III. Complementary Material

Historical Overview of the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict

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PART 1: BEFORE THE CONFLICT

The Holy Land and Its Residents

The conflict between Israelis and Palestinians is often said to originate in ancient hatreds or religious feuds that go back thousands of years. In reality, the conflict is a modern one. Its history stretches back only about one hundred years, and it centers not on religion (although religion certainly plays a role) but on issues of land and political control—that is, on questions of who controls access to land, natural resources, and sacred sites and who is entitled to select the government.

Throughout the last two thousand years, Jews and Christians have had a difficult relationship, particularly in those areas where Christianity was the official state religion, as in the Roman Empire from the fourth century CE onward. Following the founding of Islam in the seventh century CE, Jews and Muslims, as well as local Christians, generally lived, worked, and worshiped peacefully alongside one another in what many today call the "Holy Land." Excepting the period of the Crusades, it was only toward the end of the nineteenth century that sustained tensions began to emerge among the different communities of the region. The role of outside powers in generating such tensions cannot be underestimated.

The Holy Land refers to the modern-day State of Israel and the occupied Palestinian territories. (See **Maps**.) For centuries before the creation of the State of Israel in 1948, this area was known, to outsiders and to residents alike, by the Roman name "Palestine," although religious Jews also referred to it as "Eretz Yisrael"—the land of Israel. Sacred to Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, the Holy Land contains many of the places and shrines spoken of in the Hebrew Bible, the New Testament, and the Qur'an.   In Jewish tradition, Eretz Yisrael is the place where the ancient Israelites, ancestors of contemporary Jews, established the Hebrew kingdoms of Israel and Judah three thousand years ago. For Christians, it is the place where Jesus was born and crucified. For Muslims it is the place where the Prophet Muhammad ascended to heaven.

Over the last three thousand years, numerous kingdoms and empires have controlled the area known as Palestine. According to the Hebrew Bible, the ancient Israelites conquered Eretz Yisrael from other tribal kingdoms and were later defeated themselves, first by the Neo-Assyrian Empire and later by the Romans. Although Jewish civilization had already begun to spread throughout the Mediterranean, the destruction of the Israelite kingdoms and their temple in Jerusalem intensified the scattering of Jews across the world into the **diaspora**. While living in many places for nearly two millennia, Jews kept alive the memory of their ancient temple in Jerusalem. During those centuries, empires rose and fell, people came and went, and the languages and cultures of the Holy Land changed as they always had. By the 1800s, Palestine had been inhabited for centuries mostly by Arabic-speaking Muslims, along with a minority of Christians and Jews, who also spoke Arabic and were well integrated into Palestinian society.

1.2: The Ottoman Empire and the Beginnings of Zionism

Today the world is divided up into hundreds of different countries or **nation-states** with their own separate governments, languages, and national cultures. For much of recorded history, however, many people lived under a different type of arrangement: empires. An empire is a large territory where diverse groups of people, speaking different languages and practicing different religions, live under the rule of a single central government, usually controlled by an emperor. For example, before World War I, the Russian emperor (called a "czar") controlled a single territory that included the modern-day nation-states of Russia, Poland, Ukraine, Finland, Armenia, Lithuania, Estonia, Latvia, and several others. Similarly, between the years 1453 and 1923, the Ottoman Empire controlled most of the Arabic-speaking Middle East, including Palestine.

The Ottoman emperor (called a "sultan") and most Ottoman officials were of Turkish origin, and modern-day Turkey was the center of the Empire. The official language was Turkish and the official religion was Islam, but the Ottoman sultan ruled over a diverse population of Muslims, Christians, and Jews who spoke or studied in Arabic, Hebrew, Aramaic, and other languages. As long as people paid their taxes to the sultan and did not challenge his leadership, they were permitted to live and practice their religions peacefully under Ottoman protection. While there was discrimination against non-Muslims, particularly when it came to serving in high government positions, most historians agree that the Ottoman Empire was a safer place for minorities than Christian Europe at the same time, where Jews and Muslims were oppressed and sometimes expelled.

By the late 1800s, the situation for Jews in Europe was growing worse. The Russian Empire, where most of Europe's Jews lived, had become unstable. Czar Alexander II was assassinated in 1881, and in response the Russian government scapegoated the Jews. The new czar imposed anti-Jewish laws and encouraged mob attacks on the Jewish population, known as pogroms. In Western Europe, where emancipation had permitted many Jews to assimilate into Christian society, new types of **antisemitism** were beginning to emerge. Older forms of antisemitism had been rooted in Christian religious beliefs. The modern variety, however, was based on biological racism and the new phenomenon of **nationalism**. In 1894, the Dreyfus Affair, a political scandal in which a Jewish army officer in France was falsely accused of treason, led to antisemitic riots and demonstrations. In Germany, new ideas of the "German nation" were developing alongside "scientific" theories that portrayed Jews as genetically inferior.

European Jews reacted to antisemitism in a number of ways. Many who were affected by the czar's pogroms chose to flee the Russian Empire. By far the most popular destination was the United States—"the golden country"—where more than two million Jews settled between 1881 and 1924. (After more than a decade of anti-immigrant sentiment, the U.S. government barred the door to immigrants in 1924, enacting a law that remained in place until 1965.) Some intensified their religious practices, while others joined socialist or communist revolutionary movements dedicated to overthrowing the czar and creating a new society. A small minority decided on another path: **Zionism**, or Jewish nationalism. Central to Zionism is the idea that Jews are not just a religious group but a separate nation entitled to a country of their own. Theodor Herzl, the founder of modern Zionism, believed that as long as Jews lived as minorities in other countries, they would always be victims of oppression and could never prosper. Ultimately, he argued, assimilation and coexistence with non-Jews was impossible. Herzl thus called for the creation of a new country, which would give Jews the same right of self-government enjoyed by other nations.

At first, Zionism was considered a dangerous idea by a large number of Jews around the world. Jewish opponents of Zionism did not consider themselves a nation, and they feared that Zionism would cause people to see Jews as foreigners, which would increase antisemitism. Nonetheless, Herzl and his followers set up the World Zionist Organization in 1897 and soon identified Eretz Yisrael—Ottoman Palestine—as the chosen location for the future Jewish state. Before his death, Herzl attempted to negotiate with the Ottoman sultan, promising Jewish

support in exchange for permission to settle in Palestine. While the sultan welcomed Jewish immigration to other parts of the Ottoman Empire, he refused Herzl's request to settle Palestine, fearing the Zionists would challenge his leadership. Nonetheless, contingents of Labor Zionists, motivated by an ideology that combines Zionism and socialism, began arriving in Palestine around the turn of the twentieth century. Among them was David Ben-Gurion, a key founder of the State of Israel and its first prime minister, as well as other future leaders. They set out not only to build a new country, but also to create a new **identity** for Jews. Internalizing many of the anti-Jewish stereotypes of European society, Zionists believed that Jews in Europe were weak and powerless. In response, they offered the image of the "new Jew": the strong, brave, tanned, heroic pioneer who farmed the land and defended the settlement.

The early Zionist settlers (or chalutzim, meaning pioneers) bought small parcels of land from Arab landowners and set up collective communities and farms known as kibbutzim and moshavim. Zionist writings of the time described Palestine as empty and undeveloped—"a land without a people for a people without a land"—and argued that Jewish workers and technology would bring an economic renaissance to the entire Middle East. In reality, Palestine in the early twentieth century was neither empty nor undeveloped. By 1914, a few years before the dissolution of the Ottoman Empire, the population of Palestine was around 650,000 people, the vast majority of them Arabic-speaking Muslims and Christians. The Jewish population at the time was 80,000 people, or 12 percent of the total. In addition to having a sizable population, Ottoman Palestine had been experiencing a boom in farm exports even before Zionist immigration began.

At first the Zionists encountered only occasional opposition from the local Arab population. After several years, though, it became clearer to the Arabs that the Zionists were trying to set up a Jewish state in Palestine. As a result, a deeper conflict emerged between Zionism and the local Arabs[1]—a conflict rooted in competition over land and control of the government of Palestine. World War I was a major trigger for this conflict.

PART 2: THE BRITISH MANDATE AND THE ZIONIST-PALESTINIAN CONFLICT

2.1: World War I, the Balfour Declaration, and the British Mandate of Palestine

The First World War (1914-1918) had a massive impact on both Europe and the Middle East. As an outcome of the war, many of the last great empires—the Ottoman, Russian, and Austro-Hungarian Empires—were dismantled and their territories were carved up into many smaller segments. Rather than gaining independence, most of the Middle East remained under the control of European powers. At the height of the era of colonialism, Europeans believed that Middle Easterners were less mature than Westerners and not ready for self-government. The League of Nations (the predecessor of the United Nations) divided the Ottoman Empire into several mandates—Iraq, Syria, Lebanon, Transjordan (later Jordan), and Palestine—and placed them under the control of Great Britain or France. According to the League, the purpose of the mandate system was to help prepare these new countries for self-government. When it came to the British Mandate of Palestine, however, self-government was not on the agenda.

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[1] The word "Arab" refers to a native speaker of Arabic and participant in the culture of Arabic-speaking lands. As such, it can technically include Jews as well as Muslims and Christians. However, since the onset of the Arab-Israeli conflict, the words "Jew" and "Arab" have developed a mutually exclusive connotation in everyday speech. Beginning in the late nineteenth century, the non-Jewish Arabic-speaking people of the Holy Land began to identify themselves politically and geographically as "Palestinians." Here we often use "Arabs" and "Palestinians" synonymously to refer to the non-Jewish native inhabitants of Palestine/Israel.

Great Britain took control of Palestine in 1917, during the course of World War I. That same year the British foreign secretary, Lord Arthur Balfour, wrote a letter, known as the Balfour Declaration, to Baron Rothschild, a leader of Great Britain's Jews. The letter stated that Great Britain would "view with favour the establishment in Palestine of a national home for the Jewish people." This promise was later included in the constitution of the Palestine Mandate, legally committing the British government to help create a "Jewish home" in Palestine—a place which at the time was less than 15 percent Jewish. Zionists around the world viewed the Balfour Declaration as a triumph in their quest for self-government in a Jewish state. The non-Jewish majority in Palestine, however, disputed not only the content of the Declaration but the very right of the British to issue it. While the Declaration did affirm the need to protect the "civil and religious rights of existing non-Jewish communities," it said nothing about the political rights of non-Jews—that is, the right of the majority of the population to vote and to participate in the government of Palestine. This alarmed local Arab leaders, who worried that the British were attempting to allow a small group of European Jews to rule over the Muslim and Christian majority.

From the beginning of the Mandate, Arab leaders in Palestine opposed the Balfour Declaration and the objectives of the Zionist movement. They read Zionist writings, understood the Zionist demand for a Jewish state, and watched with distress as Labor Zionists began building a separate Jewish government and economy that excluded Arabs. The heads of prominent Arab families, both Muslim and Christian, came together in annual Congresses that called on the British to end Zionist immigration and hold immediate elections for a democratic Palestinian government. Meanwhile, the Zionists, represented by the Jewish Agency for Palestine, reminded the British of their promise to promote a Jewish home and argued that democratic elections would violate that commitment. For the Jewish Agency, democracy should follow only after years of Zionist immigration had turned Palestine into a country with a Jewish majority. The British, for their part, tried to keep their promises to the Zionists. They refused to recognize the Arab Congresses and instead appointed Hajj Amin al-Husseini, the son of a notable Arab family, to represent the Muslim population of Palestine.

During the Mandate period (1922-1948) several episodes of violence occurred. In 1920-21 and again in 1929, Arab mobs attacked and killed Jews. In response, the British government sent officials to investigate. They found that a general sense of anger among Arabs over the denial of Palestinian self-government was creating hostility towards both Jews and the British. The Jewish Agency, hoping to prevent the British from pulling out of Palestine and abandoning their commitment to establish a Jewish home, denied that local Arabs widely opposed Zionism and blamed the attacks on a small group of agitators. They argued that Jewish immigration from Europe was good for the local economy and that the average Arab actually supported Zionism. As the 1930s progressed, however, and Jews fleeing Nazi Germany began flooding into Palestine, Arab anger against Zionism and British rule became difficult to ignore. Simmering tensions finally exploded in 1936 into a country-wide rebellion lasting three years, known as the Arab Revolt in Palestine. Throughout the Nazi era, meanwhile, the United States—historically the preferred destination of Eastern and Central European Jews—refused to open its borders to the vast majority of Jewish refugees.

2.2 The Arab Revolt, World War II, and the UN Partition Plan

The Arab Revolt began mostly non-violently with labor strikes, the refusal to pay taxes, and numerous mass protests. Initially led by the Higher Arab Committee of Hajj Amin al-Husseini, the protesters demanded a halt to Jewish immigration and the establishment of a representative government. The British moved to quell the uprising with a combination of police power, minor concessions, and diplomacy, and in 1937 they dispatched the Peel Commission to investigate. The Peel Report—for the first time, but not the last—recommended dividing Palestine into two states, a Jewish state and an Arab state. When neither side embraced this solution, the Arab Revolt re-

sumed in the form of a peasant-led insurgency, and the British responded with full military force. The result was open war between a divided Arab camp and an alliance of the British and the Zionists. Husseini eventually fled to Lebanon, from where he ordered the assassinations of rival leaders, especially those willing to compromise with Zionism. Conflicts between Husseini's camp and other Arab factions contributed to the overall weakness of the Arab side.

The Zionists, by contrast, were more united and benefited from the training they received from the British army during the Revolt. Ever since the violence of the early 1920s, the Jewish community in Palestine (known as the Yishuv) had been building up its military wing in secret. The main Jewish militia was known as the Haganah (meaning defense) and was under the control of David Ben-Gurion and the Labor Zionists. In addition, two other armed Zionist groups emerged during the Mandate period: the Irgun and Lehi. These groups, which followed the more overtly nationalist Revisionist Zionism of Vladimir Jabotinsky, carried out deadly attacks against Arab civilians and eventually against the British administration itself. Serious tensions developed between the Labor Zionists and the Revisionists, and at times episodes of fighting erupted between them. More often, however, the various Jewish militias managed to cooperate against Arab groups opposed to Zionism. With British aid, the Arab Revolt was squelched, Zionist military power was strengthened, and the ability of Palestinians to fight was sharply reduced.

Shortly after the defeat of the Arab Revolt, World War II began. Jewish refugees from Nazi-controlled Europe streamed into Palestine between 1933 and 1938 and continued at a lesser rate during the War. As a concession to the Arabs, the British issued the 1939 White Paper, which officially restricted Jewish immigration to modest levels. The Labor Zionists actively opposed the White Paper, though Ben-Gurion nonetheless saw the British as his allies in the fight against Nazism. The Revisionists, however, considered the White Paper an unacceptable betrayal and launched a violent campaign against the British administration, assassinating British soldiers and blowing up the King David Hotel, home to British headquarters. Meanwhile, the Labor Zionists were preparing for an eventual showdown with the local Arab population. Although Ben-Gurion was more diplomatic than his Revisionist counterparts, both camps came to agree that only military force could compel the local Arabs to accept Jewish political control in Palestine. During the WWII period, the remaining local Arab leadership was badly damaged from the Revolt and incapable of opposing the expansion of Zionist military and political capabilities. Husseini, long absent from Palestine, settled in Germany for the duration of the war, where he met with Adolph Hitler and issued propaganda broadcasts encouraging Arabs to fight against the British and the Jews.

By the end of WWII, Great Britain was exhausted militarily and economically. Unable to continue to exercise control over Palestine, the British asked the newly formed United Nations (UN) to decide the fate of the territory. In November 1947, the UN General Assembly voted to partition Palestine into a Jewish state and an Arab state. The Jewish leadership accepted the UN Partition Plan and Jews around the world celebrated, seeing Partition as the fulfillment of the Zionist dream. Palestine's Arab leadership, however, rejected Partition, arguing that foreigners (i.e., the British and the UN) had no right to take land from Arabs and give it to a minority of Jews, most of whom had recently arrived from Europe. Some also emphasized that while Jews owned only 6-7 percent of the land and represented only 30 percent of the total population, the Partition Plan awarded them 56 percent of Palestine—an outcome that they considered unfair. A few small Jewish factions also opposed Partition and called instead for a single bi-national state based on tolerance and liberal democracy, but the Zionist leadership and the Palestinians both rejected this proposal.

The British eventually decided that it was impossible to implement the Partition Plan. They announced that they would withdraw from Palestine on May 14, 1948, leaving the Jews and Palestinians to work things out for themselves. The stage was set for war.

PART 3: THE WAR OF 1948 AND THE BIRTH OF THE ARAB-ISRAELI CONFLICT

3.1: Independence and Catastrophe

Fighting between Arabs and Jews broke out immediately following the Partition Resolution of November 1947 as Arab militants attacked Jewish targets and Zionist forces struck back. These were the opening battles of the 1948 War—what is today known in Israel as the War of Independence and among Palestinians as al-Nakba (the Catastrophe). Weakened by their defeat in the Arab Revolt, local Arab fighters were no match for the well-trained and equipped Haganah and its elite force, the Palmach. Many Jewish soldiers had served in the British and American armies during World War II, acquiring military skills and returning to Palestine with smuggled weapons. Palestinian Arab leaders called upon neighboring Arab countries, many of which had only recently gained their independence from European rule, to intervene on their behalf. The League of Arab States made threatening statements calling for the complete destruction of the Yishuv, and the Zionist militias prepared for the worst. On May 14, 1948, as promised, the British completed their withdrawal from Palestine. The same day Ben-Gurion issued the Israeli Declaration of Independence, bringing into existence the modern State of Israel. In response, the armies of Egypt, Syria, Iraq, and Transjordan invaded Palestine.

From the beginning, the Arab armies were divided and motivated by self-interest. Having made secret arrangements with Zionist leaders, King Abdullah I of Jordan entered the war not in order to destroy the Jewish state but rather to conquer the land that the UN had promised to Palestinian Arabs under the Partition Plan. Similarly, one of Egypt's main objectives was to prevent Jordan from taking over Palestinian territory. As a result, the Arab war effort was poorly coordinated and executed. The Haganah and Palmach, with the aid of the Revisionist militias Irgun and Lehi, as well as external arms shipments from Czechoslovakia, managed to successfully defend Zionist-held territory and went on to conquer land beyond what was given to the Jewish state by the UN. The war ended in 1949 with the signing of armistice agreements by Israel and the neighboring Arab states. Palestine was divided into three areas: the State of Israel, which included 77 percent of the total land mass; the West Bank and the Old City of Jerusalem, controlled by Jordan; and the Gaza Strip, occupied by Egypt. (See **Maps**.) The armistice line dividing Israel from Gaza, the West Bank, and the Old City was known as the Green Line.

A significant outcome of the 1948 war, however, was the expulsion or flight of the Palestinian population and the consequent creation of the Palestinian refugee problem. During the war, more than 700,000 Palestinians left their homes in what became Israel and sought safety in Gaza, the West Bank, and neighboring Arab countries. Few were permitted to return to their homes after the war and most Palestinian refugees remain **stateless** to this day. As a result of the refugees' exclusion, the Jewish population increased from 30 percent of the total in 1947 to 80 percent by 1949. Israel has denied responsibility for the Palestinian refugee problem, arguing that Palestinians left voluntarily at the request of Arab military leaders. Palestinians contend that Israel deliberately pushed them out according to a preexisting war strategy.

The historical record is more in line with the Palestinian version of events. According to Israeli historian Benny Morris[2], more than 75 percent of the refugees were directly expelled, fled after coming under attack by Zionist militias, or experienced psychological campaigns aimed at frightening them into leaving. Most of the remainder left voluntarily amidst the instability of war, hoping later to return once calm was restored. One of the most notorious attacks on Palestinian civilians was in the village of Deir Yassin, near Jerusalem, where Irgun and Lehi militants

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[2] Toward the end of the 1980s, Morris joined Avi Shlaim, Tom Segev and other Israeli historians in questioning the standard Israeli government **narrative** of the 1948 war. The voices of Palestinian and other Arab scholars remain little known to English-speaking audiences.

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killed more than 100 people, stoking panic and mass flight in neighboring areas.

The 1948 war transformed the region. For many Jews, 1948 was the realization of the Zionist dream of an independent Jewish nation-state in Palestine. Many hoped that the creation of Israel as a Jewish state would provide a safe haven for Holocaust survivors and Jews around the world facing antisemitic hostility and violence. For Palestinians, the cost of the Zionist dream has been enormous. During the 1948 war, the Israeli army destroyed more than 400 Palestinian villages, causing hundreds of thousands of Palestinians to become homeless. The refugees settled in UN camps in Syria, Lebanon, Jordan, Egypt, and elsewhere, believing these would only be temporary shelters until they were permitted to return to their homes. The State of Israel wanted to maintain its new Jewish majority and consequently refused to allow Palestinians to return. The Israeli government distributed empty Palestinian homes and property to new Jewish immigrants (mostly from Europe), making it more difficult for the original Palestinian owners to reclaim them. Additionally, it began erasing physical traces of Palestine, changing place names from Arabic to Hebrew and planting forests over the ruins of destroyed Palestinian villages. A minority of Palestinians remained in Israel and was granted Israeli citizenship, though until 1966 they lived under a separate military government which controlled every aspect of their lives. Today, these Palestinians who hold Israeli citizenship represent nearly 20 percent of the Israeli population. While they do have the right to vote, they face harsh discrimination in the provision of municipal services, building permits, and other state benefits.

3.2: From the Zionist-Palestinian to the Arab-Israeli Conflict

Until 1948, Palestine had experienced a conflict between the local Arab population and a political movement, Zionism, led chiefly by Jewish immigrants from Europe. This "Zionist-Palestinian" conflict gave way after 1948 to an "Arab-Israeli conflict"—that is, a conflict between Israel and neighboring Arab states. The Palestinian element of the conflict moved to the background, only to reemerge later during the 1960s and 70s once the era of inter-state warfare had subsided. The 1950s were a decade of intense development in Israel. Large Jewish populations from the Middle East and North Africa immigrated to Israel in this decade, dismantling the millennial Jewish communities of the region. (The reasons for this massive migration are still contested but involve a mixture of government coercion, growing anti-Jewish sentiment, and religious, ideological, and economic incentives.) With donations from the diaspora and Holocaust reparations from Germany, a new country was being built that gave hope to millions of Jews around the world. Nevertheless, Palestinian refugees did not disappear. Living in squalor in the UN camps of neighboring countries, they placed their hope in a new generation of Arab leaders, in particular Gamal Abdel Nasser of Egypt, who they believed would liberate their homeland from the Zionists.

Nasser rose to power in 1952 when a small group of army officers overthrew King Farouk, who was considered too compliant to the demands of Great Britain. The British had controlled Egypt as a colonial possession for many decades and most Egyptians, tired of foreign rule, considered Nasser a hero. Nasser, like many at the time, believed the Europeans had artificially divided the Arab world into separate nation-states and wanted to reunite it into one large country (an idea known as Pan-Arabism). For this reason—and also due to his sympathy for the Palestinians—Nasser was hostile towards Israel, which he considered just another invention of Europeans to divide the Arab world. Nonetheless, Nasser initially wanted to focus on fixing the many economic and social problems of Egypt and did not seek out conflict with Israel.

Conflict instead arose due to the lingering issue of the Palestinian refugees. In the years after 1948, Palestinian refugees from Jordan and the Egyptian-controlled Gaza Strip frequently attempted to return to their homes and fields. Some crossed the border in order to attack and kill Israelis, but most tried to return out of the desire to reclaim their lost property. In response, Israel's military (now the Israel Defense Forces or IDF) initiated a policy of shooting at returning refugees, killing several thousand. Believing that only toughness would prove to the Arab

world that Israel was a permanent country, the IDF retaliated harshly whenever an Israeli was killed. On several occasions, these attacks killed Egyptian and Jordanian soldiers and civilians, which angered Nasser, who began arming groups of Palestinian refugees and sending them to attack Israelis. Hostility between Israel and Egypt increased, and Israel began to view Nasser as a major threat.

In 1956, Nasser nationalized[3] the Suez Canal and began providing support to Algerian rebels fighting against French colonial rule. This led Great Britain and France to plot Nasser's demise. Israel eventually joined the plot, and the three countries together invaded Egypt and crushed Nasser's army. They were soon forced to withdraw, however, under pressure from U.S. President Eisenhower and the Soviet Union, bringing the Suez Crisis to an end. As a result of the forced withdrawal, Nasser emerged even more popular in the Arab world. The next decade was a tumultuous era in Middle Eastern politics. Nasser would compete with new revolutionary governments in Iraq and Syria, as well as with the King of Jordan, for leadership of the Arab world. In 1964, Nasser, working through the Arab League, established the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) to represent exiled Palestinians and coordinate their struggle against Israel. Israel, meanwhile, continued its rapid economic development and began working on a secret nuclear weapons program with help from the French government.

Two more wars between Israel and neighboring Arab states were to break out before the Arab-Israeli conflict finally subsided and Palestinians once again took center stage. The first of these wars, the 1967 War, would have enormous consequences for the future.

PART 4: FROM ARAB-ISRAELI TO ISRAELI-PALESTINIAN CONFLICT

4.1: The 1967 War and the Occupation of the Palestinian Territories

Prior to the 1967 War (also known as the Six-Day War) tensions and occasional fighting had existed along the Israeli-Syrian border. The Syrian government had sponsored Palestinian guerilla attacks against Israel, and Israel in turn had called for its destruction. In the spring of 1967, the Soviet Union informed Egypt that Israel was preparing to invade Syria. This information turned out to be false, but it prompted Nasser, who had a security alliance with the Syrians, to move Egyptian troops into the Sinai Peninsula, near the border with Israel, and to proclaim a blockade of the Israeli port of Eilat. Israel considered the blockade an act of war and, on June 5, 1967, attacked Egypt and Syria, destroying the entire Egyptian air force in a matter of hours. Jordan then joined the war on the side of Syria and Egypt. Within six days, Israel decisively defeated the Arab armies and conquered the Old City of Jerusalem and the West Bank (both controlled by Jordan since 1948), the Gaza Strip (controlled by Egypt since 1948), the Sinai Peninsula (part of Egypt), and the Golan Heights (part of Syria). (See **Maps.**) As a result, Israel now controlled territory containing millions of Palestinians, many of whom were refugees from 1948.

Following the 1967 War, the Arab League declared that it was unwilling to negotiate with Israel and demanded an immediate return of conquered territory. Israeli officials offered to return some land in exchange for peace treaties but moved immediately to annex the Old City and surrounding areas (together known as East Jerusalem), which is home to the Western Wall and the Temple Mount/Noble Sanctuary, both important Jewish and Muslim holy sites. The international community (including the United States) has never recognized this annexation as legal. The UN Security Council issued Resolution 242, which called for a return of territories captured by Israel during

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[3] To nationalize means to transfer ownership of something such as a private business to the national government. Before 1956, the Suez Canal, located in Egypt, was owned and operated by the British.

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the war. When Nasser died in 1970, his successor, Anwar Sadat, began reaching out to Israel in secret. By that time Israel was uninterested in relinquishing the conquered territory and did not respond to Sadat's overtures. To break the impasse Sadat began preparing for war. In October 1973, Egypt launched a surprise invasion of the Israeli-occupied Sinai Peninsula while Syria attacked from the north. Although Israel eventually beat back the Arab armies, the 1973 war (also called the Yom Kippur War) was far more painful for Israel than the 1967 war, with many more Israeli soldiers killed. This changed the way Israeli leaders thought about the need to make peace with Egypt—the strongest Arab state—and led in 1979 to the signing of the Camp David peace treaty by Sadat and Israeli Prime Minister Menachem Begin. As a result of the treaty, which was brokered by U.S. President Jimmy Carter, Israel withdrew from the Sinai Peninsula and the era of war between Israel and the Arab states came to an end.

Just as the Arab-Israeli conflict began to abate, the Israeli-Palestinian conflict was re-emerging. The most serious question facing Israel after the 1967 war was what to do with the West Bank, East Jerusalem, and the Gaza Strip (together known as the occupied Palestinian territories). Israel's founder, David Ben-Gurion, believed that ruling over millions of Palestinians would destroy Israel's Jewish majority and urged the government to relinquish the territories.[4] A small, well-organized network of religious and ultra-nationalist Israelis, however, challenged this idea. At first disobeying the orders of the Israeli military, they snuck into the territories and established Jewish **settlements**. Eventually sympathetic officials in the Israeli government began supporting settlement activity, particularly after Begin's Likud Party came to power in 1977. Like the religious nationalist settlers, Likud politicians believed that Israel should permanently control the occupied Palestinian territories—indeed, that the territories, which contain many Jewish religious sites, were not "occupied" at all but were instead a fundamental part of the State of Israel. Begin's government encouraged everyday Israelis to move to the West Bank and Gaza Strip, offering mortgages on favorable terms, and by the late 1980s nearly 200,000 Israeli Jews were living in dozens of settlements in the occupied territories.

4.2: The PLO, the First Intifada, and the Oslo Peace Accords

After Israel's stunning victory in the 1967 War, many Palestinians felt they could no longer rely on the Arab states to champion their cause, so they began forming their own armed groups. The most prominent of these groups was Fatah, led by a young Yasser Arafat. Arafat and his Fatah comrades eventually took over the leadership of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO), which had been created by Nasser several years earlier. The PLO was dominated by Arafat but encompassed a diverse array of Palestinian militant groups, most of them secular and left-wing. Over the years, PLO factions undertook numerous armed operations targeting both Israeli soldiers and civilians. Until the 1980s, the goal of the PLO was the replacement of Israel with a secular democratic state in all of historic Palestine. Although hugely popular among Palestinians, the PLO found itself at odds with various Arab governments. In 1970, the King of Jordan declared war on the PLO, forcing it to relocate to Lebanon. Several years later, the group became embroiled in the Lebanese civil war, triggering a bloody Israeli invasion that again pushed Arafat and his comrades out of the country (in addition to killing thousands of Lebanese and Palestinian civilians). Israel, for its part, refused to recognize the PLO, which it considered a terrorist organization.

By the 1980s, living conditions were worsening for Palestinians in the occupied territories. Whereas Israeli settlers were able to participate in Israeli democratic governance, Palestinians were denied many basic political rights and civil liberties by the Israeli government, including freedom of expression, freedom of the press, and

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[4] Israelis point out that Res. 242 says "territories" rather than "*the* territories," implying that Israel need not withdraw from all territories captured during the war. Others dispute this interpretation.

freedom of political association. All aspects of Palestinian life were controlled and often severely restricted. Unlike Israeli settlers, who had access to Israel's relatively impartial judicial system, Palestinians were tried by Israeli military courts, which had extremely high conviction rates. Even cultural expressions like displaying the Palestinian flag were considered punishable crimes. Moreover, the Israeli military was seizing Palestinian lands so that Israeli Jews could build settlements in these areas. Unrest started to build, and in 1987 it exploded into a grassroots uprising known as the first intifada, which surprised even the PLO. The uprising involved many forms of non-violent protest, including demonstrations, strikes, boycotts, tax refusal, political art, and the formation of underground freedom schools. In addition, Palestinians threw stones and sometimes gasoline bombs at Israeli tanks and soldiers. Israel responded by assassinating Palestinian leaders, imprisoning tens of thousands of people, and ordering its soldiers to "break the bones" of demonstrators.

Defeated and isolated in Tunisia (having been expelled from Lebanon in 1982), the PLO leadership decided to reclaim the spotlight from the intifada protestors by issuing an historic statement. In 1988, the PLO renounced armed attacks against civilians, recognized the State of Israel, and proclaimed an independent Palestinian state in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. This was the first time since the UN Partition Plan of 1948 that a major party to the conflict had called for a two-state solution. Nonetheless, it took several years and pressure from the United States before Israel was willing to negotiate with the PLO. In 1993, Israeli and PLO officials conducted secret negotiations in Oslo, Norway, which eventually resulted in a major breakthrough later that year when Arafat and Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin signed the Oslo Peace Accords on the White House lawn. The PLO recognized "the right of the State of Israel to exist in peace and security" and in return Israel recognized the PLO as the official representative of the Palestinian people and agreed to start formal negotiations for a final resolution of the conflict.

Many Israelis and Palestinians were hopeful that the Oslo Accords would resolve the conflict by creating an independent Palestinian state alongside Israel. Not everyone was satisfied with the peace process, however. Hope would soon unravel as violence and settlement building eroded the chances of a peaceful resolution.

PART 5: THE COLLAPSE OF THE PEACE PROCESS AND AFTER

5.1: Camp David and the Second Intifada

Arafat and Rabin soon negotiated the second phase of the Oslo Accords, which placed major Palestinian cities under the jurisdiction of the newly created Palestinian Authority (PA), with Israel retaining control over the rest of the occupied Palestinian territories. Many believed the peace process would lead to an eventual Israeli withdrawal from most or all of the occupied territories and the creation of a Palestinian state. However, a cascade of events soon occurred that derailed the Oslo process. First was the massacre of 29 Muslim worshippers at the Cave of the Patriarchs in Hebron by a Jewish settler, Baruch Goldstein, in February 1994. Following Goldstein's attack, the militant Islamic group Hamas—which had emerged just several years earlier out of the first intifada—carried out its first suicide bombings inside of Israel, killing dozens of civilians. Unlike Fatah and the PLO, Hamas refused to recognize Israel and sought to create an Islamic state in all of Palestine. In November 1995, Yigal Amir, a Jewish extremist in Tel Aviv, assassinated Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin. Rattled by Hamas's suicide bombings, Israelis elected Benjamin Netanyahu as Rabin's successor in 1996. Head of the right-wing Likud party, Netanyahu opposed giving up the occupied territories and set out to derail the Oslo Accords by delaying their implementation and expanding Jewish settlements.

In 1999, Ehud Barak, a new prime minister from Rabin's Labor Party, replaced Netanyahu. Barak sought to restart the peace process even while increasing the construction of new West Bank settlements in order to main-

tain the political support of Israeli conservatives. In September 2000, U.S. President Bill Clinton invited Barak and Arafat to a peace summit at the Camp David resort in Maryland (where Carter negotiated the Egypt-Israel peace treaty). Israeli and Palestinian political leaders invested great hope in the Camp David summit and were sorely disappointed when it ended without a peace agreement. The reason for the failure of Camp David is disputed. Many Israelis claim that Barak made Arafat a generous offer, which included a Palestinian state in most of the West Bank and Gaza Strip and partial control of East Jerusalem holy sites, and Arafat rejected the offer. Others argue that the summit collapsed because Clinton and the U.S. negotiating team failed to serve as neutral mediators, instead acting as advocates for the Israeli position. In addition, they contend that Barak was unwilling to compromise on Israeli control of East Jerusalem. An explosion of religious and national tensions quickly followed the failure at Camp David. The new leader of the Likud party, Ariel Sharon, marched to the Temple Mount/Noble Sanctuary in Jerusalem, symbolically declaring Israel's ownership over the holy site. Palestinians protested and a new intifada soon erupted.

The Oslo period (1994-2000) had done little to increase Palestinians' freedom or improve their living conditions. Israeli settlements in the occupied Palestinian territories had continued to expand, as did the network of roadblocks and **checkpoints** used by the Israeli military to control Palestinian movement in the name of security. In addition, many Palestinians had lost their jobs in Israel as a result of the new arrangements put in place by the Oslo Accords. Suicide bombings carried out by Hamas and other extremist groups terrified Israelis, leading the government to take actions that made the lives of average Palestinians even worse than before the Oslo process. The second intifada began in October 2000, which in many ways was a result of the worsening conditions of everyday life for Palestinians. While the intifada began as a series of mostly peaceful protests, it became increasingly violent. Israel responded to protests with deadly force, and Palestinian militants (including some affiliated with Fatah) soon unleashed a new wave of suicide bombings against Israel. Under the new Prime Minister, Ariel Sharon, the Israeli army laid siege to the occupied territories, killing thousands and re-conquering areas it had given up during the Oslo period. The intense trauma of the second intifada led both Israelis and Palestinians to support politicians and policies that opposed compromise and a two-state solution.

5.2: Gaza and the Suspended Peace Process

The second intifada abated around 2004. By that time, Israel had constructed an extensive physical barrier consisting alternately of a towering concrete wall and a metal fence in the West Bank. Israelis claim the barrier, which surrounds major Israeli settlements and effectively connects them to Israel, is intended to prevent Palestinian attacks. Palestinians argue it encroaches deeply into their land, blocking movement and access to crops and orchards. The International Court of Justice has declared the barrier in violation of international law and asked the Israeli government to relocate it inside Israeli territory.

In 2005, Prime Minister Sharon, a long-time supporter of Israeli settlements, surprised the world by ordering the withdrawal of all Israeli settlers and soldiers from the Gaza Strip. Although the Gaza Strip contained only a small number of settlers compared to the West Bank, the international community considered the Gaza disengagement a significant step in the peace process. Nonetheless, Israel remained in control of Gaza's borders, coastline, and airspace, and it restricted the movement of people and goods in and out of the territory.

In 2006, shortly after the disengagement, Palestinian elections were held, and Hamas won a majority of seats in the Palestinian Legislative Council, beating its primary rival, Fatah (now led by Arafat's successor, Mahmoud Abbas). As a result of Hamas' electoral victory, Israel and the United States moved immediately to boycott the Palestinian Authority, cutting off all international aid. Fighting erupted between Fatah and Hamas in July 2007; as a result, Hamas took control over Gaza, and Fatah took control over the West Bank. Since then, international aid

and cooperation with the West Bank government of Abbas has resumed, while Hamas remains isolated in Gaza. As a way of exerting pressure on Hamas, Israel has maintained a policy of severely limiting the number and type of goods that are allowed to enter Gaza, resulting in a grave humanitarian crisis.

The situation in Gaza since 2008 has been extremely unstable. Israel regards Hamas as a **terrorist** organization and refuses to recognize it as a legitimate part of the Palestinian government. Hamas, for its part, has conditioned recognition of Israel on Israeli withdrawal from the occupied Palestinian territories and the return of Palestinian refugees. The Hamas government in Gaza opposes Israel's restrictions on the movement of goods in and out of Gaza, as well as the IDF's use of deadly force against Palestinian fishermen and others who approach the border. Hamas sometimes fires (or allows others to fire) homemade rockets over the border into southern Israel in what it says is a response to Israel's enforcement of the blockade. The Israeli city of Sderot, in particular, has come under intense rocket fire, although casualties have been few. Allegedly in response to such rocket attacks, Israel has launched three full-fledged military attacks on Gaza since 2008, resulting in many thousands of deaths and injuries and the destruction of most of Gaza's civilian infrastructure (roads, homes, factories, schools, hospitals, and water treatment plants). As a result of these military operations, the international community has severely criticized Israel, and support has increased for **boycotts, divestment, and sanctions** against the Israeli government. At the same time, Hamas has grown less popular with the Palestinian public and has occasionally offered minor concessions in an attempt to end the Israeli blockade through diplomatic means.

As of 2015, negotiations between Israel and the PA under Abbas have broken down. The Israeli elections of 2009, 2013, and 2015 have brought to power a series of increasingly conservative governments under the leadership of Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu. Netanyahu has expanded West Bank settlements and pledged not to accept a Palestinian state, leaving the future of the peace process in question as he attempts to refocus international attention on Iran's nuclear enrichment program. Efforts to create a unified Palestinian government that includes both Hamas and Fatah under the leadership of Abbas have stalled as Gaza recovers from the most recent Israeli invasion (summer 2014). Recognizing the political power of Israeli settlers, as well as their sheer numbers, many observers have begun to question the feasibility of the two-state solution, long considered the only workable solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Palestinians in the West Bank, meanwhile, continue to live under a combination of Israeli occupation and local PA rule and have launched repeated unarmed protests, leading some commentators to speculate about a possible third intifada. ■