

# A grim future in Israel

Writer- Sukumar Muralidharan (teaches at the school of journalism, O.P. Jindal Global University, Sonipat)

This article is related to General Studies  
Paper-II-(International Relations)

The Hindu

13 APR, 2019

## "India needs to go beyond token homage to the cause of Palestinian freedom."

With criminal indictment imminent on charges of corruption, Israel's Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu pulled off a fourth consecutive win in general elections to the Knesset on April 9. Though tied on seats with his main rival, Mr. Netanyahu has a clear pathway towards power in coalition with a bloc of right-wing allies. As with earlier wins, eked out by strongly running against counsels of sanity from the diminishing peace camp, he has pulled the political centre of gravity sharply, yet again, to the ultra-right.

### Sources of support

Two notable triumphs achieved against the tide of global opinion facilitated Mr. Netanyahu's win. In securing these, he counted on the unquestioning — and unthinking — support of the Donald Trump administration in the U.S. and the reservoir of evangelical fervour from which it draws sustenance.

Mr. Netanyahu's opponents within Israel say that Mr. Trump effectively created a publicity video for him with a decree during the late days of the campaign, recognising Israel's annexation of the Golan Heights. This followed Mr. Trump's gift on the 70th anniversary of Israel's formation last year, shifting the U.S. embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem and consigning the Arab third of the city's population to a future of indefinite occupation.

The comatose peace process, which was never more than a charade enabling the U.S. to keep its coalition of allies in the Arab world, was declared dead then. Even Mahmoud Abbas, the normally acquiescent Palestinian Authority President, has refused all offers to resume talks since.

Despite his professions of hurt innocence at the Palestinian refusal, Mr. Netanyahu has proved them right in every respect. In July 2018, the Knesset enacted a Basic Law declaring Israel the nation-state of the Jewish people. Jerusalem would be its indivisible capital and Hebrew its language. The right to self-determination within the state of Israel would by law be unique to the Jewish people.

This is a law that puts the status of Israel's 1.26 million Palestinian citizens and the estimated 5 million living in the West Bank and Gaza into a permanent limbo. It marks the final fruition of an effort that began in 2007, when the U.S. resumed its token effort to broker a peace after all efforts at re-engineering the regional strategic architecture, beginning with the invasion of Iraq, had failed.

Condoleezza Rice, the U.S. Secretary of the State at the time, records her shock at the precondition set by her Israeli counterpart Tzipi Livni, for returning to the talks. Under no circumstances, Ms. Livni insisted, would a peace accord grant any concession to the right of Palestinian refugees to return to their homes, since

that would be a mortal danger to Israel's Jewish character.

Ms. Rice took a while to get over the implications of what she heard: "Though I understood the argument intellectually, it struck me as a harsh defence of the ethnic purity of the Israeli state... [and] shocked my sensibilities as an American. After all, the very concept of 'American' rejects ethnic or religious definitions of citizenship. Moreover, there were Arab citizens of Israel. Where did they fit in?"

The hesitancy was very brief since Ms. Rice quickly signed up for the project that had the endorsement of her right-wing fraternity in the U.S. After the George W. Bush administration vanished into history in 2008, Barack Obama sought to dissuade Israel from this insistence on ethnic purity. Mr. Trump, in his part-comical effort to be all that Mr. Obama was not, has waded on the project of Zionist purity. In tearing up the nuclear deal with Iran, Mr. Trump has also reversed other steps his predecessor took to create a new regional architecture of power through conciliation rather than coercion.

### **Strong campaign**

Mr. Netanyahu's campaign rhetoric since his debut in politics was often called out for incitement against the Palestinians. He excelled himself this time, vowing in the last days of the campaign to never allow a Palestinian state and to annex parts of the West Bank.

He is also on record telling Knesset colleagues that controlling the entire territory between the Jordan river and the Mediterranean is indispensable "for the foreseeable future". And he has been unapologetic about "living forever by the sword" if that be Israel's need.

The people of Gaza have lived through this experience after the fraudulent Israeli withdrawal of 2005 which converted the densely populated strip into the world's largest open air prison. March 30 marked a year since the people of Gaza began their "great march of return", a mass mobilisation demanding the UN-mandated right of refugees to return home. No less than 70% of the 2 million people in Gaza are refugees from villages and towns razed to establish Israel.

Israel responded to the Gaza mobilisation with brute force, killing nearly 300 people, including children and paramedics. After an inquiry, a UN Commission identified a pattern of violations of international humanitarian law, possibly amounting to war crimes, and urged individual sanctions against those responsible for Israel's actions in Gaza.

### **The view from India**

India continues to be among the biggest overseas patrons of the Israeli military-industrial complex. Increasingly, in the public discourse, Israel is portrayed as the role model that a "new India" should emulate in terms of its security posture in a troubled neighbourhood. The cause of Palestinian freedom continues to gain token homage, but the myth that this commitment can be "de-hyphenated" from India's relations with Israel looks increasingly hollow.

A renewal of India's commitment to Palestine should run concurrently with fighting back against the growing expressions of intolerance in political life and the shredding of the fabric of secular democracy. With Israel taking another perilous turn to the right, India's endorsement of the Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions movement, today the only option to gain justice for Palestine, seems a moral imperative.

## Israeli-Palestinian conflict

### Why in the discussion?

- Benjamin Netanyahu's leadership coalition in Israel has won in the general election and Netanyahu is going to become Israel's prime minister again.
- This time Netanyahu will make a record of becoming prime minister for most of the time in Israel when he becomes the Prime Minister.
- He records will become Israel's Prime Minister for the records fifth time.
- In the election campaign, Benjamin Netanyahu had said that if he comes to power again, then the captured West Bank settlements will join the Israeli tribes. Since then, the Israeli-Palestinian conflict has again been discussed.

### What is the dispute?

- The Gaza Strip is a small Palestinian area, situated on the Mediterranean coast between Egypt and Israel.
- Palestine is Arabic and the majority Muslim dominated area. This is ruled by Hamas, which is an anti-Israel terrorist group. That is because Palestinians and many other Muslim countries refuse to accept Israel as a Jewish state.
- After 1947, when the United Nations divided Palestine into a Jew and a Arab state, since then there is a continued struggle between Palestine and Israel in which one important issue is to accept as jews state, the second is Gaza Strip, which has proven to be the cause of conflict between Israel and other Arab countries since the establishment of Israel.
- In June 1967, when another war broke out, it lasted for 6 days, in which Israel again captured the Gaza Strip.
- This Israeli occupation took place for 25 years, but in December 1987, due to riots and violent clashes between Gaza's Palestinians and the occupation of Israeli soldiers, they form a rebellion.

- In 1994, Israel began a phased transfer of government authority in the Gaza Strip to the Palestinian Authority (PA) under the terms of the Oslo Agreement signed by Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO).

### main point

- In the beginning of 2000, due to lack of negotiations between PA and Israel, violence has reached its peak, in which Israel Prime Minister Ariel Sharon announced a plan at the end of 2003, under which the the withdrawal of Israel troops and Gaza Strip settling local residents was there.
- In September 2005, Israel completed the migration from the region, and the control over the Gaza Strip was transferred to PA, although Israel continued its fielding and airspace.
- In June 2007, Hamas once again occupied the Gaza Strip and captured the West Bank, led by Fateh (Palestinian political group) emergency cabinet.
- Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas announced in a statement that Gaza will be under the control of Hamas.
- At the end of 2007 Israel declared the Gaza Strip an enemy territory, and along with it sanctioned several restrictions on Gaza, including power cuts, heavy restricted imports, and closure of the border.
- After the attacks in January 2008, these restrictions were made severe on Gaza and additionally sealed their borders with the Gaza Strip so to temporarily prevent fuel imports, after Hamas's army destroyed the border of the Gaza Strip along the border of Egypt so that thousands of people s reached Egypt to make food, fuel and goods available to them due to blockade.
- After this, after the European Union's withdrawal and consent, the Gaza Strip was sealed all around.

### Expected Questions (Prelims Exams)

1. Consider the following statements regarding Gaja Strip-

1. It is the disputed region between Israel and Palestine.
2. It is the coastal island of red sea.
3. It is the disputed region between Israel and Syria.

Which of the above statements is/are correct?

- (a) Only 1
- (b) Only 2
- (c) Only 3
- (d) All of the above

### Expected Questions (Mains Exams)

- Q. Underlining the disputed matter between Israel and Palestine, elucidate what type of viewpoint should India adopt towards this matter. Discuss. (250 Words)

**Note:** Answer of Prelims Expected Question given on 12 APR. is 1(b)

