



A Critical Survey of Textbooks on the Arab-Israeli and Israeli-Palestinian Conflict

Working Paper No. 1 | 2017

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MDC Working Paper Series

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First Draft, April 2017

Revised, October 2017

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Acknowledgements

The authors would like to thank the research assistants and interns who have contributed significantly to this research project. Eline Rosenhart was with the project from the beginning to end, cataloging syllabi, constructing charts, reading each text from cover to cover, making meticulous notes, transcribing meetings and providing invaluable editorial assistance. Rebekka Windus was a critical eye and dedicated consultant during the year-long reading phase of the project. Natasha Spreadborough provided critical comments and suggestions that were very instrumental during the reading phase of this project. Ben Mendales, the MDC's project management specialist, was exceptionally receptive to the needs of the team and provided vital logistical support. Last but not least, we are deeply grateful to Prof. Asher Susser who reviewed the paper and offered invaluable comments and suggestions. His expertise on the subject of the history and historiography of the Arab-Israeli conflict was a tremendous resource. Needless to say, any errors that remain are our own. We are deeply grateful to all those who have contributed to help make this project come to fruition.

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Introduction

This paper is an outgrowth of the Annual Tel Aviv University Workshop on Israel and the Middle East organized under the auspices of the Moshe Dayan Center for Middle Eastern and African Studies. Until now, the workshop has not addressed the textbooks that are used to teach the conflict in colleges and universities. Most college and university instructors would agree that textbooks are of secondary importance. Even so, textbooks do carry the authority of print. It is assumed that textbooks, just by virtue of the fact that they are printed, have passed a certain test of objectivity and are fit for academic consumption. This is not to say that instructors endorse the text (although some do). And it does not negate the fact that many instructors intentionally choose textbooks that are flawed in order to generate lively discussions and debate and even teach analytical skills such as critical reading and critical thinking. Although textbooks can be used in many different ways, they are still dominant and powerful educational tools that shape students' views. We are convinced that most lecturers who assign a textbook for background reading or for reference prefer to assign a textbook that is balanced, objective and free of bias to the greatest extent possible. Such a textbook can supplement classroom lectures, discussions and other learning activities by providing factual background reading, and by serving as a useful reference. This report was written for instructors who want to make informed choices about textbooks for their courses that cover the Arab-Israeli or Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

We began with the assumption that some textbooks on the Arab-Israeli or Israeli-Palestinian conflict are better than others. And we acknowledge that “better” is a relative term. Certainly we have our biases and we aim to be transparent about that in this report. Firstly, we believe that in order to understand the conflict, one must understand the basic national narratives of both Israel and the Palestinians as well as the narratives of the Arab states involved. The conflict between Israel and the Palestinians is smaller but tougher to resolve. Unlike the Egyptian, Jordanian or Syrian narratives of the conflict, the Israeli and Palestinian narratives are narratives of an existential struggle. Moreover, even while there is a multiplicity of viewpoints within the Israeli and Palestinian societies, there are two, established, competing national narratives about the causes and the evolution of the conflict and it is critically important to understand them. This is true even if the narratives are official propaganda, myth or nationalist ideology. While it is a useful exercise to scrutinize, challenge and deconstruct these narratives, it is still essential for the student of the conflict to understand the basic narrative of each side, not as it is known to academics in Western universities, but as it is known by the parties themselves. How do Israeli and Palestinian children, for example, learn about the history of their nation and the history of the conflict? This is essential to understanding how the parties view each other. It is essential for understanding public opinion at given stages and it is essential for understanding the context of decisions taken and statements made. We are convinced that an understanding of the basic national narratives is essential background information for anyone seeking to better understand the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, and no textbook on the conflict is complete if it does not allow the student to have this basic understanding.

Another assumption we have is that the student of the Arab-Israeli or Israeli-Palestinian conflict is best served by a textbook that strives to portray the nuances, shades and

complexities of ideas, events and people groups rather than a textbook that overly simplifies them. We assume that the readers of these textbooks are people who have taken a genuine interest in the subject and are seeking to establish or refresh basic knowledge.

Laying on that foundation, we designed a year-long research project to identify the textbooks that are most commonly used to teach about the Arab-Israeli or Israeli-Palestinian conflict, analyze those textbooks and compare them to a set of criteria designed to assess the quality of history textbooks. We will describe the advantages and limitations of each book in the survey, in line with the criteria, and formulate recommendations for textbook selection.

A Review of the Literature

Until now, there has been no attempt to compare the relative strengths and weaknesses of textbooks that are used to teach about the Arab-Israeli or Israeli-Palestinian conflict in Anglophone colleges and universities. This lacuna can, to a large extent, be owing to the political minefield surrounding the politics of the conflict. While college level textbooks have not been the subject of dedicated critique, there has been no dearth of research on textbooks. A brief survey of the relevant literature on textbook research will show that most studies have been conducted on elementary and high school textbooks. Textbook research can be classified into roughly three clusters. The first cluster is comprised of studies carried out by public and international institutions which have produced reports that propose guidelines for selecting and evaluating national K-12 (kindergarten – 12th grade) textbooks. A second cluster of research is the evaluation of K-12 textbooks in specific countries to determine the extent of their compliance with international standards on peace and tolerance. Examinations of K-12 textbooks in Arab and Muslim countries, for example, have been produced in abundance by think tanks and privately funded research institutes. This cluster includes numerous reports and debates about the rhetoric used in Israeli and Palestinian K-12 schools. The third cluster of research encompasses studies on the methodology of textbook analysis.

The first cluster consists of reports of guidelines from national institutions and supra-national political bodies on selecting and reviewing history textbooks for classroom teaching. These studies focus mostly on the pedagogical aspects of the books, such as whether the books are free of stereotypes, whether they focus on critical thinking and whether the writing style contributes to the understanding of the material. These guidelines usually promote peace, tolerance and conflict resolution. Bodies that have provided such guidelines include the American Historical Association,¹ UNESCO in cooperation with the Georg Eckert institute² and the Council of Europe.³

¹ "Guidelines for the Preparation, Evaluation, and Selection of History Textbooks." American Historical Association. June 1, 1997. Accessed December 23, 2015. <<https://www.historians.org/teaching-and-learning/classroom-content/resources-on-k-16-teaching/guidelines-for-the-preparation-evaluation-and-selection-of-history-textbooks.>>

² Falk Pingel. *UNESCO Guidebook on Textbook Research and Textbook Revision*. 2nd Revised and Updated Edition. United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization. Paris/Braunschweig: 2010.

The second cluster of research applies the guidelines of the aforementioned institutions to national K-12 textbooks and focuses on how the "other" is represented in countries involved in conflict and how minorities are represented in countries without major conflicts. The kind of textbooks used for analysis are not necessarily taken from the field of history alone, but could also be comprised of textbooks on civics, language, geography, etc. Institutions that have analyzed Israeli and Palestinian textbooks include IMPACT-SE (formerly the Center for Monitoring the Impact of Peace), the Council of Religious Institutions of the Holy Land and the Georg Eckert Institute.⁴ Academics who have made scholarly contributions to this topic include Ruth Firer and Sami Adwan, Nathan Brown, Fouad Moughrabi and Elie Podeh.⁵ All these studies have been conducted on elementary and high school textbooks (K-12).

The third cluster is made up of analytical works on the methodology and philosophy of textbook research that offer valuable contributions to the field of academic research on textbooks. Examples include Egil Johnson's critical survey, which identifies and discusses qualitative and quantitative and combined approaches in textbook analysis.⁶ Jaan Mikk offers substantiated suggestions for composing an effective textbook based on an extensive literature review. Jason Nichols reviews different methods of textbook analysis and presents different case studies.⁷ Hillary Bourdillon and John Slater have also provided some useful surveys of the different kinds of methodologies used in textbook analysis.⁸

Methodology

1.1 The Selection of Textbooks for this Survey

³ *Against Bias and Prejudice: The Council of Europe's Work on History Teaching and History Textbooks*. Strasbourg: 1995.

⁴ See for example, "Victims of Our Own Narratives?" Portrayal of the "Other" in Israeli and Palestinian School Books", Council of Religious Institutions of the Holy Land, 2013; "International Textbook Research," *Journal of the Georg Eckert Institute* 4: (2003).

⁵ Ruth Firer and Sami Adwan. "Comparing Palestinian and Israeli Textbooks," *Palestinian Curriculum Development Center*, 2002; Nathan Brown. "Democracy, History and the Contest over the Palestinian Curriculum," an independent report prepared for the Adam Institute, 2002. Available online at: http://www.nad-plo.org/textbooks/nathan_textbook.pdf. Accessed 15 September 2016; Fouad Moughrabi. "The Politics of Palestinian Textbooks". *Journal of Palestine Studies* 31, No. 1 (2001):5-19; Elie Podeh. *The Arab-Israeli Conflict in Israeli History Textbooks, 1948-2000*. Westport: Bergin & Garvey, 2002.

⁶ Egil B. Johnsen. *Textbooks in the Kaleidoscope: A Critical survey of Literature and research on educational texts*. Translated by L. Sivesind. Oslo: Scandinavian University Press, 1993.

⁷ Jason Nicholls. "Methods in School Textbook Research." *International Journal of Historical Learning, Teaching and Research* 3, no. 2 (2003).

⁸ Hilary Bourdillon. *History and Social Studies: Methodologies of Textbook Analysis: Report of the Educational Research Workshop Held in Braunschweig, Germany, 11-14 September 1990*. Amsterdam: Swets & Zeitlinger, 1990; John Slater. "Methodologies of Textbook Analysis." In *International Yearbook of History Education*, edited by Dickinson, Gordon, Lee, and Slater. London: Routledge, 1995.

We set out to identify ten to twelve of the most commonly used textbooks used to teach about the Arab-Israeli or Israeli-Palestinian conflict in Anglophone colleges and universities. Here it is important to note that we drew a distinction between textbooks and scholarly works. In our study, a textbook is defined as a book that is used as a standard work for the study of a particular subject. A textbook is not a book that presents an explicit thesis nor is it the product of the intellectual work of one person. Rather, it is a synthesis of the field. Textbooks are often the work of one or more authors who draw upon all of the available literature in the field and endeavor to construct an authoritative, grand narrative. A scholarly work, on the other hand, presents an explicit argument. It is usually the product of one author and often based on his or her original research. A scholarly work is often a contribution to a larger historical discourse (an argument between two or more scholars) and usually views a subject from a certain angle or perspective. Scholarly works typically cover a narrower time period or a more narrowly defined topic. Some prominent scholarly works such as Benny Morris's *The Birth of the Palestinian Refugee Problem* or Rashid Khalidi's *Palestinian Identity* often appear as assigned reading in courses on the conflict.⁹ Early on in our study, it was decided to set aside the scholarly works and focus our attention just on the textbooks, as defined above.

In order to identify the textbooks most commonly assigned, we used the internet to collect a sample set of 100 syllabi for college and university courses taught between 2005-2015 that included coverage of the Arab-Israeli or Israeli-Palestinian conflict. This method, which could be characterized as “convenience sampling” was not intended to generate highly accurate statistical data about which books are most commonly used in the classroom. What we sought was a less time-consuming and less expensive method of sampling that would give a general indication of basic trends in textbook selection for what is ultimately, a qualitative study.

To ensure that there would be a range of disciplines represented, our sample set of syllabi was divided into four categories: 1) courses on the Israel-Palestinian conflict, 2) courses on the history of the Modern Middle East, 3) courses on the politics of the Middle East and 4) other relevant topics more broadly defined (such as peace and conflict studies, society in the Middle East, American policy in the Middle East and others). Twenty-five syllabi were assigned to each category, based on the title of the course. Ninety percent of the syllabi were from courses that were taught at universities in the United States, Canada and the United Kingdom. However, we also collected syllabi from courses taught in English language university programs in the Middle East (namely Egypt, Lebanon, Qatar and Turkey). Syllabi that did not include specific reading assignments about the conflict were not included in the sample.

Next we drew up a list of all the textbooks, irrespective of edition, that were listed as assigned reading for these 100 courses together with the number of different courses that used them as assigned reading. Whether the book was assigned to be read in whole or in part, it was recorded on our list. The list contained 38 different text books. Our next task was to assign a ranking to each textbook, equal the number of courses in our sample which made use of it, in whole or in part, as assigned reading. We found that fourteen of

⁹ Benny Morris. *The Birth of the Palestinian Refugee Problem, 1947-1949*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989; Rashid Khalidi, *Palestinian Identity: The Construction of Modern National Consciousness* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997).

the 38 textbooks on the list were assigned reading in 5% or more on the 100 syllabi representing 100 different courses in our sample. Of them, seven were textbooks about the Arab-Israeli or Israeli-Palestinian conflict and seven were textbooks about the history or politics of the modern Middle East at large, containing smaller sections or chapters about the conflict. Based on these findings we decided to expand the study to include a survey of fourteen books (seven of each type) instead of the original aim of identifying ten or twelve.

While we wanted to define the threshold (or cutoff) for inclusion in our study as textbooks used as assigned reading in at least 5% of the courses in our sample, we were aware that the difference between 5% and 4% is somewhat arbitrary, especially when the sample set consisted of only 100 courses. So we sought to apply a second measurement that could help to rule out the possibility of error in the first measurement. The second measurement took into account the sales rankings of these textbooks on the two leading online market places for textbooks, Amazon (amazon.com) and Barnes and Nobles (bn.com). We made lists of the overall sales rankings of each textbook that appeared as assigned reading in our sample set of 100 courses on a given day (8 December 2015) as they appeared on both the Amazon and the Barnes and Nobles web sites.

The investigation of sales rankings did confirm that most of the books that made it into the 5% threshold of our sample (13 out of 14) had sold more copies (inclusive of all editions) in both marketplaces than those that fell short of the 5% threshold. However, we did find that there was one textbook, Peter Mansfield's *A History of the Middle East* (4 eds.), that was outselling all of its counterparts in our sample. This book was assigned reading in 4% of the courses in our sample. Another textbook that featured as assigned reading in 5% of our sample, Roger Owen's *State, Power, and Politics in the Making of the Modern Middle East* (3 eds.), was clearly underselling its counterparts. We had a closer look at Owen and found that the Arab-Israeli conflict is given little attention. The book focuses mainly on the Arab world and relegates discussion of the Arab-Israeli conflict to a chapter titled "State and Society in Israel, Iran and Turkey." Given that Israel, Iran and Turkey are the region's most powerful actors, the decision to cover all of them in one chapter seemed erroneous to us. Moreover, given that Owen's textbook does not provide much coverage of the Arab-Israeli conflict, we took the decision to adopt Mansfield's top selling textbook for inclusion in our study, in place of Owen.

Based on the process described above, we have assembled a list of the textbooks that are most commonly assigned in courses that cover the Arab-Israeli or Israeli-Palestinian conflict as well as textbooks that are best-sellers when compared with other similar books. The textbooks are divided into two categories, books that focus on the conflict and books that include one or more chapters about the conflict within a wider discussion of the history or politics of the Middle East. The first group of seven textbooks, the books on the Arab-Israeli or Israeli-Palestinian conflict, is analyzed in this paper, MDC Working Paper No. 1.

Textbooks on the Arab-Israeli and Israeli Palestinian Conflict

Ian Bickerton and Carla Klausner. *A History of the Arab-Israeli Conflict*. 7th ed. Upper Saddle River, N.J.: Pearson Prentice Hall, 2014.

Martin Bunton. *The Palestinian-Israeli Conflict: A Very Short Introduction*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013.

James Gelvin. *The Israel-Palestine Conflict: One Hundred Years of War*. 3rd ed. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014.

Benny Morris. *Righteous Victims: A History of the Zionist-Arab Conflict, 1881-2001*. 2nd ed. New York: Knopf, 2001.

Ilan Pappé. *A History of Modern Palestine: One Land, Two Peoples*. 2nd ed. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2006.

Charles Smith. *Palestine and the Arab-Israeli Conflict*. 8th ed. New York: St. Martin's Press, 2012.

Mark Tessler. *A History of the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict*. 2nd ed. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2009.

Textbooks on the modern Middle East

Roy Andersen, Robert Seibert, and Jon Wangler. *Politics and Change in the Middle East*. 10th ed. Upper Saddle River, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 2011.

William Cleveland and Martin Bunton. *A History of the Modern Middle East*. 5th ed. Boulder, Colo.: Westview Press, 2013.

James Gelvin. *The Modern Middle East: A History*. 4th ed. New York: Oxford University Press, 2015.

Louise Fawcett, ed. *International Relations of the Middle East*. 3rd ed. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013.

Peter Mansfield and Nicolas Pelham. *A History of the Middle East*. 4th ed. New York: Penguin Books, 2004.

Mehran Kamrava. *The Modern Middle East: A Political History Since the First World War*. 3rd ed. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2013.

Ellen Lust, ed. *The Middle East*. 13th ed. Washington, D.C.: CQ Press, 2014.

1.2 The Criteria for Evaluation

Myriad considerations can influence the choice of a textbook. Some instructors choose a textbook that is well-illustrated and lively enough to generate student interest, while others place a high priority on factors such as cost, availability, portability, topics covered or accompanying resources. Some instructors intentionally choose a textbook that presents a sharp argument in order to provoke a lively discussion in class. Other instructors choose a textbook that presents an interpretation of history that most closely matches up with their own views of the conflict. Sometimes, an instructor will choose two books that represent opposing viewpoints or opposing arguments. For example, books and articles by Israel's "new" and "old" historians are often selected and compared with each other.

Some lecturers eschew the notion of "balance" in history textbooks, preferring instead to select a book whose historical interpretation is reasonable in their eyes. In a review of Gelvin's *One Hundred Years of War*, Joel Benin, a professor of history at Stanford University, explains that he would rather use a textbook that he considers "reasonable" than a textbook that is supposedly "balanced" or "unbiased." The latter terms are descriptions that he takes issue with, terms which he sees as holding very little meaning.¹⁰ Benin defines "reasonable" as being an interpretation that is "well supported by the available historical evidence."¹¹

It is our belief, however, that a textbook about the conflict can be both "balanced" and "reasonable," meaning that it provides insights about the story of both sides and is also well supported by the available historical evidence. This is not to say we expect textbooks to be free of author bias or judgment. We acknowledge that historians are humans and that value-free textbooks may not be entirely possible. But we believe that some historians present one-sided narratives, while others aim to shed light on the narratives of both sides. Some present interpretations that are intellectually honest, while others deliberately distort the past in service of their own political, ideological, or moral beliefs. Just like a good lawyer can construct a convincing case based purely on "the facts," so too can a historian use "the facts" of history to present an extremely biased and one-sided historical interpretation. But an intellectually honest historian does not cherry pick facts to make certain claims while deliberately ignoring evidence that might contradict his or her claims. An intellectually honest historian draws from the best available sources and acknowledges conflicting evidence or conflicting scholarly viewpoints, even while making judgments about the past.

Students have weighed in on the issue of ethics for historians. In 2009, students of the "Historian's Workshop" class at Knox College in Galesburg Illinois considered questions of ethics, politics, and constituency groups and the question of how they influence the historical profession. Together, they drew up a list of ways in which professional

¹⁰ Joel Beinin. "Why Another History of the Palestinian-Israeli Conflict?" Review of *James L. Gelvin. The Israel-Palestine Conflict: One Hundred Years of War*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005. *Humanities and Social Sciences Net*, May 2007.

¹¹ Ibid.

historians could best assure that they were behaving ethically in their teaching, research, and publishing. Among the ethical imperatives articulated by the students were the following:

1. Don't plagiarize.

While undertaking research, be at pains to take thorough notes that clearly distinguish between your own thoughts and ideas and those of the person whose work you are examining. As you share your work with others—as a conference paper, article, or book—make sure that all citations are complete and accurate.

2. Faithfully transcribe your sources.

Don't add to, subtract from, or alter the evidence your source provides. Reread your notes after transcription to be sure they are accurate.

3. Don't ignore contradictory evidence.

An argument built upon an incomplete source base will always be as weak as its foundation. Cast your net widely during research, and deal honestly with the sources you find.

4. Acknowledge your biases.

Give particular thought to the ways in which your perspective has been shaped by the era and culture in which you were born and raised, by your education, and by the expectations of the communities to which you belong (by choice and by birth).

5. Acknowledge the biases in your source material.

Recognize that every human being is a complex individual whose existence is tied to a particular time and place.

6. Maintain transparency in research.

It should always be possible for other researchers to have access to the materials on which you based your work.

7. Use the most up-to-date data available

Don't cherry-pick statistics; stay abreast of developments in your field.

The above (abbreviated) list represents a sample of the requirements for ethical conduct of historians, as articulated by some of the consumers—the students who read and learn from textbooks.¹²

¹² Catherine Denial, "Ethics for Historians: The Perspective of One Undergraduate Class." American Historical Association, January 2010. Available online at: <https://www.historians.org/publications-and-directories/perspectives-on-history/january-2010/ethics-for-historians-the-perspective-of-one-undergraduate-class>. Accessed 14 September 2016.

We believe that the vast majority of instructors, who teach introduction and survey courses on the Arab-Israeli or Israeli-Palestinian conflict, want to choose a textbook that embodies the ideals of ethical practice in the field of scholarly writing—a text book that is factually accurate and intellectually honest to the greatest extent possible. Such a textbook can supplement the classroom lectures, discussions and other course activities by serving as a useful reference book. The criteria for the evaluation of textbooks presented in this report were developed with that goal in mind. This report aims to identify the textbooks that present an interpretation that is well supported by the available historical evidence, an interpretation that acknowledges the major historiographical debates, allows the reader to understand that there is a multiplicity of viewpoints, fosters the student's ability to think independently and spurs further inquiry.

Our understanding of what constitutes a good history textbook was helped by a set of guidelines for the preparation, evaluation and selection of history textbooks published in 1997 by the American Historical Association. While it is true that these guidelines were developed for the evaluation of textbooks about American history, we believe that they are general enough that they can also be applied to textbooks on histories of other regions and issues, such as the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Here it is worthwhile to reproduce the relevant portions of these general guidelines (emphasis added):

Factual Coverage. Most textbooks primarily convey factual materials. No matter what the subject, or how large the book, these materials are necessarily selective, involving choices about what relevant historical data to include and exclude. *A satisfactory history text establishes what the key selection principles have been, so that users can assess the validity of the choices and also have some awareness of potential gaps.* For example, a world history text may downplay certain early periods or geographical regions and still measure up to coverage needs; but the choices should be briefly indicated and explained. In U.S. history, some sequences of presidents are often summed up without great detail; again, this kind of selectivity should be briefly noted and explained. In addition to explanations, *adequate textbooks do not select coverage without attention to problems of bias and distortion not only in the accuracy of the materials presented, but in the choice of major topics* [. . .]

Factual coverage must be up to date in terms of ongoing historical research.

Significant improvements in the teaching and learning of history result from the systematic utilization of research-based knowledge. Regular adjustments in light of new research are essential for textbook accuracy and for achievement of necessary balance in group and topical coverage. . .

Factual coverage should be balanced, in several senses. It should deal with several groupings (class, race, gender) in order to convey both shared and diverse reactions to key developments. The group experiences should be integrated in the larger analytical framework and narrative structure, not treated as isolated sidebars. It should also deal with several aspects of the human experience (political, social, cultural etc.) and with interrelationships among these facets.

Appropriate global perspectives are increasingly important in defining textbook adequacy. Obviously, a world history text will have much different geographical coverage from a United States or an individual state survey. In all cases, however, ***an adequate text will place developments in some wider perspective***, so that international trends and forces are given appropriate attention and so that principal distinctive features, for example in a particular national experience, gain some comparative treatment.

Factual coverage, finally, must not be defined by sheer avoidance of controversy. Indeed, ***an adequate history textbook must treat some topics about which debate continues to occur and must assist readers in balancing an understanding of diverse viewpoints*** with attention to the historical factor involved. Religion, for example, is a vital aspect of the history of virtually every society and time period. Its treatment must often acknowledge diversity of viewpoints, but the subject must be given appropriate weight for its role in the human experience.

Historical Habits of Mind. Even with a primary emphasis on factual materials, adequate history textbooks must actively encourage the development of appropriate historical habits of mind beyond memorization [. . .] Textbooks should encourage critical thinking, with sections that help students understand how different kinds of arguments and interpretations can be assessed.

Textbooks should directly include or be readily compatible with primary documents and other materials, so that students gain skill in assessing different kinds of data, judging potential bias, and building arguments from various pieces of evidence. ***Sections that periodically discuss how historians developed data of the sort embedded in the text itself, and how different evaluations of data figure into historical controversies, will usefully further the ability to understand uses of evidence.***

As appropriate to the grade level involved, textbooks should promote the capacity to assess change over time, the causes and impacts of change, and continuities that coexist with change. ***Textbooks that merely accumulate data, even across time, with no discussion of issues of change and causation are not adequate***, even at beginner student levels [. . .]

In addition to the above, some additional criteria are required to address the needs of evaluating textbooks about a protracted conflict between two distinct peoples, specifically, the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. To meet this need, we turn to some insights that were provided by two lecturers, one Israeli and one Palestinian, who in 1992 began team teaching a course on the conflict at the University of Maryland, College Park. They have provided some very useful insights about how to teach the conflict in a way that moved beyond the "one-sided and mutually antagonistic ways of approaching and understanding the Israeli/Palestinian conflict," which they say is actually quite prevalent

on college campuses.¹³ Many of their insights relate to the classroom experience but some of them have relevance to the choice of textbook as well. The excerpts below represent some of their insights which can help guide the assessment of textbooks on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict (emphasis in the original):

- **Historical events are a genuine part of the collective memory of both Arabs and Jews, and we should present both narratives as they are predominantly taught in Israeli and in Palestinian schools [. . .]**
- **As with many other parts of our teamwork we want to respect the terms of reference used by both Palestinians and Jews [. . . .]**
- **Understanding the asymmetries between us is an essential element of judgment.** Ugly atrocities, missed opportunities and leadership mishaps have occurred on both sides, but we must avoid promoting a false parallelism [. . . .]
- Obviously, **scholars committed to the search for common ground in a protracted and violent conflict cannot maintain strict neutrality toward the issues at stake.** Even if at times in the social sciences one tends to hide personal values under quantitative results or public opinion polls, it may often be better to express at the outset what our personal views are. **At the same time, there should be a deep commitment to impartiality, namely, to present the diversity of views that are formulated by each side and weigh their importance — regardless of whether they are contrary to one's own views.**

In our survey of textbooks we have adopted the views of these two University of Maryland lecturers, Edward Kaufman and Manuel Hassassian, in lieu of the views expressed by Stanford Professor Joel Benin. Whereas Joel Benin prefers a textbook that he considers “reasonable” over a textbook that tries to be “balanced” or “unbiased,” Kaufman and Hassassian advocate “a deep commitment to impartiality” and a presentation of the “diversity of views that are formulated by each side.”¹⁴ This approach favors a textbook that endeavors to provide both an authentic and critical account of the narratives of both sides to the greatest extent possible, allowing the reader to draw his or her own conclusions and encouraging him or her to consult additional sources.

In our view is a good textbook on the conflict meets the following criteria:

- It is free of obvious factual errors and inaccuracies.
- It is free of stereotypes and oversimplification.
- It is free of blatant omissions and distortions.
- It is free of misinformation that denigrates one group in order to elevate another.
- It does not privilege one national narrative over the other.

¹³ Edward Kaufman and Manuel Hassassian, “Understanding the Israeli/Palestinian Conflict: Lessons from an Unusual Classroom.” *Palestine-Israel Journal of Politics, Economics and Culture*, Vol. 18, Nos. 2 & 3, 2012. <http://www.pij.org/details.php?id=1446>. Accessed 14 September 2016.

¹⁴ Ibid.

- Facts are not manipulated to advance a certain national narrative.
- It does not marginalize or magnify certain events or processes that serve a particular national narrative or political agenda.
- It is free of rhetorical devices, and word choices that serve a particular national narrative or political agenda.
- Competing schools of thought and historiographical debates are identified.
- Selection (and/or exclusion) of sources has not prejudiced the outcome of the historian's work.
- Contradicting evidence and competing points-of-view are acknowledged.
- Instruments of representation, such as maps, charts and photos, are accurate, correctly labeled in terms of time and space, are accurately labelled in terms of selection and omission and provide the necessary context.
- Focus questions, if they are included, should encourage independent, critical thinking.

Lastly, we would note that we have also been aided in our assessment by the goals that the textbook authors have defined in the opening pages of each book. Some place a higher value on objectivity than others. Mark Tessler's stated goal, for example, is to provide a "balanced and accurate history" (viii). Charles Smith aims for a treatment of the conflict that is "historically sound" (vi). James Gelvin promises a narrative that is critical of both established narratives and he promises to be critical "evenly and effectively" (x). These are all goals that have served as useful, additional measuring rods in our evaluation and survey of the textbooks.

Ian J. Bickerton and Carla L. Klausner, *A History of the Arab-Israeli Conflict*, 7th edition (2015)

Ian J. Bickerton and Carla L. Klausner's *A History of the Arab-Israeli Conflict*, 7th edition, is a textbook published by Pearson Education, a leading publisher of K-12 and higher education curriculum and assessments. Of all the texts reviewed in this study, this book is the most textbook-like from the perspective of its large size, and reader-friendly navigational tools. The textbook, according to the preface, was born of a history colloquium that was team taught at the University of Missouri-Kansas by Bickerton and Klausner. In co-authoring this textbook, they aimed to provide the students of the conflict with critical background information, as well as the relevant primary source documents, maps and suggestions for further reading. The main objective of the book is said to be "to make the Arab-Israeli conflict more intelligible without the distortions that result from oversimplifications" (3). "We have attempted to achieve some balance and objectivity . . ." they write. "...we have tried to present both sides of the issues, although we realize that even the selection of material to be included reveals some subjective judgement on our part" (xix). We found that this textbook's treatment of the subject satisfies many of the markers of a good textbook, but dedicates more space to presenting Israeli perspectives than Arab and Palestinian ones, even while exhibiting sympathy for the Palestinian plight and Palestinian aspirations.

With its bulky 9.1 x 7.4-inch trim size it reminds one of a high school history textbook. The chapters and subchapters are divided chronologically and paragraphs are arranged according to topic. Each chapter includes at the end a conclusion, questions for consideration, a chronology and historical documents, as the table of contents notes. All chapter headings are easily identified by the grey pages on the fore edge of the book—a very helpful feature. Chapters did not have footnotes or endnotes, which was a disappointment. Historical documents are also set off in grey, helping to distinguish them from the text's main narrative. The end of the book contains a helpful glossary; a selected bibliography; acknowledgements for the documents, maps and pictures used; an index and a concise chronology. Each picture and map in the book is accompanied by a short explanation and is listed at the beginning of the book. The narrative is also very up-to-date, bringing the reader through the events of 2014.

This textbook provides a very detailed and nuanced perspective on Israel's experience with the Arab-Israeli conflict, especially in the earlier chapters that deal with the rise of Zionism, Jewish immigration to Palestine, the establishment of the State of Israel and the Wars of 1956, 1967 and 1973. What it lacks in comparison, is a thorough treatment of the Palestinian experience. This is at least partially owing to the way that the subject is framed: the book's title promises a discussion of the Arab-Israeli conflict as opposed to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. When the subject is framed that way, Arab states such as Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, Syria and Iraq will inevitably command a much larger role in the narrative and the Palestinians (who comprise one group among many Arab groups) will play a relatively smaller role.

In the introduction, Bickerton and Klausner acknowledge that the Palestinians object to the term “Arab-Israeli conflict,” and prefer to define it as the “Palestinian-Israeli conflict,” but they assert that the term “Arab-Israeli conflict” is the “most useable term to apply to the events” that [the] book describes” (2). They point out that prior to 1948 the conflict was between Palestinians and Jews but after the establishment of the State of Israel, the conflict widened to involve other regional states, with Egypt, Jordan and Syria having central roles. In Bickerton and Klausner, the role of the Palestinian leadership in the narrative, relative to the leadership of Israel and the Arab states, is smaller in the early chapters, but grows, in chapter 8 and beyond. Chapter 8 covers the PLO’s changing political positions in the 1970s that led to their recognition as the “sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people,” by the Arab League in 1974 and subsequently, to similar recognitions by the UN, the US and the international community. From that point forward, the narrative assigns greater attention to the Palestinian arena.

The authors provide good, brief coverage of the relevant ancient and medieval topics. In about six pages and under the heading “The Religious Dimension: Judaism and Islam,” the authors cover the meaning of Israel/ Palestine in Jewish and Muslim tradition in a way that is balanced and respectful of both religions. They also provide some very valuable insights about the intersections between religion and the conflict. It would be easy to dismiss this topic, the authors’ say, given that “much of the Arab-Israeli conflict is secular . . .” and given that “In many respects, the sources of tension are nonreligious.” But, the topic is worthy of attention because, as Bickerton and Klausner point out, “religion has been, and continues to be, a focal point for the peoples involved in the conflict.” It shapes attitudes and it provides the fodder by which extremists are able to attract the attention of the media and the public and stir up emotions (6). The section dedicated to this topic provides meaningful insights about the way nationalist and some Orthodox groups adhere to their visions of “Greater Israel” (9). It also provides invaluable background insights about the ideologies of extremist Islamist groups such as Hamas, Islamic Jihad and Hizballah, which will greatly help the reader interpret the actions of these groups as the story unfolds (10).

What is particularly impressive in Bickerton and Klausner’s narrative is the way in which the language is rich and engaging, while at the same time, it is cautious and precise. An example is the way that the authors introduce the name “Palestine.” The name “Palestine” is often used in ways that can lead to the false conclusion that there is or was a state called “Palestine.” Bickerton and Klausner are careful and precise introducing the term: “That part of the former Ottoman Empire today thought of as Palestine received its rather arbitrary boundaries between 1920 and 1922 . . .” (13).

The dearth of harsh judgements against polarizing figures in Bickerton and Klausner will disappoint staunch Israeli and Palestinian advocates, but this as an essential element of a good textbook. An example is a sentence about Binyamin Netanyahu’s decision to expand construction in East Jerusalem in 1997. Settlement expansion is, of course, a very contentious issue, since Palestinians view it as an obstacle to the creation of a Palestinian state while advocates of settlements believe that building within Israel’s Biblical boundaries is an eternal “right.” In regard to Netanyahu’s decision to allow construction in East Jerusalem and thereby throw a wrench in the peace process, the authors’ say, “It was unclear whether Netanyahu was indecisive, unwilling to take political chances, or

simply content to let the [peace] process die on the vine” (341). In a similar way, the authors also avoid passing judgement on Yasir Arafat as to his culpability in the violence perpetrated by Palestinian groups while still allowing for different interpretations of his behavior: “Arafat’s inability or unwillingness to control the extremists within his organization . . .” (210). By giving political actors the benefit of the doubt, the authors free the reader to reach his or her own conclusions about historic decisions that were made.

One area in which this text really excels is in its thoughtful presentation of controversial issues from multiple angles and viewpoints. The text is rich with comparative transitions such as “Palestinian supporters argued . . .” and “Israeli supporters replied . . .” (262). Elsewhere we see the authors present certain viewpoints through the eyes of others; for example, “Palestinian advocates on the other hand, describe . . .” (123) and “Zionists claimed . . .” (218). The authors present multiple viewpoints on topics such as the significance of WWII and the Holocaust in the creation of the State of Israel (74), on water resources and water usage (217-218), on the range of opinion in Israel concerning whether to retain control over the occupied territories (190 and 215), the different interpretations of UN resolutions 242 and 338 (262), and different views of the security fence/barrier (388). Sometimes the authors dedicate several paragraphs to each perspective while other times they accomplish the same result just by presenting a few choice vocabulary words; for example, the caption “Palestinian terrorist or heroine” beneath a picture of the airplane hijacker Leila Khaled (185). Often times understanding two or more opposing perspectives is crucial to understanding the conflict, and the authors clearly sought to include and de-mystify multiple viewpoints.

Another area in which this text excels is in the way that the authors often provide insightful remarks about historical contexts that challenge commonly held assumptions. An example is in their discussion about the nature of Zionism. “Zionism,” they say, “is attacked by opponents as an imperialistic movement because of its approach to the Arab population of Palestine, but it must be remembered that in the late nineteenth century most European nations expressed identical attitudes toward indigenous non-European peoples” (31). Along the same lines, major historiographical debates are explicitly acknowledged. In discussing the events leading up to the 1967 War, Bickerton and Klausner write, “Some historians and writers see all the Arab-Israeli wars as a result of Israeli aggressiveness and expansionism, which they attribute to an inherent dynamic and master plan of Zionism.” They go on to say that these historians tend to blame the war on Israeli “hawks” who had been preparing to go to war against Egypt for a decade. Then they present another side: “other historians argue that despite the existence of military contingency plans, there is no evidence that Israel would have launched a full-scale war against Egypt, had Nasser not taken the provocative actions he did” (167). The authors’ viewpoint can often be ascertained from the order in which they present the opposing arguments—briefly presenting the view that they disagree with first, followed by a more extensive and convincing argument for the viewpoint that they favor (See for example their discussion of the relative success of the American Israel Lobby in shaping US policy 244-246). Even while their own biases can usually be ascertained, the authors also intentionally introduce and discuss various debates within their narrative.

There is, however, one crucial historiographical debate that the authors did not elucidate for the reader and that is the debate surrounding the 1948 War and the creation of the Palestinian refugee problem. The brief mention of “plan dalet,” the military plan implemented by the Haganah in 1948, is not sufficient to impart a thorough understanding of the issue (113). Also, there should have been an excerpt of the military plan included as one of the historical documents. Since it has been the object of so much scholarly attention and debate (especially between the so-called “new” and “old” Israeli historians) it should have been included. Different explanations are briefly given in the text for the creation of the refugee problem: they include the traditional Israeli narrative (i.e. the Palestinians left or fled their towns and villages at the outbreak of hostilities), and the revisionist Israeli narrative (that there was both flight and expulsion), but, while the term *nakba* is mentioned, the Palestinian narrative (of victimhood and dispossession) is not elaborated (114-116). If this book were to be adopted for use in an introductory course, it would be advisable to supplement it with additional reading material on the historiographical debate surrounding the War of 1948 including the Israeli traditional narrative, the Israeli revisionist narrative and the Palestinian narrative.¹⁵

The text contains a treasure trove of invaluable insights about both Palestinian and Israeli perceptions of events. One particularly insightful passage about the events of the 1990s reads, “up to the period of the Labor party’s negotiations with the PLO, Israelis had defined security in terms of secure borders of the state. Now, as a result of terrorist bus-bombers and the political rhetoric of the conservative right wing, security was being defined in terms of personal safety within Israel” (329). This, they say, helps to explain why in 1996 the public opted for the leadership of the Likud’s Binyamin Netanyahu rather than Labor’s Shimon Peres, despite meaningful measures Peres had taken to secure Israel’s borders. The authors also provide some very valuable insights into Palestinian politics; for example, they describe the difficult position that Arafat was in during the Oslo process, “having to try to satisfy the Israelis that he was doing all he could to control terrorism” while at the same time trying to “convince followers of Hamas and Islamic Jihad that he could act as leader of all segments of the Palestinian population” (311). These types of observations provide the reader with critical insights about the internal dynamics of Israeli and Palestinian politics.

As was mentioned, the Palestinian narrative is given disproportionately less space in terms of description than the Zionist/Israeli narrative. An overview of key dates listed in the chronologies at the start of each chapter can give an indication of this. The subtopics mentioned in the chronology for chapter 1, “Palestine in the Nineteenth Century,” includes events relevant to the history and development of Zionism but does not include events connected with the Palestinian experience, such as the peasant’s revolt of 1834 or *al-nahda*, the Arab “renaissance” of the late 19th century (17). Similarly, the chronology for chapter 2, “Palestine during the Mandate,” gives key milestones related to the Zionist acquisition of land in Palestine but does not give any indications of how these developments affected Palestinians (38). Perhaps the chronology could have included the “Landless Arab Inquiry” (1931-1933), not because its conclusion was favorable to

¹⁵ See for example, Nathaniel Lorch, *The Edge of the Sword: Israel’s War of Independence (1947-1949)*, New York: Putnam, 1961; Benny Morris, *The Birth of the Palestinian Refugee Problem Revisited*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004; and Walid Khalidi, “Why did the Palestinians Leave Revisited? *Journal of Palestine Studies*, Vol. XXXIV, No. 2 (2005), pp. 42-54.

Palestinians (it was not) but because the event signaled a growing awareness on the part of the British that Zionist land acquisition had consequences for the Palestinians. The chronology for chapter 4, which covers 1948 and the nascent Israeli state is remarkably short and certainly could have been expanded to include the 1948 Deir Yassin massacre, the 1953 massacre of 69 Palestinians in the West Bank village of Qibya and/ or the 1956 massacre of 48 civilians in the Israeli Arab village of Kfar Qasim, an event which was to become a founding myth for the Arab citizens of Israel. In addition, the 1959 founding of Fatah could have been included in the chapter 6 chronology.

Some of the suggested reading lists at the end of each chapter did not include sources on the Palestinian perspective. For example, the reading list at the end of chapter 3, “WWII, Displaced Jewish Persons, and the Partition of Palestine,” does not list any sources that would paint the picture of the Palestinians’ experience in this time period. It could have included something like Isa Khalaf’s *Politics in Palestine: Arab Factionalism and Social Disintegration, 1939-1948*. Similarly, Chapter 8, “Lebanon and the Intifada,” lists some good books written by Israelis on the first intifada, but at least a few Palestinian scholarly works, such as Yezid Sayigh’s *Armed Struggle and the Search for State: The Palestinian National Movement, 1949-1993* and Rashid Khalidi’s *Under Siege: PLO Decision Making during the 1982 War* should have been included as well.

The treatment of Arab and Palestinian nationalism and their evolution in this text is disappointingly shallow. For example, Bickerton and Klausner write, “The seeds of Arab nationalism sprouted from the soil of Turkish nationalism, as historian Zeine N. Zeine has noted” (21). No reference is given for Zeine N. Zeine’s work. They go on to say that “Some recent scholars have suggested that Arab nationalism was ‘invented’ . . .” and conclude by saying that “nationalist sentiment among Arabs in Palestine also grew, partly in response to strong nationalist feelings of Jews toward Palestine . . .” (21). The authors betray their bias in favor of ascribing a late date to the development of Palestinian nationalism when they describe Golda Meir’s statement to the effect that there was no such thing as a Palestinian people as being “technically correct when it was uttered” (187; see also 168). The narrative returns to the topic of Palestinian nationalism again in chapter 7, where the authors describe the challenges facing “the Palestinian movements” in the 1960s (178-179). This is the first mention of “Palestinian movements” and could be confusing for the reader if he or she does not already have a background on the evolution of Palestinian nationalism and national movements from another source. And finally, the recognition of the PLO as the “sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people” by the Arab League in 1974, is mentioned but aside from saying that the PLO emerged stronger as a result of the 1973 War, no explanation is given as to what brought about this major shift in Arab policy (197). On the topic of Palestinian nationalism and national movements, the authors fall into the trap of making some oversimplifications, the very thing they promised to avoid (3).

Another weakness of this particular text is its lack of familiarity with and comprehension of the political geography of the Gaza Strip and the West Bank. There are a number of places where a reader less-familiar with the conflict may be confused. The reader may ask, for example, what is the difference between “the construction of illegal outposts” and “the expansion of settlements,” the mention of which both occur in the same sentence without explanation (399). A discussion of the complex and thorny issue of land

ownership in the West Bank would have been worthwhile, especially when mentioning the “confiscation of [...] Palestinian land” (331). The authors make reference to what they call a “dual road network” which they say “greatly complicated Palestinian travel” (422). There are, of course, complications to Palestinian travel such as road blocks, checkpoints, and prohibited roads (which is perhaps what the authors meant to refer to) but the dual road network (the network of roads travelled by both Israelis and Palestinians) is not usually responsible for delays. Regarding the Gaza Strip, the reader may feel confused about who actually controls the Rafah crossing after reading that Israel maintained control of it as per the Oslo Accords and would continue to control it after the 2005 disengagement (400-401), and yet invaded this area militarily multiple times in order to regain control of it (399, 405). The authors further confuse things when they say that in January 2016, “the P.A. briefly lost control of the Rafah border crossing,” (422). The text’s confusion about the “lay of the land” is not helped by the fact that the Gaza Strip is sometimes referred to in error as “the Gaza” (217, 418). Needless to say the situations in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip are complex and perhaps some of the more confusing aspects could have been un-tangled a bit for the reader.

On the other hand, Bickerton and Klausner’s narrative captures the diversity and complexity of the Israeli and Palestinian societies. Druze, Circassians and Bedouin are included in the story. Moreover, the narrative includes voices of opposition to official Israeli and Palestinian policy. For example, while narrating the events of the first intifada, the authors describe the harsh measures employed by the IDF to put down Palestinian demonstrations and they also describe Israeli protests against the severity of the IDF’s response and even voices of Israeli opposition to the occupation (251). Israel is viewed not as a monolithic entity but as a country deeply divided. In a similar vein, Bickerton and Klausner’s protagonists are not flat characters, merely good guys or bad guys: they are political actors operating in a complex environment of pressures and constraints. For example, the authors offer a very sympathetic portrayal of Arafat while at the same time, they do not attempt to explain away his complex and conflicting patterns of behavior (see for example 259, 333, 321). They describe how one week after denouncing terror in an opinion piece in the *New York Times* he issued a call in Arabic for a million martyrs to march on Jerusalem (386; See also 263). Contradictions on the part of Israeli leaders are also part of the story. They mention Ariel Sharon’s contradictory remarks when one day he said to Likud legislators, “you can not like the word, but what is happening is an occupation. . .” and then, after coming under intense criticism, announced the next day, “we are not occupiers, this is the birthplace of the Jewish people . . .” (395).

There are indications that this text favors an Israeli narrative of the conflict, albeit a leftist and critical, Israeli narrative. Israeli politicians that are easy to find fault with and political platforms that are easy to take aim at, are treated sympathetically by Bickerton and Klausner. The narrative of Camp David II, for example, focuses on Ehud Barak’s offer and the shaky position he was in politically, but does not describe the negotiating behavior that many critics found offensive (369-372). Bickerton and Klausner’s narrative does not delve into the issue of Ariel Sharon’s degree of complicity for the Sabra and Shatilla massacre of Palestinians by Maronite militiamen, though it mentions that he was forced to resign as Defense Minister. In fact, the story of Sabra and Shatilla is summed up in a mere two sentences and referred to as a “tragedy” rather than a “massacre” (238). Another indication of affinity with an Israeli narrative is the way that the War of 1967 is

termed the “Six Day War,” as it is referred to by Israelis (167, 169, 206). Hebrew concepts, terms and proper nouns, such as names of parties and organizations are introduced and used more frequently than Arabic terms. And yet, even while there is disproportionate coverage of Israeli topics, the authors are still very critical of Israel at times, and very sympathetic to the Palestinian plight. There are also numerous remarks about the “methods of violence and terror so often employed by both sides” which appear to be an effort to “level the playing field” (229; See also 104, 113 267, and 491).

From an editing perspective, this textbook, despite being in its 7th edition, suffers from a lack of uniformity and more typographical errors than any other book reviewed in this paper.¹⁶ Also, the rendering of foreign words is arbitrary and haphazard: common nouns are sometimes capitalized for no apparent reason, sometimes rendered in italics, other times not. Punctuation rules change from one chapter to the next, i.e. “2,000 Irgun terrorists” (112) vs. “5000 Palestinians” (395). Some material that should have been updated was missed; for example, a list of countries includes “North Yemen” and “South Yemen” (5). The index page numbers are often not accurate, which may suggest that they correspond to an earlier edition. There is a fair amount of repetition (153 and 157; 172 and 187; 172 and 177; 185 and 209; 188 and 177; 196 and 217). The book also contains some minor factual errors that do not have bearing on the reader’s understanding of the conflict; for example, King Hussein of Jordan is said to have received cancer treatment at the “Mayo Clinic in Rochester, New York,” where it should have read, “in Rochester, Minnesota” (345).

A History of the Arab-Israeli Conflict, 7th edition, by Bickerton and Klausner, is notable for its perceptible efforts to cast a sympathetic light on the motivations of the different actors, the ideologies and political platforms that have shaped the conflict, and the different narratives and explanations that have been advanced. The text presents an elegant and detailed narrative of Zionist history and invaluable insights about the calculations and interests of the Arab states involved, but does not examine Palestinian history with equal depth. This is most noticeable in the earlier chapters of the book (1-8) and dissipates in the latter chapters (9-16). The disproportionate space given to the Zionist narrative is at least partially owing to the way that the subject was framed—as the Arab-Israeli conflict rather than the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Given that the Arab side of the story includes a multiplicity of different states and non-state actors, the picture that emerges of Zionism/Israel is, not surprisingly, much more nuanced and complex. Furthermore, the authors seem to rely, to a greater extent, on Israeli views of events in constructing their story. If this book were to be used as a main text for a course on the Arab-Israeli or Israeli-Palestinian conflict, it should be supplemented with another article or chapter that examines the Palestinian experience including the development of Arab and Palestinian nationalism and Palestinian nationalist movements. Despite the disproportionate coverage, this textbook does not engage in the “blame game.” In Bickerton and Klausner, there is no one party that is responsible for the failure of peace. They conclude that “although the Israelis and Palestinians made some effort to reconcile their differences with American assistance, they were unable to bridge the wide gulf between their ‘red lines’ on borders, refugees and especially on Jerusalem” (490). In

¹⁶ For a list of technical errors found in this book or any other book examined in this study, please contact the authors.

many ways, this sentence typifies the entire book. The authors rarely pass judgement or take sides, allowing the reader to formulate his or her own conclusions and encouraging further investigation.

Martin Bunton, *The Palestinian-Israeli Conflict: A Very Short Introduction* (2013)

The Palestinian-Israeli Conflict by Martin Bunton is an installment in the Oxford "Very Short Introduction" series. It is marketed as an intelligent, readable introduction which serves as a "bridge between reference content and higher academic work."¹⁷ Indeed, we found that the booklet is a very portable (132 text pages) concise and clearly written summary of the history of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict with an emphasis on the early history. It is also relatively up-to-date and includes mention of the Arab uprisings of 2011-2012 (112). Indeed, it presents a number of facts, important dates, individuals and key events in a short space that will help the reader better understand the history of the conflict, but the booklet perceptibly favors the Palestinian narrative, especially in the latter chapters.

Almost one-tenth of the booklet was devoted to maps, charts and excerpts of original documents. The chronology is very helpful but the "references" section and "further reading" section are disappointing. The text does not make use of footnotes but rather lists the sources consulted in the references section. This was a limitation that was imposed by the "Very Short Introduction" series. Unfortunately, the references listed (i.e. sources consulted) create the impression that the text is not very balanced. The references from chapter 5 "Occupation 1967-87," for example, are two articles about different aspects of Palestinian politics and quotations from three heads of state: an American President and three Israeli Prime Ministers. One wonders—besides the quotations of Israeli leaders, whether any scholarly books or articles about Israel's experience with the intifadas were consulted.

The "further reading" section was more satisfactory in terms of balance but it omits some key readings—books that have been very instrumental in shaping the discourse such as Benny Morris's *The Birth of the Palestinian Refugee Problem Revisited* and *Israel's Border Wars*, Anita Shapira's *Land and Power*, Isa Khalaf's *Politics in Palestine*, Howard Sachar's *A History of Israel*, Kenneth Stein's *The Land Question in Palestine*, Nur Masalha's *The Politics of Denial*, Ziad Abu Amr's *Islamic Fundamentalism in the West Bank and Gaza*, Dennis Ross's *The Missing Peace* and others. Since the "very short introductions" are meant to serve as a "bridge between reference content and higher academic work," and since three-quarters of a page in this section was blank, there should have been a more complete reading list.¹⁸

The book's organization is logical and sequential. The content is presented in six chapters, each one covering a span of 20 years, with the exception of one chapter that covers a ten-year period. Each chapter division is framed by pivotal moments in history (1897-1917, 1917-37, 1937-47, 1947-67, 1967-87, and 2007). The preface summarizes the content of each chapter and the story begins, in the first chapter, in 1897, the year of the First Zionist Congress. What is missed completely is a mention of the Jews' ties to the

¹⁷ Oxford University Press, "Very Short Introductions," n.d., Available online at: <http://www.veryshortintroductions.com/page/about>. Accessed 25 September 2016.

¹⁸ Ibid.

land prior to the rise of Zionism. It is understandable that this topic would not receive a lot of space in a small booklet, but it should have been at least mentioned in the preface or in the discussion of the rise of Zionism (1-4). When this background is ignored, it is hard to understand why Jews were ever interested in the strip of territory that is variously referred to as the "land of Israel" or Palestine. This background is also necessary for understanding the author's references to "the promised land," "Biblical antiquity" the "Biblical areas of Judea and Samaria," and the "land of Zion" (11, 14, 16). In today's multicultural classrooms, it cannot be assumed that all students have read the Bible or are familiar with Jewish tradition. In the absence of a brief mention of this critical background, Zionism could be perceived as just another case of settler colonialism like South Africa or the thirteen American colonies—which it is not. Given this major omission, one may wonder whether having chapter summaries in the preface was really the best way to use the limited space.

The way in which Bunton covers the topic of Ottoman Palestine until 1917 is very original and thought provoking. While other texts in this survey focus primarily on the history and political economy of Ottoman Palestine, Bunton takes a very unique angle—drawing upon his own expertise he analyzes patterns of settlement and land use in Palestine. Bunton answers some very pertinent questions: Why were the Arabs, who were primarily cultivators, settled in the hills rather than in the fertile plains? Why did they cultivate more fruits than grains? Why did the Jews buy land that was mainly located in the coastal plain rather than in the hill country, the traditional land of their forefathers? Bunton makes use of insights about the limits of Ottoman state power, the re-organization of legal and administrative codes (*tanzimat*) and the implications of Palestine's integration into the world market in order to explain the geographic and demographic layout of the land on the eve of the Mandate period. This discussion is unique and valuable.

While Bunton is strong on human geography, he is weak on the subject of nations and nationalism. Early on in the text, Bunton formulates his comments about Palestinian nationalism as a response to some comments made by Golda Meir and Newt Gingrich, to the effect that Palestinians are not a people. He argues that Palestinian nationalism is not less real or less valid because it developed as a response to British imperial rule and Zionist immigration and settlement. He grants the same to Zionism, which was, to a large extent, a response to the persecution of Jews in Europe (12-13). The development of Palestinian nationalism, its thinkers, advocates evolution and emphases, is a significant topic and could have been presented more effectively had it been situated within the storyline rather than presented as a "de-bunking" of statements made by two politicians.

Bunton's explanation for the massive exodus of Palestinians in 1948 is one-sided and one-dimensional: "the atrocities that occurred during the implementation of Plan D intensified the fears of the Arab population and led to the irreversible momentum of panicked flight from successive villages and towns" (57). This is a misreading of his source which according to the references section is Benny Morris's book *1948: A History of the First Arab-Israeli War* (121). In this book, Morris describes the exodus of 1948 as being the result of war, not plan D (plan dalet). Moreover, Morris explains a multiplicity of different situations in which there were expulsions, atrocities and flight. Flight in some cases was brought on by the breakout of hostilities and in other cases was brought on due

to rumors of an impending massacre. This multi-faceted explanation for the creation of the Palestinian refugee problem is more intellectually satisfying than the shallow explanation given by Bunton.

The ineffective use of the short space allotted became more pronounced toward the end of the book where the author devotes a disproportionate amount of attention to the issue of West Bank settlements. It is an important discussion and Bunton provides a good, four-page, relatively in-depth examination of the different waves of settlement expansion after 1967 and he devotes another two pages to the issue in the context of the Oslo process (76-80, 92-93). These passages are informative and necessary, but given the extensive coverage of this important Palestinian grievance, it is strange that Bunton did not give space to a discussion of Israel's experience with the intifadas. The brutal attacks of Palestinian suicide bombers who blew themselves up in crowded bars and buses, killing hundreds of Israeli civilians in the midst of their ordinary lives is a trivial matter in Bunton's analysis. The stabbings, shootings and abductions, are not described either. There are one or two word mentions of Palestinian political violence here and there, but nowhere is the phenomenon elaborated or factored into the analysis (See, for example, 94, 95, 99 and 101). Moreover, most scholars agree that the failure of Oslo is attributable to multiple factors including unmet expectations on both sides. But for Bunton it seems, settlements were the only really significant sticking point (90, 101, 112-114).

The impact of terrorism on Israeli society and voting patterns is a well-researched subject. Moreover, Israel is a democracy in which security is a top voting issue, as it was during the height of the suicide bombing campaign. In the case of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, it is impossible to understand the decisions of Israel's leaders over the course of the intifadas and the Oslo process, without having an understanding of public opinion and perceptions of the Israeli citizenry. Bunton refers to Israelis' "pent up anger," "distrust," "deep fears" and sense of "insecurity" but nowhere does he explain why Israelis felt this way or analyze the impact of these anxieties on the conflict (94, 96, 99, 104). Moreover, Arafat is portrayed as powerless to reign in Palestinian violence, even though many prominent analysts have assigned him at least some degree of agency and Israel viewed him as a terrorist (95).¹⁹ That Israel viewed Arafat as a terrorist is a crucial insight that ought to have been conveyed within the pages of this booklet.

At times, Bunton overstretches to try to "level the playing field." One indication of this is the way that casualty data accumulated over time is presented with no differentiation between combatants and non-combatants (32, 98). In another passage he compares Hamas to militant Israeli "groups" who opposed the Oslo process on religious grounds (94-95). The example he gives is Yigal Amir, the religious extremist who assassinated Yitzhak Rabin. There are several problems with this comparison: Yigal Amir was a lone actor and did not receive support from a group—a far cry from Hamas suicide bombers who were indoctrinated, armed, trained and dispatched by a well-organized political movement. The second problem with the comparison is that Yigal Amir was an Israeli

¹⁹ Most Israeli analysts and many Western analysts agree that Arafat had at least some degree of agency. There are also Palestinian analysts who assign Arafat some degree of culpability. Khalil Shikaki, for example, described Hamas as "Mr. Arafat's playing card." He went on to say, "But this is a very risky game because if Hamas has a massive suicide bombing, it could spell the end of the peace process." See "Can Arafat Rein in the Militias?" *The Guardian*, 16 October 2000.

who assassinated his own political leader whereas Hamas suicide bombers take orders from their movement's leadership and target Israeli civilians. What would have been preferable is an effort to understand Hamas suicide bombers and Israeli religious extremists as two phenomena that have strikingly different origins, trajectories and aims.

There are a few critical errors and omissions of fact. Bunton refers to "the state of Palestine" several times when the entity under discussion is actually the British Mandate of Palestine (15, 30, 49). The Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) is mistakenly referred to as the "Palestinian Liberation Organization" (81). The name has import because it gives expression to the basic objective of the organization at the time of its establishment—the liberation of Palestine—meaning that its goal was to destroy Israel. This was explicitly stated in its charter, both the 1964 and the 1968 versions. Bunton's discussion of the PLO charter omits this detail (82). Therefore it was significant that in the 1993 Statement of Principles, the PLO recognized "the right of the State of Israel to exist in peace and security . . .". This is something that is missed by Bunton who says that the PLO "recognized Israel's right to peace and security . . ." (91). His reference to Hamas's "initial charter" is also erroneous since, at the time of his publication, there was no change or modification to the Hamas charter (89).

The Palestinian-Israeli Conflict: A Very Short Introduction by Martin Bunton is a pocket-sized booklet that will certainly help the reader get a good grasp of the chronology and key events in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. But it contains some factual errors and some critical omissions which will not be helpful for the reader who wants to learn or "brush up" on basic knowledge about the conflict. It presents a narrative that is noticeably more sympathetic to the Palestinian narrative: Palestinian grievances are outlined in relative depth, considering the brevity of the text, but Israeli grievances, notably about security, are summarized in a few words and phrases, minimized and trivialized. The limited space allotted in Oxford's "Very Short Introduction" series could have been better used. Large white spaces at the conclusion of most chapters suggest that there would have been space for a few paragraphs on Israel's perceptions of its own security during key junctures, such as the the invasion of 1948 and the suicide bombing campaigns of the 1990s and early 2000s.

James L. Gelvin, *The Israel-Palestine Conflict: One Hundred Years of War*, 3rd edition (2014)

James L. Gelvin is a professor of history at the University of California Los Angeles (UCLA). His third edition of *The Israel-Palestine Conflict: One Hundred Years of War* is a concise, illustrated textbook for undergraduate students with a focus on the “creation, evolution, interaction, and mutual definition of two national communities,” meaning Jewish Israelis and Arab Palestinians. (Groups such as the Druze and the Bedouin, even while having different stakes in the conflict and different orientations toward it, are not treated by Gelvin as distinct communities). In the author’s note which precedes the first chapter, Gelvin characterizes the book as “interpretive,” rather than “encyclopedic” (ix). While he warns that he did not write a history that will be satisfying to the “true believers” of either side, he promises to treat the “the self-aggrandizing claims of any and all nationalist movements with skepticism.” And he expresses a hope that he has “done so evenly and effectively” (ix). However, this book is less of a textbook and more of an essay arguing for the Palestinian cause or a few essays cobbled together as the table of contents seems to indicate. Its usefulness as a textbook may well depend on whether the reader will forgive the author for disingenuous story-telling and numerous factual errors.

Overall, the book lacks organizational coherence. The table of contents and chapter titles convey the impression that a motley collection of separate, stand-alone essays were patched together and marketed as a textbook. The first thing that stands out is that out of a total of ten chapters, there are four chapters on nationalism, “Cultures of Nationalism,” “From Nationalism in Palestine to Palestinian Nationalism,” “Zionism and Palestinian Nationalism: A Closer Look,” and “The Palestinian National Movement Comes of Age.” The next observation is that Palestinian nationalism is the book’s central topic and focus. Besides being narrow, this focus might also be a bit outdated because it trivializes the role of political Islam, which has played an increasingly important role in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict since the Islamic revival of the 1970s and 80s.

Timewise, the book’s proportions are also a bit skewed because the first half of the book is organized chronologically while the second half is organized thematically. Chapters 1-6 deal with history of the conflict until 1948. Chapter 7, an essay on nationalism, begins back in 1933 (with a bizarre section about the Jewish Palestine Pavilion at the New York World’s Fair). Chapter 8, titled “the Arab-Israeli Conflict,” spans the period 1949-2004. Chapter 9, another essay on Palestinian nationalism, jumps around in time, from 2001 to 1964 to 1996 and back to 1970, 1993 (and back again), ultimately ending in 1996. And the final chapter examines the failure of the Oslo process. The way that the book is organized, as a compilation of loosely related articles, prevents it from being useful as a reference tool. Moreover, the chapters read like persuasive essays rather than a careful, well-documented history.

The lack of documentation is frustrating. Many details and assertions have no references. During the survey of this book, Google had to be consulted extensively to try to figure out what sources Gelvin was drawing from. The failure to name sources on many

occasions will be frustrating for readers who are familiar with scholarship on the conflict and unhelpful for those who want to be familiarized.

Gelvin's writing style is consciously fashionable, and at times, sarcastic. At the first mention of the word Palestinian, he interjects "And yes the word 'Palestinian' does refer to a real nation and . . . the word 'Palestinian' can be used as a noun, not just as an adjective modifying the word 'terrorist'" (x). Into otherwise good sentences he interjects remarks that could be viewed as condescending, such as when he writes, "Hamas, remember, was not in the PLO" (241). At times his word choice is consciously trendy, for example, he characterizes the conflict as "a dispute over real estate" instead of a dispute over land (3). But sometimes, the way he treats the reader could be perceived as patronizing: "The kibbutz is such a national symbol, equivalent in Israel to what the cowboy is in America" (69). Moreover, there is an abundance of over-simplified explanations such as this one: "because . . . , well, Nasser was Nasser and Israelis were Israelis" (173). At times these over-simplifications seem to be used in order to avoid passing judgment on certain parties: "...the uprising drew from lower-class youths who . . . well, acted like lower-class youths" (221). This is especially conspicuous is his treatment of the less than savory behavior of the Palestinian leadership: "the PLO, being the PLO, reacted by ordering Palestinians not to comply and by assassinating those who did" (244). At times he goes overboard, to the point of condoning its human rights abuses: "The PLO could only act defensively, assassinating those who collaborated" (208).

Abundant references to popular American culture may render this book less accessible to non-American readers. For example, the composition of the PLO's executive committee is compared to "alphabet soup" (206). When discussing the Oslo process, Gelvin likens the concept of "confidence building" to pop-psychology, saying that this diplomatic strategy was "more Dr. Phil than Dr. Kissinger" (238). Elsewhere he opines that without the Balfour Declaration, Zionism might have developed more like "Confederate nationalism," an apparent reference to the ideology of the Confederate States of America (83).

Factual errors abound. The Gaza Strip, for example, is described as "the most densely populated territory on earth," which is far from the truth. There are numerous slices of territory that are more densely populated than Gaza, including Macau, Monaco, Singapore, Hong Kong, and Manhattan Island. Tel Aviv is described as Israel's largest city, while in fact it is the second largest city after Jerusalem (4). (In fact, West Jerusalem by itself is larger than Tel Aviv). While some of these blunders are harmless, others could be construed as deliberately misleading. Jaffa is described as a "Palestinian city" in the year 1909 (4). Jaffa at that time was actually an Ottoman city (part of the Sanjak of Jerusalem) which had a significant Jewish community. A synagogue had been established there in 1820 and by the year 1867, before the first wave of Zionist immigration from Europe, there were an estimated 800 Jews living in Jaffa, constituting sixteen percent of the total population.²⁰ There is no doubt that a distinctive Palestinian framework of identity was beginning to emerge among the Arabs of Jaffa, but in 1909 Arab nationalism was a more significant force for collective feeling while the city of Jaffa was under

²⁰ Ellen Clare Miller, "Eastern Sketches — notes of scenery, schools and tent life in Syria and Palestine," (Edinburgh: William Oliphant and Company, 1871), p. 97.

Ottoman Turkish rule. Thus, it would have been more intellectually honest to describe Jaffa as an “Ottoman city” or an “Arab Ottoman city,” but describing Jaffa as “a Palestinian city” without reference to the Ottoman framework is anachronistic.

In fact, Gelvin uses anachronisms liberally and frequently. For example, he says that Abraham (the Patriarch) immigrated to “Palestine” in the second millennium BC and that he may have come from “Iraq,”—the problem being that both geographical names post-date Abraham's time period. The frequent use of anachronisms and the labeling of the land as “Palestine” in every time period and context can be viewed, at best, as an insult to the reader's intelligence or at worst, an attempt to manipulate the reader's political opinions.

The greatest misnomer, however, is the book's title: “The Israel-Palestine Conflict: One Hundred Years of War.” Does the “one hundred years” refer to 1906-2006, the century preceding the publication of the first edition? And if so, which war of 1906 does the author refer to? Even if Gelvin views the 1936-39 Arab Revolt as a “war,” the notion that Jews and Palestinians have been at war for a century is just inaccurate. Taken as a whole, the title, “The Israel-Palestine Conflict: One Hundred Years of War” is misleading because it suggests that two states, Israel and Palestine, have been at war with each other for a century. What students need to understand—and Gelvin's title is not helpful in conveying this—is that there was a series of wars between Israel and various neighboring Arab states (1948–49, 1956, 1967, 1973), a war against the PLO in Lebanon (1982) two Palestinian intifadas (1989-1993 and 2000-2006), and three Israel-Gaza wars (2008, 2012 and 2014), which did not produce a Palestinian state. Unfortunately, there are educated people who think that the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is two states (Israel and "Palestine") fighting each other. Gelvin's title perpetuates and spreads this misinformation.

Israel is portrayed as the product of a colonial settler movement that took up residence on someone else's land, akin to the British colonization of North America. Both Israel and the United States were “built on the ruins of indigenous societies,” Gelvin writes (128). Nowhere are the key differences mentioned—that the Jews did not bring Palestinian society to ruin as the British colonists did with the Native American civilization. The British colonists did not claim former ties to North America, whereas the Jewish people exercised independence in the land of Israel/Palestine in ancient times, roughly between 1150 and 582 BCE. While the historicity of many details in the Bible has been challenged, most historians and archaeologists who work on the Levant in the Iron Age agree that there was in that time a process of wars and settlement whereby over time, the Hebrew people came to dominate the Canaanite landscape. In addition, there is no small number of scholars who believe that historical and archaeological evidence corroborate the existence of the ancient Kingdom of Israel, though they disagree about the extent of territory that was under its control, its degree of control and other considerations.

The “memory” of dispossession from the national homeland at the hands of the Romans in 70 CE and the ambition to return has since been a central part of the Jewish national narrative, religious liturgy, ritual and observances since Roman times. But in Gelvin's narrative, Jewish interest in Palestine during the 1800s is depicted as an anomaly that came out of nowhere: he writes, “the novelty of Zionism was its ability to integrate the lure of Palestine within what might be regarded as a quintessential nineteenth century

nationalism,” (44). One can reject the historicity of the Biblical narrative, but one cannot deny that longing for the land of Israel (*Eretz Israel*) has been a central theme in the liturgy of Jewish worship and prayer since time immemorial. In other words, “the lure of Palestine” was not something that needed to be integrated into Zionism, it was part and parcel of Zionism from the beginning.²¹ And the history and evolution of the “lure of Palestine,” or better put, the Jewish people’s collective “historic memory” of *Eretz Israel* (the land of Israel), is something that the reader should have been allowed to comprehend on its own terms. It seems reasonable that students of the conflict would be better served by being exposed to the authentic national narratives—as they are known by the parties—and be given the opportunity to apply critical thinking skills and evaluate these narratives on their own merits.

While Gelvin promised to treat the “the self-aggrandizing claims of any and all nationalist movements with skepticism,” his skepticism is unmistakably directed to only one side—the Zionist side. Gelvin asserts that Zionists “use the Bible and archaeology to assert territorial claims” and presents the Zionist narrative of the siege of Masada as a case-in-point, but it is stunning that he bypasses the matter of the great Jewish temple in Jerusalem, for which the archaeological and historical evidence is overwhelming (6-9). While he employs considerable artfulness to present the Jewish narrative as hogwash, Gelvin makes no effort to scrutinize the most problematic aspects of the Palestinian narrative. If he had, he might have mentioned that the parallel Palestinian narrative of the land’s ancient history is based purely on a theory which has largely been discredited.²² The Palestinian national narrative, as students in Palestinian schools memorize it, is that all of the ancient inhabitants of Palestine, were Arabs, i.e. the “Arab Chaldeans,” “Arab Akkadians,” “Arab Phoenicians,” “Arab Assyrians” and the “Arab Jebusites.”²³ The Palestinian national textbooks also posit that the Arab land of Palestine was occupied temporarily by the Jews in ancient times, just as the Arab land of Palestine is occupied by the Jews at present.²⁴ Gelvin’s rendition of the Palestinian narrative in this regard is white-washed of the most problematic facets and left largely un-scrutinized (10-11).

By detaching the Jewish people from their heritage, Gelvin lays the intellectual foundations for his unrelenting depiction of Zionism as a white settler colonial movement and the state of Israel as a European settler colonial state. Gelvin depicts Zionists and Arabs in emotive terms, as “colonizers” “colonized,” “alien” and “indigenous” (60, 91, 93-94, 117, 128, 150). While it is true that early Zionists spoke of their project as colonization, and many evinced condescending attitudes toward the Arab inhabitants in their writings, their “colonization” of the land can be differentiated from European

²¹ Detractors would point out that the Zionist Congress considered a proposal to establish a Jewish territory in East Africa (known as the “Uganda Scheme.”). This is true, but the “Uganda Scheme” was ultimately rejected by the Seventh Zionist Congress because it did not sufficiently take into account the historical and traditional facets of Jewish identity.

²² See for example, Philip Khury Hitti, *Tarikh Suriyya, Lubnan, wa-Falastin*. trans. (from English) by George Hadad and Abdul Karim Rafiq, Beirut: Dar al-Thaqafa, 1958, p. 58; and Jurji Zaydan, *al-’Arab qabla al-Islam*. Cairo: Dar al-Hilal, 1970; the Palestinian curriculum’s list of sources for ancient history appeared in *Tarikh al-Hadarat al-Qadima*. Grade 5, 2002, bibliography, p. 75. The Palestinian Curriculum Development Center, <http://www.pcdc.edu.ps/textbooks/index.htm>. Accessed 17 August 2008.

²³ See for example, *al-Mutala’a wa-an-Nusus*. Grade 9, pt. 2, 2004, p. 33, op. cit.

²⁴ See for example, *at-Tarabiya al-Wataniyya*. Grade 4, pt. 1, 2003, p. 15, and *Tarikh al-Hadarat al-Qadima*. Grade 5, 2004, p. 48, op. cit.

colonization of what would become the United States in two major ways: First, Jews had lived in the land of Israel/Palestine and maintained a continuous presence there (even if as a minority) for millennia, whereas Europeans did not settle in the “new world” until the 17th century. Second, the men and women who established the thirteen colonies in what would become the United States claimed no prior attachment to the land that they settled in, whereas Jews have looked and prayed toward Zion (Jerusalem) and viewed the land of Israel as their country for 3,700 years.

The de-legitimization of Zionism, and by implication the state of Israel, is a theme that colors Gelvin’s narrative of the conflict from the Mandate Period to the Oslo Accords and beyond. The reader is not given to understand why Israelis would celebrate “Independence Day” each year, because the author does not take into account that there are multiple ways of looking at the events of 1948. For Gelvin, 1948 represents the establishment of a “settler state” on the “ruins of a society that had nationalist aspirations of its own” (128). What is most conspicuous about his coverage of 1948 is that, rather than telling a story and incorporating multiple viewpoints, Gelvin constructs the entire chapter as a polemic against the Zionist narrative. Moreover, his attack on the Zionist narrative relies on a common form of argument which is actually an intellectual fallacy. His presentation of passages from Leon Uris’s novel *Exodus* followed by his “attack” on the historicity of the passages presented is a classic example of the “straw man fallacy” (129-137). Leon Uris’s book is a romantic, historical fiction novel written for a Zionist readership—a far cry from serious historical scholarship. Gelvin’s “de-bunking” of the Zionist myth as presented in the novel will not satisfy the reader who is looking for a reasoned discussion of the historiographical debate surrounding the war much less a critical examination of the debates between Israel’s “new” and “old” historians. For example, Benny Morris’s thesis and central arguments, which are not described in the text, are dismissed out of hand when Gelvin alleges that “his argument is not supported by any archival sources,” a claim which Gelvin presents as self-evident (137). The brief mention of Benny Morris is then followed by another diversion to Leon Uris’s historical fiction novel.

The amount of space dedicated to marginal voices, like Leon Uris’s, is a persistent trait of this textbook. Large passages from the memoirs of Eliza Mary Rogers are reproduced in full in two separate places (22-23, 27). Ironically, Gelvin admits that her memoirs have limited value for understanding the topic at hand when he writes, “Although Rogers’s comments are useful for getting a feel of Palestinian village life, it would be wrong to give them too much credence” (23). Similarly, there is a discussion of a short story written by Joseph Roth, “The Bust of the Emperor,” which spans about three pages of the textbook (33-36). Gelvin quotes large passages from the work of fiction to explain the development of Jewish nationalism, only to conclude that “Roth’s treatment of nationalism and its roots is shallow and unsatisfying” (36).

Proportion and coverage are real issues in this text. In a book with limited space and a lot to cover, it is hard to understand why so much space was dedicated to analyses of fictional books and stories that have limited relevance to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, while major hostilities such as the War of 1948 are skimmed over. *The Israel-Palestine Conflict* does not provide details about the war itself or analyze the major historiographical debates about the war. The causes for the exodus of Arabs from

Palestine in 1947-1948 have been a subject of major controversy between historians. Gelvin does allude to this (130). And yet instead of examining the different theses that have been put forward on this issue, Gelvin uses the available space to "de-bunk" Zionist myths about the war that are represented in Leon Uris's historical fiction novel (129, 136-138). In order to draw conclusions about Zionist aims in 1948, Gelvin examines a diary passage written by Theodore Herzl in 1895 and a statement that David Ben Gurion made to the Zionist Congress in 1937 (138). As a whole, the section about 1948 reads more like a tract written with a political purpose than a useful reference on the most significant Arab-Israeli war in history.

With no regard for historical context, Gelvin characterizes a statement that Ben-Gurion made in 1937 about the feasibility of transferring Arabs out of the would-be Jewish state as a "recommendation" that was put into practice in the 1948 War (138). There is plenty to be said about Ben Gurion's rhetoric, but characterizing a portion of a 1937 speech to Zionist leaders as recommendations for military action in 1948 is not intellectually honest. Another example of intellectual dis-honesty is his misuse of a quote taken from an interview that Benny Morris gave to a newspaper. Gelvin quotes Benny Morris, "to make an omelet, you have to break a few eggs," to introduce a passage about the massacre at Deir Yassin as an example of how Morris "justifies Zionist actions" (139).²⁵ However Morris's words are taken out of context. Morris explicitly stated:

There is no justification for acts of massacre. Those are war crimes. But in certain conditions, expulsion is not a war crime. I don't think that the expulsions of 1948 were war crimes. You can't make an omelet without breaking eggs.

Given Gelvin's open disdain for Morris, it is not surprising then that *none* of Morris's books on the topic are listed in the "suggestions for further reading" at the end of the chapter in which Morris is mentioned twice (144).

The War of 1948 and its various dimensions (the events leading up to it, the motives and aims of the different players, the significant battles, decisions taken) are not discussed. The controversial "plan dalet" and Israel's war aims, the subjects of the heated debate between "new" and "old" historians are not discussed. An eye-witness account of the massacre at Deir Yassin (which was actually an atypical event for many reasons) is held up as a case that can illustrate what happened all over the country (139). Gelvin concludes his coverage of Deir Yassin, with the statement: "In all, more than 500 villages disappeared forever," which implicitly suggests that the Israeli military committed massacres in 500 villages. This leads to the next complaint, which is that the reasons for the creation of the Palestinian refugee problem are not examined by Gelvin. In fact, Gelvin's reading of the War of 1948—as an attempt by the Jews to massacre as many Palestinians as possible (139)—does not explain why there were an estimated 711,000 refugees.²⁶

²⁵ For the context of the Benny Morris quote, see his interview in *Haaretz*, 8 January 2004.

²⁶ This figure comes from the "General Progress Report and Supplementary Report of the United Nations Conciliation Commission for Palestine, Covering the Period from 11 December 1949 to 23 October 1950." United Nations Conciliation Commission for Palestine: 1950.

Gelvin's section on Deir Yassin fails to mention that the massacre was carried out by two extremist, underground militias (the Irgun/ Etzel and Lehi), splinter groups that were at odds with the main Zionist leadership and its military wing, the Haganah. It fails to mention that the massacre was condemned by the main Zionist leadership and the Haganah (139). Elsewhere Gelvin shows an exceptional ability to identify different Palestinian groups and fringe groups, and to assign culpability for hostilities to the right party. He describes how two factions of the PLO, the PFLP and the PDFLP carried out terrorist attacks in Jordan which elicited a crushing response from the Jordanian army. "Black September," Gelvin writes, "would not be the last time one or more of the guerrilla groups would force the hand of the PLO" (210-211). Gelvin provides a careful and nuanced analysis of the balancing act that Yasir Arafat was forced to play as he sought to promote inclusion and build consensus among the different segments of the Palestinian population (208-213). Gelvin should have provided a similar analysis of the demands on Ben Gurion who faced the challenge of extremist Zionist militias acting independently of the mainstream armed forces, the Haganah.

Later chapters are plagued with the same type of omissions. The narrative of the intifada, for example, lacks the multiplicity of perspectives that one would expect from a textbook about a conflict between two peoples. Gelvin's reader is not given to understand that in the period 1993-2006, more than 150 suicide bombings were carried out in shopping malls, dance clubs, cafes, buses and markets. Without an understanding of how the intifadas were experienced in Israel, especially the suicide bombings of the second intifada, it is very difficult to understand Israeli public opinion at certain key stages and it is hard to understand the context of statements made and decisions taken. This is illustrated in the way that Gelvin introduces the April 2002 Israeli military operation in the West Bank. He writes, "In the wake of a suicide bombing that left 30 dead in March 2002, Sharon ordered 'Operation Defensive Shield,' the largest post-Oslo Israeli incursion into Palestinian territories to date" (248). His narrative goes on to depict the suffering and loss of life on the Palestinian side (which is important). But what is missing here is context for the operation. Ariel Sharon did not decide to launch a military incursion into the West Bank as a way of avenging the deaths of the 30 victims of the 27 March 2002 suicide bombing, as the text seems to suggest; rather he ordered the operation against terror cells in the West Bank because this 27 March bombing was the 15th attack of its type in a period of three months. In the previous year, 2001, 40 terrorist bombings were carried out against Israelis.

The Israel-Palestine Conflict: One Hundred Years of War, 3rd edition, by James L. Gelvin is not suitable as a reference book or as a textbook for introductory or survey courses on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Its lack of organizational coherence renders it un-useful as a quick reference. Its conspicuous partiality toward the Palestinian narrative should prevent it from being used as a main textbook. In many ways it fails to meet the criteria identified as the markers of a good history textbook. It is a set of polemical essays on the victimization of Palestinians by Zionists, cobbled together into a polemical meta-history of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and gerrymandered for an American audience.

Benny Morris, *Righteous Victims: A History of the Zionist-Arab Conflict, 1881-2001*, 2nd edition (2001)

Righteous Victims: A History of the Zionist-Arab Conflict, 1881-2001, 2nd edition, is a rigorous history of the conflict from the beginning of Zionist immigration to Palestine until the start of the second intifada. Benny Morris is a key member of the group of Israeli historians known as the "new historians," a loosely defined group of academics who have challenged, among other things, the traditional Zionist narrative concerning the events of 1948. Today he is a professor of Middle East history at Ben-Gurion University of the Negev in Israel. He completed his undergraduate studies in history at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem and received a doctorate in modern European history from the University of Cambridge in the United Kingdom. Morris served in the IDF from 1967-1969 and was wounded by an Egyptian shell at the Suez Canal. He worked as a correspondent for the *Jerusalem Post* for 12 years. It was during this time, in the 1980s, that Israel's archives concerning the events of 1948 were first opened and Morris conducted his initial research on the causes of the Palestinian exodus in 1948. His revisionist history of those events was first articulated in his book *The Birth of the Palestinian Refugee Problem, 1947—1949* (1988).

Mainstream Israeli historiography at the time explained the 1948 Palestinian exodus from their towns and villages as having been driven by fear, or by instructions from Arab leaders. The Palestinian narrative says that Arabs were expelled from their homes and villages in accordance with a Zionist master plan. Morris demonstrates that there were expulsions and atrocities, but argues that this was not the result of a master plan, and that no such master plan existed. His revisionist accounts of the events of 1948 won praise and criticism from both sides of the political divide. In 2004 Morris published an update to his 1988 book titled, *The Birth of the Palestinian Refugee Problem Revisited*. Morris explains that the 2004 revision was necessitated by the opening of additional material in the Israeli archives as well as the need to respond to the challenges raised by critics of the first book.²⁷ He summarizes his findings as follows: the newly opened archives "substantially increase both Israeli and Palestinian responsibility for the creation of the refugee problem." What the new documents reveal, he says, is that "there were both far more expulsions and atrocities by Israeli troops than tabulated in [the] book's first edition and, at the same, time, far more orders and advice to various communities by Arab officials and officers to quit their villages or to at least send away their women, old folk and children, substantially fueling the exodus."²⁸ In addition, the updated version elaborates on the contemplation of the notion of "transfer," of the Arab population in the documentary records of the Zionist leadership.

Between the publication of the first and the second editions of his seminal work, Morris also underwent substantial changes in his personal attitude toward the conflict and the potential for a solution. After the publication of his first book Morris was viewed by

²⁷ Benny Morris. *The Birth of the Palestinian Refugee Problem Revisited*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004, p. 5.

²⁸ Ibid.

many as a historian that was more sympathetic toward the Palestinian narrative of events than the Zionist one. In 1988, the year of its publication, Morris actually refused to do IDF reserve duty in the West Bank city of Nablus and spent three weeks in jail. This was to corroborate the perception of many that Morris was associated with the far left of Israel's political spectrum. But the experience of the second intifada, which broke out in 2000, turned him into a harsh critic of the Palestinians. Morris said, "The bombing of the buses and restaurants really shook me. They made me understand the depth of the hatred for us. They made me understand that the Palestinian, Arab and Muslim hostility toward Jewish existence here is taking us to the brink of destruction."²⁹ In 2012 he told the Israeli newspaper *Haaretz* that the lack of peace in the Israeli-Palestinian arena was owing to the Palestinians' rejection of the notion of two states for two peoples.³⁰ Morris, whose reputation was built on his willingness to assign a large part of the blame for the conflict to atrocities committed by the Zionists in 1948, had seemingly come full circle. By many accounts, the revision of his seminal work in the form of *The Birth of the Palestinian Refugee Problem Revisited* (2004) and the works that came after, exhibited this change in subtle, yet tangible ways.

Because of the progression of his research and his orientation, it is important to situate *Righteous Victims* within the context of Morris's scholarly output as a whole. *Righteous Victims: A history of the Zionist-Arab Conflict, 1881-2001* was published in 1999 and then again in 2001, which places its publication after that of *The Birth of the Palestinian Refugee Problem* (1988) and before *The Birth of the Palestinian Refugee Problem Revisited* (2004). Whereas *The Birth* made use of Israeli archives to the story of narrowly defined events in 1947-1948, *Righteous Victims* makes use of mostly secondary sources to tell a history of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict from 1881-2001.

Its comprehensive coverage makes *Righteous Victims* a candidate to be used as a reference book or as a textbook for introductory and survey courses on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. However, due to the limitations of the publisher, it offers none of the user-friendly extras that have come to be associated with textbooks. There are some very basic, but useful, black and white maps embedded in the text, but no images, for example. It would have been helpful to have a glossary for foreign words, especially since translations of foreign words are not always provided in the text. An explanation of the transliteration system employed is also missing. Among other things, it would have helped to know why some Arabic transliterations have diacritics and others do not. Also, the footnotes are grouped in the back and difficult to locate without also paging back and forth to figure out the location of a given passage within the book's table of contents. The volume's hefty length could have been reduced as well by removing some repetition (see for example, 593 and 618, and 271, 276 and 278).

Righteous Victims is a fitting title for this text because it presages a narrative that will assist the reader in viewing both the Zionists and the Palestinians with a measure of empathy. The subtitle, "A history of the Zionist-Arab Conflict, 1881-2001" will be intellectually satisfying to the toughest critics of terminology because it does not situate

²⁹Ari Shavit, "Survival of the Fittest?" an interview with Benny Morris, *Haaretz*, 9 January 2004.

³⁰Coby Ben-Simhon, "Benny Morris on Why He's Written His Last Word on the Israel-Arab Conflict," *Haaretz*, 20 September 2012.

the Israeli-Palestinian conflict in an inappropriate timeframe and it does not dismiss the role of Arab states in the region during the conflict's formative years.

It can be said that the narrative in *Righteous Victims* is Israel centric. The author uses English and Hebrew sources (and Israeli archives) but not Arabic sources (xiii). Chapters are arranged according to milestones in Israeli history rather than shared history and make use of terminology that is exclusively Israeli, i.e. "The Six Day War." Geography is sometimes described in Hebraic terms, i.e. Judea and Samaria, but these designations are usually qualified and explained or simply appear in quotations (2, 36, 130, 213, 218, 220, 330, 337, 454, 588).

Morris acknowledges a "built-in imbalance" in his narrative in the sense that "the Zionist side tends to be illuminated more thoroughly and with greater precision than the Arab side. . . ." (xiv). Morris points out the lack of accessible, Arab archival documents as he explanation. Another reason for the imbalance, he says, is the lack of any sort of historiographical debate between Arab or Palestinian historians analogous to the debate that has transpired between Israeli "new" and "old" historians. The Palestinian academy has yet to challenge the traditional Palestinian narrative and propose a "revision" (xiv). While writing *Righteous Victims* he says, "I have tried to compensate by using relevant Arab materials to the extent that they were accessible, and by ferreting out the 'Arab side' or 'perspective' as manifested in the Zionist-Israeli and Western archives. . ." (xiv). It is significant that he refers to "Arab materials" and not "Arabic materials," because Morris does not read Arabic. He does, however, make use of Palestinian histories in translation and scholarly books and articles by Arab and Palestinian authors (the same approach used by the other textbook authors in this survey).

Morris's self-assessment, laid out in the preface, should be coupled with the knowledge that Morris is a positivist historian. A positivist believes that by sifting through the evidence at hand, a historian can arrive at a more or less accurate understanding of past events. As new information comes to light, any narrative of history can and should be revised or supplemented. Morris is also a revisionist historian, and an academic whose prior work went a long way towards deflating Israel's heroic and romantic founding myth.

Morris's assessment of the strengths and weaknesses of his own book are generally accurate. In *Righteous Victims* as with *The Birth of the Palestinian Refugee Problem*, Morris dedicates more space to explaining the Zionist side of the story, and yet his narrative does not forgive moral failures. Quite to the contrary, Morris, who made a name for himself by exposing atrocities committed by Zionist forces in 1948, did not depart from that course in *Righteous Victims*. Thus, the narrative of the founding of the State of Israel in *Righteous Victims* is a very critical one. But there is a perceptible shift toward a mainstream Israeli narrative of events toward the end of the book, especially in the chapters that relate to the Oslo process. This may have been inevitable given that the main sources consulted to construct a narrative of these events were Israeli newspapers.

In terms of style, this text is written in a very detached way. Like the ambiguity in the title, the reader will be forced to draw his or her own conclusions about who is the righteous party from one episode to the next. While there is a sense that the author occasionally awards "points" to one side or the other, he avoids polemics and ideological

jargon, leaving the reader to reach his or her own conclusions about moral issues. This approach fits well with the criteria for what makes a good textbook.

The focus on political and military history may not meet the needs of every introductory or survey class on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Morris admits in the preface that he focuses on the political and military arenas as he views them to be the central arenas of the conflict. Many readers will be disappointed to learn that he does not devote much attention to economic, sociological, religious and cultural aspects of the conflict (xiii). In certain places, the coverage of the wider international and regional context for developments in the Arab-Israeli arena is found lacking as well. But while *Righteous Victims* is lacking in the non-military arenas, it is made up for with fascinating descriptions of the subtleties and intricacies of the military arena. Morris gives more than the standard "tit for tat" version of events. He informs the reader when gunners were ordered to miss their target, when military figures sought a pretext to go to war, and when provocations were intentionally overlooked (see examples of all of these nuances on p. 512).

It is also worth noting that the narrower military focus is not evident from the beginning. In the opening chapters, Morris presents the historical context for the establishment of the state of Israel in a very effective, scholarly and engaging way. In terms of style and presentation, his overviews of the relevant ancient and medieval history, Ottoman governance in Palestine and the rise of Zionism are top notch. And in the sea of material that is available on the British Mandate, the Arab revolt and the War of 1948, Morris's chapters on these topics in *Righteous Victims* are the standard bearers. We also noted his fair and objective treatment of subsequent Arab-Israeli wars in 1956, 1967, 1973 and the war in Lebanon in 1982; however less ponderous detail about the generals and more analysis of these wars and their significance in history might have been preferable. Morris's chapter on the first intifada and the Oslo process was among the most informative, balanced and insightful, compared with the other texts in this survey. Since the book went to press in 2001, the book does not cover the second intifada.

As noted, brief overviews of the relevant ancient and medieval history are given as part of the first chapter, "Palestine on the Eve." Morris gives a very brief, two paragraph summary of the Jewish presence in the region in ancient and medieval times (although he anachronistically calls the land Palestine even while describing its composition 3,000 years ago). His summary is brief enough to establish that Jews had an ancient presence and period of sovereignty in the land without delving into controversial historical and archeological debates about the topic. He then moves quickly to the discussion of the demographics of Palestine on the eve of Zionism, a subject which is, perhaps, more relevant to the topic at hand. Included in that is an overview of the pre-Zionist Jewish population of Palestine. This is an oft neglected topic and its inclusion was therefore important.

The discussion of the Ottoman administration and of its districts that encompassed Palestine is very useful. It is brief and to the point but introduces key terms and concepts that situates the rise of Zionist immigration in its wider context. There is a section which discusses Jewish-Muslim relations under the Ottoman Empire which introduces the notion of *dhimmi* status in Islam in general and in the Ottoman context in particular.

As was mentioned, in the first five chapters Morris does a superb job of weaving together social, economic, religious and cultural themes to provide a rich context for the watershed of 1948. His discussion of Zionism and Zionist immigration to Palestine is one of the features that sets this book apart from its counterparts. Morris not only provides an overview of the different thinkers and approaches within Zionism, he also highlights the psychological dispositions forged among Jews in Europe which were to influence the course of Jewish settlement in Palestine. Morris describes the effect of the 1903-1906 pogroms in Russia on the Yishuv (Jewish community in Palestine) when he says "Jews would no longer rely on king, baron, or policeman for protection . . . Jews had to protect themselves and their own; at the least they had to defend or assert their honor and go down fighting" (25). ". . . collectively they were haunted by their awful past. Eventually the Arabs—and they themselves—would pay the price" (26). Elsewhere he refers to the centuries of oppression and discrimination in the Diaspora as the "most important items of baggage the immigrants brought with them to Palestine" (40). In spite of this sympathetic understanding of the Jewish psyche, he does not forgive the Jews for failing to grasp that what they faced in Palestine in the 1930s was a rival national movement (136).

Morris provides a brief but rich account of the genesis of Palestinian nationalism. In terms of the debate surrounding the emergence of Palestinian national consciousness, he chooses neither the "early date" thesis as argued by Kimmerling and Migdal nor the "late date" thesis which is part of the traditional Zionist narrative.³¹ Relying on Eliezer Tauber and Muhammad Muslih, Morris traces the emergence of Palestinian nationalism to 1920, the year of a regional division between Syria and Palestine (35-36). He argues that before that regional division, Pan-Islamism and Arab nationalism were the predominant orientations in Ottoman Palestine. National sentiments in Palestine on the eve of WWI are characterized as "local patriotism" or "proto-nationalism." In terms of aspirations, the majority of Palestinians expected to be included in a national entity that would encompass Greater Syria (35). Morris attributes the formation of a distinct Palestinian national consciousness mostly to the influx of Zionists to Palestine but acknowledges that other historical processes also played a role (34).

As was mentioned, *Righteous Victims* is largely free of rhetorical devices and word choices that display a clear preference for one national narrative over another. For example, there is no repetition of emotive words such as "colonial" without an examination of the appropriateness of the term. He states unequivocally, "Zionism was a colonizing and expansionist ideology and movement" (676), but rather than drawing a simplistic parallel to other colonial movements such as the American colonies or South Africa, he analyzes the differences: "Zionism served no imperial power but rather a dispersed people that was in need of a piece of territory in which to find a safe haven and reconstruct itself socially, economically and politically" (676). The careful use of terminology is also evident in his discussion of the waves of immigration to Palestine. Morris points out that the Jews who made up the first wave of immigration "were not colonists in the usual sense of sons or agents of an imperial mother country, projecting its

³¹ Baruch Kimmerling and Joel S. Migdal, *The Palestinian People: A History* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2003), pp. 6-11. For an overview of the "late date" thesis, see "The Year the Arabs Discovered Palestine," by Daniel Pipes, *Jerusalem Post*, 13 September 2000.

power beyond the seas and exploiting Third World natural resources" (38). Morris goes on to say that the first wave of immigrants fit the definition of "colonial" better than the second wave because the first wave relied on cheap native labor whereas the second wave set up a separate Jewish economy in Palestine (38-39).

One of the real gems of *Righteous Victims* is Chapter 5, "World War II and the First Arab-Israeli War, 1939-1949." This chapter provides a succinct summary of Morris's well-known, nuanced thesis concerning the War of 1948, that the "the Palestinian refugee problem was born of war, not by design, Jewish or Arab." Morris provides a well-documented, multi-faceted explanation of the multiple factors that brought about the Palestinian tragedy and massive refugee problem. He provides vivid descriptions of atrocities against Palestinians committed by the Zionist forces and he also points to a number of atrocities committed by Palestinians against Jews. He examines the complex cause and effect relationships between war, atrocities and the Palestinian refugee problem. Those who want an account that lays the blame of the refugees wholly at the feet of the Zionists or at the feet of the Palestinians will be disappointed. His detached and "matter of fact" narrative of the war will not satisfy the devoted adherents to the traditional narrative of either side. But because the chapter is a presentation of his thesis and not an interaction with competing points of view, it would be worthwhile to supplement the chapter with the debates between Morris and his critics or with critical reviews of his work.³²

While it is refreshing to read about controversial events in a detached, objective writing style, this style also makes for a dry narrative at times, especially in chapters 6-11, which cover the period 1949-1987. These are the chapters in which the reader might experience the most craving for a discussion that includes the social and cultural dimensions of Israeli and Palestinian society. Another way in which these chapters were found lacking was in their perfunctory treatment of the implications of the Cold War on politics in the Middle East. Morris is careful to mention Soviet arms shipments to Arab states but nowhere does he interpret the effect of emerging Cold War calculations on the Americans' growing support for Israel or the influence of the bi-polar international system on the Arab-Israeli wars in 1956, 1967, 1973 and 1982, or the relationship between Soviet collapse and the softening of the PLO's rejectionist stance.

In the chapter titled, "The Intifada," journalistic sources are used to construct a narrative of events that conveys both the Israeli and the Palestinian perspectives on the first intifada. Morris situates the establishment of the Palestinian Islamic Jihad and Hamas, as well as the outbreak of the intifada within the broader context of the Islamic revival of the 1970s and 80s. Palestinian grievances and resentments are vividly conveyed as well as the factors and motivations that drove the uprising. Morris also analyzes the reasons for Israel's failure to interpret the intifada as a national uprising (586-594). What is harder to

³² See for example: Benny Morris, "Politics by Other Means," *New Republic*, 17 March 2014; Ilan Pappé, "Response to Benny Morris' 'Politics by Other Means,'" *New Republic*, 30 March 2004; Efraim Karsh, "Benny Morris's Reign of Error, Revisited," *Middle East Quarterly*, Vol. 12, No. 2 (2005), pp. 31-42; Anita Shapira, "The Past Is Not a Foreign Country," *New Republic*, 29 November 1999; Charles Smith, "Morris: Righteous Victims," The Institute for Palestine Studies. January 2000. Available online at: <http://www.palestine-studies.org/jps/fulltext/41025>. Accessed 25 September 2016; Shabtai Tevet, "The Palestine Arab Refugee Problem and Its Origins," *Middle Eastern Studies* Vol. 26, No. 2 (April 1990).

find—and herein presented—are deeper insights about Israel's response, including the role of the IDF, the use of firearms and the rules of engagement. Morris also describes the fierce debates within the echelons of power and the society in general about the IDF's response (586-602).

The sympathetic portraits of Israeli and Palestinian leaders found within the pages of *Righteous Victims* will challenge both the most ardent Zionists as well as the most devoted to the Palestinian cause. Many would disagree with Morris's assertions that Arafat clamped down on the fundamentalists (640, 649). To this day Arafat is still viewed by many as a man complicit in terrorism. Most would agree that he didn't take pains to stop terror attacks. Likewise, many would object to Morris's mention that Arafat initiated an "ambiguous annulment of the offensive passages of the Palestinian covenant" (640). Many point to the notion that Arafat delivered words and not deed. In fact, Arafat's "ambiguity" was interpreted by many as insincerity.

But Morris does not forgive Arafat for his rejection of the final status proposals offered by Ehud Barak in 2000. Ehud Barak is often vilified for his behavior toward Arafat during the Camp David talks. Less sympathetic portrayals of Barak use the memoirs of diplomats to characterize his negotiating behavior and cast him as a clever politician who did not offer something that Arafat could accept.³³ Morris does not attempt to describe what went on behind closed doors. Instead, drawing extensively on the left-leaning Israeli newspaper *Haaretz*, he gives the reader an Israeli angle: he explains the multi-layered pressures under which Barak was forced to negotiate: Barak faced an election in which right-wing Ariel Sharon was expected to win; Sharon's party campaigned on a promise of security at a time when frequent suicide bombings rocked the country. Many in Israel viewed Arafat as complicit in the terrorism and indiscriminate violence and opposed the renewal of talks. Barak viewed an agreement as strategically necessary, didn't have strong backing by the Israeli public to conclude it, and courageously tried to conclude it anyway. A similar discussion of the pressures facing Arafat and the complexities of Palestinian politics is missing from this chapter. In conclusion, Morris attributes the failure of Camp David to Arafat's rejection of the proposals offered (671).

Righteous Victims: A History of the Zionist-Arab Conflict, 1881-2001, 2nd edition, is a rigorous and well-documented history that can be used as a textbook for an introductory or survey course on the conflict. Readers should be aware that this book represents an Israeli history of the conflict. It is a very critical (revisionist) Israeli history in the earlier chapters and a less-critical Israeli history in the later chapters. Chapters 1-5 are exceptionally well-written and engaging. They cover the period 1881-1949 and include a summary of the revisionist thesis on the War of 1948 that Morris is best known for. The next six chapters read like military and diplomatic history; they are detached and objective accounts of Arab-Israeli wars and the Israeli-Egyptian peace with little reference to culture and society. They are better suited to upper level courses that examine special topics in the history of Israel or the history of the conflict. The last three chapters cover the first intifada and the Oslo process but end abruptly with the election of Ariel Sharon in February 2001. A good supplement to this book or object of comparison would be a book or article that draws upon Arabic sources to present the traditional

³³ See for example, Smith, op. cit., pp. 492-496.

Palestinian narrative. All in all, the book is written in a vivid and descriptive style, with more detail and less interpretation, allowing the reader to reach his or her own conclusions on topics for which there are multiple interpretations.

Ilan Pappé, *A History of Modern Palestine*, 2nd edition (2006)

In the author's foreword to *A History of Modern Palestine: One Land Two Peoples*, 2nd edition, Ilan Pappé describes his approach as biased. He writes, "the reader of this book will find instances and descriptions that fit many of the claims of one national narrative, the Palestinian one, but fewer of the Israeli one" (11). This comes as no surprise, coming from an academic who has made a name for himself by opposing Israel and everything it stands for. Ilan Pappé, one of the so-called "new historians" is also a political activist and a leading figure in the international movement to boycott Israeli academic institutions. Among his most recognizable books is *The Ethnic Cleansing of Palestine* (2006) in which he argues that the founders of the state of Israel carried out a massive crime against humanity. Many prominent historians of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict have found fault with Pappé's work, including others whose work has served to revise the traditional Zionist narrative.

Pappé's textbook, *A History of Modern Palestine*, first published in 2004 was conceived during the author's time spent as a lecturer at the University of Haifa (xixx). The 2nd edition was updated to incorporate the events of the 1990's and the beginning of the 21st century. It includes coverage of the Oslo Accords and the reasons for their failure as well as a discussion of the experience of Israelis and Palestinians under the political status quo. Pappé explains that the book was the product of an effort to write a comprehensive historical narrative of the conflict "that did not repeat the known versions of the two conflicting parties," a narrative that respects the "other," and brings in the voices of actors (particularly the "subalterns") which have thus far been left out of the story (xix-xx).

While Pappé describes his text as a humanistic account, rather than a political account, it may have been more germane, and certainly more accurate, to describe it as a post-colonialist and Marxist account. Pappé's Marxist lens is evident from his word choices as well as his approach. He characterizes the Jewish inhabitants living in the agricultural and semi-agricultural communities during the Mandate period as the "Jewish proletariat," writes about their "class solidarity," "class consciousness" and relationships with their "comrades" (see for example, pp. 112-113). Likewise, Palestinian refugees of 1967 are characterized as "the landless proletariat" (189). He also deploys the Saidian, post-colonial prism, sharply depicting immigrants and inhabitants and "master and native" (40). Pappé tells the reader, "this book is written by one who admits compassion for the colonized and not the colonizer" (11).

The title *A History of Modern Palestine* is a good indication of Pappé's personal political views: that the rightful sovereigns of all the land (between the river Jordan and the Mediterranean Sea) are the Palestinians and that a Jewish state in part of the land is illegitimate. In order to build the case for this conclusion, Pappé cherry-picked his sources to find evidence that supports the case he wanted to make while setting aside evidence that undermined his conclusion. Then, in a prosecutorial style, he constructed a

comprehensive and coherent argument for the illegitimacy of the state of Israel. The result is a polemical narrative of the region that masquerades as a history textbook.

It is worthwhile to take into account that Pappe is a postmodernist and a relativist. In his view, there is no historical truth, there are only narratives, views and perspectives; the historian is left to his or her imagination and ideological bent to reconstruct what happened in the past. By Pappe's own account, he wrote this book not in an attempt to provide the facts of history, but rather to further his own political agenda: "My bias is apparent," he writes, "despite the desire of my peers that I stick to the facts and the 'truth' when reconstructing past realities. I view any such construction as vain and presumptuous" (11). Ironically, Pappe is inconsistent in his assertion that there is no truth. For example, Pappe describes several films as telling the "truth" (265).

The narrative has clear heroes and villains. Zionists are hung in effigy while Palestinians are painted against the backdrop of a bed of roses. This dichotomy is obvious in all descriptions of Israeli soldiers, but it is also obvious in seemingly more innocuous subjects, such as the position of women in Israeli and Palestinian society. The status of Palestinian women, Pappe says, was upgraded during the Second World War, when women were seen working jobs they had never held before, wearing bathing costumes at the beach instead of veils, and walking unaccompanied by men in public places. In contrast, Jewish women also had new jobs, but Jewish men still dominated the workforce, he says. Not missing an opportunity to criticize Zionism from any angle he goes on to say, "The equality of women was part of the pseudo-socialist discourse of Zionism, but the reality was rather different. The terms 'member wife' and 'member's wife' were used interchangeably, implying a double duty for the sake of the Zionist and socialist revolutions—a house wife bore the additional burden of being a laborer, worker or farmer" (117). In Pappe's thinking, Palestinian Muslim women were on the path to liberation in the period of WWII while Jewish women were still dominated by Zionist men.

In Pappe's *History of Modern Palestine* everything Palestinian is beautiful and everything Zionist is ugly. Pappe writes, ". . . rural Palestine lived as it had for centuries, on terraced hills and mountain slopes . . . the villages, much like the Mediterranean islands today, were painted white, adorned with strong blue ornaments against the evil eye, and ringed with fruit trees and bougainvillea" (70). But in relation to Jewish neighborhoods he says, "Jerusalem was . . . encircled by several ugly suburbs, which crouched menacingly on the hills overlooking the Arab city below" (195).

This book was found to have more factual errors than any other book in this survey. The dates and chronology are unreliable. Pappe says "the Stern Gang and the Palmach represented two different wings of Zionism. Both however disregarded the local population before the revolt, but afterwards did all they could to drive as many of them as possible out of Palestine" (108). The problem here is that the Stern Gang and the Palmach (est. 1940 and 1941) did not exist before the Arab Revolt of 1936-1939. Pappe mistakenly writes that "by 1934" there was an Arab Higher Committee when in fact it was established in 1936 (102). He puts the establishment of Tel Aviv in July 1907 when in fact it was 11 April 1909 (53). He writes that in 1969 the PFLP hijacked three aircraft when in fact these hijackings all happened in 1970. Nazareth is described as "the only

Palestinian town in Israel” (225). Nazareth is unique in that it was not a battlefield in the 1948 War, but to say that it is the “only Palestinian town in Israel” is misleading. Umm al-Fahm, Shefa ‘Amr, Daliat al-Karmel and Abu Gosh, among dozens of others, are Arab-Palestinian majority towns inside the State of Israel. The mis-leading statements and inaccuracies should come as no surprise because Pappe’s aim in writing this book was not to provide a factually accurate reference book: his aim, as described in the introduction, was to provide an “alternative narrative” (2).

In a history of any conflict, one would expect the author to discuss and contextualize episodes of violence committed by both sides. Pappe focuses on violence committed by Jews but gives scant attention to episodes of violence committed by Arabs. When discussing the 1929 Jerusalem riots, for example, in which mobs of Arabs attacked and killed 133 Jews, Pappe writes, “A minor incident concerning prayer arrangements near the Wailing Wall . . . sparked violence that soon swept through Palestine as a whole in 1929. In all, 300 Jews and a similar number of Palestinians were killed.” The first issue is that Pappe gets the numbers wrong. There were 133 Jewish casualties and 116 Arab casualties. The second issue is that Pappe fails to mention that most of the Jews were killed by Palestinians and most of the Palestinians were killed by the British police who tried to suppress the riots.³⁴

The book includes a summary of Pappe’s well-known and controversial “ethnic cleansing” thesis, which was first articulated in his book, *The Ethnic Cleansing of Palestine*. This thesis argues that the Zionists alone bear responsibility for the 1948 Palestinian exodus. He argues that the military plan implemented by the Haganah in 1948, “plan dalet,” was part of a Zionist “master plan” to rid the Jewish state of all of its Arab inhabitants and in doing so, bring about the “ethnic cleansing” of Palestine (130). This is in contrast to the traditional Zionist narrative, which holds that most of the Palestinians who became refugees in 1948 fled during the fighting. It is also in sharp contrast to Benny Morris’s thesis, that the refugee problem was created as result of both expulsion and flight, and that the Haganah’s “plan dalet” was not a master plan for clearing Palestine of its Arab inhabitants, whether by violence or coercion.

We have said that when an author of a textbook chooses one side in a historiographical debate, he or she should acknowledge contradictory evidence and competing points of view. Pappe acknowledges and briefly summarizes the traditional Zionist narrative (in the introduction), but he does not acknowledge or address Benny Morris’s widely accepted thesis, that the refugee problem was “born of war and not of design.” And perhaps Pappe will be forgiven for ignoring evidence that contradicts his thesis since the highly publicized debates between him and Morris have been published elsewhere. But if the brief summary of the “ethnic cleansing” thesis found in Chapter 4 of *A History of Modern Palestine* is used as assigned reading for an introductory or survey course on the Israeli-

³⁴ Great Britain, “Report of the Commission on the Disturbances of August 1929, Presented by the Secretary of State for the Colonies to Parliament by Command of His Majesty [The Shaw Commission Report],” March 1930, Vol. 3530 of Cmd (London: HMSO).

Palestinian conflict, it should be paired with critical reviews of the thesis or with the public debate between Pappe and Morris.³⁵

There are numerous places in which Pappe's narrative is incoherent. In a discussion of *fedayeen* (guerrilla) attacks on Israeli civilians in the 1950s, Pappe refers to an "Israeli tendency to retaliate with a shoot-to-kill policy" (148, emphasis added). The reader is left to wonder, was it a tendency or was it a policy? The two terms do not mean the same thing. Under the heading "The Occupation (1967-1982)" Pappe cobbles together some examples of what he calls "the Israeli expulsion policy" (194). The first example, relates to the Jewish Quarter in the Old City of Jerusalem. Pappe says that after 1967, Arab residents of the Jewish Quarter "were either evicted or offered money to leave" (194). Firstly, this assertion lacks context. In 1948, 1,500 Jewish residents were evicted from the Jewish Quarter. After 1967, Israel developed a policy to re-settle Jews in the Jewish quarter. Second, the sentence creates the impression that after 1967, Israel simply cleared the Jewish Quarter of Arab residents, which is not the case. The goal of re-settling Jews in the Jewish Quarter was not achieved quickly. According to two censuses taken in 1967, 5,000 Arabs resided in the Jewish Quarter in mostly dilapidated housing. Between 1967 and 1969 about 2,000 accepted compensation from the Israeli government and left, and yet in 1975 Arabs still constituted the majority in the Jewish Quarter.³⁶ These realities are far more complex and interesting than the simple picture offered by Pappe.

For his next example of "expulsion," Pappe moves to the West Bank and gives an example which has no equivalence to the Jewish Quarter. Basing himself on Nur Masalha, Pappe says, "the residents of three refugee camps north of Jericho were expelled too. A number also fled during the war and after the expulsions" (194). This confused jumble differs significantly from what Nur Masalha writes: "During the 1967 hostilities or shortly after virtually all residents of these camps, over 50,000 people, fled or were expelled to the East Bank. . . ."³⁷ Masalha gives a very detailed explanation of the reasons for flight, saying that it was, in part, "a response to the severe situational pressures existing at the time," including shock, fears stemming from the experience of war in 1948, the need to protect the honor of women and other considerations. Masalha's multi-causal explanation is much more insightful than Pappe's simplistic one.

In sum, Pappe's *History of Modern Palestine* is not a good textbook and not a good reference book for an introductory course on the conflict. It is not an honest history. The facts are variably invented, distorted or ignored in service of the author's political agenda. The argument made in this book will certainly challenge the reader whose perspective on the conflict is the traditional Zionist narrative, but it will not suffice for a reader who is

³⁵ See for example Benny Morris, "The Liar as Hero," *New Republic*, 17 March 2011; Benny Morris, "Politics by Other Means," *New Republic*, 17 March 2014; Ilan Pappe, "Response to Benny Morris' 'Politics by Other Means'," *New Republic*, 30 March 2004; Seth J. Frantzman, "Flunking History: Review of The Ethnic Cleansing of Palestine," *The Middle East Quarterly* Vol. 15, No. 2 (Spring 2008), pp. 70-75; Yoav Gelber, "The Status of Zionist and Israeli History in Israeli Universities," *Journal of Israeli History* Vol. 20, No. 2-3 (2001): pp. 121-54; Tom Segev, "His Colleagues Call Him a Traitor," *Ha'aretz* (English Edition), 24 May 2002.

³⁶ Bracha Slae, Ruth Kark, and Noam Shoval, "Post-war Reconstruction and Conservation of the Historic Jewish Quarter in Jerusalem, 1967-1975," *Planning Perspectives*, Vol. 27, No. 3 (2012), pp. 369-92.

³⁷ Nur Masalha. *A Land Without a People: Israel, Transfer and the Palestinians 1948-85* (London: Faber and Faber, 1987).

looking for a basic reference book or a balanced account of the conflict. Some instructors intentionally choose readings that advocate an extreme position and pair them with a reading that argues the opposite. Readings by the "new" and "old" historians are primed for that type of exercise, as are the public debates that have played out in print between them. But if Ilan Pappé's work is to be used for that purpose, then it would be better to use one or more chapters from the book that represents his main thesis, *The Ethnic Cleansing of Palestine* (2006) and compare it to Benny Morris's *The Birth of the Palestinian Refugee Problem Revisited* (2004). Another alternative is to read some of the public debates on 1948 that have played out between the two of them.³⁸ In order to get the full spectrum of Israeli historiography on 1948, one of Israel's many other historians could be used as well.³⁹

³⁸ See for example, Benny Morris, "The Liar as Hero," *New Republic*, 17 March 2011; Benny Morris, "Politics by Other Means," *New Republic*, 17 March 2014; Ilan Pappé, "Response to Benny Morris' 'Politics by Other Means'," *New Republic*, 30 March 2004; Seth J. Frantzman, "Flunking History: Review of *The Ethnic Cleansing of Palestine*," *The Middle East Quarterly* Vol. 15, No. 2 (Spring 2008), pp. 70-75; Yoav Gelber, "The Status of Zionist and Israeli History in Israeli Universities," *Journal of Israeli History* Vol. 20, No. 2-3 (2001): pp. 121-54; Tom Segev, "His Colleagues Call Him a Traitor," *Ha'aretz* (English Edition), 24 May 2002.

³⁹ See for example, Jon and David Kimche, *Both Sides of the Hill* (London: Secker and Warburg, 1960); Anita Shapira, *Land and Power: The Zionist Resort to Force, 1881-1948* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992); Lawrence Silberstein, *New Perspectives on Israeli History; The Early Years of the State* (New York: New York University Press, 1991); Shabtai Teveth, *Ben Gurion and the Palestinian Arabs* (Oxford University Press: 1985).

Charles D. Smith, *Palestine and the Arab-Israeli Conflict*, 8th edition (2013)

Charles D. Smith is a professor emeritus at the School of Middle Eastern and North African Studies at the University of Arizona. His book *Palestine and the Arab-Israeli Conflict: A History with Documents* was first published in 1988 as he saw the need for a comprehensive textbook on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict in order to teach a class on this topic. Now in its eighth edition, the book has been updated to include events until the spring of 2012 and discusses the significance of the more recent population data in Israel and the Palestinian territories as well as the significance of US and Israeli elections in 2009. Documents and photographs were updated in order to portray developments and include women as well as men. The adaptation of the Selected Bibliography emphasizes the recent scholarship, and includes a wide-ranging selection of Internet sources.

In the Preface, Smith describes his intention to present a fair and balanced textbook. He seeks to present "other peoples and eras in light of the values and historical processes that produced them" and to do so with equal consideration for the Israeli and Palestinian sides (VI). What we found is that it is a valuable, fairly well-organized and detailed textbook, but there is greater preference for the Palestinian narrative of events. Toward the end, in the chapters that deal with the Oslo process and the intifadas, the preference is unmistakable.

As for textbook features, this book holds many merits. The chapters and subchapters are divided chronologically and paragraphs according to topic. Each chapter includes at the end a conclusion, questions for consideration, a chronology and historical documents, as the table of contents notes. All historical documents are recognizable as the grey pages on the fore edge of the book—a very helpful feature. The end of the book contains a helpful glossary; a selected bibliography; acknowledgements for the documents, maps and pictures used; an index and a concise chronology. The student will, no doubt, be drawn to the rich selection of photographs. Each photo and map in the book is accompanied by a short explanation and is listed at the beginning of the book. Smith chose to enhance the accessibility of his sources for students by only using those written in English, including scholarly works by Israelis and Arabs (VI). These can be found in the notes at the end of each chapter as well as in the selected bibliography in the back of the book. Compared with some of the other texts reviewed in this study, this book has, to a much greater extent, the features that are most commonly associated with textbooks and a textbook feel.

In terms of the "extras," there were a few things lacking. With all the space dedicated to primary documents, the inclusion of one document in particular, "plan dalet," (or at least an excerpt of it) would have been a useful addition. Since it has been the object of so much scholarly attention and debate (especially between the so-called "new" and "old" Israeli historians) it should have been included. And certainly it is more relevant to the chapter that covers 1948 than Rabbi Hillel Silver's comments to the UN (which take up the space of two pages). Another disappointment relates to the chapter questions. Each chapter includes 4-5 "questions for consideration," at the end. This is a well-known

pedagogical tool which can improve comprehension or serve as a foundation for classroom discussion. In this case they are less useful because the questions require the reader to retrieve facts rather than think critically and analyze, synthesize or evaluate material found in the textbook.

The author's preference for the Palestinian narrative is most noticeable in the shorter surveys and synopses, such as those given in the preface, prologue and epilogue. Passages in the prologue bespeak the harsh view of Israel that will typify the story to come. In the first paragraph Smith writes, ". . . Jewish statehood would automatically deny political rights to Palestinian Arabs, as was made clear in the Balfour Declaration of 1917." The word choices "automatically" and "made clear" are problematic. Had the 1947 partition plan been accepted by both sides, the Jewish state that would have resulted would not have been a denial of Palestinian political rights, since it provided for a Palestinian state too. The only denial that was "automatic" was the denial of political rights over the *entire* territory of the Mandate—i.e. the Palestinians would need to share. Moreover, the Balfour Declaration (reproduced on p. 93) is far from "clear." It states that "nothing should be done which may prejudice the civil and religious rights of existing non-Jewish communities in Palestine . . ." but it ignores the question of Palestinian political rights. Much has been written about the reasons for the omission, but to say that the denial of political rights was "made clear," in this declaration is an exaggeration. There has been a significant debate surrounding the intention of the Balfour Declaration. It was deliberately ambiguous and did not explicitly endorse a "state." Moreover, its final text was not written by Zionist leaders, it was written by the British Foreign Secretary, Lord Balfour, and therefore to treat it like the founding charter of the State of Israel is mistaken. In any case, it might have been more appropriate in the prologue to open with some observations about the broader dimensions of the conflict rather than with a debatable and provocative assertion.

Brief overviews of relevant ancient and medieval history are given in the prologue (1-8). Here Smith falls into the same trap as most textbook writers, which amounts to a sympathetic treatment of the traditional narrative of the origins of Islam and a critical treatment of the traditional narrative of Jewish origins. Unnamed scholars who claim that Saul, David and Solomon never existed and that Solomon's temple is a myth are given a spotlight. Smith's narrative of the ancient Israelites most closely resembles the Palestinian narrative, which relies heavily on "temple denial" as a means of asserting exclusive claims to Jerusalem and the land of Israel/Palestine.⁴⁰ What would have been preferable is something more akin to the narrative he provided about the origins of Islam. Academia provides numerous, substantive critiques of the traditional narrative surrounding the origins of Islam (such as Patricia Crone's compelling argument that Islam did not originate in Mecca) and yet Smith presents the narrative that most Muslims would identify with. Smith's treatment of ancient Jerusalem should have been equally inclusive of the traditional Jewish narrative. In the absence of knowledge about the Jewish connection to Jerusalem and the land of Israel since time immemorial, it is impossible to

⁴⁰ For a fuller discussion of "temple denial" and a more balanced treatment of the meaning of Jerusalem in Muslim, Christian and Jewish tradition, see *Where Heaven and Earth Meet: Jerusalem's Sacred Esplanade* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2009). This volume, which consists of eleven chapters by different scholars from different fields, includes a variety of divergent viewpoints on Jerusalem. It was a joint project of Al Quds University, the Hebrew University of Jerusalem and a Dominican Seminary in Jerusalem.

understand why the modern Zionist movement focused its attention on this small geographical territory. Furthermore, in the absence of an explanation of the traditional Jewish narrative regarding the land, the Zionists' call for a "restoration of a Jewish state in [the] region," which Smith mentions in the first chapter, hardly makes sense (13).

The prologue is followed by a chronology, albeit a rather poorly articulated one (10). The chronology relies on an anachronism—the nomenclature of the land under discussion. Smith did not shy away from using the terms "Kingdom of Israel" and "Kingdom of Judah": it is helpful for the reader to understand why Jews view the land as the land of their forefathers. However, Smith applies the name "Palestine" to the land in time periods that pre-date the term, as if the land has been called "Palestine" before the appearance of recorded history. His chronology includes entries such as "ca. 3000-900 BCE. -- Canaanites inhabit Palestine west of Jordan river . . ." and "ca. 1200-1100 BCE -- Philistines and Jews settle in Palestine region of Canaan." This contradicts what Smith says on the first page of the prologue—that Arabs referred to the region as Palestine since the fifteenth century (1).

The term "Palestine" in different forms does have an old history, but not as old as Smith's chronology suggests. "Philistia" the word that "Palestine" is derived from (*Peleshet* and *Palashtu* in ancient languages) referred to the group of mainly coastal cities inhabited by the Philistines, but not to the entire Jordan Rift Valley. The name "Canaan" among others was used to designate a larger swath of land that included land controlled by the Philistines as well as land that was outside of their control. The first clear use of the term "Palestine" (*Palaistin* in Greek), in reference to a swath of land that included the coastal region as well as the foothills and the Jordan Rift Valley, was in Herodotus' 5th century BCE work *The Histories*. Certainly, it is difficult to provide a coherent narrative of a territory that had multiple periods of settlement and conquest and underwent multiple name changes, but there would have been no better place to explain these complexities, and their relevance to the Arab-Israeli conflict, than in a textbook on the conflict. Another option would have been to simply use an ancient and more neutral name like "Canaan," when referring to the ancient past. Under the circumstances, the nomenclature is not without import.

At times, reliance on popular belief instead of documentary evidence tarnishes Smith's historical narrative. An example is his discussion of the Palestinian experience of the first intifada. Smith repeats the worn out cliché that "the intifada was a rebellion of the poor and the young, the less-advantaged sectors of the population who organized popular committees . . ." (408). In contrast to that picture, Sari Nusseibeh, one of the intifada's leaders, describes in his memoir how a cadre of relatively affluent and educated young people, including intellectuals, professional soldiers and rising political figures, took leadership of the popular uprising after a period of about two weeks. He goes on to describe the ways in which this group provided leadership, public relations and strategy to the Palestinian people over the course of the intifada.⁴¹ It is important to understand that the intifada was a spontaneous uprising and that the Israeli reaction to it was, by most accounts, too severe. But small details, such as the socio-demographic make-up of the leadership, should be presented accurately as well.

⁴¹ Sari Nusseibeh, *Once Upon a Country: A Palestinian Life* (Picador, 2015), pp. 264-279.

In a number of different ways, the word choice, context or lack thereof, omissions and over-simplifications point to a predilection for the Palestinian narrative. Smith's characterization of the second *aliyah* (wave of Zionist immigration) as "militant Zionism" is an example of poor word choice (32).⁴² The discussion in this section is about the focus that the second *aliyah* placed on "Jewish labor" in the land of Palestine. Smith states, "For the Zionists of the second wave, Jewish socialism meant an egalitarian Jewish society that excluded Arabs" (33). The immigrants' attitudes toward the Arabs of Palestine is worth examining in depth. Such a study will not paint these immigrants in a positive light. But the reason for their emphasis on "Jewish labor" had less to do with their attitude toward Arabs and more to do with their search for self-sufficiency and empowerment. The second wave of immigrants viewed their predecessors, the first wave of immigrants, as typical colonialists who exploited cheap, indigenous labor. The second wave of Zionist immigrants wanted to do things differently: they adopted the goal of teaching Jews how to do the menial jobs and physical work that was necessary to sustain themselves, such as ploughing the land and harvesting the fields.⁴³ It is fitting to have a discussion about the effects of this initiative on the livelihood of Arabs in Palestine, but it should have been mentioned that the end goal of "Jewish labor" was not to deliberately harm Arabs (the militancy that Smith refers to), but rather to achieve Jewish self-sufficiency.⁴⁴

Smith's description of plan dalet and his explanation of the causes of the Palestinian refugee problem are erroneous. He writes, "Scholarly debate over the flight of Palestinians no longer questions the *fact* that Zionist/ Israeli forces forcibly expelled the majority of the refugees" (197, emphasis added). What Smith refers to as a "fact" is neither factual nor is it a point of agreement between and the scholars who conducted the debate that Smith refers to. Smith goes on to describe to the historiographical debate between Benny Morris and Ilan Pappé and concludes, ". . . both agree that the goals of plan dalet, were pursued, whether officially declared or not" (197). What he does not mention is that Morris and Pappé disagree about the "goals" or better said, the nature of plan dalet. Pappé characterizes plan dalet as a wartime "master plan" for the "ethnic cleansing of Palestine," while Morris argues that plan dalet was not a "master plan" for the "ethnic cleansing of Palestine" but rather a plan to win a war and that the massive exodus of Palestinians was the result of the war, not of plan dalet. In conclusion, what purports to be a discussion of a historiographical debate between scholars, is actually a misrepresentation of the debate and an endorsement by Smith of the viewpoint of one of the scholars—Ilan Pappé. In addition, Smith adopts Pappé's views regarding the centrality and significance of Deir Yasin, while Morris's writings situate Deir Yasin within the broader context of the war. If this book were to be adopted as a course textbook, it would be advisable to supplement it with additional reading material on the historiographical debate between Morris and Pappé surrounding the Palestinian refugee

⁴² Smith apparently relies upon an expanded definition of the word "violence," which in feminist theory, is used to describe non-physical destructive forces, but he does not explain his irregular use of the term or support the assertion that "Jewish labor" qualifies as "economic violence," in the context of the theoretical body of literature on this concept. The end result, the phrase "militant Zionism" is misleading.

⁴³ See for example, Anita Shapira, *Land and Power: The Zionist Resort to Force, 1881-1948* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), pp. 62-67.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

problem and the role of Deir Yasin in it. The relevant books authored by Morris and Pappe, listed in the footnote, would be a good place to start.⁴⁵

At times, Israeli society (or its predecessor, the *Yishuv*) is depicted in Smith as a monolithic, homogeneous entity without much diversity of thought and action within. The nearly 1.5 million Arabs of Israeli citizenship are presented only in the context of victimhood (362-363). Israel's Bedouin and Druze communities (who have unique identities and orientations) are overlooked completely. Moreover, Jewish society is often depicted as a monolith. Smith says, "They [Israelis] accepted Sharon's methods because they valued the search for security more than the means by which it was achieved" (501). Sharon's critics, opposition and protest groups like "Peace Now" and "Breaking the Silence" do not factor into this textbook narrative.

In different ways, divisions between and among Jews are ignored or overlooked. Smith makes reference to a "car bomb attack by Jews" in 1946 (186), but fails to mention that this attack was carried out by an extremist, splinter group, the Irgun, and was condemned by the Jewish Agency. In a passage about the massacre of 29 Muslim worshippers in 1994 by a religious extremist, Baruch Goldstein, Smith notes that a shrine was erected to commemorate Goldstein's act (as if Israel approved of his act). Smith fails to mention that the Israeli army bulldozed it in 1999 in accordance with a Supreme Court ruling which outlawed monuments to terrorists. Similarly, in a passage about Israel's policy toward the West Bank following the War of 1967, Smith refers to "the Israelis' perception that they were the 'only legitimate collective in the land of Israel . . .'" —which, even if it is a quote from an Israeli official, does not represent the views of all Israelis, then or now: it ignores divisive debates within Judaism and within the State of Israel about the Zionist project. In another instance, Smith writes, "Even though Israel had signed armistices and accepted partition, it was not committed to those agreements because not all the land of Palestine had been conquered" (221). While there certainly were those that hoped to conquer all of Palestine, there were at least as many who opposed doing so. Israel was and is a complex society, encumbered not only with the Jewish-Arab divide, but with profound rifts between different segments of its Jewish population as well. This would have been one of those areas in which the textbook could have assisted its readers in "balancing an understanding of diverse viewpoints."⁴⁶

Woven throughout the narrative is the frequent assertion that territorial expansion was an ever-present goal in the minds of the Israeli leadership (39, 136, 229, 288, 319, 361, 401). For example, Smith writes that on the eve of the 1956 Suez War, Ben Gurion "envisaged that Israel would take over much if not all of the Sinai Peninsula, which he refused to believe was part of Egypt" (244). This is in contrast to the Israeli perception that the nascent state of Israel was as nation under siege, surrounded on all sides by large, hostile Arab armies that were bent on its destruction. Another element of the Israeli perspective

⁴⁵ It would be worthwhile to read and compare the relevant chapters from the books authored by Morris and Pappe, listed in Smith's footnote #67 on page 209. For the debate that played out in the public sphere, see also, Benny Morris, "The Liar as Hero," *New Republic*, 17 March 2011; Benny Morris, "Politics by Other Means," *New Republic*, 17 March 2014; and Ilan Pappe, "Response to Benny Morris' 'Politics by Other Means'," *New Republic*, 30 March 2004.

⁴⁶ "Guidelines for the Preparation, Evaluation, and Selection of History Textbooks." American Historical Association. June 1, 1997.

that is not given consideration in the text is the strategic component—owing to Israel's small size and relatively small army, Israeli defense doctrine called for an advance behind enemy lines. Israel sought to gain a conclusive victory by taking the fight to the enemy's territory rather than digging in and absorbing an onslaught on the home territory.

This is a textbook in which Israel is usually portrayed as the aggressor and Palestinian guerrilla groups and terrorist groups, such as Hamas, are portrayed as victims. Israel's self-perception, of being on the defense is often ignored. For example, the epilogue begins a paragraph as follows: "In December 2008, on the eve of the Israeli assault on Gaza . . . (551). The sentence ignores the November—December 2008 Hamas assault on Israel in the form of 486 rockets and 309 mortars fired at Israeli towns and cities, which was the *casus belli* for the Israeli assault on Hamas's positions in Gaza (a war which was viewed in Israel as a defensive reaction to Hamas's daily rocket fire).⁴⁷ Similarly, in the introduction to chapter 11, the chapter on the undoing of the Oslo process, Smith mention's "Israel's December 2008 assault" without any reference to the context, and later in the same chapter, the 2008 Gaza War is described as an eleventh hour effort by a sitting Prime Minister to win an election in Israel. Nowhere is there a description of what life was like in Israel, in the months prior to the Gaza war, as up to 60 rockets per day rained down on the southern communities, resulting in school and business closures and keeping families pent up inside their shelters all day long. Nowhere is there a description of Israel's military objectives, which were to destroy rocket launchers, weapons caches and tunnels used to smuggle weapons and infiltrate Israel. Another glaring omission is Egypt's role in this conflict. Egypt actually supported Israel in this war, not in words but definitely in its deeds.⁴⁸ As noted, borrowing from the American Historical Association, "an adequate text will place developments in some wider perspective."⁴⁹ Indeed, a wider context for Israel's military offensive in Gaza should have been provided.

Another indication of partiality is in the treatment of violence and legitimacy: violence committed by Israelis is usually portrayed as illegitimate, even if from Israel's perspective it was of a defensive nature, and violence committed by Palestinians is seemingly condoned, even if offensive and indiscriminate. For example, he characterizes suicide bombings carried out by Hamas and Islamic Jihad as "resistance," showing a clear preference for the point-of-view of these Islamist groups (412, 500). The terror attacks committed by Palestinians are trivialized (i.e. "random bombings that inflicted relatively few casualties") or justified by the circumstances (i.e. "Hamas . . . choose terror in the aftermath of the Hebron massacre") (272, 448). At times, Smith employs false equivalencies between Jewish political parties and Islamist groups. For example, he describes the Likud's platform as the "mirror image" of Hamas's platform (525) and the growing influence of Orthodox parties in Israel's parliament as being similar to Islamist demands in Egypt (552).

⁴⁷ "Summary of rocket fire and mortar shelling in 2008," Intelligence and Terrorism Information Center at the Meir Amit Intelligence and Terrorism Information Center (2009), pp. 6-8.

⁴⁸ See Joseph Kostiner and Chelsi Mueller, "Egyptian and Saudi Intervention in the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict (2006-09): Local Powers Mediation Compared," in *International Intervention in Local Conflicts: Crisis Management and Conflict Resolution since the Cold War*, edited by Uzi Rabi (New York: I.B. Taurus, 2010).

⁴⁹ "Guidelines for the Preparation, Evaluation, and Selection of History Textbooks." American Historical Association. June 1, 1997.

Likewise, acts of violence committed by Arabs are often related with passive voice verbs in which the agency is obscured. In describing the incident in 1949 in which a mob of Arabs massacred Orthodox Jews in Hebron, Smiths says "sixty-four were killed" (126). Palestinian violence perpetrated against other Palestinians is softened in a similar way: Smiths says, ". . . many women who had participated in the revolt [intifada] had been stoned for not wearing headdresses, especially in Gaza, a Hamas stronghold" (463). The use of passive verbs instead of action verbs diminishes the impact of violence against Israeli civilians, i.e. "Palestinian attacks occurred," "suicide bombings included civilian casualties" (500), "suicide bombings occurred" (458). This is not to say that Smith never uses active voice verbs to describe Palestinian violence against Israelis. He does. But the frequency and placement of passive verbs in this regard is quite perceptible, especially when compared with the harsh and emotive language used to describe Israel's actions.

Another overall complaint was that in many places, the author's partiality is palpable in his diction. At times, the words chosen to describe Israel's actions are unnecessarily emotive, such as the statement that the West Bank barrier "invades" the West Bank (501). Another example is the statement that the 2003 disengagement plan (Israel's plan to withdraw from Gaza) was "hatched" in Rome (512). Elsewhere Smith says that Hamas's January 2006 victory in the Palestinian legislation election is described as a "godsend" for Ehud Olmert, implying that Olmert welcomed this outcome (514). It would have been preferable to present these events in a more impartial tone so that the reader can draw his or her own conclusions.

With regard to the Oslo process, there is a lengthy critique of Israel's harsh policies in the occupied territories and of the expansion of settlements, the effects of road blocks and the daily suffering of Palestinians, and rightly so. This picture is essential to understanding the Palestinians' many grievances. But the narrative does not provide the reader with many insights about the grievances of Israelis during the same time period. As noted, to be fair, a textbook ought to assist readers in balancing an understanding of diverse viewpoints.⁵⁰ In this textbook, there is very little depiction of life in Israel during the Oslo process and beyond, especially with regard to the hundreds of suicide bombings and attacks that were carried out against civilian targets between 1989 and 2008. In spite of a few references to "trauma" (501), "fear of bombings," (504) and border policemen's "sentiments of hatred" (488) the reader will not come away with a real picture of what life was like in Israel during the intifadas, especially the second intifada when suicide bombers struck buses, restaurants and shopping malls two or three times in any given month. The psychological impact of terrorism on Israeli society is a well-researched subject.⁵¹ Moreover the relationship between trauma and political views/ voting patterns or between trauma and views of the "other" are crucial components of conflict studies. To give an example, Ruchama Marton, a psychiatrist and anti-militarist Israeli activist, writes,

. . . Israelis cannot ignore the overwhelming reality of children, women and men torn apart by explosives detonated in buses and restaurants. They choose,

⁵⁰ "Guidelines for the Preparation, Evaluation, and Selection of History Textbooks." American Historical Association. June 1, 1997.

⁵¹ See for example, Dov Waxman, Living with terror, not Living in Terror: The Impact of Chronic Terrorism on Israeli Society, *Perspectives on Terrorism*, Vol. 5, No. 4-6 (2011).

therefore, to turn a blind eye to the causal connection between excessive Israeli military power and the Palestinians' violent actions. This dissonance-reducing solution leads to feelings of loss of control and helplessness. Despite all the power in their hands, Israelis feel frightened, threatened and unprotected.⁵²

In the case of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, it is impossible to understand Israel's actions over the course of the intifadas, without having an understanding of public opinion and perceptions of the Israeli citizenry. Smith's blind spot in this regard is highlighted in his epilogue when he writes, "The Israeli public has apparently been persuaded by the official narratives regarding Camp David 2000 and the 2005 withdrawal from Gaza that territorial concessions lead to more violence . . ." (550). No doubt Israelis were exposed to official narrative, but they were also exposed to scenes of carnage, on the nightly news channels. Many experienced the terror first-hand as eye witnesses to the bombings, or as grief-stricken friends or relatives of the victims. Smith does a good job of depicting the Palestinians' suffering as a result of the conflict but the element of Israeli suffering is largely missing in this book. This is a major shortcoming for a book on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict whose author says that he views Zionist and Palestinian attitudes as "equally comprehensible" (VI). Without insights into the hardening of public opinion on both sides it will be very hard for the reader to understand why peace was not forthcoming.

While, Smith's *Palestine and the Arab-Israeli Conflict: A History with Documents*, 8th edition, is visually appealing and easy to use, its narrative leans perceptibly toward the Palestinian side. A major component of the story that is not treated on equal terms by Smith is the perspective of millions of Jews and Israelis on Zionism and the state of Israel. For most of world Jewry, the establishment of the state of Israel was an authentic response to millennia of persecution and anti-Semitism around the world. For them, independent nationhood was the fulfillment of their right to national revival in the land of their heritage. For them, statehood was also fraught with dangers and challenges. From the vantage point of its citizens, Israel in its early days was a small island in a sea of hostile nations that were bent on its destruction. In the view of many, peace was not forthcoming because of the refusal on the part of Arab states to recognize the existence of Israel and the refusal of Palestinians to accept a compromise. This basic narrative and the deep seated convictions associated with it are espoused by millions of Jews, and non-Jews, worldwide. Kaufman and Hassasian, Israeli and Palestinian lecturers who have co-taught a course on the conflict at the University of Maryland for more than 20 years, posit that, "historical events are a genuine part of the collective memory of both Arabs and Jews, and we should present both narratives as they are predominantly taught in Israeli and in Palestinian schools."⁵³ The main flaw of Smith's textbook is that the reader will not be able to get a sense of the perspectives of many, if not most, Israelis on the events that are presented in the pages of this book. As such, the textbook, if used in a course on the conflict, would need to be supplemented with readings that convey Israeli views on the conflict (including mainstream views) in order to provide students with the full picture.

⁵² See for example, Ruchama Marton, The Psychological Impact of the Second Intifada on Israeli Society, "Palestine-Israel Journal, Vol. 11, No. 1 (2004), Available at: <http://www.pij.org/details.php?id=18>, Accessed 5 August 2016.

⁵³ op. cit.

Mark Tessler, *A History of the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict*, 2nd edition (2009)

A History of the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict, 2nd edition, is a detailed and contemplative investigation of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict from its inception to the end of the Oslo process. Mark Tessler, a professor of political science at the University of Michigan, describes his approach as “objectivity without detachment” (viii). In his preface he states that his objectives for the second edition, as with the first, are to provide a book that “seeks not only to present a balanced and accurate history of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict,” but also “to encourage a sympathetic understanding of the parties involved” (viii). In our assessment, this was a goal that the textbook achieved. Tessler has made a genuine attempt to shed light on the full range of complexities influencing the perceptions, actions and decisions of parties on both sides of the conflict. We found that this textbook is more intellectually careful and thoughtful than many of its counterparts, especially in the earlier chapters.

Tessler’s detailed and contemplative investigation of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict from its inception to the end of the Oslo process has a distinct focus on the ideational aspects: the causes of conflict, the myriad proposals for managing the conflict, and the high and low level talks that have been held toward the goal of resolving the conflict. It should be noted, however, that if a detailed discussion of Arab-Israeli wars is sought, it is not to be found here. Tessler devotes merely three pages to the hostilities of 1947-1948, a half page each to hostilities of 1956 and 1967, and two and a half pages to the war in 1973. This is not necessarily a flaw, especially when we take into account the fact that these wars were essentially wars between Israel and Arab states. Moreover, the book’s title clearly indicates that this is a book whose scope is focused on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict rather than the Arab-Israeli conflict. And while the book lacks meaningful detail about individual battles it does provide a high level of analysis of the causes and effects of the Arab-Israeli wars.

This textbook is not always chronological and not always comprehensive, which isn’t necessarily a defect, but some readers will find it frustrating. Tessler omits mention of some well-known events, in favor of analyzing some lesser known events which he views as being more representative. For example, Tessler omits mention of a well-known incident involving the *SS Exodus*, a ship carrying 4,500 Holocaust survivors that was turned away from Palestine by the British in 1947. In Israeli historical narratives, this incident has become symbolic of the struggle that the Jews waged to bring Holocaust survivors to safety in the face of increasingly harsh British restrictions on immigration to Palestine. Instead, Tessler opts for a description of the accidental bombing of the *SS Patria* by members of the Haganah, and the sinking of the *MV Struma* after it was hit by a Soviet torpedo. This was apparently done in support of his broader assertion that “there were a number of deplorable incidents as Jewish refugees from Nazi barbarism struggled to make their way to Palestine” (248). Tessler’s narrative places blame on the British who “would not permit unauthorized immigrants to enter Palestine,” and also the Zionists who, he says, “would not accept an alternate destination” (248). Israeli narratives,

conversely, highlight the Zionists extreme sense of emergency given a situation where tens of thousands of Jews fleeing Nazi Germany were being denied entry even to sympathetic countries such as the United States and Switzerland.

In a similar vein, the reader will not find specific mention of the well-known Atlit detention camp, an enclosure surrounded by barbed wire and watchtowers, established in the 1930s on the coast near Haifa, in which the British intercepted and interred tens of thousands of Jewish refugees who were trying to make their way from Europe to Palestine. Tessler does, however, mention the British detention camps on the island of Cyprus (256). Another regrettable omission is the Kfar Qasim massacre, a massacre of Arab civilians by Israeli border police on the eve of the 1956 war. The murder of Arab 48 men, women and children as they were coming in from the fields became a major mobilizing subject in Israeli politics. Even while there were thousands of Palestinians killed by the IDF in the first decade of Israeli statehood, this massacre assumed a symbolic value due to the fact that the victims were citizens of the state of Israel. This massacre of citizens became a major symbol and a painful reference point in the struggle that was waged by Arab citizens of Israel for the legal protections from state violence that citizenship ought to provide.⁵⁴ It is difficult to understand processes affecting the history and politics of Arab citizens of Israel without reference to the significance of this devastating event.

Among the features that set this textbook apart from other comparable texts, is its detailed treatment of Jewish and Arab history before the conflict. The first section, “Jews and Arabs before the Conflict: The Congruent Origins of Modern Zionism and Arab Nationalism” succeeds in a crucial area where other textbooks have failed. It provides a genuine attempt to provide the reader with insights into how Zionists view the ancient past and the Biblical and traditional connections to the land of Israel/Palestine. This is essential background information, which takes very little space to relate, but makes the whole difference when trying to comprehend why the Zionist movement focused on the Land of Israel/Palestine rather than other lands.

Tessler has provided this essential and insightful background, but at times Tessler overreaches in his effort to present the unfolding of Jewish and Arab history throughout the centuries as parallel and congruent. Tessler argues that the development of nationalism among both groups unfolded in a similar way. This theme of symmetry is not confined to the pre-modern histories of the Arabs, rather it returns again and again throughout the narrative of the conflict. For example, in his discussion of illegal Jewish immigration to Palestine, Tessler opines, “like the Arabs of Palestine, they [the Jews], too, felt a need to take desperate measures in the defense of what they judged to be a matter of national survival” (248).

While there may be an advantage in “leveling the playing field,” before examining the causes of hostilities that erupted in the twentieth century, presenting disconnected historical events in a “congruent” fashion can also create some historiographical problems. For example, in order to present both people groups as having ancient ties to

⁵⁴ Tamir Sorek, *Palestinian Commemoration in Israel: Calendars, Monuments, and Martyrs* (Stanford University Press, 2015).

the land of Palestine, Tessler adopts as fact, the “Arab Canaanite” narrative (69). While it has been prevalent in Palestinian nationalist folklore since the 1920s, and has been utilized in Arab nationalist historiography since the 1950s, the narrative itself is based on theory, namely the Winckler-Caetani “Semitic Wave Theory.” The theory, which posits that all the Semites have prehistoric origins in the Arabian Peninsula, has been accepted and expounded by Arab historians, and apparently also by Tessler, as an undisputed scientific truth.

Tessler makes a valid point that there are many similarities in the histories of the Jewish and Palestinian peoples. Both have a Semitic heritage and language, both have enjoyed “golden ages” as well as periods of decline, and the trajectories of both people groups have been shaped to a large extent by their interactions with Europe (1-5). But it can also be argued that understanding the differences between the two national histories offers greater insight into the causes of conflict than looking for similarities. The Jews, for example, lived in Europe and Asia as minorities since their exile from Roman Judea in 70 CE. Since then, the “memory” of dispossession from the national homeland and the ambition to return has been a central part of the Jewish national narrative, religious liturgy, ritual and observances. There is no equivalent in Arab history. In sum, Tessler’s effort to place the Arab-Israeli conflict within the historical context of the history of both peoples is appreciated, but it might have been preferable to present the unique history of each people group on its own terms and allow the reader to draw his or her own opinions about congruity and dissimilarity.

Several important assumptions that undergird this text as a whole are made explicit in the preface. Among them are the author’s conviction that “one of the greatest obstacles to peace is each side’s distrust of the other,” an obstacle which Tessler describes as a “psychological” obstacle (ix). This conviction is evident in Tessler’s speculative digressions into what might have been if only the psychological barriers been removed. For example, he opines that “if Zionists had seen the Palestinians as the latter saw themselves . . . at least some measure of accommodation might have been possible” (168). In another instance he speculates that “for things to have worked out differently, it would also have been necessary for Zionist leadership to place less faith in Britain and more in the Arabs, especially the Arabs of Palestine” (167).

The author’s tendency to sermonize and speculate about the future also adds a considerable number of pages to the already voluminous textbook. In his narrative of Arab history before the conflict he opines “recognizing that they have no choice but to live together, Israelis, Palestinians, and other Arabs *may one day* place emphasis on the common elements in their respective national narratives; and *should this occur*, an abundant resource will be provided by the striking similarities in the history of each people, during the centuries before there was an Arab-Jewish conflict in the region” (74, emphasis added). In the end of his discussion of the First intifada he pontificates, “both Israelis and Palestinians will have to approach their adversary with the same empathy and open-mindedness . . .” In a conclusion to his chapter on the first Palestinian intifada he looks wistfully into the future, saying, “*eventually, perhaps*, distrust will be eroded by dialogue and confidence-building measures” (751, emphasis added) and surmises that “Israelis and Palestinians can effect these transformations *if* they have the political will to do so” (754, emphasis added).

Tessler devotes little attention to the way in which the historiography of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict has been a battle ground for the competing narratives. At times Tessler adopts a position toward a historiographical debate without identifying the topic as a subject of debate and taking a position in the debate without naming the sources that his position is based on. The genesis of Palestinian nationalism, for example, has been the subject of much debate which has included diverse definitions, arguments and hypotheses. Its inception has been located as early as 1834 and as late as 1967, though most scholars situate it between those two extremes. Tessler states that Palestinian nationalism dates from the “beginning of the present [20th] century” without being more specific or giving reasons for the assertion (72). But a more in-depth discussion of the meaning of Palestinian nationalism, the historiographical debate surrounding its inception and the main figures associated with the debate would have been appropriate.

Likewise, in the discussion of Jewish acquisition of land in Palestine during the Mandate period, the reader is not given to understand that this question has been at the center of much scholarly debate. Tessler provides a long quote from Hajj Amin al-Husseini’s memoirs, to the effect that the Supreme Muslim Council was active in attempting to prevent the sale of land to Jews. Afterward he mentions that a “leading Israeli scholar has carefully reviewed the claims of the mufti. . .” but he does not mention the name of the scholar, who is revealed to be Yehoshua Porath only in the footnotes. More importantly, he does not mention Kenneth Stein’s significant scholarly contribution to this question. Stein’s 1987 book *The Land Question in Palestine* lists the names of Arab politicians who opposed Zionism in public but sold land to the Jews in secret.

Tessler’s preference for using anonymous sources in his narrative will be frustrating for readers who are familiar with scholarship on the conflict and unhelpful for those who want to be familiarized. For example, in once passage, he attributes important conclusions to “one of the most important and comprehensive studies on the subject,” without giving the author’s name or the title of the work (127). In his discussion of the PLO’s time spent in Lebanon, four lines of quoted text are attributed to “one knowledgeable and objective analyst” (493). An opinion about the PLO’s rejection of a British coordination initiative in 1985 is attributed to a nameless “objective Palestinian scholar” (663). In all of these instances, the reader will need to turn to the footnotes in order to find out which scholars and sources are being praised; however, that presents yet another set of difficulties because the footnotes are grouped in the back and difficult to locate. This is usually a limitation imposed by the publisher, but the difficulty of finding footnotes may prevent a time-constrained but otherwise curious students from finding answers to their questions.

In the later chapters that relate to the two intifadas and the Oslo process, Tessler does a remarkably good job of representing the deep divisions within Israeli society over the future of Israel/ Palestine (see, for example, 708-713); however, his narrative does not give a satisfactory impression about the sharp cleavages and opposing visions within Palestinian society. Tessler’s Palestinians, more or less, think alike. In discussing the first intifada (1987-1993) he says of the Palestinians: “They sought to tell Israelis and others that there was an alternative to continued conflict, that they did not seek destruction of the Jewish state but merely sought to realize their own national aspirations within the

framework of a 'two state' solution to the Israeli-Palestinian dispute" (719-720). This statement, no doubt, accurately describes the objectives of many Palestinians, but it overlooks a large swath of Palestinians, such as the Islamic Jihad and Hamas movements, which entertained more radical goals. In 1988, Hamas's charter (mentioned on pp. 697-698), articulated the movement's rejection of a negotiated peace settlement and its call for the obliteration of Israel by the armies of Islam. This came while the PLO was grudgingly beginning to accept the idea of the two state solution. Hamas claimed responsibility for dozens of suicide bombings and massacres and quickly rose to prominence in the 1990s as a key power broker in the Palestinian political field. But Tessler's narrative is very focused on the PLO and it depicts Hamas as a fringe movement (which it is not) that played the role of the spoiler. Given that the inability of Fatah and Hamas to reconcile their differences has been one of the chief obstacles to peace, it would have been worthwhile to offer the reader a more complex picture of the deep divisions within Palestinian society.

Tessler's chapters that relate to the intifadas and the Oslo process make good on his promise to focus on the "psychological barriers" to peace. There is a lengthy critique of Israel's harsh policies in the occupied territories and of the expansion of settlements. This background is essential to understanding the Palestinians' many grievances. Tessler makes a respectable effort in his narrative to outline the grievances of Israelis, largely stemming from the scores of suicide bombings that were carried out during the same time period. And while there are charts showing Israeli deaths resulting from Palestinian attacks between 1993 and 2006 (777) and Palestinian deaths resulting from Israeli attacks (780), there should have been more differentiation. It is not clear from the chart that the Israeli deaths were mainly due to the suicide bombings that were carried out between 1993-2006 against civilians. Likewise, the chart of Palestinian deaths does not differentiate between civilian deaths and combatant deaths. In other words, the chart includes the number of Palestinians who were killed while trying to carry out attacks against Israelis. When referring to the casualties that have resulted from the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, a simple death count on both sides is insufficient.

Another area in which Tessler's narrative is found wanting is in his neglect of the debate surrounding the role of the PLO and Yasir Arafat in terror and terrorism. A question left unanswered is: was he or was he not responsible for acts of terror? Tessler depicts Arafat as a national leader unable to control the extremist elements in the Palestinian population. And while this is an insightful point to make about Arafat, it does not comprise the whole picture. What is lacking is that Israel viewed Arafat as a terrorist and because of that, did not view him as a partner for peace. Tessler tells us that Israel blamed the PLO, of which Arafat was the head, for hundreds of terrorist attacks and he tells us that Arafat denied having any connection with acts of terror. But nowhere does Tessler weigh the evidence presented by Israel or try to explain why there was such a wide gap between these two opposing views (see, for example, pp. 661-662, 658 and 823). Given that there is an abundance of material available on this issue, a thoughtful examination of this question would have been very helpful.

The textbook has a number of organizational features including maps, and charts. A list of acronyms would have been a welcome addition, because the book is so long that it is entirely possible to register the meaning of a given acronym on its first mention and then

forget what it means when encountering the same acronym hundreds of pages later. Given the extensive use of foreign words, a glossary would have also been useful. The book would also need to be supplemented with other material in order to bring the story up to the present day. The epilogue concludes with observations about the unravelling of the Oslo process.

A History of the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict, 2nd edition, by Mark Tessler is comprehensive, contemplative and more even-handed than many of its counterparts. Tessler makes a colossal effort to acquaint the reader with both of the traditional narratives as they are predominantly taught in Israeli and in Palestinian schools. This is evident especially in the early chapters. Added to this are the author's own ponderous speculations about the possibilities for peace at every historical juncture. This is perhaps why the book is so long—more than 1,000 pages! As a reference work or background reading for a survey course on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, it has a lot to offer. But teachers who recommend or assign this textbook should be aware of its limitations: its thin treatment of the military perspective in a conflict that was born and fed by wars; its strained efforts to level the moral playing field by presenting Israeli and Palestinian trajectories as "congruent"; and the tendency to lay the blame for the lack of peace mostly at Israel's door, a tendency which starts with subtle hints and becomes more pronounced in the later chapters.

Summary

We read and carefully analyzed seven books that are frequently used to teach the Arab-Israeli and Israeli-Palestinian conflict. We compared each to the list of criteria that we developed to help us identify the characteristics present in textbooks that are accurate, intellectually honest and fair-minded. We are convinced that a good textbook provides insights about the narratives of both sides, acquaints the reader with historiographical debates and tells a story that is well supported by the available historical evidence. Furthermore, we favor a textbook that encourages the reader to formulate his or her own conclusions and spurs further inquiry. A variety of approaches were encountered among these texts. We found some intellectual honesty and some blatant dishonesty. Two books sought to “revise” a traditional, state-sponsored narrative while another sought to validate a traditional narrative. We found some textbooks that presented controversial topics from multiple angles and viewpoints and we found some that were very one-sided. Here we provide our estimation of the degree to which these texts measured up to our criteria for a good textbook and provide recommendations for their use in courses on the Arab-Israeli and Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

In *A History of the Arab-Israeli Conflict*, 7th edition (2015), Bickerton and Klausner have made admirable efforts to portray the different actors in a sympathetic light and to give a fair hearing to the ideologies and political platforms that have shaped the conflict. The text presents an elegant and detailed narrative of Zionist history and valuable insights about the calculations and interests of the Arab states involved, but it does not examine Palestinian history with as much depth. This is at least partially owing to the way that the subject is framed—as the Arab-Israeli conflict rather than the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Given that the Arab side of the story includes a multiplicity of different states and non-state actors, the picture that emerges of Zionism/Israel is, not surprisingly, much more nuanced and complex. Despite the imbalance in coverage, this textbook does not blame either side for the failure to reach a resolution. The authors avoid passing judgement or taking sides, an approach that allows the reader to formulate his or her own conclusions and encourages further investigation. Paired with some additional readings on the historiography surrounding the War of 1948 and on Palestinian politics and the development of Palestinian nationalism, Bickerton and Klausner’s textbook provides a useful digest of background reading and a handy reference.

The Palestinian-Israeli Conflict: A Very Short Introduction (2013) by Martin Bunton offers a concise summary of the chronology and key events in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The booklet also offers an intriguing analysis of settlement patterns and land use in Ottoman Palestine. When the text turns to the War of 1948, it begins to read more like an endorsement of the traditional Palestinian narrative. It contains some factual errors, some critical omissions and disproportionately covers the narrative of one side—the Palestinian side. Palestinian grievances are outlined with relative depth, considering the brevity of the text, but Israeli grievances, notably about security, are minimized. In spite of the limitations in coverage, Bunton’s *Very Short Introduction* is useful as a reference book and as a quick refresher.

The Israel-Palestine Conflict: One Hundred Years of War, 3rd edition (2014), by James L. Gelvin is conspicuously biased and not suitable as a reference book or as a textbook. It is a group of essays on the victimization of Palestinians by Zionists, cobbled together into a polemical meta-history of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, crafted for an American audience. Instead of presenting a comprehensive narrative, or examining different viewpoints, historiographical debates and competing schools of thought, it presents what appears to be a polemic on Palestinian victimhood and a refutation of American pro-Israel opinion. It is interesting, engaging and provocative reading, but in many ways it fails to meet the criteria that we have identified as being the markers of a fair and balanced history textbook, and would also not be very useful as a quick reference due to its lack of organizational coherence.

Benny Morris's *Righteous Victims: A History of the Zionist-Arab Conflict, 1881-2001*, 2nd edition (2001), represents a well-researched, Israeli, revisionist history of the conflict. Zionist ideology and Israeli and Palestinian politics are treated in a very critical light. The major advantage in using this as a textbook is that its narrative encompasses Morris's well-received theses about the War of 1948, the Haganah's "plan dalet," and the birth of the Palestinian refugee problem. Chapters 1-5 are exceptionally well-written and engaging. They cover the period 1881-1949 and include a summary of the revisionist thesis on the War of 1948 that Morris is best known for. The next six chapters read more like a military and diplomatic history; they are detailed but dispassionate examinations of Arab-Israeli wars and the Israeli-Egyptian peace. If it were to be used as a main textbook, it should be supplemented with a work that draws on Arabic sources to construct a Palestinian narrative of the same events as well as some readings that bring the story up to the present day: the last three chapters cover the first intifada and the Oslo process but end with the election of Ariel Sharon in February 2001. Morris's narrative includes more detail and less interpretation, usually allowing the reader to reach his or her own conclusions about the subjects discussed. It is a very insightful and exceptionally well-documented history that provides excellent reading selections for a course on the conflict and could also be used as a background reference work.

Ilan Pappé's *A History of Modern Palestine: One Land, Two Peoples*, 2nd edition (2006) is not an honest history but rather a lengthy polemic. As the title suggests, the author supports the Palestinian narrative and sees no advantage in giving Israeli viewpoints a fair hearing. Inventions and distortions are presented as facts and are weaved into a sophisticated argument in service of an anti-Israel political agenda. Pappé methodically presents a selection of anecdotes which support his position and ignores facts and data that undermine his position. This polemical presentation has also rendered the story rather incoherent; it has a tendency to jump around in time and space. The argument made in this book can serve as an apt example of an extremist viewpoint, or a narrative to be analyzed and de-constructed, but it should not be used as a main textbook or basic reference book for an introductory course on the conflict.

Charles D. Smith's *Palestine and the Arab-Israeli Conflict: A History with Documents*, 8th edition (2013), is visually appealing and contains a wealth of historic documents and useful maps. Its methodical and linear approach, combined with its ease of use makes a very useful quick reference. It presents a narrative of the conflict that is dominated by chronology and yet examines thematic topics with considerable depth, and it skillfully

weaves together international, regional and local components to create a comprehensible meta-narrative of events. However, the meta-narrative leans perceptibly toward the Palestinian side. Israel is usually portrayed as the aggressor and Palestinians, including guerrilla groups and terrorist groups, are portrayed as the victims. Israel's self-perception, of being under attack and on the defense is often overlooked. Moreover, Smith does a good job of depicting the Palestinians' suffering as a result of the conflict but the element of Israeli suffering is largely missing in this book. This is a major shortcoming for a book on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict whose author says he views Zionist and Palestinian attitudes as "equally comprehensible" (VI). Without insights into the experience of both Israelis and Palestinians it will be very hard for the reader to understand why peace was not forthcoming. If it is paired with some readings that delve into the historiographical debates surrounding the War of 1948, and some readings that elucidate Israel's experience with the second intifada and the Israel-Gaza wars, this book can be a useful basic text and reference work on the Arab-Israeli conflict.

A History of the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict, 2nd edition (2009), by Mark Tessler is comprehensive, contemplative and more even-handed than many of its counterparts. Tessler makes a titanic effort to acquaint the reader with both of the traditional narratives as they are predominantly taught in Israeli and in Palestinian schools. This is evident especially in the early chapters. In his effort to be fair and objective, the author presents a lot of detail and carefully weighs the viewpoints and experiences of a multiplicity of actors. Added to this are the author's own ponderous speculations about the possibilities for peace at every historical juncture. This is perhaps why the book is so long—more than 1,000 pages! As a reference work or background reading for a survey course on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, it has a lot to offer. But teachers who recommend or assign this textbook should be aware of its limitations: It lacks a satisfying discussion of the Arab-Israeli wars, especially the War of 1948, and toward the end of the book, it does not include a satisfying account of Israel's perceptions of and experience with the second intifada. It would also need to be supplemented with readings that bring the story up to the present. Despite these limitations, this is a book that provides a well-organized chronological narrative for the beginner as well as a great deal of "food for thought" for readers hoping to gain fresh insights.