

A solution to Israel and Palestine conflict

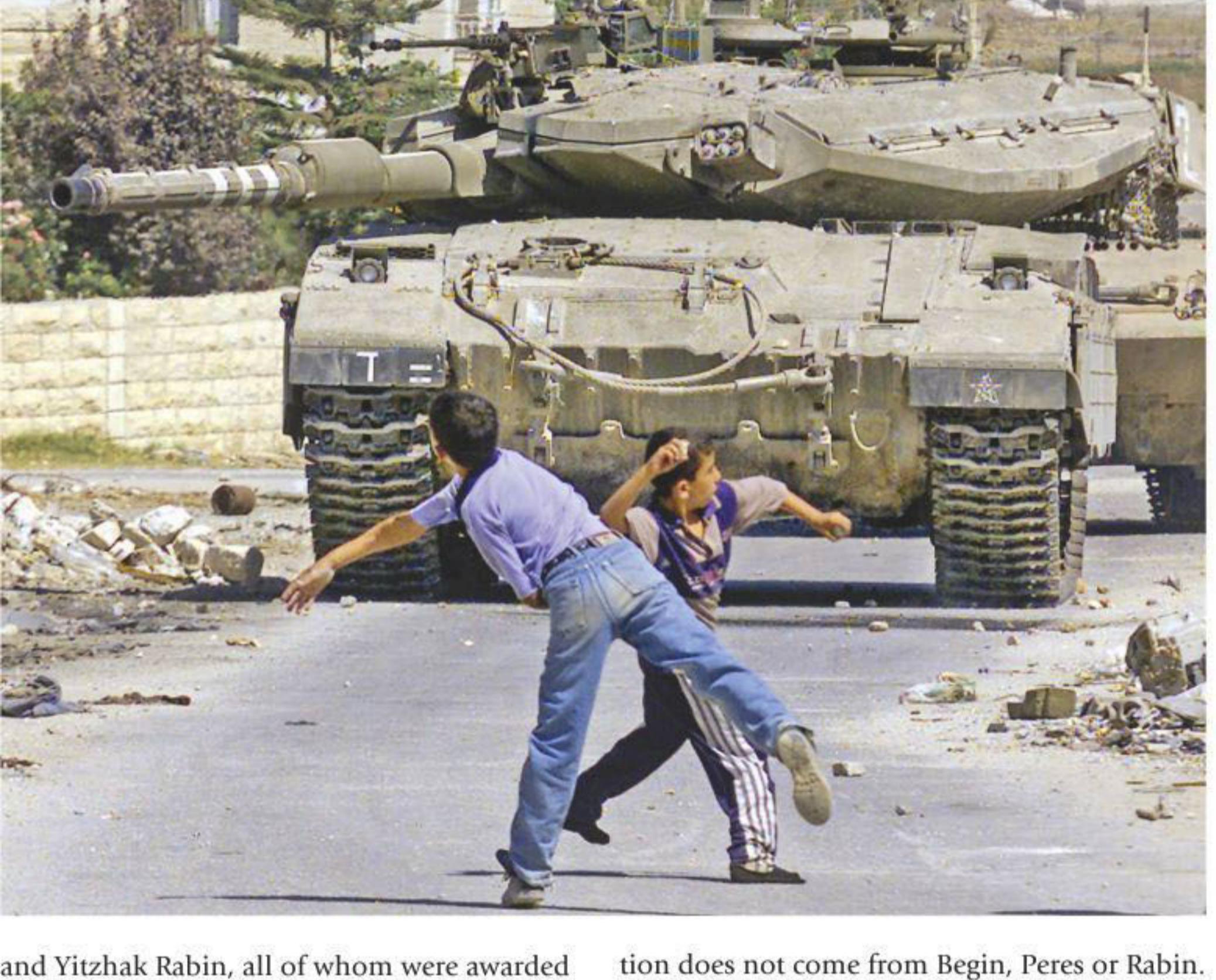
RASHIDUL BARI

P ALESTINE and Israel, once known as cradle of civilisation, have become the hub of cemeteries in modern times. Their conflict has shed untold blood and produced graves as far as the eye can see. The countless tombstones are silent, but the sound of their outcry has carried from the Middle-East to here at New York University's Bobst Library -- where I'm writing this article -- and from which I'm hearing the outcry of three beautiful boys -- Naftali Fraenkel, Gilad Shaer and Eyal Yifrah -- one or all of whom could have grown up to become Einstein or Freud.

At such a tender age, when most youngsters, including my two sons, are busy reading math books to develop new algorithms and physics books to unlock the secret of God, these three boys -- all of whom were under 17 -- eventually got kidnapped by supporters of Hamas. The whole Middle-East, especially Israel and Palestine, has been at war since deaths of these three innocent boys.

This never-ending war between the Jews and Muslims began on July 2, 2014, when Israel unleashed a revenge attack on Palestine in response to the killing of those three boys. They have destroyed almost all of Gaza -- including killing 16 year old Mohammad Khdeir and arresting nearly every Hamas leader -- and launched a war, dubbed Operation Protective Edge, which has killed over 2,000 human lives, most of whom are Arabs. This war has come at a time when the Arab Spring -- the revolutionary wave that led to the ousting of many dictators, including Hosni Mubarak and Muammar Gaddafi, and provided hope to millions of people -- has lost its influence over Muslim and Jews.

The next generation of Middle-Eastern youth once hoped to create a modern and secular Middle-East region based on the ideologies espoused by the quintet of Anwar Sadat, Menachem Begin, Yasser Arafat, Shimon Peres



and Yitzhak Rabin, all of whom were awarded the Nobel Prize for abandoning the path of violence in favour of the path of dialogue. These leaders' desire for peace led to two successful peace deals: Camp David and the Oslo Accord, where Jimmy Carter and Bill Clinton, respectively, invested unsparring effort, untiring energy, and great devotion in the peace making process. However, instead of embracing the spirit of this quintet and their two godfathers, the duo of Benjamin Netanyahu and Ismail Haniyeh are busy trying to destroy each other via a bloody war. Now, the question is simple: who is responsible for this war? The answer is even simpler: many people, including the leadership of the trio, Netanyahu, Haniyeh and Barack Obama.

This article is divided into two parts. In part one, I will identify the failure of the trio. In part two, I will present three solutions -- a one-state solution, destruction of one state and a two-state solution -- and use the spirit of the quintet to pick the best solution.

Part one:

The violence began on July 3, after Hamas leader Ismail Haniyeh -- who read Adolf Hitler for inspiration -- deliberately fired rockets into civilian areas of Israel to kill as many Jews as possible, ignoring the fact that most of the victims would be women and children. Instead of embracing Anwar Sadat and Yasser Arafat's nonviolent approach to persuade the Jews to leave Palestine, Hamas -- a political party that celebrated 9/11 and mourned the death of Osama bin Laden -- has chosen Hitler's philosophy in hopes of killing every Jew in Israel. Hamas' motivation should have come from Anwar Sadat's pluralist philosophy, which he delivered in his Nobel Prize acceptance speech: "The decision of the Nobel Prize Committee to bestow upon me the Peace Award has been received by the people of Middle East not only as an honour, but also as a confirmation of the universal recognition of our relentless efforts to achieve peace in an area in which God has chosen to bring to mankind, through Moses, Jesus and Muhammad. Through me it was the eternal Middle East that was expressing itself. Let us put an end to wars..."

Hamas' motivation should also have come from Arafat, who claimed that there were more than four forces in the universe -- the last one is the force of peace -- which were born in 1993. By referring to the Oslo Accord as the

infant of peace, Arafat famously said in his Nobel Prize Lecture: "Let us protect this newborn infant from the winter winds, let us nurture it with milk and honey, from the land of milk and honey, and on the land of Muhammad, Abraham, Ishmael and Isaac, the Holy Land, the Land of Peace." Instead, Hamas' charter is deeply rooted in the philosophies of Hitler and bin Laden: "The Day of Judgment will not come about until the Muslims fight the Jews and kill them. Then, the Jews will hide behind rocks and trees, and the rocks and trees will cry out, 'O Muslim, there is a Jew hiding behind me, come and kill him.'" This is totally contrary to the lesson of the Koran -- that teaches us that if one kills an innocent, it is as if he has killed all mankind; and whoever saves a person, it is as if he has saved all mankind. "Then, if they should be inclined to make peace, do thou incline towards it also, and put thy trust in Allah (The Holy Koran, 8:62)." Clearly, Islam is not part of the problem of securing peace in the Middle East; Hamas is. That being said, those on the other side of the border are no angels, either.

Netanyahu is also not a fan of Begin, Peres or Rabin. And he pretends like he has never heard the names Sadat and Arafat, either. The Likud Party's motivation should have come from Simon Peres' pluralist philosophy, which he delivered in his Nobel Prize acceptance speech: "The sword, as the Bible teaches us, consumes flesh, but it cannot provide sustenance. It is not rifles but people who triumph, and the conclusion from all the wars is that we need better people, not better rifles, to win wars, and mainly to avoid them."

The Likud Party's motivation should also come from Yitzhak Rabin's philosophy, which he shared in his Nobel acceptance speech: "With me here are five million citizens of Israel, Jews and Arabs, five million hearts beating for peace, and five million pairs of eyes which look to us with such great expectations for peace."

However, it seems as if Netanyahu's motiva-

tion does not come from Begin, Peres or Rabin. If it had, he would not drop bombs on Gaza -- which has caused the death of over 1,800 civilians, most of whom are women and children. He has failed to realise that a dead child is a dead human child, not a Jew or Muslim child. I am the father of two beautiful children, and if I lived in Gaza and his bombs killed my children, I would probably hate him too, regardless of my political and religious affiliations. In fact, every bomb that Netanyahu sends to Palestine makes Hamas stronger by creating more Osama bin Ladens. Netanyahu's aggressive behaviour is contrary to the Jewish-Christian tradition: One should not treat others in ways that one would not like to be treated.

Who is the winner in Israel's violence against Gaza? The answer is simple: evil men like Syrian President Bashar al-Assad and terrorist organisations like Hamas. In fact, this has given Assad a reprieve, because the aggression taking place in Syria is now getting little press due to Israel's aggression against Gaza. Netanyahu's Zionist approach has also given Hamas the opportunity to exploit the Arab youth. Once again, they find it thrilling to dream of rockets falling on Israel. Some of my Muslim brothers in the Middle East -- who initially supported the Arab Spring -- have recently changed their secular tone, regarding rocket launching as a great lesson for the Jews. In fact, they are now busy singing a divisive song: "Strike a blow on Tel Aviv. Don't let the Zionists sleep! We don't want a truce or a solution! Oh, Palestinians, you can be proud!"

Now, let's briefly talk about the very last member of the trio, Mr. Obama. Unlike Netanyahu and Haniyeh, Obama is a Nobel laureate. He should be able to understand the peace message of the quintet better than the duo. In fact, he should not only use this recent violence to put his Cairo speech into action but also to prove that the Norwegian Nobel Committee did not choose the wrong person in 2009 to spread the philosophies of the quintet, that we need to leave behind us the era of belligerence and stride together toward peace.

Part two:

Using the spirit of Camp David and the Oslo Accord, we have found three solutions to end this never-ending war: a one-state solution, complete destruction of one state and a two-state solution. First, inspired by Dr. Martin

Luther King's prophecy, I developed a one-state solution, which would erase the borders and put Israelis and Palestinians together in one equal, pluralistic state. This is much the same way that integration dissolved the conflict between blacks and whites in America. This is possible in principle but impossible in practice simply because every Jew knows that Palestinians would very soon outnumber them.

The second solution is the bloody alternative: complete destruction of one state. This conflict could end if one side outright vanquished the other, a complete destruction as Gilad Sharon, the son of Ariel Sharon, restated his father's agenda in the Jerusalem Times: "We need to flatten entire neighbourhoods in Gaza. Flatten all of Gaza. The Americans didn't stop with Hiroshima. The Japanese weren't surrendering fast enough, so they hit Nagasaki, too. There should be no electricity in Gaza, no gasoline or moving vehicles, nothing. This needs to end quickly, with a bang, not a whimper." However, not all Israelis would agree with this view because it will generate catastrophic abuse of human rights. This option is preferred by extremists like Hamas, but they are not strong enough to destroy Israel anyway. If they could, they would have destroyed Israel a long time ago. So, although Hamas prefers this option, it is impossible for it to implement it.

The third option, a two-state solution, is a brain child of Camp David and Oslo Accord. It would allow for both Israelis and Palestinians to have their own independent states. Many people advocate for this solution, including the quintet and their two godfathers. Now the big question is this: would Israeli and Palestinian leaders be willing to make sacrifices to implement the third solution? They will not change their habits unless there is external pressure from the United States -- and, more specifically, from Nobel Laureate Obama!

In fact, this crisis gives Obama a second chance to implement the promise he made five years ago in his Cairo speech. Since then, he has achieved many successes -- including the killing of Bin Laden and Moammar Gadhafi -- but failed to end the violence in the Middle East. Why is that? In the book *Deterring Democracy*, Noam Chomsky blames the double standard of US foreign policy for the violence in the Middle East. I like Obama, I do not want to lose my hope in him. I hope his foreign policy will not be guided by a double standard, like many of his predecessors', but by the godfathers of the quintet. Unlike Chomsky, I refuse to believe that Obama's Cairo speech was nothing but humanitarian rhetoric. However, what would happen if Obama fails to abandon the American double standard policy? The answer is simple: If Obama is going to practice double standards, Muslims -- especially Hamas' followers -- will repay him with a double standard. Nonetheless, it seems like he will try sincerely this time to bring about peace in the Middle East. In fact, it is encouraging to see him managing this situation in the background, dispatching John Kerry to implement a cease-fire deal. However, this won't resolve the underlying causes of the conflict unless a two-state solution to the Palestine problem can be implemented. Now, the Arabs and Jews have to do their part as well.

Israel needs to stop its expansionist policy in the Palestinian territory. It must agree to give the Palestinians at least the non-Jewish parts of Jerusalem as their future capital. It must also permanently lift the siege of the Gaza Strip, which has essentially imprisoned 1.7 million Palestinians in a narrow tract of land. Of course, in return, Palestinians need to recognise Israel's right to exist. They should also realise the prophecy of Arafat, that the children of Arabs and Jews shall play together and compete to pick flowers, and they should compete to win math and science competitions rather than compete to kill each other. In the same fashion, the motivation for the Jewish people, as one of the generation of the Holocaust and Redemption, should come from Menachem Begin's Nobel Prize speech: "Every child of Arab and Jewish descent is born free and equal, in dignity and rights. They are endowed with reason and conscience and should act towards one another in a spirit of brotherhood."

Without the values of the prophecies of the quintet, the two-state solutions that we dream of are jeopardised. Solving the never-ending Israeli-Palestine conflict by creating two nation-states and integrating Jews and Muslims through the spirit of the quintet and their two godfathers would not only remove much of the motivation for terrorism around the world, but also cut the violence in half. The sooner the trio realises this, the better it would be for the world.

Unfortunately, I still am alive to see the shed blood of my children, including Fraenkel, Shaer, Yifrah and Khdeir, while pondering solutions here in the New York University Library. I recall those sacred prophecies of the quintet and their two godfathers and ask myself not whether, but when, this vision of a "two-state solution" is going to become reality? In the spirit of monotheism, let's give each other the most momentous pledge: no more war. No more bloodshed. We shall negotiate and reach peace because it is the triumph of truth and the smile of Fraenkel, Shaer, Yifrah and Khdeir. So, let me end my tears by stating a traditional monotheism blessing recited by the followers of Abrahamic religions -- Jews, Christians and Muslims -- God will give strength to his people; God will bless his people, all of us, with peace.

The writer, CRISP Scholar of New York University, most recently authored the book, *The Grameen Social Business Model*. He is currently collaborating with Dr. Daniel Kabat to complete another book, *Beautiful Mathematical Laws of Physics*. He can be reached at rb3408@nyu.edu.

OP-ED

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