**New ways for Israel-Palestine peace**

[Atle Hetland](https://www.nation.com.pk/columnist/atle-hetland)

December 07, 2023

[Opinions](https://www.nation.com.pk/opinions), [Columns](https://www.nation.com.pk/columns)

In recent articles, I have draw attention to some famous people that we can learn from, such as the writer and philosopher Charles Dickens who authored ‘A Tale of Two Cities’ and ‘Oliver Twist’ about a hundred and fifty years ago, and the ‘pop-star statistician’, demographer and professor Hans Rosling. The latter was put on several lists of the worlds one hundred most influential thinkers a decade ago; he died of an AIDS related liver cancer illness in 2017, contracted during his work in Africa. Their sharp and sometimes witty analyses appeal to our heart, not only our mind, and they encourage us all to believe in our own ability to solve our problems – and think anew.  
It is certainly important to be reminded of this in our time when there are terrible wars in Ukraine and Gaza, and also other protracted and unsolved conflicts, where nobody seem to have any solutions. In spite of the fact that we live in the best of times, we also live in the worst of times, to paraphrase Charles Dickens. The current wars are sad manifestations of our shortcomings, in spite of all our knowledge, expertise, technology, and more. I believe that both wars could and should have been avoided if our politicians and leaders had done their jobs in more positive ways, if they really had wanted to, and if negative counter forces had been controlled, indeed the military research and related economic issues.  
The current war between Israel and Hamas/Palestine began on 7 October when the Palestinian leaders of Gaza carried out a terrible terrorist attack on Israel. It should have been avoided if the local and international partners had seen what was happening, and not happening, in the recent decades and years. The situation was so bad for the Palestinians, indeed in Gaza, that some desperate action was almost bound to be taken.  
In recent years, there were also positive developments as several Arab states established more normal relations with Israel. However, it was wrong to do that with little or no involvement of the Palestinians. It was also a major mistake that there was hardly any follow up and progress regarding a two-state solution agreed on in the Oslo Agreements of 1993, sanctioned by President Bill Clinton on the White House lawn. How could the parties and the international community let the unresolved issues drift for thirty years since that time – worse, since the 6-day War in 1967 when Israel occupied Palestinian land and its true intentions were revealed? We can even go all the way back to the time since the creation of Israel on Palestinian land in 1948 and ask how the international community, indeed the young UN that time, could let it all happen and drift since? The Israeli settlements in the West Bank, with some 0.6 million Jews, are scattered in segregated enclaves, where people have their own weapons for security, living under Israeli law, not Palestinian law yet on their land. The world community says the settlements are illegal but does not take any action to enforce its decisions.  
Alas, the current situation makes the implementation of a two-state solution close to impossible. Israel and the Jewish settlers would hardly accept to be under Palestinian rule in the West Bank, and obviously, the Palestinians would not accept lasting Israeli rule through occupation of their land in the West Bank and Gaza. It is quite unrealistic to foresee Palestinian rule in Gaza, even without Hamas. The only foreseeable future for Gaza, and probably also the West Bank, notably the whole of Palestine, would probably be to setup an international force to control the situation – and keep the Israeli military and the frustrated Palestinian militants away. Also, there would probably be a need for an international force in Israel itself. Till now, that has never been discussed beyond the fact that USA is cooperating closely with Israel in the military and economic fields, including as regards the nuclear weapons, which Israel is said to have.  
Let me remind of some figures: There are some 6 million people living in the Palestinian Areas of the Gaza Strip and the West Bank; there are 1.6 million Palestinians living in Israel, which has a total population of well over 8 million. There are about 6 million Palestinian refugees living all over the world, many in Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon and Syria. There are in all some 15 million Jews living all over the world, including the largest number in Israel and almost as many in USA. Considering the situation today, is likely that many Israelis may consider whether they should move abroad and certainly make arrangements for their children and grandchildren to live elsewhere in more peaceful circumstances. It is my opinion that the Arab states in the region must play a more proactive role in solving the protracted Israel-Palestine conflict, along with the international community, of which USA has a special role.  
In 1948, a one-state solution, a Palestinian state, should have been implemented, probably with self-ruled Israeli provinces. That would have been a better solution than creating an Israeli state on Palestinian land, with unclear future for Palestine itself. However, it is too late to change those main decisions from 1948, and Israel will certainly still exist. Yet, major improvements and changes can and must be made. Neither the Israelis nor the Palestinians, nor the international community can live any longer with the current situation, with ongoing conflicts, occupation, and war. Since the parties are unable to live in peace, the international community must play a direct role militarily and for security reasons, as I suggested above – and the neighbouring countries must be much more involved with both Israel and Palestine. True, this means that both Palestine and Israel would be placed under outside administration – at least for the number over years that is required till it is likely that they can run their countries without fighting all the time, and Israel having the upper hand.  
Can advice from Charles Dickens and Hans Rosling help solve the situation? No, but they have told us that we have to evaluate issues truthfully, not be fools, as Dickens would say bluntly, but use a bit more of all the wisdom that ordinary people and experts have in our hearts and minds. There is no excuse for not doing better and indeed create lasting peace between Israel and Palestine – and between Russia and Ukraine, and Russia and the wider West.