

Israel\222s Changing Neighborhood  
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When Israel first became a nation, a unified Muslim world (in particular, Arab world) invaded, hoping to destroy the nascent state. The Arabs did not prevail, but that did not stop them for trying 13 other times since 1947.

In the past 12 months alone, Israel faced 407 terror attacks, including 165 stabbings, 87 attempted stabbings, 107 shootings, 47 vehicular attacks, and one bus bombing. All this is in a country the size of New Jersey!

Today, however, the Arab (and Muslim) worlds face increasing disarray. The two major sects of Islam, Sunni and Shiite, are in open conflict. Non-Arab Iran (formerly Persia), is home to the majority of Shiites in the world, but there are Shiite pockets living in Saudi Arabia, the Persian Gulf, Afghanistan, Iraq, and Pakistan. Iraq has been transformed from a Sunni-Arab majority country to a Shiite-majority country, with the inevitable conflict that results from this clash.

Both Sunnis and Shiites are under attack by two other murderous cults, ISIS and the older Al Qaeda, the brainchild of Osama bin Laden. These cults aspire to global reach and have little interest in existing Muslim nation states.

Within each of these nation states another conflict is going on: that of disaffected citizens against their oppressive governments. The great youth bulge (now beginning to crash) is split among those wanting to enter the modern Western-style world and those believing that their problems will be solved by more Islam. In addition, young women are increasingly educated and aware how badly their religion and culture has treated them. The birthrate is dropping like a stone.

The Saudis, the most ferocious enemy of Israel\222s very existence, is suddenly facing a much more hostile enemy, Iran. For some time now, under the radar, the Saudis and Israelis have developed a security relationship that neither country wants publicized. As usual, "the enemy of my enemy is\205..if not my friend, at least my ally."

Nobody in the region gives a hoot about Palestine or the Palestinians, an issue that formerly unified the Muslim world against Israel. The only people who seem to care about the Palestinians are European left-wingers and, of course, American and European academics, who can see no evil in the world other than Israel. They are rapidly becoming outliers and ridiculous among any people with critical thinking abilities. The Obama Administration has already condemned the BDS movement (boycotts and divestment of Israel). The President will oppose any targeting of Israel, and several states have also banned under law the anti-divestment movement.

Meanwhile, Israel enjoys stable and lasting peace treaties with Jordan, Egypt, and the Gulf Arab Emirates. They have made up with Turkey, which, although increasingly Islamist, recognizes that there are worse enemies out there. Israel has also opened new agreements for strategic cooperation with Greece (formerly hostile to them) Cyprus, and with the UAE and Pakistan in joint military exercises with the US.

Israel now has an opportunity to take risks and make some sort of settlement with the Palestinians. They certainly do not want a "one-state" solution in which all Palestinians become part of Israel and have a vote. They could unilaterally recognize the State of Palestine and let the Palestinians scramble to run it. This would keep the Palestinians busy for some time and could provide a home for disaffected Israeli Arab youth.

With the support of Arab states for such an initiative, Israel could benefit by no longer being the bad guy in the Muslim world. It is an open secret that for many years, despite unified Arab support for a Palestinian state, they have shown their distaste for Palestinians themselves when they seek work in the Arab world. Furthermore, at international air shows, I have seen Arab attendees swamping the Israeli pavilion collecting marketing brochures. The Palestinians have not managed to produce anything marketable; they are trapped in unproductive resentment and violence.

European enthusiasts for Palestine should support it with money and their young can go help the Palestinians to create a state. Lots of luck to them.

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Dr. Laina Farhat-Holzman is a historian, lecturer, and author of God's Law or Man's Law. You may contact her at [Lfarhat102@aol.com](mailto:Lfarhat102@aol.com) or [www.globalthink.net](http://www.globalthink.net).