

Palestine-Israel Conflict

GOVT 332

The Israeli-Palestinian Conflict
Origins, Histories, and the Path of Forward

General Questions to Frame Our Discussion:

1. What is the land of Israel? Where is Palestine?
2. What are the conflicting claims over the land of Palestine?
3. What is at the core of the Palestine-Israel Conflict?
4. What is notion of “false symmetry?”

Lecture Outline:

- The Parties: Two Peoples?
- The History and Dynamics of the Conflict
- One Land, Two Peoples: Central Issues and Points of Contention

The Parties: Two Peoples:

“The Israeli Palestinian conflict has shaped the lives of at least three generations of Israelis and Palestinians...[it] has played a central role not only in the daily lives of the people throughout the Middle East but also in lives of Palestinians and Jews living outside Israel and the Occupied Territories...Many scholarly and media accounts however, tend to overlook this fact, presupposing the existence of two cohesive and unified parties locked into conflict.”

Arab and Jews

- Not naturally oppositional or mutually exclusive
- 200, 300, or 500 years ago asking someone if they were Arab or Jew would not make sense
- Both categories are constructions of Arab nationalism and Zionism; They are modern notions
- Palestinians and Israelis are also modern categories; indeed European Jews immigrating to Palestine in the British mandate period sometimes called themselves Palestinian Jews.
- Qualification of reading: Palestinians and Palestine was in use long before 1980s (mainstream point imp.) and dating as far back as 1908.
- Israelis: May 15 1948.

Palestinians:

Who?

- Arabs, Christians, Muslims, Druze (and before 1948 the Jews of Safad, Tiberius, Hebron).
- 5-7 million: West Bank, Gaza, Lebanon, Syria, beyond.
- Creation of state of Israel: Diaspora of Palestinians and the birth of the refugee problem.

Leadership:

- Arab League established PLO in 1964—important role in consolidating P i.d.
- Fatah:
 - Yasser Arafat est. 1954, engineer Kuwait, started a magazine, had a P.O. Box; goal of liberating Palestine and right of return; armed struggle only means to achieve goal [Fanon, Algeria], self-reliance but cooperate with outside forces; departure Arab unity was not the road to liberation of Palestine.
 - Fatah became know in operation in 1965 when small group tried to cross Lebanon into Israel to place bombs on Nat'l Water Carrier.
 - Fatah carries out about 40 operations all in all/ Not a threat but an embarrassment to the Israeli government
 - PFLP, DFLP, PCP
 - Class
 - Sectarianism; Islamism in the 80s.

- **Israelis:**
- **Who?**
- Israelis—ancient Israelites?
- Israelis synonymous with Jews?
- Israelis generally identify as Zionists (mobilization of world Jewry to migrate to Palestine; establishment of a Jewish state in Palestine).
- Divisions: Ashkanizim versus Mizrahim
- Divisions: Palestinians in Israel
- Political map: 17 parties; historically Labor (Ashkanazi/secular; ruled between 1948 and 1977; land for peace; “moderate” but settlement expansion) and Likud (right, Mizrahi, working class, original platform all territory gained in 1967 except Sinai; Greater Israel; disengagement).

History and Dynamics of the Conflict

1880-1948:

Birth of Nation-State Model in 20th century Europe: right to self-rule tied to emerging national identity housed in state borders.

Zionism: **Image 4: Herzl**

- Herzl WZO 1890s; Jewish people are a nation without a state. Dreyfuss affair; anti-Semitism.
- Respond to murderous anti-Jewish riots (pogroms in 19th century Russia). The Holocaust/Sho’ah or the Nazi genocide of over six million European Jews during WWII further enhanced international support for Jewish state.

Two turning points:

- 1897: WZO and a Jewish home in Palestine (although the question of territory was vague until 1942 at the Biltmore hotel in New York when the WZO
- 1917: Balfour Declaration; British promises to facilitate JNH would be codified into law. No political rights for Palestinian Arab majority who are not named. **Image 5**

What was Ottoman Palestine? **Image 6**

Not a land without a people for a people without a land as some, but not all, Zionists claimed.

1878: 463K people- 404K Muslim, 44K Christians, 15K Jews (10K of which recent immigrants with foreign citizenship; 5K had lived for centuries in Jerusalem, Safad, Hebron, Tiberius).

1914: outbreak of WWI 683K Pal. Arabs, 60K European Jews; Arabs 92 percent Jews 8 percent.

Plurality, Ottoman cosmopolitanism.

Ottoman Palestine not a backwater but thriving time of economic growth, agro-industry, and commerce.

Image 7: Demo of BD

British Mandate

- Middle East site of intracolony contest
- End of WWI, defeat of Ottomans; spheres of power
- Mandate system:
 - Palestine/Transjordan **Image 8**
 - Palestine separated March 1921 **Image 9**
- Policy: facilitate JNH maintain Arab status quo.
- Conflicting promises: BD versus British promises of independent Arab state to the Hashemite patriarch Husayn ibn 'Ali.

Palestinian Leadership

- Two newspapers key to Palestinian collective identity in 1908/1911; Land purchases by JNF from absentee landlords; disposed peasants becoming urban working class poor.
- AHC
- Mufti, sectarianism, elites
- Arab Revolt
- 1937 Peel Commission **Image 9: Peel**
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- Class Differences **Image 10: Palestinians**

Zionist Leadership/State Building

- 1920s: Histadrut, Hagannah and Palmach, Health care, Banking, Insurance, Agriculture
- 1942 Biltmore: Differences among Zionists
- 1940s Population Exchange: Ben-Gurion; Peel; Greek-Turkish 1925

Image 11: Jews

1947-1948:

- UN 181: **Image 12**
 - Zionists accepted
 - Palestinians rejected—coastal fertile citrus plus Jews only owned 7 percent of land
- Nakba/Independence:
- Historical Debates: Revisionists/ Moral Question
- Depopulation a consequence of war? Or was it a systematic plan?
- Outcomes:
 - Declaration of State of Israel **Image 13: BG**
 - Birth of the Palestinian Refugee Predicament **Image 14: Refugees 700 K of Palestinians displaced; 430 villages destroyed. Image 15: map of villages destroyed.**
 - Refugee camps: WB and Gaza
 - Lebanon, Syria, Jordan and BEYOND
 - Lebanon dire
 - Class differences
 - **Historic Palestine split into three**

1948-1967:

- Palestinians in Israel: military rule: full control over movement, political association, daily life; “uncle toms,” Mahmoud Darwish
- June 1967 Six Day War:
 - Conventional Israeli interpretations: self-defense
 - Ample evidence: preemptive strike
 - Palestinian commandos conducting attacks from Syrian territory
 - Nasser proclaimed blockade of port of Eilat

- Israel conducted preemptive attack on Egypt and Syria on 5 June 1967
- Egyptian, Syrian, Jordanian armies were decisively defeated in six short days.
- *Naksa*
- Victorious Israel/ No longer besieged but regional superpower/ war of expansion not defense
- UN Resolution 242: complete Israeli withdrawal from territories

Settlements:

- **Image 17 and 18: Settlements** [Post Camp David I, settlements went from 54 in 1977 to 146 in 1987; 16 in Gaza evacuated; thousands of illegal outposts]. Today approximately 418,000 settlers in the West Bank including East Jerusalem.
- **1974: Gush Emim, Bloc of the Faithful**

1967-1987

PNM: Arafat 1969 chairperson of PLO

Arafat 1974 UN lecture “The Gun and the Olive Branch” **Image 19: Arafat**

Black September: 1000s of Jordanians and Palestinians

PLO moves to Lebanon becomes embroiled in civil war

String of Peace Talks Begin:

1978: Camp David I: **Image 20: The Trio**

1982 Lebanon:

Consolidation of peace movement

Sharon

Sabra and Shatilla

What was life under occupation like:

- Denial of basic political right: freedom of expression, press, political association.
- PN criminalized
- Collective punishments, detentions, curfews, house demolitions

- Mass detention—600,000 Palestinians have passed through detention system since 1967.
- Israeli policy and sectarianism. (PA under Arafat; Iraq under Saddam); gender (*isqat*, women's honor. Peres granted 1976 municipal elections and granted right to vote for women hoping they would pull for conservatives but instead women brought about revolutionary shift in town and city councils.
- Dayan Plan

First Intifada:

- Social revolution: cross-generational struggle that had nothing to do with the PLO leadership in Tunisia. It was a popular mobilization that involved thousands of people – men, women, teens, and children – in many forms of civil disobedience: demos, general strikes, refusal to pay taxes, boycotts of Israeli products, political graffiti, establishment of underground schools
- Local leadership: United National Leadership of the Uprising, a coalition of political parties, drew unprecedented international attention to Palestinian life under occupation.
- Popular committee and the women's front
- Breaking their bones

PLO began to signal readiness for political settlement, 80s

1987-present (Summary):

PLO and Saddam; 400K Palestinians in Kuwait

Madrid: Bush Senior after US War on Iraq pushed reluctant Likud Israeli PM Shamir

Oslo: System of truncated sovereignty

A,B, C areas: Bantustans or a path to statehood?

Area A: under PA.

Area B: civil Palestinian, Israel security

Area C: complete Israeli control

During the protracted interim period of the Oslo process, Israel's labor and Likud governments continued to build settlements and a network of bypass roads for travel by Israeli settlers only (to enable settlers to travel from their settlements to Israel proper without passing Palestinian inhabited areas).