

EVA STALIN IAS ACADEMY

12/24, Muthuranga Mudali St, next to Deepam Hospital,
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Israel, a two-state solution, some recent perceptions

How, and where, did the idea of a Jewish national home arise and take shape since recorded history on the matter is somewhat hazy?

Rarely has social media summed up a situation so succinctly. According to the *Urban Dictionary*, the noun Israel 'got israelied' as a verb to mean when someone is asked to share something of yours, then claims it as their own, and takes it for themselves.

Origin and questions

The 40th anniversary (in 1988) of the establishment of the Israeli state, however, and the release of official documents, coincided with the effort by Israeli scholars to challenge it. The historian Ian Pappé contested 'the Ten Myths' about the origin and identity of the contemporary state of Israel. Five of these related to the origins: that Palestine was an empty land; that the Jews were a people without land; that Zionism is Judaism; that Zionism is not Colonialism; and that the Palestinians left their land in 1948.

Bilateral and multilateral efforts to seek a solution to the resulting problems brought forth no compromise. On the contrary, and early in 2018, Israel's ruling Likud Party unanimously endorsed a resolution calling for the annexation of West Bank settlements. The Public Security Minister Gilaad Erdan declared, "We are telling the world that it doesn't matter what the nations of the world say. The time has come to express our biblical right to the land."

Subsequent writings, and official Israeli assertions, have confirmed the validity of these questions. The war of June 1967 changed the landscape to Israel's benefit. It was followed by United Nations Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973). In 1974, the Palestine Liberation Organization was officially recognised by the Arab League and the United Nations General Assembly as being the "sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people", and was invited to participate in all UN activities under observer status. The Arab states, after much meandering, developed a common position in the Arab League Declaration/Initiative of March 2002. This was followed a few months later by the Palestinian Non-Paper (June 12, 2002) outlining a vision for Permanent Status Negotiations based on it and stating that 'the border between the state of Palestine and the state of Israel will be the June 4, 1967 Armistice Line'.

Light on this was shed by Benjamin



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Writings and official Israeli assertions offer an idea of what 'a Jewish national home' and a long-standing dispute constitute

Beit-Hallahmi of Haifa University in *Original Sins: Reflections on the History of Zionism and Israel*:

'Out of the original sins of the world against the Jews grew the original sins of Zionism against the Palestinian'. Looking at the future he argued that 'the main obstacles to a solution have to do with exorcising the past, admitting past and present injustice for one side; forgiving the past, and the present for the other. The Israelis' problem is asking for forgiveness; the Palestinians' the readiness to forgive...Israelis seem to be trapped in a peculiar and impossible situation. Any concession to the Palestinians may lead to the unravelling of the whole Zionist enterprise'.

Balance of forces

A realistic assessment of the balance of forces was made by former negotiator and Ambassador to Washington, Prof. Itamar Rabinovich of Hebrew University, in *Waging Peace: Israel and the Arabs 1948-2003*: "The military might that Israel displayed in June 1967 convinced the Arabs that they could not reasonably hope to end the conflict through a military victory... The effect of the 1967 defeat was qualitatively different from that of the defeats of 1948 and 1956...In the Arab's ensuring soul-searching, several alternatives were fiercely debated...but a recommendation to seek a political settlement based on a historic compromise was not made."

Further turmoil, regional and global, including the arrival in Israel of nearly a million immigrants from the former Soviet Union, and the long and profound effect on the Israeli public of the Intifada, eventually led to the Madrid Conference of 1991. The letter of invitation to invitees did not include the phrase "territories for peace" but was mentioned in the letters of assurance addressed to the Arab invitees.

Writing in 2004, Rabinovich concluded that 'Israel is far more powerful than its Palestinian adversary, but it cannot translate its military superiority into a total, definitive victory...The military might that Israel displayed in June 1967 convinced the Arabs that they could not reasonably hope to end the conflict through a military victory...The effect of the 1967 defeat was qualitatively different from that of the defeats of 1948 and 1956...In the Arab's ensuring soul-searching, several alternatives were fiercely debated...but a recommendation to seek a political settlement based on a historic compromise was not made.'

In a study published recently by a the Tel Aviv University think-tank, two experts assessed that the American support for Israel in the present

war 'has been unprecedented' in terms of diplomatic support, ongoing military assistance and strategic support but also in growing criticism of Israel's conduct and increasing efforts to shape the post-war situation. It adds that the predominantly Jewish community (in the U.S.) and particularly its younger members 'are distancing themselves from Israel' and the same can be said of in assessing domestic attitudes in Israel.

The Israeli argument, and the substance of Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's reasoning, is guarantee of a continued Israeli control over the majority of West Bank land, water, internal and external movement and transportation, and overriding security. This, in effect, is a recipe for preventing the creation of a normal Palestinian state. The American way out of it is a two-state solution whose small print shall be a de-militarised Palestine guaranteed by a de-facto U.S.-Israeli alliance.

The players

The respective requirements of the affected or interested parties to this long-standing dispute, in the light of the experience of October 7, can thus be summed up:

Palestinians: recognition of their existence as a state along with rights as a state under international law and in terms of the Palestinian Non-Paper of June 12, 2002;

Israel: retention of the acquired territory. 'The Palestinians would be given all the powers to govern themselves but none of the powers that could threaten Israel. Put simply, the solution is self-government for the Palestinians with vital security powers retained by Israel.'

The United States: A two-state solution with a de-militarised Gaza, a Saudi normalisation with Israel, a role for the moderate Arab countries in rebuilding Gaza, and in keeping Iran isolated.

In the last week of February, Thomas Friedman wrote about 'the increasingly rapid erosion of Israel's standing among friendly nations' and if [U.S. President Joe] Biden is not careful, America's global standing will plummet right along with Israel's.'

Arab states: A revitalised Palestinian state, devoid of radical elements after the experience of the Arab Spring, and a benefiting from the experience of Egypt and Jordan and of the governments party to the Abraham Accords. Some of may not be averse to American suggestions of an Arab Mandate.

One needs to be an optimist, even a 'panglossian', to consider these to be realisable.

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Scientists and a wish list for the incoming government

With 970 million Indians in the process of exercising their franchise in the ongoing general election, what do scientists look for in the polls? Who do they want to vote for, and what are the fundamental issues they want to see their elected representatives resolve and implement?

There are five fundamental issues that scientists want the new government to solve and their elected representatives to pay urgent attention to.

Increase spending

First, an increase in the nation's gross domestic expenditure on research and development (currently below 0.7% of GDP), both from the government exchequer and private players (who contribute less than 40% of the current spending). Government spending on research and development should increase by at least 50% year-over-year in the next five years, accounting for nearly 4% of GDP at the end of the incoming government's term. How can the private sector spending on research and development go up? One such avenue is contributing to the recently established Anusandhan National Research Foundation (ANRF), where the private sector is expected to contribute ₹6,000 crore over five years.

Although a legislative route to facilitate this is envisioned, the incoming government needs to implement a more detailed plan and establish mechanisms akin to escrow accounts guaranteeing this funding. Increased funding will require raising the skilled scientific workforce to spend the money judiciously, and in time, including bringing new and nurturing existing human resources.

Second, public sector institutions' physical and intellectual infrastructure, such as universities and research institutions, must be improved. Modernising science laboratories in undergraduate colleges, State and central universities, and specialised research institutions is badly required. Providing a better



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Supporting
science and
scientists is
essential in
India's quest to
become a major
economic
powerhouse

infrastructure for students and scientists to stay and practise their trade is also needed. Upgrading infrastructure will not only require hiring more quality teachers and researchers to fill the sanctioned positions but also doubling that number effectively over the next five years.

However, hiring more people to practise competitive science will only help if we have a robust and unbiased system to bring the best.

Focus on merit

Third, making hiring in educational and research institutions to a globally accepted standard that is transparent, fast and free from any influence. The criteria for selection should be strictly based on merit, with a competent committee capable of choosing the right person for the right job free from any outside influence. It should be at the most six months from the time of application to the time of providing the appointment letters. There are established global norms for hiring quality teachers and scientists, and we must follow the same process.

Fourth, a robust science grant management system to facilitate research will be required, one with less red tape in grant submission, one that makes faster and timely grant and student fellowship disbursement, one that demands no hard copy submission, and one that gives autonomy to individual scientists on how and what they want to spend on for their research. A robust system and an increased workforce are needed to allow various departments within science ministries to spend their allocated budget before the end of each financial year and streamline fund disbursement to scientists in time.

Effective spending at the level of scientists also means providing flexibility to purchase from places other than the government's e-marketplace (which is mandated now and forces scientists to buy, at times, lower quality, sub-par "Made in India" products due to low overall price) and providing flexibility to scientists to deviate from the general financial rules, if required. The money is well spent when scientists

purchase what they need for their research over the cheapest available products. This can be done while making scientists accountable for the spending.

Ensure freedom

Finally, the last but not the most critical implementation that scientists look forward to is the freedom to speak and write on their subjects based on evidence and which is free from interference. Academia without a flourishing start-up ecosystem will not produce innovation for the masses. Although successive governments have done a great deal to promote innovation and entrepreneurship on Indian campuses, the true spirit of innovation will come when the incoming government provides full autonomy to individual scientists to take leave to form companies, have flexibility in hiring the right scientific staff in their laboratories without excessive paperwork and administrative processes, and the freedom to spend money on where they deem fit and to travel to national and international conferences. While doing so, scientists need to be accountable for the quality of their science rather than merely following the processes, for the quality of the products/solutions that come out of their laboratories (those who work on applied science subjects) and for the quality of knowledge that they create and impart to younger minds.

For India to aspire to be the second largest economy by 2050, the incoming government must improve the ease of doing science and provide scientists the complete freedom to think and implement, away from excessive bureaucratic and administrative processes and paperwork. While supporting our researchers in creating wealth and jobs for society through innovation and entrepreneurship, it is vitally important that the incoming government also invests in fundamental science and knowledge creation. One cannot exist without the other. Scientists, although small in number, form an essential electoral block that can influence decision-making for the larger public good.