

## **Can America afford to neglect the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict?**

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Before President Biden took the oath of office, it became known that he decided to avoid the traps of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. His 48 years of experience as Vice President and member of Congress had proved that since 1973 all efforts had failed to solve one issue of the conflict. But is the conflict unsolvable and must be avoided to save time and credibility? The answer is NO. No conflict has no solution, but some conflicts are more complicated than others. Since President Dwight Eisenhower, no American president, except for Clinton, tried to end a conflict. Clinton found an opportunity to be a peacemaker after Palestinians and Israelis reached an agreement on their own in 1993 (the Oslo Accords); so Clinton hosted a ceremony for signing the agreement in the White House that was attended by Yaser Arafat, the Palestine Liberation Organization leader, and Yitzhak Rabin, the Israeli prime minister.

American policy since 1922 has supported the Zionist movement in its quest to establish a Jewish state in Palestine. Donald Neff says that "The final major diplomatic achievement of American Zionism in the post-World War I period was the passage by Congress on Sept. 11, 1922, of a joint resolution favoring a Jewish homeland in Palestine. The words of the resolution practically echoed the Balfour Declaration." (Donald Neff; Justice Brandeis Was the Savior of Zionism in America, Washington Report on Middle East Affairs, August/September 1966, 38) The Balfour declaration was issued by Britain's Foreign Minister on November 2, 1917. It says; "His Majesty's Government view with favor the establishment in Palestine of a national home for the Jewish people, and will use their best endeavors to facilitate the achievement of this object, it being clearly understood that nothing shall be done which may prejudice the civil and religious rights of existing non-Jewish communities in Palestine, or the rights and political status enjoyed by Jews in any other country."(Balfour Declaration, History.com)

American and British leaders knew that any Jewish state in Palestine has to come at the expense of the Palestinian people because when the Balfour declaration was made in

1917, Jews owned 3% of the Palestinian land and represented 5% of the total population. After Britain occupied Palestine in 1917, Jewish immigration increased year by year; it reached 11% of the total population in 1922 and 31% in 1947. (see Jewish Virtual Library: Population of Israel/Palestine). But despite this increase, “As of 1944, Jews acquired only 6% of the land in Palestine.” The organizations that controlled most of this land were **the Jewish National Fund** and **the Palestine Jewish Colonization Association**. (Jewish Land Purchase in Palestine. [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jewish\\_land\\_purchase\\_in\\_Palestine](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jewish_land_purchase_in_Palestine))

Having made this commitment, American efforts to negotiate an agreement to settle the conflict were used to give Israel time to confiscate more land, build new settlements, and make the establishment of a Palestinian state rather impossible. Two cases of American involvement in other conflicts prove this point.

In 1956, Britain, France, and Israel conspired and attacked Egypt, occupying the Sinai peninsula and the Swiss Canal. President Eisenhower got angry because he was neither consulted nor informed of the attack; he, therefore, ordered Britain, France, and Israel to withdraw their force, and they did. Eisenhower had then an opportunity to solve the Palestinian problem by forcing all parties to implement the UN 1947 partition plan. But Eisenhower did not even try, because solving the Palestinian issue was viewed as contrary to American interest in the Middle East. The second case is US involvement in the civil war in former Yugoslavia in the 1990s.

The Serbs, particularly the Bosnian Serbs, committed untold crimes against the Bosnian Muslims that resulted in the killing and raping of thousands of men, women, and children and ethnically cleansing millions more. After trying several options to stop the massacres without success, President Clinton decided to take decisive action. It started by linking diplomacy with military force because he realized that “success in Bosnia required a clear sense of how the conflict would have to be resolved as well as a willingness to impose [US vision] on the parties. The endgame strategy provided the vision; Holbrook’s diplomatic efforts produced an agreement based on that strategy,” and the military intervention forced the Serbs to negotiate. (Ivo Daalder, Decision to intervene: How the war in Bosnia ended, Brookings, December 1, 1998)

If President Biden fails to take decisive action regarding the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, others will take it for him, and America will lose its influence in the Middle East. The Islamic forces in Gaza, Lebanon, and Yemen, backed by Iran's military technology and money will move sooner rather than later to attack Israel in a massive display of military power that could destroy Israel's ports, airports, highways, bridges, military bases, and means of communication in probably 24 hours. And this will encourage millions of Palestinian refugees to reclaim their homes in all parts of Israel, creating a chaotic situation beyond control. Palestine is too small; 40 times the size of Houston.

Antony Blinken, US Secretary of State, said recently that "The United States is committed to advancing prosperity, security, and freedom for both Israelis and Palestinians in tangible ways in the immediate term, which is important in its own right, but also as a means to advance towards a negotiated two-state solution." But providing \$150 million to boost the UNRAW budget that serves 5.7 million Palestinian refugees is hardly enough to build and support a decent hospital in Gaza. If this money were to be divided among all refugees, each person will get \$30 a year, not enough to buy books for a high school student. The US will also provide \$75 million for "economic development projects" in the West Bank and Gaza whose population is about 5 million people, making the share of each Palestinian \$15. If this money were to be used to build little houses for the refugees, it will probably build 5,000 units a year and create about 4,000 jobs. Is this enough to advance prosperity, security, and freedom?

President Biden needs to do what Eisenhower did in 1956, and Clinton in Bosnia in 1995; otherwise, he should prepare himself for another Middle Eastern catastrophe.

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