A Brief Outline of the Israel–Palestinian Conflict

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Abstract Before we can explore the use of management science, game theory, cognitive science and artificial intelligence to attempt to resolve (or just manage) the Israel–Palestinian dispute, we need some sort of mutual understanding about the conflict. Given such a long and multi-faceted history rife with multiple conflicting claims, interpretations and emphases, all fraught with moral and political implications, it is unlikely that any account will be acceptable to all parties as authoritative. Nevertheless, we must search for some common ground. Our examination of history commences with the life of Abraham, the father of the three great monotheistic religions: Judaism, Christianity, and Islam and continues through to a discussion of Zionism and Arab nationalism. This leads to the creation of the State of Israel on May 14, 1948; celebrated as *Yom Ha'atzmaut* (Independence Day) and commemorated as '*al-Nakhba* (the catastrophe), according to one's background. Whilst our discussion concludes with recent events, including the spring 2011 protests and demonstrations spread throughout the Middle East, there is no doubt that during the time between which this article is written and it appears in a journal, momentous events will have occurred.

Keywords Israel · Palestinian · Middle-east conflict · Peace · Negotiation

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1 Introduction

The editor of this Special Issue of the Group Decision and Negotiation Journal on the Israel–Palestinian and Related Conflicts claims '*that for decades the Israel–Palestinian conflict has been characterized as intractable, inextricable, and the root cause of suffering and misery for many of the people who live in the Middle East region*.' The aim of this special issue is to explore the use of management science, game theory, cognitive science and artificial intelligence in support of attempts for resolving these conflicts. But, as in any other dispute, in order to do so, we must first have a fairly acceptable common view of the issues behind the dispute.

Is this possible for the Israel–Palestinian conflict? For in any such current conflict, so fervently contested, history becomes one of the primary battlegrounds. Given such a long and multi-faceted history rife with multiple conflicting claims, interpretations and emphases, all fraught with moral and political implications, it is unlikely that any account, let alone one so brief, will be acceptable to all parties as authoritative. Hence we will make no such claim for this brief background. Rather, what we intend to provide here is an exposition not simply of important events, but of events considered to be important by the contending parties. The result, therefore, will be an impressionistic amalgam of fact, interpretation and myth, at the end of which we hope the reader will have a broad understanding of the issues as understood by multiple players in the dispute.

Broadly speaking, the conflict has two sides. On the one side is Israel, the Jewish state with its majority Jewish population, founded according to the ideology of Jewish national self-determination known as Zionism. On the other, the Palestinians, an Arabic-speaking, mostly Muslim population, who believe themselves the indigenous inhabitants of the territory, which the Jewish state occupies. This dichotomy, however, obscures the complexity of the situation. Each of these two groups contains its own religious, cultural and ideological cleavages that significantly impact their relations with one another and the outside world. And numerous external players also have a stake in the conflict, such as the region's neighbouring states, the United States and the international community, as well as Arab, Muslim, Jewish and Christian populations worldwide.

2 From Antiquity to Modernity

It is often said that the roots of this conflict go back hundreds or even thousands of years. Certainly, the territory in question has been the subject of frequent warfare since biblical times. Others, however, stress that the current conflict is of a different nature and of relatively recent origin, a convergence of fundamentally modern ideologies, identities and political events. Regardless, both of the contending groups identify their own origins and association with the land deep in antiquity.

Interpretations of religious scripture identify Abraham as the progenitor of both the Jewish and Arab peoples. According to the story, Abraham's wife, Sarah, was unable to conceive, so Abraham bore a son, Ishmael, to his Egyptian servant Hagar. However, very late in life, Sarah gave birth to Isaac, upon which she ordered Abraham to banish

Hagar and Ishmael (Genesis 21:1–20). Isaac became the ancestor of the Jewish and Ishmael of the Arab peoples. God later tested Abraham's commitment by commanding him to sacrifice his beloved son Isaac on Mount Moriah, intervening to prevent the slaughter only at the last moment by substituting a ram (Genesis 22:1–19). Mount-Moriah later became the location of the Temple in Jerusalem. Islamic scripture holds that it was Ishmael, rather than Isaac, who was marked for sacrifice in this manner (Quran 37:101–106) at *al-Kaaba* in Mecca city in modern Saudi Arabia (Quran 14:37, Al-Bukhari[1]). Abraham, along with Sarah and subsequent ancestors of the Jews, was buried in a cave in a town in the West Bank that is still known to Jews and Christians by its biblical name of Hebron, (Genesis 25:9–10) and to Arabs as '*al-Khalil'*, after Abraham who was said to be a friend (Arabic: *Khalil*) of God. Abraham was promised by God that his descendants would inherent the land of Canaan (Genesis 15:18–21), a promise that was reiterated, along with specific boundaries, to Moses before his death.[2]

The territory roughly between the Jordan River and the Mediterranean Sea, and in particular Jerusalem, changed hands frequently over subsequent centuries. Before their unification (ca. 1000 BCE), the twelve Israelite tribes, named for the twelve sons of Jacob who was also known as Israel (Genesis 32:28) lived under a loose confederation of leaders called Judges (*shoftim*). Under the threat of foreign invasion, in particular by a people known as the Philistines, the tribes united to form the Kingdom of Israel. The prophet Samuel anointed Saul as Israel's first king (1 Samuel 10). Following Saul's death, David created a strong and unified Israelite monarchy achieving prosperity and superiority over its neighbours. David conquered Jerusalem from the Jebusites to serve as his capital (2 Samuel 5). It was there that his son and successor Solomon built the FirstTemple (1 Kings 6–8).

Following the death of Solomon and the accession of Rehoboam in 930 BCE the country split into two kingdoms, Israel in the north and Judah (containing Jerusalem) in the south (1 Kings 12). The Kingdom of Israel remained as an independent state until 720 BCE when it was conquered by the Assyrian Empire. History does not record what became of the ten tribes of the Northern Kingdom of Israel.[3] Judah continued to exist as an independent state until its conquest by the Babylonian Empire under Nebuchadnezzar II in 586 BCE (2 Kings 25). The Babylonians destroyed the Temple and exiled the population, however 48 years later, in 538 BCE, Cyrus of Persia conquered Babylon. The Judeans were permitted to return to their land and rebuild the

[1] Al-Bukhari, Muhammad ibn Ismail, Saheeh a-Bukhari, Volume 4, Book 55, Number 584. (Available online at http://www.usc.edu/schools/college/crcc/engagement/resources/texts/muslim/hadith/bukhari/. Last accessed May 10, 2011).

[2] Numbers 34:1–12. A detailed discussion on the boundaries of Canaan can be found in Kallai (1997). This statement is often used by ultra-nationalist religious Jews as justification for claiming all of the land of Judea and Samaria, and by detractors of Zionism as alleged evidence of its irredentist aspirations.

[3] They most likely dispersed, some migrating to Judah, others assimilating into their own local religions or cultures. It is theorized that the Samaritans of the New Testament period, a remnant of whom continue to live in the territory today, primarily in the area around the West Bank town of Nablus, are all that remains of the Kingdom of Israel as a distinct and continuous religious culture, though much legend and speculation grew in subsequent years as to the fate and current location of the "lost" Israelite tribes. Recent books examining this mythology are Gonen (2002) and Ben-DorBentie (2009).

Temple (Ezra 1, 6). The Davidic monarchy was not restored, however, and the state was effectively ruled by the hereditary priestly class (Levine 2002:42).

After the incorporation of the territory into the empire of Alexander the Great, the population increasingly came under the social and religious influence of Hellenistic culture. Taking advantage of the political turmoil resulting from the division of the empire, priestly traditionalists known as the Maccabees staged a revolt in 165 BCE, gaining control of the state, an event still celebrated by Jews during the holiday of Hanukkah. This independence was short-lived, however, due in part to the encroaching influence of Rome, culminating in the conquest of Judea by Pompey in 64 BCE. Though some semblance of independence was maintained at first under the client-king Herod, the territory essentially remained under Roman/Byzantine control until the Muslim conquests in the seventh century.

It was during this period of direct Roman rule that a Galilean named Jesus attracted a following around his claim to be the *Messiah* (lit.: anointed, Greek: Χριστός, *Khristós*); the rightful heir to the Davidic monarchy that some Jewish sects anticipated would be sent by God to restore and purify the state. After disrupting the Temple ritual, Jesus was crucified by Roman authorities in collusion with collaborators among the Jewish priestly leadership, at a site adjacent to the walls of Jerusalem (the site is now marked by the Church of the Holy Sepulchre). Though its quest to restore Jewish independence failed, the movement around Jesus Christ ultimately transformed the Roman Empire and the Western world through the religion of Christianity.

In 66 CE the Jews revolted against Rome. This insurrection failed, culminating in the destruction of Jerusalem and the Second Temple (70 CE) and the last stand at the mountain fortress of Masada (73 CE).[4] With the exception of one final revolt in 135 CE under the leadership of another Messiah-claimant, Bar Kochba, whose final defeat came at the fortress of Betar, this would be the last expression of Jewish sovereignty for the next eighteen centuries. While some Jews continued to live in the land, the majority were once again dispersed, forming minority communities in other countries.

The land remained under the rule of the Eastern (Byzantine) division of the Roman Empire until the Arabs, energized by the newly-founded religion of Islam, burst from the Arabian Peninsula to conquer the whole of the region. Heavily influenced by Judaism and Christianity, Islam considered Jerusalem to be the third holiest city next to Mecca and Medina, with the site of the Temple identified as the location to which the Islamic prophet Mohammed was transported during his "Night Journey" en route to heaven.[5]The third Caliph Umar bin al-Khattab built a mosque in the vicinity of the ruined platform of the Temple upon capturing the city in 637 CE[6] from Byzantine Empire (Tritton 1930). The current structures, the Al-Aqsa Mosque and the Dome of

[4] Documented by Flavius Josephus in *The Wars of the Jews*, with the episode of Masada related in Chapter 8. Israeli archeologist YigalYadin offers an account of the excavations of the site of Masada in, *Masada: Herod's Fortress and the Zealots' Last Stand*. London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson 1966; while sociologist Nachmann Ben-Yehuda offers a more critical account of the role of the episode on Israeli historical consciousness in *The Masada Myth: Collective Memory and Mythmaking in Israel*. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1995.

[5] Qur'an 17:1.

[6] Covenant of Umar (العهدة العمرية).

the Rock (*Qubbat As-Sakhrah*) were built in the decades immediately following by Abd al-Malik ibn Marwan, the fifth Caliph of Umayyad Dynasty.

Jerusalem remained under the authority of successive Muslim empires for the next fifteen centuries, with the exception of a brief period beginning in 1099 when it was conquered by the Crusades—a series of military campaigns originating in Christian Western Europe under papal authority to liberate the Holy Land and its holy places associated with Jesus Christ and to keep them under Christian rule. In 1187 Salah al-Din (Saladin), a Kurdish Muslim who founded the Ayyubid dynasty of Egypt and Syria, recaptured Jerusalem after a siege. Saladin and Richard the Lionheart of England signed a treaty in 1192 that kept the city under Muslim control while allowing Christian pilgrims to visit Axelrod and Charles (2001). Crusaders maintained a foothold in the territory, until they were gradually forced back by Ayyubid forces and then by the Mamluks—a Muslim military empire of Mongol origin—under Sultan Baybars who eliminated the last Crusader fortress at Acre (Akko) in 1291. The Mamluks ruled until 1517 when they were defeated by the Ottoman Turks who held the territory as part of their empire until 1917.

3 Zionism and Arab Nationalism

Dispersed throughout the world as minority communities defined by their distinct religion, Jews nonetheless maintained collective memories of sovereignty through their ritual cycles and in their continuing anticipation of a *messiah* who would lead them back to the land. This idea was, for example, expressed in the invocation, "next year in Jerusalem" that traditionally concluded the ritual meal during the annual observance of Passover commemorating the exodus from Egypt (Gilbert 1998:3). However, until the nineteenth century there was little in the way of mass political movement among Jews to return to the land. To the extent that such migrations occurred, they were during extraordinary periods of messianic fervour or religious persecution. In the tenth century, leaders of the Karaite Jewish community, mostly living under Persian rule, urged their followers to settle in the Land of Israel, and the number of Jews migrating rose significantly between the 13th and 19th centuries, mainly due instances of persecution in and expulsion from European states such as England in 1290 and Spain in 1492 (Gilbert 2003:46–7). By the middle of the nineteenth century, the territory was inhibited mostly by Muslim and Christian Arabs, as well as Jews, Greeks, Druze, Bedouins and other minorities. By the end of the nineteenth century, Jews constituted the largest population group in Jerusalem, and may have been an absolute majority in the city, though they amounted to a small minority of the population of the region as a whole (Gilbert 1996:6).

By the end of the nineteenth century, however, the character of Jewish immigration to the territory began to change. The increasingly repressive anti-Semitism of the Russian Empire that followed the assassination of Tsar Alexander II and the accession of Alexander III in 1881 led to the immigration of approximately 35,000 Jews between 1882 and 1903. This came to be known as the First Aliya (lit. "ascent"). Many established agricultural communities such as Petah Tikva, RishonLeZion, Rosh Pina

and Zikron Yaakov, and the *Hebrew language was revived as a lingua franca for this population, largely through the efforts of Eliezer Ben-Yehuda.*[7]

Meanwhile, events in Europe were contributing to the development of Zionism as a political movement. A Hungarian-Jewish journalist named Theodore Herzl was sent to Paris to cover the trial of Alfred Dreyfus, a Jewish military officer accused of treason. The anti-Semitism Herzl witnessed surrounding the trial and motivating the guilty verdicts convinced him, during this age of spreading nationalism, that despite the Enlightenment and Jewish emancipation Jews could never hope for fair treatment in European society (Gilbert 1998:9–11). The only solution to what he termed "the Jewish Question" (Herzl 1986:Chapter 2) was therefore for Jews to once again enjoy national sovereignty in a state of their own. Though he was not the first to come up with the idea,[8] Herzl's name soon became a symbol as the individual whose efforts most contributed toward its transformation into a coherent political agenda. Soon afterward, he wrote *Der Judenstaat* ("The Jewish State" 1896), founded the World Zionist Organisation (1897), and convened the first World Zionist Congress in Basel, Switzerland which called for the movement "to secure for the Jewish people a publicly and legally assured home in Palestine." (Gilbert 1998:14).[9] At this time, the Zionist movement amounted to a small minority of Jews, and was vocally opposed by the mainstream leadership in both the traditional (Orthodox) and modernising (Reform) branches of the religion (Laqueur 1972:385–413).

Between 1904 and the lead-up to World War I in 1914, the situation for Jews in the Russian Empire worsened considerably, and 40,000 Jews emigrated to Palestine following further pogroms. As the war progressed, and it appeared that Allied conquest of Palestine from the moribund Ottoman Empire was imminent, the Zionist political leadership lobbied Allied governments to support their goals. Their efforts proved fruitful when on November 2 1917 British Foreign Secretary Arthur James Balfour issued a formal statement of policy in a letter to Walter Baron Rothschild expressing the British Government's sympathy with the Zionist movement's aspiration to the establishment of a national home in Palestine for the Jewish people. This letter came to be known as the Balfour Declaration (Gilbert 1998:43). Five weeks later, on December 9, 1917, British troops led by General Sir Edmund Allenby captured Jerusalem from the Ottomans.

While this was taking place, however, British diplomats had also encouraged the Arab population to assist in the Allied war effort by revolting against Ottoman rule

[7] Discussion of the relationship between language and nation building in Israel can be found in Safran (2005).

[8] For example, George Eliot (1876) argues the case for a Jewish national state through the voice of one of her characters in the novel *Daniel Deronda*.

[9] There have been, at various times, proposals to establish a Jewish national homeland elsewhere other than Palestine. At the first Zionist Congress Herzl suggested a homeland in Uganda as a temporary alternative where European Jews could escape immediately from the bias and prejudice to which they were subjected in European countries. Stalin planned to create a Jewish homeland in the Ukraine and Crimea, and did in fact form a Jewish Autonomous Region in Birobidzhan, Siberia near the Amur River in 1928. The area was largely swampland with harsh climatic conditions and Jews were forcibly transported to the region (Gettler 1993) describes the ultimately unsuccessful attempt Isaac Steinberg to organise Jewish settlement of the North West Australian Kimberley region. Dr Steinberg's plan was finally rejected by the Australian Government.

under the unified leadership of Sharif Hussein bin Ali of Mecca. Between 1915 and 1916 British High Commissioner in Egypt, Sir Arthur McMahon promised Sharif Hussein control of an Arab nation encompassing the entire span between Egypt and Persia. Both promises could not be honoured simultaneously, so the European powers embarked on a program of dividing the territory, first into spheres of colonial influence, then into separate states under different authorities. The Sykes-Picot agreement, signed secretly in 1916 between Britain and France, divided the region according to French and British zones of control (Milton-Edwards 2009:22). When this was translated into the mandate system ratified by the League of Nations on July 24, 1922, Britain was left in administrative control of the territory of Palestine and Iraq, with France governing the territory that would later become the independent states of Syria and Lebanon. The British Mandate of Palestine was divided into two regions: Transjordan to the east of the Jordan River, which was placed under the authority of Sharif Hussein's son Abdullah and later became the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, and Palestine to the west which was ruled directly by Britain.

Palestine between 1918 and 1948 was characterized by increasingly tense relationships between Jews, Arabs and British authorities, all of whom felt that they had legitimate right to rule the same land. The Jewish population of Palestine was known as the Yishuv (lit.: settlement), with the increasingly dominant arrivals of post-1882 referred to as the "New Yishuv". Though some arrived as refugees from anti-Semitism, and others for religious reasons, many were motivated by a desire to build a new society and transform Jewish identity according to Zionist and socialist principles (Laqueur 1972:270–337). The Yishuv developed its own social and political institutions, providing services for and representing the Jewish population, including a para-governmental institution called the Jewish Agency, and a paramilitary called the Hagana (defence), precursor to the Israeli Defence Forces (IDF). David Ben-Gurion became chairman of the executive committee of the Jewish Agency in 1935, before becoming Israel's first Prime Minister upon the creation of the state in 1948. The Yishuv, however, was not politically united. In 1931 a militia group known as the Irgun split from the Hagana under the leadership of Ze'evJabotinsky. Jabotinsky was the founder of "Revisionist Zionism", an assertive, maximalist interpretation of Jewish nationalism that became the main ideological competitor to the right of the mainstream socialist Labour Zionism. Though the Irgun was re-absorbed into the IDF after the state's independence, Revisionist Zionism was the basis for the formation of the Herut party, which later transformed into the present Likud (Laqueur 1972:338–383).

The Arab population was divided as well, albeit in a different manner. Starting from a clan and village based society unaccustomed to political organisation, several figures from among the community's notable families vied for leadership of the emerging national movement. These included the Nashashibis of Jerusalem, led by RaghibNashashibi, mayor of Jerusalem and one of the founders of the National Defence Party. With ties to the Jordanian monarchy, they were known for moderation and a conciliatory approach to Zionism. However, the politics of Arab Palestine came to be dominated by the Husayni family, led by Hajj Mohammed Amin al-Husayni, Mufti (clerk) of Jerusalem, and Abd al-Qadir al-Husayni who led paramilitary units in the 1930s and 1940s (Kimmerling and Migdal 2003:74–6, 86–99, 166–8). The Husaynis rejected both the British mandate and Zionism, opposing the goals of Jewish national-

Table 1 Waves of Jewish immigration to Palestine from 1882 to 1948

	Dates	Number	Motivating events
First Aliyah	1882–1903	35,000	Anti-Semitism in the Russian Empire
Second Aliyah	1904–1914	40,000	Pogroms, increased anti-Semitism in Russia
Third Aliyah	1919–1923	40,000	WWI in Europe, British conquest of Palestine, Balfour Declaration
Fourth Aliyah	1924–1929	82,000	Anti-Semitism in Poland and Hungary
Fifth Aliyah	1933–1936	174,000	Rise of Nazism in Germany
Aliyah Bet	1936–1948	110,000	Illegal immigration due to British quotas, refugees and displaced persons escaping Nazi-occupied Europe

ism including Jewish immigration which increased in waves over these decades (see Table 1). This rejection was reflected in the second Arab Revolt of 1936–1939 in Palestine, which involved a general strike organized by a newly formed union of Arab political parties called the Arab Higher Committee, along with attacks on Jewish settlements. The AHC articulated three basic demands: cessation of Jewish immigration, an end to all land sales to the Jews, and the establishment of an Arab national government (Peel Commission Report Cmd. 5479, 1937, p. 97, see also Milton-Edwards 2009:43–6)

Though the revolt was suppressed by British forces, the British subsequently attempted to diffuse Arab resentment with the release of a White Paper in 1939, placing a strict quota on Jewish immigration to Palestine. As this policy was implemented at the onset of World War II, it served to contribute to the inability of Jews to escape Nazi-occupied Europe thus enabling their destruction in the Holocaust. To many, this served as a stark illustration of the need for a Jewish national home. Zionist organisations and militias did their best to facilitate the rescue of European Jews, and the resettlement of displaced persons after the war, through clandestine, illegal immigration in what was known as "*Aliyah Bet*" (Hochstein and Greenfield 2010).

4 Independence Day / 'al-Nakhba

The State of Israel was declared on May 14, 1948; a day that has been commemorated in Israel ever since[10] as *Yom Ha'atzmaut* or Independence Day. But among Palestinians this date is commonly referred to as '*al-Nakhba*, "the catastrophe". The stark contrast between these two contending perspectives on this same moment in time succinctly illustrates the intractable differences between the two opposing groups in the manner in which they interpret history, construct their identities, and develop their sense of rights and justice.

With the end of World War II, it was clear the continuation of the British Mandate was no longer viable, and Britain turned the matter of Palestine over to the newly formed United Nations. By this time, the territory was populated by approximately 600,000 Jews or one-third of the population, compared to 1.2 million Palestinian Arabs

[10] According to the corresponding date on the Jewish ritual calendar.

and others. Between May and August 1947 the United Nations convened a Special Committee on Palestine, UNSCOP. It proposed the creation of two separate and independent states, one Arab and one Jewish, with the city of Jerusalem and its environs (including Bethlehem) to be placed under international trusteeship. Under this proposal, the Jewish state would have only a slight majority of Jews (55 %), while the international city of Jerusalem would be near-evenly split between Jews and Arabs. The Jewish Agency accepted this plan, but it was rejected by the Arab Higher Committee with the encouragement of the member states of the Arab League (Gilbert 1998:149). The Partition Plan proposed by UNSCOP was put to a vote in the UN General Assembly on November 29, 1947. UN General Assembly Resolution 181 passed by 33 to 13 with 10 abstentions.[11]

Fighting began as soon as the UN resolution was passed between the Hagana and Palestinian Arab fighters under Abd-el Qadir al-Husayni who was killed fighting for control of Qastel Hill on the Tel-Aviv-Jerusalem road in April 1948. With the withdrawal of Britain and the declaration of the state in May 1948, armies of the Arab League, including Egypt, Jordan, Iraq, and Syria, intervened against the Hagana in support of the Palestinian Arabs. However, the new Israeli army prevailed, and by the end of hostilities in 1949 Israel held considerably more territory than had been allotted to it in the partition plan: some 78 % of mandated Palestine. The remaining territory was annexed to neighbouring Arab states, with the territory now referred to as the West Bank attached to Jordan and the Gaza strip to Egypt. The UN made no serious attempt to enforce the internationalization of Jerusalem, which was divided between Jordan and Israel. Jordan retained control of the Old City with its Jewish, Christian and Muslim holy sites. The Arab countries refused to recognise Israel through the signing of a permanent peace treaty. Consequently, the borders established through the armistice commission (which came to be known as the "Green Line") never received official international recognition.

But the 1948 war had another effect. By war's end, the vast majority of Arabs previously resident in the territory that came under Israel's control were no longer there. The specifics of what happened to them became a matter of controversy. For some time, the standard narrative in Zionist historiography was that they fled the war zone, encouraged by the leaders of the invading Arab nations who assured them that they would be able to return once the Jewish state was destroyed. This perspective has since been challenged even within mainstream Israeli scholarship[12] with the widespread acknowledgement that at least some forced expulsions took place, particularly from villages in strategically sensitive areas like the Jerusalem corridor, along with atrocities such as the massacre of 107 civilians by an Irgun militia in the village of DeirYassin.

But regardless of the extent to which the exodus was voluntary or forced, Israel prevented the refugees from returning via a complex set of laws declaring them "absentees", allowing the new state to deny them citizenship and confiscate their property (Forman and Kedar 2004). This property was redistributed by the Jewish National

[11] Both the Soviet Union and the United States voted in favour (Gilbert 1998:150).

[12] By a group known as the "new historians", starting with the publication by Benny Morris of *The Birth of the Palestinian Refugee Problem, 1947–1949*, Cambridge University Press, 1988.

Fund to Jewish citizens, particularly refugees from Europe and those forced to flee Arab countries over the years following. It is estimated that between 750,000 and 900,000 refugees fled or were expelled from the territories that became the State of Israel in 1948, mostly to neighbouring Arab states including those parts of Palestine—the West Bank and Gaza—annexed by Jordan and Egypt.[13] However, unlike the Jewish refugees arriving in Israel, most were not absorbed into their host societies. They rather retained their identity as Palestinians, many settling in temporary refugee camps, holding on to memories of the towns, villages and properties they had left and passing these memories on to subsequent generations.[14] At the same time the government of Israel passed a law that reinforced the new state's status as the Jewish national homeland, dedicated to the protection of Jews world-wide. The Law of Return, enacted in 1950, states that any Jew[15] has the right to settle in Israel and to gain immediate citizenship. This law remains in effect.

5 The Suez Crisis and the Six-Day War

When Gamal Abdel Nasser assumed the presidency of Egypt in 1956, one of his first acts was to nationalise the Suez Canal. Given the threat this posed to French and British shareholders and to Israeli shipping, Israel, France and Britain colluded to reverse this action. Israel advanced its forces across the Sinai Peninsula to the canal with British and French air support. The United States and the UN pressured Israel to withdraw in exchange for guarantees that international waterways would remain open to Israeli shipping, reinforced by a UN force stationed in Sinai. Though the Egyptian army had been defeated, the perception that he had boldly stood up to Israeli and European aggression dramatically enhanced Nasser's prestige and popularity in Egypt and throughout the Arab world, transforming him into a symbol of Arab nationalism.

Tensions between Israel and its neighbours, primarily Egypt, began to escalate significantly starting in May, 1967. The closing of the Straits of Tiran to Israeli shipping, the expulsion of the UN force from Sinai, a succession of defensive agreements between Arab states, and increasingly bellicose public statements by Nasser and other Arab leaders heralding the destruction of Israel convinced most that war was imminent. Unable to maintain mobilisation for long, Israel initiated a pre-emptive strike on June 5, 1967, and in the first hours of the war destroyed the Egyptian, Jordanian and

[13] These numbers may not be accurate and current but they serve to give a general idea of the complexity for the refugee issue.

[14] The number of *registered* Palestinian refugees including their descendants is estimated at 4.8 million world-wide today (UNRWAR 2011). While the number of Palestinian refugees and their descendants who were displaced after the 1948 and 1967 wars but did not register with UNRWA is estimated at 2.65 million and the number of internally displaced persons at 450,000.

[15] With a few exceptions, later tested in the courts, such as those who had converted to another religion or who were claiming Israeli citizenship in order to evade prosecution for crimes committed elsewhere. The law extends to those born Jewish, converts to Judaism, those with Jewish ancestry, and to spouses of Jews. Though this is at odds with the more restrictive traditional definition of who qualifies as a Jew, the logic was that anyone who could have been persecuted under the Nuremberg Laws of Nazi Germany should be entitled to the protection of the Jewish State. (see http://www.mfa.gov.il/MFA/MFAArchive/1950_1959/Law%20of%20Return%205710-1950. Last accessed June 22, 2011)

Syrian air forces on the ground. With complete control of the air space, Israel was able to swiftly conquer Sinai, Gaza and the West Bank. Jerusalem, including the walled Old City with its Christian, Jewish and Muslim holy sites, came under Israel's control. Finally, in the last days of the war, Israeli forces crossed into Syrian territory and captured the Golan Heights, an area of high-ground that left Israeli border towns and the whole of the northern Galilee vulnerable. Upon completing this task, Israel agreed to a ceasefire on June 10, 1967. UN Resolution 242 called for Israel's withdrawal from these newly captured territories in exchange for a permanent peace between the parties.

The effects of the 1967 Six-Day war were as profound as those of 1948. At the onset of the war, Israelis felt their new state to be vulnerable, under constant threat of annihilation. By war's end, they had acquired extensive new territories—the Sinai, the Golan Heights and the West Bank—along with a triumphal sense of invincibility. But the victory also activated a quasi-messianic strain in Zionist thought, previously a secular nationalism that sought to transform Judaism away from its religious roots. The capture of Jerusalem's Old City, with the former location of the Temple, along with numerous other sites of Jewish religious significance in the West Bank such as Hebron, was viewed by religious Zionists as providential, heralding a redemption and restoration of the biblical golden age. Groups such as Gush Emunim ("bloc of the faithful") saw themselves as tasked with hastening this redemption by settling the land, particularly the West Bank referred to by its biblical names of Judea and Samaria. Their efforts were often supported by elements of Israel's government, particularly those parties influenced by Revisionist Zionism, who saw value in these settlements as enhancing the security of Israel's borders. (Gorenberg 2006 provides a semi-novelistic but well researched account of the politics and ideology behind the origins and development of the settlement movement; see also Friedman 1992).

Along with these occupied territories, however, came the problem of the populations residing in them. The conquest of the West Bank and Gaza Strip brought more than one million Palestinian Arabs under Israeli rule; many of them were the same refugees who had been exiled and dispossessed in 1948. These territories could not be formally incorporated into Israel, for if these populations were granted Israeli citizenship, the Jewish majority that enabled Israel to remain a Jewish state would be threatened, yet if they were incorporated without citizenship rights the democratic character of the state would be compromised. It was thus that the territory settled into perpetual occupation, and its ambiguous status and the fate of the Palestinian population residing there came to play a central role in the wider Arab-Israeli struggle.

6 Terror, Wars, and Peace: 1967–1982

The cause of the Palestinians was taken up by an amalgamation of militant organisations called the Palestinian Liberation Organisation (PLO). The PLO had originally formed under the auspices of Egypt, a creature of Nasser's Arab nationalist agenda. But as Fatah (The Movement for Liberation of Palestine) began to dominate the organisation under the leadership of Yasser Arafat, it increasingly separated from these moorings becoming a political force unto itself. The Palestinian National Charter,

which was adopted as the founding document of the PLO in 1968, identified Palestine under its British Mandate boundaries as an indivisible part of the Arab homeland and the home of the Palestinian Arab people. It called for the destruction of the Jewish State, identifying armed struggle as the means by which this was to be achieved.[16] Toward this end, Fatah staged guerrilla attacks on targets in Israel, basing their operations in Jordan. On March 21, 1968, Israeli forces crossed the Jordanian border to attack Fatah's headquarters in the town of Karameh. Both sides suffered heavy losses, and the Jordanian army ultimately intervened on behalf of the Palestinians and forced the Israelis to retreat. Though Fatah's base was destroyed, the battle boosted its prestige within the Palestinian movement for having stood up to the IDF (Kimmerling and Migdal 2003:254).

Over the next years, Palestinian militant organisations, many affiliated with the PLO, embarked on an international campaign of bombings, assassinations and kidnappings targeted against Israel. In October 1973, Egypt and Syria launched simultaneous surprise attacks against Israel on Yom Kippur, the holiest day in the Jewish religious calendar. Egyptian forces successfully crossed the Suez Canal, while Syrian forces made significant gains against outnumbered Israeli forces on the Golan Heights, threatening Northern Galilee. Within a week, Israel recovered with a counter-offensive, recapturing the territory and penetrating into Syrian and Egyptian territory, but fighting went on for nearly the whole of the month and both sides suffered heavy losses. Though the war was a tactical victory for Israel, the perception that they had been caught by surprise and nearly defeated shattered the sense of invulnerability generated by the Six Day War. And while the Arab armies had been beaten back, their strong performance and early gains served to vindicate the humiliation of the previous defeat.

It was thus that Anwar Sadat, as president of Egypt, felt able to break from previous Egyptian policy and the Arab League and approach negotiations with Israel in a spirit of dignity rather than weakness. Israel, for its part, also underwent a political transformation, as the Likud party under Menachem Begin was elected to government, ending 30 years of single-party rule under Labor. Though this was a victory for the political right, with Begin having been a former militant with the Irgun before the creation of the state, it was also seen as a victory for democratic pluralism, with the old socialist European elite replaced by a coalition representative as well of Middle Eastern and religious Jews, promoting a socially conservative and economically liberal agenda.

In 1978 Begin and Sadat signed the Camp David accords, brokered by US President Jimmy Carter. Israel agreed to withdraw from the whole of the Sinai Peninsula and dismantle its settlements there in exchange for recognition and normalisation of relations. This was the first time an Arab state recognized Israel's legitimacy, and set the standard of "land for peace" as a basis for resolving the Arab-Israeli conflict. The agreement was fully implemented by 1982, but not without consequences. Egypt was expelled from the Arab League for breaking ranks in its united front against Israel, and Sadat was assassinated by an Islamic fundamentalist militant in 1981.

[16] Articles 15 and 19–23 of the 1968 Palestinian National Charter. In 1996 Yasser Arafat sent Shimon Peres and Madeleine Albright, then Prime Minister of Israel and US Secretary of State, respectively, a declaration abrogating the articles in the charter that call for the destruction of Israel.

By this time, Israel was facing problems on a different front. Lebanon to the north had originally been founded as a consociational state whose system maintained a delicate balance of power between the three main religious communities—Sunni and Shi'ite Muslims and Maronite Christians. However, the influx of mostly Sunni Palestinian refugees beginning in 1948, along with the higher birth-rate of Shi'ites, disrupted this demographic balance while the system ensuring Christian political dominance remained rigid. Once expelled from Jordan in 1970, PLO militants relocated their base of operations to southern Lebanon, from which they planned and launched attacks against Israel. The presence of these armed groups mobilizing the swelling Palestinian population beyond the state's control contributed to the outbreak of civil war between communal militias starting in 1975. In 1982, Begin ordered Israeli forces to invade Lebanon[17] in support of allied Christian militias, with the aim of destroying the PLO's political and military infrastructure.

Israel's invasion succeeded in driving the PLO out of Lebanon to Tunisia, but it also had some unforseen effects. Lebanon's Shi'ite population became radicalized and received assistance from Iran to organise a new resistance movement, the *Hizb Allah* or Hezbollah (Party of God). In September 1982, Lebanon's President-elect and Israel's ally, Bashir Gemayel was killed in a bomb attack. In response, Israel moved into West Beirut. Their allies in the Lebanese Christian Phalangist militia went into the Palestinian refugee camps of Sabra and Shatilla, massacring at least 700 people.[18] An Israeli judicial investigation concluded that Israel's Defence Minister Ariel Sharon was indirectly responsible and compelled his resignation. Israel subsequently extricated itself from Lebanon, confining its forces to a 10 km "security zone" along the southern border.

7 The Intifada to the Peace Process

Throughout this period, as Israel fought its Arab neighbours and Palestinian factions operating outside of its borders, the Palestinian population of the West Bank and Gaza had been largely quiescent. This changed in 1987 when a riot starting at the Jabalia refugee camp spread throughout Gaza, the West Bank and East Jerusalem initiating a seven-year period of civil disobedience and violent confrontation known as the *intifada*.[19] The Israeli army acted to suppress the uprising, and the iconic image of the period came to be Palestinian youths hurling stones at heavily armed Israeli soldiers.

Though the *intifada* began spontaneously, without the apparent instigation of any organisation, the PLO swiftly took command of the situation. However, this period also saw the rise of a new movement competing for leadership of the Palestinian cause. Hamas[20] presented itself as a fundamentalist Islamic alternative to the leftist revolutionary nationalism of the PLO. As Israel's attention had been focused on Fatah, it at

[17] The precipitating event was the assassination in London of Israeli Ambassador ShlomoArgov by terrorists of the Abu Nidal faction, not controlled by the PLO.

[18] The number is disputed, and according to some sources could be as high as 3,500.

[19] lit. "shaking off", usually translated as "uprising"

[20] Arabic acronym for *Harakat al-Muqāwama al-Islāmiyya* or "Islamic Resistance Movement".

first ignored, and some say actively encouraged the spread of Islamic groups in the occupied territories (Milton-Edwards 1996:103–5, 151). However, with its religious motivation, the violent rhetoric of its charter, and its association with the tactic of suicide bombing, Hamas swiftly developed the reputation as the more violent and uncompromising of the two major factions of Palestinian politics.

The intifada was taking a toll on Israel, both in terms of the cost of policing the territories and the cost to its international reputation. Saddam Hussein's missile attacks against Israel during the first Gulf War had demonstrated the futility of holding territory as a means to security. Meanwhile, the collapse of the Soviet Union brought a new wave of Jewish immigration to Israel, at the same time losing for the PLO a crucial source of support and patronage just as its support among Palestinians was under challenge from Hamas. Conditions were ripe for compromise on both sides. Arafat first expressed a willingness to recognise Israel in 1988. Open negotiations between states were initiated in Madrid in 1991, with the Palestinians participating as part of the Jordanian delegation. However, given that the two principal sides—Israel and the PLO—had difficulty formally recognising one another as legitimate, more fruitful negotiations took place in secret over subsequent months in Oslo, Norway. A framework was devised for future relations between the two sides whereby Israel recognised the PLO as the legitimate representative of the Palestinians, and the PLO renounced violence and recognised Israel's right to exist. The agreement called for the withdrawal of Israeli forces from the occupied territories and the creation of instruments of Palestinian self-governance in stages, with the difficult issues of the status of Jerusalem, the rights of Palestinian refugees, and the fate of Israeli settlements left to final-status negotiations scheduled for 1996. Israeli Prime Minister Yitzchak Rabin and the PLO Chairman Yasser Arafat signed the Oslo Declaration of Principles in September 1993 and the Oslo Interim Agreement in 1995, which created the Palestinian National Authority (PNA), a para-governmental entity with the authority to negotiate and to govern areas of the West Bank and Gaza evacuated by Israel. Israel and Jordan signed a peace treaty in 1994.

The peace process came under increased strain in subsequent years. While the PLO had agreed to forego violence, Hamas and other Palestinian factions continued to perpetrate suicide attacks on Israelis. Israel retaliated with military incursions inside areas under PNA control, and carried out clandestine operations targeting and killing key Palestinian leaders. Israeli troops had withdrawn from most major population centres of the West Bank and Gaza, and Palestinians residing in these areas elected a legislature presided over by Arafat and the Fatah faction. About 97 % of the Palestinians in these territories were now nominally under Palestinian rule, but the area effectively controlled by the Palestinian Authority amounted to no more than 8 % of the land. Meanwhile, Israel continued waves of settlement construction, building thousands of housing units in strategic areas of the West Bank and doubling the number of settlers there by 2004.

After the assassination of Israel Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin in late 1995 and a series of Hamas suicide bombing in early 1996 the Israel elected the Likud party under the leadership of Benjamin Netanyahu, who took a more inflexible stance in dealing with the Palestinian authority. Despite Netanyahu's reservations over the Oslo process, in January of 1997 Israel and the PNA signed an interim agreement over Hebron. Israel

withdrew from most of Hebron, leaving an enclave of about 500 settlers living in the middle of an Arab city, protected by Israeli Army Forces. Negotiations at the Wye River Plantation in October of 1998 produced agreements on further withdrawal of Israeli troops and renewed Palestinian commitments to prevent terror and incitement. However, neither party lived up to its commitments. In May 1999 Netanyahu was voted out of office in favour of the Labour party under Ehud Barak. Barak continued expanding settlements, but vowed to pursue peace negotiations aggressively. After a failed attempt to negotiate with Syria over the Golan Heights, he unilaterally withdrew Israeli forces from the security zone in Lebanon. He then turned his attention to the Palestinians. Israel made the troop withdrawals mandated by the Wye agreements, and negotiations began toward a final settlement.

In July 2000, US President Bill Clinton hosted negotiations between Barak and Arafat, once again at Camp David Arafat rejected the offer that was negotiated. The precise implications of the offer, the reasons why it was rejected, and whether this rejection was justified have naturally become matters of controversy. On September 28, 2000, Ariel Sharon, now leader of the Likud Party, along with a large escort, visited the site of the Dome of the Rock and Al-Aqsa Mosque. Perceiving this as an assertion of sovereignty over the former site of the Temple, Palestinians revolted, initiating what came to be known as the Second Intifada, or the *Al-Aqsa Intifada*.[21] Israelis perceived this violence as reflecting a popular rejection by Palestinians of the generous offers negotiated at Camp David and became disillusioned over the prospects for peace.

In January 2001, efforts were made to salvage negotiations at a series of sessions in Taba on the Sinai coast in Egypt, and a framework was devised whereby nearly all of the West Bank and Gaza would be turned over to the Palestinians with the exception of a few areas of Jewish settlement which would be annexed to Israel in exchange for a comparable amount of territory in Israel-proper. However, by this time, violence had resumed, and elections in Israel in February 2001, which returned Likud returned to power under Sharon as Prime Minister, compromised the authority of the Israeli delegation to negotiate on behalf of its government.

After a series of suicide bombings in January 2002 carried out by Palestinian militants, Israel placed Arafat in the city of Ramallah in the West Bank under siege to isolate, marginalize and limit his ability to mobilize Palestinians. In the same year, Israel declared Arafat as an enemy, and US President George Bush called on Palestinians to replace him. Arafat died at the end of 2004, and was succeeded as Chairman of the PLO by Mahmoud Abbas, who was then confirmed as president of the Palestinian Authority in an election in January 2005. However, Hamas dominated the elections for the Palestinian Legislative Council in January 2006, leading to a declaration by Israel and the Quartet on the Middle East (the United States, Russia, the Europe and the United Nations) that economic sanctions would be imposed and assistance to the PA would cease until Hamas renounced violence and accepted all previous Israeli-Palestinian agreements.

[21] An American fact-finding committee concluded that Sharon visit did not instigate the Al-Aqsa Intifada (Mitchel et al. 2001).

8 The Conflict Today

The interrupted Oslo process left the occupied territories and the populations residing there in an ambiguous state, partially under the rule of a Palestinian Authority partway through an abortive attempt to develop democratic institutions under difficult conditions, with Israeli occupation forces still present in areas of Jewish settlement and capable of exerting significant force throughout. Concern has been expressed that between the levelling off of Jewish immigration to Israel and the higher birth-rate of the Arab population, the state's Jewish character—fundamental to Israel's identity as a democratic state in which Jewish national self-determination is realized—stands threatened. Perception of this threat leads to a categorical rejection of the notion that Palestinian refugees and their descendants living in the occupied territories and elsewhere enjoy a "right of return" to the places in Israel-proper from which they were expelled in 1948, which is in turn a fundamental tenet of Palestinian national identity. But even discounting the prospect of returning refugees, the Arab proportion of Israel's population currently stands at 20 %. It is estimated that it could reach the critical threshold of one-third within a decade and possibly a majority by the middle of the twenty-first century.[22]

It has been suggested that perception of this threat was the cause of Ariel Sharon's apparent transformation from a hard-line icon of Israel's right-wing to the principal proponent of the policy of "disengagement": unilateral withdrawal from the occupied territories, in absence of negotiations or provisions for the orderly transfer of authority, to whatever extent Israel's security allows.This policy led to the withdrawal of Israeli forces from Gaza in August 2005, this time accompanied by the dismantling and evacuation of all Israeli checkpoints and settlements. But it also led to the construction of a wall—referred to as the "security fence" by Israel, and as the "apartheid wall" in the rhetoric of Israel's detractors—aimed at separating the Israeli and Palestinian populations. Proponents of the wall stress its proven effectiveness as a security measure, noting that suicide attacks within Israel-proper have all but ceased since its construction. Opponents point to the fact that it effectively redraws the territorial boundaries in Israel's favour, causing undue hardship by separating and isolating Palestinian communities.

It was over the policy of disengagement that Sharon, while still in power, resigned from the Likud forming a new party, Kadima ("forward"), that became a major force in subsequent elections. However, shortly afterward, he suffered a debilitating stroke and disappeared from the political scene. He was succeeded as party leader and Prime Minister by former Jerusalem mayor Ehud Olmert, who proceeded to win the next set of elections for Kadima in March 2006. In response to rocket attacks across the northern border perpetrated by Hezbollah militants, Israel once again invaded Lebanon in the summer of 2006 in what became the Second Lebanon War, but withdrew by October of that year.

[22] A situation described by Israeli Ambassador to the United States, Michael Oren, as one of seven "existential threats" faced by Israel (http://www.commentarymagazine.com/article/seven-existential-threats/. Last accessed June 22, 2011).

Conflict between Palestinian factions led to Hamas ousting Fatah officials from Gaza in 2007 and taking control of the territory, using it as a base for rocket attacks on adjacent Israeli towns. In response to this and to the kidnapping of Israeli soldier GiladShalit in a cross-border raid, Israeli forces invaded Gaza at the end of 2008 in an effort to destroy Hamas military positions. Though Israel withdrew after three weeks, they maintained a blockade of Gaza to prevent the importation of arms to Hamas militants. Critics contend that by interfering with free flow of people and goods, the blockade has also prevented aid from reaching Gaza and exacerbated a serious humanitarian crisis. This was brought to international attention in the summer of 2010 when a flotilla of private ships bringing humanitarian aid to Gaza was boarded and searched by Israeli forces, and 10 Turkish activists were killed in the ensuing fighting.

In Israel's elections of 2009, Kadima, now led by Tzipporah "Tzipi" Livni, narrowly won the largest number of seats. But the Likud party, once again under Netanyahu, was in a better position to form a coalition government with the support of right-wing parties such as the secular ultra-nationalist YisraelBeiteinu (lit. "Israel is our Home) and the religious Shas Party. Netanyahu has expressed a willingness to proceed with negotiations with the Palestinians, but negotiations have foundered on the issue of Israel's refusal to extend a settlement freeze inside the West Bank and Jerusalem, despite US pressure. Netanyahu insists that the Palestinians recognize Israel as the historical nation-state of the Jewish people as a precondition to any final agreement and a quid pro quo for temporary extension of a moratorium on building more settlements. Palestinian negotiators rejected Netanyahu's demands fearing such recognition would infringe on their historical and international legitimacy that ensure their rights to a sovereign state. In a joint Israel–Palestinian poll, 64 % of Israelis and 58 % of Palestinians supported mutual recognition of Israel as a Jewish state and Palestine as the state for the Palestinian people.[23]

In early 2010 a wave of protests and demonstrations spread throughout the Middle East, ushering in new political realities in some of the countries surrounding Israel. Civilian revolutionary uprisings in Tunisia and Egypt overthrew governments and heads of state in these authoritarian regimes, and instilled new governments with potentially different outlooks toward Israel. What is has been referred to as the "Jasmine Revolutions" or "Arab Spring" renewed nationalist sentiments among the people in the region with potential to change the dynamics of the Israeli–Palestinian conflict. These revolutions were strongly supported by the United States, the European Union and many western countries, but the Israeli government was apprehensive about the future of its diplomatic and economic relations with allied Arab countries such as Egypt, and its ability to leverage these relations when dealing with the Palestinians. The Palestinian authority represented by the two rival factions of Fatah and Hamas responded to the revolutions in Egypt, Tunisia, and Libya by signing a reconciliation agreement on April 2011 ending their four-year conflict, agreeing to form an interim government, and calling for a general election in the West Bank and Gaza.

[23] The poll was published October 21, 2010 by the Harry S. Truman Institute for the Advancement of Peace at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem and the Palestinian Center for Policy and Survey Research in Ramallah. http://www.pcpsr.org/.

Inevitably, by the time this outline is published and in the months following, further events will have occurred with the potential to alter the situation or lend strength to one or another interpretation. Already the increased isolation of Iran over its nuclear program, internal pressures threatening the Syrian regime, and the success of Islamic parties in Egypt's democratic elections appear to be generating new concerns about Israel's security, while at the same time pushing Fatah and Hamas further toward reconciliation. It is hoped, however, that this outline has adequately described the background against which future events will occur, and around which models and proposals for conflict resolution must be tested.

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