli occupation.

The PA's loss of legitimacy was mostly self-inflicted. Internal rivalry inside Fatah had led to a power struggle which damaged the rule of law, freedom of speech, and pluralism in Palestinian civil society. During the past decade, the PA in the West Bank has taken several measures that have severely undermined good governance and eliminated any meaningful accountability and oversight within the political system. Since the last general elections in 2006, the parliament was dissolved; the rule of law was sacrificed; the judiciary was weakened and its independence damaged; media freedoms were highly curtailed; and the space for civil society has significantly shrunk, as nongovernmental organizations and institutions lost much of their independence from the government.

These developments generated a gradual loss of PA legitimacy, both electoral and nonelectoral. Though his presidential term ended in 2010, Abbas has continued to prevent the holding of parliamentary and presidential elections ever since. As of this writing he continues to rule without a popular mandate—and public trust in the PA government has consequently declined, from 68% when it was first elected in 2006 to 27% by the end of 2021 and 19% on the eve of October 7.¹⁶

The perception that corruption existed in PA institutions also increased during this period, reaching as high as 87% in October 2023.¹⁷ The vast majority of Palestinians—78% as of October 7—also demanded President Abbas's resignation.¹⁸ By then, Palestinians viewed the PA as a burden on the Palestinian people; a majority viewed its continued existence as serving the interests of Israel, and viewed its dissolution or collapse as serving the interests of the Palestinian people.

The aforementioned difficulties were compounded by steps taken by Israel. In the absence of a peace process since 2014, Palestinian-Israeli relations became increasingly hostile. The main venue for PA confrontation with Israel during this period has been international institutions. Such confrontation has been costly to the PA, however, mostly because it was asymmetric: The PA had little leverage over Israel, whereas Israel could respond by denying Palestinians resources and economic opportunities. The formation in Israel in December 2022 of what seemed to Palestinians a national religious government represented another significant turning point in Palestinian-Israeli relations. Soon thereafter, Israel suspended the transfer of clearance funds to the PA, and Israeli army incursions into West Bank cities more than tripled.

These developments together led to reduced PA law enforcement capacity, thereby generating an increased security vacuum in parts of the West Bank, and the resulting formation of new armed groups willing to challenge both PA security forces and those of Israel. As the Israeli army sought to fill the vacuum, it further weakened the PA, leading to a vicious cycle of incursions, violence, and bloodshed. The year 2022 was the most violent in Palestinian-Israeli relations since the end of the Second Intifada. Palestinian deaths in the West Bank alone stood at 146, the highest since 2005;¹⁹ Israeli deaths stood at 31, the highest since 2008.²⁰ Incidents of settler violence against Palestinians amounted to 755 in 2022, compared with 496 in 2021 and 358 in 2020.

During the eighteen months from the beginning of 2022 until June 30, 2023, 397 Palestinians died as a result of settler-related incidents.²¹ In the two months following October 7, the Israeli watchdog *Yesh Din* documented 242 settler violence incidents, in which “hundreds of Israelis raided Palestinian villages, setting fire to dozens of homes and vehicles.”²²

The Israeli Scene

A number of interconnected trajectories in Israel's domestic scene contributed to the environment that led to October 7. The most important of these was the rise of right-wing governments in the aftermath of the Second Palestinian Intifada. Especially after the failure of the Obama administration's Kerry mission in 2014, most of these governments opposed the creation of an independent Palestinian state within a two-state solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. These governments also refrained from assisting the PA in its attempts to govern and develop the West Bank and weakened Fatah in its attempts to battle Hamas. While throughout this period senior IDF officers stressed the contribution of the PA to Israel's security and to the area's stability, they could not overcome the priorities of their civilian masters.

Consistent with their opposition to Palestinian independent statehood, most Israeli governments during this period contributed to institutionalizing the separation between Gaza and the West Bank by directly or indirectly helping Hamas. One example concerns the issue of prisoners' release, which is of great importance to Palestinians: In a deal with Hamas in October 2011, Israel agreed to release 1,027 Palestinian prisoners in exchange for Hamas's release of a single Israeli prisoner, Gilad Shalit. Ironically, one of the released was Yahya Sinwar, the mastermind of October 7. Given that since 2000 Israel never released Palestinian prisoners to the PA, this one-sided deal helped Hamas establish itself as the guardian of Palestinian interests.

Another example concerned the ending of all military confrontations with Hamas since it took over Gaza in 2007. All these confrontations, in 2009, 2012, 2014, and 2021, ended with negotiations between Israel and Hamas, notwithstanding the fact that their respective representatives did not sit in the same room. With that, Israel acknowledged, informally but importantly, that it had two Palestinian addresses: one in Ramallah and the other in Gaza.

To contain Hamas, Israel cooperated with Egypt in isolating Gaza, but it also took care of the area's basic needs—so that Hamas-ruled Gaza became dependent on Israel for its water, fuel, and electricity. Israeli hospitals serviced Palestinians from Gaza whose illnesses could not be treated sufficiently well at hospitals in the Strip. This was enabled by means of direct communication between Israeli hospitals and the Gaza health ministry, which was now directed by Hamas. Finally, Israel also played a key role in ensuring Hamas's financial solvency by coordinating with Qatar—and at times even lobbying it—to annually transfer hundreds of millions of dollars to Hamas.

These long-term negative trajectories only worsened during the year that preceded October 7, following the creation of a new Likud-led coalition government on December 29, 2022. Not only did the new government include parties that were previously viewed as beyond the pale—so extreme that they were excluded even from all previous Israeli right-wing governments—but some of their leaders were given key, hypersensitive ministries such as internal security, finance, and a position of minister within the Ministry of Defense.

The new government quickly took a number of steps that weakened the PA, further radicalized the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, and threw Israeli society into the sharpest internal split it has experienced in the past half-century. The minister of finance, Bezalel Smotrich, further squeezed the economy of the West Bank by suspending the transfer of funds that Israel owed the PA. He also gave cover to extreme Israeli settlers in their violent clashes with their Palestinian neighbors. And he played a key role in pressing the Israeli government to legalize illegal Israeli strongholds in the West Bank. These measures contributed to increasing support among Palestinians for armed resistance, and to the strengthening of armed groups that had already been part of the scene since the end of 2021. This in turn forced the IDF to redeploy some of its forces stationed in the Gaza “envelope” to the West Bank, thus thinning the military presence in the areas attacked by Hamas on October 7.

Meanwhile, the new minister of national security, Itamar Ben-Gvir, pushed for changing the status quo in Jerusalem’s Temple Mount/Haram al-Sharif, provoking violence by visiting a site that was informally off-limits to Jews since then opposition leader Ariel Sharon visited it in late September 2000, provoking the Second Palestinian Intifada. The visits also contributed to increasing Hamas’s popularity in the Palestinian street, as its violent reaction in 2021 helped situate it as the defender of Arab rights in Jerusalem and enabled it to argue that the PA was incapable of protecting these rights.

Another realm in which the new Israeli government created an environment that led to October 7 was its attempt to change the distribution of power among Israel’s main branches of government, in favor of the Knesset and at the expense of the judiciary. Interpreted by large segments of Israeli society as a threat to Israeli democracy, the proposed change was opposed by hundreds of thousands of Israelis who went into the streets and city squares to protest every Saturday night for months on end.

Even more consequentially, IDF reservists threatened that they would not show up for service if the attempt to legislate the proposed changes was not stopped. Minister of Defense Yoav Gallant and IDF Chief of Staff Herzi Halevi along with other members of the IDF General Staff warned publicly that the proposed “judicial revolution” was creating an unprecedented rift in Israeli society and a deep crisis within the IDF—and that Israel’s adversaries were watching and might view the situation as providing an unprecedented “window of opportunity” to strike Israel. In retrospect, notwithstanding the monumental tactical and operational surprise that Israel suffered on October 7, these statements constituted clear strategic warnings that were dismissed or simply ignored by the country’s political leaders.

CHAPTER 2

OCTOBER 7 AND ITS AFTERMATH

On October 7, 2023, Hamas demonstrated its capacity to spring a highly effective attack on Israel's civilian communities, as well as on its military bases bordering on the Gaza Strip. Remarkably, Israel did not just fail to anticipate the attack; rather, it had become trapped in a mindset and elaborate conceptual framework that precluded even the possibility that Hamas would—or could—launch such a massive, sophisticated, and well-coordinated attack. The success of that attack accounts for most of Israel's casualties in the war to date: more than 1,200 dead and 8,700 wounded.²³

During the years and months preceding October 7, Israeli intelligence had succeeded in collecting the relevant information regarding almost all components of Hamas's planning, buildup, training, and exercises. Most important, in early 2022, Israeli intelligence obtained the detailed operational plan that Hamas implemented on October 7.²⁴ Still, the intelligence community failed to properly assess Hamas's determination and capability to launch such an elaborate attack: It continued to regard Hamas as an insurgency, failing to understand that it had transformed itself into a military that was organized in relatively large formations of battalions and brigades, and that could launch a combined assault via land, air, and sea and could breach and penetrate the Gaza-Israel border along 119 different locations in a well-coordinated fashion.²⁵

Suffering from a serious case of hubris and repeating the fateful mistake it had made prior to October 1973—the failure to take the adversary seriously—the IDF could not even imagine the multidimensional attack that Hamas launched on October 7, let alone consider it a compelling threat for which it needed to prepare, train, and exercise. What remains baffling is that Israel's political leaders also ignored the strategic warnings mentioned earlier (issued in March 2023) by Israel's then minister of defense, Yoav Gallant, and the IDF's chief of staff, Herzi Halevi.

The dimensions of the strategic surprise that Israel suffered on October 7 were largely but not entirely responsible for the complete failure of the IDF and the other branches of Israel's defense community to respond immediately and competently to Hamas's initial attack. For long hours that day, Hamas fighters conquered civilian communities on Israel's side of the border in addition to at least one key military base, blinding Israel's surveillance and other technical means of information gathering along the border. Also significantly damaged were the means of transmitting such information to the IDF's Southern Command and General Staff, diminishing their capacity to read the battlefield correctly and in a timely manner.

As Hamas’s leaders were probably also surprised by the magnitude of their forces’ success, they seem to have failed to prepare for the immediate consequences of that success. Thus, as much as their forces displayed impressive discipline when preparing and launching the attack, they seemed completely undisciplined after they breached and penetrated the border. Additionally, they seemed to have underestimated the speed with which the news of their success would spread to Palestinian towns located close to the border, resulting in mobs storming across the border to join Hamas fighters and inflicting the largest number of civilian casualties since Israel’s founding.²⁶ Thus, Hamas’s brilliant military achievement was transformed into a horror show.

The number of Israeli soldiers and civilians of all ages abducted on October 7, largely by Hamas, also impacted the subsequent war. Just as significant, the photos and videos of the rampage that Hamas launched that day, including atrocities committed against Israeli civilians, significantly impacted Israelis’ perceptions, attitudes, assessments, and judgments in the following weeks and months regarding the future of Israeli–Palestinian relations.



Israeli communities that were attacked by Hamas militants on October 7, 2023.

The War

Immediately after the October 7 attack, the Israeli government publicly articulated the purpose of its response: to demolish Hamas's military as well as its governing capacity. Very soon thereafter, a third objective was added: to gain the release of Israelis taken hostage by Hamas. Only gradually did the tension between these goals sink in: Hamas could not be expected to release the hostages without making sure that neither its capacity to fight nor to govern were destroyed.

In this complex environment, Israel needed to decide its priorities. Early on, its war cabinet rejected the suggestion of launching a preventive or preemptive strike against Hezbollah in Lebanon. Instead, it decided that Israel would pursue containment in all fronts other than Gaza, launching offensive operations on these fronts only within its previous doctrine of Operations between Wars, or in retaliation for adversary attacks. This restraint, however, came with a heavy toll: In order to reduce the exposure of its civilian population while refraining from a major offense against Hezbollah, Israel relocated some 70,000 civilians from their homes in communities just south of its border.

By contrast, on December 4, 2023, Israel launched a major ground maneuver in the south, beginning with a mass incursion of mechanized and armored formations, and with close air and artillery support. The maneuver was directed at Gaza City, the seat of government located in the northern third of the Gaza Strip. To reduce civilian casualties, the population of the area (some 1.2 million people) was instructed to relocate to so-called "safe zones" in the central and southern parts of the Strip—by far the largest forced Palestinian relocation since the 1948 War. By early November 2024, Palestinian casualties were estimated to have reached 43,391 dead and 102,247 wounded.²⁷



A Palestinian woman inside her damaged apartment on the outskirts of Khan Yunis in the Southern Gaza Strip. (Photo by MAHMUD HAMS/AFP via Getty Images)

Some of the characteristics of the Gaza War are unique. First, not since the Vietcong used tunnels massively in the 1960s and 1970s was so much warfare conducted below ground. This required the IDF to deploy a disproportionate number of combat engineers, who in turn constituted a high percentage of Israeli casualties.

Just as remarkable was the speed with which Hamas's fighting force reinvented itself. From an insurgency that transformed itself in recent years into a military, Hamas, recognizing Israel's superiority in fire and maneuverability, now largely avoided direct encounters with the IDF. Instead, it quickly reverted to its previous advantages as an insurgency that enjoyed superior knowledge of its home turf. Launching small but lethal attacks against advancing IDF troops, Hamas was now protected aboveground by a civilian population that served as a human shield—as well as underground, where its fighters were protected by an elaborate tunnel system. The effectiveness of these tunnels is best evidenced by Israel's failure to locate Hamas's military leader, Yahya Sinwar, or the hostages held there, throughout the entire first year of the war.

The International Environment

A significant characteristic of the international environment of the War was that the United States—which was said to have pivoted from the Middle East to the Far East as a primary focus of attention and diplomatic concern—has returned to play a major role, and to exercise active diplomacy in the region. Beginning in the immediate aftermath of October 7, no single region or issue, with the possible exception of the war in Ukraine, has seen as much time and energy invested by President Biden and the senior members of his team. This was certainly the case with respect to the involvement of Secretary of State Antony Blinken, National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan, and CIA Director William J. (Bill) Burns in every aspect of the negotiations for a cease-fire and hostage release. In this context, the most salient example of U.S. diplomacy was the proposed Biden Plan, which linked a cease-fire and hostage release to the end game of Palestinian-Israeli peace based on a two-state solution.²⁸

A second aspect of U.S. involvement was the Biden administration's defense of Israel on all fronts: diplomatically supporting its legitimacy and its right to defend itself; providing Israel with billions of dollars' worth of arms and munitions; moving additional U.S. forces to the region in order to deter Israel's adversaries, primarily Iran, from attacking and thereby escalating the fighting into a full-fledged regional war (a policy articulated by President Biden as "Don't"); and deploying U.S. armed forces in Israel's defense. The last included U.S. Navy vessels deployed to defeat Houthi attempts to thwart freedom of navigation through Bab al-Mandeb and the Red Sea, and to intercept missiles, rockets, and other platforms launched by the Houthis against Israel; and deploying CENTCOM (U.S. Central Command) as a framework for military cooperation and coordination and for the establishment of a regional coalition to defend Israel against Iran, as was the case in April 2024. An important milestone in these U.S. efforts was the stationing of U.S. THAAD anti-missile systems in Israel in late October 2024 to defend against an anticipated Iranian missile attack.

A third aspect of the U.S. role involved discussions with Israel regarding its military operations, placing clear limitations on these activities or directing them in different ways. In a few cases this also involved leveraging aspects of America's support to ensure Israeli compliance with U.S. priorities. One such case had to do with providing fuel and humanitarian aid to the Gaza population and limiting the type of Israeli military operations in certain areas so as to reduce civilian casualties, notably in Rafah.

But a fourth and final aspect of U.S. efforts during the war involves the demonstrated *limits* of U.S. power: instances of U.S. failure to impose its priorities, especially on Israel. The clearest examples of such limitations were the Biden administration's failure to compel Prime Minister Netanyahu to engage in a serious discussion of "the day after"—that is, the Gaza Strip in the war's aftermath; the failure to persuade Israel to shorten the war and prevent its further escalation by implementing an early cease-fire; and the failure to persuade Israel's prime minister to consider the suggested cease-fire in the context of a permanent two-state solution of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict—and to give a reformed and strengthened PA an important role in governing Gaza in the aftermath of a Hamas defeat.

Another dimension of the international environment of the war was the role played by Russia—a former superpower and still a permanent member of the UN Security Council. The war placed Russia in a difficult position, as it sought to balance its many, often conflicting interests in the Middle East and elsewhere. Possibly the most important of these interests was the war in Ukraine. The war solidified Russia's close ties with Iran, as it resulted in Moscow's increased dependence on Tehran for arms and munitions, especially attack drones.

As the Israel-Hamas War gradually escalated and broadened into a multi-front confrontation, Russia reportedly sent various forms of assistance to Yemen's Houthis, as part of its efforts to undermine U.S. interests where possible.²⁹ This support is said to have resulted in some tension in Egyptian-Russian relations, as the Houthis' success in damaging international navigation through Bab al-Mandeb has resulted in a dramatic reduction of traffic through the Suez Canal—a critically important source of Egypt's hard currency.

Surprisingly, given Russia's closer ties with Iran and the Houthis as well as its public criticism of Israel's conduct of the Gaza War, Moscow has not significantly changed its conduct with regard to Israel's military activities in Syria. These Israeli activities, largely focused on preventing the transfer of weapons and munitions from Iran to Hezbollah, have continued throughout the war in the framework of Israel's doctrine of Operations between Wars. Russia continued to adhere to the tacit agreement on deconflicting reached with Israel almost a decade earlier, and it refrained from attempting to undermine Israeli operations by employing the combat air assets that it has deployed in Syria since 2015.³⁰

World public opinion is another dimension of the Gaza War's international environment. Very negative opinions of Israel's conduct of the war were expressed in very large protests, especially among youth in locations such as London and Paris and on the campuses of leading universities in the United States. Often, the pro-Palestinian demonstrators' criticism of Israel would slide to questioning Israel's legitimacy—and at times even further, to anti-Semitism. In turn, these expressions of criticism contributed to the decision of a number of countries, especially in Europe, to recognize Palestine as an independent state.

A final dimension of the international environment of the war was the reaction of international organizations, primarily the United Nations Security Council and General Assembly, its Human Rights Committee (HRC), and the International Criminal Court (ICC). In New York, on March 25, 2024, the UNSC unanimously passed Resolution 2728 by a vote of 14–0, which included a very noticeable abstention from the United States.³¹ The resolution called for an immediate cease-fire during Ramadan, the unconditional release of all hostages, and increased humanitarian aid and civilian protection in Gaza.³² Then, on September 18, 2024, the UN General Assembly passed a resolution with 124 votes in favor, 14 votes against, and 43 abstentions urging Israel to comply with international law, cease new settlement activities, evacuate settlers from occupied land, and dismantle parts of the separation wall in the West Bank.³³

Meanwhile, in the Hague, on November 21, 2024 the International Criminal Court (ICC) issued arrest warrants for Hamas and Israeli leaders, including Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu as well as the now deceased Ismail Haniyeh and Yahya Sinwar.³⁴ Five months earlier, the UN's Human Rights Council found Israeli authorities responsible for war crimes against Palestinians, including weaponizing access to essential supplies like food, water, and electricity as well as sexual violence. For the perpetration of the October 7 attacks, Hamas was found responsible for war crimes against civilians; killing, injuring, and physically and emotionally mistreating children; and patterns of sexual violence against Israeli women.

The Regional Environment

The Israel– Hamas war developed within the Middle East, a highly complex region in which religiously driven movements and sub–state actors, in Arab states as well as in Israel, are engaged in significant efforts, many of which are supported and guided by Iran and other Islamist actors, to further destabilize the region. This regression threatens to revert the Arab–Israeli conflict back to the existential phase that characterized the early decades of the conflict.

Regional pro–Palestinian Islamists and pro–Iranian proxies are joining forces to challenge Israel and the pro–American status quo powers in an unprecedented manner: Hezbollah joining the fight; Houthis severely restricting Red Sea access to Israel and damaging access to the rest of the world through the Suez Canal (which accounts for 15 percent of world trade); and Iraqi militias targeting Israel.³⁵

Parallel to this trajectory, however, important players in the Middle East are pushing back in an unprecedented effort to prevent a sliding into even greater region–wide violence, and to contain Iran’s attempts to further destabilize the Middle East. Thus, in 2020 the Abraham Accords states—the UAE, Bahrain, Morocco, and Sudan—joined Egypt and Jordan in establishing diplomatic and economic ties with Israel. Efforts to prevent further destabilization continued after the Gaza War began, notably Egypt’s and Qatar’s attempts to help negotiate a Hamas–Israel agreement on ending the fighting and releasing the Hamas–held Israeli hostages.

In the rivalry between these camps and the tension between these trajectories, the “axis of resistance” scored a number of successes against the pro–U.S. “status quo axis,” beginning with the launching of active proxy warfare against Israel from four fronts: Gaza, Lebanon, Yemen, and Iraq. Related developments included a first–ever direct Iranian attack on Israel; the establishment of closer military, economic, and diplomatic ties between Iran and the Houthis on the one hand and Russia, China, and even Saudi Arabia on the other; and continued Iranian efforts to expand its nuclear program.

It is noteworthy, however, that the pro–U.S. “status quo axis” that included Egypt, Jordan, and the Abraham Accords signatories as well as, informally, Saudi Arabia also scored some impressive achievements during the same time frame. In both April and October 2024, for example, together with the UK and France, they thwarted Iran’s massive rocket and missile attacks on Israel.



Israel's Iron Dome anti-missile system intercepts rockets launched from the Gaza Strip, as seen from the city of Ashkelon, Israel, October 8, 2023. (REUTERS/Amir Cohen)

Another significant advance in the war's regional environment that took place parallel to the growing conflict between the "axis of resistance" and the pro-U.S. "status quo axis" was the establishment of closer ties between the countries focused on economic progress and development along with other considerations: Egypt, Jordan, the UAE, Bahrain, Morocco, Israel, Saudi Arabia, and Oman, along with the PA. For all of these, war—any war—is a costly deviation, undermining their national interests.

Among the most notable examples of responses from regional powers have been:

Fearful that the continuation of the war might lead to a further deterioration of conditions in the West Bank—and hence to hundreds of thousands of Palestinians emigrating to the East Bank—**Jordan** prepared for the possible construction of hospitals in the West Bank, and moved tanks to the border with Israel. In coordination with the Israeli Air Force, it also parachuted many tons of medicines into Gaza, and played a leading role in the CENTCOM-facilitated coalition forces that were deployed to thwart Iran's attack on Israel on April 16

For its part, **Egypt** became very concerned about the possible demographic impact of the Gaza War. As Egypt had just received hundreds of Sudanese refugees, bringing the total of registered refugees in the country to more than nine million, the possibility that large numbers of Palestinians would breach the fence along the Gaza–Egypt border, flooding Egypt with hundreds of thousands of additional refugees, was anticipated to be extremely burdensome in a time of economic hardship. Egypt therefore became especially focused on arrangements concerning the future of Rafah and the Philadelphi Corridor along the Gaza–Egypt border.

Egypt also became very concerned about the devastating long-term impact of the prolongation of the war on Egypt’s economy. As noted earlier, a particular focus of Egypt’s concerns was that as long as the war continued, the Houthis would not relent, causing a further dramatic decline in naval traffic through the Suez Canal and a commensurate drop (by 70 percent) in revenues associated with such traffic—a major source of Egypt’s hard currencies.³⁶

Both issues motivated Egypt to become heavily involved in negotiations to end the fighting and secure the release of Hamas-held Israeli hostages, as well as in bilateral talks with Israel regarding Rafah, Philadelphi, and the prevention of arms smuggling after the war.

Qatar’s role during the Gaza War seemed as complex as that of Jordan and Egypt, if not more so. Hosting the largest U.S. military base in the Middle East, which also hosts the forward headquarters of CENTCOM in the region, Qatar did its best to be helpful to the U.S. by facilitating and mediating Israeli–Hamas negotiations on a cease-fire and hostage release and by providing humanitarian assistance to Gaza. And yet Qatar could not be considered a neutral mediator: Before the war it provided financial support to Hamas and Gaza, and during the war, the Qatari government-owned Al Jazeera served as the voice of Hamas’s narrative, creating tension with Israel, especially after the latter closed Al Jazeera offices in Jerusalem.

Israel and the Palestinian Authority

Although Israel's adversary in the Gaza War was Hamas—the archnemesis of the PA—the war contributed to a further deterioration in Israel–PA relations. An immediate impact of October 7 was Israel's imposition of a closure regime that blocked Palestinians' access to employment in Israel, which had a catastrophic effect on the PA's economy. With their access to main roads restricted, West Bank Palestinians also suffered considerable limitations on their movement.

At the same time, Israel accelerated efforts to construct new settlements, to legalize illegal settlements and outposts, and to undo the legal steps that were taken in 2005 to disengage from the West Bank, by removing four settlements that were located there. Israeli settler violence against their Palestinian neighbors also increased considerably during this period, with Israel's Ministry of National Security liberally distributing permits to carry arms.

Israeli efforts to further weaken the PA extended to preventing its access to clearance funds—mostly customs that Israeli authorities collect on the PA's behalf. Israel also reduced some of the PA's civil jurisdiction over Area B in the West Bank, and it refused all PA requests to provide its security services with access to arms. Fearing a third intifada if not a repeat of October 7, Israeli security services conducted more frequent and larger-scale offensive operations in the West Bank, killing Palestinian members of armed groups. And as already noted, in the eyes of the Palestinian population, these incursions diminished the standing and prestige of the Palestinian security services.

Israel's Domestic Scene

Israel's population reacted to Hamas's October 7 attack by “rallying around the flag”: supporting calls for unity, and massively mobilizing and volunteering to serve even when not called up. At the political level, the National Unity Party joined the coalition, and a war cabinet was created to include two National Camp leaders, both former IDF Chiefs of Staff: Benny Gantz and Gadi Eisenkot.

No less surprised than Israel's defense and intelligence communities by the magnitude of the October 7 attack, the Israeli government responded to the effects of the attack dysfunctionally, failing to assist the population in heavily damaged areas and leaving much of the critically important emergency services to civil society organizations and even individual volunteers.



Soldiers recover an Israeli flag while searching damaged cars for human remains and evidence after the October 7th attack near Netivot, southern Israel. (REUTERS/Amir Cohen)

Much of the Israeli government's conduct during the year that followed the October 7 attack was affected by its DNA as arguably the most right-wing in Israel's history. Two members—Bezael Smotrich, Minister of Finance and Minister within the Defense Ministry, and Itamar Ben-Gvir, Minister of National Security—while representing small parties and a minority viewpoint, were very vocal in opposing any negotiations with Hamas, in supporting the expansion of the war and its aims, and in conquering the Gaza Strip fully and subjecting it to long-term military rule, including the desired Israeli resettlement of Gaza.

As a result of these ministers' influence, the frequency and intensity of IDF incursions into the West Bank increased dramatically, thereby diminishing the legitimacy of PA security services. Israel's security services were pressed to turn a blind eye to extreme settler violence against Palestinian farmers and dwellers; Israel legalized previously illegal outposts; and the 2005 dismantlement of four Israeli settlements in the northern West Bank was now undone. Israeli control of Area C (for example, over rezoning and housing permit issues) was further tightened. And Palestinian workers were denied entry to Israel, curtailing their employment and income.

In the months following October 7, the immediate "rallying around the flag" atmosphere gradually dissipated as Israeli society returned to some of its pre-October 7 fragmentation. Though efforts to change the distribution of power among the branches of government were largely frozen, other issues were now subject to far greater polarization. Thus, the debate on the relations between religion and state was sharpened by the war, as the demand for military service conscription grew dramatically, and anger at the exemption from such conscription accorded ultra-religious youth increased as well.

Gradually, public opinion in Israel changed, as the war resulted in a further turn to the right. But at the same time, support for and trust in the country's leaders diminished as well, and calls for early elections grew. Support for accepting the terms of a cease-fire and hostage release deal increased, as did calls for the creation of a National Commission of Inquiry to investigate the causes of the October 7 disaster.

Most devastating was evidence that an increasing number of Israelis began to suspect that Prime Minister Netanyahu's war decisions—delaying a cease-fire and hostage release deal and insisting on Israel's right to continue the war until "total victory"—were tainted by personal and domestic political considerations: his estimate that the end of the fighting would prevent him from further delaying the launching of a National Commission of Inquiry; that it would increase the demand for early elections; and, finally, that it would accelerate the domestic legal proceedings to which he is subject.³⁷

The Palestinian Domestic Scene

The PA has become irrelevant in the aftermath of October 7. This irrelevance was self-inflicted: The PA was not prevented from becoming relevant. Rather, it chose not to become so by refraining from taking any initiative even in areas of humanitarian assistance or in managing the provision of such assistance in cooperation with Egypt or in coordination with Israel. The PA also made no effort to reach out to Hamas during the war to explore forming an emergency government; to reunify PA institutions in the West Bank and Gaza in order to produce one PA negotiating team to bring about an end to the war; or to build an internal consensus on a vision and a work plan for “the day after” the war. Only in November 2024 did Fatah and Hamas meet in Cairo to discuss the possibility of forming a “Societal Support Committee” to manage the affairs of the Gaza Strip after the end of the war. Though progress seems to have been made, by mid-November no agreement had been reached by the two factions.³⁸

Confronted with increased settler violence, the PA made no effort to defend local communities in the West Bank suffering from such violence. Lack of safety and security in the West Bank along with the exposure to violence in Gaza led to greater Palestinian support for armed struggle, thus making it more difficult for the PA to enforce law and order.

President Abbas also made no effort to address the PA’s incompetence and corruption or to prepare the PA to fulfill the roles ascribed to it by the U.S. for “the day after” in the framework of the Biden Plan. On March 28, 2024, Abbas created a new PA government,³⁹ but there is no evidence that the new government, regardless of what may ultimately be its “shelf life,” will prove more efficient or less corrupt. Another result of the PA’s incompetence—in addition to the impact of the aforementioned Israeli measures—was the further decline of the West Bank economy during the War. The consequence was additional deterioration in public support for the PA and President Abbas and increased support in the West Bank for Hamas, as well for the jailed Fatah leader, Marwan Barghouti.

CHAPTER 3

THE PEACE VISION

The horrific casualties of October 7, 2023, and of the resulting Gaza War, as well as the terrifying possibility that the violence could escalate to a deadly region-wide war, invite the following question: If these experiences and even greater dangers would persuade Arabs and Israelis to step back from the brink and commit themselves to finally resolve their conflict, what would such a resolution look like? Answering this question requires addressing its two different dimensions. First, at the bilateral Palestinian-Israeli level: What are the two adversaries' minimal requirements and demands that such a deal would have to meet? And second, what requirements and demands of the important regional states would have to be met, and what contributions should they be expected to make in order to help resolve the bilateral Palestinian-Israeli conflict?

The premise guiding our approach is that during the decades-long Arab-Israeli peace efforts, official and unofficial participants' peace proposals demonstrated admirable ingenuity and creativity. Hence, the failure of such efforts resulted primarily not from any lack of better ideas in the face of major deficiencies in the ideas proposed for resolving the conflict. Instead, the failures resulted from three possible reasons. The first was that the most ingenious proposals offered by each side did not meet the other side's minimal requirements, with the result that the opposition of key domestic constituencies to the offered deals could not be overcome. Second, as the agreements were to be implemented, the signatories failed to suppress terrorism and continued settlement activities on the part of the dissenting factions on both sides—notably Hamas and Israeli right-wing settlers—and to arrest the perpetrators. Finally, key regional players refrained from offering sufficient support for these efforts and ideas.

In the next few pages, the protagonists' minimal demands and requirements will be elaborated as the key to obtaining the necessary domestic support for a negotiated deal. What each side can do to help the other side obtain sufficient domestic support for the negotiated deal will next be considered. Finally, what the regions' important players can do to help negotiate and implement the deal will be discussed.

Resolving the Bilateral Conflict

For Palestinians, conflict with Israel cannot be resolved if it does not lead to independent statehood. Moreover, the boundaries between the new state and Israel would need to be based on the 1967 lines, with mutually acceptable changes made through territorial swaps so as to grant the new state maximum territorial contiguity. The capital of that state would need to be located in the area of East Jerusalem that will be under the Palestinian state's sovereignty. Finally, the agreement would need to provide a fair solution to the refugee problem that satisfies the Palestinians' "right of return" and make possible implementation of this principle.

For Israelis, the conflict would not be resolved if a negotiated agreement did not address their country's national security concerns and ensure that their personal safety and security are not compromised. Moreover, the agreement would have to ensure Israel's future as a "Jewish state" by addressing the plight of Palestinian refugees in a way that did not jeopardize Israel's founding fathers' articulation of the minimal demographic requirements of a "Jewish state": namely, that Jews would constitute a clear majority in that state. Consistent with this requirement, the large settlement blocs in the West Bank would be included within Israel's negotiated boundaries. Finally, the agreement would have to ensure that Jerusalem would remain undivided, and guarantee unhindered access to its various quarters, neighborhoods, and holy sites.

Although this monograph is not intended to prejudge the work of future Israeli and Palestinian negotiators in working out the details of implementing the aforementioned principles, two critically important realities must be acknowledged. First, *the most fundamental and vital interests, aspirations, and requirements of Palestinians and Israelis*—independent sovereign statehood for the Palestinians and a demographically vibrant "Jewish state" for Israelis—*can be met only in the framework of a two-state solution to the Palestinian-Israeli conflict.*

Such a solution would not prevent the two states from entering into different forms of relationship between them as long as these relationships are consistent with the two states' aforementioned vital interests. Nor would these states be precluded from entering into relationships with third countries as long as those relationships would not violate any of the principal requirements of the negotiated deal. Such relationships might include, for example, an Israeli-Palestinian-Jordanian confederation of the three sovereign states, or a Palestinian-Israeli or Palestinian-Jordanian confederation.

The second reality that must be acknowledged is that much creative work has been done, and many innovative approaches have been suggested, by previous negotiators as well as by nongovernmental experts over the past three decades. On the official level, these have included ideas exchanged by Israeli and Palestinian officials during talks held in Sweden in early 2000; proposals presented during the July 2000 Camp David negotiations, and Israeli–Palestinian meetings in the aftermath of those negotiations that sought to record the understandings reached in those talks; the bilateral discussions held in December 2000 at Bolling Air Force Base near Washington, DC, on the basis of which President Clinton articulated on December 26 the so-called Clinton Parameters, and the two sides exchanged ideas at Taba in January 2001; and, finally, ideas exchanged between Prime Minister Ehud Olmert and President Mahmoud Abbas in the framework of the Annapolis Process and other proposals presented during the Obama administration’s attempts in 2013–14 to resolve the conflict (the so-called Kerry Mission).

Other creative ideas that should be considered can be found in various records of *unofficial* (Track II) discussions held over the years between Israelis and Palestinians regarding the issues dividing the two parties. The most detailed among them was the Geneva Initiative, which produced hundreds of pages of such proposals.⁴⁰ These proposals and initiatives should not be ignored, as they were the product of considerable talent, very hard work, and deep commitment to peacemaking.

A Regional Support System

One premise guiding this monograph is that an important reason why three decades of serious efforts to resolve the Palestinian–Israeli conflict bilaterally have failed is that they all lacked a regional context: a support system that the region’s states would provide the protagonists. Such support could have given Israel and the Palestinians incentives to walk the “extra mile” in order to meet each other’s requirements. Indeed, the regional players might have offered measures and incentives to offset some of the risks that the parties would be taking to meet their rival’s demands. In the case of most negotiation efforts, such incentives were not offered; in other instances, benefits were offered and sometimes provided without making a connection to any concessions that the parties needed to make if the conflict between them was to be resolved. The Abraham Accords, signed in 2020 between Israel, the UAE, Bahrain, Morocco, and Sudan, were an important example of such a disconnect.

There are compelling reasons to believe that the Gaza War paradoxically created conditions that increase the odds that a constructive regional support system for bilateral Israeli–Palestinian negotiations could be created. First, in light of the developments since October 2023 noted earlier, the relevant regional players are much more aware that Palestinian–Israeli violence could escalate into region-wide wars, threatening these players’ security, safety, and prosperity. The result is that they now have far greater incentives and motivation to do what it takes to avert such escalation.

A second reason is that currently at least some of the region’s states seem to be placing far greater emphasis than before on geoeconomic (more prosperity) considerations at the expense of geopolitical (more power) ones. This is reflected in the emergence of regional groupings such as the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), comprising Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates, and the East Mediterranean Gas Forum. Another example might be the Council of Arab and African States bordering the Red Sea and the Gulf of Aden, which was established in January 2020 and includes Egypt, Jordan, Sudan, Eritrea, Djibouti, Somalia, Yemen, and Saudi Arabia.⁴¹

The Israeli–Lebanese agreement signed on October 14, 2020, which delineated the maritime economic boundaries between the two countries, is another reflection of this geoeconomic trajectory. The agreement was motivated by the two parties’ strong economic interest in creating the conditions that would allow them to exploit the natural gas reserves in the East Mediterranean without getting into a war with each other. Indeed, these strong interests made it very difficult if not impossible for potential opponents of the agreement—Hezbollah in Lebanon and right-wing parties in Israel—to prevent the signing of the deal.

Strongly connected to this second reason is a third regional development that may help Middle East states be more receptive to providing support to Palestinian–Israeli peacemaking: their far greater tolerance of modes of economic cooperation and economic interdependence. Indeed, such greater tolerance is now deemed acceptable even among former adversaries such as Egypt and Israel, who have recently become even more dependent on one another for meeting their strategic energy needs, primarily for natural gas. Beyond providing vital support to Palestinian–Israeli negotiations and agreements, the new regional environment makes it possible for the first time to design and construct the process in such a manner that the agreement

negotiated would combine bilateral and multilateral (that is, regional) dimensions. These added dimensions would create an architecture that, in its logic, would more closely resemble the 2002 Arab Peace Initiative, thus addressing the shortcomings of the Abraham Accords. In addition to the aforementioned bilateral elements, these dimensions could incorporate various multilateral and multidimensional components, including:

- **political (diplomatic recognition and peace agreements)**
- **security (a multilateral security regime)**
- **economic (major multilateral economic projects; refugee resettlement)**
- **religious (managing access to holy places)**
- **legal (establishing a mechanism for settling/ending claims; creating a Truth and Reconciliation Commission [following the post-apartheid South Africa example], in an effort to settle the protagonists' narrative gaps)**

and

- **cultural (supporting narratives of reconciliation)**

This weaving of the bilateral and multilateral levels would follow the logic of the Madrid Process of the early 1990s, which included both levels. Propelling the negotiations then was the recognition that peace requires stability, and that stability would not be achieved if the region-wide problems plaguing the Middle East were not addressed and resolved. At that time, working groups that included Israel, the Palestinians, and thirteen Arab states were formed to address economic development, refugees, natural resources, the environment, and regional security and arms control. Lessons from that experience have hopefully been learned, so as to prevent a repeat of the mistakes that were made then, culminating in the collapse of the process by the mid-1990s.

How Do We Get There? Transitioning to Long-Term Peace

The previous sections of this chapter presented our vision for peaceful relations between Israelis and Palestinians that we would like to see replace the carnage that the two peoples have experienced on and since October 7, 2023. By April 2024, this carnage had escalated to unprecedented levels, as Israel has deepened its military effort to demolish Hamas in Gaza; as Hezbollah and Israel escalated their exchanges of fire, causing altogether some 200,000 Israelis and Lebanese to relocate from their homes along both sides of the Israel-Lebanon border into safer areas in both countries; as violence between Israeli security forces and Palestinian militants and civilians in the West Bank became a nearly daily routine; and, finally, as Iran launched two direct attacks on the Israeli homeland.

In such a heated environment, implementing the vision of peace presented here will be very difficult for all the parties concerned, requiring them to undergo a demanding transition process, the success of which will be anything but self-evident. During this period, the environment of Palestinian-Israeli relations must change significantly, enabling the parties to undertake a serious consideration of steps that need to be taken to reach the long-term bilateral and regional peace envisaged here. The principle guiding the implementation of these steps is that the vital needs of Palestinians and Israelis must be met if the transitional phase is to become a path to the envisaged peace. It is nevertheless expected that the parties' vital needs during this transitional phase will be less demanding than what they will likely regard as vital for the long-term peace presented earlier in this chapter to succeed.

While an improved environment would be conducive to negotiating the details of a permanent peace, entering the transitional phase would require Palestinians and Israelis to agree on the principles on which their long-term peace will be based. Otherwise, both parties will fear that at some point the process might be derailed, leaving them failing to reach their goal despite the considerable concessions they had made. The most important of these principles, again, is that a Palestinian-Israeli long-term peace must be based on two states living side by side, meeting both sides' aspirations for self-determination. Additional arrangements, such as creating a confederation between them or with one or more additional countries, will be based on independent decisions by the two states.

Implementing the long-term agreement outlined above must begin with Israel's announced agreement to end the war in Gaza, to gradually transfer control of the area to the PA, and to withdraw from the Gaza Strip. Together, these steps would restore the pre-2007 *status quo ante* in the Gaza Strip as stipulated in the Oslo implementation agreements. In parallel, the PA would move to restore its legitimacy by recommitting itself to the principles of democratic government and to cleansing itself of all forms of corruption. Most important, the PA would be reestablishing its monopoly of force as stipulated in the Oslo implementation agreements.

During the transitional phase, the following security and stabilization measures would have to be implemented: a full cessation of violence, full Israeli withdrawal from the Gaza Strip, the release of all hostages, the return of displaced persons to their homes and the provision of temporary shelters to those without homes, the resumption of basic services, and the reconstruction of private and public buildings. As well, there would need to be a restoration of effective policing, efficient service delivery, and other characteristics of peaceful democratic governance, including the holding of elections in all Palestinian territories.

The efforts to establish security and good governance should be based on the following principle: *All Palestinian and Israeli political parties and factions are to be allowed to participate in the various aspects of the political process, including competing in elections, but they would not be allowed to bear arms.* Hence the transition envisaged would include the disarming of all armed factions, thereby reestablishing the status of both Israel and the PA as unitary actors, with each exercising a monopoly of force in their sovereign territory.

To be clear: For the transition phase to begin, these principles and measures would have to be accepted by the relevant parties. But the implementation of these principles and measures would take place gradually throughout the transition phase, so that they would be fully implemented by the end of the agreed duration of this phase. During this period, the parties would be expected to undertake additional measures to improve the environment for the establishment of long-term Palestinian-Israeli peace. An example of such a step would be an Israeli affirmation that it is committed to refraining from any measure that could be seen as attempting to change the status quo in the Holy Basin (Temple Mount/Haram al-Sharif) in Jerusalem. Another example would be a Palestinian consolidation of the PA monopoly over coercive force in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip.

The different facets of the transition process would require implementation and/or orchestration by three institutions, **linked by a steering group** to coordinate their activities:

A transitional Palestinian Authority for the entire Palestinian territories would be created, and a strong and independent technocratic prime minister with full powers as outlined in the Palestinian Basic Law will be nominated, to be appointed only after acceptance by at least the two most important Palestinian factions. The PM would appoint all ministers in the cabinet, all of them professional technocrats; the jurisdiction of the cabinet would extend to all Palestinian territories, and the cabinet would operate under the terms of the Oslo agreement.

A multinational body made up of representatives of seven major international donor countries that share basic strategic parameters (the U.S., Canada, the UK, Germany, France, Japan, and Norway) would be created to provide *political, security, and financial* support for the entire transitional process.

A regional Arab body would be created with the strong participation of five main regional powers—Egypt, Jordan, the United Arab Emirates (UAE), Bahrain, and Morocco—all of whom would be willing to provide *political, security, financial, and economic* support for the entire transition process.

Armed military advisors from Arab countries that have established peace or entered into normalization agreements with Israel—Egypt, Jordan, the UAE, Bahrain, and Morocco, as well as Saudi Arabia—would assist the PA's security services to ensure safety and security in the Gaza Strip. This multilateral force would also oversee the implementation of the terms and conditions negotiated by Israel and the PA regarding the return of all Gaza Palestinians to the homes from which they were displaced after October 7, 2023.

In parallel fashion, the U.S. would undertake to assist in reforming and rebuilding the PA's security services so that they can assume the task of providing security in the West Bank as well. As part of this process, all other Palestinian armed groups operating in the West Bank would be disarmed so that the PA's security services could achieve a key element of statehood: exercising a monopoly of force. In parallel, Israel will undertake to disarm all extremist Jewish elements in the West Bank, thus ending all forms of violence exercised by such elements and establishing its own security services' monopoly of force wherever Israelis reside.

To complement these steps, Israel, the PA, Egypt, and Jordan would establish a security regime, the primary purpose of which would be to prevent the smuggling of weapons to Gaza and the West Bank from Egypt and Jordan, as well as from Gaza and Israel to those countries. This regime would also negotiate the terms and conditions under which Gaza Palestinians could enter and exit Gaza, through Egypt, Israel, the West Bank, and Jordan. After the full implementation of this security regime, Israel would complete its withdrawal from the Gaza Strip.

On the economic front, Saudi Arabia and the Abraham Accords states, together with the U.S. and the European Union, would design and offer to the PA a Marshall Plan-type program to rebuild Gaza and its economy and to revamp the economy of the West Bank. To facilitate this, Israel and the PA-PLO would recommit themselves to implementing all elements of the post-Oslo Paris Accords on Israeli-Palestinian economic cooperation. As a first step in that direction, Israel would release to the PA all funds that it collected on the PA's behalf—primarily customs on goods imported by the PA through Israeli ports—but has withheld in recent years.

Members of the envisaged multinational and regional Arab bodies would have an important role in assisting in the transition from the current levels of violence to a more stable environment, one that would allow consideration of, and negotiations over, the requirements of long-term peace. In both mid-April and early October of 2024, some members of these bodies already demonstrated their willingness to cooperate in thwarting Iran's ballistic missile and other ordnance attacks on Israel, thereby demonstrating their capacity to provide the security necessary for the envisaged transition to succeed.

As Israel gradually withdraws from the Gaza Strip during the transition phase, the steering group will coordinate with Israel and the PA the details of implementing the withdrawal, along with the transfer of the various aspects of Gaza's governance from Hamas and Israel to the reinforced PA.

CHAPTER 4

IMPEDIMENTS TO IMPLEMENTING THE PROPOSED PEACE PLAN

Any serious effort to implement the peace program proposed in the previous chapter will likely encounter obstacles. Variations of such obstacles have derailed previous efforts to resolve the Arab-Israeli, and especially the Palestinian-Israeli, conflict for years. In this chapter we focus on the specific hurdles that the program proposed here, designed to advance peace in the specific environment that has engulfed the Middle East since October 7, 2023, will most probably face. In so doing, the likely difficulties will be identified and mapped along four arenas: the international/global scene, the Middle East regional environment, the domestic politics of Israel and of the Palestinians, and the particular characteristics of the two protagonists' leaders. In the next chapter, we'll attempt to suggest different ways in which these impediments might be overcome.

The International Scene

As in the past, any effort to implement a Palestinian-Israeli peace plan will require active encouragement and support from the most consequential global power: the United States. Given its political, diplomatic, military, and economic assets, the U.S. can exercise direct and indirect leverage over the protagonists in the conflict, as well as over regional players who can influence the decisions of these protagonists.

Yet during the decades-long efforts to resolve the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, the U.S. has been reluctant to use its leverage to affect the protagonists' conduct: their decisions to negotiate and the positions they have taken within such negotiations. Such U.S. reluctance to exercise its leverage, notwithstanding its ability both to directly influence Israeli priorities and policies and to persuade European and Middle East regional players who could affect Palestinian choices, has had serious negative consequences for the prospects of Israeli-Palestinian peace.

In the context of this overall reluctance, it is noteworthy that the U.S. was especially averse to exercising its leverage when that could be depicted as intervening in the protagonists' domestic affairs. This was especially detrimental in the case of Israel, as the U.S. was careful to avoid actions that could be seen and portrayed as interfering in the politics and choices of a democratically elected government. Sadly, this was the case even as elements in that government pursued policies that undermined the prospects for peace.

On the Palestinian side, the U.S. has seemed similarly hesitant to involve itself when the PA adopted policies and took steps that undermined state building, a commitment to democracy, and the pursuit of a reform agenda. Should the U.S. continue to adhere to such reluctance, this would likely have an important negative impact on the prospects of implementing the ideas proposed here.

In this context it is especially worth noting that when in rare cases in the past the U.S. *has* exercised its leverage—whether or not in the context of peacemaking—such interventions were quite impactful. For example, when in 2020 the U.S. was less hesitant to use its influence on the UAE, Bahrain, Morocco, and Sudan, all four countries joined the Abraham Accords. And when Iran threatened to attack Israel in April 2024, the U.S. was able to mobilize Arab states to participate in Israel’s defense. In this context the participation of Jordan was especially noteworthy, as the Hashemite Kingdom was quite critical of Israel’s conduct in Gaza. Through August 2024, the U.S. was likewise successful in dissuading Israel from responding to Hezbollah attacks in ways that would massively damage Lebanon at large.

In the case of U.S. leverage over Israel, however, an important constraint that must be acknowledged is the tendency of many U.S. administrations to differentiate clearly between their unhappiness—and in some cases, real anger—with specific Israeli policies and America’s general commitment to Israel’s safety and security, including its right to self-defense. This was the case even when President Obama was convinced that Israeli policies were detrimental to advancing the prospects of Israeli-Palestinian peace. Not only did the U.S. refrain from using its security assistance as leverage, but U.S.-Israeli defense cooperation reached unprecedented heights even as the Obama administration’s frustration with Israeli policies increased.

This is even more so given the very strong bipartisan support for Israel in the U.S. Congress. In this case, U.S. leverage works in the opposite direction: As administrations strive to support other U.S. interests, they often use congressional support of Israel to advance those interests. This happened in 2024 when some Republicans in Congress were reluctant to continue supporting high levels of U.S. arms transfers to Ukraine. To overcome this problem, the Biden administration tied support for Ukraine to another large-scale arms transfer to Israel. More than once, administrations that were frustrated with what they regarded as outsized support for Israel in the U.S. have mobilized those supporters to lobby Congress for other U.S. interests, such as assistance to Egypt and Jordan.

A related constraint that affects America's ability to leverage the assets it possesses in attempting to press its allies concerns the extent to which the Middle East is where U.S. global and regional interests meet and often collide. In recent years, arguably more than ever, the Middle East has become an important arena of the "great game" between two global/regional camps. The U.S.-led camp now includes Israel, Egypt, Jordan, and most if not all GCC states (first among them, Saudi Arabia). The opposite camp, led by Iran, is supported to various degrees by two global powers: Russia and China. Their goal is to identify potential cracks in America's global standing and to further weaken that standing by widening whatever cracks can be identified.

Finally, it should be noted that U.S. reluctance to exercise leverage with respect to its friends in the Middle East has also affected America's allies in Europe. Complaining of U.S. dominance but often looking to Washington for leadership and guidance, leaders of France, Britain, and Germany have traditionally refrained from exercising their own potential influence in the Middle East when the U.S. was itself reluctant to do so.

The Regional Scene

In the regional arena, the most formidable obstacle to any effort to implement an Israeli-Palestinian peace is Iran. The Islamic Republic will surely see a peace agreement as promising endurance, stability, and prosperity for the Jewish state— anathema vis-à-vis its ideological commitment to Israel's destruction. Moreover, for a number of reasons Iran may assess its position in the Middle East as strong enough to provide sufficient power to derail any progress in Israeli-Palestinian peacemaking. In the global realm, the war in Ukraine made Russia ever more dependent on Iran as a developer and producer of drones and other military ordnance. And in its global competition with the U.S., China is counting on closer ties with Iran as it strives to strengthen its economic presence worldwide.

As well, in the Middle East, Iran's strengthening began with the U.S. invasion of Iraq in 2003. The removal of Iraq as a regional power capable of balancing Iran left the Islamic Republic as the dominant power in the Gulf. What the Carter Doctrine was meant to achieve in the aftermath of the Shah's removal—a regional balance of power that could be counted on to maintain stability—had collapsed.

Additionally, as indicated earlier and owing to a series of U.S. errors, the Islamic Republic has reached the status of a nuclear threshold state. One of those errors was the JCPOA, the weakest aspect of which was its so-called “sunset clauses”: The limitations placed on Iran’s nuclear efforts were all due to expire within a few years. Thus, the Obama administration’s success in building a coalition that agreed on and implemented a myriad of very effective economic, financial, and other sanctions on Iran had placed the U.S. in a position to extract a better—perhaps far better—agreement with Iran.

As imperfect as was the JCPOA, however, an even greater U.S. error was President Trump’s decision on May 18, 2018, to abandon the agreement. As most of the benefits that the Islamic Republic expected to obtain from the deal—mostly sanctions relief—were in the realm of U.S.-Iranian relations, America’s exit led to the agreement’s quick collapse. Indeed, given that the exit was not complemented by a meaningful alternative strategy for limiting Iran’s nuclear efforts, the Islamic Republic, now free from compliance even with the JCPOA’s imperfect stipulations, was no longer constrained from renewing its efforts to produce and reprocess plutonium and to expand uranium enrichment.

Finally, given the aforementioned “axis of resistance” that the then commander of Iran’s Quds force, Qassem Suleimani, had built, Iran could launch a coordinated effort to derail any Palestinian-Israeli peace agreement and deter direct Israeli or Western attacks on its nuclear or missile facilities. In addition, the influence of the Islamic Republic among Palestinians has steadily increased, taking advantage of Palestinian fragmentation and the weakening of the nationalist-secular forces, and using Jordanian territories to smuggle arms and thereby help build armed resistance groups in the West Bank.

In their expected attempts to derail any Palestinian-Israeli peace effort in which the U.S. would play a major role, these “axis of resistance” players would find support in the region fueled by the past performance of the U.S. in the Middle East. That support would reflect negative perceptions of U.S. biases, as reflected in its recognition of Jerusalem as Israel’s capital and of Israel’s sovereignty in the Golan Heights, as well as U.S. tolerance of many decades of Israeli settlement construction activities in Area C, which was intended to be part of the Palestinian would-be state.

These perceptions of bias were exacerbated by perception in the region of past U.S. failures and weaknesses, notably its failure to deter security challenges in the Middle East. One pivotal development in this context was the U.S. failure to deter and then react to the September 2019 drone attacks on Aramco oil facilities in Abqaiq and Khurais as well as in eastern Saudi Arabia.⁴² The lack of a satisfactory U.S. response to the Iran-Houthi attacks on the port of Fujairah and on Abu Dhabi Airport on January 17, 2022, left a similar imprint on regional perceptions.⁴³

Likewise, after having facilitated a compromise between Ethiopia and Egypt regarding the Nile water that the World Bank was assigned to supervise, the Trump administration refrained from reacting when Addis Ababa failed to sign the deal. Neither did the optics of the U.S. military's withdrawal from Afghanistan in August 2021—especially the chaotic scenes in Kabul airport—nor its failure to deter the Houthis' attacks on the maritime navigation at the Strait of Bab al-Mandeb, at huge cost to Egypt's GDP, help America's image in the Middle East. The Biden administration's recurring failures to press Israel and Hamas (through Egypt and Qatar) to accept a cease-fire in Gaza is only the latest example on this list.

Given that the Palestinian partner in any attempt to resolve the conflict with Israel will be the PA-PLO, another impediment to the negotiations over and implementation of a deal would be the very low opinions of the PA among Middle East states. These opinions stem from fatigue over internal Palestinian squabbling, along with the failure of all regional efforts to help negotiate internal Palestinian reconciliation. More often than not such reconciliation deals were concluded, but without the slightest intention on the part of the protagonists to implement the signed agreements. Though the PA often asked the region's states—especially Gulf states—to provide its struggle for statehood with financial assistance, these states often complained that the conflict between Fatah, Hamas, and the Palestinian Islamic Jihad seemed more important to the Palestinians than their common conflict with Israel.

As many of the region's states are authoritarian, they had no standing to press the Palestinians to adopt and implement democratization reforms. But as many of them were asked to contribute to the PA's coffers, they did have standing to demand that the PA reform in order to increase its competence. Yet these states were disappointed time and again by the PA's failure to deliver on the promises it made. Not surprisingly, at least the UAE, as well as some in Egypt, seemed to be hanging their hopes on former Fatah leader Muhammad Dahlan as someone who could at least "deliver."

Indeed, the experience of the region's states with Hamas was not very different. Called to help with Gaza's reconstruction after every round of Hamas's mini-wars with Israel (2008–9, 2012, 2014, and 2021), these states would later see all these investments sink as Hamas and Israel would launch a new round of violence. This experience may have given birth to the greatest impediment to regional support for Palestinian-Israeli peacemaking: pessimism. That pessimism is the result of the failure of all attempts to bring about Palestinian internal reconciliation and the sinking of all previous investments in Palestinian reconstruction, as well as the failure of all previous peacemaking efforts.

Israel's Domestic Scene

Two types of impediments in the Israeli domestic scene will likely make Israeli-Palestinian peacemaking very difficult. The first of these is the rightward trajectory in Israeli politics that accelerated some three decades ago but reached a new peak in late December 2022, with the formation, as mentioned earlier, of the most right-wing government in the country's history. Israel's current government is likely to resist any meaningful concession that Israel would need to make in order to meet the Palestinians' minimal requirements in any peace deal with Israel.

The second sort of Israeli domestic obstacle to peacemaking is of a different nature: The unprecedented level of the country's political polarization and social fissures may discourage Palestinians from embarking on any serious effort to resolve their conflict with Israel. Palestinians may conclude that they do not need to concede any of what they regard as their historical rights because Israel will likely collapse internally, as Syria did in the aftermath of the Arab Spring. One leader who voiced this expectation and to whom Israelis paid attention was Hezbollah leader Hassan Nasrallah, who contended that Israel was weaker than "a spider web."⁴⁴

Importantly, the Israeli left and center-left point to a different trajectory, leading them to a similar concern: namely, that current demographic trends may lead Palestinians to lose interest in accommodation with Israel, expecting that they will become a majority "between the river and the sea" and will then leverage their new status to demand equal collective and personal rights within a single Arab-Jewish "one state."

The first stumbling block is tied to President Biden's observation that the current Israeli government is the most extreme in Israel's history. This government includes two small national-religious parties whose leaders favor annexation of the West Bank, and in the aftermath of Hamas's October 7 assault they now favor the expulsion of Palestinians and the return of Israeli settlers to the Gaza Strip.

Like the right-wing Likud party, which in recent years has also moved further rightward, Israel's current government will oppose any two-state solution to resolving the conflict. It seeks, rather, a massive expansion of settlements and for extremists to control settlement policy and implementation, thereby taking away the role of the army and the professionals in COGAT (Coordination of Government Activities in the Territories) and the Civil Administration and leading to implicit if not explicit annexation of settlements and of the entire Area C to Israel, thus accelerating the slide to a one-state reality.

The atmosphere of Israeli-Palestinian relations is also being poisoned by a sharp increase in settler violence against Palestinians, an increase that is encouraged and supported by extremist government ministers and members of the Knesset. Israeli army and police are often complicit with such activities, triggering increased Palestinian demand for the formation of armed groups and consequently further weakening the standing of the PA.

Most dangerous of all, Israel's extremist government ministers are voicing demands, accompanied by action, to change the status quo at the Temple Mount/Haram al-Sharif area. While Prime Minister Netanyahu insists that the status quo in the Holy Basin has not changed and will not change, he tolerates the provocative behavior of some of his ministers.⁴⁵ For its part, the Israeli police refrains from enforcing the status quo and does not prevent its frequent violations by national religious zealots. Given the hypersensitivity surrounding the area, tensions could escalate at any moment to mass violence that would destroy any chance for peace.

The aforementioned negative developments were reinforced by the impact of October 7 on the Israeli public. Polls reflect a significant hardening of attitudes among Israeli Jews, considerable support for Israel's war in Gaza, and a growing sense of being threatened, accompanied by the belief that the Arab-Israeli conflict has reverted to its original existential nature, necessitating a "kill or be killed" mindset. Consequently, expressions dehumanizing Palestinians have increased in frequency and taken on a more severe tone.

The Palestinian Domestic Scene

On the Palestinian side, it seems that the greatest impediment to accepting and implementing any plan for peace is political, social, and territorial fragmentation. The political and social division between the Fatah-led secular nationalists and Hamas-led Islamists has shown remarkable resilience in the face of many regional efforts to bridge the gap between the two camps. This is made even more complex by divisions among the secular nationalists: between the camp that continues to follow President Mahmoud Abbas and those who challenge his authority and legitimacy—many of whom have aligned with UAE-supported former PA director of preventive security, Muhammad Dahlan. Abbas being almost 90 contributes to the formation of a succession-dominant and hence competitive if not poisonous political environment.

And as if the aforementioned divisions were not enough, they are further complicated by geographic discontinuity and separation between the West Bank, where Fatah continues to dominate despite years of a slow downward trajectory, and Gaza, where Hamas continues to rule despite signs of considerable popular discontent. This too would make it very difficult to gain support among Palestinians for any new national program to advance the prospects for peace.

Under present circumstances, it is also exceedingly difficult for the PA elite to embark on a process of strengthening itself through political reforms, including the holding of free and fair elections and combatting corruption. This has led to a continuous reduction in the PA's public support and perceived legitimacy, as it is increasingly seen as a liability by a growing number of Palestinians who support its dissolution. The result is the further weakening of Fatah—a movement that was the backbone of the early 1990s peace process—thus increasing the relative support for Hamas in the West Bank and respect for its organizational and military capacity.

These difficulties are further complicated by Israel's politically motivated contributions to further weakening the PA by reducing its jurisdiction, and by means of financial and other sanctions that make it nearly impossible for the PA to pay the salaries of public and security sector employees. The latter, only partly paid and often unpaid, view themselves as in a perpetual vicious cycle, as their diminished capacities make them too weak to protect their Palestinian constituents in the face of escalating Israeli settler violence—and to protect

themselves from new armed groups that claim to be substituting for the PA's security services, thereby contributing to these services', and the PA's, loss of legitimacy. These trajectories are exacerbated further by the general economic deterioration and continuous decline in per capita income in the West Bank.

The Leaders: Netanyahu

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu is the single most important impediment to peace on the Israeli side. Ideologically as well as strategically he would oppose any accommodation with the Palestinians that is based on a two-state solution to the conflict and that meets the two sides' minimal requirements as stipulated above. He may grudgingly accept a Palestinian ministate of the kind suggested in 2020 by then president Donald Trump in his so-called "Deal of the Century." But the parameters of that state could not and will not be acceptable to the Palestinians.

Netanyahu's opposition to a two-state solution is deep and serious, as indicated by the lengths to which he has gone to prevent such a solution from ever being considered feasible and viable. Thus he did everything possible to slice off Gaza from any possible future Palestinian state by ensuring Hamas's hold on Gaza while at the same time weakening the PA's hold on the West Bank. Most notably, he strengthened Hamas's position in Palestinian public opinion by granting it the most generous prisoner exchange deal (by a ratio of 1:1,027), while refraining from any prisoner release in favor of Fatah, the PLO, or the PA since the year 2000.

No less one-sided were the aforementioned financial pressures exerted by Netanyahu-led governments against the PA even as they lobbied Qatar to transfer hundreds of millions of dollars to Hamas and then facilitated those transfers. The decision of Netanyahu-led governments to provide the Hamas-governed Gaza with electricity, fuel, and water and to expand the area in the Mediterranean where Gaza fishermen were permitted to fish had a similar effect. Indeed, Netanyahu's opposition to any steps that would return the PA to Gaza (or even only to the Rafah Crossing) was a conspicuous reflection of his determination to prevent a viable Palestinian state from ever emerging.

To be sure, Netanyahu is far from being an agent of chaos, as are some of the ministers in his government—notably Minister of National Security Itamar Ben-Gvir and Minister of Finance Bezalel Smotrich. But he tolerates these ministers' commitment to territorial expansion; to the likely eruption of violence in Jerusalem owing to the expected, if not welcome, violent Arab response to changing the status quo in Jerusalem's Holy Basin; and to the resulting chaos that might well enable a second Nakba—a mass Palestinian expulsion. This tolerance is opportunistic, driven by the imperative of maintaining his coalition government, which holds a small majority in the Knesset.

For Netanyahu, the survival of this government is also, if not primarily, a very personal matter, because his government's fall will precipitate a chain reaction that will likely end his political career, if not send him to prison. Any successor Israeli government will likely accept a cease-fire in the south, and will surely appoint a National Commission of Inquiry to investigate, among other matters, Netanyahu's contribution to the trajectories that led to the horrors of October 7, and to the failure to secure the release of the majority of Israeli hostages thereafter. Once the fighting is over and Netanyahu is no longer prime minister, it would also be impossible for him and his attorneys to continue delaying the legal procedures that began in May 2020 following his indictment on corruption charges.⁴⁶



Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu (right) and Palestinian President Abbas (left) with U.S. President Barak Obama (not shown) in the East Room of the White House, September 1, 2010. (AP Photo/Charles Dharapak, File)

The Leaders: Abbas

Elected in January 2005 to a five-year term as president of the PA, Mahmoud Abbas (Abu Mazen), now 89 years old and never reelected to that position, is a highly unlikely candidate for any positive change. To maintain his rule years after his term expired, he opposed the appointment of a strong and independent prime minister and the implementation of serious reforms within the PA, including the holding of elections (which he knew he would lose). Instead, he transformed the PA political system into an increasingly authoritarian regime by weakening public institutions and concentrating power and jurisdiction in his own hands. Without accountability and oversight, the PA governing institutions have become corrupt and incompetent.

Since October 7, 2023, during one of the most consequential years in the Palestinians' history, Abbas, as mentioned earlier, has remained totally passive: abdicating responsibility in the crisis and refraining from taking any initiative of any kind. Not surprisingly, he lost nearly all legitimacy and credibility, as 90 percent of respondents in the West Bank and Gaza express the desire to see him leave office.⁴⁷ As a result, he also lost the respect and support of major Arab state leaders.

The decline in Abbas's standing as leader has taken place over time but accelerated in recent years. During this period, he failed to take measures to protect his Palestinian constituents in the West Bank against mounting Israeli settler violence. He failed to enforce law and order among Palestinians, thereby creating conditions that allowed armed groups to form instead, thus leading to the PA's loss of monopoly of force. At the same time, he contributed his share to the failure of all Palestinian internal reconciliation efforts, thereby sometimes helping to ignite Palestinian-Israeli violence, as when in 2021 he reneged on his promise to Hamas to hold elections.⁴⁸

CHAPTER 5

CONFRONTING THE IMPEDIMENTS TO PEACE

Under the current circumstances of continued war, it is only natural to be deeply pessimistic about the prospects of the peace proposal presented in Chapter 3 of this monograph. Such pessimism is only exacerbated by the analysis provided in Chapter 4 of the impediments to implementing the proposed peace.

Though earlier chapters also provided some important reasons to expect that this time, efforts to advance Arab-Israeli peace and even a Palestinian-Israeli agreement might succeed, this chapter proposes specific ways in which the impediments to peace described in Chapter 4 can be addressed. The steps suggested are of three types. First, measures that the relevant parties can take to affect the incentive structure within which the currently warring parties would be making decisions about peace and war. Second, reciprocal Arab and Israeli messaging that could improve the atmospherics of Arab-Israeli relations, thus making the regional environment more conducive to peacemaking. And finally, specific measures that Israel and the Palestinians can take to improve the domestic environment within which the other side's leaders would be attempting to persuade their respective constituents to support the proposed peace deal.

The third type of proposed measures—which is largely neglected by students of the Middle East peace process, as well as by peace practitioners over the past decades—is critically important. This is because the failures of Palestinians and Israelis to date to reach a permanent status agreement have resulted primarily not from lack of sufficient creativity in constructing logical compromises relating to each of the permanent status issues. Rather, these failures largely resulted from the inability of Israeli and Palestinian leaders to see how they could garner sufficient domestic support for, and overcome opposition to, the compromises necessary for a worthwhile agreement to be reached.

Measures to Improve Decision Environments

The U.S. and key members of the international community should implement targeted measures to weaken extremists among the Palestinians and the Israelis. Most importantly, they as well as regional players should press Israel and the PA to reestablish a monopoly of force by disarming all individuals and groups who are not part of the two entities' security services. In this framework, these powers should condition engagement with Hamas on its

willingness to accept reunification of PA institutions in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, and to accept a single PA security force. Likewise, these important international players should press the Israeli and PA security services and court systems to punish severely all who perpetrate violence and otherwise act to undermine West Bank security and stability.

The U.S. should seek the cooperation of the other permanent members of the UN Security Council in embedding and legitimizing the proposed peace plan within a UNSC resolution. It should also seek the European Union's help in strengthening the PA economy and Gaza reconstruction and in reducing unemployment, particularly in the Gaza Strip. Working hand in hand with Palestinian civil society organizations, the European Union should also design a clear and measurable institutional reform agenda, including separation of powers, an independent judiciary, and greater space for civil society. And Arab donors to the PA should support these efforts and monitor the reform agenda's implementation.

The most significant contributions that key Arab regional powers can make to overcome the expected impediments to implementing the peace proposed here are in the realms of security, economics, and messaging communication. In the realm of geopolitics, these powers should consider ways of not only deterring but coopting regional spoilers, notably Iran and its proxies. In the realm of geoeconomics, these powers should design concrete plans for the economic integration of Israel and Palestine in the region. And in their messaging, these powers must make clear to Israelis and Palestinians alike that Arab normalization is not an alternative to Palestinian-Israeli peace, but rather is designed to increase the likelihood of achieving such an agreement.

Specific key Arab players can implement specific measures that would enhance the prospects of the proposed peace deal. Thus, **Jordan and Egypt** should seek a deeper security relationship with the PA, building a joint security regime that would include Israel. Members of the regime will cooperate in training, command and control, provision of arms, and security backup support when needed or requested. In addition, **Jordan** should consider offering the Palestinian state a confederation plan that addresses political, security, and economic partnership.

The most important step that the **Palestinian Authority** leadership must take to enhance its capacity to withstand internal opposition to the proposed peace plan is to regain its long-lost legitimacy. Ultimately, this can come about only through elections. In the meanwhile, as outlined in Chapter 3, a strong and independent prime minister, trusted by the public and the region, must be empowered to set the stage for rebuilding PA legitimacy and competence as well as its economy.

Equally important would be the PA's willingness to address Palestinian internal divisions. This would require unifying Palestinian public institutions and the creation of one security force for both the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. A broader deployment of Palestinian police in vulnerable Area B towns, as well as strengthened PA-U.S.-Israel security coordination to facilitate such deployment, would also be required. Reunifying the ranks of the largest PLO faction, Fatah, would also require that group to address the succession issue, by bringing back into the fold leaders who have been rejected or sidelined in recent years.

Reconciliation would also allow Hamas's reintegration into the political process, provided that it accepts the PA's monopoly of force, excluding all separate armed militias. While such acceptance would be sufficient for Hamas's participation in the Palestinian political process, its participation in Palestinian governing institutions would be contingent on its acceptance of these institutions' being bound by the agreements already signed by previous PA governments. This would also help to induce Hamas to moderate its position and reduce the general level of militancy, particularly in the West Bank.

For its part, **Israel** would need to take similar steps to improve its political environment as a means of battling the impediments to peace. While Israeli democracy would not allow banning parties and leaders who oppose the two-state solution from participating in the political process, such movements and leaders should not be included in governing coalitions. Israel would also need to reaffirm its commitment to the principle of the monopoly of force by reversing the policy of its current government that liberally provides citizens permits to own and carry weapons. Finally, Israel's police and security services as well as its courts would need to take firm action to prevent extremists from carrying out any form of violence against Palestinians in the West Bank.

Reciprocal Messaging

The second way in which the impediments to peace described in Chapter 4 could be mitigated is through Arab and Israeli reciprocal messaging that could improve the atmospherics of Arab-Israeli relations, thereby making the regional environment more conducive to peacemaking. With this goal in mind, Arabs should consider the following messaging:

- Refer to Israel in their public speeches by name, both at home and in international forums
 - Communicate to Israelis directly by granting interviews and publishing articles in Israeli media
 - Acknowledge that despite its strong connections to the West, in its religion and history Israel is also an integral part of the Middle East region
 - Suggest that after a two-state solution is implemented, Israel should be granted the status of “observer” (together with Turkey and Iran) in the Arab League
 - Publicize the likely economic benefits of cooperation with Israel, in particular the likely future benefits of peace with Israel in the realm of technology, and in facing the challenges of climate change, food shortages, and water scarcity. Egypt and Jordan should at the same time emphasize the economic and employment benefits that they have derived over the years from the Qualified Industrial Zones (QIZ) established with Israel, and Egypt should emphasize the likely economic benefits of exploiting the natural gas field off the Gaza coast
- and
- Honor President Sadat and his peace initiative, as President el-Sisi did recently.⁴⁹

In the same spirit, Israelis should consider the following messaging:

- **Refer to the Palestinians as a “people” and a “nation”**
- **Refer to the Oslo agreement as a courageous step**
- **Acknowledge Arabs’ and Israelis’ common suffering**
- **Motivate media coverage of the modernization processes in Arab countries that have concluded peace and normalization agreements with Israel**

and

- **Acknowledge and highlight the role of Jews in Arab-Islamic civilizations.**

Help Thy Neighbor

A third set of steps that Israel and the Palestinians can take to improve the odds of overcoming the impediments to peace is to support the efforts of the other side’s leaders to persuade their respective constituents to back the proposed peace deal. This section describes measures that have been tested in joint Palestinian-Israeli survey research.

The latest round of the Palestinian-Israeli Pulse, a joint public opinion survey conducted in July 2024 by Tel Aviv University and the Palestinian Center for Policy and Survey Research in Ramallah shows that incentives or policy measures offered by leaders of each side can significantly increase public support for a permanent peace along the lines described in this monograph. While October 7 and the Gaza War have significantly affected the psychosocial environment on both sides, thereby adding yet another impediment to peacemaking, it is clear from the joint survey that leaders can still help each other garner public support for making painful concessions.

Among Palestinians, findings show that support for a permanent comprehensive peace package along the lines of the two-state solution can be increased from about a third to a majority if the peace package includes tangible and intangible incentives. Examples of such incentives might include Israel agreeing to allow Palestinian laborers to work inside Israel, acknowledging Palestinian historic and religious links to the land, releasing Palestinian prisoners from Israeli jails, and providing Palestinian refugees with compensation in the form of homes and land in the countries where they are settled.

Among Israeli Jews, findings show that support for the same peace package can be increased from about a quarter to a majority if the package includes such measures as a Palestinian commitment to combat incitement against Israel in Palestinian textbooks, and to allow Israeli factories currently located in the West Bank to continue operating in the Palestinian state after the peace agreement is reached. Other tangible and intangible incentives could include Palestinian recognition of the State of Israel as the homeland of the Jewish people, and the provision of some monetary compensation to Israeli Jews who had to leave Arab countries following Israel's establishment.⁵⁰

In an earlier effort to identify possible measures that could garner domestic support on both sides for the proposed deal, two of this monograph's authors, Shai Feldman and Khalil Shikaki—together with their American colleagues, Robert H. Mnookin and James K. Sebenius—led groups of Israelis, Palestinians, and Americans to propose measures that Israelis and Palestinians could take to enhance the efforts by the other side's leaders to persuade their respective constituents to support the proposed peace deal. Funded by the Norwegian Ministry for Foreign Affairs, these groups, comprised of policy experts and former government officials, met privately in Istanbul and Oslo in 2012. The three teams adopted a central premise: namely, that a major, if not primary, impediment to reaching a two-state solution to the Palestinian-Israeli conflict has been *the leaders' estimates that they would not be able to gain sufficient support for, and overcome opposition to, the compromises necessary for a worthwhile deal to be reached.*

The joint exploration produced two sets of suggested measures to help garner domestic support for a peace deal:

1. Steps and statements that each side could take or make—or refrain from taking or making—to ease the other party’s ability to garner domestic support for reaching a permanent status agreement on the eve of concluding such an agreement.
2. Steps and statements that each side could take or make—or refrain from taking or making—to ease the other party’s ability to garner domestic support for reaching a permanent status agreement immediately after such an agreement is reached.

Based on these discussions, the following are examples of steps that **Israeli leaders** should take to help their Palestinian counterparts garner domestic support for the proposed peace deal *on the eve of* concluding such an agreement:

- The Prime Minister should state publicly that Israel seeks no sovereignty in the vast majority of the West Bank territory and that, as a result of the anticipated agreement, not all settlements will remain in place
- Israel should take a number of steps with regard to existing settlements and outposts and initiate a national process of settler relocation. These steps would include:
 - a) A combination of a settlement construction freeze, evacuation of outposts inhabited by extreme settlers, and more visible steps to combat settlers’ violence
 - and
 - b) Legislating a voluntary evacuation–compensation law for Jewish settlers. The new law would assist those who wish to move back to within the Green Line or to agreed-upon settlement blocs even before an Israeli–Palestinian agreement is reached, while providing them with appropriate compensation for their property.

- Israel should gradually take a number of steps to improve daily life in the West Bank, such as transferring to the Palestinians additional responsibility and authority in certain parts of Area C
- Israel should begin to work together with the PA on strategic Palestinian transport projects, rebuilding West Bank and Gaza airports and a Gaza seaport, a West Bank–Gaza Strip safe–passage corridor, and a Damia Bridge crossing

and

- Israel should initiate a number of steps in the realm of internal and external public education, such as allowing teaching of the Nakba in Israeli schools in the Arab sector and raising awareness of Palestinian narratives in the broader Israeli school system.

Examples of steps that Israeli leaders should take to help their Palestinian counterparts garner domestic support for the proposed peace deal immediately after such an agreement is reached:

- Begin to teach the Nakba in Israeli schools
- Acknowledge the suffering of the Palestinian refugees and suggest that Israel shares responsibility for such suffering
- Be the first state to establish an embassy in East Jerusalem, the Palestinian capital in our proposed agreement. This would signal Israel's recognition of East Jerusalem as foreign, Palestinian territory and improve relations with the new Palestinian state and its people
- Initiate joint appearances with the Palestinian president at the United Nations General Assembly, the Israeli Knesset, the Palestinian Parliament, and the U.S. Congress
- Release all Palestinian prisoners

and

- Commit to employing Palestinians, as opposed to foreign workers.

The following are examples of steps that Palestinian leaders should take to help their Israeli counterparts garner domestic support for the proposed peace deal on the eve of concluding an agreement:

- **The Palestinians should take precautionary measures against strategic destabilization, such as violence and incitement, and declare their unequivocal commitment to ending anti-Israel and anti-Jewish incitement**
- **Palestinians should recognize the existence of a Jewish people and publicly adopt the principle of “two states for two peoples,” thus implying that the Palestinian state is the homeland of the Palestinian people and Israel is the homeland of the Jewish people. This acknowledgment should include mutual recognition of the religious, historical, and emotional attachment of both peoples to the land—and, therefore, of the imperative to reach a historic compromise on its division between them**
- **Palestinian leaders should highlight and amplify public support for the basic compromises entailed in a permanent status agreement, making sure that their public is aware of the plans for Palestinian-Israeli reconciliation**

and

- **The terms of the peace proposed here should be ratified by a vote in the PLO parliament: the PLO National Council.**

Examples of steps that **Palestinian leaders** should take to help their Israeli counterparts garner domestic support for the proposed peace deal immediately *after* such an agreement is reached:

- **Enshrine Palestinian commitments and the permanence of those commitments in a Palestinian constitution**
- **Offer Israeli settlers the option of remaining under Palestinian sovereignty**

- **Acknowledge the Jewish nature of the State of Israel**
- **Publicly and repeatedly declare five things important to Israelis:**
 - a) **They do not question the legitimacy of the Israeli state**
 - b) **Palestinians will not raise in the future claims about other parts of historic Palestine; there is no hidden agenda**
 - c) **The Palestinian government will never resort to violence to resolve differences with Israel**
 - d) **The agreement with Israel is permanent**
- and**
- e) **Palestinians will be open about where Palestinian refugees are to be resettled.**

In addition to the steps that Palestinian and Israeli leaders can take to help each other garner sufficient domestic support for the proposed peace deal, participants in the Norwegian-funded project also recommended a set of measures that the U.S. and EU member states might consider taking to achieve the same goal. The following proposed steps are inspired by these recommendations.

To help garner Palestinian domestic support on the eve of concluding the proposed peace agreement, the U.S. and EU member states could:

- **Offer early recognition of a Palestinian state and support its UN membership**
- and**
- **Fund Palestinian initiatives to reduce prejudice and incitement at the grassroots level**

And after the proposed peace agreement is concluded, the U.S. and EU member states could:

- **Encourage an inclusive and democratic Palestinian political system**
- **Expand the residency visa program for Palestinian refugees**
- **Fund more scholarships for Palestinians in the U.S. and in EU states**
- **Provide assurances that international forces will protect Palestinians and their interests**
- **Announce that the U.S. and the EU will respect the outcome of new Palestinian elections**

and

- **Offer an international “Marshall Plan” to develop the Palestine economy.**

To help garner Israeli domestic support on the eve of concluding the proposed peace agreement:

- **The U.S. could further reinforce its commitments to Israel and its support of Israel’s national defense, especially in addressing the threat posed by Iran**

and

- **The U.S. and EU member states could fund local Israeli initiatives at the grassroots level to reduce prejudice and incitement.**

And after the proposed peace agreement is concluded, the U.S. and EU states could:

- **Increase support for the Israeli defense establishment**
- **Offer to support a U.S. security treaty with Israel**
- **Offer to encourage and support Israeli membership in NATO**
- **Offer to encourage and support Israeli membership in the European Union**
- **Offer to fund Israeli legislation to encourage settler relocation to the agreed-upon settlement blocs or to pre-1967 Israel**

and

- **Support empathetic internal dialogue with Israeli settlers.**

Needless to say, the three types of measures proposed in this chapter to counter the likely impediments to the proposed peace plan and its transitional phase require strong and committed leadership on all fronts: Israeli, Palestinian, regional, and international. The cooperation of leaders is required to weaken and isolate spoilers and extremists and achieve the necessary legitimization of the proposed peace plan. And Arab and Israeli reciprocal messaging that is conducive to peacemaking requires courage and creativity on the part of regional and Israeli leaders. But perhaps the need for leadership is most critical if Israel and the Palestinians are to help each other garner domestic support for the proposed deal by adopting steps that each can take to enhance the efforts of the other side's leaders to persuade their respective constituents to support the proposed peace deal.

CHAPTER 6

SUMMARY AND CONCLUDING OBSERVATIONS

This monograph addresses the most recent chapter in the history of the Arab–Israeli conflict, which began with Hamas’s attack on October 7, 2023, on Israel’s civilian communities and military bases located across the border from Gaza. Writing this monograph extended into November 2024, during which time the violence also became among the deadliest in the history of the conflict. The fighting also broadened considerably, as Lebanon’s Hezbollah, Yemen’s Houthis, and Iraq’s pro–Iranian militias joined the fighting.

In the months following October 7, the war escalated to unprecedented levels, as Israel deepened its efforts to demolish Hamas in Gaza and Hezbollah and Israel escalated their exchanges of fire, causing altogether more than 200,000 Israelis and Lebanese to relocate from their homes along both sides of the Israel–Lebanon border into safer areas in both countries. Meanwhile, violence between Israeli security forces and Palestinian militants and civilians in the West Bank became a nearly daily routine. And in April 2024 the war witnessed the first direct large–scale military confrontation between Iran and Israel, adding to the odds that the war might escalate even further.

The purpose of this monograph was to explore the possibility that the horrors experienced on and since October 7 might lead to a different, more positive chapter in Arab–Israeli relations. But given the enormous pain and suffering still experienced by Arabs and Israelis, the prospects of future stability, peace, and prosperity currently seem distant at best.

Yet in world history, dramatic and positive changes following the horrors of war have happened on more than one occasion. The tens of millions of deaths during the Second World War in Europe and the Pacific and the mass killings and destruction in Vietnam in the 1960s and 1970s led to the creation of the United Nations, NATO, and the European Union and to decades of unprecedented stability, peace, and prosperity in Southeast Asia, respectively. Likewise, in the Middle East, Egypt’s President Sadat launched a dramatic peace initiative in late 1977, traveling to Israel only four years after the deadly 1973 War. A decade after Sadat’s trip, the Palestinians launched the First Intifada, which soon led to the first–ever direct negotiations between Israel and the PLO, resulting in the 1993 Oslo Accords. Two years earlier, the First Gulf War had led to the convening in Madrid of the first broad Arab–Israeli peace conference. In all these cases, the idea that violence and war could lead to peace and prosperity did not seem realistic as long as the violence and killing continued.

Motivating Palestinian-Israeli Accommodation

Encouraged by such precedents, this monograph argues that the events of the past fourteen months have produced conditions that allow the advancing of Palestinian-Israeli accommodation within a broader regional Arab-Israeli peace. We began by laying the foundations for this argument (in Chapters 1 and 2) by explaining—not justifying—what led to the October 7 attack and identifying the unique characteristics and dynamics of the resulting war. We then articulated the conditions that need to be met for a positive turn of events to take place, from war to negotiations and peace.

The first of these conditions is that all the parties concerned accept the centrality of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict and the costs associated with attempting to ignore it. Closely related is the second condition: the need to appreciate the complex relationship between the broader regional dimensions of the conflict and its bilateral Palestinian-Israeli dimension. If recent history has demonstrated anything, it is that the Palestinian-Israeli conflict cannot be bypassed in pursuit of broader Arab-Israeli peace. At the same time, the contributions of the region's Arab states will be essential for Palestinian-Israeli peace to be achieved, and for the transition from killing and war to negotiations and peace to succeed.

The third condition for a positive transformation to be achieved is that Israeli-Palestinian accommodation must be based on safeguarding the two parties' short-term and long-term vital interests. In Chapter 3 of this monograph, we articulated what such a resolution of the conflict might look like. This description is based on decades of Palestinian-Israeli peacemaking efforts, during which many creative ideas for resolving the conflict were offered. Arguably the most authoritative of these ideas were packaged in the framework of the "parameters" suggested by President Bill Clinton in December 2000. Less authoritative but much more detailed ideas were later offered by a large group of unofficial Palestinians and Israelis in the framework of the Geneva Initiative.

This monograph refrains from duplicating these efforts. We offer a possible framework for a peace proposal; but a far greater emphasis is placed here than in previous peacemaking efforts on *the critically important role of the region's states* in helping to reach peace and sustaining it over time. The region's states will be especially important in endorsing the principles of Palestinian-Israeli accommodation (a role that they refrained from assuming during the

2000 Camp David negotiations), in investing resources to encourage a buy-in from both Israelis and Palestinians for the proposed deal, and in reducing and offsetting the risks associated with implementing the proposal.

Transitioning to a Positive Change

Inevitably, any Arab-Israeli peace agreement will be confronted by structural and political impediments, and by potential spoilers who may feel threatened by the proposed deal. Chapter 4 of this document identifies these possible impediments and potential spoilers among global powers, regional opponents of peace, domestic players, and individual leaders.

Implementing the vision of peace presented here will be difficult, as it will require far-reaching concessions on the part of all the parties concerned. Additionally, the current war requires the parties to undergo a demanding transition process, the success of which will be anything but assured. During this period, the environment of Palestinian-Israeli relations must change significantly, allowing the parties to seriously consider the steps that need to be taken to reach the long-term bilateral and regional peace envisaged here. Most important, special care would need to be taken to diminish the odds that the transition would produce additional opponents and impediments, preventing the parties from ever reaching the desired long-term peace.

The principle guiding the implementation of these transitional steps is that the vital needs of Palestinians and Israelis must be met if the transitional phase is to succeed. Hopefully, the parties' vital needs during this transitional phase will be less demanding than what they will likely regard as vital for the long-term peace presented here to be achieved.

During the transitional phase, the following *security and stabilization* measures will be implemented: a full cessation of violence, full Israeli withdrawal from Gaza; release of all hostages; return of displaced persons to their homes, and provision of temporary shelters to those without homes; resumption of basic services; and the reconstruction of private and public buildings. As well, Israel would need to reaffirm its commitment to refrain from any measures that could be seen as attempting to change the status quo in the Holy Basin (Temple Mount/Haram al-Sharif) in Jerusalem. For their part, the Palestinians will be expected to implement the following *good governance* measures: competent and

efficient policing, effective service delivery, and other characteristics of the path to peaceful democratic governance, including the holding of elections in all Palestinian territories.

The efforts to establish security and good governance should be based on the following principle: All Palestinian and Israeli political parties and factions are to be allowed to participate in all aspects of the political process, including competing in elections, but would not to be allowed to bear arms. So the envisaged transition would include the disarming of all armed factions, thereby reestablishing the monopoly of force to be exercised by both Israel and the PA in their respective sovereign territories.

And though the improved environment would be conducive to negotiating the details of a permanent peace, entering the transitional phase and sustaining it would require Palestinians and Israelis to agree on the principles on which their long-term peace will be based. The most important of these principles is that the peace envisaged must be based on two states living side by side, with both sides' aspirations for self-determination met. Otherwise, the relevant parties will fear that at some point the process might be derailed and the transitional phase would become permanent owing to a failure to agree on a long-term deal, leaving the parties failing to reach their destination despite the considerable concessions that they had made. For example, the ability of the transitional arrangements to ensure a single PA with a monopoly over coercive force depends almost entirely on charting a path, with credible and irreversible steps, toward a Palestinian state. Additional arrangements, such as creating a confederation between the two states or with one or more additional countries, will be based on the independent decisions of the two states.

To be clear: These principles and measures would have to be accepted by the relevant parties in order for the transition phase to begin. But the implementation of these principles would take place gradually throughout this phase, so that they would be fully implemented by the end of its agreed duration.

Institutions Implementing Positive Change

As we discuss more fully in Chapter 3, the different facets of the transition process would require implementation and/or orchestration by three institutions, linked by a **steering group** to coordinate their activities:

- **a transitional Palestinian authority for the entire Palestinian territories, created under a strong and independent prime minister with full powers as outlined in the Palestinian Basic Law**
- **a multinational body made up of representatives of seven major international donor countries that share basic strategic parameters—perhaps joined by the IMF and the World Bank—to provide political, security, and financial support for the entire transitional process**

and

- **a regional Arab body, to provide political, security, financial, and economic support for the entire transitional process.**

These bodies would provide the means to improve safety and security for Israelis and Palestinians and to increase prosperity during the transition phase, with a special focus on:

- **economic revitalization, to ensure development and prosperity in Gaza and the West Bank**
- **reconstruction, whereby Saudi Arabia would undertake to orchestrate a massive regional effort to improve the infrastructure of the West Bank and to reconstruct that of Gaza**
- **social reforms, to spread a culture of tolerance throughout the region**

and

- **security sector reform that would seek to ensure that the enhanced PA is equipped with the means for providing security for Palestinians, based on a monopoly of force exercised by its services.**

As Israel gradually withdraws from the Gaza Strip during the transitional phase, the steering group will coordinate with Israel and the PA the details of implementing the withdrawal, and *the transfer of the various aspects of Gaza's governance from Hamas and Israel to the reinforced PA.*

Addressing the Impediments to a Positive Change

As shown in Chapter 4, any effort to transform the Arab-Israeli conflict from war and violence to accommodation and prosperity will face considerable impediments that would need to be addressed. One helpful response could be the implementation of measures that the relevant parties can take *to affect the incentive structure and improve the policy environment*, such as those that would:

- **weaken extremists, and deprive them of the ability to impose a veto on peace negotiations**
 - **encourage cooptation of regional spoilers**
 - **offer the relevant parties assurances of security and economic integration**
 - **offer the option of a Palestinian-Jordanian confederation**
- and**
- **encourage the reunification of Palestinian ranks and the restoration of PLO-PA legitimacy and acceptance, to strengthen its capacity to negotiate and implement agreements.**

A second response to anticipated impediments should be *Arab and Israeli reciprocal messaging* that might improve the atmospherics of Arab-Israeli relations, thus making the regional environment more conducive to peacemaking. With this goal in mind, Arabs could consider:

- **messaging that refers to Israel by name in their public speeches, both at home and in international forums**
 - **communicating to Israelis directly, by granting interviews and publishing articles in the Israeli media**
- and**
- **acknowledging that despite its strong connections to the West, in its religion and history Israel is also an integral part of the Middle East region.**

In the same spirit, Israelis could consider messaging that:

- **refers to the Palestinians as a “people” and a “nation”**
 - **refers to the Oslo agreement as a courageous step**
- and**
- **acknowledges the Arabs’ and Israelis’ common suffering.**

Finally, as set forth in Chapter 5, *Israelis and Palestinians could take measures to enhance the other side's leader's attempts to persuade their respective constituents to support the proposed peace deal*. Thus, in order to help their Palestinian counterparts garner domestic support for a negotiated peace deal, after a peace agreement has been reached, Israel could:

- **begin teaching the Nakba in Israeli schools**
- **acknowledge the suffering of the Palestinian refugees**
- **imply that Israel shares responsibility for such suffering**
- and**
- **be the first state to establish an embassy in East Jerusalem.**

For their part, Palestinians can:

- **enshrine Palestinian commitments and the permanence of those commitments in a Palestinian constitution**
- and**
- **offer Israeli settlers the option of remaining under Palestinian sovereignty.**

The Politics of Peacemaking: Liabilities and Assets

The feasibility of beginning to implement the proposals suggested here will be affected by the ever-changing political environment in the domestic, regional, and international realms. At this juncture, each of these realms is a source of significant liabilities and unknowns that complicate the ability to embark on a serious attempt to implement hopes for peace and prosperity. As this monograph goes to press, the rapidly unfolding dramatic developments in Syria provide an excellent example.

Domestically, the greatest liability is the leadership deficit from which Israelis and Palestinians currently suffer, inhibiting their capacity to make the complex and risky decisions associated with our proposed peace plan. The PLO and the PA are led by an aging and inactive president who remained passive and refrained from any meaningful initiative throughout one of the most fateful periods in the history of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict.

Likewise, Israel's prime minister has lost the trust of most Israelis, many of whom continue to believe that he bears much of the responsibility for the October 7 surprise and give him low grades for his management of the war since then.⁵¹ Given the indispensable role that extremists play in Israel's current Netanyahu-led governing coalition, it is difficult to see the plan suggested here materializing before significant changes take place in Israel's domestic scene.

A second liability is associated with the regional realm, parts of which have already experienced a considerable escalation in violence—most recently, three first-ever large-scale direct military engagements between Iran and Israel. In light of these events, increasing fears that violence might escalate even further is not surprising. Such escalation to a comprehensive regional war targeting military, economic, infrastructural, and leadership assets could have unpredictable results, and might easily delay or destroy any possibility of progress toward peace. Whether fears of such further escalation might motivate some of the region's states to come together to implement some of the proposals suggested here—or, conversely, might inhibit them from such cooperation—remains an open question.

Internationally, the greatest uncertainty surrounds the likely ramifications of the 2024 U.S. elections results. Although some of the initiatives that created previous breakthroughs in Arab-Israeli peacemaking originated from the region

and not from the U.S.—this was notably the case with Egyptian president Sadat’s trip to Jerusalem and with Israel’s Yitzhak Rabin and PLO leader Yasser Arafat deciding to negotiate and sign the Oslo Accords—the U.S. role in other breakthroughs was indispensable. This was the case with respect to Henry Kissinger’s role in the Egyptian–Israeli and Israeli–Syrian disengagement agreements following the 1973 War and Secretary of State Jim Baker’s role following the first Gulf war in designing and orchestrating the Madrid peace conference. It is difficult but not impossible to see how the path to ending the Palestinian–Israeli conflict suggested here could materialize in the event that the U.S. focuses its attention instead on other parts of the world.

As noted in the Preface, it is too early to assess with any confidence how President Trump will seek to navigate the complexities of the Middle East. In the Palestinian–Israeli realm, a significant liability that President Trump has is the track record of his previous term. Specifically, the “Deal of the Century” that he proposed failed to meet the minimal requirements on the Palestinian side and was preceded by a number of one-sided steps that the U.S. took unilaterally, especially regarding the hypersensitive issue of Jerusalem. Indeed, a number of early steps that Trump took soon after his reelection—notably, the nomination of Mike Huckabee to be the next U.S. Ambassador to Israel—reflect and echo that track record. Still, it is noteworthy that one of the first appointments that the president-elect made only days after his reelection was to name a U.S. Special Envoy for the Middle East.

Alongside these aforementioned liabilities, however, President Trump also brings to the White House a number of assets that may prove crucial in advancing some of the proposals made in this monograph. Possibly the most relevant among these is Trump’s affinity and close relations with the leaders of key Arab countries, such as Crown Prince Muhammad bin Salman of Saudi Arabia, Muhammad bin Zayed of the UAE, and President Abdel Fattah el-Sisi of Egypt. No less important, especially in handling the Syrian and Iranian fronts, may be Trump’s admiration for and close relations with Russian president Vladimir Putin.

Another important asset of the next American president is his ability and willingness to exercise leverage, both positive and negative, to advance international transactions and diplomacy. This other facet of Trump’s reputation was demonstrated conclusively in the negotiations that led to the signing of the Abraham Accords. Exercising such U.S. leverage through

promises of incentives and threats of punishment may be critically important in extracting concessions from Israel and the Palestinians, as well as in mobilizing regional players to help implement the ideas advanced here.

Other facets of the current Middle East political environment may prove to be important assets in advancing the plan for stability and peacemaking offered in this monograph. The most important of these is the policy change that a number of Middle East countries have undergone in recent years. This change from exclusive focus on geopolitics to greater emphasis on geoeconomics was reflected in the imperfect but very significant Abraham Accords. Importantly, after many decades, Egypt and Jordan were joined in the pursuit of stability, development, and peace by the UAE, Bahrain, and Morocco, with Saudi Arabia hovering in the wings. So at least five Arab countries would likely support the plan proposed in this monograph. This is a revolutionary change from the time that Egypt was ostracized for launching a peace offensive in the late 1970s.

A second important asset is Arab public opinion. Regardless of whom Palestinians and Israelis hold responsible for the horrors that both experienced on or since October 7, these horrors have gradually produced a shift in favor of supporting steps to reduce the odds of additional calamities. Indeed, as demonstrated in detail in Chapter 5, the most recent round of the Palestinian-Israeli Pulse, conducted in July 2024, shows that incentives or policy measures offered by leaders of each side can significantly increase public support for a permanent peace along the lines described in the monograph. While October 7 and the Gaza War have significantly affected the psychosocial environment on both sides, thereby adding yet another impediment to peacemaking, it is clear from the joint survey that leaders, if they desire, can still help one another garner sufficient public support for making the painful concessions required for peace.

Annex

The following document served as the basis that guided the discussion of the 2012 Norwegian-funded project

Principles for a Palestinian-Israeli Hypothetical Agreement

(1) Two states:

An independent and sovereign Palestinian state would be established and would live side by side with the state of Israel in peace, security, and cooperation. The states of Israel and Palestine would recognize each other.

(2) End of Conflict:

The full implementation of this agreement in its entirety will mean the end of conflict between the two states, Israel and Palestine and the end to all claims. A UN Security Council Resolution to that effect would also insure the release of all prisoners.

(3) Territory:

The borders of the two states will be based on 1967 lines with mutual agreed swaps. Land annexed by Israel would be compensated by an equivalent land swap and a permanent corridor linking the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. Guidelines for the swap would include: a small swap in the range of 2%–6%, most settlers would live under Israeli sovereignty, the least number of Palestinians would be affected, and Palestinians would have territorial contiguity.

(4) Security:

The state of Palestine would be defined as a “non-militarized state” but will have a strong security force. Both sides agree to exercise comprehensive and complete commitment to fighting terrorism and incitement. For deterrence and border security, an international presence that can only be withdrawn by mutual consent would be deployed in Palestine. This presence will also monitor the implementation of the agreement between both sides. An Israeli presence would be allowed in early warning stations facilities for a limited period of time. The state of Palestine will have sovereignty over its airspace but special arrangements would be made for Israeli training and operational needs. No foreign army would enter Palestine, and its government would not conclude military agreement with a country that does not recognize Israel.

(5) Jerusalem:

Jerusalem would be the capital of the two states and will remain united but will have two municipalities and a coordination body. Arab areas in East Jerusalem would come under Palestinian sovereignty and Jewish under Israeli. Palestinians would have effective control over the Haram and Israelis effective control over the Western Wall. An international committee made up of Jordan, Saudi Arabia, the US, Israel, and Palestine would play the role of a custodian managing matters related to holy places in the Old City and other agreed areas just outside the city wall. The committee would maintain the holy sites, oversee relevant cooperation and conflict resolution, and guarantee access for all religions. It would oversee the implementation of special arrangement barring excavation under the Haram and behind the Wall. Consent of all parties would be required before any excavation can take place. International monitoring would provide mutual confidence.

(6) Refugees:

Israel would acknowledge the moral and material suffering caused to the Palestinian people as a result of the 1948 war. The solution to the refugee problem would be consistent with the two-state approach: the two states as the homeland of their respective peoples. The Palestinian state would be the focal point for the Palestinians who choose to return to the area and Israel would accept some of these refugees. Refugees would have five possible homes: in the State of Palestine; in the areas in Israel being transferred to Palestine in the land swap; in host countries; in third countries; and in Israel. Right to return to the Palestinian state and the swapped areas would be granted to all Palestinian refugees. Settlement in host and third countries and absorption into Israel will depend upon the policies and sovereign decisions of those countries and would be implemented in a manner that would not threaten the national character of the State of Israel. An international body would be established to process claims and manage the process of location, resettlement, return, and compensation. The parties would agree that this implements Resolution 194.

Endnotes

1. Abdel Monem Said Aly and Shai Feldman, "Echo Politics: Changing the Regional Context of Arab-Israeli Peacemaking," Belfer Center for Science and International Affairs, August 29, 2003.
2. Kevin Liptak and Jeremy Diamond, "Rifts between Biden and Netanyahu Spill into Public View," CNN, December 12, 2023, <https://www.cnn.com/2023/12/12/politics/biden-israel-losing-support-netanyahu/index.html>.
3. Nidal Al-Mughrabi, Ali Sawafta, and Rami Ayyub, "Palestinian Leader Delays Parliamentary and Presidential Elections, Blaming Israel," Reuters, April 30, 2021, <https://www.reuters.com/world/middle-east/palestinian-elections-delayed-says-president-mahmoud-abbas-2021-04-29/>.
4. Shai Feldman and Khalil Shikaki, "Israel and the Palestinians: Sliding toward a One-State Reality," Middle East Brief, no. 104, Brandeis University, Crown Center for Middle East Studies, December 2016, <https://www.brandeis.edu/crown/publications/middle-east-briefs/pdfs/101-200/meb104.pdf>.
5. "Syrian Revolution 13 Years On: Nearly 618,000 persons Killed since the Onset of the Revolution in March 2011," Mar 15, 2024, <https://www.syriaahr.com/en/328044/>.
6. Consulate of Israel (Toronto and Western Canada), "Israel Marks Memorial Day 2024 for the Fallen Soldiers and Victims of Terrorism," May 13, 2024, <https://www.gov.il/en/pages/memorial-day-for-the-fallen-soldiers-and-victims-of-terrorism-2024>, and Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics, "The Conditions of the Palestinian People via Statistical Figures and Findings, on the Annual Commemoration of the Palestinian Nakba 76th," <https://www.pcbs.gov.ps/post.aspx?lang=en&ItemID=5750>.
7. House Armed Services Committee, Statement of General Mark A. Milley, Department of Defense Budget Hearing, March 29, 2023, <https://www.armed-services.senate.gov/imo/media/doc/CJCS%20PB24%20Written%20Statement%20FINAL%2025%20MAR%202023.pdf>, and Shai Feldman, "Iran's Nuclear Threat in the Biden Era: Israel's Response Options," Middle East Brief, no. 155, Brandeis University, Crown Center for Middle East Studies, July 2023, <https://www.brandeis.edu/crown/publications/middle-east-briefs/pdfs/101-200/meb155.pdf>.
8. Mona Sukkarieh, "The East Mediterranean Gas Forum: Regional Cooperation amid Conflicting Interests," Natural Resource Governance Institute, February 2021, https://resourcegovernance.org/sites/default/files/documents/the_east_mediterranean_gas_forum_regional_cooperation_amid_conflicting_interests_o.pdf.

9. Ronen Bergman, Adam Rasgon and Patrick Kingsley, "Secret Documents Show Hamas Tried to Persuade Iran to Join Its Oct. 7 Attack," New York Times, October 12, 2024, <https://www.nytimes.com/2024/10/12/world/middleeast/hamas-israel-war.html>.
10. Mohamed EL Doh, "Iran: The Real Beneficiary of the Gaza Conflict," Geopolitical Monitor, December 13, 2023, <https://www.geopoliticalmonitor.com/iran-the-real-beneficiary-of-the-gaza-conflict/>.
11. Maged Mandour, "Egypt's Shifting Hamas Policies," Sada (Carnegie Endowment for International Peace), July 26, 2021, <https://carnegieendowment.org/sada/2021/07/egypts-shifting-hamas-policies?lang=en>.
12. Fares Akram, "Hamas Has Developed a Vast Arsenal in Blockaded Gaza," March 25, 2019, <https://apnews.com/article/9977b51fc0754009b932c860daef579e>.
13. Udi Dekel and Orit Perlov, "The Egyptian Hudna Initiative: Bypassing Israel" (Tel Aviv: Institute for National Security Studies, Insight No. 1740, June 21, 2023), <https://www.inss.org.il/publication/hudna/>.
14. "Egypt Warned Israel Days before Hamas Struck, US Committee Chairman Says," BBC, October 12, 2023, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-67082047>.
15. Gershon Baskin, "The Future of Hamas," Times of Israel (Blogs), August 31, 2023, <https://blogs.timesofisrael.com/the-future-of-hamas/>, and Dan Perry, "The Bennett-Lapid Government Must Move on the Palestinians," June 3, 2021, <https://www.jpost.com/opinion/the-bennett-lapid-government-must-move-on-the-palestinians-opinion-670058>.
16. Palestinian Center for Policy and Survey Research, Public Opinion Poll No. 89, September 13, 2023, <https://www.pcpsr.org/en/node/955>.
17. Ghaith al-Omari, "How the Palestinian Authority Failed Its People" (Washington Institute for Near East Policy, October 19, 2023), <https://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/how-palestinian-authority-failed-its-people>.
18. Palestinian Center for Policy and Survey Research, Public Opinion Poll No. 89.
19. Miriam Berger, "2022 Was Deadliest Year for West Bank Palestinians in Nearly Two Decades," Washington Post, December 29, 2022, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/2022/12/29/palestinians-killed-west-bank-israel/>.

20. Oscar Rickett and Huthifa Fayyad, "Number of Israelis Killed by Palestinians in 2022 Highest since 2008," Middle East Eye, November 18, 2022, <https://www.middleeasteye.net/news/israel-palestine-number-killed-highest-2008#:~:text=Twenty%2Dseven%20Israeli%20civilians%20and,analysis%20of%20United%20Nations%20figures>.
21. "Increase in Settler Violence, Displacement: Remarks by OCHA Spokesperson Jens Laerke" (United Nations, August 5, 2023), <https://www.un.org/unispal/document/increase-in-settler-violence-displacement-remarks-by-ocha-spokesperson-jens-laerke/>, and International Crisis Group, "Stemming Israeli Settler Violence at Its Root" (Report No. 246, September 06, 2024), <https://www.crisisgroup.org/middle-east-north-africa/east-mediterranean-mena-israel/palestine/246-stemming-israeli-settler-violence>.
22. "2023 'Most Violent' Year for West Bank Settler Attacks, Watchdog Says," Times of Israel, January 1, 2024, <https://www.timesofisrael.com/2023-most-violent-year-for-west-bank-settler-attacks-watchdog-says/>.
23. Mary Kekatos, "1 year into the Israel-Hamas War: The Grim Human Toll by the Numbers," ABC News, October 7, 2024, <https://abcnews.go.com/International/israel-hamas-war-death-toll-1-year/story?id=114458943#:~:text=Deaths%20and%20injuries,7>, and Government of Israel, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, "Swords of Iron: Civilian Casualties," updated to November 24, 2024, <https://www.gov.il/en/pages/swords-of-iron-civilian-casualties>.
24. Ronen Bergman and Adam Goldman, "Israel Knew Hamas's Attack Plan More Than a Year Ago," New York Times, November 30, 2023 (updated December 2, 2023), <https://www.nytimes.com/2023/11/30/world/middleeast/israel-hamas-attack-intelligence.html>.
25. "Doubling Previous Numbers, Report Says 6,000 Gazans—including 3,800 Trained Hamas Terrorists—Broke into Israel on Oct. 7," Times of Israel, August 31, 2024, https://www.timesofisrael.com/liveblog_entry/doubling-previous-numbers-report-says-6000-gazans-including-3800-trained-hamas-terrorists-broke-into-israel-on-oct-7/.
26. "Hamas's Attack Was the Bloodiest in Israel's History," The Economist, October 12, 2023, <https://www.economist.com/briefing/2023/10/12/hamass-attack-was-the-bloodiest-in-israels-history>.

27. "Reported Impact Snapshot: Gaza Strip" (United Nations, OCHA, November 5, 2024), <https://www.ochaopt.org/content/reported-impact-snapshot-gaza-strip-5-november-2024>.
28. Emma Kinery, "Biden: Israel-Hamas War Must End with Vision for a 'Two-State Solution,'" CNBC, October 25, 2023, <https://www.cnbc.com/2023/10/25/biden-israel-hamas-war-must-end-with-vision-for-a-two-state-solution.html>.
29. Ruslan Suleymanov, "Why the Kremlin Is Drifting Closer to Houthi Rebels in Yemen" (Carnegie Politika, September 12, 2024), <https://carnegieendowment.org/russia- Eurasia/politika/2024/09/yemen-russia-middle-east-cooperation?lang=en>.
30. Dan Williams, "Russia Sees Military Coordination with Israel on Syria Continuing," Reuters, February 26, 2022, <https://www.reuters.com/world/middle-east/russia-sees-military-coordination-with-israel-syria-continuing-2022-02-26/>.
31. "Gaza: Security Council Passes Resolution Demanding 'An Immediate Ceasefire' during Ramadan" (United Nations, UN News, March 25, 2024), <https://news.un.org/en/story/2024/03/1147931>.
32. United Nations Security Council, Resolution 2728 (2024), <http://unscr.com/en/resolutions/2728>.
33. "UN General Assembly Demands Israel End 'Unlawful Presence' in Occupied Palestinian Territory" (United Nations, UN News, September 18, 2024), <https://news.un.org/en/story/2024/09/1154496>.
34. Ivana Kottasová and Madalena Araujo, "Exclusive Interview: ICC Prosecutor Seeks Arrest Warrants against Sinwar and Netanyahu for War Crimes over October 7 and Gaza," CNN, May 20, 2024, <https://edition.cnn.com/2024/05/20/middleeast/icc-israel-hamas-arrest-warrant-war-crimes-intl/index.html>.
35. Courtney Bonnell and David McHugh, "How Attacks on Ships in the Red Sea by Yemen's Houthi Rebels Are Crimping Global Trade," Associated Press, January 12, 2024, <https://apnews.com/article/red-sea-yemen-houthis-attack-ships-f67d941c260528ac40315ecab4c34ca3>.
36. "Egypt Loses 70% of Suez Canal Revenue due to Gaza War: IMF," Egypt Today, October 24, 2024, <https://www.egypttoday.com/Article/3/135618/Egypt-loses-70-of-Suez-Canal-revenue-due-to-Gaza>.

37. "Prosecutors Rest Case in Netanyahu Trial; PM to Kick Off Defense Portion on Dec. 2," The Times of Israel, August 8, 2024, <https://www.timesofisrael.com/prosecutors-rest-case-in-netanyahu-trial-pm-to-kick-off-defense-portion-on-dec-2/>.
38. Hamza Hendawi and Holly Johnston, " Hamas and Fatah Officials Discuss Post-war Gaza in Cairo Meeting," The National, November 03, 2024, <https://www.thenationalnews.com/news/mena/2024/11/03/gaza-fatah-hamas-cairo/>.
39. "PA's Abbas Announces New Cabinet, with Little-Known Figures Taking Key Roles," Times of Israel, March 28, 2024, <https://www.timesofisrael.com/pas-abbas-announces-new-cabinet-with-little-known-figures-taking-key-roles/>.
40. Jacob Shamir and Khalil Shikaki, Palestinian and Israeli Public Opinion: The Public Imperative in the Second Intifada (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2010), and "The Geneva Accord: A Model Israeli-Palestinian Peace Agreement" (Draft Permanent Status Agreement), https://geneva-accord.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/04/The-Geneva-Accord_-_Full-Text.pdf.
41. "Foreign Minister: The Council of Arab and African Coastal States of the Red Sea and the Gulf of Aden Is a Joint Action System for Coordination and Cooperation," Saudi Press Agency, January 6, 2020, <https://www.spa.gov.sa/2019804>.
42. "After the Aramco Attack: A Middle East One Step Closer to Its '1914 Moment,'" International Crisis Group, September 20, 2019, <https://www.crisisgroup.org/middle-east-north-africa/gulf-and-arabian-peninsula/saudi-arabia-yemen-iran-united-states-united>.
43. "Timeline: UAE under Drone, Missile Attacks," Al Jazeera, February 3, 2022, <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2022/2/3/timeline-uae-drone-missile-attacks-houthis-yemen>.
44. "Sayyed Speech in Full on 26 May 2000—Resistance and Liberation Day," Alahednews, November 26, 2024, <https://english.alahednews.com.lb/14178/446>.
45. Eliav Breuer, "Netanyahu Knew of Ben-Gvir's Temple Mount Ascent in Advance, Minister Says," Jerusalem Post, August 14, 2024, <https://www.jpost.com/israel-news/article-814668>.
46. Yonette Joseph and Patrick Kingsley, "Netanyahu Will Return with Corruption Charges Unresolved. Here's Where the Case Stands," New York Times, November 3, 2022 (updated June 26, 2023), <https://www.nytimes.com/2022/11/03/world/middleeast/netanyahu-corruption-charges-israel.html>.

47. Palestinian Center for Policy and Survey Research (PCPSR), Public Opinion Poll No (92), <https://pcpsr.org/en/node/985>.
48. Khalil Shikaki, "Can Hamas, and Does it Want to, 'Lead' the Palestinian People?" (Palestinian Center for Policy and Survey Research, Critical Policy Brief, Number 5/2021, August 2021), <https://www.pcpsr.org/en/node/849>.
49. "President El-Sisi's Speech at Military Colleges' Graduation Ceremony in the New Military Academy" (The Arab Republic of Egypt: Presidency, October 3, 2024, <https://www.presidency.eg/en/حالات-الادب-ع-سي-ال-مؤلك-ؤسي-اى-ر-اب-خ-أ-اب-خ-أل-م-س-ق>, <https://www.pcpsr.org/en/node/849>, and "A Just Peace Is the Only Solution to Ensure Coexistence in Middle East: El-Sisi at Military Academy Graduation," Ahram Online, October 3, 2024, <https://english.ahram.org.eg/News/532961.aspx>.
50. For further details about these incentive packages and about the impact of the possible pairing of such incentives, see Khalil Shikaki, "Did October the 7th and the Gaza War Put an End to the Palestinian-Israeli Peace Process and the Two-State Solution?" (Palestinian Center for Policy and Survey Research, Critical Policy Brief, Number 3/2024, October 2024, <https://pcpsr.org/en/node/993>.
51. Anna Gordon, "What Israelis Think of the War With Hamas," Time, November 10, 2023, <https://time.com/6333781/israel-hamas-poll-palestine/>; Laura Silver and Maria Smerkovich, "Views of the Israel-Hamas war," Pew Research Center, May 30, 2024, <https://www.pewresearch.org/global/2024/05/30/views-of-the-israel-hamas-war-may-2024/>; and Benjamin Hart, "How Israelis Are Feeling One Year After October 7," New York Magazine, Oct. 7, 2024 <https://nymag.com/intelligencer/article/israelis-feeling-anniversary-october-7.html>.



CROWN CENTER
for Middle East Studies

ISBN 979-8-218-57463-5



9 798218 574635