

The Israel-Palestine Conflict

Introduction: What follows is a historical narrative of the Israel-Palestine conflict. Without this background it is impossible to understand why things are as they are and why the conflict has proved so intractable. As I write, preparations are underway for the resumption of Middle-East peace negotiations. Ehud Olmert, Mahmud Abbas and Condolezza Rice make occasional pronouncements about their intentions. Each frames the issues and uses language that requires decoding. Without understanding the past, it is difficult to decode this diplomatic language and all-too-easy to accept the framing of issues set out by media talking heads. This briefing paper is intended to provide the background essential to 1) understanding the history of the conflict, 2) decoding the positions taken by all sides, and 3) thinking clearly about the peace process and the possible options for resolving the conflict.

Zionism

Definition: a movement supporting the establishment of a homeland for the Jewish people.

For 2000 years, the Jewish people lived without a homeland. Their expulsion from Palestine scattered them throughout parts of the Middle East and Europe. Although they contributed richly to the communities in which they lived, they were often forced to live apart and were frequently the victims of persecution and organized pogroms.

Although there was talk early in the 19th century about the possibility of creating a homeland for the Jewish people, Zionism as **an organized movement** began with the publication of Theodore Herzl's *Der Judenstaat* (*The Jewish State*, 1896). Herzl was a Jewish Austrian journalist who covered the infamous trial of Alfred Dreyfus, a young Jewish artillery officer in the French army falsely accused of treason. The Dreyfus affair and the many pogroms occurring in Eastern Europe during the last decades of the century persuaded Herzl that the Jewish people could only live in freedom and security in a homeland of their own. To build support for the creation of a Jewish homeland, Herzl founded the World Zionist Organization. The first Zionist Congress met in Basle, Switzerland in 1897. The gathering issued the Basle Program calling for the return of Jewish people to the land of Palestine.

In these early days, Zionists knew very little about Palestine. Like most Europeans, they thought of the Middle East as "other"-- as the antithesis of modern Europe, backward and undeveloped, an affront to "real civilization." In a letter written to British Foreign Secretary, Arthur Balfour in 1918, Chaim Weizman, a leader of British Zionism and the first President of Israel, stated that the Arab peasant "is at least four centuries behind the times, and the *effendi* (Arab landowner) is as dishonest, uneducated, greedy, and as unpatriotic as he is inefficient." He warned Balfour that the Arabs worshipped only power.ⁱ Some Zionists imagined that the Palestinians would welcome Jewish immigrants for the organizational skills, energy and capital they would bring to the task of modernizing the region. Others feared that Arabs would accept Zionism only through the force of arms. Ben Yehuda, a prominent early Zionist and one of the first to visit Palestine, concluded that the Palestinians were a weak people "from whom we shall easily take away the country."

The Zionist cause was furthered in 1917 when Arthur Balfour issued a “Declaration” stating that the British government looked with favor on the establishment in Palestine of a national home for the Jewish people, adding that such a homeland should not prejudice the civil and religious rights of existing non-Jewish communities in Palestine. And therein lay the problem: the Balfour Declaration, though careful not to commit to the creation of a Jewish nation state in Palestine, proposed to encourage Jewish settlement in an area in the Middle East where over half a million Arab Palestinians lived.

At the end of World War I, the victorious allies met at the palace of Versailles in Paris to draw up new boundaries for the territory they had liberated from Ottoman control. Under pressure from President Woodrow Wilson, they pledged to ensure the self-determination of all peoples. Wilson insisted on sending a fact finding mission to the Middle East to determine the wishes of the Arab inhabitants. The Commission concluded that if the Zionist project was carried out, it would constitute “a gross violation of the principles of self determination and the peoples’ rights...” These concerns were set aside when it was discovered that France and Britain had earlier made a secret arrangement for the post-war governance of the Middle East. The Mandatory system created by this agreement gave France administrative authority over Lebanon and Syria and Great Britain authority over Iraq and Palestine.

The first Jewish immigrants who moved to Palestine from Western Europe in the late nineteenth century were not technically Zionists. They did not immigrate to Palestine to build a Jewish state but to practice their faith free from persecution; they settled in urban areas. The true Zionists who arrived between 1904 and 1914, among them David Ben-Gurion, came from eastern Europe and Russia where nationalist fervor was infused with ethnic, cultural and religious passions. Convinced that the bonds of “blood and earth” were the foundations of national strength and that hard agricultural labor would toughen the Jewish spirit, they set out to achieve their socialist ideals within a separate Jewish state. The Hebrew scholar, Zeev Sternhell, adopted the term “nationalist socialism” to refer to this cluster of powerful ideas at the heart of Israel’s founding mythology:

“... it is to [the young Zionist immigrants from Eastern Europe and Russia] that we owe the political, economic and cultural organization which allowed the Zionist project to take shape, then succeed. Firmly convinced that they had been charged with a unique mission, persuaded of the justice of their vision of history, it was this revolutionary elite, nationalist to the hilt... that orchestrated the conquest of the country.”ⁱⁱ

For the Zionists of this second wave, Jewish socialism meant the creation of an egalitarian Jewish society from which Arabs were to be excluded. They had few illusions about the consequences of Zionist nationalism for the Arab population of Palestine. David Ben-Gurion, the first prime minister of Israel, declared in 1919 that “Everybody sees a difficulty in the question of relations between Arabs and Jews. But not everybody sees that there is no solution to this question. No solution! There is a gulf and nothing can bridge it... We, as a nation, want this country to be ours: the Arabs, as a nation, want this country to be theirs.”ⁱⁱⁱ

The response to the World Zionist Organization’s call for European Jews to build a homeland in Palestine quickly gathered momentum. In 1921, the population of Palestinian Jews was 61,000. By 1935 the

Yishuv (Jews of Palestine) had increased to 335,500. In 1947, largely as a result of the flight from Fascist persecution, the Yishuv numbered 650,000 or 31 percent of the population of Palestine. At first, the young immigrants brought only their labor and the shirts on their backs: in time the amount of private and public capital imported by immigrants became relatively plentiful. The engine driving the social, cultural, political and economic development of Jewish Palestine during these years was a unique form of state capitalism managed by the General Federation of Jewish Workers or the *Histadrut* created in 1920. From its origin in labor exchanges and workers' kitchens helpful to new immigrants, the Histadrut developed into an economic empire that controlled 25% of the Yishuv's economy with public investments in banking, construction, kibbutzim, a health service and a system of public education. The combination of a growing, energetic population, plentiful capital, managerial shrewdness, and a powerful dream led to an average annual net domestic product growth rate of 13.2 percent per year between 1922 and 1947.

Arab Resistance

For most Arab Palestinians who had lived for centuries under the loose sovereignty of the Ottoman Empire and the over-lordship of family clans and absentee landlords, the arrival of waves of Jewish immigrants was a source of fear. In the town of Jaffa on May 1, 1921 a demonstration involving two rival Jewish labor groups suddenly burst into an outpouring of Arab rage. Before order was restored, 200 Jews and 120 Arabs were dead or wounded. One of the targets of the Arab mob was a Jewish immigrant hostel in the middle of Jaffa. The British authorities ordered an investigation of the incident. The Haycraft Commission Report commented on the clash of cultures at the heart of the violence: Palestinians resented the immigrants "arrogance" and their free and easy ways, especially mixed nude bathing at the beaches. The Commission also expressed concern about Arab resentment of the nationalist ambitions freely expressed in Zionist publications circulating in Palestine. To illustrate the point, the Report quoted from the *Jewish Chronicle* published on May 20th, 1921: "Hence the real key to the Palestine situation is to be found in giving to Jews as such, those rights and privileges in Palestine which shall enable Jews to make it as Jewish as England is English, or as Canada is Canadian..."^{iv}

As the sheer numbers of Jewish immigrants and their relative prosperity grew, Palestinian anxieties and grievances increased. The Jews bought land from wealthy Arab absentee landlords forcing Arab tenants and laborers off the land and into cities where many lived in squalor. Arab farmers and workers earned roughly one quarter of what Jewish farmers and laborers earned. The Jews excluded Arabs from their schools, hospitals, labor unions and other institutions. The British authorities who gradually began to recognize that the Balfour declaration had committed them to a politically explosive and possibly unworkable policy, made futile efforts to encourage both peoples to create joint self-governing bodies.

An Arab revolt broke out in 1936 and lasted until 1939 when 20,000 British forces finally suppressed it. Although some historians have blamed Palestinian politicians and religious leaders for inciting the rebellion, it seems more likely that the "leadership," which had for years vacillated and compromised and sat on their hands, vaulted to the front of a popular rebellion made inevitable by conditions on the ground. The non-Jewish population came together in an unaccustomed show of solidarity and resolved to continue the rebellion until the British government stopped the flow of Jewish immigration. The

rebellion led to a general strike: Arab rebels burned crops, cut down orchards, mined roads, destroyed homes and villages, and derailed trains. Both Jews and Arabs were brutally killed. In 1937, the British created another commission to look into the reasons for the “disturbances” in Palestine. The Peel Commission concluded that the best way to end the violence would be to partition the land of Palestine into an Arab and a Jewish state. The proposal was welcomed by Palestinian Jews and denounced by Arab Palestinians. The revolt continued. Two years later, after repressing the Arab revolt, British Colonial Secretary Malcolm MacDonald told the House of Commons that the British in Palestine could restore order but could never create peace.

On May, 17, 1939, three months before war broke out in Europe, MacDonald issued a White Paper repudiating the recommendations of the Peel Commission for the partitioning of Palestine. MacDonald believed that the only way to ensure Arab cooperation in the event of war was to address their grievances. He declared that Britain would no longer support the creation of a separate Jewish state in Palestine. Afraid of further Arab resistance, afraid too that Palestinian Arabs might succumb to the blandishments of the Axis powers, he acceded to their demands to restrict Jewish immigration. He pledged that the British government would permit only 75,000 Jews to immigrate to Palestine over the next five years. Only months before, Nazi foreign minister Joachim von Ribbentrop had announced Germany’s intention of ridding itself of the “Jewish problem.” It has been argued that the British decision to restrict Jewish immigration to Palestine doomed millions of Jews to death in the Holocaust. In hind sight, this exercise in *realpolitik* seems both tragic and shameful. It is a shame shared by many nations. Britain was not alone in turning its back on the plight of European Jewry. At an international conference held in the spring of 1939, thirty nations discussed organizing an international effort to create facilities for Jewish immigrants. The conferees accomplished nothing.

On the day after the publication of the MacDonald White Paper, Chief Rabbi Dr. Herzog, standing in the pulpit of the Yeshurim synagogue in Jerusalem before a weeping congregation, tore up a copy of the document. MacDonald’s White Paper ended the Yishuv’s commitment to “*Harlaga*” – the principle that Jews would meet the anger and resistance of Arab Palestinians with restraint. Until that moment, Jewish leadership had been divided on just how to realize their dream of a Jewish state; some had argued for the moral high ground achieved by the patient and determined labor of their own hands, a homeland built “goat by goat and dunum by dunum.” [A dunum is a measurement of land]. Others had foreseen the inevitability of force. Abandoned by the British and soon to be confronted with the utter horror of the Holocaust, the Jews of Palestine would, in the future, come to believe that they could count on no one but themselves for their security. ^v

The Israeli War for Independence

By 1949, the Yishuv had forced an end to the British Mandate in Palestine, declared the founding of the sovereign state of Israel (May 14, 1948), fought a successful war against neighboring Arab nations, and in the end, occupied 4/5 of historic Palestine. As a result of the war, 720,000 Arab Palestinians were driven from their homes and lands and forced to seek refuge in neighboring states.

Two weeks after the end of the war in Europe, the Jewish Agency demanded that the British government officially recognize the Jewish state of Israel. Ernest Bevin, the Foreign Secretary for the newly elected Labour government, refused declaring that the government would pursue the one-state solution set out in the White Paper of 1939—a unitary state including both Palestinian Arabs and Jews. He also pledged to restrict Jewish immigration to 100,000 persons. This was at a time when over 300,000 Jewish Holocaust survivors were desperately seeking refuge. Once again *realpolitik* trumped sympathy for the plight of European Jewry. At the end of WWII Britain was nearly bankrupt; it had expended more than a quarter of the nation's wealth in the war effort. The Labour-led government believed that the restoration of the British economy depended on ensuring the security of the Suez Canal and access to Middle Eastern oil. Cultivating the good will of Arab nations took precedence over backing the Zionist cause.

The Jewish Agency resolved to defy Britain. On July 22, 1946, the Assault Unit of the Irgun, a Jewish paramilitary organization, set off a bomb at the headquarters of the British Authority in the King David Hotel in Jerusalem killing 91 people. The bombing was part of a growing wave of violence against the British. The Irgun and the Stern gang also blew up bridges and planes, attacked British troop barracks, mined roads, derailed trains, created armories and sank patrol boats. Bevin's attempts to find an arrangement acceptable to both Jews and Arabs failed. Under great pressure to bring the 100,000 British soldiers home, Bevin threw in the towel and turned the problem over to the United Nations.

In November, 1947 the United Nations General Assembly approved a recommendation for the Partition of Palestine. The Partition Plan recognized the historic roots of the claims to Palestine made by both Arabs and Jews. The Plan defined the conflict as a clash of "two intense nationalisms." "Only by means of partition can these conflicting national aspirations find substantial expression and qualify both peoples to take their place as independent nations in the international community and in the United Nations." The Arab nations rejected the plan on the grounds that Palestine should be preserved as one state under the governance of the Arab majority. Israel approved the plan in principle because it represented the international recognition of the right of Jews to a nation of their own. But the Jewish Agency objected to the borders which Ben-Gurion observed would never provide "a stable basis for a Jewish state." As a glance at Map # 1 reveals, the Partition Plan severely compromised the contiguity of both states. Moreover, 40 % of the people living in the land allotted to Israel were Arabs. So many Arabs in their midst raised Israelis' fears that, in the event of war with neighboring Arab states, they would face sabotage and subversion from within. The UN Partition Plan was never adopted.

Fighting between Jews and Palestinians broke out in December 1947. The Palestinians attacked Jewish quarters in Jaffa, Haifa and Jerusalem. By March of the following year, the Arab nations organized the Arab Liberation Army – a guerilla force of some 15,000 Arabs. These forces cut off roads used to supply the Jewish sector of Jerusalem and Jewish communities in Galilee. In the first months of the war, the Israelis were handicapped by the partiality the British showed towards the Arabs: the British placed an embargo on Jewish immigration and on weapons sent to Israel. When supplies of weapons from Czechoslovakia began to arrive in March and April, Haganah, the Jewish paramilitary defense organization, went on the offensive. Israel instituted a war plan [Plan Dalet] that called for gaining control of Palestine's interior road system, ousting Arab people from villages located along these roads

or situated near *Haganah* installations and destroying their villages. In the course of these operations, Irgun paramilitary forces attacked the village of Dair Yassin outside of Jerusalem. They killed more than 200 men, women and children. The Arabs retaliated on April 13 by killing seventy Jewish doctors and nurses in a medical convoy near Jerusalem. News of the massacre at Dair Yassin was spread by Irgun and Haganah as well as by Arab word of mouth. A state of panic ensued: more than 300,000 Arabs had fled the area by May 15.^{vi}

Two days after Israel declared its independence on May 15, 1948, armies from Iraq, Syria, Lebanon, Transjordan and Egypt invaded Israel. For a time the situation of the new state of Israel appeared desperate. However, the Arab armies were less formidable than their rhetoric.^{vii} The Arab governments had no common battle plan or command structure. Each country was more interested in promoting its own territorial ambitions than in helping create an independent Palestinian state. By the time armistices were signed early in 1949, the Israelis had achieved most of the objectives outlined in the Plan Dalet. They extended their control over north western Galilee and over the land between Jerusalem and Tel Aviv and a portion of the Negev desert. Jordan and Egypt too had advanced their territorial ambitions. Egypt gained control of the Gaza Strip. Transjordan (renamed Jordan) which had once included only lands east of the Jordan River now assumed control over the West Bank. The West Bank of the Jordan had been specified in the UN Partition Plan as the area of Palestine belonging to the Palestinian Arabs. In 1948, King Abdullah of Jordan proclaimed the unity of Arab Palestine and Jordan. This suited Israel which looked forward to the resettlement and integration of the Palestinian refugees into the state of Jordan and in other Arab states. .^{viii}

Israel instituted a policy of no-return through the Absentees Property Law first promulgated in December 1948. It stated that the property of Arabs who left their places of residence between November 1947 and September 1948 was subject to appropriation. This definition of “absentee property” served to justify the taking of Arab lands and homes for the sake of consolidating Israeli control over most of the land of Israel. This “abandoned” property helped finance the settlement of hundreds of thousands of Jews who immigrated to Israel from Europe and from neighboring Arab nations after 1948.

For the Palestinian Arabs the wars of 1948 were devastating. After the hostilities ended, the UN estimated the number of Arab fugitives expelled from Israeli-controlled territory at approximately 720,000 or 70% of the Arab population of Palestine. 470,000 fled to Gaza and the West Bank, 250,000 to Lebanon, Syria and eastern Jordan, and 113,000 remained in Israel. The Palestinian people experienced their own Diaspora. Without lands or homes to return to, forced to live in squalid refugee camps and made the subjects of governments most rejected, the Palestinians began to discover their own national identity -- an identity conceived in exile and waiting for its moment of expression.

Israel steadfastly refused to address the problems of the refugees created by their War for Independence. Israeli Ambassador to the UN, Abba Eban explained why the right of refugees to return to Israel was and would remain unthinkable: after describing all of the circumstances that threatened Israel’s security, he asked “Can the mind conceive of anything more fantastic than that we can add to these perils by the influx [*sic*]... of people steeped in the hatred of our very statehood?”^{ix} Prime Minister

David Ben Gurion who led Israel through the first five years and forged many of the decisions affecting the terms of the armistices and the future of the Arab Palestinians foresaw a future of endless conflict in quest of national security.

Why should the Arabs make peace? If I was an Arab leader I would never make terms with Israel. That is natural: we have taken their country. Sure God promised it to us, but what does that matter to them? Our god is not theirs. We come from Israel, but two thousand years ago, and what is that to them? There has been anti-Semitism, the Nazis, Hitler, Auschwitz, but was that their fault? They only see one thing: we have come here and stolen their country. Why should they accept that? They may perhaps forget in one or two generations' time, but for the moment there is no chance. So it's simple: we have to stay strong and maintain a powerful army. Our whole policy is there. Otherwise the Arabs will wipe us out.^x

The Six Day War

The Israelis inevitably looked upon their Arab neighbors through the lens created by the Holocaust and the invasion and war of 1948. Not surprisingly, they projected upon the Arabs the single-minded malice of the Nazis. They viewed every act of Palestinian resistance—even the pathetic attempts by Palestinian peasants to pick oranges from orchards that once were theirs—as a provocation. The Israelis were convinced that every action on their part was defensive: little wars were fought to punish and deter, big wars were fought for survival. They were determined to meet every perceived threat to their security with overwhelming force.

Palestinian nationalism emerged slowly. In 1958 a group of young Palestinian professionals educated at the University of Cairo and led by Yasser Arafat founded the guerilla movement known as al-Fatah. In an article published in their underground newspaper *Filastinuna* a member explained the link between al-Fatah and the plight of Palestinian refugees:

Life in the tent has become as miserable as death...[To] die for our beloved Fatherland is better and more honorable than life, which forces us to eat our daily bread under humiliation or to receive it as charity at the cost of our honour. We the sons of the catastrophe [Nakaba—the term Palestinians use to refer to the events of 1947] are no longer willing to live this dirty, despicable life, this life which has destroyed our culture, moral and political existence and destroyed our human dignity.

At the Cairo summit in January 1964, the Arab nations encouraged Palestinians to play an active role in restoring their homeland and determining their own destiny. Several months later, a group of Palestinians organized the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO). The PLO stated as its goal the “objective of liquidating Israel.”

Hostilities between Israel and her Arab neighbors escalated in the mid 1960s. In 1966, Syria, in cooperation with al Fatah, conducted a series of raids against Israeli settlements and Israel water diversion projects. Egypt, which ten years earlier had fought a war with Israel, Britain and France over its right to nationalize the Suez Canal, closed the Straits of Tiran (access to the Red Sea) to Israeli

shipping. Arab rhetoric against Israel became more bloodcurdling. Six days before war broke out, President Nasser of Egypt declared “our” intentions of destroying Israel. On June 5, 1967 Israel launched preemptive strikes against the armies of Syria, Jordan and Egypt. In six days Israel defeated all three national armies, gained control of East Jerusalem and Gaza and occupied the Egyptian Sinai peninsula, the Golan Heights in western Syria and the West Bank of Jordan.

The Six Day War created a new military, political and geographical reality. As a result of the war, Israel was forced to deal with the aspirations of the 850,000 refugee Palestinians then residing in the West Bank. For nearly twenty years they had been Jordan’s problem, and might have been assimilated – an outcome that Israel had once hoped for. But under Israeli occupation, the Palestinians discovered their political identity. They began to demand a nation of their own, a cause that Fatah and the PLO were eager to encourage. As a result of the Six Day War, Israeli politicians were forced to consider a future shaped by the many difficulties created by their occupation of Arab lands. The longer Israel occupied these lands, the greater the influence exercised by conservative political and ultra-orthodox religious factions that championed the cause of a Greater Israel or, in other words, the occupation of the lands from the Nile to the Euphrates, the Biblical lands of Judea and Samaria.

United Nations Resolution 242

In November 1967, the United Nation’s Security Council, in an effort to resolve the issues created by the Six Day War, passed UN Resolution 242. This document has served as the official basis for all negotiations since. The resolution stressed the “inadmissibility of the acquisition of territory by war and the need to work for a just and lasting peace in which every state in the area can live in security.” It called for the “withdrawal of Israel from territories occupied in the recent conflict” and for “termination of all claims or states of belligerency and respect for and acknowledgment of the sovereignty, territorial integrity and political independence of every state in the area and their right to live in peace within secure and recognized boundaries free from threats and acts of force.” It also called for “a just settlement of the [Palestinian] refugee problem.” All parties to the Six Day War defined the implementation of the provisions differently. These differences are fundamental to the conflict that persists to this day. Israel insisted that a return to the boundary lines drawn up in 1949 was unthinkable. As Prime Minister Levi Eshkol explained in a speech to his nation: “there should be no illusion that Israel is prepared to return to the conditions that existed a week ago....We have fought alone for our existence and our security, and are therefore justified in deciding for ourselves what are the genuine and indispensable interests of our state and how to guarantee our future. We shall never return to the conditions prevailing before.” The U.S. publicly supported Israel’s insistence on retaining the territories gained by war until acceptable terms for peace and security were agreed to by the Arab states. Privately the Johnson and Nixon administrations expected that Israel would ultimately withdraw from most of the lands acquired in the war. The PLO protested the language in Resolution 242 which defined the Palestinian issue simply in terms of a refugee problem. The language in effect denied the PLO’s claim to sovereignty over its former homeland. Fatah hoped to win support of the Palestinians in the West Bank for a campaign of escalating violence against Israel.

In 1977, President Jimmy Carter succeeded in persuading Israel and Egypt to sign a peace treaty bringing to closure their part in the Six Day war. In exchange for Egypt's acknowledgment of Israel's right to exist and to the establishment of full diplomatic relations, Israel agreed to remove its forces from the Sinai. Although the treaty satisfied the desires of both Egypt's President Anwar Sadat and Israel's Prime Minister Menachem Begin for peace, the negotiations at Camp David failed to deliver on provisions for a comprehensive settlement to the Israel-Arab conflict. Carter was committed to the implementation of UN Resolution 242. He urged the withdrawal of the Israeli military government and its civilian administration from the West Bank and Gaza and the creation of a transitional authority that included representatives of the Palestinian people. However, the conservative Likud Party's victory under Begin just months before the beginning of the Camp David peace process ensured that the Palestinian question would be finessed through the vague language of diplomatic double-speak. Begin had won the Israeli election by promising the members of his coalition that the land in Gaza and the West Bank would forever belong to Israel.^{xi}

Background to the Oslo Accords

Israel's Political Shift to the Right: the Settlement Strategy

The failure of the Camp David negotiations to produce a comprehensive solution to the legacy of the Six Day War led to further decades of conflict. This failure and the ensuing violence were shaped by the shifting internal politics within Israel, the PLO and the United States. In Israel, the parties in the Knesset that favored expansionism gained the ascendancy. The capacity of the PLO to engage in diplomatic efforts to resolve the Palestinian question was complicated by divisions within its ranks and by the growth of groups espousing militant Islamism. In the U.S. the tilt in favor of Israel grew more pronounced.

Party politics in Israel have always been lively and contentious, reflecting differences between generations, lands of emigration and religious convictions. In the aftermath of the Six Day War, political leaders argued about Israel's appropriate boundaries and about how best to ensure the nation's security in the face of the resistance of the Arab populations living in the territories occupied after the War. On the one hand were the extreme annexationists who based their claims to all of the land stretching from the Nile to the Euphrates on a literal reading of the Bible. Moderates like Abba Eban, who served as Israel's ambassador to the UN and to the US, warned against such expansionism. Eban feared that it would cost Israel support from abroad and saddle her with a rapidly increasing Arab population which opposed Zionism and resented Israeli occupation. Yigal Allon, the deputy prime minister in Golda Meir's cabinet, had been raised among Arabs and was more deeply knowledgeable about the Arab people and culture than many Israelis. Although at one time Allon had argued for the creation of defensive paramilitary settlements on the hills overlooking the Jordan, in the debate over the future of lands seized during the war he argued that Israel accept the legitimacy of an independent Palestinian nation. Vying with Allon for influence were the military men who had devised the plan for victory in the Six Day War—Moshe Dayan and Ariel Sharon. Moshe Dayan, Minister of Defense during the Six Day War, shared neither the religious nor historical vision of the most ardent expansionists. He was a pragmatic expansionist. Israel, he said, should act as a permanent government in the occupied territories rather

than wait for the chimera of a final peace. He urged the government to “create facts” and those facts, he argued, should include Jewish settlements throughout the occupied territories. Allon called such a policy “creeping annexation.” Dayan’s views prevailed.^{xii}

The election of Menachem Begin to the position of Prime Minister in 1977 marked an important shift to the right in Israeli politics and in strategies for integrating the West Bank into the Israeli political and economic system. Begin had always been a staunch proponent of expansionism. His electoral success was the result of at least three factors: the influx of religiously conservative Sephardic Jews from neighboring Arab countries, the surge in Palestinian terrorist activity, and the increasing economic interdependence of Israeli and West Bank economies. The Sephardic Jews were the real beneficiaries of the occupation of the West Bank: the influx of unskilled Arab labor into Israel enabled Sephardic Jews to escape the menial jobs they had previously held. They, more than the Ashkenazi Jews (from Western Europe) who supported the Labor party, favored the retention of the territories and supported Begin’s call for holding the West Bank in perpetuity. After the dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991, nearly a million Russian Jews migrated to Israel adding to the demands on the Israeli economy and on pressures to acquire more Arab lands.

The removal of Arab populations and their replacement by Jewish settlers had been practiced from the time of the War for Independence. The original Allon Plan had envisioned Israeli settlements as military outposts created to enhance security. There was a boom in the creation of such outposts in the early 1970s. With the election of a Likud majority and the appointment of Ariel Sharon to the post of Minister of Agriculture, the priority shifted from creating outposts to acquiring uncultivated Arab lands through both purchase and seizure. Sharon explained the government’s policy: the entire breadth of the West Bank, he declared, would in time be populated by 300,000 Jews. The settlers would serve as Israel’s permanent “security shield.” To coordinate settlement, the Begin government, in cooperation with the World Zionist Organization, set out the government’s plan:

The disposition of the settlements must be carried out not only around the settlements of the minorities [indigenous Arabs] but also in between them... with the objective of reducing to the minimum the possibility for the development of another Arab state [Palestine] in these regions.

By 1982, Israel had acquired not less than 31 percent of the West Bank’s total land area. In the 1990s Orthodox Jewish militants of the Ateret HaCohanim, backed by Gush Emunim, a Zionist organization with messianic ideals, aggressively pushed their way into the Muslim and Christian quarters of Jerusalem creating the facts on the ground supporting Israel’s claim to Jerusalem as the exclusive capital of Israel. These settlements were financed by Minister of Housing Ariel Sharon. Despite international criticism of the settlement movement, Prime Minister Itzhak Shamir’s Likud government pressed ahead. By the end of the year 2000, Israeli settlers in the West Bank and Gaza numbered 225,000. [The UN estimates the number of Jewish settlers in 2007 at 450,000; the Israeli government claims the figure is closer to 267,500]. The honeycomb of Jewish settlements and the roadways and arteries providing the settlers with water, electricity communications and security divided the West Bank into a number of non-contiguous areas. Although Shamir and other Israeli leaders have, on occasion, promised the Arabs of the West Bank “autonomy,” the settlement strategy has made the promise of autonomy meaningless.^{xiii}

The PLO: Factionalism and Vacillation

Just as the Israeli stance toward the occupied territories was the result of changing demographics and shifting political coalitions, so too the PLO's position toward Israel was forged in the heat and pressure created by contentious factionalism. In 1967, the PLO was little more than a forum in which Fatah waged ideological battles with rivals over the place of the Palestinian cause in a Pan Arab revolutionary movement. After the PLO was driven out of Jordan in 1971, factional strife shifted to struggles over the meaning of Palestinian "national authority." The PDFLP favored establishing a Palestinian state in the West Bank: the Party urged armed resistance to Israeli moves to incorporate the West Bank into a greater Israel. This position was supported by the Palestinians living in the West Bank who hoped to hang on to what they had. The Rejection Front, which now included two factions within the PFLP denounced such "limited objectives," arguing instead for the ultimate goal of recovering all of Palestine from Israeli control. This position was supported by the Palestinians living in refugee camps who insisted on the "right of return" and who made up the PLO's guerilla cadres. Although sympathetic to the PDFLP position, Arafat could not embrace it openly without jeopardizing the Fatah majority. Unable to resolve these differences, Arafat straddled and obfuscated.

In 1974 at a summit meeting of the Arab League nations in Rabat, Morocco, the Palestinian Liberation Organization was declared "the sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people." A month later, after the UN granted the PLO observer status, Arafat made a speech before the UN General Assembly. In his speech Arafat identified the Palestinian cause with nationalist struggles for self-rule against European imperialism around the world. He denounced the myth that Palestine had been a desert -- "a land without a people" --until the Jews made it bloom. He insisted that the Palestinian armed struggle was fought for freedom and liberation as sanctioned by the United Nations Charter. It was the Israelis, he said, who were the real terrorists for it was they who waged war to colonize and oppress. Arafat appealed to the members of the General Assembly to "enable our people to establish national independent sovereignty over its own land." His call for a unitary state in which Arabs and Jews would "live together in a framework of just peace in **our** democratic Palestine" may have satisfied both those within the PLO who wanted a Palestinian state and those who insisted on the refugees' right of return, but it did little to clarify PLO objectives.

Neither Israel nor the United States was prepared to deal with the PLO so long as it refused to accept the language of Resolution 242 and Israel's right to exist. Neither would they accept the PLO as the legitimate representative of the Palestinian people so long as it supported armed struggle. The Israeli ambassador to the UN, Yosef Tekoah, in response to Arafat's address, declared that the UN rostrum had been defiled and its Charter desecrated by the murderers of Jewish athletes at the Olympic Games, the children of Jewish settlers in Ma'alot and Jewish diplomats in Khartoum. He explained to the Assembly that the Palestinians were not a people without a country. They lived in Jordan which was a part of historic Palestine. As a result of the wars of 1948 and 1967, he explained, they had simply moved from one part of Palestine to another. From the PLO's perspective living under the conditions of a Jewish occupation even if that occupation was in the land formerly known as Palestine was hardly an answer to their desire for self-rule.

The PLO's influence over Palestinian affairs waned after an Israeli invasion of Lebanon in 1982 drove the PLO leadership into exile in Tunis. Discouraged by the failure of their diplomatic efforts, the leadership grew weary, remote from Palestinian affairs on the ground, and some would say, rich and corrupt. The first Intifada woke them up. In December 1987, a spontaneous eruption of Palestinian hatred and frustration broke out in Gaza and the West Bank. Known as the First Intifada, the rebellion was a reaction to economic hardships following a period of recession and inflation and to Sharon's intensification of the settlement strategy. It was a rebellion of the young and the poor. In the beginning, local committees operated independently of the PLO. They agreed that demonstrators should use neither guns nor knives. Resistance took many forms: Gazans boycotted Israeli goods, refused to work for Israeli employers or pay Israeli imposed taxes. They took to the streets protesting Israeli Defense Minister Yitzhak Rabin's "iron fist" policy. Demonstrators were shot, arrested, beaten and held in detention for months: many were tortured. Israeli attempts to repress the intifada unified the resistance movement.

The intifada created an opening for militant Islamic groups to preach their message of *jihad*. In the Gaza Strip, Islamic Jihad was formed in the mid-1980s and Hamas in 1988. Both called for an armed struggle against Israel and the creation of a new Islamic state in all of Palestine. Hoping to head off the growing influence of Islamic militancy, the PLO leadership at a meeting in Algiers in November 1988 declared the creation of a Palestinian state. In an important break from their past, the leaders of the PLO renounced terrorism and invited a reopening of negotiations with Israel based on UN Resolution 242.

US Relations with Israel

From the day that Israel declared its Independence, Americans sympathized with the Jewish struggle to create a homeland in Palestine. This sympathy and support was based on a number of factors including horror and regret over the Holocaust, a reverence for the Jewish foundations of Christianity, and admiration for the Israeli's success in building a strong economy and democratic institutions. During the Cold War, American policy makers considered Israel the one state in the Middle East that could be relied on to side with the US in the struggle to contain Soviet geopolitical ambitions. While one need not invoke a conspiratorial theory about the power of the "Jewish lobby" to explain the United State's unwavering support for Israel, it is true that policy-making elites and the media generally embrace Israel's representations of its interests and its adversaries.^{xiv} The way they frame the issues and the language used to discuss them obscure the context of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Settlements are referred to as "neighborhoods." Israeli attacks are usually rationalized as necessary to defend the nation's security. Palestinian attacks are described as the acts of terrorists, rarely as acts of resistance to Israeli occupation.^{xv} All US presidents have gone on record as supporting UN Resolution 242 which requires that Israel withdraw from the territories acquired in the Six Day War. All have expressed opposition to the Israeli settlement policy. However, with the single exception of George H.W. Bush, no president has ever cut off aid in an effort to pressure Israel to cooperate in any peace process.

The United State's lavish support for Israel's military superiority in the region was forged during the Nixon administration. National Security Advisor Henry Kissinger, who played an important role in persuading Israel to disengage its forces in the Sinai after the Yom Kippur War (1973), used the promise

of military assistance as a carrot in the negotiations. Ever since, the US has kept a promise to support Israel's definitions of its security needs. Since 1949, the US has provided Israel with \$100 billion dollars in aid: in recent years US aid has amounted to \$6 billion annually. This money helps fund Israeli operations against the Palestinians. On at least 33 occasions, the US has exercised its veto power at the UN Security Council to block resolutions critical of Israeli actions. In the eyes of the Arabs of the Middle East, this level of aid and the frequent affirmation of the US "special relationship" with Israel undermine the US claim to serve as a neutral broker in peace negotiations. The official tilt of US policy towards Israel discourages the American public from recognizing that there may be a Palestinian side to the conflict.

The Oslo Process

The Oslo peace process began in 1993 when Israel and Palestine signed a document known as the Declaration of Principles. In this document, the PLO recognized Israel's right to exist in peace and security and declared its acceptance of UN resolution 242. Arafat also declared that the PLO renounced terrorism and promised to control militant elements that might engage in it. Arafat's peace initiative undermined his credibility with some factions in the PLO and emboldened militant Islamic groups in Gaza and the West Bank. The government of Israel formally recognized the PLO as the representative of the Palestinian people and declared its willingness to negotiate. From the very start of the Oslo negotiations, Israel and Palestine had irreconcilable goals. Arafat and the PLO entered the process committed to the creation of a sovereign Palestinian state with sufficient authority and territorial integrity to govern effectively. The Israelis, who had just managed to quell the first intifada (1987-1993), sought an agreement that would ensure their ultimate control over the future of the West Bank.

Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin, who became Prime Minister and head of a Labor coalition government in 1992, immediately set to work implementing the first step in the Oslo Accords -- an Israeli military withdrawal from the Gaza Strip and Jericho and its environs. The Israelis were particularly ready to rid Israel of responsibility for the poor, resentful and increasingly militant Arabs of the Gaza Strip. Israel also agreed to a limited transfer of civil authority in Gaza to appointed councils of Palestinians. However, the Israeli government reserved the right to control security in Gaza and insisted upon its authority over the Israeli settlements in the area.

The Oslo 2 Interim Agreement signed in September 1995 provided for a phased withdrawal of Israeli military forces from the West Bank. These "withdrawals" were linked to the Israeli insistence that exceptions be made "for issues [to be] negotiated in the permanent status negotiations." In other words, Israel would not consider withdrawals that might affect the final outcome of the permanent status negotiations on the most critical issues: the resolution of claims by both parties to a capital in Jerusalem, the future of Palestinian refugees, Israeli settlements in the West Bank, security arrangements and definitions of borders. Israel reserved the right to control events on the ground to ensure its security until the end of the process. The Interim Agreement provided for the election of a Palestinian governing authority. Details of the responsibilities to be assigned to the Palestinian Authority were to be negotiated over a transitional period of five years. The timing of Israeli military withdrawals in three designated areas depended on the PLO's success in controlling violence and

establishing viable governing institutions. Not until the very end of this interim period would the final “peace for land” negotiations take place.

Rejectionist groups in both Israel and Palestine balked at these provisions. Islamic militants objected to the fact that the PLO had recognized Israel’s right to exist without securing Israel’s acknowledgment of the Palestinians’ right to self-determination in a homeland of their own. And Israeli ultra-orthodox hard-liners opposed any agreement that threatened to surrender lands that they were determined to retain for Israel.

Progress toward peace was threatened by increased violence on the part of both Israelis and Palestinians. President Clinton and Rabin demanded that Arafat suppress Palestinian violence. When Arafat tried to comply, his efforts to do so alienated the support of Hamas. Dissatisfaction with Arafat’s leadership mounted especially when he seemed unwilling or unable to secure Israeli agreement to halt the ravages caused to existing Arab villages by the settlement movement. Despite Rabin’s pledges to halt further settlements, he permitted the establishment of “security” settlements while consolidating existing settlements by building more roads linking Israel to the West Bank settlements. Rabin assured the members of the Knesset that the Oslo accords would leave 70% of West Bank lands in Israeli hands. The ultraorthodox elements in the Knesset were unimpressed. Ultra-Orthodox rabbis insisted that Rabin’s promise to withdraw Israeli forces from six major Arab population areas and 400 Arab towns in the West Bank was the act of a traitor. In a debate in the Knesset on the Oslo 2 Interim Agreement, Likud party stalwart Binyamin Netanyahu declared that Rabin and his government “were removed from Jewish tradition... and Jewish values.” The Rabin government, he claimed, threatened the Jewish homeland. The Rejectionists mounted anti-government demonstrations. In one of these demonstrations, a protestor carried a sign depicting Rabin in a SS uniform. On another sign, he was pictured with a sniper’s sight targeted at his head. On November 4, 1995, Rabin was assassinated by a Jewish religious zealot.

In elections held the following June, the conservative Likud party, led by Binyamin Netanyahu and supported by four conservative religious parties, prevailed. Netanyahu condemned the Oslo Accords. He pledged that he would never turn over more land to the Arabs. The peace process floundered. Netanyahu pursued an aggressive settlements process and postponed indefinitely delivering on pledges to redeploy Israeli forces around Hebron. Palestinian internal politics grew more volatile as criticism of Arafat increased and Palestinian impatience led to increasing violence. Netanyahu’s fragile coalition fell apart. When Ehud Barak succeeded in putting together a coalition that included the Labor Party and expressed an interest in resuming negotiations, the Clinton administration once again attempted to play the role of broker.

Camp David 2000

In his campaign for the leadership of Likud, Barak had promised that Jerusalem would remain united under Israeli control and that there would be no return to the 1967 borders. However, unlike Netanyahu, Barak recognized the need for a peace settlement and the inevitability of the creation of

some sort of Palestinian state. In July 2000, Clinton convened peace talks at Camp David. Barak was willing to offer concessions that no other Israeli government had offered. In the end he appears to have promised Clinton, though never in any written document, that Israel would keep only 9% of the West Bank and sovereignty over 15% of the border with Jordan, though Israel would maintain control of the entire Jordan valley for at least the next 12 years. He agreed to a partitioning of Jerusalem.

Arafat asked for further clarification of precisely what the terms offered by Israel meant. Arafat received no answers and was unwilling to offer counter proposals. Clinton and Barak publicly blamed Arafat for the failure of the Camp David negotiations. Despite Barak's apparent willingness to risk making compromises, the "facts on the ground" created by the settlement movement made it impossible for Arafat to accept the Israeli proposal. The Israeli government under Netanyahu and Ehud Barak had pursued a robust expansion of the settlement- building process. In the years since 1993, the number of Jewish settlements on the West Bank had nearly doubled. The network of roads built on expropriated Arab lands and the multiplication of Israeli check points and travel restrictions greatly enhanced Israel's matrix of control over the lives of Palestinians. These by-roads isolated the areas under the Palestine Authority into several non-contiguous areas and many fragments. Some of these fragments were either uninhabitable or simply unreachable. The Israeli offer would have left more than 180,000 Jewish settlers in 209 strategically located settlements in the West Bank and Gaza. The settlers expected that Israel would continue to provide their settlements with all the necessary amenities and ensure their security. The Camp David Accords would have denied to the Palestinian Authority control of borders, air space, water aquifers, and national security. In the absence of such control, the Palestinian Authority could not possibly have exercised the responsibilities of a sovereign state. Hanan Ashrawi, who was the chief spokesperson for the Palestinians, rejected the notion that it was the Palestinians who were responsible for the failure of the Camp David negotiations:

They [the Israelis] have provoked tremendous violence by acts of incitement like shelling, bombing, house demolition, uprooting trees, destroying crops, assassinating political leaders, placing all Palestinians under closure in a state of total immobility – a prison. And they wonder why some Palestinians are acting violently. And then they want to have the right to exercise violence against the captive population. They like to make non-violence on the part of the Palestinians a precondition for the Palestinians to qualify for talks, let alone statehood.^{xvi}

Denis Ross, who was the chief US negotiator during Clinton's Camp David peace negotiations, told a French audience though never any American audience that the biggest mistake made during the negotiations had been allowing "a huge gap to develop between the reality on the ground and the reality around the negotiating table. The Palestinians have to stop inciting violence... The Israelis have to stop ... constructing settlements... stop destroying Palestinian houses and confiscating land, and they have to change their attitudes at checkpoints.... If I could do it all over again, I'd do it differently."^{xvii} He might have added that a process which delayed negotiations on the critical issues until the very end while permitting Israel to change the facts on the ground and which made all progress on the important issues contingent on the PLO's success in controlling the violence of some of its factions was bound to seem a process that favored Israeli interests.

The frustration of the Palestinians was further inflamed when, in September 2000, Likud presidential candidate Ariel Sharon paid a highly publicized visit to the Temple Mount/ Haram al-Sharif, a holy site sacred to both Muslims and Jews. He was accompanied by a thousand Israeli soldiers. Sharon campaigned on a pledge to preserve Greater Israel. Palestinians took to the streets throwing rocks and burning tires to protest Sharon's visit. The Israeli armed retaliation triggered the Second Intifada. Sharon won the election. He ordered the division of the West Bank into 64 isolated sectors and Gaza into four sectors using trenches, earthen ramparts and concrete barriers with an estimated 450 checkpoints and roadblocks. The violence intensified causing great trauma on both sides. Islamic militias and organizations associated with the PLO resorted to suicide bombings which often affected innocent civilians not only in the occupied territories but inside Israel. From the view point of the Israelis, there seemed to be no entity capable of exercising authority over the bombers and no effective method for addressing the rage that motivated these acts. For Israelis terrified by these bombings, the developments in the occupied territories – the harassment, raids, curfews, beatings, and economic hardship created by the seizure of lands and closure of borders – were immaterial. They accepted Sharon's methods because they valued the security such methods promised to provide. Sharon insisted that Israeli security required a military response and that Arafat was to blame. "The trauma of their daily lives justified for Israelis what Palestinian trauma justified for the occupants of the territories—revenge and reprisals with little concern" for the civilian casualties to both sides.^{xviii} In 2002 Sharon ordered the construction of a wall 522 miles long: the wall was intended to define Israel's new border in the West Bank. Upon completion, the wall will annex an additional 15% of the area along the Israeli-West Bank border and encircle Palestinian towns lying near the border. The Israeli government estimates that the wall has cut the number of Israelis killed by 60%.

In the years since 9/11, Israel's stance toward peace negotiations with the Palestinians has changed. Sharon's methods would not have been possible had it not been for the massive influx of Russian Jews following the collapse of the USSR. Jewish immigration ended Israel's dependence on the labor of Palestinian workers and farmers. Before the arrival of Russian Jews, 150,000 Palestinians left their homes daily to work in Israel, and Palestinian farmers and trades-people sold their goods in Israel. The restrictions on the movement of Palestinians and the closure of the borders have been catastrophic for Palestinians: in 2007 between 50 and 60% of working men were unemployed. After the dot-com bust in 2001 and the bombing of the Twin Towers, the dynamic sectors of the Israeli economy shifted from trade in traditional goods and high technology telecommunications to a disproportionate focus on technologies and expertise focused on counterterrorism. Israel's rapid recovery from the dot-com bust in 2001 was fueled by the boom in homeland security enterprises. Naomi Klein, a journalist and author of *The Shock Doctrine*, points out the implications of these changes for the prospects for peace:

It is not a coincidence that the Israeli state's decision to put 'counterterrorism' at the center of its export economy has coincided precisely with its abandonment of peace negotiations, as well as a clear strategy to reframe its conflict with the Palestinians not as a battle against a nationalist movement with specific goals for land and rights but rather as a part of the global War on Terror – one against illogical, fanatical forces bent only on destruction.^{xix}

Conclusion

Neither Israel nor the Palestinians are without responsibility for the violence and the prolongation of the conflict. Both are driven by hatreds, suspicions and the felt necessities dictated by nearly a century of conflict. There seems to be no exit from the vicious synergies that drive the peoples of the Holy Land in their desire to assuage years of grief, suffering and victimization. The Israelis remember the many centuries when their right to live in peace and security was denied. They vow “never again.” Convinced that the occupation and defense of lands acquired in war are entirely defensive actions necessitated by the hostility of the Arab people surrounding them, their actions have created the very hostility they feared. The Palestinians believe that the Israeli occupation of their homeland -- an occupation condemned by UN resolutions and outlawed by Article 49 of the Geneva conventions -- is illegal and unacceptable. At the most profound level, Palestinian anger is not a Muslim version of anti-Semitism; it is not evidence of some Arab/ Muslim proclivity to violence, though Islamic militancy has fueled the violence. Rather, it is the result of an understandable sense of injustice and victimization. The frank acknowledgement of this victimization would not delegitimize the Zionist enterprise. As Henry Siegman, Former Director for the U.S. Middle East Project of the Council on Foreign Relations has observed, the admission that the creation of Israel came at enormous cost to the Palestinian people is the only way forward. “There can be no disagreement that enabling Palestinians to live as a free people in their own state and compensating the refugees who suffered most from the Nakba are not matters of Israel magnanimity and altruism, but a sacred obligation to a people that has been greatly wronged, a wrong compounded by keeping the West Bank and Gaza under occupation since 1967.”^{ix} Many Israelis understand this. We can only hope that the parties to the proposed peace negotiations have the wisdom to act on this understanding.

ⁱ Edward Said, *Orientalism*, New York: Vintage Books, 1978, p. 306. Said notes that Zionists embraced the West’s stereotype of the “Oriental” as the product of “arrested development. ”By a concatenation of events and circumstance the Semitic myth bifurcated in the Zionist movement; one Semite went the way of Orientalism [i.e. embraced the western myths and stereotypes about the peoples of the Orient], the other, the Arab, was forced to go the way of the Oriental.” pp. 306-7.

ⁱⁱ Zeev Sternhell, “Zionism’s Secular Revolution,” *Le Monde diplomatique*, May, 1998, p.2.

ⁱⁱⁱ The source of this quotation is Wikipedia, Wikiquote, “David Ben-Gurion,” quoted by *Time Magazine* (July 24, 2006) and originally written in June of 1919.

^{iv} David Hirst, *The Gun and the Olive Branch*, N.Y.: Thunder Mouth Press, 1984, p. 171.

^v *Ibid.* pp. 221-230.

^{vi} Charles Smith, in a footnote to his description of the events at Dair Yassin, reviews the extensive literature on this controversial event. *Palestine and the Arab-Israeli Conflict* (Boston: Bedford St. Martin’s, 6th ed., 2007), p. 213.

^{vii} Musa Alami, a Palestinian, traveled to the countries of the Arab League to find out what support his people were likely to get. When he was in Damascus, the Syrian president told him: “our Army and its equipment are of the highest order and well able to deal with a few Jews, and I can tell you in confidence that we even have an atomic bomb... yes, it was made locally; we fortunately found a very clever fellow, a tinsmith...” David Hirst, *The Gun and the Olive Branch*, p 260.

^{viii} Quoted in Howard M. Sachar, *A History of Israel from the Rise of Zionism to Our Time*, New York: Alfred Knopf, 2nd ed. 1996, p.335.

^{ix} Sachar, p. 440.

^x David Ben-Gurion, quoted by Nahum Goldmann in *The Jewish Paradox* (Fred Jordan Books: Grosset & Dunlap, New York, p. 99.

^{xi} For details of the Camp David Accords, see Jimmy Carter, *Palestine: Peace not Apartheid* (New York: Simon & Shuster, 2006), Appendix 3, pp.221-230.

^{xii} Sachar, p. 680.

^{xiii} The settlement movement is discussed by Sachar (pp. 865-867), Smith (372-374) and Carter (p. 151).

^{xiv} John Mearsheimer and Stephen Walt in their book *The Israel Lobby and U.S. Foreign Policy* (Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2007) make a case for the scope and influence of the Israeli lobby on the shaping of US foreign policy. A much abbreviated version of the book was published by the *London Review Bookshop*, available on line at www.lrb.co.uk/v.28 For a sane and insightful critique of the Mearsheimer and Walt book, see *The Nation* for October 22, 2007, pp. 23-27.

^{xv} "Peace, Propaganda and the Promised Land," Video distributed by Media Education Foundation, 2004.

^{xvi} The general evaluation of the implications of the Camp David peace process and the statement of Hanan Ashrawi occurs in Jimmy Carter, *Palestine: Peace not Apartheid*, pp. 151-154.

^{xvii} The quotation from Dennis Ross occurs in Charles Smith, *Palestine and the Arab-Israeli Conflict*, p. 508.

^{xviii} Charles Smith, *Palestine and the Israeli-Arab Conflict*, 516.

^{xix} Naomi Klein, *The Shock Doctrine*, New York: Henry Holt and Company, 2007, p.439.

^{xx} Henry Siegman, "Israel: a Historic Statement," *New York Review of Books* (February 8, 2001). Available on line at www.cfr.org/publication/3893/israel

Readings and Resources

Carter, Jimmy. *Palestine: Peace Not Apartheid*. New York: Simon & Schuster, 2006. 250pp. In this personal account of the peace-making process from 1947 to the present, Carter brings his experience to bear on how to achieve permanent peace in the region – security for Israel and justice for the Palestinians. It includes important documents relating to the peace process and useful maps.

Friedman, Thomas. *From Beirut to Jerusalem*. New York: Doubleday, Anchor Books, 1989. 541pp. This is a journalistic account of the Israeli invasion of Lebanon in 1983 by the *New York Times* correspondent in Jerusalem. It is readable and informative. Although Friedman never underestimates the human tragedy experienced by both sides in the conflict, his sympathies are clearly with the Israeli point of view.

Hirst, David. *The Gun and the Olive Branch: The Roots of Violence in the Middle East*. New York: Nation Books, 3rd edition, 2003. 627pp. Hirst is a long time Middle-East correspondent for *The Guardian*, an English newspaper. He traces the conflict back to the late 19th century and brings his narrative up to date in a new introduction. The book is a good read, lively and detailed. Hirst's sympathies lie with the Palestinians, a point of view that is rarely available in the American press.

Sachal, Howard M. *A History of Israel from the Rise of Zionism to Our Time*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1996. 1153pp. I found this massive work enormously helpful in understanding the impact of economic factors, demographic changes and generational differences on Israeli politics and decision-making. Although the Arab populations appear only when the conflicts are impossible to ignore and Jewish actions are often air-brushed, the book provides a profound understanding of the Jewish experience.

Smith, Charles D. *Palestine and the Arab-Israeli Conflict*. Boston: Bedford/St. Martins, 2007. 598pp. This is a text book with the strengths and liabilities this suggests. While it may not be the most riveting reading, Smith's unusually **even-handed** account fosters an understanding of how and why the history of this conflict has taken the course it has.

Peace, Propaganda and the Promised Land. A DVD produced by Media Education Foundation, 2004. By comparing BBC and US television coverage of the Second Intifada, the producers of this video make a convincing case that the American media reflect a pro-Israeli bias, a bias that obscures the context of the violence which is so much a part of Middle-East coverage. Highly recommended.

Sources on the Web

Ha-aretz –an Israeli newspaper published in Jerusalem. This newspaper prides itself on expressing views unpalatable to the powers that be in Israel. A recent editorial compared the ruling party, Likud, to Hamas! This is a useful source for anyone interested in keeping their fingers on the pulse of Israeli life and politics. www.haaretz.com

Council on Foreign Relations – The archives on this site include articles on the Israel-Palestine conflict. I have found the articles by Henry Siegman especially useful. See for example, his article "Israel: A Historic Statement" which appeared Feb. 8, 2001 (originally published in the *New York Review of Books*). www.cfr.org/publication/3893/israel

Brzezinski, Zbigniew, et.al. "Failure Risks Devastating Consequences," *New York Review of Books* (Nov. 8, 2007), p. 13. Also available on line at www.nybooks.com A cast of eight "former" officials with a great deal of experience in foreign affairs lay out a basic approach for resolving the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. This document makes a number of recommendations that are "substantive, inclusive, and relevant to the daily lives of Israelis and Palestinians."

MAP

For a map that gives a reasonably up to date representation of the situation on the ground in the West Bank (Barriers, Jewish settlements, roads) with commentary by Norman Finkelstein see www.normanfinkelstein.com/article.php?pg=11&ar=1006

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. Why have previous attempts to resolve the Israel-Palestine conflict resulted in failure? Are there lessons to be learned from the failure of the Oslo peace process that might contribute to success in future peace negotiations?
2. The settlement issue seems to be the most formidable obstacle to a successful peace process. Do you think that a return to the 1967 borders is a real possibility? Do you think that there is a way to resolve the settlements issue?

-
3. Some claim that there is no real ethical difference between the violence of Palestinian terrorists and the state violence of the nation of Israel. What do you think about this issue?
 4. The U.S. and Israel have agreed upon policies designed to establish Mahmud Abbas as the only legitimate voice of the Palestinian people and as the only possible partner in the peace process. Do you think that the exclusion of Hamas from the peace process is a good idea?
 5. Do you think that the U.S. can serve as a “neutral broker” in any peace negotiations?
 6. Preliminary discussion of the prospective peace initiative suggests that the US is urging a return to the Bush “Road Map.” Do you think that the adoption of the Road Map offers a reasonable prospect for a successful outcome to the negotiations?
 7. Although we seem not to have noticed, there is a Peace Movement in Israel. Do you think that our “personal diplomacy” initiatives should include providing support for this peace movement? How might we do this?
 8. One of the most difficult issues facing any peace negotiations is the problem of the Palestinian refugees who claim a right to return to their homes in Israel. How might this issue be resolved in a way acceptable to the refugees living in camps and to Israel?