

II. History

Before There Was the Iron Dome, There Was the Iron Wall—The Deadly Flaw Underlying Israel’s National Security Doctrine

by Harley Schlanger

April 2—The Israeli government of Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and his coalition partners, which is an unstable gaggle of Greater Israel fanatics, is pushing the region of Southwest Asia toward World War III, with its insistence that the United States join them in a war to “decapitate” Iran. The drive for war coming from this group has little to do with rescuing hostages, obliterating Hamas, or of protecting Zionism from anti-Semitic enemies, despite their incessant repetition that these outcomes are their goals.

Whether they are aware of it or not, they are acting on behalf of a strategy that serves the interests not of the Jewish people, but of an empire centered in the City of London, which has shown itself to care little for the well-being of the Jews, who they used to extend their imperial reach into the Ottoman empire after World War I, and are using today as instruments to preserve their empire. For the oligarchs of London and their allies of Wall Street, their survival as a unipolar order depends on provoking constant conflicts, to weaken or destroy those nations which challenge their hegemony. These oligarchs are enforcing a geopolitical doctrine which has served them well, a doctrine responsible for



Prime Minister of Israel Facebook page

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu visited the Border Police Judea and Samaria District Undercover Unit Base.

two world wars in the last century, and perpetual wars since the end of World War II.

The creation of Israel as a Zionist entity is a product of the application of this doctrine. Sold as a means of protecting Jews from anti-Semites, historian Avi Shlaim contests this, saying that as a result of a failed national security strategy from the beginning of its existence, there is no place less safe for Jews today than Israel!

That failed national security strategy is the “Iron Wall,” and its adoption and subsequent, continuing failure is the subject of this article. Despite this



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Avi Shlaim

easily demonstrated history of failure, Benjamin Netanyahu and his gang are fervent believers that it has been key to the survival of Israel, and that brutal, swift punishment of any person or institution perceived as a threat to Zionism is the best deterrent. If humanity is to avoid the consequences of a global nuclear war, which could be triggered by Netanyahu and his delusions, the Iron Wall concept and the strategies derived from it must be rejected, especially by the people of Israel.

Among the leading critics of this concept is military historian Uri Bar-Joseph, professor emeritus in the Department for International Relations of The School for Political Science at Haifa University. In a recent article, Bar-Joseph wrote:

The ultimate goal of the founders of the Zionist movement was to establish a sustainable Jewish state, and upon its establishment, to persuade the Arabs to agree to end the conflict by building an insurmountable military “iron wall.” This strategy was realized in 1967. Prior to the Six-Day War, Israel did not have the bargaining chips that could be traded for Arab recognition of its right to exist, but the conquest of the territories during the war created this option. Nevertheless, Israel continued to emphasize military force and “security lines” as its security concept. With the exception of the peace agreements with Egypt and Jordan, Israel refused to make use of the political option, and efforts to settle the conflict have remained incomplete for various reasons ... the persistent reliance on military force while ignoring the diplomatic channel, especially the Arab Peace Initiative that strives to end the conflict, is leading Israel into a military dead end, and it could pay a heavy price for this in the future.¹

What Is the Iron Wall?

The bloody riots which occurred from May 1 to 7, 1921, between Arabs and Jews in Jaffa under the British Mandate of Palestine—which resulted in the deaths of 47 Jews and 48 Arabs—had a profound effect in shaping the flawed national security policy of Israel,

which remains in place to this day. In the short term, the violence confirmed for leaders of the Zionist movement that they must address seriously the threat posed by the Arabs, and that they may not be able to count on British forces to defend the Jewish community. Thus, they concluded that their decision, taken a year earlier to create the Haganah as a military defense force, was justified.

Yet the Haganah was small and poorly equipped at the outset, which meant that the Zionists were forced to rely on the British Army for protection in the years following the Balfour Declaration. While some were distrustful of the British government’s decision to back Lord Arthur Balfour’s declaration of support “for the establishment in Palestine of a national home for the Jewish people,” conveyed in a letter to Lord Walter Rothschild on November 2, 1917, the vast majority of Zionists were so excited about the stated intent that they ignored, or blocked out, the deeper implication behind that decision, which was that they were being used as an instrument of British imperial policy.

Thus, while the Zionists proceeded with a plan to use Jewish emigration from Eastern Europe to colonize what they delusionally described as “a land without a people for a people without a land,” the British had a different plan: Use a Jewish entity as part of their post-World War I deployment to carve up Southwest Asia for the Empire’s geopolitical purposes, after the fall of the Ottoman Empire. The Balfour Declaration is thus properly viewed as a continuation of the secret negotiations which led to the Sykes-Picot agreement of 1916, to consolidate British and French spheres of influence in the region.

It should come as no surprise that Sir Mark Sykes, of Sykes-Picot, was intimately involved in the cabinet discussions of the Balfour Declaration. Before the public was informed of Balfour’s letter, Sykes wrote that “to my mind, the Zionists are now the key of the situation,” referring to the goal of the British replacing the Ottomans as the dominant force in the region.

Balfour likewise made it clear during a cabinet discussion on October 31, 1917—just days before the declaration was released—that he shared Sykes’ view, and was acting out of imperial motives, rather than altruism toward the Jews. He said that a statement in favor of Zionism would “carry on extremely useful propaganda both in Russia and America,” referring to Britain’s most important allies in the war against Ger-

1. Uri Bar-Joseph, “The Lost ‘Iron Wall’: Rethinking an Obsolete National Security Plan”; Institute for National Security Studies (INSS), June 2024. The INSS is a think tank affiliated with Tel Aviv University.

many, which was still dragging on.²

The vulnerability of the Zionist colonizers in the face of an angry Arab uprising exposed by the Jaffa riots, led to a rethinking by some of how to address the Arab resistance to the creation of a Zionist state in the shared land of Palestine, at a time when the Jews were greatly outnumbered. A 1922 census reported that nearly 84,000 Jews lived in Palestine, next to approximately 591,000 Arabs. How to address the threat this posed to the Zionists was taken up by Ze'ev Vladimir Jabotinsky, a Russian Zionist born in Odessa, Russia in 1880, who first arrived in Palestine in 1917, where he co-founded the Jewish Legion of the British Army. He concluded, following the riots, that the Zionist dream of a Jewish state was in danger, due to local Arab resistance, a lack of commitment to Zionism from the British, and indifference in the Jewish diaspora. In November 1923, he published two essays to address these problems, and his conclusions deepened the split in the Zionist movement; that split was formalized when Jabotinsky created the Revisionist Zionist Alliance in 1925. The Revisionist Party was the predecessor of today's Likud, the party of Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu.

The disagreements Jabotinsky had with mainstream Zionism revolved around two points: first, his rejection of accepting a small Jewish state, which was in the original British proposal, and was later codified in the 1937 partition plan of the Peel Commission. Instead, he insisted on what historian Avi Shlaim called the “maximalist definition of the aims of



Ze'ev Jabotinsky

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Zionism,” an all-or-nothing approach for establishing a “Greater Israel.”³ By 1931, he described Greater Israel in his party's newspaper, *National Front*, as “all of Palestine, including the Transjordan and the Syrian desert”; and second, according to Shlaim, for Jabotinsky, the “creation of an independent Jewish state would take precedence over a Jewish-Arab agreement.”

On this latter point, David Ben-Gurion, who emerged as Jabotinsky's chief rival, argued for accepting whatever was offered as a Zionist state, based on reaching an initial agreement

with the Palestinian Arabs, to establish a precedent of legitimacy, of “facts on the ground.” Ben-Gurion, who was born in Poland in 1886, emigrated to Palestine in



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The Peel Commission listens to testimony from Chaim Weizmann, President of The Jewish Agency for Israel, in Jerusalem.

1906. Like Jabotinsky, he served in the British Army's Jewish Legion during the First World War, and dedicated his life to fulfill the dream of building a Zionist state. Unlike Jabotinsky, he was not a maximalist, striving at once for a Greater Israel. He wrote that the goal

2. On the overall British sponsorship of Zionism as part of their geopolitical intention, see Harley Schlanger, “Some Important History of Israel, Palestine and the British Great Game,” *EIR*, May 17, 2024; Balfour's quote is in J.C. Hurewitz, *The Middle East and North Africa in World Politics: A Documentary Record*, Yale University Press, 1979.

3. Avi Shlaim, *The Iron Wall: Israel and the Arab World*, W.W. Norton & Company, Inc., 2000, p. 12.

should be: “[E]rect a Jewish state at once, even if it is not in the whole land. The rest will come in the course of time. It will come.”⁴

Jabotinsky countered in the “Iron Wall” that it should be clear from history that such an agreement with a colonized people was impossible, that “there is not even the slightest hope of ever obtaining the agreement of the Arabs of the Land of Israel to ‘Palestine’ becoming a country with a Jewish majority.”⁵

Elaborating further on the problem related to colonizing another people, he wrote that “there has never been an indigenous inhabitant anywhere or at any time who has ever accepted the settlement of others in his country. Any native people ... views their country as their national home, of which they will always be the complete masters. They will not voluntarily allow, not only a new master, but even a new partner. And so it is for the Arabs....

“Every indigenous people will resist alien settlers as long as they see any hope of ridding themselves of the danger of foreign settlement.... That is what the Arabs in Palestine are doing, and what they will persist in doing as long as there remains a solitary spark of hope that they will be able to prevent the transformation of ‘Palestine’ into the ‘Land of Israel.’”

The solution he proposes is the creation of what he calls an Iron Wall: “Zionist colonization, even the most restricted, must either be terminated or carried out in defiance of the will of the native population. This colonization can, therefore, continue and develop only under the protection of a force independent of the local population—an iron wall which the native population cannot break through. This is, in toto, our policy towards the Arabs. To formulate it any other way would only be hypocrisy.”

In conclusion, he writes, “As long as there is a spark of hope that they can get rid of us, they will not sell these hopes, not for any kind of sweet words or tasty morsels, because they are not a rabble but a nation, perhaps somewhat tattered, but still living. A living people makes such enormous concessions on such fateful questions only when there is no hope left. Only when not a single breach is visible in the iron wall, only then do extreme groups lose their sway, and influence trans-

fers to moderate groups. Only then would these moderate groups come to us with proposals for mutual concessions. And only then will moderates offer suggestions for compromise on practical questions like a guarantee against expulsion, or equality and national autonomy.”

Once the Arabs have willingly accepted their subordinate status, he claims, they will be granted democratic rights as citizens. As one influenced by 19th-Century liberalism, Jabotinsky wrote a second essay, “The Ethics of the Iron Wall,” to defend the “morality” of his proposal. Since the argument for a Zionist state was moral, he writes, making any concessions to “Arab nationalism” would destroy Zionism. Therefore, “[W]e cannot abandon the effort to achieve a Jewish majority in Palestine. Nor can we permit any Arab control of our immigration or join an Arab Federation. We cannot even support [the] Arab movement, it is at present hostile to us and consequently we all ... rejoice at every defeat sustained by this movement.... And this state of affairs will continue, because it cannot be otherwise, until one day the iron wall will compel the Arabs to come to an arrangement with Zionism once and for all.”

Building the ‘Iron Wall’

The physical Iron Wall was initially constituted by the combined forces of the British army and the Jewish Legion, soldiers who were trained by the British and fought on their side against the Ottomans in World War I. When the Legion was disbanded after the war, many of its soldiers joined the Haganah and local police forces, while some became the core militants of Betar, a Revisionist youth movement founded by Jabotinsky in 1923, and the Irgun, an underground army commanded by Jabotinsky, which engaged in terrorist actions against Arabs, and later against the British.

Ben-Gurion, who had emerged as Jabotinsky’s chief opponent within the Zionist movement, focused his efforts on maintaining British support for the creation of the State of Israel. He distanced himself from Jabotinsky, going so far as to call him “Vlad Hitler” for his attacks on the Jewish Labor Federation (Histadrut), among other disagreements. Ben-Gurion was the head of the Histadrut, the Jewish labor union, from 1921 to 1935. During the 1930s, he continued to work publicly for an agreement with Palestinian Arabs and neighboring Arab countries, while building an army to defend the Jewish population.

As the number of Jewish immigrants swelled during

4. Ben-Gurion quote, Shlaim, *Ibid.*, p. 21. Shlaim notes that, while this was Jabotinsky’s view from the beginning, Ben-Gurion and the Labor Zionists adopted this view by the Twentieth Zionist Conference in 1937, p. 19.

5. [Jabotinsky quotes](#) are from *The Iron Wall*.

the '30s—nearly 250,000 arrived between 1932 and 1939, many fleeing Germany and its neighbors, due to the rise of Hitler and the Nazis—tensions with the Arabs grew, contributing to the grievances which triggered the “Arab Revolt” from 1936 to 1939. The revolt was against both continued British colonial rule, and British support for Zionist colonialism. While Ben-Gurion continued making public statements supporting cooperation with Arabs, the Arab Revolt provoked a change in his thinking, bringing him closer to Jabotinsky’s view that it was futile to seek an agreement with the Arabs. On May 19, 1936, for example, he told the Jewish Agency Executive, “We and they [the Palestinian Arabs] want the same thing. We both want Palestine. And that is the fundamental conflict.”⁶

He went further toward Jabotinsky in a letter of June 9, 1936, writing that an agreement with the Arabs was conceivable, but that a “comprehensive agreement is undoubtedly out of the question now. For only after total despair on the part of the Arabs, despair that will come not only from the failure of the disturbance and the attempt at rebellion, but also as a consequence of our growth in the country, may the Arabs possibly acquiesce in a Jewish Eretz Israel.”⁷

Partition and the War of Independence

In response to the violence of the Arab Revolt, a commission under the direction of Sir Robert Peel was convened by the British in 1936 to seek a resolution to the fighting. The Peel Commission’s conclusion was to proceed with a plan to partition Palestine into two states, a Jewish and a Palestinian state, with twenty percent of the land allocated to the Jews, the rest to the Arabs. In justifying the two-state solution, the Commission wrote that an “irrepressible conflict has arisen between two national communities within the narrow bounds of one small country. There is no common ground between them. Their national aspirations are incompatible. The Arabs desire to revive the traditions of the Arab golden age. The Jews desire to show what they can achieve when restored to the land in which the Jewish nation was born. Neither of the two national ideals permits of combination in the service of a single State.”

Endorsed by the British cabinet in 1937, this was rejected by Arab leaders, who opposed the idea of a Zi-

onist state, and by Jabotinsky, who insisted on the whole of Palestine. He argued that the Jews must not relinquish any parts of “Eretz Israel ... the birthplace of the Jewish people.” At the 20th Zionist Congress in 1937, Ben-Gurion and Chaim Weizmann argued in favor of acceptance of the Commission’s conclusions, as a significant step forward toward statehood. Ben-Gurion said in an address to the conference, that while “there could be no question ... of giving up any part of the Land of Israel ... it was arguable that the ultimate goal would be achieved most quickly by accepting the Peel proposals,” that is, that it affirms the legitimacy of a Zionist state. He added that while it was his belief that the Balfour Declaration meant that the whole of historic Palestine was to be the Jewish National Home, borders could be adjusted later.

In other words, while the Jabotinsky tradition today, represented by the Likud party and allied settler territorial extremists, openly demands a Greater Israel, Ben-Gurion and the “moderate” Zionists differed only on the time required to achieve it. Jabotinsky demanded it immediately, while Ben-Gurion argued in favor of taking the offer of the Peel Commission to establish the principle, and get the rest later.

“I am certain,” he wrote in a letter to his son on October 5, 1937, “we will be able to settle in all the other parts of the country, whether through agreement and mutual understanding with our Arab neighbors or in another way.... Erect a Jewish state at once, even if it is not the whole land.” That is, accept the Peel Commission Partition—“The rest will come in the course of time. It must come.”⁸

By 1938, the Peel Commission’s findings were dismissed by the British government as “infeasible.” However, the idea of a two-state partition influenced the drafting of United Nations Resolution 181, which ended the British Mandate, with a provision that its troops must leave by August 1, 1948; and it drew the boundaries of two states. The Zionist state was granted 56.47% of the land, the Arab state 42.88%, with the remaining 0.65% an international zone, which included Jerusalem and Bethlehem.

A convergence had emerged, in broad terms, between the Revisionists and Ben-Gurion’s Labor Zionists, on the role of force required to consolidate a Zionist state at the expense of the Arabs living in Palestine. According to Avi Shlaim, “Both concluded that only

6. Shlaim, p. 18.

7. Shlaim, p. 18.

8. Shlaim, p. 21.

insuperable Jewish military strength would eventually make the Arabs despair of the struggle and come to terms with a Jewish state in Palestine. Ben-Gurion did not use the terminology of the Iron Wall, but his analysis was virtually identical to Jabotinsky's.”⁹

As for the reliance on military force to succeed in forcing Arab acceptance of the State of Israel, Shlaim points out that their disagreement was “over the timing” of when to resort to force: “Jabotinsky stated openly that there was no alternative to military power and pressed for an immediate declaration of statehood. Ben-Gurion knew that there was no alternative to military power but wanted to delay confrontation with the Arabs until military superiority had been achieved. His declared belief in a peaceful solution to the conflict served a useful public relations purpose. Both internally and externally, it enabled the Zionist movement to hold the moral high ground, to pose as the innocent victim of Arab aggression. For Ben-Gurion, however, the so-called defensive ethos of Zionism was from the beginning inextricably linked to the offensive ethos. They were two sides of the same coin.”

The militant organizations created by Jabotinsky forced Ben-Gurion to maintain the “moral high ground,” as they launched high-profile terrorist actions, becoming increasingly militant after Jabotinsky's death, on August 3, 1940, when he was touring a Jewish defense camp run by Betar in America. The Irgun took credit for blowing up the British administrative headquarters at the King David Hotel in Jerusalem, in July 1946, which killed 91; and was part of the Deir Yassin massacre, in which 107 Palestinians were killed, on April 9, 1948. Two future Prime Ministers had emerged as leaders of “Jewish terrorist” organizations. Menachem Begin, the commander of the Irgun, said after the UN vote to establish Israel, “The partition of Palestine is illegal. It will never be recognized.... Jerusalem was and will forever be our capital. Eretz Israel will be restored to the people of Israel. All of it. And for ever.” Yitzhak Shamir



Unknown author

Menachem Begin (left) inspecting members of the Irgun in Jerusalem, August 1948.

was a commander of the more militant Stern Gang, which was at the center of the Deir Yassin massacre.¹⁰

Ben-Gurion's public hesitancy to rely on military force ended on May 14, 1948, with his proclamation of Israel's independence, which was followed immediately by five Arab nations declaring war on the new state. The next day, Ben-Gurion, now Prime Minister, established the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) as the army of Israel, which included members of Revisionist Party-linked militia members. (Members of Betar and the Irgun were more formally incorporated into the IDF after the Irgun was disbanded in January 1949.)

10. Shlaim, p. 25. Begin, as Prime Minister, signed the Camp David Accords with Egypt's President Sadat on September 17, 1978, and a peace treaty with Egypt on March 26, 1979, which is today threatened by renewed attacks on Gaza by Netanyahu. However, he opposed the creation of a Palestinian state. Shamir, under pressure from the First Intifada, which began on December 9, 1987, and from U.S. Secretary of State James Baker, which led to the Madrid Talks, opposed the “land for peace” approach of Begin with Egypt. Shamir did all he could to sabotage the Madrid process, saying “we will not ... give land in return for peace” and excluded the PLO from participating in the Madrid talks. He was defeated by Rabin in the 1992 election, which led to the breakthrough of the Oslo Accords. Shlaim, p. 465.

9. Shlaim, p. 19.

The Nakba

The military consolidation set the stage for the victory against the Arab armies, which invaded after the announcement of independence, and for brutal, murderous attacks on Palestinian civilians, producing what the Arabs called the “Nakba,” or Catastrophe. The Nakba began with the launching of Plan Dalet, to capture land and drive Palestinians from land allocated to them by the UN Partition Plan. More than 200 villages were destroyed and more than 750,000 Palestinians were displaced, losing their homes and lands. Some were driven out at gunpoint, others fled in panic and fear. A Transfer Committee was established to move people out and prevent their return.¹¹

By the end of the war, Israel held 78% of the total land of Palestine drawn by the Partition Plan, including nearly 50% of the land the plan granted to a Palestinian state.

At various points during the 1920s and 1930s, both Jabotinsky and Ben-Gurion had asserted that they would not support a policy of transferring Arabs out of Palestine, though both were convinced that military power would be necessary to establish a state. For Jabotinsky, military power was an essential part of the Iron Wall, necessary to break Arab resistance. He stated that once the Arabs accepted Jewish sovereignty, they could be granted civil and national rights. Ben-Gurion and the Labor Zionists, while professing that peaceful agreements could be reached with the Arabs, ultimately concluded that Jewish immigration and settlement would not guarantee that a state could be consolidated without a military capability.

And while Jabotinsky “never wavered in his conviction that Jewish military power was the key factor in the struggle for a state,” according to Shlaim, the Labor Zionists “gradually came around to his point of view without openly admitting it.... So in the final analysis the gap was not that great: Labor leaders, too, came to

rely increasingly on the strategy of the iron wall.”¹²

The Nakba was, in part, a tragic consequence of this convergence.

2025—Operation Iron Wall

For those familiar with this history of Jabotinsky, his Revisionist movement, and his imprint on Israel and its national security policy, it should come as no surprise that the bloody military campaign launched against “West Bank militants” in Jenin on January 21, 2025 was named “Iron Wall.” Initiated two days after the ceasefire in Gaza was implemented, Israel’s embat-



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1948 expulsion of the Tantura women (Palestinian village) and children to Fureidis (Arab town in the Haifa District of Israel).

tled Prime Minister Netanyahu described it as a campaign “to eradicate terrorism there,” as part of a broader operation “to strengthen security in Judea and Samaria,” the administrative name given to the occupied territories seized by the IDF on the West Bank of the Jordan River in the Six-Day War of June 1967.

The operation was initiated in response to a request from Finance Minister Bezalel Smotrich, a member of Netanyahu’s post-October 7 cabinet and leader of the Religious Zionism Party. As a member of the Knesset, he has been an advocate of the mass transfer of Palestinians from Israel. In 2017, he presented what he called his “Decisive Plan,” which rejected the idea of a two-state solution to the Israel-Palestine crisis. Rather than “managing” the problem, he said there is a “new readi-

11. Details of the brutality which characterized Zionist actions in the Nakba are provided in Ilan Pappé’s book, *The Ethnic Cleansing of Palestine*, Oneworld Publications, 2006, Chapters 6-11.

12. Shlaim, p. 16.

ness of Israeli society to win the conflict,” achieving “a victory founded on the understanding that there is no room in the Land of Israel for two conflicting national movements.” After the October 7 attacks, he told Israel’s Channel 12 TV news show that a “voluntary migration plan” to remove Palestinians would “solve the major security threat facing Israel.” On August 26, 2024, when the UN and other relief agencies warned of potential mass starvation due to the cut-off of food, water, fuel and medical supplies to people of Gaza, Smotrich defended the withholding of aid, saying “it may be just and moral to starve” the residents of Gaza.

Smotrich and his extremist partner in the cabinet, Itamar Ben-Gvir, are supporters of driving the Arab population out of Greater Israel. Smotrich is himself a settler, living in an illegal settlement; Ben-Gvir, who as the Minister for National Security has responsibility for overseeing the police, is a devout admirer of the extremist rabbi, the late Meir Kahane, who founded the Jewish Defense League in the U.S. Though Kahane’s Kach Party, which called for the expulsion of Palestinians from all territory of Greater Israel, was banned from participating in elections after 1988, its influence has grown among the settlers since his assassination in 1990. Kahane met Jabotinsky when he visited the Kahane home in Brooklyn, during an organizing trip. Kahane’s father was a fund-raiser for Jabotinsky’s terrorist militia, the Irgun. As a Knesset member for four years representing Kach, Kahane had his own version of the Iron Wall: No self-respecting Arab, he said, would consent to live under Israeli subjugation indefinitely.¹³

Last November, Smotrich ordered his agency to annex land in the West Bank, under the guise of preparing “the necessary infrastructure for applying sovereignty” of Israel. He clarified the reason for this by citing security concerns: to remove the “threat” of a Palestinian state, it is necessary “to apply Israeli sovereignty over the entire settlements in Judea and Samaria.” One of his proposals was to remove Israeli civil servants employed in the West Bank and have settlers take over administrative responsibility there.

When Netanyahu began his sixth term as Prime Minister in December 2022, the government moved to

ease restrictions on expanding existing settlements and approving construction of new settlements. The number of settlers in the West Bank jumped from 314,000 in 2010 to nearly 530,000 in January 2025, in 135 settlements. Another 225,000 settlers live in East Jerusalem.

The rapid growth was the subject of a ruling by the International Court of Justice (ICJ), which stated that the occupation of Palestinian lands is a breach of international law. The ruling called on Israel to halt all new settlement activities and to evacuate settlers from Palestinian lands.

Netanyahu responded by attacking the ICJ, saying “the Jewish people are not conquerors in their own land.” He was backed up by Itamar Ben-Gvir, who justified settlement expansion, saying, “It’s our land.... This land never belonged to Arabs.”

After the Hamas attack on October 7 and the subsequent Israeli response, Palestinian demonstrators in the West Bank have been subjected to violent attacks by the IDF, police, and armed settlers. Between Oct. 7, 2023 and December 31, 2024, a total of 716 Palestinians were killed in the West Bank, many by roving bands of armed settlers, and police have recorded 1,860 attacks by settlers.

The announcement of Operation Iron Wall on January 21, 2025 led to the deployment of IDF troops, special forces, Shin Bet agents, and Border police, who used airplanes, drones, armored vehicles, and bulldozers for the assault on Jenin. On the 23rd, an evacuation order was issued for the 14,000 residents of the refugee camp there. Many of the residents are descendants of those who arrived in 1948, after being dispossessed and driven from their homes during the Nakba.

As the evacuation was being enforced, Israeli newspaper *Haaretz* ran a story on January 28 by reporter Yaniv Kubovich debunking the story of “Jenin Brigades” terrorists, which precipitated the operation. They were identified by authorities as a battalion of Hamas, running wild, allegedly threatening settlers. Kubovich quoted a commander of the IDF’s Menashe Brigade, who admitted there is no Jenin terror battalion. Nevertheless, the next day, Defense Minister Katz said the forces will remain in Jenin indefinitely. This operation, he said, is being run as “the first lesson from the method of repeated raids in Gaza.” According to *The Times of Israel*, Smotrich added that West Bank cities, such as Nablus and Jenin, “need to look like Gaza’s Jabalia,” a town with 70% of its buildings destroyed by the IDF.

13. Joshua Leifer, “Kahane’s Ghost: How a Long-Dead Extremist Rabbi Continues To Haunt Israel’s Politics,” *The Guardian*, March 20, 2025. See also Robert I. Friedman, *The False Prophet: Rabbi Meir Kahane*, Brooklyn, N.Y.: Lawrence Hill Books, 1990.

It is now estimated that 40,000 West Bank Palestinians have been uprooted thus far by Operation Iron Wall.

Systemic Failure of the Iron Wall

Avi Shlaim, speaking of the great irony of Jabotinsky's belief that adopting his "Iron Wall" doctrine would assure Israel's national security, stated that "Israel was created as a safe haven for the Jews [It] has become the least safe place for Jews."

From the war of independence until today, Israel's military has been involved in 19 wars and major military operations. In 2007, the decision was made to enhance security by supplementing the Iron Wall doctrine with the Iron Dome, described as a mobile, all-weather air defense system which can intercept and destroy short-range rockets and artillery fired at Israel. It became operational in March 2011, with technical and logistical support given by U.S. military contractors and members of the U.S. armed forces, just in time to disable rockets fired from Gaza during the IDF's 2012 Gaza War, Operation Pillar of Defense. It has become a central feature of Israel's defense, protecting the country from strikes from Hamas, Hezbollah, and the Houthis.

The security conception derived from Jabotinsky is that early warning, and rapid, certain punishment leading to a decisive victory of the Zionists are enough of a deterrent to force the Palestinians into submission. Netanyahu has embraced this conception fully. On May 15, 2023, he declared "We have restored deterrence—we have changed the equation." In July, 2023, Netanyahu expressed his admiration for Jabotinsky and the Iron Wall, stating, "One hundred years after the 'Iron Wall' was stamped in Jabotinsky's writings we are continuing to successfully implement these principles."

Yet, with the most modern components of surveillance technology watching Gaza, networks of spies infiltrating Gaza, and tanks, military bases, walls and fences surrounding the Gaza Strip, on October 7, 2023, Hamas militants broke through the containment of the modern "Iron Wall," murdering civilians and soldiers, and taking hostages, some of whom have remained in captivity in the tunnels under Gaza for more than seventeen months. In response, IDF forces have levelled Gaza and destroyed its infrastructure, killed more than 50,000, assassinated most of the leaders of Hamas, and inflicted devastating blows against Hezbollah in Lebanon, then moved further into Syria following the over-

throw of the Bashar al-Assad government, while Netanyahu continues to make threats that he will "decapitate" Iran.

The Greater Israel fanatics, typified by members of Netanyahu's cabinet such as Itamar Ben-Gvir and Smotrich, are openly demanding the forcible removal of Palestinians, while destroying their homes, their hospitals, their schools and universities in a deadly scorched-earth/ethnic-cleansing frenzy, which has led to credible charges of genocide and crimes against humanity, in a case filed by South Africa at the International Court of Justice.

Yet Hamas continues to recruit. Military historian Uri Bar-Joseph, who has written numerous books on this subject—the latest being *Beyond the Iron Wall: The Fatal Flaw in Israel's National Security*—argues in his books and opinion pieces that despite this history, Israel has not updated its security concept, "which has undergone little change since it was shaped by Ben-Gurion in the 1950s." In an article published by the Institute for National Security Studies in Tel Aviv,¹⁴ he takes Netanyahu to task for his belief in deterrence and brutal punishment. Deterrence works, Netanyahu said, if they are "struck with a blow that they had never suffered in their history." Yet, despite blow after blow, the resistance against the Zionists and their occupation of Palestinian land is still alive today.

Avi Shlaim's study of this seemingly never-ending tragedy, *The Iron Wall: Israel and the Arab World*, first published in 2000, provides additional profound insights into this tragic drama, which stretches back more than one hundred years to the essays of Jabotinsky on the iron wall. The axioms presented by Jabotinsky—that diplomacy won't work with the Arabs and that military force must be used to crush their hopes so that, in despair, they will accept the Zionist state in their land—still dominate Israeli strategic policy.

In an interview with *Jacobin* magazine published on September 18, 2020, Shlaim said the problem is that "Israel's leaders fell in love with the Iron Wall; they fell in love with military power...." As a result, they are relying on "using military superiority to reach a settlement with the Palestinians...."

"Netanyahu has never shown any interest in resolving the conflict through negotiations," he added. "Since 1967, no Israeli government has ever intended to allow

14. Uri Bar-Joseph, "Israel's Deterrence and the 10/7 Attack," INSS publication, July 2024.



Vince Musi/The White House

Yitzhak Rabin, Bill Clinton, Yasser Arafat at the White House Sept. 13, 1993.

an independent Palestinian state.” The one exception was the effort by Yitzhak Rabin with the Oslo Accords. “The historical significance of Oslo is that Rabin was the first and only Israeli prime minister who, in good faith, went toward the Palestinians on the political front.... None of his successors were serious about negotiations.”¹⁵ Rabin’s assassination, on November 4, 1995, by an extremist tied to the settlers’ movement, essentially ended the possibility of a peaceful resolution opened by Rabin with the Oslo Accords.

Rabin, a long-time enforcer of the Iron Wall during his military career and in his first term as Prime Minister, from 1974-77, eventually realized that this strategy would not succeed. Leah Rabin, his wife, describes in her moving biography, her husband’s change of heart, due to what he saw as the futility of suppressing the First Intifada by force. “The Intifada made it wholly clear to Yitzhak that Israel could not govern another people.” By 1989, “he was gradually moving toward advocating Palestinian autonomy and self-determination.”¹⁶

Following his election as Prime Minister in 1992, he

broke with the entrenched axioms which rejected negotiations with the adversary, initially through secret talks with emissaries of the PLO in Oslo. He also incorporated into the Oslo Accords an economic annex, which specified the importance of mutually-beneficial economic cooperation between Israel and the Palestinians, providing an incentive to both sides to end the fighting. That he was aware he was posing a challenge to these axioms was evident in the toast he proposed at the White House gathering, in honor of the agreement he had just signed with PLO chairman Yasser Arafat. He asked the guests to lift their glasses in a toast, to “those with the courage to change axioms.”

Bar-Joseph is appealing to the leaders of Israel to learn the lesson from this history. This lesson, reiterated in the In-

stitute for National Security Studies (INSS) article, is that “deterrence is not an alternative for sensible foreign policy.” As for what would make a sensible foreign policy, he reached the same conclusion as Shlaim—to actually negotiate, beginning with the idea of trading the land won in the 1967 war, for recognition by Arab nations and the Palestinians of Israel’s right to exist, and live in peace.

This became a possibility in 2002, following an Arab League summit in Beirut, in which 22 Arab nations voted for a Saudi land-for-peace initiative. In return for an Israeli withdrawal from the territory seized in the 1967 war—which would become part of an independent Palestinian state, with East Jerusalem as its capital—the Arab nations agreed to end the conflict, recognize Israel, and normalize relations with Israel. Included would be a “just settlement” of the refugee problem, including an agreement on the “right of return.” This initiative was endorsed by PLO leader Arafat, but rejected by Israel’s Prime Minister Ariel Sharon, who objected to the return to the pre-1967 borders. The Arab League reaffirmed it in 2007 and again in 2017. But instead of accepting the offer as a framework, which would require difficult negotiations to work out the details, it was again rejected by Israel’s leaders. It was Netanyahu who rejected it in 2017, saying he would not accept an “ultimatum” from Arab

15. *Jacobin* magazine, September 2020.

16. Leah Rabin, *Our Life, His Legacy*; G.P. Putnam’s Sons, New York, 1997. For more on Rabin’s break with the axioms of the Iron Wall, see Harley Schlanger, “What Rabin Knew: Peace Takes the Courage to Change Axioms,” *Executive Intelligence Review*, December 21, 2001.

leaders.

Bar-Joseph concludes his INSS article by writing that “reluctance to pursue political settlements based on the principle of ‘land for peace’ has led Israel into a deadlock,” with deadly consequences for both sides, and the threat of a much broader regional war.

Postscript

As this article is being written, Netanyahu has broken the ceasefire agreement signed with Hamas, and ordered renewed heavy air and artillery strikes against Gaza, resulting in more than 400 deaths in the first day, more than 100 of them children. On March 20, Defense Minister Israel Katz issued a bloodcurdling warning to not just Hamas, but to all Palestinians still in Gaza. In a video message, he threatened to drive all Palestinians from Gaza. “Residents of Gaza, this is your final warning.... The Israeli Air Force’s attack against Hamas terrorists was only the first step. What follows will be far harsher, and you will bear the full cost. Evacuation of the population from combat zones will soon resume. If all Israeli hostages are not released and Hamas is not kicked out of Gaza, Israel will act with force you have not known before.... The alternative is destruction and total devastation.”

Typified by this statement by Katz, Israel’s leaders are acting arrogantly and with confidence, with the expectation that U.S. President Donald Trump will back up their intention to solve Israel’s “Palestinian problem” by supporting their efforts to eliminate the Palestinians. This is part of an imperial strategy of regional destabilization, of permanent war, shaped by a geopolitical doctrine which led to the adoption by the British cabinet of the Balfour declaration more than a century ago. The same British lords of the City of London, whose Great Game targeted Eurasian unity beginning in the middle of the 19th Century—and continues today with NATO’s proxy war in Ukraine—never intended that peace should emerge among sovereign states in Southwest Asia.

The perpetuation of the cycle of violence, protected



CC/Avital Efrat

Lord Balfour’s visit to Binyamin, 1925. Sitting from left to right: Vera Weizmann, Chaim Weizmann, Balfour, Nahum Sokolov. Standing: British Mandate officials and PKA officials (Henry Frank and Jules Rosenhack).

by the axiom that diplomacy should cede precedence to an Iron Wall manned by Jewish colonizers, not only makes a mockery of the slogan against genocide, “Never again,” which was a response to Nazi genocide, specifically against the Jewish people. It also shows that the adoption of the Iron Wall policy has not brought security, nor will it bring peace to Israel, a lesson that is long overdue.

LaRouche on Freeing Israel from the Grip of London’s ‘Great Game’ Players

In May 1981, U.S. statesman Lyndon LaRouche wrote an article on how to free Israel from being used as a wrecking ball on behalf of British imperial interests. He was in communication with Israeli networks to promote what later became his “Oasis Plan,” a major infrastructure project to provide fresh water for Israel and its Arab neighbors, to “green the desert.” The “LaRouche Doctrine” begins with the idea of cooperation among sovereign states for mutual benefit. By providing an incentive for peace for all parties, it is as relevant today as it was then.

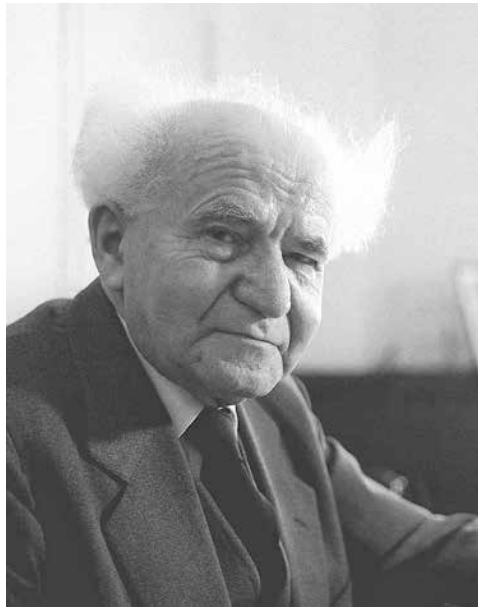
The following is excerpted from “The ‘LaRouche

Doctrine' on Israel and the Holocaust" (*Executive Intelligence Review*, May 19, 1981).

"Repeatedly, from within Israel, there has emerged to a leading position some political faction determined to change the situation, to move developments into directions consistent with the policy we have outlined. Each time, Arab leaders who should have encouraged this have bent to pressures, and have failed to make the public response required to foster this effort from within Israel. More significantly, the great powers, including the British-influenced United States, have failed to provide the credible, required, open support for such ephemeral Israeli initiatives. In practice, Israel has been left to maneuver by extreme Machiavellian expedients within the circumstances defined by the continuing, bloody heritage of British intelligence's 'Great Game' in the region. This is best understood in examining the history of the tiny nation of Israel under the leadership of David Ben-Gurion.

"Lacking credible outside support for peace-oriented policy initiatives from among its own political forces, Israel's policy has been chiefly one of expedient strategic maneuver within the terms of the 'Great Game' rigged chiefly, in turn, by the cupidity or other form of folly of the great powers. Israel has existed predominantly by functioning as a virtual 'multiple agent' of the principal factions of the great powers in that region, playing off the follies of one or another patron ... against those of others.

"There can be no effective, proper foreign policy toward the Middle East unless this pattern of behavior by the great and lesser powers toward the Middle East is changed. Essentially, the principal powers must give credible forms of support to those political initiatives from within Israel's leading political circles which strengthen them, by reinforcing the impulses within



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David Ben-Gurion

Israel, toward the objectives we have broadly identified above. When a Begin attempts to follow courses of action to destabilize the Middle East situation, credible and efficient deterrents must be quickly applied to the included effect of discrediting that impulse within Israel. Contrary to the record of past great-power performance generally, whenever political initiatives from within Israel are even tentatively in the direction needed to effect genuine solutions, the electorate of the tiny nation of Israel must have credible evidence that such initiatives from Israel will have full and efficient support. In this, we must be blind to all arguments on behalf

of Zionism, but fixed on the objective of the forms of Israeli nationalism which are consistent with the principles of the sovereign nation-state.

"The keystone of efficient policy toward Israel today is the interrelated matter of Israel's foreign debt and internal inflation. The key to strengthening Israel's capacity to become a sovereign nation-state republic in outlook, is to aid it in achieving the internal conditions of life consistent with a sovereign nation-state dedicated to technological progress. The debt must be reorganized, a 'heavy currency' reform instituted as part of that package, and sufficient credits for technology provided to enable Israel to export needed categories of technology for the economic development of those among its neighbors which desire improved technologies in water, nuclear, and other categories. That sort of assistance to a political leadership seeking to change the patterns of Middle East relations will provide indirect benefits of inestimable great value to the nations which act in concert to bring peace to the Middle East on this basis. That assistance, if combined with action to terminate at last the old British 'Great Game' in the region, is the concrete policy we must seek the opportunities to implement."