

Security Council

Addressing the issue of the surge of Israeli settlements



Forum	Security Council
Issue:	Addressing the issue of the surge of Israeli settlements
Student Officer:	James Evans
Position:	Deputy President

Introduction

The issue of Arab-Israeli violence is long-debated and divisive. Both the Jewish people and the Arab people have a claim to the land that is now Israel and Palestine. The Jews believe it was promised to Abraham and his descendants by God in biblical times and have long had a strong affiliation with the area. The Arabs on the other hand have lived in the region for centuries, the idea of an independent Palestine arising near the end of the Ottoman Empire which had previously governed much of the region.

Methods to control the disputed land have historically been violent, resulting in the deaths of many thousands of Israelis and Arabs, but since the late 1900s Israel has begun to use more subtle methods, encouraging its citizens to set up homes on the West Bank and the Gaza Strip with a particular emphasis on East Jerusalem, a holy site for Jews, Christians and Muslims. There are now more than 400 000 Israeli settlers living in the West Bank with an additional 200 000 in East Jerusalem alone.

Previous solutions, and some of the most likely proposed plans, tend to be variations on the two-state solution, a scenario where an independent Israel and Palestine could coexist peacefully, however the generally recognised (not by all countries) border between Israel and Palestine is being blurred even further by these settlements, the developed, permanent nature of these communities makes their removal difficult. Despite attempts at negotiation tensions remain very high and it is becoming increasingly clear to both sides and the international community that something needs to be done if more violence is to be avoided.

NB: At times in this report Palestine is referred to as a country or a state. It is currently recognised in the UN as a non-member observer state.



Definition of Key Terms

Zionism

“The political movement that had as its original aim the creation of a country for Jewish people, and that now supports the state of Israel”.

Corpus Separatum

Latin for “separated body”. It is used to describe the legal state of Jerusalem in the 1947 UN partition plan.

Arab

“A member of an Arabic-speaking people” that historically originate from the Arabian Peninsula”. For the purposes of this report this excludes Jewish people.

Judaism

A monotheistic religion whose key teachings are found in the Torah.

Intifada

Arabic for ‘uprising’.

General Overview

A Brief History of Arab-Israeli conflict

Before and during the First World War Britain offered support to both Arabs and Zionists for independent homelands in exchange for them opposing the Ottoman Empire, conflicting declarations that sparked tensions between the two groups. After the 1st World War, the newly formed League of Nations -precursor to the UN- awarded Britain a mandate (Appendix I) over Iraq and Palestine. The latter was then divided into two: Palestine, governed from London, and Transjordan. No fully independent Arab state was formed.

The atrocities of the Holocaust raised support amongst the international Jewish community, the ideals of the Haskala movement (Jewish integration into European societies) seeming unattainable. This surge in Jewish immigrants stoked tensions between Zionists



and Arabs and violence between the two groups intensified. Anger towards the British grew in both the Arabs and the Jewish people as both promised homelands failed to be created. Britain, unable to manage the region referred its control to the UN.

Throughout 1947 the UN deliberated and formed a partition plan put forward in resolution 181 which was then adopted. It proposed a Jewish state: now Israel, and an Arab state: Palestine. In 1949 the British mandate came to an end and the two states had the chance for independence. Jerusalem, given its wide religious and cultural importance, became a 'corpus separatum', managed by the UN.

On May 14th, 1948 the Zionists declared the creation of the state of Israel, one day before the British mandate expired. On the 15th Arab troops from Egypt, Transjordan, Iraq, Syria and Lebanon began to occupy eastern Palestine, then attacked and captured East Jerusalem. The purpose of the attacks, the Arabs claimed, was to "restore order" after the British departure but this is widely disputed as these countries also wanted to extend their influence in the region.

The war ended in July 1949 after the UN arranged ceasefires and the Arab states and Israel signed a set of armistice agreements. Under these agreements Israel now controlled 77% of the territory, Transjordan was allotted the West Bank and East Jerusalem and Egypt occupied what is now known as the Gaza strip. The 1947-9 war is estimated to have caused 726 000 Palestinian Arabs to become refugees.

In response to the creation of the Palestinian Liberation Organisation (PLO), on the 5th June 1967 Israel attacked at the Egyptian border capturing the Gaza strip and the Sinai Peninsula marking the beginning of the Six-Day war. Israel took control of the whole of the West Bank and Jerusalem and then advanced on the Golan Heights, Syria. Israel gained large amounts of territory but the outcome of the war remains disputed, both sides heralding it as a success.

In November 1967 the UN Security Council adopted resolution 242 which directed Israel to withdraw troops from territories it had seized in the Six-Day war. Israel offered to return all captured territory except Jerusalem in return for peace treaties with the neighbouring Arab states.

Anger within the Arab community towards Israel only grew as Israel essentially governed all of what had previously been promised to be Palestinian land and in 1987 erupted into the First Intifada. Protests became violent and were met with force by Israel.



More than 1000 Palestinians and over 200 Israelis died during this period which lasted until 1993.

This fresh outburst of violence made it clear to both sides that the situation was not sustainable, and a longer lasting peace treaty had to be signed. To this end the Oslo Accords were written and ratified in both Washington D.C. and Taba, Egypt. By signing these accords the PLO agreed to formally recognise the state of Israel and Israel agreed to give the Palestinians a form of self-governance in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. Violence temporarily abated but tensions remained high.

The Second Intifada, more violent than the first, which began in September 2008 made it clear to the world that this issue was far from solved.

Recent events

On March 30th, 2018 Palestinians began protesting along the border fence with Israel to demand their right to return to their ancestral homes which now make up the state of Israel, and to end the blockade imposed on the Gaza Strip. Just over a year later and 190 people had died, 28 000 had been injured. Israeli forces have repeatedly fired on civilians protesting at the border. The UN accuses the Israeli military of having committed war crimes, Israel attempted to defend its actions claiming the protesters were violent and would have breached the border fence.

The expansion of Israeli settlements

After the Six-Day War, religious Zionists wanted the occupied land to remain a part of the state of Israel, noting that with the new territories acquired, Israel's borders were very similar to those of the biblical land of Israel to which they aspired. While Israel returned the land, in 1977 Israel adopted an official policy of "settlement expansion". These settlements form the basis of the issue that must be addressed. By 2003, 220 000 Jews had settled the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, an additional 200 000 had settled in Jerusalem and 15 000 in the Golan heights (officially annexed from Syria in 1981). The international community widely regards these settlements in Gaza and the West Bank as illegal, and breach Resolution 242. Israel maintains that because these territories were not sovereign territory of any state, they are not illegal, they are merely acting as legal administrator of land of indeterminate status.

While Palestine has some civil control over its territory, it is not a fully recognised state (defined by the UN as a "non-member observer state"). Attempts to create a fully



independent Palestine are made substantially more difficult by the large number of Israelis that have settled there, particularly on the West Bank.

The population of the West Bank is approximately 3 million, almost 20% are Jewish Israelis. These settlers are still citizens of and supported by Israel. Israel even went so far as to offer building permits and drawing up plans to develop the West Bank. It built roads throughout the region to connect its settlements and allow access back to Israel. Most of the settlements are not temporary structures, many even having schools, hospitals, in one case a university. East Jerusalem, which is not recognised as a part of Israel also continues to be heavily settled affording Israel more and more control over this important historic and religious site.

According to the UN these settlements have “no legal validity” and are widely regarded as being a significant issue that prevents peace in the region (UN), some go as far as to say they breach article 49 of the 4th Geneva Convention. Despite this strong condemnation Israelis continue to move here, partly because of the historical and religious significance of the region, and partly because of the economic incentives offered by Israel. The Israeli Prime Minister took another step towards Israeli control of the West Bank saying he planned to annex Jewish settlements there if re-elected, which he was later that year.

Major Parties Involved

Israel

Israel does not recognise Palestine and has not, in general, ever done so. The only exception was for a short time after the Oslo accords, but this was short lived. Throughout the last 70 years it has attempted to prevent the founding of an independent Palestine through violence but has more recently turned to different means. Since the 1970s Israel has encouraged its citizens to settle on the West Bank in a bid to increase its control of the land. Despite strong condemnation by the international community and the UN having explicitly said these settlements are illegal, Israel has given no indication it intends to stop. Housing on the West Bank for Israelis tends to be cheap; it is often subsidised by Israel. The extensive road system built by Israel makes access very easy.



Palestine, the PLO and the Palestinian National Authority (PA)

Formed in 1964 the PLO was created to unify various groups advocating the creation of an independent Palestine. In 2011 it attempted to attain full member-state status in the UN. This failed, but in 2012 the General Assembly voted to recognise it as a “non-member observer state” allowing it to take part in General Assembly debates.

Since the 1960s the PLO has orchestrated a number of attacks against Israeli military targets. In the mid 1960s the PLO was largely taken over by a group called Fatah. In 1969 Yasser Arafat (a member of Fatah) became chairman of the PLO and remained in this position until his death in 2004. Under him the PLO began using terrorist tactics such as aircraft hijacking. It played a major role in both intifadas.

Arafat signed the Oslo accords with Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin, recognising Israel and forming the PA which governs parts of Gaza and the West Bank. Fatah, which now governs most of the West Bank now believes in negotiating with Israel and has ruled out violent methods. The PLO however strongly condemns Israeli settlements in the West Bank.

Hamas

Hamas is an Islamic group formed in 1987 after the start of the first intifada. It is regarded as a terrorist group by many states and organisations including the USA and the EU. This organisation has never recognised Israel and historically wished to destroy it and establish an independent Palestine on the whole of what used to be the British Mandate. In 2017 however it adopted a less extreme stance declaring itself willing to establish an “interim Palestinian state” within pre-1967 borders (Appendix III). In 2006 Hamas achieved an overwhelming victory in the Palestinian Legislative Council (PLC) elections, but after clashing with Fatah in Gaza, left and set up a rival government that now manages the Gaza Strip.

Egypt, Syria, Jordan, Iraq and Saudi Arabia

These neighbouring Arab countries do not recognise Israel, excepting Egypt which became the first Arab state to do so in 1979 through the signing of the Egypt-Israel peace treaty. All these states have a history of violence with Israel, participating in the 1947 war, the Six-Day War or both.



Lebanon

Does not recognise Israel. Was part of the Arab invasion of Israel in 1948. Played host to PLO headquarters from 1971-1982. After the attempted assassination of the Israeli ambassador to Britain by a Palestinian splinter group, Israel invaded Lebanon in June of 1982 in retribution for it supporting Palestinian independence organisations. Israeli troops remained in Lebanon until 1985.

The United States of America

The USA has from Israel's creation been one of its biggest supporters. President Truman was the first world leader to recognise Israel in 1948. From this point onwards the USA has provided Israel with financial and, in some cases, military assistance. The USA also supported Israel during the Six-Day War. USA support of Israel has not been universal however. The US administration demanded Israel's withdrawal from Sinai in both 1956 and 1975. President Bill Clinton hosted the ratification of the Oslo Accords in 1993 which led to a small period of peace. The US administration under President Barack Obama, however, strongly condemns Israel's continued settlement of the West Bank, but in a controversial move President Donald Trump recognised Jerusalem as the capital of Israel.

The Russian Federation

Russia has been fairly unbiased in Arab-Israeli conflict. It was one of the first countries to recognise Israel, but also recognises Palestine. The Russian Federation, like most of the international community, strongly opposes the expansion of Israeli settlements. It "reaffirms support for the two-state solution" and regards West Jerusalem as the capital of Israel and East Jerusalem as the future capital of Palestine.

Timeline of Key Events

Date	Description of event
1915	Britain requests Arabs rebel against the Ottoman Empire in return for the promise that Britain will support the creation of Palestine.
November 2 nd 1917	Balfour declaration issued.
April 25 th 1920	Britain awarded mandate of what is now Israel and Palestine.



1918-1922	Jewish population of Palestine region rises to 11% (increased rate of immigration).
1936-1939	Arab revolt against British rule.
May 23 rd 1939	White Paper is ratified in attempt to pacify Arab rebels.
November 29 th 1947	Resolution 181 calling for the partition of the British mandate into a Jewish and an Arab state. Violence erupts in response to the allocation of land in this resolution.
May 14 th 1948	British mandate ends, creation of the state of Israel. USA President Truman recognises the new state on the same day.
May 15 th 1948	Egypt, Transjordan, Iraq, Syria, Lebanon declare war on Israel and begin to occupy eastern Palestine.
July 1949	Armistice agreements signed between Israel and Egypt, Transjordan, Iraq, Syria and Lebanon.
October 29 th 1956	Israeli troops invade Sinai after an agreement made with France and Britain in response to Egyptian President Nasser nationalising the Suez Canal.
May 28 th 1964	PLO founded.
June 5 th 1967	Israel attacks Egyptian border, start of the Six-Day War.
November 21 st 1967	UN resolution 242 passes.
1977	Israel adopts an official policy of “settlement expansion”.
December 8 th 1987 – September 13 th 1993	First Intifada, Hamas formed.
September 13 th 1993	First of the Oslo Accords (Oslo I) is ratified.
September 28 th 1995	Second of the Oslo Accords (Oslo II) is ratified.
September 2000 – February 2008	Second Intifada, more violent than the first with terrorist tactics used by the PLO, and great force used by Israel.
August 15 th 2005	Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon withdraws settlements in the Gaza Strip, most of which then move to the West Bank.
March 30 th 2018	Palestinians begin protesting along Gaza Strip border with Israel.

UN involvement, Relevant Resolutions, Treaties and Events

- Future government of Palestine, 29 November 1947, A/RES/181
- Middle East, 14 June 1967, S/RES/237



- Measures taken by Israel to change the status of the City of Jerusalem, 4 July 1967, A/RES/2253
- Measures taken by Israel to change the status of the city of Jerusalem, 14 July 1967, A/RES/2254
- Middle East, 22 November 1967, S/RES/242
- Middle East, 21 May 1968, S/RES/252
- Territories occupied by Israel, 22 May 1979, S/RES/446
- Territories occupied by Israel, 20 July 1979, S/RES/452
- Territories occupied by Israel, 1 March 1980, S/RES/465
- Territories occupied by Israel, 30 June 1980, S/RES/476
- Territories occupied by Israel, 20 August 1980, S/RES/478
- The situation in the Middle East, including the Palestine question, 12 March 2002, S/RES/1397
- The situation in the Middle East, including the Palestine question, 19 November 2003, S/RES/1515
- The situation in the Middle East, including the Palestine question, 16 December 2008, S/RES/1850
- Status of Palestine in the United Nations, 4 December 2012, A/RES/67/19
- The situation in the Middle East, including the Palestine question, 23 December 2016, S/RES/2334

Previous Attempts to solve the Issue

Previous attempts to solve the issue of violence between Israel and Palestine have all been in a similar vein, namely following the two-state route. This strategy hopes to satisfy both parties, fulfilling their wishes for their own independent homelands and allowing them to coexist peacefully, indeed it is often difficult to envision any other form of solution.



Resolution 181 in 1947 was the first proposed plan advocating this method. It divided the area into a Jewish state: Israel, and Arab state: Palestine. This resolution however led to a heightening of tensions between the two groups as 57% of the land was allotted to the Jewish people who accounted for only 30% of the population.

Although territory changed hands several times over the course of the 20th century (usually in Israel's favour) there was no change to the central idea of 2 states. In regard to the issue of expanding Israeli settlements, while there have been many UN resolutions condemning them and deploring Israel's continued expansion there has been no improvement, Israel has largely ignored them.

Jerusalem has been a continued issue in all previous attempts at peace given its significance to both parties. Resolution 181 designated it as an international, UN governed city, but Israel has continued to occupy it and has settled East Jerusalem which in theory is controlled by the Palestinian authorities.

Possible Solutions

Two-State

There are many variations on this central idea, some of which will be discussed here. Israeli settlements in the West Bank in particular are often said to be killing the two-state solution, but some variations aim to fix or work around this problem.

One potential option is for Israel to withdraw its citizens from the West Bank and other Palestinian territories, and for an independent, Palestine to be established in pre-1967 borders. This is not a very feasible solution given the number of people it would displace and the permanent nature of these settlements. Israel would also almost certainly refuse.

More recent suggestions have advocated moving the Israeli border into the West Bank, so it encompassed the majority of Israeli settlements. This would minimise the number of people that would need to move. To offset the Palestinian territory lost most advocates of this plan propose a territory swap (Appendix IV), Israel giving up control of some areas adjacent to the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. These areas tend to have a high Arab population, once again minimising the displacement of people. This plan would not split up a future Palestinian state into disconnected segments, but rather allow a contiguous country. The West Bank and the Gaza strip would be connected by a 40km road, railway and utility pipes (gas, water, etc.). This solution seems potentially workable, especially considering that



Israeli and Palestinian authorities have over the last two decades indicated some willingness to pursue this route.

Another possibility is that Israel would annex the areas with the largest Israeli populations regardless of whether they split up the future Palestinian state. While this would further reduce the displacement of people it would leave Palestine as a fragmented country which would most likely lead to difficulties in its management. It would also lead to complex borders with Israel which may lead to future disagreements.

A major difficulty with these solutions is the fact that the Gaza Strip and the West Bank are currently managed by different entities. Gaza Strip being governed by Hamas and the West Bank being governed by the Fatah PLO. While the PLO has indicated it would be willing to discuss these proposals Hamas is decidedly more radical (see major parties involved) and is less likely to agree to such an idea. There may be some room for negotiating however since the loosening of their stance in 2017.

Different versions of the two-state solutions also differ on whether the new Palestine would have to be demilitarised or not. Many Israeli groups argue that it would have to be in order for Israel to agree to a proposal, Palestinian groups differ in whether they would accept demilitarisation, but it is, in general, a definite possibility.

Through past wars and Israeli occupation, many thousands of Arabs have been displaced to the surrounding Arab nations. Whether Palestinian refugees will be able to return to Israel is a polarising issue. For many Palestinians this is key, and a deal will not be accepted without the “right to return”, as it is called. The majority of Israeli supporters of a two-state solution oppose an “unlimited right” for refugees to return.

Jerusalem will also prove to be a difficult point to negotiate. As it stands Israel controls West Jerusalem, the PLO controls East Jerusalem but Israel authority is growing there as the Jewish population increases. Both sides, particularly Israel, are unwilling to give up control of holy sites in the city. An interesting point to debate may be whether a joint governance of Jerusalem would be possible. This touches on the one-state solution that will be discussed shortly. Any good resolution should address the issue of Jerusalem as this is central to finding a workable solution.



One-State

This umbrella term covers many different plans. Some ideas will be discussed here, but delegates are encouraged to consider all options and possible combinations of options.

Israel and Palestine could enter into a confederation. This would involve two separate governing bodies, independent on most matters but with joint governance of certain aspects such as water management, environmental issues, usage of natural resources, etc. No one would be displaced, and if there was free movement between the two states all those living there would, in theory, be able to return to their homes and families. It would also give much more freedom to the people in the Gaza Strip who are enduring the blockade.

A more radical one-state solution would be the creation of a full binational state. This would fully integrate Palestinian and Israeli people which may lead to increased cooperation and peace, or potentially a further rise in tensions, some say it would lead to apartheid. It would act as one entity in all areas of governance. Though an appealing prospect to many, it would mean both sides would have to give up on a homeland for their people alone. The Jewish people would no longer be a majority in their country, making up just less than half of the population in this proposed scenario. Integration would be difficult, the difference in average income per capita between Israel and the West Bank is approximately \$37 000, giving the former Israeli population a big advantage in this proposed state.

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Appendix or Appendices

Appendix I

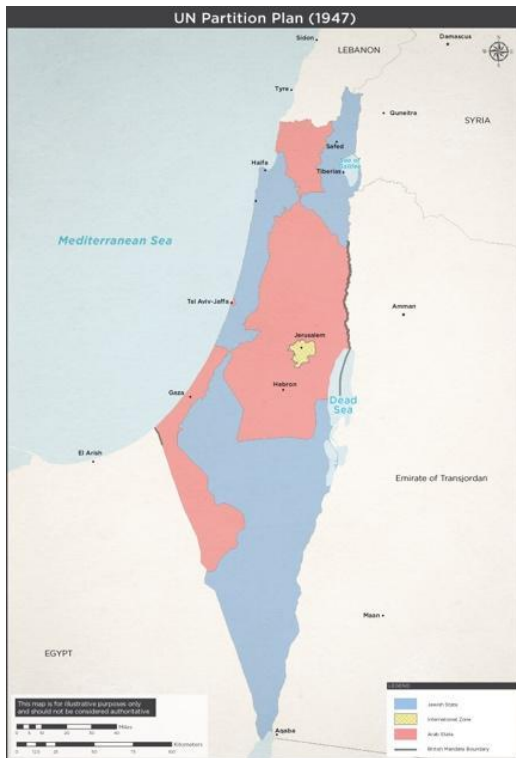
The British Mandate



Appendix II



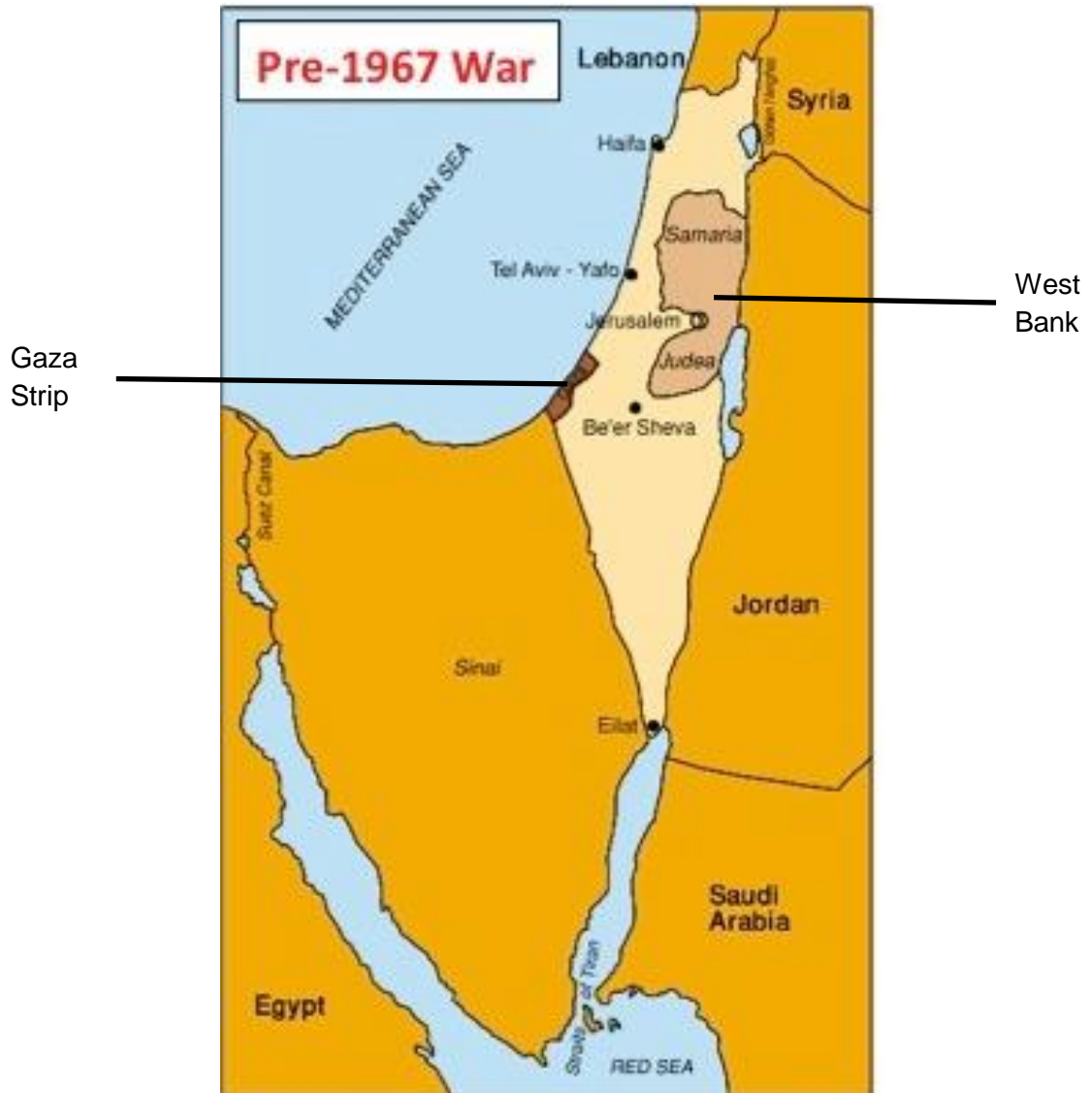
1947 UN partition plan – resolution 181



Appendix III

Pre-1967 borders

Both the Gaza Strip and the West Bank on this map form territory that was intended to become a Palestinian state. It does not show concrete borders of a recognised state.



Appendix IV

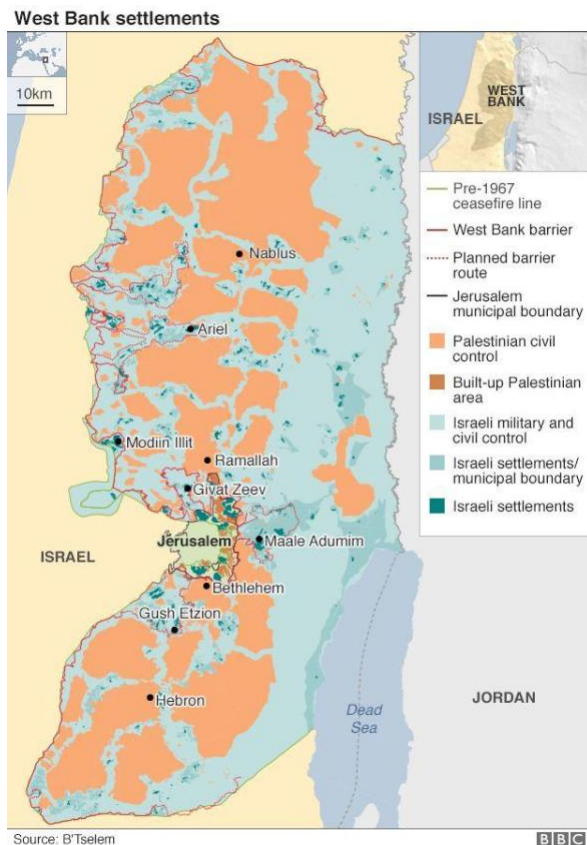
Possible territory exchange in a two-state solution

Land swaps as part of a two-state solution



Appendix VI

Israeli settlements on the West Bank



Appendix VI
Useful overview of the issue

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iRYZjOuUnIU>



