On 5 June 1967 Israel staged a surprise preemptive strike against Egypt. It destroyed virtually all the aircraft in the Egyptian, Jordanian, and Syrian air forces. Most of them were destroyed while sitting on the ground.

Within three days, the Israelis had taken the Sinai Desert and reached the Suez Canal. Within six days, the Israelis had control of the West Bank, the Golan Heights, and the Gaza Strip as well.

The Israeli David had defeated the Arab Goliath. Not only Arabs and Israelis, but the whole world was stunned.

And there was more. Israeli troops were able to take East Jerusalem, site of the Western Wall of the ancient Jewish temple. To Jews, it’s one of the holiest places in the world. Arabs had captured it and the rest of the old Jewish Quarter during Israel’s 1948 War for Independence. And now it was back in Jewish hands.

On top of the Temple Mount stands the Dome of the Rock mosque. Muslims believe it’s the spot from which the prophet Muhammad went up to heaven.

Quick Write

What do you think went through the minds of Israeli soldiers walking through East Jerusalem for the first time during the Six-Day War? Describe how you think the Arabs of the Old City felt.

Learn About

• historical events that contributed to the founding of modern Israel
• historical events associated with the Six-Day War of 1967
• how the Yom Kippur War of 1973 affected Arab-Israeli relations
• the various attempts at lasting peace in the Middle East
In the previous lesson, you read about how the Ottoman Empire's collapse led to French and British mandates over different parts of the Middle East. These European powers controlled territories until they were either ready for independence or gained it through revolution. This process played out in British-controlled Palestine, too. But it was much more complicated than in other places because of the Jews' and Arabs' competing claims.

**The 1947 United Nations Partition Plan for Palestine**

The Balfour Declaration of 1917 put the British government on record in favor of a Jewish homeland in Palestine. This statement gave the Zionists a huge boost. It showed that the government of one of the most powerful countries on earth was in favor of their cause. The institutions of the nascent—developing—Jewish state began to take form. Jewish immigration into Palestine increased.
CHAPTER 1 The Middle East
Harry Truman felt morally bound to help the refugees and pushed Britain to change for permission to go to Palestine. They had world opinion on their side. US President

The Zionist movement acquired large tracts of land in Palestine. The region lacked a clear system of private property rights, and, especially during the hard times of the 1930s, Arab landowners were willing to sell.

This led to an anti-Zionist backlash, however. Arab resistance to Jewish immigration intensified. It often led to violence. An organization called the Arab Higher Committee called a general strike and issued three demands:

- An end to further Jewish immigration
- An end to land sales to Jews
- The establishment of an Arab national government.

And so in 1939 the British government changed its policy. It issued a white paper—a statement of government policy—that ended its commitment to the Jews in Palestine. Instead, it called for the creation of a Palestinian (Arab) state within 10 years. The Palestinians would take over as soon as “peace and order” could be restored. This plan would severely limit Jewish immigration to 75,000 a year for five years. After that, further immigration would require the Palestinian government’s consent. This policy change did not go down well with the Zionists.

The outbreak of World War II further complicated the situation. However disappointed the Jews were in the British government, they really had no choice but to support Britain in the fight against Nazi Germany, which was rounding up and murdering millions of European Jews. As David Ben-Gurion, who would eventually become Israel’s first prime minister in 1948, put it, “We shall fight the war against Hitler as if there were no White Paper, and we shall fight the White Paper as if there were no war.”

And so they did. Ben-Gurion played another key leadership role in Israel’s founding as chairman of the Jewish Agency, which helped settle immigrants into Palestine. He held the post from 1935–1948. In 1945 the Jewish Agency joined forces with armed radical groups to form the Jewish resistance. This resistance sometimes resorted to violence in support of its goals.

By the end of World War II, the British effort to limit Jewish immigration was becoming untenable. Hundreds of thousands of Jews who had survived the Nazi Holocaust were stuck in camps for “displaced persons” in Europe. They clamored for permission to go to Palestine. They had world opinion on their side. US President Harry Truman felt morally bound to help the refugees and pushed Britain to change its policy. It was more than Britain, weakened by World War II and straining under the weight of its empire, could sustain.
On 18 February 1947 British Foreign Secretary Ernest Bevin announced that his
government would hand the issue over to the United Nations. On 15 May the UN
set up an 11-member Special Committee on Palestine (UNSCOP). On 31 August
the committee announced a plan to divide Palestine into two states, one Jewish
and the other Arab. Jerusalem would have special international status. An economic
union would link the three entities.

A majority of UNSCOP's members supported the partition plan. So did the United
States and the Soviet Union. The UN General Assembly adopted the plan on
29 November 1947.

The Zionist General Council thought the plan fell short of what Zionists had
expected from the League of Nations mandate to Britain 25 years before. But the
council was willing in principle to accept partition. On the other hand, the League
of Arab States said it would do whatever was necessary to block the deal.

The US Department of State then told Truman that a Jewish state would not be
viable—able to survive. So in January 1948 the president reversed himself. He said
he could not support Israel. He agreed to postpone partition and transfer the British
Mandate to a UN trusteeship council.

Young Palestinians walk down a street in Gaza City, Gaza Strip.

*Photo by Melanie Stetson Freeman / © 2001 The Christian Science Monitor*

After the 1948 Israeli War of Independence, only two parts of Palestine remained in Arab hands:
the Gaza Strip and the West Bank.
The Arab political parties on the ground in Palestine rejected the plan as well and called for a general strike. Violence mounted between Arabs and Jews. British forces in Palestine sided with Arabs. They tried unsuccessfully to keep the Yishuv—the Jewish community in Palestine before statehood—from arming itself.

The Jews’ first clandestine—secret—shipment of heavy arms arrived from Czechoslovakia in March 1948. The Haganah—the military arm of the Jewish Agency—went on the offensive. It set up communications links for the territory the UN plan designated as the Jewish state. Jewish forces also attacked Arabs. When the news came that they had killed 250 Arab civilians at the village of Dayr Yasin, Arabs fled from places with large Jewish populations.

Meanwhile, the US policy stance changed yet again. A Zionist leader named Chaim Weizmann persuaded Truman to pledge support for the proposed Jewish state. On 14 May 1948 Ben-Gurion proclaimed the establishment of the State of Israel. Britain gave up its mandate the next day at 6 p.m.

**The Israeli War of Independence**

The Zionists’ dream wasn’t secure, however. The day after Ben-Gurion’s proclamation, Arab forces invaded the new state.

Initially these forces numbered about 25,000. They included Egyptians, Iraqis, Syrians, Transjordanians, and Lebanese, along with sprinklings of Saudi Arabians and Yemenis. On the Israeli side were the Haganah and irregular units, along with women’s auxiliaries, totaling 35,000 or more.

By mid-October, Arab forces in the war zones rose to about 55,000, including up to 5,000 Palestine Liberation Force irregulars. With the exception of the British-trained Arab Legion of Transjordan, most of the Arab troops were ill prepared for battle. By contrast, Israeli troops grew to about 100,000, and about a quarter of these were World War II veterans. Their advantages included combat experience and good internal communications lines.

By January 1949—when hostilities ended with a set of armistice agreements—the Israelis held the area that would define their borders until June 1967. It was much more land than what the UN called for. Only two parts of Palestine remained in Arab hands: Egypt held the Gaza Strip. And the Arab Legion of Transjordan controlled the West Bank.

Jordan (formerly Transjordan) chose to annex—take over—the West Bank after fighting had ended. It remained under Jordanian control until 1967. But only two countries—Britain and Pakistan—officially recognized Jordanian rule there.
The armistice agreements settled division lines in Jerusalem as well. Jordan controlled the Old City and the Western Wall, as well as the Temple Mount. The Temple Mount is sacred to both Jews and Muslims. Solomon’s Temple once stood there, and today it is the site of the mosque called the Dome of the Rock. The Israelis controlled West Jerusalem, the more modern part of the city. The situation pleased no one, but brought an end to the fighting—for the time being.

The Suez Canal

The Suez Canal is a shortcut for ships sailing between the Mediterranean Sea and the Red Sea. It was an Anglo-French project. The French designed it and provided most of the construction funding. Legions of poorly paid Egyptian laborers did most of the heavy lifting. The Europeans eventually bought out the Egyptian share of the project. And when it opened in 1869, France and Britain had a joint concession for the canal—a contract granting the right to operate it. It was set to expire in 1968.
The Suez Conflict of 1956

The area remained relatively calm until July 1956. That's when Egypt moved to nationalize—to put under state control—the Suez Canal, a critical route to India. Britain and France had controlled the canal. After Egypt took it over, the two European countries worked with Israel to recapture it.

Israel took Egypt’s action as a sign that it was preparing to launch another invasion. Israeli forces mobilized rapidly. Under Major General Moshe Dayan, the Israeli Defense Forces launched a preemptive strike into Sinai on 29 October. By 2 November they had cleared out the Egyptians and won control of the entire peninsula.

The French and the British, however, landed troops at Port Said and insisted that both the Egyptians and the Israelis withdraw from the canal. The UN, in turn, insisted that the French and the British pull out of Suez. They did so in December, in response to pressure from both the United States and the UN.
The UN also demanded that Israel pull back to the 1949 Armistice line. It did, but only in March 1957 after the United Nations stationed an emergency force in Gaza and at Sharm el-Sheikh, Egypt.

Israel emerged from this war with its security at least somewhat improved because of the UN presence. The real benefit to the new state, however, was the boost to its prestige as a military power. True, the Israeli forces had pulled back from the territory they had taken. But they had pushed back the Egyptians at a cost of only 170 of their own lives.

The decade that followed this war was the most peaceful in Israel’s history so far. Its borders were mostly quiet. But underlying tensions remained. By the early 1960s, a third round of war seemed inevitable. An arms race developed. The Soviet Union, which had originally supported Israel, now supplied Egypt and Syria with military aid and hardware. And Israel found that the West Germans, the British, and especially the French were good sources of modern weapons.

**Historical Events Associated With the Six-Day War of 1967**

In June 1967 the Israeli Defense Forces (IDF) redrew the map of one of the most sensitive parts of the world in less than a week. The Six-Day War was one of the most significant since World War II. It was like an earthquake whose aftershocks still reverberate. Its still-unresolved questions—notably that of a Palestinian state—continue to drive or at least affect the political agenda of much of this region.
Arab Threats to Israel Prior to the Six-Day War

As the State of Israel neared the end of its second decade, border skirmishes, shelling, and other violence began increasing. During the 1960s, Syria repeatedly shelled Israeli border villages from the Golan Heights and by air. Most of these incidents were minor, but on 7 April 1967, Israeli fighter aircraft struck back. In the ensuing dogfight, the Syrians lost six of their Soviet-built MiG fighters. Syria began to fear an all-out attack from Israel. Egypt, an ally of Syria, began a big military buildup the next month.

Then on 18 May Egyptian President Gamal Abdul Nasser ordered UN forces out of Gaza and Sinai. UN Secretary-General U Thant agreed to pull his troops out. Four days later, Nasser announced a blockade of the Straits of Tiran. That was Israel’s only outlet to the Red Sea and its markets to the east. Nasser knew that would be grounds for the Israelis to go to war. Ever since the 1956 war, Israel had stressed to the Egyptians that a blockade would be as good as a declaration of war. Soon after the Egyptian move, Jordan and Iraq joined the Syrian-Egyptian military alliance.
The Six-Day War

Moshe Dayan, hero of the 1956 war, became the Israeli minister of defense on 30 May 1967. He came to power declaring publicly that war could be avoided. But secretly, he was planning a huge preemptive strike against Arab airpower. On 5 June Israel destroyed about 370 Egyptian, Syrian, and Jordanian aircraft. Most of them were knocked out sitting on the ground.

The attack nearly eliminated Arab air forces. Next came a ground invasion of Sinai and the Gaza Strip, Jordan, and then Syria. It was a rout on all fronts for the Arab ground forces, which lacked air support.

By the time a UN cease-fire took hold, the IDF had taken the Sinai Peninsula as far west as the Suez Canal. It had also seized the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, as well as Syria’s Golan Heights. And this time, in contrast with 1956, the Israelis did not pull back once the shooting stopped.

The swift and stunning victory cost Israel 700 troops. The IDF beat back the combined Arab armies, which included far larger numbers.

Most significantly, for the first time since independence, Israel’s heartland was out of its enemies’ artillery range. The territory that had harbored threats to its security since 1948 was under its control.

The Issues Associated With Israeli-Occupied Territories in Palestine

From the Israeli perspective, the victories of the Six-Day War solved some major problems. But it also created new ones.

Israel might have used its captured territories to bargain for peace with its neighbors. But in the postwar euphoria, this had little appeal for the Israeli public.
Right after the war, Israeli Prime Minister Levi Eshkol said he would negotiate “everything” for a full peace, including settlement of the refugee problem. In November 1967 he accepted UN Security Council Resolution 242. This committed Israel to “withdrawal of Israeli armed forces from territories occupied in the recent conflict.” In return, Israel would get acceptance from its Arab neighbors.

But the Eshkol government also made plans to build Jewish settlements in the disputed territories. And so did Eshkol’s successor, Prime Minister Golda Meir.

Israel’s persistence in building new settlements in occupied territories, even as successive governments have said they are willing to negotiate land for peace, is one of the main issues in the Arab-Israeli conflict.
Other Political and Military Developments

The occupied territories held roughly 1 million Arabs. These provided potential cover and support for guerrillas, notably a group called Al Fatah (“the victory”). Skirmishes and sabotage continued during this period. A steady stream of men and weapons flowed into the West Bank from the end of the war until 1970. In the spring of that year, guerrillas went back to shelling Israel from Jordan and Lebanon. International terrorism intended to focus attention on Palestinian grievances also appeared after the Six-Day War.

From the Arab political perspective, the Six-Day War was not just a defeat for Egypt. It was a defeat for Nasser’s goal of uniting the Arabs in one country. The Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO), led by Yasser Arafat, emerged as the political face of the Palestinian people. The Soviet Union quickly resupplied the Egyptians with weapons and became much more visible at the Suez Canal. And fighting started again. For nearly two years, the Egyptians and Israelis waged a low-level war. The Egyptians fired missiles at Israeli positions on the east bank of the canal. The Israelis held their own and sent fighter-bombers deep into the Egyptian heartland. This was known as the War of Attrition—in other words, a war of wearing each other down.

The conflict’s climax came on 30 July 1970, when Israeli fighter pilots clashed with Soviet counterparts in a dogfight near the Suez Canal. The Israelis reportedly shot down four Soviet MiGs without any losses of their own. But such a direct confrontation with a nuclear power was a frightening development. The Israelis stepped back from the brink. A new cease-fire took effect on 7 August 1970.
How the Yom Kippur War of 1973 Affected Arab-Israeli Relations

Six years after the triumph of 1967, Israel found itself in another major war with its Arab neighbors. It won this one, too—but at a high price. This war almost brought the two nuclear superpowers—the United States and the Soviet Union—into direct conflict.

The Historical Events That Led Up to the War

Palestinian guerrillas continued to attack Israel through the early 1970s. But after the War of Attrition, Israel felt relatively safe. Its military intelligence thought Syria would attack only if Egypt did, too. And according to this view, Egypt wouldn’t attack unless it were sure its airpower was superior to Israel’s. This reasoning was known as “the concept,” and it helped make Israel feel secure. Defense spending fell. Reservists served only 30 days instead of 60 each year. And by 1973, draftees—served only 33 months instead of 36.

Meanwhile, Egypt was making peaceful noises. Anwar Sadat had come to power after Nasser died in September 1970. Like Nasser late in life, Sadat realized that Egypt’s domestic problems were more urgent than its dispute with Israel. Peace with Israel would allow Egypt to cut its defense spending and maybe even get financial help from the United States.
And so Sadat launched a peace initiative. In 1971 he told the Egyptian parliament that “if Israel withdrew her forces in Sinai to the passes I would be willing to reopen the Suez Canal ... and to sign a peace agreement with Israel....” (The canal had been closed since the end of the Six-Day War.)

Israeli Prime Minister Golda Meir turned him down flat, however. Israel would not return to prewar borders, she said. This was the general view in Israel. The Israelis thought the neighboring Arab states were too weak to attack. The Arab world was in political disarray. Israelis were settling in the occupied territories. The Israelis saw no incentive to trade away land. And an attack on Israel seemed even less likely after Sadat expelled Soviet military advisers from Egypt in 1972.

But in fact, Meir’s rejection of Sadat’s peace overture convinced him he needed to try something else. He wanted to change the diplomatic status quo and to win legitimacy at home. What he needed, he concluded, was to start a war.
The Egyptian Attack on Israel and the Israeli Counterattack

Egypt and Syria chose Yom Kippur, the Jewish Day of Atonement, to launch their surprise attack against Israel. On 6 October 1973 Egyptian infantry crossed the Suez Canal and overran Israel’s defensive Bar-Lev Line. In the north, Syrian forces reached the outer edge of the Golan Heights. They greatly outnumbered the Israelis, with 1,100 tanks to 157.

Israel counterattacked, but for the first few days could make no headway. Casualties were heavy and the Israelis lost almost 150 planes as well.

On 10 October the tide turned. Israel pushed the Syrians out of all the territory they had taken since the start of the war. The next day Israeli forces got as far as 12 miles from the outskirts of Damascus, Syria’s capital.

In the south, Israelis repelled the Egyptian offensive into Sinai. A force led by General Ariel Sharon crossed the Suez Canal and surrounded the Egyptian Third Army.

Russian and US Participation in the War

The Yom Kippur War, as it became known, differed from Israel’s earlier wars because the world’s two superpowers, the Soviet Union and the United States, quickly got involved.
Sadat had expelled Soviet military advisers in 1972. But after Israeli forces advanced into Syria, the Soviet Union responded with huge military airlifts to Damascus and Cairo, Egypt’s capital. The United States matched this move with airlifts to the Israelis.

The Soviet Union called US Secretary of State Henry Kissinger to Moscow to negotiate a cease-fire. He worked out a deal calling for a cease-fire within 12 hours. It also called for implementation of UN Resolution 242, the “land for peace” resolution. And it called for negotiation of “a just and durable peace in the Middle East.”

After Kissinger returned to Washington, word came from the Soviets that the Israelis had violated the cease-fire. They had surrounded the Egyptian Third Army and were threatening to destroy it, the Soviets added. If the Israelis didn’t back off, the Soviets would take action on their own.

It was everyone’s nightmare scenario during the Cold War: a regional conflict that risked pulling in the superpowers as adversaries. Had the Soviets acted unilaterally, the United States would have felt a need to respond. But fortunately, Israel yielded to American pressure to let up on the Egyptians. A cease-fire took hold 25 October.

The Outcomes of the War

Israel may have “won” the Yom Kippur War, but it left the country feeling devastated. Casualties—those killed or wounded—numbered more than 6,000. The war cost the Israelis an estimated $7 billion in US dollars. This covered the loss of military equipment as well as the decline of general economic output. It was equivalent to a whole year’s gross national product—the sum total of a country’s output of goods and services.

Most important, the war shattered Israel’s image of invincibility. What happened in October 1973 shook national self-confidence. Israeli citizens questioned the competence of their Labor Party government. And Defense Minister Dayan, the hero of the Sinai and the Six-Day War, drew sharp public criticism.

After the October war, Israel also became more dependent on the United States. It relied on Washington for military, economic, and diplomatic aid.

And Israel found itself in an arms race. As oil prices rose, the Arab states had the money to buy more and more advanced weapons. This, in turn, forced Israel to spend more on defense, further straining its economy.
The Arab Oil Embargo

During the Yom Kippur War, the Arab members of the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) began an oil embargo against the United States. OPEC is a group of oil-rich countries who use their collective power to set policies and prices. They do this by reducing or increasing the amount of oil they are willing to sell. An embargo is a ban on trade, or in this case, a refusal to sell oil to the United States. The Arab oil states wanted to get back at America because of its decision to resupply Israel during the war. Arab oil producers extended the embargo to other supporters of Israel. They also cut production. This drove prices up. Long lines formed at US filling stations as people waited to buy gas. The embargo came as the decades-old system of oil pricing was already breaking down for other reasons. And so the embargo was especially effective from the Arab perspective. Prices eventually quadrupled from $3 to $12 a barrel. OPEC lifted the embargo in May 1974 after progress in Arab-Israeli disengagement.

The Various Attempts at Lasting Peace in the Middle East

“Peace in the Middle East” has been on the American diplomatic agenda since at least 1948. The unresolved question of Palestinian statehood remains a sore spot in the region.

Washington’s focus on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict has waxed and waned over time. But a number of attempts have been made to achieve a “just and durable peace” over the years. In the next sections you’ll read about two of the most important ones.

LESSON 2  ■  The Arab-Israeli Conflict
The Camp David Accords of 1979

When Menachem Begin came to power as Israel’s prime minister in May 1977, some observers hoped he might be the leader who made peace with his country’s neighbors. He was known as a real “hawk” toward the Palestinians. As a younger man, he had headed the Irgun, a Zionist militia trying to force the British out of Palestine.

But that might make it easier to make peace, some thought. There was no doubt he would stand up for Israel in dealings with the Arabs. And people remembered Richard Nixon’s historic opening to China, just a few years before. It was precisely because he was such a well-known anticommunist that he could open dialogue with the Communists in Beijing.

In 1977, international public opinion wanted a peace conference that would lead to an overall Arab-Israeli settlement. All parties would gather in Geneva, Switzerland. The United States and the Soviet Union would oversee things. America’s new president, Jimmy Carter, and Soviet leader Leonid Brezhnev issued a joint statement calling for such a conference.

But Begin had other ideas. He said that no international forum would tell him how to deal with Israeli territory. And he didn’t want to attend a peace conference where he would have no allies except the United States. Within America, opposition from supporters of Israel, as well as from anti-Soviet groups who didn’t want Moscow to have a bigger voice in the Middle East, also worked against an international conference.
Egyptian President Anwar Sadat also had other ideas. He feared Egypt might lose out to Syria at a Geneva conference. And what he cared most about was getting the Sinai back. At an international conference, the focus would be on a settlement for the Palestinians and the return of the Golan Heights to Syria.

And so Sadat made a bold diplomatic move: his own opening to Israel. He offered to address the Knesset (kuh-NESS-it)—the Israeli parliament.

His November 1977 journey to Jerusalem opened a new era in Egyptian-Israeli relations. He was committed to settling the Palestinian issue, but the Sinai was his priority.

Begin responded positively. He saw Sinai as negotiable, unlike the West Bank. And peace between the two countries would remove Egypt from the Arab-Israeli military balance. It would take some of the pressure off Israel to give up any of the West Bank.

Sadat’s move forced President Carter to change course and drop support for an international conference. Carter ended up playing a key role in bringing Sadat and Begin to an agreement, however.

Israeli-Egyptian negotiations began after Sadat’s trip to Jerusalem, but then bogged down. After nearly a year’s impasse, Carter brought Begin and Sadat to his presidential retreat at Camp David, outside Washington, for talks. Carter was putting a lot on the line for this: his own credibility and prestige.

The talks went on for two weeks, with Carter shuttling between cabins at the retreat, trying to broker an agreement. The crux of the problem was that Begin, who had opposed territorial concessions for so long, resisted dismantling settlements built in the Sinai while it was under Israel’s control.

Finally he consented, and the Camp David Accords were signed 17 September 1978. The Knesset approved them the next day.
One of the two agreements dealt with Sinai. It called for restoring Egyptian sovereignty to the Sinai and free passage for Israelis through the Suez Canal and the Straits of Tiran. The other agreement dealt with the West Bank, in terms that were vague and could be read in several ways. The accord called for “negotiations” by Egypt, Israel, Jordan, and “the representatives of the Palestinian people” on the future of the West Bank. There was also a call for peace talks between Israel and its other Arab neighbors. The package included as well personal letters to Carter from Sadat and Begin committing them to actions not outlined in the agreements themselves. All parties understood that the United States would sweeten the deal with increased aid to both Egypt and Israel.

The Camp David Accords were disappointing almost from the start. Early on, it became clear that Begin had a very limited concept of Palestinian autonomy. He was unwilling to give the West Bank any real control over its own resources. This in effect shut out not only radical Arabs, but also moderates from the peace process. Hopes that Camp David would be the first of a series of Arab-Israeli accords went unfulfilled.

**The Terms of the Oslo Accords**

The early 1990s, however, were a period of good news and hopefulness in the international arena. The Berlin Wall had fallen. Throughout Eastern Europe, fledgling democracies had replaced communism. In most cases, the changes came without bloodshed. Many “impossible” things had come to pass.

In the Middle East, too, there were reasons for hope. The US-led coalition in the Persian Gulf War of 1991 succeeded in ousting Iraqi forces under Saddam Hussein from Kuwait, which Iraq had invaded the summer before. The victory didn’t just showcase American military might. It demonstrated the value of diplomacy and of the United States getting as many countries on its “team” as it could. It made some people think “impossible” things could happen in the Middle East, too.

And so in October 1991 the United States and the Soviet Union convened the Madrid Conference in Spain. Palestinian leaders and the leaders of Israel, Lebanon, Jordan, and Syria took part. They laid foundations for negotiations to bring peace and prosperity to the region.

Within this framework, Israel and the PLO negotiated a Declaration of Principles signed 13 September 1993.

Earlier, on 14 December 1988, PLO Chairman Yasser Arafat had condemned all forms of terrorism. He’d also recognized Israel. Israel was unimpressed. But Arafat’s move led President Ronald Reagan to authorize “substantive dialogue” between US diplomats and the PLO for the first time.

By signing the Declaration of Principles, Israel recognized the PLO. It also granted it limited autonomy in return for an end to Palestinian claims to Israeli land.
The declaration is known as the Oslo Accords because it was worked out in the Norwegian capital, Oslo. It set some ambitious goals for the transfer of authority from Israel to an interim Palestinian Authority. Israel and the PLO signed two other agreements the next year to prepare for a transfer of powers and responsibilities.

**How the Intifada Undermined the Oslo Accords**

The mid-1990s saw two more important accords signed. Israel and Jordan signed a peace treaty 26 October 1994. And on 28 September 1995 Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin and PLO Chairman Arafat signed the Israeli-Palestinian Interim Agreement.

But just weeks later on 4 November, a right-wing Jewish radical assassinated Rabin. The murder brought to a head the bitter national debate over the peace process.

Even so, Israel continued to negotiate with the PLO. The two sides reached a number of agreements. But when President Bill Clinton hosted a summit at Camp David in July 2000 to tackle the core issues—such as Jerusalem, refugees, and Israeli settlements—the session broke down with no agreement.
Within weeks, widespread violence broke out in Israel, the West Bank, and Gaza. It started when Ariel Sharon, now the leader of Israel’s right-wing opposition, visited the Temple Mount in Jerusalem. Palestinians saw the visit as a provocation. With the failed peace process as a backdrop, the episode touched off a wave of violence. By December, it had taken 300 lives.

The violence was known as the intifada, or uprising. (This was actually the second wave of violence to be designated this way. The first began in 1987.)

In the final weeks of his presidency, Clinton made one more attempt at Middle East peace. He convened a summit on 17 October 2000 at Sharm el-Sheikh, Egypt, to calm the continuing violence between Palestinians and Israelis. A plan was announced. But it came unraveled almost at once.

In August 2005, after two years of diplomatic efforts, Israel began to withdraw from the Gaza Strip. In January 2006 the Palestinian terrorist group Hamas won a majority in elections to the Palestinian Legislative Council. This led to a series of armed clashes between Hamas and the PLO. In June 2007 Hamas seized control of Gaza, leaving Hamas governing it while the Palestinian Authority governed the West Bank.

Israeli troops invaded the Gaza Strip in January 2009 after Hamas fired rockets into Israel. The Israelis withdrew after three weeks of fighting, leaving the basic Palestinian-Israeli stalemate essentially unchanged. Diplomatic efforts to end the conflict continued as this book went to press.
Lesson 2 Review

Using complete sentences, answer the following questions on a sheet of paper.

1. How did the lack of a clear system of property rights in Palestine help the Zionists?

2. What important policy change did the British government announce through a white paper in 1939?

3. What actions by Egypt in May 1967 did Israel consider grounds for going to war?

4. What problems did victory in 1967 create for Israel?

5. What did Anwar Sadat conclude from Golda Meir’s response to his peace initiative?

6. What were the outcomes for Israel of the 1973 war? List three.

7. What was the main result of the Camp David Accords?

8. What was the main result of the Oslo Accords?

Applying Your Learning

9. Explain what you think the United States should do to help resolve the Arab-Israeli conflict.