

The Palestine Strategic Report 2018 – 2019



Edited By

Prof. Dr. Mohsen Mohammad Saleh



Al-Zaytouna Centre For Studies & Consultations

Chapter Eight

The Palestine Issue and the International Situation

The Palestine Issue and the International Situation

Introduction

Given the geostrategic position of the Arab region, its problems are significantly affected by international developments even when they appear to be of a local or regional nature. The Palestine issue remains the most sensitive in the region vis-à-vis any event, sub-trend, or mega-trend (in data related to future studies) in the international environment. It is therefore essential to monitor the developments of this environment and the implications of the direct or indirect mutual influence with the Palestine issue.

First: The International Environment: Sub-Trends¹

The most prominent new or continuous trends in the international environment during 2018 and 2019, which had negative or positive impacts on the Palestine issue, can be identified in the following:

1. The continuation of the Russian-Chinese efforts to convert the unipolar international system into a multipolar one, which would weaken the US monopoly of the international decision in general, and affect the balance of power in the Middle East, and consequently influence the Palestine issue, in particular.²

2. The rise of right-wing populist parties, especially in Europe: Despite the differences among the wings of the Right, the strongest trend has the least desire to harmonize with US policies as it perceives the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) as a tool serving US, rather than European, interests. These parties are more inclined to non-interference in the Middle East and their thinkers are concerned with the dangers of “Islamic extremism” and migration from the Middle East to Europe. The populist parties in Central Europe show greater sympathy with Palestinian demands, while in some Western European countries they take a pro-Israel stance.³

3. The Arab revolutions and the ongoing political unrest, which began in 2011, have made the concerns about the Palestine issue and its prominence over other issues decline. The regional-international interaction has been dominated by the US-Iranian-Israeli conflict, the wars in Yemen and Libya, as well as by the continuation of the Syrian crisis, with the tension extending to Algeria, Sudan, Lebanon and Iraq, yet it has still been permeated by the Palestine issue in one way or another.⁴

4. Migration crises, especially from the Arab world, in light of political turmoil, particularly towards Europe and Turkey, and the consequent implications on the issue of Palestinian refugees, besides the attempts to adapt attitudes towards the refugee phenomenon in general, so they would be applied to previous UN resolutions regarding the issue of Palestinian refugees.⁵

5. The repercussions of the trade war between China and the US on the Sino-Israeli relationship. The US has shown some concerns about the development of joint projects between China and Israel, their growing trade relations and the impact of this on the US, especially in projects such as the development of the Haifa Port, which is within the framework of the Chinese Belt and Road Initiative (BRI).⁶

6. Volatile energy prices and the security of energy transfers, in light of strained US-Iranian relations and Iranian-Gulf relations. The possibilities of closing the Strait of Hormuz and Bab al-Mandab, the subsequent detention of Iranian ships in Gibraltar and in the Strait of Hormuz, as well as the Iranian response through the detention of British ships, further diverted attention towards these developments and overshadowed the Palestine issue, albeit within certain limits. They also paved the way for Israeli infiltration into the Gulf countries through profound changes in the orientations of some Gulf political regimes regarding the Palestine issue, under the pretext of the priority of confronting the Iranian threat.⁷

7. European preoccupation with the repercussions of the British exit from the EU, or Brexit, and its impact on the European economy, especially the Euro zone, and European-Israeli relations, as Israel welcomed Brexit. The UK is an important trading partner of Israel, with trade amounting to more than \$7 billion per annum. In addition, Israel has strong relations with some British political forces, where 80% of the Conservative Party MPs—who are mainly hostile to the EU—are members of the Conservative Friends of Israel (CFI). They

believe that Brexit would free the UK from some European orientations supporting Palestinian rights on one level or another.⁸ But at the same time, however, Brexit could make the EU less biased in favor of Israel.

8. The rising role of digital public diplomacy in influencing international public opinion, on which Israel has been working with remarkable vigor. In December 2017, the Israeli Foreign Ministry hosted Israel's Second Digital Diplomacy Conference, which was attended by representatives from 30 foreign ministries throughout the world, discussing the employment of digital platforms (Facebook, Twitter, etc.) in foreign policy, especially communication with various sectors of the international community. This matter became more important after Israel realized that its popularity was eroding globally.⁹ Israel established the Hasbara Ministry, a special ministry under the title of the Ministry of Strategic Affairs and Public Diplomacy, which specializes in explaining and interpreting official Israeli stances. This ministry has launched its own programs and courses for students in Israeli universities and colleges, to provide the tools and skills needed to market the image of the "State of Israel" through various digital platforms. The University of Haifa has begun teaching the "Ambassadors Online" course, imposed by the Hasbara, while the University of Tel Aviv offers the "Ambassador Club" course to promote digital diplomacy. In 2018, a Facebook page was created in Iraqi dialect to communicate with the Iraqi community, particularly the youth sector, benefiting from the input of Israeli Jews of Iraqi origin.¹⁰

The positive and negative impacts of these points on the Palestine issue is on two levels; the first is a direct impact, while the other is what future studies courses call Cross Impact Matrix; i.e., how these data interact to yield impact, which might not appear when directly considering them.

Second: The United Nations (UN)¹¹

1. Quartet on the Middle East (UN, EU, US and the Russian Federation)

The general trend governing the role of the Quartet mentioned in previous Palestine Strategic Reports has continued, for its efforts in international diplomacy has declined, including its statements, activities and meetings.

During the UN General Assembly meetings in 2018, the Quartet issued a statement expressing its concern over the escalation in GS and “support for the United Nations’ efforts to prevent further escalation, empower the legitimate Palestinian authorities in Gaza and address all humanitarian needs.”¹²

In December 2018, the Quartet presented a report on its activities to assist the Palestinian side in the areas of energy, water, movement and trade, effective governance and rule of law, telecommunications and economic mapping. The Head of Mission John Clarke would periodically review and facilitate the Quartet’s activities in the various mentioned sectors.¹³ Indeed, Clarke made interventions on these activities in March 2018 and April 2019, stressing that the Palestinians would only be able to achieve their full potential with the realization of a “final status” agreement, as stated in the agreements between the two sides (the Oslo Accords), or through the appeals to the international community seeking aid to Palestinians, especially after the cessation of UNRWA support from some countries, notably the US.¹⁴

The Quartet’s strategy for the period 2018–2020, which was announced in Jerusalem in January 2018, and formulated after consultation with the Quartet members and donor countries, focused on sectoral solutions (energy, water and wastewater, movement and trade, etc.) encompassing short, medium, and long-term measures, while seeking to bridge between the parties to resolve disputes.¹⁵

The Quartet has continued to see its effectiveness dwindle, a situation worsened as it has not put any pressure on Israel to abide at least by its decisions, despite the collective political weight of its members.

2. Nickolay Mladenov, UN Special Coordinator for the Middle East “Peace Process”

Mladenov warned in his reports, in January and August 2019, that a political settlement based on the “two-state solution” had become difficult to achieve, given the Israeli settlement policies, particularly in Area C of the WB, in addition to its building of random settlements deep in the WB and its systematic demolishing of Palestinian-owned structures. He explained how Israeli laws are imposed in these areas, where in December 2018 the Israeli government had endorsed a bill to legalize 66 illegal outposts in WB during 2019–2020. Also, Mladenov called on the Palestinians to resolve the political impasse, by ensuring full implementation

of the 2017 Cairo Agreement, and he stressed that the “absence of a functioning elected Palestinian legislative body remains a cause for concern until credible elections can take place.” Mladenov pointed to the escalation of tension in areas A and B in the WB because of what he called “terrorist attacks,” and the increase of Israeli military operations in these areas. Mladenov noted the humanitarian crisis in GS, which had been complicated by cuts in donor funding, urging donors to continue their support for the critical services provided by UNRWA.¹⁶

In a later development, following clashes between the Palestinian resistance in GS and the Israeli forces in the period 14–16/11/2019, Mladenov highlighted the role of the UN and Egypt in preventing a major escalation in and around GS and called on all sides to “show maximum restraint.”¹⁷

3. Security Council¹⁸

The activities of the UN Security Council can be divided into three sections: first, its resolutions (which were passed or vetoed); second, the Council’s statements; and third, the reports presented to it by the Secretary-General or his delegates.

a. Resolutions

1. Throughout 2018–2019, Security Council resolutions regarding the Middle East were limited to extending the mandate of the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL), which was reassigned in late August 2019, as well as the mandate of international forces in Syria, in June 2018.
2. The US aborted, through veto, a Security Council resolution in June 2018 to protect Palestinian civilians in times of war, following the Marches of Return launched by the Gazans in March 2018. The US also sought to pass a draft resolution at the same session condemning Hamas as a “terrorist movement” and holding it, together with other Palestinian organizations, responsible for firing rockets towards Israel. However, the US endeavor failed when ten members abstained from voting and three others opposed the draft.

b. Statements

The Security Council discussed the clashes between the Palestinian resistance forces and the Israeli army in GS, in the 11–13/11/2018 period, and issued a statement calling for calm, along with assurances from the Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process on this issue.

c. Reports

The Security Council heard reports on the situation in Palestine from the UN Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs and Peacebuilding Rosemary DiCarlo, Mladenov (as indicated before) and other international bodies. Throughout 2018–2019, many topics were raised in different (almost monthly) sessions, with focus on the following:¹⁹

1. Emphasizing the increasing “risks” of the collapse of the “peace process” due to unilateral actions.
2. The growth of Israeli settlements at a high rate. The Security Council also warned that UNRWA’s \$1.2 billion budget had suffered a deficit of about \$211 million, which increased in the following year to \$446 million (a matter that was mostly dealt with, as we shall see later).
3. Discussing the escalation in violence between the Palestinian resistance and Israel in GS in 2018, which was the most violent year since 2014.
4. The UN Coordinator called for the exercise of restraint, which was the result of the efforts of the UN and Egypt, leading to a temporary truce on 6/5/2018 between the Palestinian factions and the Israeli army in GS.
5. Raising the issue of Israeli policies in Jerusalem and the continued settlement building there and in the rest of WB, which the UN Coordinator considered “a major obstacle to peace.”
6. The Security Council was briefed by the heads of civil society organizations on the humanitarian, economic and environmental conditions in the 1967 occupied Palestine, and the UN Under-Secretary-General reported the difficult conditions experienced by Palestinian women in the occupied territories.
7. The Security Council heard repeated warnings from Mladenov that the escalation of violence in GS constituted a threat to “peace” in the region, while mentioning the clashes between the resistance and the Israeli army in November 2018. Mladenov renewed his call for Israel to abide by UN Resolution 2334, issued in 2016, regarding the end of Israeli settlement building in WB and Jerusalem. He stressed that extremism threatens the two-state solution, especially in light of deteriorating economic conditions in WB resulting from Israeli confiscation of Palestinian income sources, and in GS from the continued blockade.

8. The increasing number of Palestinian civilians killed by Israeli forces at the GS border line during the Marches of Return.
9. Criticizing rocket launches at civilian settlements and holding the Palestinian factions in GS responsible, while pointing to the decline of these operations.
10. The UN Coordinator expressed concern over what he called “the weakening of the international consensus around a two-state resolution of the Israel-Palestinian conflict,” emphasizing the need to end the occupation.
11. The UN envoy criticized the US decision to recognize Jerusalem as the capital of Israel, noting that it would undermine “peace” efforts in the region and might lead to the return of “violence.” Remarkably, his criticism did not include any indication to the illegality of the US decision itself.

4. General Assembly²⁰

In 2018–2019, the UN General Assembly held two sessions (regular and special), and it approved several issues regarding Palestine, including:²¹

- a. Calling for the protection of civilians, expressing regret over Israel’s excessive use of force against civilians in WB, including Jerusalem, and GS (June 2018), and demanding Israel to adhere to the “1949 Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War” in WB, including Jerusalem, the Golan Heights and all occupied Arab territories. The General Assembly also expressed regret over the rockets launched from GS towards Israeli civilian areas, calling on both sides to respect the ceasefire.
- b. Supporting UNRWA in its financial crisis and thanking funders. On 15/11/2019, the General Assembly voted in favor of extending UNRWA’s mandate, despite the US and Israeli pressure to reduce the Agency’s role, and the Special Political and Decolonization Committee (Fourth Committee) adopted a decision to extend the Agency’s mandate until the end of June 2023, with 167 countries voting in favor to five against, including the US and Israel.²²
- c. Considering special reports related to:
 1. Israeli practices regarding the rights of the Palestinian people in WB, including Jerusalem, and GS.
 2. Discussing illegal Israeli settlement building in WB, including Jerusalem, the GS and Golan.

3. Applying the “1949 Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War” in WB, including Jerusalem, GS and the occupied Arab territories
- d. On 14/11/2019, the Economic and Financial Committee (Second Committee) voted in favor of a resolution demanding that Israel end its occupation of the Palestinian territories and the Syrian Golan Heights, while emphasizing “Permanent sovereignty of the Palestinian people in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and of the Arab population in the occupied Syrian Golan over their natural resources.” It also called on Israel to cease destruction of vital infrastructure and demolition of Palestinian homes, while stressing that reconstruction and development projects must be advanced, including in GS. The resolution was passed with 156 votes in favor to 6 against, with 14 abstentions.²³

The UN has been considering the Palestine issue since its foundation, especially in its central bodies (the Security Council, the General Assembly, the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA), and the United Nations Human Rights Council) in addition to the specialized agencies.

Examining the levels of support for Palestinian rights in the UN (especially in the General Assembly which is considered an international parliament) shows the need to observe a megatrend devoted in the General Assembly voting patterns in 2018, where support for Israel at the UN received 2.43% of the votes compared to 75.8% in support of the Palestinian position (see table 1/8).

Table 1/8: UN General Assembly Voting Trends in the 73rd Session
18/9–5/10/2018²⁴

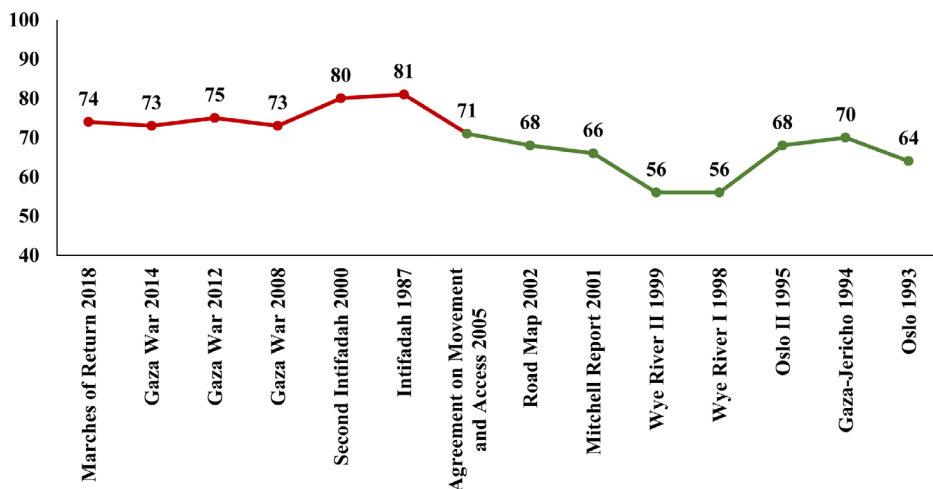
| | Topic | Voting in favor of Israel | Voting in favor of Palestine |
|----------|--|----------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| 1 | Assistance to Palestine refugees | 2 | 161 |
| 2 | Persons displaced as a result of the June 1967 and subsequent hostilities | 5 | 155 |
| 3 | UNRWA operations | 5 | 158 |
| 4 | Palestine refugees' properties and their revenues | 5 | 155 |
| 5 | Work of the Special Committee to Investigate Israeli Practices Affecting the Human Rights of the Palestinian People and Other Arabs of the Occupied Territories | 8 | 77 |
| 6 | Applicability of the Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War to the occupied Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem, and the other occupied Arab territories | 5 | 154 |
| 7 | Israeli settlements in the occupied Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem, and the occupied Syrian Golan | 5 | 153 |
| 8 | Israeli practices affecting the human rights of the Palestinian people in the occupied Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem | 6 | 153 |
| 9 | The occupied Syrian Golan | 2 | 151 |
| | Average | 4.7 | 146.3 |
| | Percentage of the total UN 193 members (%)* | 2.43 | 75.8 |

* The rest of the percentage is countries which were absent or abstained from voting.

Remarkably, the percentage of support of the Palestinian position in 2018–2019, implies that there is a historic trend that needs to be considered in the UN. This trend shows that support rates of the Palestinian position increase at times of growing resistance against the occupation. Thus, monitoring the vote in the UN across various topics related to the Palestine issue (refugees, their properties,

Jerusalem, human rights, military operations, settlement, environment, detainees and prisoners, women and children...) reveals that (see the following chart) the periods of confrontation between the Palestinians and Israel have seen the highest percentage of voting in favor of Palestine among the UN members (the red line in the graph). The support has grown in the periods of the two *Intifadahs* and the three GS wars (2008, 2012 and 2014), as well as during the weekly Marches of Return, while it declined in concurrence with making agreements with Israel, which indicates the need for deep consideration regarding the strategic implications of this issue.

The Percentage of Votes in Favor of Palestine in all UN Bodies 1987–2018
(prepared by the researcher)²⁵



The international community generally tends to hold Israeli illegal policies responsible for escalations of violence; thus, the majority of members work to curb these policies through their support of the Palestinian side. Remarkably in this sense, the UN issued 27 decisions in 2018 regarding human rights in the world, including 21 decisions condemning Israeli policies.²⁶ Also, some countries, especially the major ones, consider regional escalations danger to their interests (oil prices, transport, investments, tourism, extremism, migrations, etc.) and hold Israeli policies responsible for them, which makes these countries vote, in most cases, for the Palestinians to pressure Israel and prevent it from straining the region and affecting their interests.

5. United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC)

The ECOSOC maintained its previous orientations regarding the repercussions of the Israeli occupation of WB, including Jerusalem, GS and the Golan. Thus, in its July 2019 sessions, the ECOSOC voted in favor of the following:²⁷

- a. Calling once again to open the GS borders in accordance with Security Council Resolution 1860 of 2009, especially providing humanitarian conditions for the crossing of people and goods.
- b. Demanding Israel comply with the Protocol on Economic Relations (Paris Protocol) it signed with the PLO in 1994, as well as restoring and replacing civilian property, vital infrastructure, agricultural lands and government institutions that have been damaged or destroyed due to its military operations.
- c. Reaffirming the inalienable right of the Palestinian people and the Arab population in the occupied Syrian Golan to all their natural and economic resources, and calling upon Israel to immediately cease its exploitation of natural resources and dumping of waste materials in the occupied areas.

The ECOSOC also took several decisions in its July 2018 session, the most important of which were:

- a. The international community has a duty to stand by their collective promise to protect the rights of the Palestinian people, and take decisive action to prevent Israel's planned construction of a record number of housing units in the WB settlements.
- b. The reference to the Civil Administration's Higher Planning Committee meeting, which approved the construction of about 2,400 housing units and public infrastructure in 21 settlements and outposts. Hence, providing the existing structures on official aspect, as well as providing initial permits to new structures. UN experts interpret such moves as solidifying the Israeli claim of sovereignty over the WB, which violates international law.
- c. The focus on two points related to settlement building:
 1. Illegality of settlements or annexation of the 1967 occupied territories.
 2. The failure of the international community to impose "effective sanctions" against Israel for defiance of international law.²⁸

- d. Calling on all donor countries to fulfill their financial obligations pledged in 2014, at the Cairo International Conference on Palestine, while calling on Israel to respect all international conventions on human rights, in the 1967 occupied territories.

These decisions were passed by 45 votes in favor to two against (Canada and the US), with two abstentions (Cameroon and Rwanda).²⁹

6. United Nations Human Rights Council (HRC)

In its meetings (March 2018 and 2019), the HRC adopted resolutions affirming the following:³⁰

- a. Emphasizing the inalienable right of the Palestinian people to self-determination and living in freedom, justice and dignity, alongside the right to an independent Palestinian state.
- b. Calling on Israel to immediately end its occupation of the 1967 occupied territories, while stressing the two-state solution.
- c. Emphasizing grave concern about any governmental or non-governmental organization violating the decisions of the General Assembly or the Security Council regarding Jerusalem.
- d. Expressing profound concern about the demographic changes caused by the continued Israeli settlement in the 1967 occupied territories.
- e. Confirming the right of the Palestinian people to permanent sovereignty over their natural wealth, and to benefit from their resources which must be used in the interest of their national development and well-being.
- f. Calling on the international community not to support Israeli violations in the 1967 occupied territories, and the need to help Palestinians realize their right to self-determination and support international efforts to achieve this goal.

7. United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)

Israel and the US announced their withdrawal from UNESCO in December 2018 given what they considered “anti-Israel” policies. The two countries had declared their intention to leave the organization as early as 2017. Both the US and Israel declared that they would continue their work in preserving world heritage sites in their countries, while the US also made it clear that it will continue to play a role in the organization as an “observer.”³¹

Third: The United States

Since the arrival of Donald Trump in the White House, US policy has exerted great political, economic and legal pressures on Palestine, as demonstrated by the following:³²

1. Supporting legislation calling for the cessation of aid to the Palestinian security forces, despite some Israeli officials stressing the seriousness of this step. In 2018, Congress decided to establish the Palestinian Partnership Fund Act of 2018 to facilitate and finance joint ventures between the US, Israeli and Palestinian companies, with the aim of deepening normalization between Israelis and Palestinians.
2. The transfer of the US Embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem, in May 2018, announced in 2017.
3. In August 2018, the US announced its intention to suspend all financial aid to WB and GS related to the fiscal year 2017, amounting to \$231 million.
4. Reprogramming of US aid to UNRWA in September 2018, which amounted to \$359 million in 2017, forming 25% of all international aid, as part of efforts to liquidate the refugee issue. The US administration justified its step as one intended to push other countries to bear these burdens and stop the inclusion of refugee descendants in aid. This made the Agency face “the worst financial crisis since its inception” with a deficit of about \$1 billion.
5. The PLO office in Washington was closed as well as the US consulate in Jerusalem, which had been providing services to the Palestinians, and it fell under the authority of the US ambassador in Jerusalem under the pretext of “increasing effectiveness.” However, the truth was that the closure was intended to give West Bankers the status of Israeli citizens, administratively and symbolically, rather than their status as Palestinians under the occupation. Jared Kushner, senior advisor to US President Donald Trump, explained the reasons for these actions when he said, “All we’re doing is dealing with things as we see them and not being scared out of doing the right thing. I think, as a result, you have a much higher chance of actually achieving a real peace.” Kushner has also said that he believes the Palestinian leadership is refusing talks with the US about the peace plan because “they are scared we will release our peace plan and that the Palestinian people will actually like it.” Trump has himself been even blunter about using US humanitarian aid as leverage, telling

the Palestinians publicly that “we’re not paying until you make a deal. If you don’t make a deal we’re not paying.” However, public opinion polls revealed that two-thirds of Palestinians now oppose the resumption of contact with US negotiators and 88% view the US as biased toward Israel.

6. Congress passed the anti-terrorism law, known as the Anti-Terrorism Clarification Act (ATCA), in October 2018 and enacted it in February 2019. The law allows US citizens to sue those receiving US aid over alleged complicity in acts of terrorism against US citizens. This law made the PA reject all remaining US aid, to avoid paying billions of dollars in potential legal obligations arising from the possibility of activating the anti-terror law against Palestinian sides. This refusal, which would also mean ending all US security assistance to the PA, raised deep concern among Israeli security forces.
7. The US Agency for International Development (USAID) suspended all projects in the WB and laid off most of its local staff.
8. The “Palestinian Territories” term has been removed from the list of countries on the US State Department website, while the term “occupied territories” was to no longer be used in reference to the WB.
9. US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo announced, on 18/11/2019, that “After carefully studying all sides of the legal debate, this administration agrees with President Reagan. The establishment of Israeli civilian settlements in the West Bank is not per se inconsistent with international law.” Pompeo added that the “United States Government is expressing no view on the legal status of any individual settlement” and “we are not addressing or prejudging the ultimate status of the West Bank.”

This new position of the US administration was a departure from the legal opinion of the US State Department since 1978, which had considered settlement building in the 1967 occupied territories to be “illegal.”

10. Announcing a plan to settle the Arab-Israeli conflict, known as the “Deal of the Century,” despite the absence of direct public negotiations with the PA, and without announcing its terms, except on 28/1/2020, at a time when the US was actually resolving the conflict in favor of the Israeli side.
11. Supporting Israel in the issues to be negotiated in the final status negotiations.

All US measures regarding the Palestine issue, as well as its stances in international organizations, indicate a clear endeavor to prepare a regional and

international environment to impose a “peace settlement” identifiable with Israeli policies, that would take into account Israeli interests represented in:

1. Granting international legitimacy to Israeli policies regarding refugees, Jerusalem and settlements, in order to achieve the Jewishness of the state.
2. Providing economic and military assistance to Israel in 2018 and 2019 worth \$7.6 billion, and pledging to provide \$3.3 billion in 2020, which would bring the value of US aid to Israel throughout 1946–2020 to a total of \$142.4 billion.³³
3. Working to gradually expand Arab and Islamic normalization with Israel in all fields, so as to reach security and military coordination against regional powers, which might oppose the Zionist project.
4. Employing previous results to achieve political, economic and military gains for the benefit of the US, which faces competitive international projects in the region, especially by Russia, China and some European powers.

In return, US policy has suffered some confusion, which weakened the momentum of its projects in the region, namely:

1. Instability of the Trump administration: Since Trump took power, resignations and dismissals until mid-September 2019 numbered 303 top staffers, including 55 senior figures, the last of whom were two of the administration’s hawks: Jason Greenblatt, Trump’s special envoy for Middle East peace, and John Bolton, Trump’s national security advisor, the fourth national security advisor to resign (or be fired) from his post.³⁴
2. The halt of “public” negotiations between the US administration and the PA, leading to a stalemate in the peace process.
3. Increased diplomatic clashes between the US administration and a number of countries over Trump’s policies on Palestine and other international issues, such as North Korea and Iran, trade wars with China and Russia, and even the EU in some sectors, in addition to the repercussions of Brexit on the US as well as the tension with Venezuela.
4. The US policy regarding the Palestine issue lacks international acceptance. Most countries, including the major powers (China, Russia, the EU, and Japan), and most international and regional organizations, still refuse to recognize Jerusalem as the capital of Israel, relocate their embassies, accept the legitimacy of settlements, and accept most Israeli policies in the 1967 occupied territories.

Nevertheless, the main feature of the US policy during 2018–2019 was the declared intention to announce the “Deal of the Century,” the peace plan to settle the Arab-Israeli conflict, as declared by Trump during his election campaign in 2016. However, its content was not revealed until 2020, in a ceremonial press conference held in Washington on 28/1/2020, in the presence of Trump and Netanyahu. In 2018–2019, the announcement of the deal’s terms was continuously postponed, indicating its difficult enforcement and the failure to convince the concerned sides of its content. At the same time, this postponement was to make the political environment conducive for accepting the deal at the local (Palestinian and Israeli), regional (Arab in particular), and international (in general) levels. Then, the deal would be announced after ensuring enough promotion among the fundamental forces in the aforementioned three levels. (See details of the deal in this report, in Chapter Four, under the title: The Peace Process)

Statements by US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo revealed the link between political circumstances and the announcement of the deal. On 23/1/2019, he declared that his country’s peace plan would not be unveiled until after Israel’s general elections, on 9/4/2019.³⁵ Yet, the elections were repeated in September 2019, and the deal was revealed when it was of the interest of both parties.

Trump’s Middle East Envoy Jason Greenblatt published the Economic Framework of the “Deal of the Century,” which was presented at the “Peace to Prosperity” workshop in Bahrain in June 2019. More than half of the \$50 billion Middle East economic plan would be spent in the occupied Arab territories during the next decade (that is, until the beginning of 2030), while the rest would be spent in Arab countries hosting Palestinian refugees.³⁶ After reading the 38 pages published on the White House website,³⁷ which include Kushner’s perception of Palestine’s environment as similar to those of Japan and South Korea, the following observations can be noted:

1. Although the Palestine issue is in its essence a political issue, the Bahrain document does not contain any description, direct or indirect, of the nature of the Palestinian entity, which would receive its economic project. The project talks about empowering the “Palestinian people” and the word “state” has not been included in the project. Also, the name of Palestine is not used at all, while the reference is made to the “WB and GS,” with no definition whatsoever of borders or the nature of the entity that would “hypothetically” receive and

interact with the project. This means that the Palestinians of the WB and GS would end up within a region similar to the Kurdistan region of Iraq.

2. The plan talks about “management, governance, and public sector” without any reference to a political authority, which suggests that such administration and governance are not of an international character but a regional government, as we have indicated, similar to what is in Iraqi Kurdistan or the provinces of the federal states.
3. A careful reading indicates that the Bahrain document aims to achieve two strategic steps:
 - a. The transformation of the WB and GS into a bridge through which the Israeli economies cross to the Arab market, evident when the plan said that this “vision will boost the economies of Egypt, Israel, Jordan, and Lebanon and reduce trade barriers across the region. Increased cooperation between trading partners will support companies in these countries, which are seeking to develop international business, particularly in the West Bank and Gaza.” Notably, Syria is excluded here, although it is closer than Egypt to Palestine geographically, historically, demographically and even politically.
 - b. The project says that the “Palestinian diaspora offers a tremendous potential source of talent for the Palestinian economy,” in a way which suggests that they would remain where they are.
4. The project’s temptation lies in its economic and social dimensions (talking about employment, education, health, judiciary, investment, internet access and services, water, electricity, etc.), but inspection of this aspect indicates the following:
 - a. The total \$50 billion the project talks about, is distributed as follows:
 1. In terms of time, the sum is distributed over 10 years, or an average of \$5 billion annually.
 2. Of the \$5 billion, part is grants and another is loans (i.e., they are recoverable with interest/ usury), and according to the figures mentioned in the project, it turns out that 51.8% is loans, while 49.2% is grants. Thus, if we calculate the total grants mentioned in the project, the result shows that their value in the early stages is \$3,480 million, and when dividing this amount by the number of the Palestinian people at home and abroad (the Diaspora as the project classifies them), the result shows that the annual Palestinian per capita share is \$232 (i.e., about 164 Jordanian dinars).

If we take into consideration that Jordan, Israel, Lebanon and Egypt will participate in receiving the “loot,” the Palestinian per capita share will not exceed \$35.

- b. The project states that these sums will be placed “into a new fund administered by an established multilateral development bank,” and the “fund’s leadership will work with beneficiaries to outline annual investment guidelines, development goals, and governance reforms that will support project implementation.” This means that there will be a financial “trusteeship council” overlooking the Palestinian administration, with the need to be aware that Israel is a party to this administration, which will be entrusted with overseeing planning and implementation.

On top of that, the following observations should be considered:

1. Previous experience with grants and aid, since the Paris conferences and Arab support conferences, indicates that prospects for implementation decline annually, if any is launched in the first place. Also, it shows that even if agreements were concluded, implementation from the Western and Israeli side is uncertain; the Oslo accords are sufficient evidence in this respect.
2. The first requirement of the project is to obtain the Palestinian signature to legalize it (as was the case with the Oslo Accords), and then procrastinating over implementation begins.
3. The participation of some Palestinian figures in the Bahrain workshop may involve significant risks. It may hide a parallel negotiating track similar to what happened with the team of Haidar ‘Abdel Shafi at the beginning of the Oslo negotiations, or other administrations may develop, alternative to the PA and similar to “former village councils.”

The US team assigned for the “Deal of the Century” project, of which the Bahrain economic document was launched, openly adopted the Israeli perspective.³⁸ Remarkably, the changes in personnel it witnessed did not affect its general trend, with the team’s new members sharing the same orientations as the old ones. Avraham Berkowitz, who is of Jewish descent, replaced Greenblatt (also Jewish), lacks diplomatic experience (is aged 30) and is the cousin of Howard E. Friedman, who was president of AIPAC during the 2006–2010 period. He graduated from Harvard Law School in 2016, worked as a White House consultant for Trump and contributed to Trump’s election campaign through Facebook Live discussions. He

studied at Yeshiva Kol Torah (a Jewish-Orthodox religious school) in Jerusalem for two years and speaks fluent Hebrew. In 2009, he returned to the US and joined Ner Israel Rabbinical College in Baltimore, then became an employee in one of Kushner's companies. Berkowitz is one of four people who viewed the draft of the "Deal of the Century." Berkowitz was also among the US delegation that visited the Gulf countries and Turkey in February 2019, to inform the officials there about the outlines of the plan.³⁹

According to the *New York Times*, Berkowitz was among those who pressed for the relocation of the US Embassy to Jerusalem.⁴⁰ However, his appointment indicated Kushner's role in the decision, given their Jewishness and close personal relationship. His articles in the *Observer* newspaper showed that he is very conservative in his political thought, and that he was the one behind the special meeting of Jewish leaders with Greenblatt and Kushner to discuss "peace" in the Middle East.⁴¹

Robert O'Brien, who replaced John Bolton, was from the State Department's staff, and has worked with Democratic and Republican administrations. He has served as Special Presidential Envoy for Hostage Affairs at the US State Department, a lawyer who worked with the Bush administration to serve as a US Representative to the 60th session of the UN General Assembly. He also worked with Bolton, Condoleezza Rice and Hillary Clinton and is very close to Pompeo. O'Brien is a sharp critic of the UN role and has called Iran "the largest state sponsor of terrorism in the world." He criticized the UN in 2005 because, in his view, its decisions condemned Israel but not the Palestinians and this reduces the effectiveness of its role.⁴² His book shows that he adopts the following strategies, which reflect his general approach to international relations:⁴³

1. Adapting NATO's mission and increasing the contributions of others to its expenditures.
2. Developing strategic relations with Israel and Brazil.
3. Encouraging India to give up its arms sources, especially Russian sources.
4. Views the UN as a platform for criticism of the US and Israel.
5. Hostile to peace movements, Iran and immigrants.

As for the US legislative framework, there is still a strong movement supporting the previous peace process, as was demonstrated in a symbolic resolution passed by the US House of Representatives backing the two-state solution for the

Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The resolution passed by a 226–188 vote, stating that “only the outcome of a two-state solution... can both ensure the state of Israel’s survival as a Jewish and democratic state and fulfill the legitimate aspirations of the Palestinian people for a state of their own.”⁴⁴

In general, during 2018–2019, the US worked on:

1. Deepening the imbalance of power in favor of Israel through a series of measures, which strip the Palestinian side of its political, economic and military capabilities (the latter relating to the resistance, especially in GS), on the one hand, and demanding it to negotiate in such an environment, on the other hand.
2. For the diplomatic missions concerning the Palestine issue, a five-person US team was assigned, of whom three were Jewish, and all of them with track records of negative attitudes towards Palestinian demands.
3. Removing the notion of a Palestinian state in the US position; rather Palestine is dealt with as an estate rather than a state, evident in the Bahrain economic document.

Fourth: The European Union (EU)

The European Joint Strategy in Support of Palestine 2017–2020: Towards a Democratic and Accountable Palestinian State became the central aspect in European policy towards the Palestine issue, especially regarding the following pillars:⁴⁵

1. Governance reform, fiscal consolidation and policy.
2. Rule of law, justice, citizen safety and human rights.
3. Sustainable service delivery.
4. Access to self-sufficient water and energy services.
5. Sustainable economic development.

This document outlines the general conclusions of the EU regarding the “peace” process in the Middle East (January 2018) as follows:⁴⁶

1. Condemning the violence of all sides and respecting obligations related to the holy places, in accordance with relevant understandings, while respecting Jordan’s role in this respect.

2. Working to stop verbal or actual incitement by one side against the other.
3. Implementing the Quartet's recommendations, especially regarding Israeli policies in the 1967 occupied territories, Area C in particular.
4. Supporting the two-state solution and calling for the removal of the most significant obstacles to its achievement.
5. Calling for the establishment of an international support group, and holding an international conference to promote peace settlement opportunities and to settle the claims of the parties to the conflict.
6. The obligation to implement international humanitarian law and the commitment to it by states and non-state actors (institutions, parties, and individuals).
7. Condemning Israeli settlements and home demolitions; stressing the need to abandon settlements, including those in Jerusalem, besides ensuring continued, full and effective implementation of existing EU legislation and bilateral arrangements applicable to settlements products, in addition to stressing that all agreements between Israel and the EU do not apply to the 1967 occupied territories.

In this context came the EU response to the US Secretary of State's declaration in November 2019 regarding the "legitimacy of settlements in the occupied territories," where the EU swiftly announced that its position on settlements is "clear and unchanged: all settlement activity is illegal under international law and it erodes the viability of the two-state solution and the prospects for a lasting peace," further it called on Israel to end all settlement activity in the occupied territories. European diplomats saw that the US step would deepen the gap between the Palestinian and international position on one hand, and the US on the other hand, and they saw that the Trump administration was seeking through its decision on settlements "to woo evangelical voters."⁴⁷

8. Emphasizing Europe's assistance to achieve Palestinian reconciliation.
9. Working to lift the GS siege, while committing to Israeli security.

When looking at European positions in international fora, the following can be noted:⁴⁸

1. EU states voted 76.19% in support of Palestinian rights in the 37 draft resolutions submitted to the General Assembly in 2018–2019.
2. The increasing tendency of European policy to be independent of US policy, evident in the difference in UN voting trends between the two sides as well as in

the letter signed by 33 former European officials (25 former foreign ministers, six former prime ministers and two former NATO secretary-generals). They called for opposing Trump's "biased" policies against the Palestinians and demanded that "Europe should embrace and promote a plan that respects the basic principles of international law as reflected in the agreed EU parameters for a resolution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict... that a viable peace requires the creation of a Palestinian state... with Jerusalem as the capital for both states."⁴⁹

3. The continued support of Egyptian and international efforts to stop the military escalation between the GS and Israel, as demonstrated in EU statements in August 2018 and May 2019, noting that these statements held both sides responsible for the escalation.⁵⁰
4. The EU criticized the "Jewish Nation-State Law" passed by the Israeli Knesset in July 2018, which limited the right to self-determination in Israel to Jews only, and reduced the status of the Arabic language from an official language to a language with "a special status." The EU believed the decision would complicate the realization of the two-state solution.⁵¹

European financial and economic aid to the WB and Gaza amounted to €380 million (about \$459 million) in 2018 and €45 million (about \$54 million) in 2019,⁵² and was distributed as follows:

1. €155 million (about \$187 million) Direct Financial Support to Recurrent Expenditures of the Palestinian Authority.
2. €153 million (about \$185 million) to UNRWA.
3. €71.35 million (about \$86 million) for project support to sustainable economic development and enhanced governance, improved access to self-sufficient water and energy services, and East Jerusalem.
4. €40.1 million (about \$48.4 million) to address the worsening living conditions of populations affected by the GS siege.
5. €5.9 million (about \$7 million) as an emergency response to demolitions and evictions, critical assistance for essential services, and improved access to quality and safe education.

Yet, it is necessary to note that no formal European measures were taken to counter Israeli policies, with the exception of some boycott of WB settlements products to make Israel respond to the main directions of European policy, especially the establishment of a Palestinian state with Jerusalem as its capital.

However, Europe is often inclined to criticize any armed Palestinian resistance and demands the Palestinian side to review the educational curricula, where “incitement to violence is fundamentally incompatible with advancing a peaceful two-state solution.”⁵³ Indeed, UNRWA schools responded to this demand as confirmed by the Agency’s Commissioner-General in his statement in November 2018.⁵⁴

In December 2018, the EU responded to Israeli pressure by issuing a declaration adopting a call to fight anti-Semitism, but at the same time, it considered “criticism of Israel similar to that levelled against any other country cannot be regarded as antisemitic.”⁵⁵ Notably, European public opinion sees (as we shall see later) that Israel exploits the issue of anti-Semitism for its political interests.⁵⁶

Finally, the European stance remains less prejudiced than that of the US, whether in terms of the volume of aid to both sides of the conflict, voting indicators at the UN, or its role in the Quartet (which was already negative for the Palestinians). However, the European influence on the negotiating tracks and the application of international law remains quite limited.

Fifth: The BRICS States

The BRICS group (Russia, China, India, Brazil and South Africa) agreed in their statement of the July 2018 summit (in South Africa) on the following:⁵⁷

1. Establishing an independent, viable, territorially contiguous Palestinian State, living side by side in peace and security with Israel, based on the UN resolutions, the Madrid Principles, the Arab Peace Initiative and previous agreements between the parties.
2. The status of Jerusalem is one of the final status issues to be defined in the context of negotiations between the Israeli and Palestinian sides, a position that is less significant than the European position on this point.
3. Regarding GS, affirming support to the UN General Assembly Resolution (A/RES/ES-10/20) on the protection of the Palestinian population and the need for its implementation.
4. Reiterating support for UNRWA.

On 5/6/2018, the BRICS foreign ministers issued a statement in South Africa reiterating the same positions again.⁵⁸

The election of right-wing President Jair Bolsonaro in Brazil marked a significant change in the BRICS, especially as Bolsonaro's policies radically contrast those of the BRICS group, individually and collectively, as follows:⁵⁹

1. He supports Trump's protectionist trade policies, particularly against China and Russia.
2. He stands strongly against the policies of Venezuelan President Nicolas Maduro, who is backed by the other BRICS countries, especially Russia and China.
3. His stances and visits to Taiwan have been severe provocations to China.
4. He supports Trump's policies in the Middle East, especially moving the US Embassy to Jerusalem. Days after winning the presidency in 2018, he promised to follow in Trump's footsteps,⁶⁰ which he had to retract under internal, Arab, Islamic and international pressure.
5. Hostility to the globalization policies adopted by the Chinese leader.

This means that the orientations of the BRICS may face complications under the new Brazilian policies, which will be reflected in the Middle East in general, and the position towards Israel, in particular. The Brazilian president may adapt the orientations of the BRICS in a way that makes them less supportive of Palestinian rights.

Sixth: Russia

The Russian position on the US "Deal of the Century" was a general indication of Russian policy during this period. Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov, while noting that the details of the deal had not yet been published, said that the economic part of the plan, especially leaving Palestinian refugees in the countries hosting them, was inconsistent with the Security Council resolutions.⁶¹ Lavrov also expressed sympathy with the Palestinian reaction to the "Deal of the Century," indicating that the Palestinians had made many years of concessions without receiving any compensation.⁶²

The Russian political scene witnessed several attempts to activate Israeli-Palestinian negotiations in Moscow. A meeting was held that included all Palestinian factions; a Hamas delegation was invited to visit Moscow; a meeting between President 'Abbas and Russian President Vladimir Putin was held in July

2018; and a meeting between Putin and Israeli PM Benjamin Netanyahu was held in April 2019.⁶³ Despite the positivity of inviting the resistance factions to Moscow, a negative aspect should also be noted, which was the Russian pressure to accept the peace process course, the same role the Soviet Union played with Fatah and the Palestinian factions.

Russia promised, through the Federation Council Committee on Foreign Affairs, to provide \$10 million in aid to UNRWA.⁶⁴

The downing of the Russian reconnaissance aircraft in September 2018, for which Russia held Israel responsible—for it was shot down by Syrian forces responding to an Israeli airstrike—“triggered testy exchanges of blame between Israel and Russia,” but then the crisis was overcome.⁶⁵

Seventh: China

Chinese policy towards the Palestine issue did not change, and perhaps the joint statement between the EU and China in July 2018 confirms this. It stated, “On the peace process in the Middle East, both sides confirmed their support for a two-state solution, under which the two states live side by side in security within internationally recognized borders, with Jerusalem as their capital, and in accordance with the relevant United Nations resolutions.”⁶⁶

However, it is necessary to note that, despite the US-Chinese trade war, Israeli-Chinese relations developed in the economic, technical, political and cultural fields, and increased at a noticeable rhythm, faster than those with the Palestinian side. This accelerated development can be linked to several factors:⁶⁷

1. The Chinese BRI project, which includes 1967-occupied Palestine and Israel, especially its ports.
2. The pragmatic approach continues to grow in the Chinese political structure, especially concerning adapting to and guiding economic globalization, as expressed by Chinese President Xi Jinping.
3. The linkage between the Chinese and Arab relations on one hand, and the Palestine issue on the other hand, has weakened. Chinese diplomacy has an impression that Arab official tendencies are gradually moving towards normalization with Israel.

The volume of trade between China and Israel in 2019 was \$11.4 billion, with a trade deficit of \$2 billion in favor of China.⁶⁸ Chinese tourism to Israel increased in the first half of 2019 by 67% compared to 2015.⁶⁹ However, these evolving Israeli-Chinese relations faced some criticism and paranoia from the US, as well as from the leaders of the Israeli security services, especially regarding:⁷⁰

1. Security and economic risks, due to transferring some aspects of advanced US technology to China, through Sino-Israeli companies and joint investment.
2. The development of Israeli ports, especially Haifa, through the Chinese BRI, would provide China with the ability to collect information on the US Sixth Fleet, which uses the facilities of this port extensively.
3. Sino-Israeli relations negatively affect US trade measures against China, which constitute one of the main pillars of Trump's policies.

In return, China has taken some steps to support the Palestinian side, such as:⁷¹

1. Prevented Chinese workers from working in Jerusalem or Israeli settlements in the 1967 territories.
2. Provided about \$15 million to help the Palestinians in the fields of development, in addition to about \$2 million to UNRWA.
3. Rejected Trump's "Deal of the Century" and emphasized the two-state solution in accordance with UN resolutions.
4. The inclination to sign a free trade agreement with the PA.

The Chinese and Russian positions remain within the parameters set by the Ramallah-based PA and have not yet reached the position of the Resistance factions.

Eighth: India

India's June 2019 vote in favor of an Israeli motion at the UN's ECOSOC to deny a Palestinian organization based in Lebanon (Shahed Foundation) observer status, is an indication of the departure of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) Hindu nationalist government from the traditional position supporting Palestinian and Arab issues,⁷² a trend which started when this party assumed power in 2014.

India has a stark need for Middle East countries, especially the Gulf states and Iran, as sources of crude oil, and Indian remittances from the Gulf states. In 2018, these states hosted 8.5 million Indians, who transferred about 68% of remittances

from Indians abroad, amounting to \$79.5 billion during 2019.⁷³ Yet, this did not have any impact on the official Indian stances regarding the Palestine issue, and the government of Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi continued its approach without any change.

The opening up of some gulf countries to Israel throughout 2018–2019, which culminated in Netanyahu's visit to Oman, has helped Modi escape the criticism of Indian political forces for his "Look West" policy. This policy became more clear in Modi's rapprochement with Israel, especially when he visited it in 2017, marking a first by an Indian prime minister.⁷⁴ Thus, Gulf countries bear some responsibility for this decline in the Indian position towards the Palestine issue.

However, Indian-Israeli relations face some complications, such as limited trade relations, which have not exceeded \$5 billion. Also, Indian-Iranian relations are a point of disagreement in some aspects, while India seems concerned about a possible Pakistani-Israeli rapprochement.⁷⁵

Ninth: South Africa-The African Union (AU)

The statements by the AU and the African Union Commission (AUC) Chairperson Moussa Faki Mahamat, throughout 2018–2019, were an indication of the main African orientations as they focused on the following:⁷⁶

1. Expressing grave concern over the relocation of the US Embassy to Jerusalem and its impact on reaching a comprehensive settlement.
2. Condemning disproportionate Israeli uses of force against Palestinian demonstrators.
3. Supporting the Palestinians' legitimate quest for an independent and sovereign State with East Jerusalem as its capital.
4. The need to implement UN resolutions related to the Palestine issue.

Despite the difference of positions of some African countries, South Africa is the most supportive among non-Arab African countries to the Palestinian rights,⁷⁷ while Ghana is the one most keen to bring AU policies closer to Israel, especially the Ghanaian endeavor to grant Israel observer status in the AU, which mirrors the approaches of both Kenya and Ethiopia.⁷⁸ Notably, this Israeli endeavor aims to impact Palestine's activity in the Union, after Palestine was granted observer status in 2013.

In 2017, the Republic of Togo called for holding the first African-Israeli summit in its capital, Lome, on 23–27/10/2017. However, the summit was canceled due to Palestinian, Arab and African pressure and rejection. There was a Palestinian consensus to reject the summit and remarkable media and political pressure applied by the Popular Conference for Palestinians Abroad to abolish it.

In 2018–2019, normalization between Israel and several African countries developed. It was encouraged by the normalization and reciprocal visits of Arab and Israeli figures and delegations, as well as Israeli efforts in this regard. In November 2018, Chadian President Idriss Deby Itno visited Israel.⁷⁹ In September 2019, Ethiopian Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed visited Israel and met Israeli officials, with Netanyahu calling Ahmed “one of the most important and influential leaders in Africa.” In July 2019, media outlets said that Israel was building a Spyder-MR air missile system around the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam.⁸⁰

In February 2018, an Israeli security mission made a secret visit to Rwanda to market Israeli weapons and military technology. The Israeli Ministry of Defense mission included the International Defense Cooperation Directorate (SIBAT), the Special Unit for the African Continent of the Israeli army and representatives of the Israeli military equipment manufacturers including Israeli electronic equipment manufacturer Elbit, Israel Aerospace Industries (IAI), Israel Military Industries (IMI) and Israel Weapon Industries (IWI), among others.⁸¹ Furthermore, former Israeli officials launched a campaign to assist Rwanda to join the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), led by former Israeli Attorney General Yehuda Weinstein and former Israeli Ambassador to the UN Ron Prosor. Indeed, Rwanda was formally admitted to the OECD in May 2019, having applied to join the body in November 2018.⁸² Israel opened its embassy in the Rwandan capital Kigali in February 2019.

Throughout 2018–2019, Israeli relations with South Africa witnessed high tension until the latter withdrew its ambassador from Tel Aviv and reduced its level of representation in April 2019, having summoned its ambassador in 2018 for consultation in light of moving the US Embassy to Jerusalem. The ambassador withdrawal came in response to the massacres committed by the Israeli forces against demonstrators in GS.

South Africa is still one of the strongest supporters of the rights of the Palestinian people. It voted in the General Assembly session, on 6/12/2018, against the US

draft resolution to condemn Hamas, at a time the US and Israel had tried to pressure countries to vote for the draft. South Africa also received a delegation from Hamas in late 2018.

PA President Mahmud ‘Abbas participated in the 32nd and 33rd AU sessions in 2018–2019. In his two speeches, he called on the AU countries to support Palestinians in international fora and for the AU to have a role in the peace process, while offering to provide his services in combating “terrorism” and in the areas of sustainable development.

Tenth: Brazil – The Organization of American States (OAS)

Most of the 35 OAS countries’ orientations have been known as closer to the Palestinian position, but since 2017, the South American continent has witnessed developments that Israel used to strengthen its position when it comes to voting at the UN. Notably, Benjamin Netanyahu visited the region three times throughout 2017–2019. The growth of right-wing parties, populist leaders and the evangelical Christians might have contributed to create these favorable conditions for Israel. Brazil said it was considering moving its embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem, following the election of the right-wing President Jair Bolsonaro.⁸³ The trade relations between the two sides in 2019 amounted to \$1.2 billion. Israeli companies were also active in this region (for example, there are about 150 companies in Mexico, more than 100 companies in Colombia and Argentina and 200 in Brazil). Israel has been seeking to tempt some countries to transfer their embassies from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem in exchange for providing them with weapons, such as Honduras and Guatemala, as well as Paraguay that later backed off.⁸⁴ However, some countries with leftist leaderships, such as Venezuela, Bolivia (whose President Evo Morales is supportive of Palestinian rights and has resigned in November 2019 leaving the country after being replaced by right-wing leadership) and Cuba, still hold firm in their solidarity with the Palestinians in the face of Israeli policies.⁸⁵

Latin America and the Palestine Issue

Latin American countries have always supported the Palestine issue over the decades of the history of the Arab-Israeli conflict. However, notable developments have occurred during recent years, especially with the rise of right-wing parties supporting Israel. After the US moved its embassy to Jerusalem in May 2018,

some Latin American countries called for supporting this move, where Paraguay decided to relocate its embassy after Guatemala had done so, and Brazil promised to follow suit. However, they had to reverse their decision either because of the political changes, which occurred in Guatemala and the election of Mario Abdo as president, or because of political and commercial pressures from some Muslim countries having relations with Brazil.

Support from these countries came only as a result of changes in the political landscape of Latin America, and the decline of the left-wing role in policymaking in favor of right-wing supporters of Israel. Consequently, cooperation became available, and Netanyahu made a tour to Latin American countries in 2017. Netanyahu also received Brazilian Foreign Minister Aloysio Nunes in February 2018, signing a social insurance agreement. During their meeting, Netanyahu “expressed desire to enhance bilateral cooperation and said that Israel is greatly interested in ties with Brazil and believes in their latent potential.”⁸⁶

In December 2018, Netanyahu visited Brazil to participate in the swearing-in ceremony of the new Brazilian President Jair Bolsonaro, whose election has gained Israel more support from Latin American countries in international fora. For example, Brazil voted in the General Assembly, in December 2018, in favor of a US draft resolution condemning Hamas.

Certainly, the US administration has played an important role in changing the attitudes of South American countries in favor of Israel. Netanyahu held a tripartite meeting during the Bolsonaro inauguration ceremony with the President of Honduras and US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo, where they discussed moving the Honduran Embassy to Jerusalem. Indeed, Honduras announced, in late 2019, its intention to open an embassy in Jerusalem and anticipated this announcement by opening a trade office in Jerusalem in September 2019, which was a step towards developing relations with Israel.⁸⁷

In the context of political changes within Latin American countries, the Bolivian interim government announced in November 2019 its intention to restore diplomatic relations with Israel. The former Bolivian President Evo Morales, who fled the country after what he described as a coup, has accused the interim government of having requested support from Israel to fight the left in his country.⁸⁸

On the 70th anniversary of *Nakbah* in 2018, many Latin American countries witnessed demonstrations and protest marches against the transfer of the US

Embassy to Jerusalem, and in support of the Palestinian people, as in Mexico and Argentina.⁸⁹ In May 2018, Mahmud ‘Abbas made a trip to Latin America, and met the presidents of Cuba, Venezuela and Chile, to mobilize international support for rejecting the relocation of the US Embassy to Jerusalem.

In an important step, a conference of Palestinian communities in Latin America and the Caribbean was held in the Salvadoran capital, San Salvador, on 13–16/6/2019, to unite them and serve the Palestine issue and community members. The closing statement of the conference stressed the necessity of rebuilding the PLO through PNC democratic elections, with the participation of all the Palestinian people. It also affirmed its commitment to defending the national rights of the Palestinian people, foremost of which is the right to self-determination, building an independent sovereign state with its capital in Jerusalem, and the right of return of all refugees to their homes from which they were forcibly expelled in 1948.⁹⁰ The conference declared the establishment of the Palestinian Union of Latin America (*Unión Palestina de América Latina*—UPAL) to represent Palestinian communities. The importance of such entities in Latin American countries stems from the size of the Palestinian community and the history of its presence in Latin America, and from the influence of many of its members who have high positions in these countries.

Eleventh: Japan

The book of the current Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe, “Towards a Beautiful Country: My Vision for Japan,” can be considered a general indication of Japanese foreign policies, especially concerning the Palestine issue and its Arab environment. It includes:⁹¹

1. The tendency to have some independence from US policies, especially after Trump’s election. Japan’s refusal to participate in the maritime force proposed by the US to protect maritime transport routes in the Gulf is an indication in this respect.
2. The urgent need for energy resources in the Gulf, which amount to about 90% of its needs, especially with Iran, in addition to the large trade volume with the Gulf countries that reached \$115.8 billion in 2018.

3. The tendency to be more deeply embedded in international politics, especially in the Middle East, with an emphasis on employing “soft” rather than hard power, through affirming three directions: “tolerance, coexistence and cooperation.”
4. The continued work of developing the “Corridor for Peace and Prosperity” initiative, which Japan is adopting in the Jordan Valley for the benefit of the countries of the region.

Japanese government statements, throughout 2018–2019, criticized Israeli policies in the following aspects:⁹²

1. The continuation of Israeli settlement policies despite their inconsistency with international law, and Israel’s failure to respond to Japanese calls to stop this policy.
2. Condemning Israel’s demolition of Palestinian homes and facilities, considering it an impediment to reaching a two-state solution supported by Japan.
3. Refusing to move the Japanese Embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem.

As in European policies, Japan does not take punitive actions against Israel, but rather expands its relations with it. During the visit of Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe to Israel in 2018, Netanyahu stressed that the volume of Japanese investments in Israel doubled throughout 2014–2019 by about 120 times, while the number of Japanese companies in Israel increased thirty-fold. In return, Japan has provided the Palestinians with around \$63 million in aid, including support of agricultural and industrial projects in Jericho, aid to some families and childcare programs, as well as to UNRWA.⁹³

Twelfth: International Public Opinion

International non-governmental public opinion consists of three main sectors: individuals, local non-governmental civil society organizations and international non-governmental civil society organizations. Israel clearly knows the impact of these sectors on international politics, even if in the long term, making it work on curbing the impact of growing support of Palestinian rights. The impact of these sectors is demonstrated in the following models:

1. The Boycott, Divestment, Sanctions (BDS) Movement

In 2018, this movement succeeded in a number of aspects, such as the announcement of two members of the US Congress, Rashida Tlaib and Ilhan Omar, of their intention to visit the 1967 occupied territories, accompanied by a congressional delegation, to expose Israeli policies on issues like Israel's detention of Palestinian children, education, access to clean water, and poverty, and all issues preventing peace settlement in the region.⁹⁴ As Israel denied the two US elected officials entry to the WB and GS, the Americans for Peace Now (APN) organization called on the Israeli government, on 15/8/2019, to reverse its decision, describing the measure as "outrageous."⁹⁵ The BDS movement also succeeded in the following:⁹⁶

- a. Ireland's Senate approved a bill criminalizing the import and trade of goods and services from Israeli settlements, by a vote of 30–13.
- b. The BDS movement managed to persuade British-based bank HSBC to disengage from projects with companies that produce weapons for Israel.
- c. Following a BDS campaign, the University of Manchester in Britain stopped dealing with certain brands, because of funding the Israeli army.
- d. BDS succeeded in persuading international singer Lana Del Rey to cancel her Israel show, which was scheduled for September 2018.

The BDS movement continued its activities in 2019, organizing around a 100 activities in European countries, while British newspapers, such as *The Guardian*, and dozens of universities cooperated with it, especially in focusing on exposing Israel's racist policies. BDS also coordinated activities in African countries, holding meetings with parties and unions to focus on exposing Israeli policies on the issues of human rights, racist practices, settlement building and enforcement of racist laws.

It also succeeded in organizing various activities in Latin American countries, especially Chile, Argentina, Brazil, Colombia and Mexico, holding seminars on the role of Israel in the militarization of Latin America and the need to thwart that policy. In the US, more than 20 universities and colleges, including Harvard University, participated in the "Israeli Apartheid Week (IAW)," holding student media activities and publishing related material in student newspapers. In Asia, the BDS movement organized activities in India and Malaysia, by displaying posters and films at universities, while focusing on exposing the growing Indo-Israeli relations and some right-wing sides in Malaysia.⁹⁷

According to a report issued by the Israeli Ministry of Strategic Affairs, the level of BDS movement activities has increased to such an extent that supporters of Israel are no longer able to express themselves and organize activities on US college campuses, to defend Israel and its policies. According to the report, which was quoted by *Israel Hayom* newspaper, BDS activists do not hesitate to call anyone expressing solidarity with Israel a “baby killer.”⁹⁸

However, the important accomplishments by the BDS movement in expanding the global boycott against settlements, does not eliminate the difference between its position and that of the resistance factions, especially regarding adherence to the Palestinian fundamentals including the right of return.

2. The International Criminal Court (ICC)

ICC Prosecutor Fatou Bensouda announced that, based on an independent and objective analysis of the information available to her office regarding the situation in Palestine, she had decided that statutory criteria under the Rome Statute for the opening of an investigation have been met. Also, she was satisfied that there was a reasonable basis to proceed with an investigation into the situation in Palestine, and she sought from the Pre-Trial Chamber “a confirmation that the ‘territory’ over which the Court may exercise its jurisdiction...comprises the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, and Gaza,” stressing that “such determination is made strictly for the purposes of determining the Court’s ability to exercise its jurisdiction and the scope of such jurisdiction under the Statute.”⁹⁹ Bensouda’s declaration caused widespread satisfaction among Palestinian, Arab and international circles, and President ‘Abbas called on the Palestinians affected by the occupation to file cases against Israel before the ICC, considering that day as a “great day.”¹⁰⁰ In return, Netanyahu said that the ICC “has no authority to adjudicate the matter. It has jurisdiction only in lawsuits presented by sovereign states, but there has never been a Palestinian state,” and claimed that Bensouda’s decision represented a “dark day for truth and justice.”¹⁰¹

3. Amnesty International

Amnesty International criticized the new Israeli laws promoting racial discrimination against non-Jews, as well as the violent Israeli policies, which claimed the lives of 290 Palestinians in 2019, including more than 50 children, none of whom posed danger to anyone. The organization also criticized the Israeli blockade of GS, which at that point had been imposed for 11 consecutive years.

It also pointed to Israeli restrictions on the freedom of movement of the Palestinians in the WB, especially with the erection of military roadblocks and the closure of roads with concrete walls. The organization affirmed that thousands of Palestinians, including hundreds of administrative detainees, were still being detained without charge, while torture and other ill-treatment of detainees, including children, were being committed with impunity. Amnesty also said that Israel had continued to demolish Palestinian homes and facilities, forcing residents to leave their homes. It added that the judiciary had failed to be just and respect humanitarian law, for the Israeli authorities had denied asylum-seekers—African migrants in particular—access to a fair or prompt refugee status determination process, while conscientious objectors to military service were imprisoned.¹⁰²

4. Freedom House

In 2019, Freedom House contributed to the disclosure of a number of Israeli practices, such as restricting the movement of the population, demolishing homes and public facilities, restricting civil and political freedoms and the continued expansion of settlements, while granting settlers the same rights enjoyed by Israelis in Israel. The organization also criticized the level of freedoms in the areas administered by the PA.¹⁰³

5. Human Rights Watch

Human Rights Watch reports for 2018–2019 included reference to the following:¹⁰⁴

- a. Enforcing severe and discriminatory restrictions on the human rights of Palestinians.
- b. Restricting the movement of people and goods into and out of GS.
- c. Facilitating the unlawful transfer of Israeli citizens to settlements in the occupied WB.
- d. The use of excessive lethal force by Israeli forces stationed on the Israeli side of the fences separating GS and Israel.
- e. The Israeli army launched intermittent air strikes and artillery shelling against the GS during the period 30/3–19/11/2019, killing 37 Palestinian demonstrators protesting for Palestinian rights in GS.
- f. Israel continued to maintain its more than decade-long effective closure of GS, exacerbated by Egyptian restrictions on its own border with GS, limiting access

to water and electricity (households in GS received power for between 4 and 5 hours a day on average during most of the year).

- g. The Israeli authorities continued to expand settlements in the occupied WB, and to discriminate systematically against Palestinians and in favor of settlers, in providing services, allowing freedom of movement, and issuing building permits, among other actions.
- h. The occupation authorities continued to demolish hundreds of Palestinian homes and properties, forcibly displacing large numbers of Palestinians.

6. Reporters Without Borders

Based on all the inhumane procedures outlined in the reports of international NGOs, in May 2018 Reporters Without Borders formally asked the ICC to investigate what it regarded as war crimes committed by the Israel army against Palestinian journalists covering protests in Gaza since late March 2018.¹⁰⁵

7. International Public Opinion Polling Institutions

The Palestine issue has been under the scope of many specialized international public opinion polling institutions. Polling results mostly indicate that there is a linear decline of popular sympathy with Israeli policies, as evident in the following models:

- a. Of 22 countries, Israel was the fourth-most-disliked nation.¹⁰⁶
- b. Shifts in the US perception of Israelis in 2019:¹⁰⁷
 - 1. 77% of Republicans and 57% of Democrats have favorable opinions of Israel's people.
 - 2. 61% of Republicans and 26% of Democrats have favorable opinions of Israel's government.
 - 3. Only 27% of young Republicans (under 30 years) viewed Israel's government favorably compared to 57% among those over 65, and "This trend is something important to watch," according to a lecturer at the Lauder School of Government, Diplomacy and Strategy at the Interdisciplinary Center in Herzliya.¹⁰⁸
- c. The position of the Israelis towards the UN: 65% of Israelis have negative view of the UN compared to 26% of respondents worldwide.¹⁰⁹
- d. 35% of Europeans said supporters of Israel use accusations of "anti-Semitism" to shut down criticism.¹¹⁰

- e. 71% of people in 24 countries opposed Trump's decision to recognize Jerusalem as the unified capital of Israel and thereby move the US embassy there, compared to 11% who supported the decision. Concerning the Europeans, 55% opposed the decision, while the lowest opposition rate was in the Ivory Coast at 27%.¹¹¹
- f. In a poll of French public opinion conducted by the French Institute of Public Opinion in 2019, it was found that 57% of the French people surveyed had a negative image of Israel, 69% had a negative image of Zionism, and 71% believed that Israel has a heavy responsibility for the lack of talks with the Palestinians.¹¹²
- g. 37 former European foreign ministers representing 19 European countries signed a letter criticizing Israeli policies, and demanding a European stance in this context, especially as "the current US administration has departed from longstanding US policy and distanced itself from established international legal norms. It has so far recognized only one side's claims to Jerusalem and demonstrated a disturbing indifference to Israeli settlement expansion." They called on Europe to "embrace and promote a plan that respects the basic principles of international law as reflected in the agreed EU parameters for a resolution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict," including "the creation of a Palestinian state alongside Israel on borders based on the pre-1967 lines," while making "security arrangements that address legitimate concerns and respect the sovereignty of each side and with an agreed, fair solution to the question of Palestine refugees." The letter warned that the situation in Palestine was "sliding into a one-state reality of unequal rights."¹¹³

Thirteenth: Future Implications

Israel is facing several opportunities and challenges in its international relations, and its response will vary depending on the issue itself and a set of future changes, the most important of which are:

1. The results of the US presidential elections in 2020, as President Trump's chances of winning a second term do not seem reassuring to the Israeli side. There is instability in his administration and the Democrats have been trying to isolate him. Consequently, the US stance may return to its pre-Trump status.

However, if Trump wins and continues with his current policy, some problems may arise between Israel and the US regarding the Chinese-Israeli relations, as was indicated by some US officials, especially regarding cooperation in Israeli infrastructure facilities within the BRI framework.¹¹⁴

2. The victory of the pro-Israel Conservative Party in the UK elections—which were held due to disagreements over Brexit—was not in the Palestinians’ interests, whose rights have been supported by the opposition Labour Party leadership. This means more US-British coordination will increase pressure on the Palestinians in the future.

3. Britain’s exit from the EU means imbalances within the European decision-making body, which is against Israel’s interests. For the UK was the country most supportive of Israel within the EU, and its exit might weaken the support given to Israel, given that Britain had a significant role in the Union.

4. The continued expansion of the Israeli-Chinese relations and the Israeli-Indian relations, in light of the deterioration of Arab diplomacy regarding the Palestine issue, could further complicate the international situation for the Palestinian side.

5. The change in the Brazilian presidency will probably mean the BRICS have internal political contradictions, and might be faced with:

- a. The possibility of Brazil withdrawing or freezing its BRICS membership—taking into account its weight in Latin America—especially if its differences with China and Russia escalate over Brazilian support of Trump’s policies towards Venezuela, Bolivia and other leftist governments in Latin America.
- b. The possibility of Brazil, with its new leadership, adapting to the BRICS decisions, according to specific constraints. This was clear in the statements of China and Brazil during the organization’s summit in November 2019, where it was important to take into consideration that China is Brazil’s prime trade partner. These conditions may lead to mitigating the Brazilian president’s bias towards Israel, or they may lead the BRICS to avoid issuing certain positions on the Palestine issue, especially in light of the great divergence between the positions of Brazil and the rest of the member states, thus constituting a major loss to the Palestinian side.

Fourteenth: Recommendations

Based on the above, it is necessary to work in the following directions:

1. The need for international or regional NGOs to give more attention to international public opinion, especially in European countries, where the Palestinian and Arab communities would work more on lobbying in these countries and Latin America. In this context, it is necessary to distribute the results of international public opinion polls, as much as possible, to international institutions and international governmental and non-governmental organizations, and the results of UN voting and levels of condemnation of Israeli policy to intergovernmental organizations.
2. Increasing dialogue with pro-Palestine political forces known in:
 - a. China: Here it is necessary to establish a specialized intellectual cell to identify the most pro-Palestine Communist leaders and contact them, while focusing on Chinese concerns about US-Israeli relations.
 - b. India: The Indian National Congress, with its traditional positions, is one of the most important pro-Palestine forces in India. It also has its extensions in Indian society and might return to power again, which should be noted and invested in.
 - c. Russia: The Communist Party of the Russian Federation (CPRF) and the Liberal Democratic Party of Russia (LDPR) (espouses nationalist ideology) are the most sympathetic forces with Palestinian rights. Therefore, it is necessary to focus on developing relations with them, especially their intellectuals, such as the famous Russian thinker Aleksandr Dugin, who has significant influence on President Putin.¹¹⁵
 - d. The need to study what we have concluded in this chapter, that international support of Palestinian rights increases in periods of confrontation with the occupation and deteriorates with the relaxation of resistance activity.
 - e. The need to take decisive stances by the PA and the resistance forces regarding any unauthorized Palestinian participation in international conferences, as was the case when Palestinian personalities participated in the Bahrain workshop. Such participation might have more serious consequences than those appearing at first glance.
 - f. The necessity of achieving the broadest possible international unity against US policies, including the so-called “Deal of the Century.”

Endnotes

- ¹ Top ten foreign policy trends in 2019, site of European Council on Foreign Relations (ECFR), 3/1/2019, https://www.ecfr.eu/article/commentary_top_ten_foreign_policy_trends_in_2019; and The World in 2019: Ten Issues that will Shape the Global Agenda, site of Barcelona Centre for International Affairs (CIDOB), December 2018, https://www.cidob.org/en/publications/publication_series/notes_internacionales/n1_208/the_world_in_2019_ten_issues_that_will_shape_the_global_agenda
- ² Peter Harris, When Will the Unipolar World End?, site of *The National Interest* magazine, 27/5/2019, <https://nationalinterest.org/feature/when-will-unipolar-world-end-59202>
- ³ Yehuda Ben-Hur Levy, The Undiplomats: Right-wing populists and their foreign policies, site of Centre for European Reform, August 2015, https://www.cer.eu/sites/default/files/publications/attachments/pdf/2015/pb_ybl_undiplo_21aug15-11804.pdf
- ⁴ Philipp O. Amour, “Did a Palestine spring take place? The lost decade in Palestine,” *Tarih Dergisi* (magazine), İstanbul Üniversitesi Edebiyat Fakültesi, İstanbul, No. 67, p. 154, <https://dergipark.org.tr/tr/download/article-file/524475>
- ⁵ Pinhas Inbari, The Fate of Palestinian Refugees in Syria and Lebanon, site of Jerusalem Center for Public Affairs, 6/6/2019, <http://jcpa.org/article/the-fate-of-palestinian-refugees-in-syria-and-lebanon/>
- ⁶ Yigal Chazan, Amid trade war tensions, is Israel getting too close to China for America’s comfort?, *South China Morning Post* newspaper, Hong Kong, 12/1/2019, <https://www.scmp.com/comment/insight-opinion/united-states/article/2181616/amid-trade-war-tensions-israel-getting-too>
- ⁷ *The Guardian*, 19/3/2019, <https://www.theguardian.com/news/2019/mar/19/why-israel-quietly-cosying-up-to-gulf-monarchies-saudi-arabia-uae>
- ⁸ Gilad Atzmon, Brexit Is All About Making Israel Greater, site of The Unz Review: An Alternative Media Selection, 26/5/2019, <http://www.unz.com/gatzmon/brexit-is-all-about-making-israel-greater>
- ⁹ *The Jerusalem Post*, 19/12/2017, <https://www.jpost.com/Opinion/Reaping-the-benefits-of-digital-public-diplomacy-518519>
- ¹⁰ Souman Hong and Sun Hyoun Kim, “Political polarization on twitter: Implications for the use of social media in digital governments,” *Government Information Quarterly* journal, vol. 33, issue 4, October 2016, pp. 777–782.
- ¹¹ See details of resolution and decisions in: United Nations (UN), Resolutions, Decisions and Voting Records of the General Assembly, the Security Council, the Economic and Social Council and the Human Rights Council Relating to the Question of Palestine, A/AC.183/L.2/Add.40, 18/4/2019, https://www.un.org/unispal/wp-content/uploads/2019/06/2018E-Annual-compilation-of-UN-resolutions_EnFinal_180419.pdf
- ¹² Site of The Office of the United Nations Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process (UNSCO), 26/9/2018, https://unsco.unmissions.org/sites/default/files/statement_by_the_envoys_of_the_middle_east_quartet_-_26_september_2018.pdf

- ¹³ Office of the Quartet, Report on the Activities of the Office July 2017 - December 2018, 27/12/2018, <http://www.quartetoffice.org/files/flash/OQ%20Annual%20Report.pdf>
- ¹⁴ See details of speeches of the head of the committee in front of Conference on Cooperation among East Asian Countries for Palestinian Development, June 2018, <http://www.quartetoffice.org/files/flash/OQ%20Clarke%20intervention%20at%20CEAPAD%20III.pdf>; and the Brussels' meeting in the European Union headquarters, March 2018, <http://www.quartetoffice.org/files/flash/AHLC%20plenary%20intervention%2020%20iii%2018%20formatted.pdf>
- ¹⁵ Office of the Quartet, Strategy 2018–2020, Jerusalem, January 2018, <http://www.quartetoffice.org/files/The%20Office%20of%20the%20Quartet%20-%20Strategy%202018-2020%20FINAL%20VERSION.PDF>
- ¹⁶ Prospects for Viable State of Palestine Dwindling as Settlements Expand amid Continuing Violence, Special Coordinator Tells Security Council, UN, Security Council, SC/13674, 22/1/2019, <https://www.un.org/press/en/2019/sc13674.doc.htm>
- ¹⁷ BBC, 14/11/2019, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-50414810>
- ¹⁸ Rising Extremism Risks Eroding Viability of Two-State Solution, Top Official Warns Security Council, Stressing Need for Leadership, Political Will, UN, Security Council, SC/13707, 20/2/2019, <https://www.un.org/press/en/2019/sc13707.doc.htm>; and site of Security Council Report, Chronology of Events, Israel/ Palestine, 1/10/2019, <https://www.securitycouncilreport.org/chronology/israelpalestine.php>
See also site of UN, Security Council, S/2018/516, 1/6/2018, https://www.un.org/en/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=S/2018/516
- ¹⁹ Security Council Meetings in 2018, <https://research.un.org/en/docs/sc/quick/meetings/2018>; and see the 2019 data in: <https://dppa.un.org/en/security-council-briefing-situation-middle-east-under-secretary-general-rosemary-dicarolo-1>
- ²⁰ Resolutions of the 73rd session, General Assembly of the United Nations, <https://www.un.org/en/ga/73/esolutions.shtml>
- ²¹ UN, Resolutions, Decisions and Voting Records of the General Assembly, the Security Council, the Economic and Social Council and the Human Rights Council Relating to the Question of Palestine, A/AC.183/L.2/Add.40, 18/4/2019.
See also UN, General Assembly, 73rd session, A/73/PV.62, 20/12/2018, <https://undocs.org/ar/A/73/PV.62> (in Arabic)
- ²² Fourth Committee Approves 8 Draft Resolutions, Draft Decision, Concluding its Work for Main Segment of Seventy-Fourth General Assembly Session, UN, General Assembly, GA/SPD/713, 15/11/2019, <https://www.un.org/press/en/2019/gaspd713.doc.htm>
- ²³ Second Committee Approves 6 Resolutions, including on Compensation for Oil Slick off Lebanon's Coast, Sovereignty of Palestinians over Their Natural Resources, UN, General Assembly, GA/EF/3526, 14/11/2019, <https://www.un.org/press/en/2019/gaef3526.doc.htm>
- ²⁴ 2018 UN Fourth Committee Resolutions Against Israel, site of UN Watch, <https://unwatch.org/2018-un-fourth-committee-resolutions-israel>; and State of Palestine to Gain Enhanced Rights, Privileges in General Assembly Work, Sessions When It Assumes 2019 Group of 77 Chairmanship, UN, General Assembly, GA/12078, 16/10/2018, <https://www.un.org/press/en/2018/ga12078.doc.htm>
It is noted that when only two countries vote for Israel, they would be Israel and the US; and when several countries vote for it, they would be usually, Canada, Marshall Islands, Micronesia, Australia, Guatemala and Honduras.

- ²⁵ The percentage was brought from the resolutions and recommendations addressing the Palestine issue during the period 1987 (The first *Intifadah*)–2018 (The beginning of the Return Marches at GS borders). The number of resolutions of various UN bodies and agencies were calculated based on the database of the UN site, where also the percentage of countries supporting the Palestinian demands to the number of member countries was calculated. Notably, the number of UN members increased from 159 states in 1987 (The first *Intifadah*) to 193 (Return Marches in March 2018). For reviewing all resolutions of different UN branches, see <https://www.un.org/unispal/documents/>
- ²⁶ Site of TRTWORLD, 28/12/2018, <https://www.trtworld.com/middle-east/in-2018-israel-became-the-most-condemned-nation-at-the-un-22899>
- ²⁷ Economic and Social Council Adopts Texts on Harmful Impact of Israeli Occupation, Rise in Opioid Overdose Deaths, Other Subjects, as Management Segment Begins, UN, Economic and Social Council, ECOSOC/7010, 23/7/2019, <https://www.un.org/press/en/2019/ecosoc7010.doc.htm>
- ²⁸ “Meaningful action” needed to stop Israeli settlement building, say UN experts, site of The Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (UN Human Rights), 8/8/2019, <https://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=24881>
- ²⁹ Resolution adopted by the Economic and Social Council on 24 July 2018, 2018 session, UN, Economic and Social Council, E/RES/2018/20, 3/8/2018, <https://undocs.org/E/RES/2018/20>; and UN, Economic and Social Council, 2018 session, 50th & 51st meeting, ECOSOC/6946, 24/7/2018, <https://www.un.org/press/en/2018/ecosoc6946.doc.htm>
- ³⁰ For details about these sessions, see Economic and Social Council Adopts Texts on Harmful Impact of Israeli Occupation, Rise in Opioid Overdose Deaths, Other Subjects, as Management Segment Begins, UN, Economic and Social Council, ECOSOC/7010, 23/7/2019; and UN, Resolutions, Decisions and Voting Records of the General Assembly, the Security Council, the Economic and Social Council and the Human Rights Council Relating to the Question of Palestine, A/AC.183/L.2/Add.40, 18/4/2019.
- See also “Meaningful action” needed to stop Israeli settlement building, say UN experts, The Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (UN Human Rights), 8/8/2019.
- ³¹ Daniel Marwecki, Why Did the U.S. and Israel Leave UNESCO?, site of E-International Relations (E-IR), 14/2/2019, <https://www.e-ir.info/2019/02/14/why-did-the-u-s-and-israel-leave-unesco/>
- ³² See details of US positions and measures in the following references:
The State Department Omits: The Palestinian Territories From the List of States and Regions on its Site, France24, 28/8/2019; and see Secretary Michael R. Pompeo Remarks to the Press, site of U.S. Department of State, 18/11/2019, <https://www.state.gov/secretary-michael-r-pompeo-remarks-to-the-press/>; Philip H. Gordon, Rethinking U.S. Policy Toward the Palestinians, site of Council on Foreign Relations (CFR), 28/2/2019, <https://www.cfr.org/report/rethinking-us-policy-toward-palestinians>; 115th Congress, Bill S.3549-Palestinian Partnership Fund Act of 2018, site of Congress.gov, 4/10/2018, <https://www.congress.gov/bill/115th-congress/senate-bill/3549/text>; Jennifer Hansler, Nicole Gaouette and Jeremy Diamond, Pompeo Announces Reversal of Longstanding US Policy on Israeli Settlements, site of CNN politics, 18/11/2019, <https://edition.cnn.com/2019/11/18/politics/pompeo-west-bank-settlements-announcement/index.html>; and The Times of Israel, 26/8/2019, <https://www.timesofisrael.com/us-state-department-drops-palestinian-territories-listing-from-website/>
- ³³ Jeremy M. Sharp, “U.S. Foreign Aid to Israel,” CRS, 7/8/2019.

- ³⁴ Site of WSB-TV, 10/9/2019, <https://www.wsbtv.com/news/explainers/who-has-left-the-trump-administration-here-is-a-list-of-55-major-departures/984836034>
For details see:
Site of CBS News, 11/9/2019, <https://www.cbsnews.com/news/trump-fires-john-bolton-his-services-are-no-longer-needed-at-the-white-house/>; Riddhima Kanetkar, Brenda Fitzgerald Joins Long List Of Short-Serving Trump Administration Officials, site of International Business Times, 1/2/2018, <https://www.ibtimes.com/brenda-fitzgerald-joins-long-list-short-serving-trump-administration-officials-2648230>; and List of Trump administration dismissals and resignations, Wikipedia, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_Trump_administration_dismissals_and_resignations
- ³⁵ MEMO, 23/1/2019, <https://www.middleeastmonitor.com/20190123-us-pompeo-says-no-deal-of-the-century-until-after-israel-election>
- ³⁶ MEMO, 3/7/2019, <https://www.middleeastmonitor.com/20190703-us-mideast-envoy-publishes-economic-plan-of-deal-of-the-century-in-arabic/>
- ³⁷ Peace to Prosperity, site of The White House, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/peacetoprosperty/economic/unleashing-economic-potential/>
- ³⁸ About the “First” US Team Delegated to Follow up on the Deal, see Strategic Assessment (110): The Prospects of the US Deal of the Century, al-Zaytouna Centre for Studies and Consultations, February 2019, <https://eng.alzaytouna.net/2019/02/19/strategic-assessment-110-the-prospects-of-the-us-deal-of-the-century/#.X1uu7S1h2qA>
- ³⁹ Eliza Relman, “Jared Kushner’s 28-year-old protégé is his right-hand man in the White House,” site of Business Insider, 5/4/2017, <https://www.businessinsider.com.au/jared-kushner-avi-berkowitz-trump-2017-3>; The Times of Israel, 6/9/2019, <https://www.timesofisrael.com/who-is-the-longtime-kushner-aide-set-to-replace-trump-envoy-jason-greeblatt/>; and Reuters, 11/4/2019.
- ⁴⁰ Amy Chozick and Hannah Seligson, Are Jared and Ivanka Good for the Jews?, *The New York Times*, 17/11/2018, <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/11/17/style/ivanka-trump-jared-kushner.html>
- ⁴¹ Site of Observer, <https://observer.com/author/avrahm-berkowitz>
- ⁴² BBC, 18/9/2019, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-us-canada-49744497>
- ⁴³ Robert C. O’Brien, *While America Slept: Restoring American Leadership to a World in Crisis* (New York: Encounter Books, 2016), passim.
- ⁴⁴ Reuters, 6/12/2019 (in Arabic); and “H.Res.326 - Expressing the sense of the House of Representatives regarding United States efforts to resolve the Israeli-Palestinian conflict through a negotiated two-state solution,” Congress.gov, 6/12/2019, <https://www.congress.gov/bill/116th-congress/house-resolution/326/text>
- ⁴⁵ “European Joint Strategy in support of Palestine 2017–2020,” EEAS, https://eeas.europa.eu/sites/eeas/files/final_-_european_joint_strategy_english.pdf
- ⁴⁶ Ibid.
- ⁴⁷ Jennifer Hansler, Nicole Gaouette and Jeremy Diamond, Pompeo Announces Reversal of Longstanding US Policy on Israeli Settlements, CNN politics, 18/11/2019.
- ⁴⁸ 2018 UN General Assembly Resolutions Singling Out Israel-Texts, Votes, Analysis, UN Watch, <https://unwatch.org/2018-un-general-assembly-resolutions-singling-israel-texts-votes-analysis>
- ⁴⁹ *The Guardian*, 15/4/2019, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2019/apr/15/europe-urged-to-reject-us-middle-east-plan-if-unfair-to-palestinians>
- ⁵⁰ EEAS, 4/5/2019, https://eeas.europa.eu/headquarters/headquarters-homepage/61841/statement-latest-israeli-palestinian-escalation_en; and EEAS, 10/8/2018, https://eeas.europa.eu/diplomatic-network/middle-east-peace-process/49322/statement-latest-escalation-violence-between-gaza-and-israel_en

- ⁵¹ *The Guardian*, 19/7/2018, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2018/jul/19/israel-adopts-controversial-jewish-nation-state-law>
- ⁵² The EU Mobilises Additional €22 Million in Aid to Palestinians, site of European Commission, 30/4/2019, https://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_IP-19-2341_en.htm
- ⁵³ Site of European Parliament, 24/4/2019, http://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/E-8-2019-000906-ASW_EN.html
- ⁵⁴ Commissioner-General's Statement: Special Political And Decolonization Committee, UNRWA, 14/11/2018, <https://www.unrwa.org/newsroom/official-statements/commissioner-general%E2%80%99s-statement-special-political-and-decolonization>
- ⁵⁵ *Haaretz*, 6/12/2018, <https://www.haaretz.com/world-news/europe/.premium-eu-adopts-declaration-that-doesn-t-link-anti-semitism-to-anti-zionism-1.6722922>
- ⁵⁶ How Israel Manipulates the Struggle Against Anti-Semitism, site of Orient XXI, 12/2/2019, <https://orientxxi.info/magazine/how-israel-manipulates-the-struggle-against-anti-semitism,2906>
- ⁵⁷ 10th BRICS Summit Johannesburg Declaration, site of Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India, 26/7/2018, https://www.mea.gov.in/bilateral-documents.htm?dtl/30190/10th_BRICS_Summit_Johannesburg_Declaration
- ⁵⁸ MEMO, 7/6/2018, <https://www.middleeastmonitor.com/20180607-brics-contributes-to-palestines-oppression-through-the-two-state-compromise>
- ⁵⁹ *The Guardian*, 1/1/2019, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2019/jan/01/jair-bolsonaro-inauguration-brazil-president>
- ⁶⁰ The Times of Israel, 31/3/2019, <https://www.timesofisrael.com/brazils-bolsonaro-lands-in-israel-professes-love-for-the-country/>
- ⁶¹ Site of Russian News Agency (TASS), 3/7/2019, <https://tass.com/politics/1066895>
- ⁶² Site of Agence France-Presse (AFP), 15/1/2018, <https://www.afp.com/en/>
- ⁶³ Palestinian-Russian Relations, The Times of Israel, <https://www.timesofisrael.com/topic/palestinian-russian-relations/>
- ⁶⁴ Site of Yeni Şafak, 23/1/2019, <https://www.yenisafak.com/en/world/russia-to-grant-10m-in-aid-to-palestinian-refugees-3472652>
- ⁶⁵ Site of The Associated Press (AP), 19/9/2018, <https://apnews.com/49ff908bba924ee1a43b5a6db3917bcd>
- ⁶⁶ Joint statement of the 20th EU-China Summit, EEAS, 17/7/2018, https://eeas.europa.eu/delegations/china_en/48424/Joint%20statement%20of%20the%2020th%20EU-China%20Summit
- ⁶⁷ Walid 'Abd al-Hay, "Does the Policy of Balance Restrict China's Role in the Middle East?," *Journal of International Politics Supplement*, Dar Al Ahram Publishing House, no. 207, January 2017, pp. 25–30. (in Arabic)
- ⁶⁸ See CBS, <https://www.cbs.gov.il/he/publications/doclib/2020/yarhon0120/h8.pdf>
- ⁶⁹ *Haaretz*, 4/7/2019, <https://www.haaretz.com/israel-news/business/.premium-chinese-tourism-rose-67-in-first-half-of-2019-1.7436346>
- ⁷⁰ Dan Arbell and David Gordon, What do Israel's China ties mean for its relationship with the US?, site of International Institute for Strategic Studies (IISS), 8/5/2019, <https://www.iiss.org/blogs/analysis/2019/05/israel-china>
- ⁷¹ See *Alghad*, 31/5/2018; *al-Hayat al-Jadida*, 10/7/2018; WAFA, 10/7/2018 (in Arabic); and *al-Hayat al-Jadida*, 7/8/2018.

- ⁷² Yeni Şafak, 12/6/2019, <https://www.yenisafak.com/en/news/india-favors-israel-against-palestinian-group-at-un-3483028>
- ⁷³ Site of ARAB NEWS, 9/12/2018, <https://www.arabnews.com/node/1417906/business-economy>
- ⁷⁴ P. R. Kumaraswamy, India's New Israel Policy: How the Decline of the Palestinian Issue and Economic Reorientation Accelerate Indo-Israeli Cooperation, site of German Institute for International and Security Affairs (SWP), no. 11, March 2019, https://www.swp-berlin.org/fileadmin/contents/products/comments/2019C11_kumaraswamy.pdf
- ⁷⁵ Haaretz, 10/9/2019, <https://www.haaretz.com/world-news/premium-israel-would-welcome-ties-with-pakistan-should-india-worry-1.7805334>
- ⁷⁶ Statement of the Chairperson of the African Union Commission on Palestine, site of African Union, 14/5/2018, <https://au.int/en/pressreleases/20180514/statement-chairperson-african-union-commission-palestine>
- ⁷⁷ Anadolu Agency, 14/5/2018. (in Arabic)
- ⁷⁸ Azad Essa, "Ghana's support brings Israel a step closer to African Union seat," site of Middle East Eye, 22/11/2018, <https://www.middleeasteye.net/opinion/ghanas-support-brings-israel-step-closer-african-union-seat>
- ⁷⁹ Arabs 48, 25/11/2018.
- ⁸⁰ *Alqabas* newspaper, 7/7/2019.
- ⁸¹ Arabs 48, 23/2/2018; and MEMO, 23/2/2018, <https://www.middleeastmonitor.com/20180223-is-israel-exchanging-arms-for-refugees-with-rwanda/>
- ⁸² Site of The New Times, 21/5/2019, <https://www.newtimes.co.rw/news/rwanda-joins-oecd-centre>
- ⁸³ Site of Gulf News, 31/12/2018, <https://gulfnews.com/world/mena/behind-israels-love-affair-with-latin-america-1.61185289>
- ⁸⁴ Gulf News, 22/2/2019, <https://gulfnews.com/opinion/op-eds/israels-activity-in-latin-america-is-worrying-1.62208269>
- ⁸⁵ *The Jerusalem Post*, 12/8/2018, <https://www.jpost.com/Diaspora/Is-South-America-Turning-Pro-Israel-564645>
- ⁸⁶ PM Netanyahu meets with Brazilian Foreign Minister Aloysio Nunes, site of Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 27/2/2018, <https://mfa.gov.il/MFA/PressRoom/2018/Pages/PM-Netanyahu-meets-with-Brazilian-Foreign-Minister-Nunes-27-February-2018.aspx>
- ⁸⁷ Site of Msdr News, 3/12/2019, <https://msdrnews.com>; and The Times of Israel, 1/9/2019, <https://www.timesofisrael.com/honduras-opens-trade-office-in-jerusalem-in-first-step-toward-embassy-move/#gs.gijygn>
- ⁸⁸ RT, 9/12/2019. (in Arabic)
- ⁸⁹ *Al-Youm al-Sabi'*, 16/12/2017; and site of Mobtada, 16/5/2018, <https://www.mobtada.com/details/731943>
- ⁹⁰ Site of The Popular Conference of Palestinians Abroad, 17/6/2019, <https://palabroad.org/post/view/33929>
- ⁹¹ Shinzo Abe, *Towards a Beautiful Country: My Vision For Japan* (Vertical Inc., 2007), passim.
- ⁹² See Japan-Israel Relations, site of Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, 27/2/2020, https://www.mofa.go.jp/region/middle_e/israel/index.html
- ⁹³ See Wafa, 4/7/2018 (in Arabic); *Alghad*, 14/5/2018; and *al-Hayat*, 8/3/2018.
- ⁹⁴ Site of The Intercept, 3/12/2018, <https://theintercept.com/2018/12/03/rashida-tlaib-palestine-israel-aipac-congress-trip/>
- ⁹⁵ Peace Now, 15/8/2019, <https://peacenow.org/entry.php?id=31907#.XeTncFQzZhE>

- ⁹⁶ Site of The New Arab, 1/1/2019, <https://www.alaraby.co.uk/english/blog/2019/1/1/for-palestine-top-five-bds-victories-of-2018>
- ⁹⁷ Site of Boycott, Divestment, Sanctions (BDS), 10/5/2019, <https://bdsmovement.net/news/israeli-apartheid-week-even-bigger-success-2019>
- ⁹⁸ *Israel Hayom*, 25/12/2019, <https://www.israelhayom.com/2019/12/25/strategic-affairs-ministry-campus-anti-semitism-increasingly-related-to-israel/>
- ⁹⁹ Statement of ICC Prosecutor, Fatou Bensouda, on the conclusion of the preliminary examination of the Situation in Palestine, and seeking a ruling on the scope of the Court's territorial jurisdiction, ICC, 20/12/2019, <https://www.icc-cpi.int/Pages/item.aspx?name=20191220-otp-statement-palestine>
- ¹⁰⁰ WAFA, 20/12/2019. (in Arabic)
- ¹⁰¹ The Times of Israel, 20/12/2019, <https://www.timesofisrael.com/nentanyahu-icc-decision-to-probe-israel-a-dark-day-for-truth-and-justice/#gs.gjusu8>
- ¹⁰² Site of Amnesty International, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/countries/middle-east-and-north-africa/israel-and-occupied-palestinian-territories/report-israel-and-occupied-palestinian-territories/>
- ¹⁰³ Site of Freedom House, <https://freedomhouse.org/country/west-bank/freedom-world/2019>
- ¹⁰⁴ World Report 2019, site of Human Rights Watch, <https://www.hrw.org/world-report/2019/country-chapters/israel/palestine>
- ¹⁰⁵ Site of Reporters Without Borders, 15/5/2018, <https://rsf.org/en/news/rsf-asks-icc-investigate-israeli-sniper-fire-palestinian-journalists>
- ¹⁰⁶ How does the world feel about Israel/Palestine?, site of Vox, 14/5/2018, <https://www.vox.com/2018/11/20/18080086/israel-palestine-global-opinion>
- ¹⁰⁷ Carroll Doherty, A new perspective on Americans' views of Israelis and Palestinians, site of Pew Research Center, 24/4/2019, <https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2019/04/24/a-new-perspective-on-americans-views-of-israelis-and-palestinians/>
- ¹⁰⁸ *The Jerusalem Post*, 25/4/2019, <https://www.jpost.com/Diaspora/Younger-Republicans-are-less-supportive-of-Israel-poll-finds-587810>
- ¹⁰⁹ The Times of Israel, 24/9/2019, <https://www.timesofisrael.com/israelis-hold-most-negative-view-of-un-in-new-poll-of-numerous-countries/>
- ¹¹⁰ Richard Allen Greene, CNN poll reveals depth of anti-Semitism in Europe, CNN, <https://edition.cnn.com/interactive/2018/11/europe/antisemitism-poll-2018-intl/>
- ¹¹¹ Attitudes Towards the Recognition of Jerusalem as Israeli Capital, site of Gallup International Association (GIA), December 2017, http://www.gallup-international.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/01/2017_USA-Decision-on-Jerusalem.pdf
- ¹¹² How Israel Manipulates the Struggle Against Anti-Semitism, *Orient XXI*, 12/2/2019.
- ¹¹³ The signatories are former foreign ministers representing:
United Kingdom, France, Germany, Italy, Spain, Sweden, Poland, Romania, Belgium, Denmark, Austria, Slovakia, Luxembourg, Croatia, Ireland, the Netherlands, Finland, Slovenia, and Czech Republic. See *The Guardian*, 15/4/2019, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2019/apr/14/europe-must-stand-by-the-two-state-solution-for-israel-and-palestine>
- ¹¹⁴ Shira Efron et. al., *The Evolving Israel-China Relationship* (US: Rand Corporation, 2019), pp. 123–142, https://www.rand.org/pubs/research_reports/RR2641.html
- ¹¹⁵ Claude Forthomme, The Deadly Ideology Driving Putin: Eurasianism, site of Impakter, 14/3/2019, <https://impakter.com/deadly-ideology-putin-eurasianism/>

This Report

Al-Zaytouna Centre is pleased to present to its readers the Palestine Strategic Report (PSR) 2018–2019, the 11th PSR to be published.

With an academic methodology and comprehensive, and objective approach, the report comprehensively details developments concerning the Palestine issue and provides the latest information and data available at the end of 2019, along with analyses and forecasts running into 2020–2021.

This report is the result of collaborative work between 14 experts and researchers. In eight chapters, it addresses the internal Palestinian scene; Palestinian demographic and economic indicators; the situation in Jerusalem and the holy sites; the specifics of Israeli aggression, Palestinian resistance and the peace process; the complexities of Israeli-Palestinian dynamics, including the internal situation in Israel; and Palestine's Arab, Islamic and international relations.

The PSR now occupies a prominent position as an indispensable reference document, integral to Palestine studies and research. Al-Zaytouna Centre hopes the PSR will continue to make valuable contributions in this field.

Prof. Dr. Mohsen Mohammad Saleh

The Palestine Strategic Report 2018 – 2019



Al-Zaytouna Centre for Studies & Consultations

مركز الزيتونة للدراسات والاستشارات

P.O. Box: 14-5034 Beirut - Lebanon

Tel: +961 1 803 644 | Tel-Fax: +961 1 803 643

info@alzaytouna.net | www.alzaytouna.net



ISBN 978-9953-572-99-4



9 789953 572994



Al-Zaytouna Centre For Studies & Consultations