

Preface

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A recently published book in Germany about Israeli settlements in the West Bank included an article entitled “Israel lost the Six-Day War on the Seventh Day.” Israel may have won the war in 1967, but many problems remain unresolved. Every day the state is confronted by many unanswered questions, to which it is struggling to find answers.

Relations with the Palestinians remain one of the main challenges. Sari Nusseibeh, a Palestinian negotiator and current President of Al Quds University, in an interview published in a German news magazine, said that without the Six-Day War Israelis and Palestinians would still not recognize each other. Only after 1967, he said, did the PLO slowly start to accept Israel, demanding withdrawal from all the territories. Again, it took a long time for the Palestinians to understand the need to negotiate with Israel, rather than expecting their demands to be answered without question.

Israel has also adapted its policies. Ariel Sharon finally questioned the policy that developed after the Six-Day War of settling the territories. Many see the settlements today as an obstacle to a peaceful two-state solution — the only stable solution. A diplomat with whom I spoke recently summed this up succinctly: “Israel is looking for historic compromise, whereas the Palestinian side, and today also maybe Syria, is claiming historic rights.”

The situation is very difficult and complicated, especially with a Hamas-led government in the Gaza Strip. It will be a long journey to find any kind of solution. Yet it is also clear that compromise is certainly needed on both sides to resolve the main issues in the final settlement of the conflict, including the refugee question, the status of Jerusalem, and the future of the Jewish settlements.

The Konrad Adenauer Stiftung stands for Israel’s right to exist in secure borders, at peace with its neighbors. It supports debates about possible solutions and provides platforms for discussion. The purpose of this volume is to make just such a contribution to the current debate, sharing the insights, thoughts, and experience of experts. Hopefully, these articles will lead to interesting deliberations and fruitful discussions.