

***UN Essentials or Reinventing the Wheel:
Rising Powers and the decline of Trilateralism in Middle East Peace-Making***

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Introduction

‘The agreed basis for a peaceful settlement of the conflict between Israel and its neighbors is United Nations Security Council Resolution 242, in all its parts.

After four wars during 30 years, despite intensive human efforts, the Middle East, which is the cradle of civilization and the birthplace of three great religions, does not enjoy the blessings of peace. The people of the Middle East yearn for peace so that the vast human and natural resources of the region can be turned to the pursuits of peace and so that this area can become a model for coexistence and cooperation among nations.

(...) the peace proposals made by both leaders, as well as the warm reception of these missions by the peoples of both countries, have created an unprecedented opportunity for peace which must not be lost if this generation and future generations are to be spared the tragedies of war.’¹

Over a period of some thirty-eight years, the five major diplomatic efforts to resolve the Israeli-Palestinian question (widely seen as the issue at the heart of the broader Arab-Israeli conflict), have been characterised by a trilateralist negotiating approach —bilateral Arab-Israeli talks, unilaterally overseen by the United States. As a result the traditional recourse to the open organisational forum for conflict resolution centred on the United Nations (UN) and international law (exemplified by the first such referral and undertaking of note on the subject of Arab-Jewish tensions, the Partition Plan - UN Resolution 181 (II), 29 November 1947) has been somewhat sidelined in the post-1967 Six-Day War era in favour of private peace talks premised on trilateralism.

Commencing with the Egyptian-Israeli summit hosted by president Jimmy Carter in 1978 and the resulting Camp David Accords, the diplomatic U.S.-led sequence of peace initiatives continued with the Madrid Conference in 1991 (theoretically jointly chaired by president George H W Bush and the Russian general secretary, Mikhail Gorbachev, just prior to the implosion of the Soviet Union). The meeting in Spain was followed by the Oslo Accords (1993), along with the Camp David and Taba summits of 2000 and 2001, which were championed by president Bill Clinton, and the chain effectively concluded with the Road Map for Peace launched by president George W Bush in April 2003 on the day military activities ceased at the conclusion of the invasion phase of the Iraq war.

Although the achievement of the first peace agreement in 1979 between Egypt and Israel was heralded in the West as a major advancement in the normalisation of Arab-Israeli relations, the emergent details of the treaty were roundly criticised outside the northern hemisphere, not least in Egypt itself, but also by the Arab League, the UN General Assembly, and the People’s Republic of China (a permanent UN Security Council member), for not only by-passing the auspices of the UN, but for excluding the Palestinians from a process substantially devoted to shaping the terms of their own right to self-determination. Moreover, a succession of trilateralist U.S. initiatives specifically designated to address the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, have been singularly distinguished by their repeated failure to arrive at a peace settlement, as the original and underlying cause of the Arab-Israeli struggle has repeatedly escaped a resolution.

Trilateralism as a U.S. negotiating strategy in Arab-Israeli affairs, emerged during the tense bipolar atmosphere of the Cold War superpower rivalries. As a doctrine conceived and fostered under the administration of president Richard Nixon, as Hulme had noted, it was also adopted beneath the

¹ ‘The Camp David Accords, Framework for Peace in the Middle East’, *The Jimmy Carter Library*, 5-17 September, 1978, <http://www.jimmycarterlibrary.gov/documents/campdavid/accords.phtml>

‘long shadow cast by Henry Kissinger’s post-1973 policies’, when the ‘three principles’ of Washington’s engagement were established, —‘US dominance over the “peace process”; no “imposed” peace by third parties; and commitment to “step-by-step” negotiations’.² Ostensibly introduced as a tactic to soft shoulder Moscow from securing a greater presence in a geo-political domain that Washington was increasingly keen to try and maintain under its own ideological terms, particularly in the context of a decreasing role for the former imperial-colonial powers of British and France after the Suez Crisis of 1956, and what the White House and State Department perceived as the vulnerability of states like Egypt, Syria, Lebanon, Iraq, and Jordan, to the creeping threat of Communism in the nationalist movements of the newly independent Arab countries, the efforts to address the Israeli-Palestinian question have always been encompassed by the overarching canvas of regional circumstances, combined with the world-wide tussle between the Soviets and the United States.

In the main support for a trilateralist approach has been quintessentially sustained by the belief that only the U.S., with its financial leverage and military prowess, in conjunction with its assumed influence on Israel and key Arab states (centrally, Saudi Arabia), is best positioned to arbitrate and deliver peace. The initial success of trilateralism, epitomised by the Egyptian-Israeli peace agreement, perpetuated this sense of American diplomatic and political omnipotence throughout much of the 1980s and 1990s, this despite the fact that a breakthrough in the Israeli-Palestinian question remained illusive, or occasionally left unattended, and the comprehensive Arab-Israeli agreement that was expected to follow never really materialised. On the contrary far from the momentum for a region-wide peace the accords of 1978 were meant to create, some of the unforeseen consequences are viewed to have enhanced the expansionist policies of the right-wing Likud bloc in Israel, thereby inadvertently prolonging and spreading the conflict.

With the most populous Arab state and largest military power to directly border Israel effectively neutralised, the situation is thought to have helped facilitate the invasion and occupation of southern Lebanon by Israel in 1979 and 1982, which only ended in 2000. This turn of events is thought to have led indirectly to the start of the first Palestinian uprising (1987), as Israel, after dismantling its civilian settlements in the Egyptian Sinai, expanded and accelerated its settlement programme in the Occupied Palestinian Territories; an Israeli policy decision that may have been calculated on the premise that having expelled the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) from Lebanon to Tunis, the Arab population of the West Bank, East Jerusalem, and the Gaza Strip, denied the physical proximity of the formal Palestinian resistance, and already marking the twentieth anniversary of the Israeli military occupation, would be sufficiently undermined psychologically as to render their ability to offer any noteworthy resistance to Israel as futile.

Generally speaking, and despite the significant repercussions arising from the near ritual cycle of confrontation (poignantly highlighted by the global economic and industrial recession following the Arab oil embargo and dramatic price increases after the 1973 war in a response to western military support for Israel), the diplomatic front-running undertaken by a string of U.S. presidents and secretaries of state in Mideast peace efforts have gone largely unchallenged. Among a majority of European countries, and any number of moderate pro-western Arab regimes, notably, Egypt, Jordan, and the Gulf states, including a long line of Israeli and Palestinian leaders extending to at least the 1980s, the American-led trilateralist template has traditionally attracted a fairly consistent degree of support. While the Oslo talks (secretly broached by a Norwegian diplomat in the first instance) produced an Israeli-PLO mutual recognition agreement in 1993, and a peace treaty between Israel and Jordan in 1994, gave a renewed energy to the trilateral mode of diplomacy, the

² Hulme. Derick L. (Jr.), (2008: 13) ‘*The Israeli-Palestinian Road Map for Peace: A Critical Analysis*’, (Maryland: University Press of America)

primary issues underpinning the causes of conflict between Israeli and the Palestinians —final borders, the status of Jerusalem, the right of return for refugees (Arab and Jewish³), statehood, and mutual security— remained resolutely unresolved and mostly untouched amid escalating violence and a hardening of positions as political and religious extremisms continued to gain ground within both Israeli and Palestinian societies.

Two decades later, and with no resolution in prospect, the absence of dissent among the chief exponents of U.S. trilateralism had begun to change. A series of votes by the British, Swedish, Spanish, French, and Irish parliaments to recognise Palestine as a state —based on the Green Line boundaries of 1967 (the 1949 ceasefire lines)— that began with Iceland in 2011,⁴ and extended to the Vatican City State, has continued with a decision by Greece to follow suit in December 2015.⁵ What this developing pattern in decision and policy-making arguably constitutes, is not just a growing degree of impatience with the glacial pace of progress towards a two state resolution (or occasionally, the lack of any development), but more significantly, perhaps, the deviation also represents a broader and deeper international political frustration and financial wariness that encompasses both a general fatigue with the actual diplomatic mechanism, —namely, the trilateralist negotiating template itself, and by implication, the prominence, if not dominance, of the U.S. in shaping the nature and the conduct of the Israeli-Palestinian peace efforts over a lengthy and mostly fruitless period of time. The sequential distancing from the Americans by an increasing number of western European governments (many of which have been close and long-term partners of Washington), must also say something about a breakdown of confidence in the ability of the US to deliver an agreement, and thus, a resolution of the conflict; a confidence, that in spirit, lies at the heart of the trilateralist approach. What might be considered more disconcerting about the ebbing of support away from trilateralism from within the European legislatures is that it occurred during the tenure-ship —that in light of the Cairo speech in 2009— initially looked to be one of the more promising U.S. presidencies, —that of Barak Obama. Although Obama reaffirmed the foreign policy position of the US at the outset of his first term in office by stating the ‘only resolution is for the aspirations of both sides to be met through two states’,⁶ the impetus assisted by a fresh pair of eyes and ears, and widespread regional and international goodwill, soon ran into difficulties as the peace talks foundered in the wake of a somewhat personalised stand-off between Obama and the Israeli prime minister, Benjamin Netanyahu, over the continued settlement activities of the Israeli governments in the Occupied Territories. Regardless of the continued paralysis in the U.S.-Israeli dialogue across much of the two Obama terms in office, the administration showed few signs of departure from the trilateralist negotiating model that had folded on each occasion in the past, and which has done little over the same period to stem the downward flow of belief and trust from European, regional, and international allies in the classic trilateralist trajectory.

Aside the apparent impasse in the American efforts to secure a resolution to one of the longest running and destabilising conflicts in world affairs, a number of political, diplomatic and economic factors have contributed to the seeping, but inexorable shift in the position of the Europeans from a peace process headed by the US. Among the most pressing determinants has been the global

³ See, ‘Return to Morocco’, *Al Jazeera English*, 21 January 2015,

<http://www.aljazeera.com/programmes/aljazeeraworld/2015/01/return-morocco-2015120124346751467.html>

⁴ ‘Iceland recognises Palestinian state’, *The Guardian*, 30 November 2011, <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2011/nov/30/iceland-recognises-palestinian-state>, accessed 27 April 2015.

⁵ ‘Greek parliament votes to recognise Palestinian state’, *Al Jazeera English*, 22 December 2015, <http://www.aljazeera.com/news/2015/12/greece-recognises-state-palestine-151222144252203.html>

⁶ ‘Remarks by the President On A New Beginning’, Cairo University, Cairo, Egypt, 4 June 2009, ‘Remarks by the President at Cairo University, 6-04-09’, *The White House, Office of the Press Secretary* (Cairo, Egypt), <https://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/remarks-president-cairo-university-6-04-09>

economic downturn caused by the crash in the investment banking sector in 2008, which had tendency to focus many minds on more urgent domestic challenges, but also raised further questions about the sustainability of maintaining, without end, the ascending financial cost of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Additionally, the scale of the on-going post-Arab Spring conflicts in Syria, Iraq, Libya, and Yemen, and the phenomenal rise of ISIL (the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant), have all assisted in the gradual shift in positions and priorities of some major players. As the former British Foreign Secretary, Jack Straw, recently expressed,

‘On Israel/Palestine I would wish that the UK and the West, particularly the EU, takes a more robust line. I have said this earlier but the practicalities of Israeli policy mean that the ever-expanding number of illegal settlements makes a two state solution less and less likely, day by day. The US, with the strong lobby forces at work across the Atlantic, moves only at a snail’s pace on this issue. We, the UK, and the EU, should move faster.’⁷

On the basis of that particular perspective, some of the reasons offered for the changes in the European mindset could hardly be clearer. Additionally, there are other and possibly equally compelling motivations that seem to have frayed the patience of countries that have previously been supportive and largely uncritical of the U.S. and Israel. In some quarters that restiveness has developed into a call for a stronger and more autonomous stance by the Europeans and international community. As Straw also added, on the settlement building, the EU ‘should be clear that the Israelis are, bluntly, stealing Palestinian land.’ He continued, ‘Israel will obdurately continue this policy so long as there is no price for doing so’. But what was more significant, perhaps, was that Straw concluded, ‘we should be ready to consider other measures’.⁸ The ‘other measures’ already applied in the wider world and elsewhere in the Middle East (principally, Iraq and Iran, but hitherto not seriously considered or advocated in the case of Israel), have typically included sanctions, boycotts, and inspections; ‘measures’ could also be interpreted to include the application of an imposed resolution of the conflict based on UN Resolutions 242 (1967), whatever the protestations from Ramallah or Tel-Aviv, and the deployment of an international military force —similar to the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) example in south Lebanon.⁹

On the related question of sustainability, some of the more recent wars (notably, the 2006 Israel-Lebanon war, and the 2006 and 2014 Israel-Gaza conflicts) have been notable, not just for the disproportionate civilian casualties incurred, but by the nature and scale of material destruction —substantial areas of Beirut and Gaza City were reduced to rubble, as was a good deal of the surrounding network of social overhead capital, principally roads, bridges, airports and harbours. Among the most questionable incidents, however, was the Israeli bombing of non-military targets, in particular, infrastructural facilities like the \$75 million (£110 million) sewage treatment plant in Gaza; much of it, as was reported, had been funded by the ‘World Bank, (...) France, Sweden, the European Union, Belgium and other donors’,¹⁰ along with regional, international aid and development programmes. Besides the consternation raised by the advent of another war, the repeated damage has caused a number of donors to re-think their strategies in terms of whether such levels of funding can be directed indefinitely at a situation of conflict without the reasonable prospect of resolution in sight, and in the lack of a meaningful negotiating process.

⁷ Straw, Jack. ‘Brismes Lecture: The Future of British Foreign Policy in the Middle East’, *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies*, Vol. 42, No.4, (2015), p. 380, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/13530194.2015.1046257>

⁸ Straw, Jack. ‘Brismes Lecture’, p. 380.

⁹ UNIFIL was established through UN Security Council resolutions 425 (1978) and 426 (1978) on the 19 March 1978, <http://unifil.unmissions.org/Default.aspx?tabid=11552&language=en-US>

¹⁰ Salem, Mohammed. ‘World Bank says Blair sewage project in Gaza may collapse’, *Reuters*, 8 June 2009, http://cncc.bingj.com/cache.aspx?q=blair%2c+sewage+treatment+plants%2c+gaza+&d=5038560803494631&mkt=zh-CN&setlang=en-US&w=rTY2A3hGLy3zRc0usZTu2QH_Z_MA71OhL

Alongside the familiar, almost routine occurrences of war between Arabs and Israelis, the plight of Middle Eastern refugees have rightly been at the centre of international attention in recent years. However, for the most part, Palestinian refugees, and the precise historical circumstances of their predicament, and their current situation in the civil war zones of Syria and Iraq, for instance, and to a lesser extent, Lebanon, and the Occupied Territories, has gone mostly unnoticed outside the region. Whether expelled by force of arms or from misguided fear triggered by propaganda, between 1947 and 1949 around 700,000 Palestinians became refugees in Lebanon and elsewhere across the region, with the addition of some 750,000 refugees after the 1967 war. While high profile visits by western political leaders have rightly highlighted the Syrian refugee crisis, the less visible aspect of the Palestinian refugees was largely overlooked, though not by some liberal news commentators, ‘Lebanon, which has population of 4 million, is hosting 1.1 million Syrian refugees in internal tented settlements. These contrast with formal refugee camps, which host 450,000 Palestinian refugees.’¹¹ At the same time, and in some contrast, it was misleadingly reported by some press outlets, that ‘Around £29 million of the funding announced by Mr Cameron in Madrid earlier this month will be spent in Lebanon - with some of the cash going to Palestinian and Lebanese citizens to reduce tensions between the groups’.¹² The reality, however, is that the Palestinians in Lebanon, as elsewhere in the Middle East, are not ‘citizens’, but refugees, a status that excludes them from fully integrating into their host states, but affords them the legal ‘right of return’ to their homes and property, in either the Occupied Territories, or inside Israel.

For the greater part, Palestinian refugees have been the responsibility of UNWRA, the United Nations Work and Relief Agency, established in 1949. Seventy years later, the agency employing 30,000 staff is still providing many life preserving essentials —housing, food, water, health care, and education (‘700 schools and half a million pupils’),— to a community now numbering 5.2 million people in 2016, and ‘pending’ what Ban Ki-moon, the UN Secretary-General, described as a ‘just and lasting solution to their plight.’ Additionally, and reflecting on the rotating implications of conflict overspill in the region, at a special meeting of UNWRA (4 May 2016) Ki-moon commented, that ‘shortly after the end of the devastating conflict in the summer of 2014’, he ‘saw first-hand how UNRWA’s 252 schools went from providing quality education to 240,000 children, to offering sanctuary to 300,000 displaced in Gaza.’ Similarly, he stated, ‘In March, I saw for myself UNRWA’s extraordinary work in Lebanon. I visited the Nahr El Barad camp, destroyed in 2007, and witnessed the progress to rebuild it.’¹³

The longevity and burgeoning proportions of the provision, however, have place an increasing strain on UNWRA resources, and while substantial supplementary contributions by some European donors (primarily Sweden) have fortuitously been forthcoming, staving of an emergency caused by a ‘shortfall of \$101 million US dollars’ in 2015, a swelling demand exacerbated by natural demographic growth, and the regular destruction of schools, hospitals, along with other social facilities in war, have placed further circulating questions, not just about the direction of the trilateralist approach, but ultimately about the future sustainability of the UNRWA project itself, even from inside the auspices of the agency, and amid suggestions that extremist groups might step in to fill the void should the services be reduced or suspended altogether. In response, UNWRA

¹¹ Watt, Nicholas. ‘David Cameron visits Lebanese refugee camp’, *The Guardian*, 14 September 2015, <http://www.theguardian.com/politics/2015/sep/14/david-cameron-visits-lebanese-refugee-camp>

¹² McCann, Kate. ‘David Cameron visits Syrian refugee camp in Lebanon’, *The Telegraph*, 14 September 2015, <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/uknews/immigration/11863018/David-Cameron-visits-Syrian-refugee-camp-in-Lebanon.html>

¹³ ‘UN Secretary-General’s Remarks on the Sustainability of UNWRA’, *UN Headquarters*, New York, 5 May 2016, <http://www.unrwa.org/newsroom/official-statements/un-secretary-generals-remarks-sustainability-unrwa>

‘introduced stringent budget processes and controls and approved a zero-growth budget for 2016’ and (...) reduced around \$12 million in core planned expenditure in 2015 and forecasts a further reduction of around \$18 million this year [2016].’¹⁴

Emerging powers — China.

Against the backcloth of these complicated and overlapping events, not only has the notion of a search for complimentary or alternative ideas and actors among the emerging and relatively untested diplomatic powers been tentatively muted, but simultaneously, whether the vacuum left by a general waning of interest among the customary cohort of financial donors can be supplemented or met by rising powers like China.

Since the early 1990s, China’s increasing peace-keeping role has gone hand-in-hand with its economic rise and expanding conventional military capabilities, to the extent that as its own Ministry of National Defence recently stated (2014), ‘China is now the sixth-largest contributor of UN peacekeeping funding and the largest among developing countries. China is also the largest contributor of peacekeepers among the five permanent members of the Security Council. It has participated in 24 peacekeeping missions and has sent more than 27,000 peacekeepers.’¹⁵ Though mostly deployed in the African continent (including South Sudan, Western Sahara, Liberia, and the Democratic Republic of Congo), Chinese personnel have also contributed to the work of UNIFIL.

Historically, however, of the five major Arab-Israeli peace initiatives since 1978, the involvement of China (in its totality) —through choice, or by western design— has fallen somewhere between nominal and occupying a peripheral capacity within the latter stages of the Road Map, —the international multilateralist peace plan, originally conceived and sponsored by the Quartet for the Middle East (EU, Russia, UN, and US), that despite EU reservations, became effectively transformed by president George Bush (junior) into an archetypal trilateralist U.S. initiative in early months of 2003. Prior to that minor discerning part, Beijing had generally confined itself to making observational comments from afar while at the same time, consolidating its domestic and regional credentials in the post-1949 civil war period, and walking an international political tightrope as the communist government positioning itself in the no-man’s-land between the U.S. and the Soviet Union, amid Beijing’s declining relationship with Moscow after 1956, and during the internal volatility in the years immediately after Mao Tse-tung’s passing in 1976.

Although the Republic of China was replaced on the UN Security Council in 1971 by the People’s Republic of China, the essential character of Beijing elevation to the high table of international diplomacy is that it has been largely conspicuous by its near complete absenteeism from the western Middle East peace efforts. Nevertheless, with the advent of China as one of the leading economic forces in world affairs, Beijing might well be induced to take a greater role in peace-making, as it has been in peace-enforcing. But that possibility will almost certainly require the abandonment of trilateralism led by the U.S., and a return to the vehicle of the UN, pre-requisites Washington and some of its western allies, thus far, show few signs of heeding, or even substantively exploring. Unwilling to jeopardise the overreaching tandem of precedences located in maintaining energy security (crucially, Arab oil supplies), and a domestic social agenda driven by a programme to lift a further tens of millions from rural and urban poverty, Beijing will not easily step into the Middle Eastern quagmire simply in order to relieve the western powers of a situation largely of their own

¹⁴ ‘Remarks by Commissioner-General Pierre Krähenbühl on UNRWA Sustainability’, *UN Headquarters*, New York, 5 May 2016, <http://www.unrwa.org/newsroom/official-statements/remarks-commissioner-general-krähenbühl-unrwa-sustainability>

¹⁵ Zhou, Su. ‘China to increase UN peacekeeping role, official says’, *China Daily*, 15 October 2014, http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2014-10/15/content_18744235.htm

making. As curtailed as the activities of China might have been in the past, as a former injured party to western imperialist ambitions in South-East Asia, the arguably unique sympathy, if not empathy, among the UNSC members the Chinese have with the people of the Mideast region, may just, in the medium or long-term, have an influence in determining otherwise.

Conclusion

The League of Nations came into being in 1919. Barely two decades later, the United Nations emerged in June 1945, again in the immediate aftermath of another universal confrontation, World War Two, —only this time with the additional spectre and unimaginable horrors posed by the pending commencement of the nuclear age. With some parts of Europe reduced to a smouldering ruin, and the war in the Pacific still underway, the representatives of some fifty nation states gathered in San Francisco to fashion a new intergovernmental organisational model for the governance of international affairs. Facilitated by the urgency and goodwill engendered by the suffering and desolation inflicted by five years of war, and the failings of the previous organ, the UN was endowed with its own military force, denoted and now internationally recognisable by its black and white equipment, blue berets and helmets. The lessons of the concluding chapter to the last global cataclysm —the dropping of the atomic bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, and the Nuremberg trials that consolidated the jurisdiction of international law— should irrefutably inform us that in all likelihood there will not be another post-world-wide situation from which to form a third and potentially improved international organisation; that is unless we are prepared to contemplate sitting amid a nuclear wasteland attempting to better an imagined model from what went before. The hard reality dictates that as imperfect as the United Nations might be, there is not going to be a realistic or remotely palatable opportunity for re-inventing the UN wheel; there cannot be a post-Third World War in which to build on the blueprint of the UN inherited in 1945, and in many ways there is little or no need. The UN essentials, the legal and moral principals enshrined in the UN Charter —in essence, that all states and actors are equal under the law, just as they are all equally accountable to the law— are just as valid and infinitely universal as they were when they were originally adopted.

In specific trilateralist and Israeli-Palestinian terms, if one defining factor has illustrated the inherent risks for individuals engaged with the task of resolving the Arab-Israeli conflict, then it has to be the roll call of diplomatic casualties slain by Arab and Jewish assassins, notably, Lord Moyne (1944) the Anglo-Irish British Minister of State in the Middle East, Count Folke Bernadotte the Swedish U.N. diplomat (1948), King Abdullah I of Jordan (1951), U.S. Senator Robert F. Kennedy (1968), President Anwar Sadat of Egypt (1981); and Israeli Prime Minister, Yitzhak Rabin, in 1995. What this list of fatalities evidently precludes is any further reliance on a singular figure or select group, however well-meaning. Similarly, what the evidence also invites is a full return to the practical principles established in 1945, along with the relative anonymity and safety of the collective and the United Nations as the organisational avenue for conflict resolution. Such a move would be key to protecting the leading lights involved in negotiations, while at the same time putting the weight of the international community behind the UN as the enforcing agents of its resolutions. It is not as though the so-called intractability of the Israeli-Palestinian question is beyond answers, or indeed a solution, after all, all the major issues are covered by international law, and a series of UN resolutions that have been in existence since 1967, if not 1947. If the Zionist movement in Palestine unilaterally imposed the State of Israel with its declaration of independence in May 1948, barely six months after the 1947 partition plan proposed a two state resolution — one Arab state, one Jewish state— and amid the mayhem of the post-1945 era, then there is surely, with all the technological advantages of the contemporary world, no tangible reason why a State of Palestine cannot be established by the close of 2016, avoiding the repeated delays of five years, and two years incorporated into the 1978 accords, and the Road Map in 2003.

With a 136 of the 193 member states of the United Nations recognising Palestine as a state, international opinion seems to be in front of the diplomatic hesitancy displayed by the U.S. While the assertion by president Barak Obama in 2009 that we ‘cannot impose peace’¹⁶ may be accurate, an adherence to international law and UN resolutions can doubtlessly be imposed. Moreover, the establishment of Israel has certainly not imposed a peace, but it did impose justice for the Jewish people after centuries of endemic persecution. Though the failure to implement a just settlement for the Palestinians has left little room for optimism, the unresolved Israeli-Palestinian conflict continues to raise daunting questions about the sustainability of not enforcing a resolution in a region that is more than capable of drawing the rest of the world into its war-torn and suspected nuclear grasp, —a prospect no established or rising power can escape or afford to ignore.

¹⁶ ‘Remarks by the President On A New Beginning’, Cairo University, Cairo, Egypt, 4 June 2009, ‘Remarks by the President at Cairo University, 6-04-09’, *The White House, Office of the Press Secretary* (Cairo, Egypt), <https://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/remarks-president-cairo-university-6-04-09>