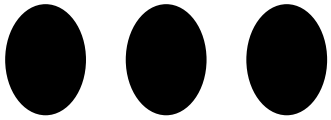
Written by **Gary Benoit** on December 29, 2008

Gaza Crisis Should be Avoided by U.S.

Modern Israel's 60-year history has seen unending conflict between Israel and her various Arab neighbor states, as well as between the Jewish and non-Jewish residents of Israel herself. The so-called Gaza Strip was part of the territories annexed by Israel in the pre-emptive Six-Day War in 1967, territories that also included the Golan Heights (formerly part of Syria) and the West Bank, including East Jerusalam (formerly part of Jordan). Of these territories, the crowded, impoverished Gaza Strip, which Israel granted limited autonomy in 1994 and withdrew from entirely in 2005, is one of the least desirable pieces of real estate on the planet. Crowded to the gills with desperate Palestinians and ruled for the past two years by the anti-Israel terrorist organization Hamas, Gaza has become a seedbed of anti-Israel activity, including the frequent launching of rockets into Israel. As has always been the case, each side blames the other for this deplorable state of affairs.



If past is precedent, the Israeli attacks will soon cease, and both sides will return to the simmering status quo ante. Hamas leaders killed in the bombing raids will soon be replaced, and terrorist activities will resume until the next round of punitive attacks by Israel.

In the political memory of this writer, very little has changed in Israel. The past few decades have seen numerous wars and bloody terrorist incidents, and while Israel and her neighbors have occasionally had negotiations for peace, the animosities that keep the Middle Eastern cauldron at full boil are as potent as ever — which is why the United States should leave the Gaza situation alone.

Our involvement in another Middle Eastern cross-border dispute (Iraq's invasion of Iran) almost 20 years ago, at which time we tilted U.S. foreign policy in favor of Saddam Hussein's Iraq, has led to an interminable ground war launched against Saddam Hussein and a horribly expensive exercise in nation-building, for which few in the region will thank us.

Should we become enmired in the Israeli-Palestinian vendetta — say, by sending peacekeeping forces to Gaza or elsewhere in the so-called "Occupied Territories" — we will pay for it in the currency of American blood and treasure over indeterminate years.

More than 20 years ago, then-President Ronald Reagan foolishly decided to insert American Marine peacekeepers into the hornet's nest that was Lebanon. That Middle East adventure ended in tragedy when a suicide truck bomber attacked the Marine barracks, killing 241 American servicemen, most of them Marines. Chastened, President Reagan (to his credit) withdrew American forces from Lebanon a

few months later.

Rather than repeat our mistake in Lebanon, America should steer clear of the poisonous broils of the Middle East. Americans are of course entitled to form opinions on the right and wrong of the Israel-Palestinian conflict, but we have no right to impose them militarily on the victims of this trans-generational tragedy.

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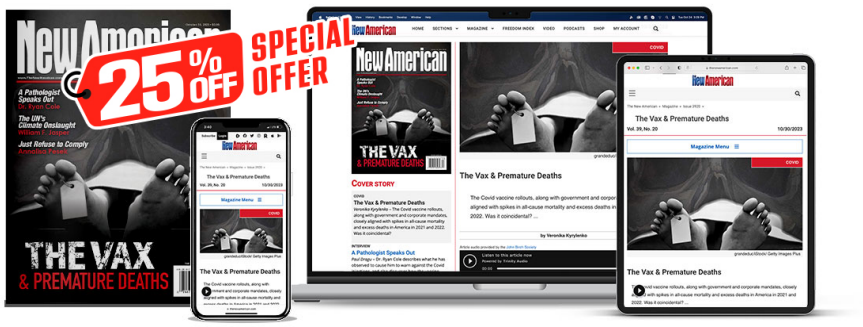

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