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Problems in Defining the Conflict

If ever there was a contemporary conflict that deserved to be included in a series of historical works entitled “Contesting the Past,” it is surely the Arab–Israeli or Israeli–Palestinian conflict. Perhaps exaggerating, one scholar considers it “the single most bitterly contentious communal struggle on earth today.”¹ Any attempt to simply recount its main events in chronological order is bound to be contested by someone – even if that account is deliberately neutral in intent, purged of any overt editorializing, and without judgments on motives, causes, or effects. Of course, such bare chronologizing is of very limited use to anyone, and the study of history is a much more complicated affair.

In a letter to US president Harry S. Truman in December 1945, Dr. Chaim Weizmann, president of the World Zionist Organization, wrote: “Palestine, for its size, is probably the most investigated country in the world.”² More than 50 years later, a French intellectual and one-time associate of Cuban revolutionary Ernesto “Che” Guevara, agreed: “No conflict in the world,” wrote Régis Debray, “is as well documented, mapped and recorded.”³ Juxtapositions and contrasts such as these occur frequently and provide ironic relief to those engaged in researching this enduring and perplexing dispute.

Not surprisingly, there exists a wide variety of ways of understanding and representing the Israeli–Arab or Palestinian–Israeli conflict. These efforts at

explanation, whether in the realm of politics, lobbying, media, academe, or the general public, are often reflections of the highly contentious conflict itself, including its bitterness and complexity. A familiar pattern is the presentation of one side's "true" account as against the other party's "lies," "myths," or "propaganda." Less simplistic and more useful are the scholars, journalists, and analysts who acknowledge and discuss the parties' competing "narratives" of the conflict – the different stories, versions, perceptions, or viewpoints adopted by those people most intimately involved.

In Part II of this book we outline the history of 140 years of the interrelated Israeli–Palestinian and Arab–Israeli disputes from their early local origins to conflicts of regional and global dimensions. Reflecting – and respectful of – the clash of narratives, we highlight 11 "core arguments" that have emerged between Israelis and Palestinians and that contribute to the unhappy fact that the conflict is still today unresolved and very resistant to resolution. My intentions are modest, yet challenging enough: to explore this conflict with all its paradoxes and complexities, if possible to demystify some of its features, and to offer some understanding about why the histories of Palestine and Israel – the narratives held dear by Palestinians and Israelis – are so contested.

What's in a Name?

A number of problems stem from the complexities that flow from the very act of naming the conflict and its main protagonists. In naming the conflict and defining what it is about, one is immediately, if unwillingly, taking a position that will surely be disputed by someone holding a different view. The conflict analyzed in these pages has been described variously as the "Jewish–Arab" conflict, the "Zionist–Arab" conflict, the "Arab–Israeli" conflict, and the "Israeli–Palestinian" conflict.

If we choose to call it the "Jewish–Arab" conflict, we are pitting the Jewish people as a whole against the Arab people as a whole. Is this an appropriate or accurate definition? As we will see below (Chapter 2), the designations Jews and Arabs refer to wide groups extending beyond those directly contesting the land of Palestine/Israel. Although some writers do refer to the "Arab–Jewish conflict," in these pages we avoid this designation because it is too broad and may lend itself to confusion and misleading interpretations.

What is missing from such a wide definition are the specifically *political*, *national*, and *territorial* aspects of the conflict that exists today. By using the term "Zionist" rather than "Jewish," we supply these missing components for one of the protagonists. Zionists believe in and support the quest by Jews to "return to Zion" (i.e. Jerusalem and the Holy Land); in the modern period, this implied also support for the creation of a Jewish state in the area.

Applying this definition, it would be accurate to say that, prior to the creation of the Israeli state in 1948, we were dealing largely with a “Zionist–Arab” and a “Zionist–Palestinian” conflict.

Who, then, are the Arabs? Not really a symmetrical designation to Jews, Arabs may be defined as an ethno-national group sharing a common history, the Arabic language, and cultural roots emanating from ancient tribes in the Arabian Peninsula. The “Arab–Israeli” conflict – perhaps the most commonly used of all these various titles – is in many ways an apt name for the territorial and political dispute since 1948 between the state of Israel, on the one hand, and the 20 or so states that consider themselves to be Arab, on the other.

Still, even this preferred designation carries with it a number of drawbacks. As we have noted, it may lead to the erroneous notion that the conflict began in 1948 with the creation of Israel, ignoring at least half a century of a pre-existing Zionist–Arab and Zionist–Palestinian dispute. Also misleading is the notion that the Arab world is a single entity that displays uniform attitudes and policies vis-à-vis Jews, Zionism, and/or Israel. In effect, historical experiences, policies, and attitudes vary among individual Arab peoples and states, with the result that it is misleading to suggest that the Arabs, as a single unit, constitute one of the two antagonists in the Arab–Israeli conflict.⁴

A further potential drawback of this definition of the conflict is that the broad term “Arab” can sometimes overlook or understate the existence of the specific struggle between Zionists (pre-1948) and Israelis (since 1948), on the one hand, and the Arabs of *Palestine* (or *Palestinians*), on the other. Thus, for example, while most discussions from 1948 to 1973 accurately speak of a wider *Arab–Israeli* conflict, in the period since 1973, and more so since 1993, many people came to see the conflict as being at its core a narrower *Israeli–Palestinian* conflict for sovereignty and self-determination on the same territory – albeit one with broader Arab dimensions.

In this book we retain the latter two ways of naming the conflict, using the common and convenient “Arab–Israeli conflict” to denote and include its wider regional dimensions, while referring to the “Palestinian–Israeli conflict” when focusing on its core and its two main protagonists. This way of defining the conflict and its protagonists, it should be pointed out, is hotly challenged by some, especially right-wing Israelis and Zionists.⁵

Loaded Terminology

As with discussions of other conflicts, terminology can deliberately or unintentionally favor one side over the other, and betray the biased perspective or partisan support of the writer or speaker. These dangers can be amply

illustrated for the Arab–Israeli conflict with regard to general descriptors, the naming of the protagonists, the naming of events, and the labeling of maps.

As in all accounts of conflict and war, terminology is enlisted to help separate the heroes from the villains. The commitments and feelings of the writer or observer are reflected in the choice to be made between terms with pejorative connotations (e.g. “terrorist”) and those that put the actor in a more favorable light (e.g. “freedom-fighter”). With both sides claiming virtue and nobility, observers end up taking sides by choosing when to speak of acts of “aggression” and when to refer to acts of “resistance” against that aggression.

In the naming of the main protagonists, there are, for some people, automatic connotations to be adopted, or avoided. The word “Zionist,” for example, can be associated with the antisemitic pamphlet *The Protocols of the Learned Elders of Zion*, a forgery that purports to provide evidence that Jews are members of a treacherous cabal plotting to take over the world. In the eyes of Palestinian Arabs who struggled against Zionism for control over Palestine/*Eretz-Israel* (Hebrew: “land of Israel”), the term “Zionists” will understandably be viewed negatively as signifying those who took over lands and the country they claim as theirs. Indeed, the mythological powers supposedly available to world Jewry have played their part in engendering fear, and sometimes respect, among the opponents of Zionism.

Some international campaigns on behalf of Palestinian rights have resulted in further vilification of the term “Zionist” by virtue of a resolution equating Zionism with racism adopted by the United Nations General Assembly [UNGA] in 1975 (rescinded in 1991).⁶ While recognizing the existence of these pejorative connotations, our use of the word in these pages will more often reflect the usage of those who, historically, have self-identified as Zionists, i.e. adherents of ideological and political movements seeking to create a national home or state for the Jewish people in the land of Palestine/*Eretz-Israel*.

Some readers who reject the legitimacy of the Jewish state may take offense at this book’s references to “Israel” and “Israelis,” preferring to designate the latter as “Zionist invaders” or “occupiers” and the former as “the Zionist entity” or “Occupied Palestine.” Likewise, other readers may have difficulty with my frequent references to “the Palestinians,” preferring instead to refer to these people as “Arabs,” consistent with their belief that there is no such thing as a separate Palestinian people who are entitled to a separate Palestinian political state.

Similar concerns exist about the naming of events and episodes in the history of Arab–Zionist relations before 1948 and Israeli–Arab relations after that date. Outbreaks of violence that occurred during the period of

British rule (1917–1948) have been given different names, with sometimes strikingly different connotations. Calling them “disturbances” seems an exercise in understatement, while the terms “riots” or “rioting” suggest primitive and criminal behavior on the part of the population, usually referring to the Arabs but sometimes also the Jews. Some Palestinian and Arab nationalists prefer to designate these events as “protest demonstrations” (that turned violent), or acts of “resistance” against British occupation and Zionist colonization of their land.

Perhaps the most famous case of differences over the naming of events is the 1948 war (more accurately, the fighting that broke out in December 1947 and ended in January 1949). For Israelis it is their “War of Liberation” or “War of Independence” (in Hebrew, *milhemet ha-atzma’ut*) full of the joys and overtones of deliverance and redemption. For Palestinians, it is *al-Nakba*, translated as “The Catastrophe” and including in its scope the destruction of their society and the expulsion and flight of some 700 000 refugees.

Subsequent Arab–Israeli wars are also subject to disputes over naming. From an Israeli viewpoint, the 1956 war between Israel and Egypt is the “Sinai Campaign” or “Operation Kadesh,” from the Israel Defense Forces’ [IDF] battle plan. From an Egyptian and Arab perspective, however, it is known as the “Tripartite Aggression,” highlighting the collusion between the invading Israeli army and the subsequent Anglo–French military operations in the Suez Canal Zone under the pretext of protecting the Canal from the two warring parties. More neutral ways of referring to this war would be to call it the “Suez War” or the “1956 war.” For some, referring to the June 1967 as the “Six Day War” highlights and glorifies the swiftness and apparent ease of the Israeli victory, thereby perhaps offending the Arabs in their loss. Similarly, to use the name “Yom Kippur War” to refer to the October 1973 attack by Egypt and Syria against Israeli forces along the Suez Canal and on the Golan Heights would be to present the war as seen from an Israeli perspective that underlines the ruthlessness of an enemy who chose Judaism’s holiest day to launch a surprise attack. Generally, the best way to approach neutrality in such naming is to refer to wars by their calendar dates.

Maps

Finally, another contested aspect of the Arab–Israel conflict is the geographic nomenclature on maps.⁷ Maps in Arabic will normally designate the entire contested territory as *Filastin* (Palestine), without reference to a country named “Israel” – a political act of non-recognition. By contrast, most world and regional maps published in English and European languages

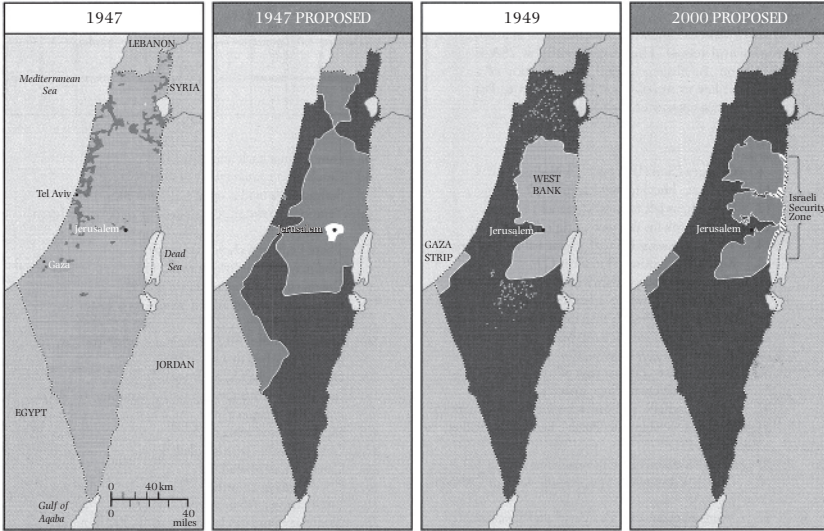
between 1949 and 1967 indicated no “Palestine” (which disappeared as a distinct legal entity following the 1947–1949 war) but rather the new state of “Israel” within its 1949 armistice boundaries (see Map 6.2).

Many maps in Hebrew since 1967 have shown Israel without clearly demarcating the Palestinian territories captured by Israel from Jordan (the West Bank), Egypt (the Gaza Strip), and Syria (the Golan Heights) in the June war of that year; others retain the 1949 armistice borders, also known as “the green line.” Maps published by the settlers’ movement in Israel will ignore the green line and indicate the Palestinian territories captured in 1967 by their Biblical Hebrew names, *Yehuda ve-Shomron* (Judaea and Samaria) – emphasizing their inclusion in the Biblically promised *Eretz-Israel* (Land of Israel) and the intention that they be part of the modern Israeli state. These latter territories have become known generally and almost universally as “the West Bank” (i.e. of the Jordan River). Along with the Gaza Strip, these territories have been designated variously as “administered territories” or “disputed territories” (in mainstream official Israeli publications), or “liberated territories” (in publications promoting a “Greater Land of Israel” beyond the 1949 frontiers). General international usage will use the terms “occupied territories” or “occupied Palestinian territories” (“OPT”) – see Maps 7.1, 11.1.

Juxtaposition and labeling of maps can also be highly politicized as a way of suggesting aggressive motives or registering a claim. Thus, for example, both Palestinians and Zionists utilize maps to illustrate how their people have lost territory – whether actually inhabited or promised. A negative portrayal of Israel as an aggressive and expansionist state is frequently achieved by placing maps in sequence showing the growth of Israeli-assigned or -held territory from the 1947 United Nations [UN] partition proposal to the 1949 armistice lines to the new map following Israel’s victory in the 1967 war (Maps 6.1 and 6.2). A typical example can be found in a 1999 volume of collected conference papers entitled *The Future of Palestine and Israel: From Colonial Roots to Postcolonial Realities*, which includes in its introduction a series of maps entitled “Palestinian loss of land, 1946–1999.” Each of four maps indicates the changing shape and size of “Palestinian land” and “Jewish land,” with the use of the word “stage” signaling nefarious intent on Israel’s part.⁸ Map 1.1 is an American magazine’s illustration making the same point.

For Zionists and Israelis, equivalent maps would record instead the cumulative gains and achievements of “Jewish land acquisition” or “Jewish land purchase,” without mention of Palestinian losses.

Seen from a Zionist or Israeli perspective, the extensive “promised land” of Biblical days and the area offered by the 1917 Balfour Declaration for the creation of a Jewish national home (see Chapter 4) have both been whittled down over time by Britain and other outsiders. This is vividly illustrated by three juxtaposed maps of pre-Mandate Palestine in 1920–1922, the official



After Britain takes control in 1920, the Jewish portion of Palestine's population grows from one tenth to one third by 1947, when Jews own almost 7 percent of the land—mostly in the north and west—with the rest living in cities.

A U.N. plan offers 53 percent of the land for a Jewish state and 47 percent for an independent Arab state, with Jerusalem declared an "international" city. The fate of Arab towns remaining within the Jewish state is not explicitly addressed.

By war's end, 418 Arab towns have been depopulated, and Israel controls 78 percent of the land (where some Arab towns remain), with the West Bank left to Jordan to prevent a Palestinian state there, and Egypt in control of the Gaza Strip.

Israel's plan for a Palestinian state includes isolated Arab pockets of Jerusalem and a network of Jewish settlement roads (not shown) dividing the West Bank into 29 pieces, its eastern edge under Israeli control without formal annexation.

POPULATIONS	Palestinian	Jewish	Israeli
Under foreign rule	■	■	
Self-rule	■		■

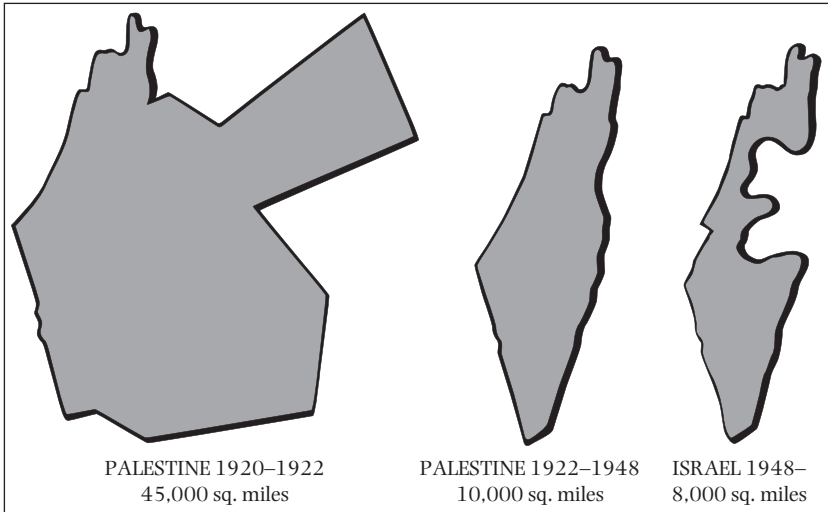
Map 1.1 Palestine Losing Ground.

Source: Seth Ackerman, "Losing Ground," *Harper's Magazine*, December 2001, 88. Art by XPLANE (www.xplane.com). Used with permission.

Mandated territory during 1922–1948 showing Transjordan removed, and Israel 1948 (armistice lines after the war), in Map 1.2.⁹

Another visual impact can be had by framing Israel surrounded by Arab countries stretching from Morocco in the west to the Gulf States in the east and Sudan in the south; on such maps, the Jewish state appears tiny and endangered.¹⁰ Similarly, in Martin Gilbert's annotated historical maps, Israel's various wars from 1948 onwards are depicted in ways that underscore the Jewish state's vulnerability as a country encircled by hostile and aggressive neighbors of overwhelming size and/or armed might.¹¹

A comparison of maps about the early days of Zionism offers some insight into the "mental maps" of rival Zionists and Palestinians. The first edition of Martin Gilbert's classic *Jewish History Atlas* (1969) contained a map entitled: "Jewish settlements in Palestine 1855–1914" (see Map 1.3), which was reproduced in Walter Laqueur's popular *History of Zionism*.¹² It shows some 15 black dots and triangles, but no Palestinian towns or villages – all



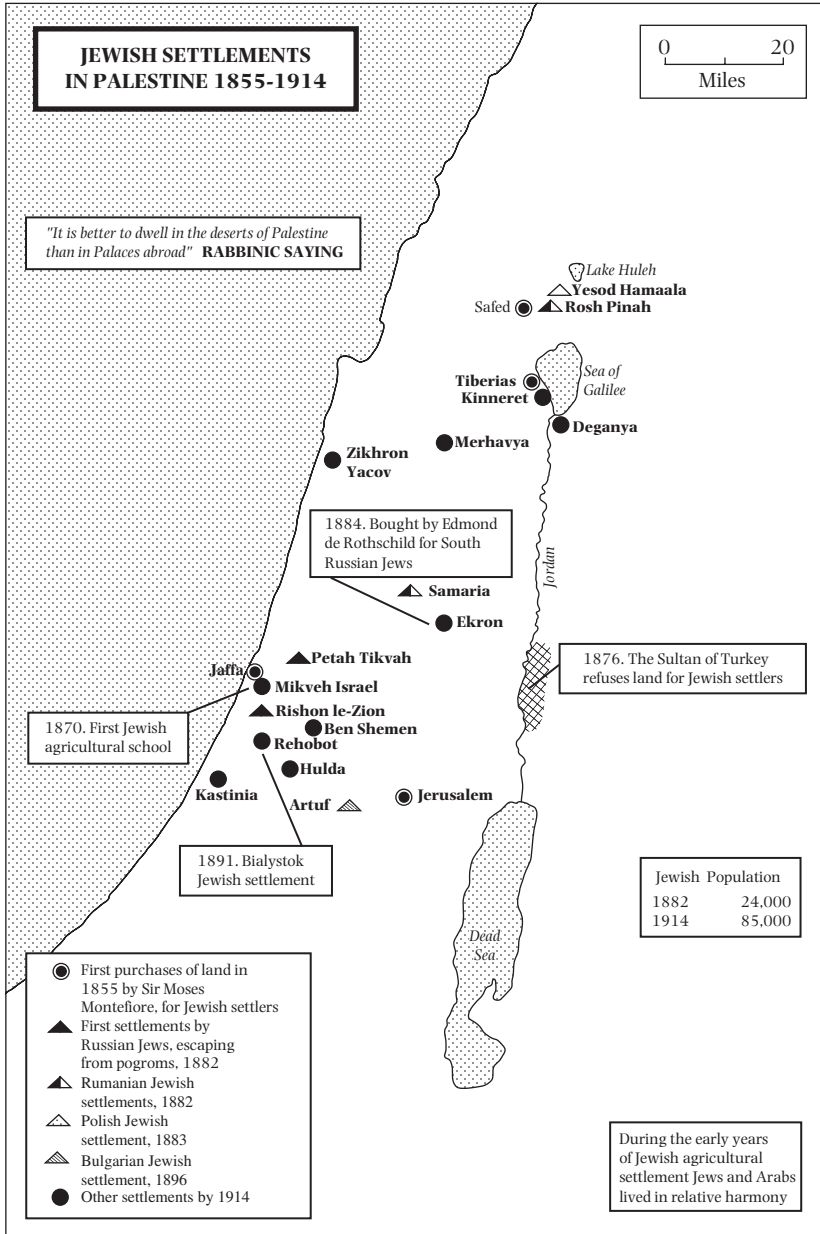
Map 1.2 Shrinking Jewish National Home: Palestine 1922, 1948, and Israel 1948. *Source: Israel's Struggle for Peace*, New York: Israel Office of Information, 1960, p. 8.

the white space suggesting an empty land ready to receive newcomers and reflecting a Eurocentric, colonialist view of providing “a land without a people for a people without land.”¹³ By contrast, Walid Khalidi’s *Before Their Diaspora* offers a map entitled, “The first Zionist colony in Palestine, 1878” (see Map 1.4), which shows Palestinian towns, villages, and mixed towns – clusters of gray dots, six large black dots, along with one barely visible, small, unnamed square dot indicating the new colony of Petah Tikvah.¹⁴

Finally, those inclined to interpret the Bible literally as a roadmap for the present would cite references to God’s promises to Moses and Joshua that the ancient Hebrews would receive the land stretching “from the wilderness and the Lebanon to the Great River [the Nile?], the River Euphrates – the whole Hittite country – and up to the Great [Mediterranean] Sea on the west.” Today’s Arabs and Muslims would fear and object to this use of Jewish religious texts as a master-plan for modern Israeli conquest of parts of Egypt, Syria, and Iraq, while Orthodox Jews would regard them literally as a deed of entitlement.¹⁵

Dates and Periodization

A more complex historiographical issue is one’s choice of a starting date of the conflict, the selection of its major turning points, and its periodization. Some may wish to start with the Biblical antecedents of the conflict (Isaac



Map 1.3 Jewish Settlements in Palestine, 1855–1914.

Source: Martin Gilbert, *The Jewish History Atlas*. London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1969, p. 79. Reproduced by permission of Taylor & Francis Books UK. © Sir Martin Gilbert. (<http://martingilbert.com>).



Map 1.4 The First Zionist Colony in Palestine, 1878.

Source: Walid Khalidi, *Before Their Diaspora: A Photographic History of the Palestinians, 1876–1948*, Washington, DC: Institute for Palestine Studies, 1984, 34 (modified for grayscale). Used with permission.

and Ishmael, sons of Abraham, as progenitors of today's Israel and the Arabs) – reflecting a belief that we are dealing with a primordial and eternal clash, with supernatural overtones. In the pages that follow, we choose instead to begin our examination of the evolving dispute with the first

modern Zionist immigrants to and settlements in Ottoman Palestine in 1882 – reflecting the altogether different view that this dispute is a product of political, economic, and social forces that were unleashed in a particular place and at a particular time in human history. Although some critics argue that choosing 1882 as starting point unduly accentuates the antagonism between the parties by ignoring centuries of earlier Jewish–Muslim and Arab–Jewish amity and collaboration,¹⁶ this is the timeframe adopted by most historians of the conflict, and Part II of this book will unfurl the events of the last 140 years.

An Ongoing Conflict: Tractable or Intractable?

Other problems arise because we are studying and attempting to understand an ongoing conflict that has not yet been resolved – one that continues to produce new victims and casualties almost daily, fueling and being fueled by feelings of bitterness, hatred, and revenge already many generations deep. Analyzing the historical roots and patterns of this conflict is therefore not merely of theoretical or academic interest. How we approach and analyze the past is often, consciously or unconsciously, driven by what continues to happen in Israel, Palestine, and the Middle East as the conflict either festers or rages. And how we portray the past can have implications for how we approach current questions brought up by the unresolved conflict. This case amply illustrates the dictum that “All history is contemporary history.”

Another overriding question is almost impossible to answer: To what extent is the Arab–Israel conflict intractable – one that is inherently incapable of ever being solved?¹⁷ Readers will be invited to form their own evidence-based conclusions. Against the common wisdom that all conflicts are somehow and ultimately resolvable, some leading figures on both sides have depicted the conflict they were living as being indeed intractable. While awaiting the final verdict of the 1919 Paris Peace Conference to be applied in the Middle East, David Ben-Gurion, then a labor-Zionist spokesman and future Israeli prime minister, exhorted his fellow delegates at a *yishuv* (Palestinian–Jewish community) council meeting to view the problem of their relations with the area’s Arabs without illusions:

Everybody [he said] 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 fill that gulf. It is possible to resolve the conflict between Jewish and Arab interests [only] by sophistry. I do not know what Arab will agree that Palestine should belong to the Jews—even if

the Jews learn Arabic [as was being recommended during those debates by an advocate of Jewish–Arab rapprochement]. And we must recognize this situation ... [and not] try to come up with “remedies” ... We, as a nation, want this country to be *ours*; the Arabs, as a nation, want this country to be *theirs*. The decision has been referred to the Peace Conference.¹⁸

A near mirror-image view was ventured in early 1932 by Awni Abd al-Hadi, a Palestinian lawyer, leader of the pan-Arab Istiqlal Party and former aide to Faysal Ibn Husayn (later King Faysal I of Iraq) at the Paris Peace Conference in 1919. In a private conversation with Dr. Haim Arlosoroff, head of the Jewish Agency’s Political Department in Jerusalem, Awni responded negatively to feelers about the chances of an Arab–Zionist agreement, reportedly stating:

Some time ago he had come to the definite conclusion that there was no point whatever in negotiations or attempts to reach a mutual understanding. The goal of the Jews was to rule the country, and the aim of the Arabs was to fight against this rule. He understood the Zionists quite well, and respected them, but their interests were fundamentally opposed to Arab interests, and he saw no possibility of an agreement.¹⁹

It is important to acknowledge and factor into our analysis such blunt, pessimistic, and authentic views expressed by leading protagonists. One reason for doing so is to counteract the perils of wishful thinking about would-be solutions to this conflict. In our final chapter we will again return to the question: Is there a solution to this conflict?

Conflict Resolution or Conflict Management?

The resistance of the Arab–Israeli conflict to over a century of attempts to resolve it seriously challenges the tenability and inherent optimism of the assumption that all conflicts are ultimately resolvable. As will be evident from our survey of the conflict in Part II, both Israelis and Palestinians have defined national goals and expressed beliefs which appear, even in their most moderate expression, mutually incompatible when set down side by side. To date, there have been only a few rare moments – “windows of opportunity” – when all parties seemed simultaneously ready and able to concede some of what the other parties claimed they needed for the sake of agreeing to a compromise agreement. Both main parties seem, by and large, prepared to endure more bloodshed and future wars until ultimate victory, on their terms, is one day theirs.

This forces us to consider the possibility that this conflict may not be resolved in the commonly accepted format of an agreed international treaty, or on the pattern of a compromise formula settling, once and for all, all outstanding claims and grievances. Rather, we may have here a conflict that can only be managed or contained, at best, in the form of an unresolved low-level, or low-intensity, dispute. This notion draws on an elementary international relations distinction between conflict *resolution* and conflict *management*.²⁰

In the pages that follow, readers may find themselves uneasily oscillating between (a) a natural inclination to hope and presume that the conflict can one day be ended, or *resolved*, and (b) a more realistic appraisal that it can be (at best) only *managed* – i.e. kept from exploding into its most violent and destructive expressions.²¹ While not clear-cut, or intellectually or emotionally satisfying, living with such an inconsistency is, in my view, both an accurate reflection of reality and a necessary component to any effort to understand the history and future of this conflict.

The “Other” Arab–Israeli Conflict

Another problem in defining this conflict is the complication caused by the superimposition of additional layers upon the local Arab–Israeli conflict in Israel, Palestine, and the neighboring lands. Because each party has also been waging a long-term battle with a view to winning sympathizers outside the region, their quarrel has taken on its own special features in the form of lobbying of politicians in world capitals and intense battles for favorable public opinion through the media. American political scientist Steven Spiegel titled his seminal study of the lobbying of US presidents and congressmen, *The Other Arab–Israeli Conflict*.²² In similar fashion, the League of Nations and its successor United Nations, along with their various organs and agencies, have served as extended battlegrounds for the claims and counterclaims of Zionists, Arabs, Israelis, Palestinians, and their networks of supporters around the globe.²³

Another parallel arena in which the Arab–Israeli conflict continues to be played out is the courtroom – both metaphorical and actual. As we shall see when we examine several of the core arguments, international lawyers and human-rights experts have become involved in the prosecution or defense of one party or the other in publications, lecture halls, media appearances, films, or actual courts of law. The latter activity has spawned a novel form of conflict known as “lawfare” – the use of law and courts (both domestic and international) as a substitute for other means to achieve political or other, not purely legal, objectives.²⁴

In Chapters 12 and 13, we will see in greater detail how the conflict on the ground is mirrored in yet another sphere: academia, especially but not exclusively by historians who more often than not do their readers and students a disservice. By viewing the conflict through any of these external, superimposed prisms we risk developing distorted perceptions, rather than an accurate reflection, of the real conflict on the ground.

Advocacy and Censure

A final, related consideration that complicates our attempts to define the Arab–Israeli and Israel–Palestine conflicts is the widespread tendency by authors and observers to allocate blame or engage in advocacy. In the course of discussing how the conflict started and why it continues, it is difficult to avoid censuring the parties one holds responsible for past errors that created or aggravated the conflict, and criticizing those parties who, by their behavior and/or policies, appear to be blocking the way to a resolution or peaceful coexistence.

It is almost impossible for analysts to focus on this conflict's events or issues in a totally neutral way, uninfluenced by their sense of justice or by their quest for the truth. Both Palestinians and Israelis often frame their claims and grievances in terms of their concepts of justice and/or truth – and the other party's corresponding disrespect thereof. In the pages that follow, I will try to reflect the parties' own views without embracing any party's cause, and without singling out any party for special blame. I will return to the issue of advocacy again briefly at the end of Chapter 2, and more fully in Chapters 12 and 13, when we look at academics and their ways of presenting the conflict.

This book joins others that have come before in wrestling with a deceptively simple question: What is the Arab–Israeli conflict *really* about? Partly because of its longevity and complexity, the elements of this dispute “are neither easily definable nor are they static” – as Haim Shaked noted when attempting to outline the conflict's main characteristics several decades ago.²⁵ Partisans of one side or the other will already have their diametrically opposing answers to this basic question.

But how can a non-partisan student or observer navigate between what one party calls truth and the other side's propaganda, between the claims and counterclaims of the competing parties, between the contested narratives of Israeli Jews and Palestinian Arabs? Such are the challenges and the difficulties facing students of this conflict. In Chapter 2 I attempt to sketch out some useful ways of defining the conflict and understanding some of its special qualities.

Notes

- 1 Wheatcroft, G. (2008). Zion story. *The Times Literary Supplement*, 20 February.
- 2 Chaim Weizmann to Harry S. Truman, 12 December 1945, Heller, J. (ed.) (1979). *Letters and Papers of Chaim Weizmann*, vol. 22, 78. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University/Transaction Books.
- 3 Debray, R. (2007). Palestine: A policy of deliberate blindness. *Le Monde Diplomatique* (Eng. ed.), p. 5.
- 4 For a convincing treatment of this subject, see Tessler, M. (2006). Narratives and myths about Arab intransigence toward Israel. In: *Israeli and Palestinian Narratives of Conflict: History's Double Helix* (ed. R.I. Rotberg), 174–193. Bloomington/Indianapolis: Indiana University Press.
- 5 See e.g. Shamir, Y. (1982). Israel's role in a changing Middle East. *Foreign Affairs* 60 (4): 790–793; Netanyahu, B. (2000). *A Durable Peace: Israel and Its Place among the Nations* (rev. ed.). New York: Warner Books, ch. 3 (“The Theory of Palestinian Centrality”); Karsh, E. (2014). *The Myth of Palestinian Centrality*. Ramat Gan: Begin-Sadat Center for Strategic Studies, Bar-Ilan University. Mideast Security and Policy Studies No. 108, at <https://besacenter.org/mideast-security-and-policy-studies/myth-palestinian-centrality/> (accessed 17 June 2018).
- 6 UNGA Resolution 3379, adopted 10 November 1975 by a vote of 72 to 35 (with 32 abstentions); UNGA Resolution 4686, adopted 16 December 1991, by a vote of 111 to 25 (with 13 abstentions).
- 7 See Benvenisti, M. (1986). *Conflicts and Contradictions*, 191–202. New York: Villard Books (2000), and *Sacred Landscape: The Buried History of the Holy Land since 1948* (transl. M. Kaufman-Lacusta). Berkeley/London: University of California Press (2000); Pappé, I. (2014). *The Idea of Israel: A History of Power and Knowledge*, 24–26. London/New York: Verso. On the special challenges facing Israelis, see Collins-Kreiner, N., Mansfeld, Y., and Kliot, N. (2006). The reflection of a political conflict in mapping: The case of Israel's borders and frontiers. *Middle Eastern Studies* 42 (3): 381–408; Miles, W.F.S. (2011). Border pedagogy in Israel. *Middle East Journal* 65 (2): 253–277.
- 8 Farouk-Alli, A. (2007). The poetics of justice and the politics of oppression. In: *The Future of Palestine and Israel: From Colonial Roots to Postcolonial Realities* (ed. A. Farouk-Alli), 5–7. Midrand, South Africa: Institute for Global Dialogue.
- 9 See e.g. Curtis, M., Neyer, J., Waxman, C.I., and Pollack, A. (eds.) (1975). *The Palestinians: People, History, Politics*, 252–253. New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Books [prepared under the auspices of the American Academic Association for Peace in the Middle East].
- 10 See e.g. Curtis, M. et al. *The Palestinians*, 251; Gilbert, M. (2012). *The Routledge Atlas of the Arab–Israeli Conflict*, 10e, 34, 60–61. London/New York: Routledge.
- 11 Gilbert, M. *Routledge Atlas*, 37 (Immediate response to the UN Partition plan), 38–39 (Arab attacks and the Jewish reaction), 40–42, 44 (Israel: prelude to independence), 43–4 (Battle for the Jerusalem roads), 52 (Israel's sense of insecurity, 1949–1967), 53 (Central Israel and the Jordan border, 1949–1967), 58 (Terrorist raids into Israel, 1951–1956), 60–61 (Changing balance of

- power in the Arab world, 1953–1973). Perhaps the best known and most often reproduced is the map on p. 45, entitled “The Arab invasion of the State of Israel, 15 May 1948.”
- 12 Laqueur, W.Z. (1972). *A History of Zionism*. New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, reissued New York: Schocken Books, 1989, 41. See a similar map in Sachar, H.M. (1976). *A History of Israel: From the Rise of Zionism to Our Time*, 87. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, accessed online 2 May 2018 at <http://www.passia.org/maps/view/3>.
 - 13 On the origins and use of this phrase, see Garfinkle, A.M. (1991). On the origin, meaning, use and abuse of a phrase. *Middle Eastern Studies* 27 (4): 539–550; Muir, D. (2008). A land without a people for a people without a land. *Middle East Quarterly* 15 (2), accessed online 2 October 2018 at <https://www.meforum.org/articles/2008/a-land-without-a-people-for-a-people-without-a-land>. For an extended application of the “phenomenon of the ‘white patches’ on the mental maps carried around in the heads of the Jews and Arabs of Palestine/Eretz Israel, which cover the habitat of ‘the other’,” see Benvenisti’s *Sacred Landscape* (quotation from p. 1).
 - 14 Khalidi, W. (1984). *Before Their Diaspora: A Photographic History of the Palestinians, 1876–1948*, 34. Washington, DC: Institute for Palestine Studies. See also the ironic juxtaposition of maps of (1) “The land without a people,” showing Palestinian villages and towns and (2) “The people without a land,” showing the first Zionist colonies, in *From Haven to Conquest: Readings in Zionism and the Palestine Problem until 1948* (ed. and introduced by Walid Khalidi), 94–95. Beirut, 1971; 2nd printing, Washington, DC: Institute for Palestine Studies, 1987.
 - 15 Joshua 1:3–4 (v. 3 begins: “Every spot on which your foot treads I give to you, as I promised Moses”). Translation as given in *Tanakh: A New Translation of the Holy Scriptures according to the Traditional Hebrew Text*, 337. Philadelphia, PA: Jewish Publication Society, (1985). See also Numbers 34:1–12 (translation as given in *Tanakh*, 267–268). For a typical example of Arab fears, see “From the Nile to the Euphrates,” *The Facts about the Palestine Problem*, Beirut: Arab Women’s Information Committee, May 1968.
 - 16 E.g. Kark, R., in *Shared Histories*, 13–22; Kaufman, E. and Hassassian, M. (2008). Understanding our Israeli/Palestinian conflict and searching for its resolution. In: *Regional and Ethnic Conflicts: Perspectives from the Front Lines* (ed. J. Carter, G.E. Irani, and V.D. Volkan), 87–129. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall; Klein, M. (2014). *Lives in Common: Arabs and Jews in Jerusalem, Jaffa and Hebron*. Oxford University Press. On the “golden age” of harmonious relations between Jews and Arabs (or between Jews and Muslims), see Goitein, S.D. (1974). *Jews and Arabs: Their Contacts through the Ages*, 3e. New York: Schocken; Patai, R. (1976). *The Seed of Abraham: Jews and Arabs in Contact and Conflict*. Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press.
 - 17 Crocker, C.A., Hampson, F.O., and Aall, P. (eds.) (2005). *Grasping the Nettle: Analyzing Cases of Intractable Conflict*, 343–372. Washington, DC: United States Institute of Peace Press (essays by Stephen Cohen and Shibley Telhami).

- 18 Speech to the Vaad Zmani [Provisional Council of the Jews of Palestine/*Eretz-Israel*], 10 June 1919, Central Zionist Archives, Jerusalem [CZA], J1/8777, my translation from the Hebrew. Cf. Caplan, N. (2015). *Futile Diplomacy, vol. I: Early Arab-Zionist Negotiation Attempts, 1913-1931*, 7. London: [Frank Cass, 1983] Routledge RLE.
- 19 Moshe Shertok (later Sharett), Report of talk between Haim Arlosoroff and Awni Abd al-Hadi, 12 February 1932, CZA, S25/3051, my translation from the Hebrew. Caplan, N. *Futile Diplomacy*, vol. I, 7-8.
- 20 See, e.g. Bar-Siman-Tov, Y. (ed.) (2007). *The Israel-Palestinian Conflict: From Conflict Resolution to Conflict Management*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.
- 21 For an incisive Israeli presentation of this argument, see Susser, A. (2012). *Israel, Jordan, and Palestine: The Two-State Imperative*, 217-223. Waltham, MA: Brandeis University Press.
- 22 Spiegel, S.L. (1985). *The Other Arab-Israeli Conflict: Making America's Middle East Policy from Truman to Reagan*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. Cf. Mearsheimer, J.J. and Walt, S.M. (2007). *The Israel Lobby and U.S. Foreign Policy*. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux; Ross, D. (2015). *Doomed to Succeed: The U.S.-Israel Relationship from Truman to Obama*. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux.
- 23 E.g. Kattan, V. (2009). *From Coexistence to Conquest: International Law and the Origins of the Arab-Israeli Conflict, 1891-1949*. London: Pluto Press; Quigley, J. (2016). *The International Diplomacy of Israel's Founders: Deception at the United Nations in the Quest for Palestine*. New York: Cambridge University Press; United Nations. The Question of Palestine, at <https://www.un.org/unispal/> (accessed 17 June 2018); Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs: International Organizations at <http://mfa.gov.il/MFA/InternatlOrgs/Pages/default.aspx> (accessed 17 June 2018); UN Watch: Monitoring the UN, Promoting Human Rights at <https://www.unwatch.org/en/> (accessed 17 June 2018).
- 24 Herzberg, A. (2010). NGO "Lawfare": *Exploitation of Courts in the Arab-Israeli Conflict*, 2e. Jerusalem: NGO Monitor, downloaded 28 April 2018 from <https://www.ngo-monitor.org/data/images/File/lawfare-monograph.pdf>; Susser, *Israel, Jordan, and Palestine*, 215, 222. See also the Israel-advocacy "Lawfare Project" website at <https://thelawfareproject.org/> (not to be confused with the "Lawfare Blog" site at <https://lawfareblog.com/about-lawfare-brief-history-term-and-site> which devotes itself to wider issues).
- 25 Shaked, H. (1991). Continuity and change: an overview. In: *The Arab-Israeli Conflict: Perspectives*, 2e (ed. Z. Alvin), 197. Rubinstein, NY: Harper Collins. The first edition was published by Praeger in 1984.

