

PALESTINE-ISRAELI CONFLICT

The two-state solution is the only way to go

FROM A BYSTANDER

 MAHMOOD HASAN

THE long-awaited solution to the Palestinian conflict appears to have been abandoned by Israel. With the collapse of US-sponsored negotiations in April 2014, there has been no direct contact between the Palestinians and Israelis. The positions of both the Palestinians and Israelis over the two-state solution have hardened over the years with neither side willing to compromise.

The two-state solution. First was the landmark UN Security Council Resolution 2334 (December 23, 2016) which condemned Israeli settlement-building in the West Bank and East Jerusalem. The outgoing Obama Administration for the first time chose to abstain and not to block it with veto. Second was the Middle East Peace Conference in Paris on January 15, 2017.

The Egypt-sponsored UNSC Resolution 2334 was a turning point in American position on Israel. Ever since President Obama took office relations between him and Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has been marked by tension and distrust. Netanyahu had repeatedly frustrated Obama with his refusal to negotiate with Palestinian President Mahmud Abbas and halt Jewish settlements in the West Bank and Jerusalem. The American abstention on the Resolution, first time in many years, was the ultimate explosion of Obama's exasperation with Netanyahu.

Then on December 28, 2016, Secretary of State John Kerry came out with his passionate but blunt speech at the Dean Acheson Auditorium in Washington when he warned the Israeli leader that ditching the two-state solution will trigger incalculable damage to Israel and the region. Kerry warned that without the two-state solution, Israel faces a choice between being a Jewish state and a democracy. An angry Netanyahu reacted with name-calling and vowed not to abide by the Resolution.

The American abstention was also not taken kindly by the US President Donald Trump. He went on Twitter to say that things would be different at the United Nations from January 20,



ILLUSTRATION: DAVID KLEIN

2017 – the day he has been sworn-in. He also promised that the US Embassy would be moved from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem once he took office. Having nominated David Friedman (58), an Orthodox Jew hostile to the two-state solution, as Ambassador to Israel, Donald Trump's policy towards Israel would evidently be one of blatant fidelity for Netanyahu and inimical towards the Palestinian cause. That would be a major departure from the long standing bipartisan US policy towards Israel and the Middle East.

To give the two-state solution an international backing, France hosted a day-long conference in Paris on January 15, 2017 participated by 70

countries, the United Nations and European Union. France has repeatedly tried to breathe new life into the peace process. President Francois Hollande took fresh initiative in June 2016, as the situation on Israel and Palestine was worsening due to lack of prospects for negotiation.

Holding the conference hurriedly just five days before the inauguration of Donald Trump, President Hollande wanted to convey a clear message to the Trump administration. The Joint Declaration issued after the meeting forcefully reiterated the two-state solution; ending occupation that began in 1967; referring to UNSC Resolution 2334 condemned Jewish

settlements on Arab land; and asked both Israel and Palestine to make genuine commitment to the two-state solution.

President Hollande, whose term ends in May 2017, said that the objective of the conference was to reaffirm the support of the international community to the two-state solution that is withering "on the ground and in the minds". That the two-state solution was the only way forward for a "just, lasting and comprehensive resolution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict".

French Foreign Minister Jean-Marc Ayrault warned that moving the US Embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem

would result in "extremely serious consequences". The conference also expressed deep concern that if the Trump administration did move the embassy, it would unleash violence in Israel and the region. The settlements have already created deep tension among the Palestinians. Mahmud Abbas also warned that if US moved its embassy to Jerusalem, Palestine would consider revoking its recognition of Israel.

What was unusual was that the Paris Conference went ahead without Netanyahu or Mahmud Abbas, though both were invited. However, Mahmud Abbas welcomed the conference and is scheduled to go to Paris to get briefing from President Hollande on the outcome of the conference. Furious Netanyahu, refusing to attend the conference, castigated the French exercise as "rigged" and "fraud" and is demonising American and French leaders.

The intractable Israeli-Palestinian conflict have gone through many diplomatic manoeuvres – Madrid Conference 1991, Oslo Accords 1993, Camp David Summit 2000, Taba negotiations 2001, the Arab Peace Initiative 2002, besides the US-led negotiations during 2013-2014. But a peaceful solution still eludes Palestine.

The UNSC Resolution 2334 and the Paris Conference were victories for Mahmud Abbas, particularly at a time when the incoming US administration is threatening to change course on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. After the international community reiterated its support for the two-state solution, it will be important to watch what course President Donald Trump takes vis-a-vis the Palestine-Israeli conflict.

The writer is former Ambassador and Secretary.

The youth's romance with violence


 SARAH ANJUM BARI

1 5-year-old Adnan Kabir's death at the hands of teenage gangs has come as a shock to many adults, especially parents who

had no inkling of the existence of such gangs. But it isn't a newborn phenomenon, as many of us with fresh school memories can readily attest to. It has been a part of the school culture in Bangladesh for decades, even among the more prestigious institutions.

Most student bodies comprise of social cliques. These groupings take on violent forms in Bangladesh, or at least in Dhaka from what we've witnessed, particularly among males. Friends and acquaintances flock together to form gangs, and the gangs in turn form alliances to exchange protection when feuds break out. Nearly all members boast allegiance (or 'backup', as the parlance goes) with stronger and older honorary 'brothers' who are brought in to deal justice to serious offences.

Taken out of the school grounds and into the graffiti'd alleys that glorify their brands of cruelty, the matter takes on especially strong implications involving fists in the best of circumstances and deadly weapons in the worst. Visualise these murky political dynamics and then remind yourself that they're made up of children aged as young as 13 or 14.

Teenagers' glorification of danger and dominion can be sympathised with given their malleable states of mind. Even a few years ago, most of them could have been expected to grow

out of it as the realities of higher education and professional life sunk in. But the recent past has shown a faltering in the ebb of bullying tendencies. They tend to engage in the same destructive activities upon entering and graduating from universities, especially if they are unable or disinclined to find jobs. As the pile up of bullies continue to cast shadows on each new generation,

impressionable, so intricately has violence woven itself into our social fabric. Heightened social segregation has played a role. I can recall many classmates who were involved in such feuds back in school. As we graduated from high school and entered university, however, nearly all of them discarded their bullying behaviour; not necessarily through counselling or

turn think of their anti-violence classmates as disconnected from reality.

These very rigid lines have caused the aggression contained within a certain social group to fester and gain strength, separated as they are from the exchange of ideas and open-mindedness with their peers. It is no longer just a divide between English and Bangla-medium students, contrary

and the educated masses' treatment of him as the most widely circulated social media joke on the other, perfectly demonstrated these ideological divides.

Adults hoping to solve these issues need to gain the right perspective and understand the youth that they're trying to save. Instead of painting something as vast as the Internet and western media with broad negative strokes, they have to realise that the problem lies in the youth's inability to choose correctly from a plethora of influences available to them. Literature and media have contained an abundance of content relating to violence, warfare, and other sensitive topics since the beginning of time; we wouldn't have classics like *The Illiad*, *War and Peace*, *Ulysses*, or *The Godfather* otherwise. What's frightening is that the young are no longer able to draw the line between intrigue and imitation, and choose to absorb useful lessons from cross-cultural exposure while picking apart the negative aspects it entails.

Barack Obama, in his interview with *The New York Times* last week, spoke of the role played by books in his experience as a world leader for the past eight years. "There are writers who I don't necessarily agree with in terms of their politics, but whose writings are sort of a baseline for how to think about certain things," he said. "I'm using writing like that as a foil or something to debate against." That's what we lack – the space to explore, think, and respectfully debate against opposing views without resorting to violence. We have justified this for far too long; but when an increasing number of young people take pride in being able to cause harm, generate fear and pain, and overrule others' choices through force, something is

very, very wrong.

It is no longer advisable but imperative to bring about reforms in our education – not merely through updated syllabi and ambitious accreditations – but in the very attitude towards learning among the youth. Parents and teachers must close a firm lid on rote methods that require students to wordlessly swallow any and all information they are fed, and mould them to think for themselves. Creativity, through subjects of the Arts and Humanities as well as in the way they learn the more technical subjects, needs to be practised. Intellect and open-mindedness, not power, need to be promoted. Students must be broken free of the thought process that causes them to view critical questions in examinations as an injustice dealt against them, and pushed to think critically and compassionately. Poor or deceptive exam results may seem like the most direct outcome of such herd mentality, but its worst manifestation lies in the ceaseless cases of murder, rape, assault, even child marriage, and the recent upsurge of terrorism amongst us. On January 18, this newspaper reported a 17 year old being beaten to death in Tangail over a cricket match, while two students beat up a classmate in Chittagong University just two days later. We must stop treating these as isolated incidents.

Yes, we need public spaces, alternate forms of leisure and exercise, and a deviation from harmful influences; but simply providing them isn't a solution. We have to inspire the young to choose the healthier options we're hoping to offer, and de-glamorise danger in their eyes.

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IMAGE: THE SCIENCE EXPLORER

more and more young minds are sucked into this vortex of brutality and destruction. It's alarming that such a vast number of people are unable to grow out of their immature fascination with domination; that they still equate respect with cruelty and feel the same inclination towards darker sentiments as an adult that they did when they were young and

deliberate efforts, but simply because they grew up. Discussions with my younger cousins reveal the ways in which the culture has evolved since then. Today, teenagers are either very strictly pro-gang culture or against it, with the latter deeming the former as culturally and intellectually inferior. Those with a penchant for violence are shunned and made fun of, who in

to popular belief, but a case of differing ideologies creating starkly different human beings within the same age and socio-economic backgrounds. An example can be found in last year's viral video of a young man named Xunayed repeatedly beating up a friend who refused to retaliate. Xunayed's pride in his insane cruelty on the one hand,

A WORD A DAY



LEGERDEMAIN
 noun

Skillful use of one's hands when performing conjuring tricks

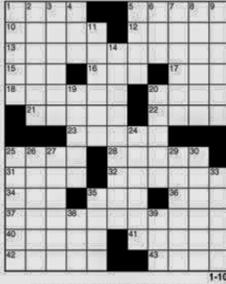
CROSSWORD BY THOMAS JOSEPH

ACROSS 43 Knee protectors

- 1 Hoodwink
- 5 Unforeseen problems
- 10 Bring together
- 12 Airline worker
- 13 Road flattener
- 15 Director Burton
- 16 Fido or Fluffy
- 17 Can. neighbor
- 18 Protect, as freshness
- 20 Field yield
- 21 Derisive sound
- 22 Eye part
- 23 Stop
- 25 Chorizo meat
- 28 Springs
- 31 Gorillas and gibbons
- 32 Party snack
- 34 Humor
- 35 Feeling down
- 36 Stretch of history
- 37 Coat-applying tool
- 40 Parts of hearts
- 41 Mideast's -- Heights
- 42 Tearful

DOWN

- 1 Does some housework
- 2 Loosens, in a way
- 3 Simple Simon met one
- 4 Greek vowel
- 5 Location
- 6 Zero
- 7 Attraction
- 8 Continues
- 9 Bra parts
- 11 Realm
- 14 Tourist transport
- 19 Canal parts
- 20 Do some housework
- 24 Old salt
- 25 Custard apple's cousin
- 26 Morphine, for one
- 27 Stop working
- 29 Saffron-flavored dish
- 30 Butter or jam
- 33 Brings in
- 35 Remain
- 38 Quick bite
- 39 Cut off



YESTERDAY'S ANSWER

C L O D P R O O F
 L I M E L E A N O N
 A L E S A N K A R A
 P A G E A N T T E N
 S C A R V E S E A T
 T O T D A R E
 S I R E N W O R M S
 A G E D P I G
 U N D S E N T F O R
 C O T P A G E O N E
 E R A S E R A L E E
 R E P E A L M I N D
 D E A R S S O D S

BEETLE BAILEY

by Mort Walker



BABY BLUES

by Kirkman & Scott

