

The Arab-Israeli Conflict Spring 2008

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Course Objectives

This course will examine the root causes, evolution and main issues that comprise the Arab-Israeli conflict. Among the issues to be discussed and elucidated are: Jewish and Arab nationalism and state building; exile; Diaspora and migration; armed conflicts; peace processes (both abortive and successful); peace-making strategies and great power involvement.

While the Arab-Israeli Conflict is one of the oldest in world history, its basic issues remain hotly contested to this day. The conflicting claims of Jews and Arabs for the same territory was one of the major concerns confronting world leaders at the conclusion of World War I. It was one of the first issues to confront the new United Nations after World War II. This conflict was a major point of contention during the Cold War and even after the collapse of the Soviet Union. It is now one of the main matters raised by “jihadists”; including Osama bin Laden and Mahmoud Ahmadinejad.

As Alan Dowty concludes, “the conflict over Israel/Palestine may be the quintessential ‘hot spot’ on today’s globe.” The implications of this struggle have consequences not only in the Middle East, but also internationally. It is a factor in the so-called war on terror as well as in the politics of oil.

This course will focus on the history of the conflict. We will discuss the motivations of various participants, including the efforts made by both regional and world leaders to resolve the disputes. In order to grasp the nature of the conflict, it is important to understand the motivations of people on both sides, as well as to recognize that even these views are not monolithic. There are often conflicting views held by both Palestinians and Israelis.

In an effort to gain a better understanding, we will explore why individuals involved view issues the way that they do and how this has effected their actions. We will discuss the roles played by most of the key participants and attempt to understand their motivations. In doing so, it is worth mentioning that there is no commonly accepted historical narrative. People viewed as freedom fighters by one side are often perceived as terrorists by the other. There are often even disagreements over “ancient history”, including the location of the Temple itself and which sites have “legitimate” religious or historical significance.

Countries and their borders are artifacts defined by humans. We will look at the changing borders of Israel/Palestine. Disputes over the location of borders and the nature of who should administer specific areas are additional key factors that will be considered.

In addition to looking at the role of leaders in the region, we will analyze the actions of the United States and other outside parties. In sum, we will seek to determine why this conflict has been so difficult to resolve and whether there are any proposals that might lead to a resolution in the future.

Required Readings

Ian J. Bickerton and Carla L. Klausner, A History of the Arab-Israeli Conflict (Fifth Edition) (Pearson Prentice Hall, 2007)

Rashid Khalidi, Palestinian Identity, (Columbia University Press, 1998)

Michael Oren, Six Days of War: June 1967 and the Making of the Modern Middle East (Ballantine Books, 2003)

Dennis Ross, The Missing Peace: The Inside Story of the Fight For Middle East Peace, (Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 2004) (paper back version if available)

Please be aware that in addition to the required readings, additional articles will be sent by emails frequently, depending on events in the region and the coverage these receive in the major newspapers and periodicals. These articles will be considered “required” as well and will be discussed in class as often as possible.

There will also be a collection of DVDs which students should watch at home.

Highly Recommended Reading

Alan Dowty, Israel/Palestine (Polity, 2005)

We will use Bickerton and Klausner as the basic text for this course. Dowty covers much of the same material, in a slightly shorter and easier to read format. Please read Bickerton and Klausner as your prime assignment; read Dowty for additional background or explanation.

Walter Laqueur and Barry Rubin (editors), The Israel-Arab Reader (6th edition) (Penguin, 2001)

It will be useful, but not required, to look at Laqueur and Rubin. This volume contains virtually all of the various documents and primary sources that are relevant to this course.

Michael Oren, Power, Faith, and Fantasy: America in the Middle East, 1776 to the Present (2007). This is the best new overview of American policies in the region, covering the entire period of American history. It is a fascinating book and well worth the time to read it.

Recommended Readings

Richard Ben Cramer, How Israel Lost the Four Questions (Simon and Schuster, 2005)

Mathew Levitt, Hamas: Politics, Charity, and Terrorism in the Services of Jihad (Yale University Press, 2006)

Bernard Wasserstein, Israelis and Palestinians: Why do They Fight? Can They Stop? (Yale University Library, 2004)

Tom Segev, 1967: Israel, the War and the Year that Transformed the Middle East (Metropolitan, 2007). This is a somewhat controversial new book that came out on the 40th anniversary of the June 1967 War. Segev argues that Israel did not have to take preemptive measures.

Class Sessions:

January 9 - Description of the Problem

Why has this conflict lasted for centuries? What are the implications of this struggle for the modern world? What are the implications for American policies? What influence does the US have in the region? What groups in the US are directly concerned about these issues? What are the religious dimensions to this conflict? What does the geography of the land look like?

Summary of the course in 90 seconds!

<http://www.mapsofwar.com/images/EMPIRE17.swf>

Or at:

<http://www.mapsofwar.com/ind/imperial-history.html>

Required:

Bickerton, 1-14

Recommended:

Cramer, 1- 64; 279-293

Dowty, 1-20; 217-226

Wasserstein, 1- 99

January 16 - The Jewish Story

What is the origin and background of Zionism? Can Jewish claims to the land be traced back to ancient history? How did events in Europe in the late 19th and early 20th century affect Jewish desires to move to Palestine? What role did Theodor Herzl play? What was the significance of the Dreyfus case? Why did Herzl insist that the “Jewish homeland” be located in Palestine? What were the alternatives and how did the delegates in Basel react to these? Who were the first Jewish immigrants to region in the late 19th/early 20th century? What conditions did they find?

Required:

Ross, 15-29

Bickerton, 20-26, 31-33

DVD- The Rise of Anti-Semitism

Ami Isseroff, Zionism - Definition and Early History

<http://www.mideastweb.org/zionism.htm> (available from [MidEastweb for Coexistence http://www.mideastweb.org](http://www.mideastweb.org))

For a relatively “right wing” view of anti-Semitism and the importance of Israel in combating it, please see the following short video:

http://kismet.ilove.com/ltw_mbr.html

Recommended:

Dowty, 21-44

Laqueur, 1-11

Cramer, 139-226

January 23 - The Arab Story

What is the significance of the “glory of Islam” for today’s events? What are the Arab claims for Palestine? How did the Arabs in the region react when Jews began to arrive in the early 20th century? What is the basis for Palestinian nationalism? Why have most Arab leaders rejected the concept of a Jewish state of Israel? Have the Palestinian leaders served their people well? Is a Palestinian state possible? Desirable?

Required:

Ross, 29 – 45

Khalidi, 1-34; 177-209

Recommended:

Dowty, 45 – 68

Cramer, 65 - 138

January 30 - The Emergence of Israel (1900 – 1948)

What events led to the establishment of the state of Israel? What were conditions in the area like during the reign of the Ottomans? What promises did the British make during the First World War? Why did the British undertake the “Hussein-McMahon Correspondence”, the promises made by General Alenby and T.E. Lawrence, the Sykes-Picot Agreement, and the Balfour Declaration? Were these and similar proposals contradictory or in line with a coherent policy? How was Middle East territory allocated after World War I? What was the mandate system? How well did the British manage Palestine during the mandate period? How did the Jews in Israel react to British rule? How did the Arabs respond? How did the British seek to reconcile the conflicting demands of the Jews and Arabs? How did they deal with the issues involving immigrations? What deal did Winston Churchill and Abdullah arrange in 1922? How did this change the borders of the region? What were the British White papers? What was the impact of the Arab Revolt (1936-39)? What was the conclusion of the Peel Commission? Did the Woodhead Commission improve these results? How did Jewish groups respond to these reports? What was the conclusion of the 1939 White Paper?

What was the impact of the Nazi regime, World War II and the Holocaust on the Middle East? Why did Jews seek to enter Palestine during and after World War II? How did the world seek to deal with so many “displaced persons”? What is the story of “The Exodus”? Why did the British determine to leave Palestine? What were their options? How did the United Nations seek to resolve the conflicts and allocate the territory? What were the results of the missions of Count Bernadot and then Ralph Bunche? What was the UNSCOP Majority Report? What events led to Israeli independence? Why did the UN General Assembly approve the partition plan? What was the reaction of Jews within Israel? Arabs within Israel? Arab nations? Where did the Jews who entered Palestine/Israel in the 1940’s come from? Why did Palestinians leave and what became of these refugees? What happened to Jews who arrived from Arab nations? Why did President Truman decide to recognize Israel? What were the political pressures on him to accept/reject this conclusion?

Required:

Bickerton, 15-20; 27-29; 34-95

DVD – Ben Bradley

Recommended:

Dowty, 69 – 104

Laqueur, 11-87

Wasserstein, 99-122

February 6 - The first Twenty Years of Independence (1948 – 67)

What problems did the new state have to overcome? How did Israel's Arab neighbors react to creation of the new nation? How did Israel win the war in 1948 against so many Arab states? Why did many Arabs in the area leave? Where did the Palestinian refugees go? How were they received and treated? What was the significance of Deir Yassin? How did people like Begin justify this? What was the significance of the creation of Israel? Who were its early leaders? What type of society was set up? What happened to the Arabs who remained in Israel? What is the United Nations Works and Relief Agency (UNWRA)? Why was there only an armistice (Rhodes Agreement) rather than a peace agreement in 1949?

Why did various Arab groups continue to attack Israel after 1949? What was the significance of the assassination of King Abdullah of Jordan, and the coups in Egypt and Syria? Summarize British-Egyptian relations up to 1956. How did Gamal Abdel Nasser rise to power in Egypt? How did he seek to become the leader of the "pan-Arab" movement? What was the significance of the Baghdad Pact of 1955? What factors led up to the 1956 war? What were the roles of the British and the French? Why did the Middle East become such a key factor in the Cold War? What were the results of the 1956 War? What led to the creation of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) and what were its objectives? What factors led up to the war in June 1967? What role did the United States play during that war?

What were the results of the 1956 Suez War? How did the War affect conditions in Israel? What were the implications of this war on the Cold War? What led to the formation of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) in 1964? What events led up to the 1967 War? What was the role of the UN? Why was the United States not more involved? What were the results of the war?

Required:

Oren, 1 – 33

Bickerton: 96-140

DVD – The 50 Years War – Part I

The 1967 War

Recommended Readings:

Dowty, 105 – 116

Laqueur, 88-103

Wasserstein, 122-128

February 13 – The Aftermath of the 1967 War (1967 – 1973)

What were the results of the 1967 War? Which territories did Israel occupy as a consequence of this war? When and why did Israelis “settle” in the newly gained territories? What was UN Resolution 242? Why are there still different interpretations on its meaning? What were the stated objectives contained in the PLO’s National Charter (Covenant)? How did the PLO get along with other Palestinian organizations and with Arab national leaders? What were the objectives of the PLO before and after 1967? Why did the PLO determine to resort to violence in and outside of the region? How effective? What was the “War of Attrition”? What was “Black September” in Jordan? What role did Israel and the US play in the events of Black September? What attacks were sponsored or carried out by the PLO and other Palestinians organizations (ie. Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine?) Might “peace” have been possible after the death of Nasser and the coup in Syria that brought Assad to power in 1970? What events led up to the War in 1973? What were the results of this war? How did it affect the regime of Golda Meir? What was UN Resolution 338? What was the impact of the oil embargo?

Required:

Bickerton, 140-177

Oren, 305 – 341

Start -- The 50 Years War Part II

Recommended Readings:

Dowty, 105 – 116

Laqueur, 103-182

Wasserstein, 122-125

February 20 - The era of Sadat and Begin - The 1970’s

What were the results of the 1973 War? What was the basis of Kissinger’s “shuttle diplomacy”? Could Israel and Syria have resolved their basic differences at this time? What did Arafat stress in his talk to the UN in 1974? What was the significance of the Rabat Conference in 1974? Why were increasing numbers of Israelis eager to move to the West Bank, Gaza and even Sinai? What problems did this present for the Israeli government? Why is water such a key aspect of the overall conflict? What were the basic principles of the Likud Party? Why did Sadat go to Jerusalem? How Arab leaders react? What was the response in Israel? How did their initial meeting lead to the Camp David negotiations? What was the role of President Carter? What were the results of Camp David? How did other nations react? What did Begin mean by “autonomy”? What were the results of the Camp David Accords?

Required:

Bickerton, 178-204

Bob Cullen, "Two Weeks at Camp David", Smithsonian, September, 2003

<http://www.smithsonianmag.com/people-places/campdavid.html>

Recommended Readings:

Laqueur, 183 - 232

Dowty, 116 – 126

Wasserstein, 125 – 128

February 27 – The Regan Years through the end of the Cold War - The 1980's

How did the revolution in Iran impact the region? What were the implications of the Iran-Iraq War? How did Egypt change after the assassination of Sadat? What were conditions like in Lebanon in the 1970's? Why were so many Palestinians living in Southern Lebanon? Under what conditions? What caused the Lebanese Civil War in 1975? Why did Israel move into Lebanon (Operation Peace for Galilee)? What were the consequences of the War in Lebanon? How significant was the assassination of Bashir Gemayel? What happened at Sabra and Shatila? What led to the formation of Hezbollah? What was the Reagan Peace Plan? How was it received in the region? What led up to the First Intifada? What were its consequences? What led to the formation of Hamas in 1988? What were the key points in its charter? What is AIPAC and how effective is it in the US? What was the Reagan peace plan and how was it received in Israel and in the Arab world? What led to the outbreak of the First Intifada? What was the role of the PLO in this conflict? What was the role of Hamas? How did Israel respond to the Intifada?

Required:

Bickerton, 205-236

Recommended Readings:

Laqueur, 232 – 367

Dowty, 120 – 136

March 5 – Spring Break – Likely Voluntary meeting of the class

March 12 – Midterm assignment due – 1,200 to 1,600 words!

Please select one of the three following assignments:

- 1) Draft two op-ed articles on the same topic, but taking two different perspectives.

- 2) Write a book review on any book relevant to this course (that is not part of the assigned readings)
- 3) Write a film review of any motion picture relevant to this course (No, Raiders of the Lost Ark is not acceptable)

March 12 - Two efforts for peace - Madrid through Oslo

How did the end of the Cold War affect the Middle East? Why did Saddam Hussein move into Kuwait? How did the world react? Why were President Bush and Secretary of State Jim Baker able to put together such a large coalition for the Gulf War? How did the PLO react to the war? Why did Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir agree not to respond to Iraqi attacks? Why was the Bush administration able to convene a Middle East conference in Madrid? Who attended? How successful was the conference? How successful were the subsequent Israeli-Palestinian negotiations held in the US? Why was Arafat suddenly more willing to consider negotiations with Israel? Was Hamas a real threat to the PLO? What was the impact of the election of Yitzhak Rabin? Why did Israelis and Palestinians meet secretly in Norway? What led to the “handshake” on September 13, 1993? What were the results? Oslo I? Why did so many people believe that Oslo would be a real turning point in the peace process?

Required:

Bickerton, 228-229; 237-271

Ross, 3- 15, 88 – 137

DVD – The Road from Oslo

David Samuels, “In a Ruined Country”, The Atlantic Monthly— September, 2005

<http://www.theatlantic.com/doc/200509/samuels?ca=Q3R6awwJJu%2BvLybYkb6FnD00zBFqtsu9cfBNKtpGcY%3D>

Recommended readings:

Laqueur, 367 - 440

Dowty, 137 – 160

Please try to access the article on Arafat’s potential involvement in the murder of US ambassador Cleo Noel:

<http://www.weeklystandard.com/Content/Public/Articles/000/000/013/192ioiwy.asp>

The recently declassified State Department memo on this is at:

<http://state.gov/documents/organization/67584.pdf>.

March 19 - The Clinton Years - Oslo through Wye

What was the Gaza-Jericho Agreement? What was/is the Palestinian Authority? How effective was Arafat at “governing”? What was the Oslo II agreement? Why did West Bank settlers object to the peace process? What role did King Hussein play in these negotiations? What led to the Israeli-Jordanian peace agreement? Why did West Bank settlers oppose the Oslo process? Who was dr. Baruch Goldstein and why were his actions in Hebron so significant? What was the significance of the assassination of Yitzhak Rabin? How effective was Shimon Peres as Prime Minister? Who was “the engineer” and why was his killing a turning point? What was the significance of the election of Arafat as President of the PA? How did he deal with Islamists? What events led to the election of Bibi Netanyahu? How did the Arab world react? What led up to the Hebron agreement? Why was this so difficult to achieve? What was the controversy surrounding the Hassmonean tunnel? Was there any possibility of a real peace with Syria? What was “Operation Grapes of Wrath”? How did Hezbollah become a significant factor in Lebanon? Did the PLO change its covenant? What was the significance of the Wye Summit? What internal problems did Netanyahu face in Israel? Why did the Wye Agreement fail?

Why did negotiations with Syria not produce an agreement? What led to the Clinton-Arafat-Barak meetings at Camp David? Why did these meeting not produce an agreement?

Required:

Ross, 164 – 494 (pages 216-245; 269-322; 398-414 are highly recommended)
Bickerton, 272-312

For an update on Hebron, see: Scott Wilson, “In Divided Hebron, A Shared Despair”, Washington Post, July 26, 2007, p. 1.

<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2007/07/25/AR2007072502360.html?referrer=emailarticle>
DVD – Elusive Peace

Recommended Readings:

Laqueur, 440 - 555
Dowty, 204 – 216

March 26 – No Class; Easter break.

April 2 – Further peace attempts: Syria, Camp David II, Clinton Plan and Taba

What was the significance of the death of King Hussein? What led to the election of Ehud Barak? What were Barak’s objectives? How well did he deal with Arafat? What was agreed to at Sharm al-Sheik? Was there a real chance to achieve peace with Syria? What were the border differences between Israel and Syria? Why did they have different maps of the same areas? What were the

results of the talks at Shepherdstown, West Virginia? Was Barak serious about the Syrian option or was this a ploy to pressure Arafat? Why did Israel leave Southern Lebanon in 2000? How did the UN react to this? How did Hezbollah respond? What events led up to Camp David II? What transpired there? Why was no agreement reached? Whose fault was it? Why did Sharon go to the Temple Mount/Haram al-Sharif? What else led to the Second Intifada? What was the "Clinton Plan"? How close did negotiations held at Taba come to resolving the problems? What led to the election of Ariel Sharon? How did he differ from Barak?

Required:

Ross, 495-711, 801-805 (pages 509-548 are highly recommended)
Bickerton, 312-342

Recommended:

Laqueur, 556 – 580
Dowty, 204 – 216

April 9 – The Bush/Sharon era; the Arab-Israeli Conflict in the Post 9-11 World

How did George W. Bush approach these issues? What impact did the Christian Right have on Bush's views of the region? How did Bush differ from Clinton on Middle East issues? What was the impact of Ariel Sharon's election? How did Bush and Sharon get along? How did they view Arafat? What was the Mitchell Commission and what were its conclusions? How did the events of 9-11 impact the Middle East? Why did Bush endorse the concept of a Palestinian state? What was the plan proposed by the Saudi leaders? How was it received? Why did Israel build a "security fence"? What was the "Road Map to Peace"? How effective? What are the "Geneva Accords"? Are they a blueprint for peace? Why did Sharon conclude that Israel should withdraw from Gaza? How was this carried out? What were the domestic repercussions in Israel? What was the impact of Arafat's passing? Who is Abu Mazen and can he be an effective leader? What challenges did Abu Mazen confront?

Required:

Ross, 712-789

Bickerton, 343- 383

David Makovsky, Engagement through Disengagement: Gaza and the Potential for Renewed Israeli-Palestinian Peacemaking, which can be found at:

<http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/templateC04.php?CID=221>

April 16 – The election victories of Hamas and Olmert, Hezbollah and the War in Lebanon; the peace efforts at the "close of the Bush era"

How has the war in Iraq affected Middle East peace prospects? What is the background of Hamas? Why was Hamas successful in the Parliamentary elections of January 2006? What are the implications of their victory? Why did Sharon form the Kadima Party? What factors contributed to the election of Ehud Olmert and the Kadima Party? What challenges did Olmert face? Why was he supportive of further unilateral withdrawals from the West Bank? Why did Olmert wish to continue construction of the security fence? How significant are the challenges posed by Iran? Syria? Why did Hamas attack Israel on June 25, 2006? Why did Hezbollah attack Israel on July 12, 2006? What led up to the Second Lebanon War? What were its consequences? What were the conclusions of the Winograd Commission that looked into Israeli actions in Lebanon? What are the "Mecca Accords"? Why did Saudi King Abdullah bring Abu Mazen and Hamas leaders Haniyeh and Khaled to Mecca? How effective was the eventual "unity government"? What was its nature? What is the Saudi Peace Plan (of 2002) and why was it reintroduced in March 2007? How was it received? What led to the Hamas-Fatah fighting in June 2007? What are the implications of Hamas' take-over of Gaza?

Required:

Ross, 789-800

Bickerton, 394-396

Rob Satloff (ed) Preliminary Views of Hamas is at

<http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/templateC04.php?CID=232>

Hamas Covenant -- to access: At search option put in: "Hamas Charter"

<http://www.yale.edu/lawweb/avalon/mideast/hamas.htm>.

Hamas use of Mickey Mouse to reach children (brief video):

<http://youtube.com/watch?v=gi-c6lbFGC4>

[Robert O. Freedman](#), "The Bush Administration and the Arab-Israeli Conflict: The Record of its First Four Years", *The Middle East Review of International Affairs (MERIA) Journal*: Vol.9, No.1 – March 2005

<http://meria.idc.ac.il/journal/2005/issue1/jv9no1a4.html>

Aaron David Miller, "The Abandonment; How the Bush Administration Left Israelis and Palestinians to Their Fate"

Washington Post, Sunday, April 29, 2007; B01

<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2007/04/27/AR2007042702049.html>

[Hussein Agha](#), [Robert Malley](#), "The Road from Mecca". *The New York Review of Books* – Volume 54, Number 8 · [May 10, 2007](#)

<http://www.nybooks.com/articles/20176>

David Makovsky, Olmert's Unilateral Option: An Early Assessment which can be found at <http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/templateC04.php?CID=240>

David Makovsky and Jeffrey White, Lessons and Implications of the Israel-Hizballah War: A Preliminary Assessment, which can be found at: <http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/templateC04.php?CID=251>

Recommended readings:
Levitt, Hamas

April 23 - Is Peace possible?

What are the main issues that must be resolved? What role, if any, should the United States play in this process? What, if any, solutions are there to the conflicting claims on the same land? Can any agreements be reached with Fatah? Hamas? What should be done about Israeli settlements in the West Bank? Is there a good solution to the issues involving Palestinian refugees? Is any solution possible to deal with Jerusalem?

Required:
Bickerton, 384-394

ROGER COHEN, Her Jewish State
The New York Times – Sunday Magazine – July 8, 2007

<http://select.nytimes.com/search/restricted/article?res=F50915FB3F5A0C7B8CD DAE0894DF404482#>

<http://select.nytimes.com/search/restricted/article?res=F50915FB3F5A0C7B8CD DAE0894DF404482>

STEVEN ERLANGER, A Life of Unrest: *Khaled Abu Hilal's journey is Gaza's journey: bleak, violent and headed nowhere hopeful.*

The New York Times – Sunday Magazine – July 15, 2007

<http://www.nytimes.com/2007/07/15/magazine/15HAMAS-t.html?th&emc=th>

<http://www.nytimes.com/2007/07/15/magazine/15HAMAS-t.html?th=&emc=th&pagewanted=print>

Recommended:
Dowty, 169-203
Cramer, 227-279