



# The Arab-Israeli and Israeli-Palestinian Conflict in Textbooks on the Modern Middle East: A Critical Survey

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## **Introduction**

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This paper is the second in a series of working papers in which we report on the results of a multi-year research project designed to survey the textbooks that are most commonly used to teach about the Arab-Israeli and Israeli-Palestinian conflict in colleges and universities. The working papers associated with this project were written for instructors who are seeking to make informed choices about textbooks for their courses on the modern Middle East.

The project 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 and bound, 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 political agenda 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.

We began with the assumption that some textbooks that cover 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 on their own terms. 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 and 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 multi-year research project to identify the textbooks that are most commonly used to teach about the Arab-Israeli and Israeli-Palestinian conflict, analyze those textbooks and compare them to a set of criteria designed to assess the quality of textbooks that relate to the history of the conflict. We will describe the advantages and limitations of each book in the survey, in line with the criteria, and formulate recommendations for textbook selection.

## **Methodology**

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### ***The Selection of Textbooks for this Survey***

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 or monograph, on the other hand, presents an explicit argument. It is usually the product of one author and often based on his or her dissertation or post-dissertation 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.<sup>1</sup> 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,

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<sup>1</sup> 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).

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 modern Middle East and 4) other relevant topics, 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-taught 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 textbooks. Our next task was to assign a ranking to each textbook, equal to 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 the 38 textbooks on the list were assigned reading in 5% or more of 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, 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 shortsighted 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 modern Middle East. The first group of seven textbooks, the books on the Arab-Israeli or Israeli-Palestinian conflict, was analyzed in the MDC’s Working Paper No. 1. The second group of seven textbooks on the history or politics of the modern Middle East is the topic of this paper, MDC Working Paper No. 2.

### **Textbooks on the Arab-Israeli-Palestinian Conflict**

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

### **Textbooks on the Modern Middle East**

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*. 4<sup>th</sup> ed. New York: Oxford University Press, 2015.

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

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

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

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

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

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### ***Resources that Guided the Selection of the Evaluation Criteria***

Textbooks on the modern Middle East are wide and varied. The first and most obvious division is between those designed for use in political science or international relations courses and those designed for use in history courses. Some are single authored books while others are co-authored or edited volumes. In some, the topic of the Arab-Israeli and Israeli-Palestinian conflict is treated in designated chapters while in others, the story or analysis is woven throughout. Textbooks vary in the extent to which they integrate economic, social and cultural history. They vary in their method of organization—some are chronological while others are thematic. And of course, they vary in their up-to-dateness. Some of these textbooks treat the Arab-Israeli conflict as the central issue in the modern Middle East while others treat it as just one of the region's many ills. Likewise, some courses are designed to emphasize the conflict while others are designed to emphasize other states or topics in the modern Middle East.

We restricted our analysis to just those chapters or passages that touch on the Arab-Israeli or Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The question we ask is whether each text presents a balanced and reasonable narrative about the conflict, meaning that it provides insights about the experience of both Israelis and Palestinians 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 scholars are humans and that value-free textbooks may not be entirely possible. But we believe that some authors present overtly one-sided narratives, while others endeavor to shed light on the narratives of both sides. Some present interpretations that are intellectually honest, while others deliberately distort the past in service to 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 writer use “the facts” of history to present an extremely biased and one-sided interpretation. But an intellectually honest writer does not cherry pick facts to make certain claims while deliberately ignoring evidence that might contradict his or her claims. An intellectually honest scholar draws from the best available sources and acknowledges conflicting evidence or conflicting scholarly viewpoints, even while making judgments about the past.

## **Ethics of Writing History for Students**

One thing that is true for all of the texts in this analysis is that they address the historical context of the contemporary conflict and rightfully so. The conflict cannot be understood apart from its historical evolution. Given that commonality, the ethics of writing about history are applicable to all of them. A variety of guidelines have been suggested for the writer who addresses history. An example is a set of guidelines produced by some students as part of a class project. 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 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:

### **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.

### **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.

### **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).

### **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.

### **Maintain transparency in research.**

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

### **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 those writing about history, as articulated by some of the consumers—the students who read and learn from the textbooks.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> 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->

We believe that the vast majority of instructors, who teach introduction and survey courses on the history and politics of the modern Middle East, want to choose a textbook that embodies the ideals of ethical practice in the field of scholarly writing—a textbook 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 background reading or as a reference work. The criteria for the evaluation of the textbooks' treatment of the Arab-Israeli and Israeli-Palestinian conflict were developed with that goal in mind. This report aims to identify the textbooks that present an interpretation of the conflict 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.

## What Constitutes a Good Textbook about History?

Our understanding of what constitutes a good history textbook was also 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 modern Middle East. 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 [. . .]

## Additional Considerations for Textbooks about Protracted Conflict

In addition to the criteria laid out above, what is needed is some additional criteria that 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 moves 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.<sup>3</sup> Many of their insights relate to the classroom experience but some of them have relevance to the choice of textbook as well. The below excerpts 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.**

## *The Evaluation Criteria*

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.”<sup>4</sup> This approach favors a textbook

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<sup>3</sup> 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).

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

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, 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.
- 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 and, in terms of selection and omission, also conform to the criteria laid out above.
- Focus questions, if they are included, encourage independent, critical thinking.

**William Cleveland and Martin Bunton, *A History of the Modern Middle East*, 5th edition (2013)**

The 5<sup>th</sup> edition of *A History of the Modern Middle East* was written by William Cleveland and Martin Bunton. The first edition was put out by William Cleveland in 1994 when he was a professor emeritus at Simon Fraser University. He updated and revised the book twice before his death in 2006. Martin Bunton, a professor of history at the University of Victoria, undertook in 2008 to expand the popular introductory textbook to include developments that have taken place in the region since the publication of the 3<sup>rd</sup> edition. Since the writing of this paper, a 6<sup>th</sup> edition of the textbook was published, which expounds on the aftermath of the Arab uprisings, the sectarian conflict in Iraq, the war in Syria, ISIS, the crises in Libya and Yemen, and the United States' nuclear talks with Iran. This review relates to the 5<sup>th</sup> edition.

Cleveland and Bunton's book was meant as an introductory text on Middle East history for "students and general readers who have not previously studied the subject" (p. xi). There are four chapters that focus on the history of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The authors note that the amount of space reserved for the conflict indicates an attempt neither "to reify nor to isolate that subject" (463). There is also a Select Bibliography in the end of the book, which provides a description of the major works written on select topics, including "Zionism and the Mandate Period" and "Israel and the Palestinians after 1948." As far as the content about the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is concerned, this textbook is more intellectually careful and thoughtful than many of its counterparts, especially in the earlier chapters. In the latter chapters, there are some significant flaws.

The book excels at contextualizing the Israeli-Palestinian conflict within the wider regional dynamics before focusing on it as a subject for more detailed analysis. This can be seen in a chapter titled "World War I and the End of the Ottoman Order" (137-158). This chapter treats the creation of the Palestine Mandate as part of the broader regional story—a story which also encompasses the role of the Ottoman Empire in the First World War, the Sykes-Picot agreement and the Hussein-McMahon correspondence (145-151). The author mentions the Balfour Declaration as part of the story but he also refers the reader to a later chapter which elaborates on its meaning and implications (150). The book strikes a good balance between chapters that deal broadly with historical processes in the region and chapters that examine major developments in greater detail.

The beginning of the conflict is examined in detail in Part Three, in a chapter titled, "the Palestine Mandate and the Birth of the State of Israel" (221-251). The chapter's introductory paragraph introduces some analytical questions and a statement of its limited but important purpose: "to examine the interactions among the British, the Zionists and the Palestinian Arabs in order to illustrate the main issues of the mandate era" (221). The chapter is both comprehensive and analytical, with occasional evaluations of the existing historical literature. For example, Cleveland disavows Israel's traditional narrative about the birth of the Jewish state when he says, "the legend of a defenseless, newborn Israel facing the onslaught of hordes of Arab soldiers does not correspond to reality" (248). He provides a thoughtful and nuanced depiction of heroic figures such as David Ben Gurion

and Hajj Amin al-Husseini. Ben Gurion is described as an exemplar of the kinds of experiences and attitudes that prevailed among Zionist leaders from his generation (233). Hajj Amin al-Husseini is described as being “more moderate” than either Zionists or Arab nationalists acknowledge (231). Cleveland furnishes just enough detail about major political actors to understand the intellectual and historical milieu in which they operated without indulging in sensational or theatrical story-telling.

Cleveland’s narrative is fashioned with clarity, economy and precision. He often shows awareness of popular misconceptions, rebutting them in just a word or two. An example is his assertion that “Zionism *resembled* a project of settler colonialism” (235, emphasis added). This qualification is helpful, because Zionist immigration to Palestine is often erroneously defined as colonialism without disambiguation. Elsewhere, in a short space he effectively disambiguates the notion of “Jewish terrorism” as it relates to the Mandate period. He identifies the different armed groups that were active and describes their uneasy relationships with each other. He makes a distinction between the types of operations carried out by the Haganah, and those of the other two irregular armed groups, the Irgun and the Lehi (the Stern Gang). He describes the activities of the Haganah, the official paramilitary organization which later became the national army, as “acts of sabotage” against the British while those of the other two groups he characterizes as “acts of terror” (243-244). There was a marked difference in the goals and tactics between these different groups and students of Israeli history will appreciate that he makes the distinction.

Seasoned readers and newcomers alike will appreciate the richness with which the story is told, and will find a level of precision and attention to detail that is not often present in comparable textbooks. Compare the following descriptions of the 1929 Jerusalem riots taken from three of the textbooks surveyed in this report:

Zionists demonstrated at the Wailing Wall by raising the Zionist flag and singing the Zionist anthem. There were clashes with Arabs. By August 1929, full-scale rioting broke out, resulting in 740 deaths . . . (Anderson et. al., 73)

The Zionists acquired a new sense of confidence. In the same month a dispute concerning religious practices at the Wailing Wall in Jerusalem led to widespread communal clashes, with severe casualties. Troops were rushed in and order was restored (Mansfield, 231).

A dispute over the Jewish right of access to the remains of the Western, or Wailing, Wall came to serve as a focal point for all the communal antagonisms that had been building up since the beginning of the mandate. Jews regarded the wall as a holy site . . . Muslims also had deep religious attachments to the wall and its immediate surroundings . . . Although Jews had the right to visit the wall, they were not allowed to set up such appurtenances as chairs, benches, or screens to separate men and women during prayer . . . in late 1928 the British found it necessary to forcibly remove from the area a screen and the worshippers who had placed it there. The intensity of Jewish objections to this action galvanized the mufti and the Supreme Muslim Council into launching a publicity campaign about the danger that Zionism placed to the holy places of Islam. A year of claims and counterclaims over the status of the wall turned into violent confrontations in August 1929, during which

Arab mobs, provoked by Jewish demonstrations, attacked two Jewish quarters in Jerusalem and killed Jews in the towns of Hebron and Safed (Cleveland and Bunton, 237).

The first two passages describe a spontaneous outburst of intercommunal violence which no one is responsible for. Only from the third passage—Cleveland’s description—can the reader get an idea about what actually happened. Cleveland devotes more space to this topic, but the detailed account did not come at the expense of a longer book—it was made possible by careful editing and avoidance of repetition elsewhere in the text. As mentioned, the text is very economical and the space is utilized to the fullest.

Cleveland devotes about two pages to the hostilities of 1947-1948 and provides a useful map of the armistice lines (247-250). The 1949 armistice map can be easily compared with the map depicting the 1947 UN partition plan which appears just a few pages earlier in the text (245). Cleveland provides a succinct summary of Benny Morris’s nuanced thesis concerning the war itself and “plan dalet,” but his explanation of the Palestinian refugee problem more closely resembles the narrative put forward by Israel’s “old historians” than the “revisionist” narrative put forward by Morris. Cleveland identifies two distinct phases of hostilities, the intercommunal war followed by the war that involved the Arab states. He explains “Arab flight” from Palestine during the first phase as the “normal reaction of a civilian population to nearby fighting—a temporary evacuation from the zone of combat with plans to return” after the fighting (248). He contrasts that with the second phase which he says included both a “mass exodus” as well as “forced expulsion” (250). The word “flight” appears four times and the word “expulsion” appears twice, suggesting an emphasis on the voluntary retreat of the Arabs (248-250). Cleveland does not mention the atrocities committed by Zionists or the impact of atrocities—which Morris and other “new historians” have documented and incorporated into a more thorough understanding of the consequences of the war and the severity of the Palestinian refugee problem. Further to that, Cleveland tells the reader that Palestinians view these events as the “nakba,” or “disaster,” he identifies the Arab commentator who popularized this terminology, and comments on the political implications for Palestinians, but he does not offer adequate insight as to how Palestinians experienced war, displacement and dispossession (250).

On the topic of the PLO, Cleveland misses the mark. 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 through armed struggle—meaning that its goal was to defeat and destroy Israel. Cleveland tells the reader that the PLO’s *raison d’être* in the 1970s was “the establishment of an independent Palestinian state” (254). This is only partially true. The PLO aimed to establish the independent Palestinian state, but only after defeating and dismantling the Jewish one. Thus, the objective that took precedence in the 1970s was the necessity of undoing the Jewish state. Later, in a different context, Cleveland edges closer to an accurate depiction of the PLO’s aims when he says, “The new Palestine was to comprise the whole area of mandate Palestine” (336). He acknowledges that this was viewed by Israel as a threat and as an intention to dismantle the Jewish state, but still tends to treat it more as rhetoric than a firm position (336). Later he describes Arafat’s strategic considerations on the eve of Oslo, when he says, “years of rejectionism and maximalist demands had failed to bring

about the creation of a Palestinian state” (466). This is a gross understatement. For Arafat and the PLO, participation in Oslo was an explicit admission that Israel was a reality that would not be undone. Cleveland evinces awareness of this tension, but fails to factor it into his overall analysis of the impasse between Israel and the PLO at that stage. In his view, the PLO was a movement of freedom fighters striving for a state. It may be tempting to focus on the quest for independence, but if the founding principles and objectives of the PLO are not depicted accurately, the reader will not be able to have a sense of how the group evolved and changed over time, nor will he or she have a sense of why the Madrid Conference and the Oslo Accords represented a watershed in the history and trajectory of the Palestinian national movement.

In spite of the shortcomings, Cleveland’s narrative does include a number of components that most textbooks omit. Cleveland devotes space to depicting the diversity and complexity of both Israeli and Palestinian society. Israel is depicted as a country whose very nature and trajectory is contested between different orientations, for example, between secular and religious groups and between peace activists and settlers (322, see also 339). This is seen in statements such as the following: “What some Israelis viewed as an unjustifiable occupation, others saw as a God-given opportunity . . .” (322). He describes intense “disagreements over the proper components of national identity” and the “struggle for the very soul of Israel” (327). He provides a particularly perceptive synopsis of the question of the relationship between religion and state in Israel, the problems and politics involved in defining “who is a Jew?” and even the contested politics of marriage in Israel (327-328). He also provides very informative analysis of Israel’s multi-party political system and the challenges arising out of the demands it creates for coalition governments (239). Israel’s perceptions of security, debates about the occupied territories, and foreign relations priorities are covered as well (329-331, 339-342).

The text contains a treasure trove of rich description and insight about the Palestinian experience after the nakba. Cleveland paints a vivid portrait of the Palestinian diaspora community and the hardships that they faced after 1948 and after 1967. He differentiates between how they fared in the different lands they found themselves in including Jordan, Lebanon, Syria, Iraq, the Gaza Strip and the West Bank. He describes the PLO’s founding, make-up, and its clash with Jordan and the events known as “Black September” (338). And he offers some poignant insights about how Palestinian national identity was sharpened by the collective experience of dispossession and foreign occupation: “Perhaps the principal achievement of the Palestinian resistance,” he notes, “was to create a Palestinian consciousness, as a distinctive people entitled to basic human rights, that was too deeply rooted to be eliminated by the brute force of Israeli occupation policies” (343). In describing the hardships faced by the Palestinians in the West Bank, Cleveland assigns much of the blame to harsh Israeli policies which included collective punishment, house arrests and business closures. The experience of coming under Israeli occupation, he asserts, “demoralized and radicalized the Arab inhabitants of the West Bank” (342). In sum, the earlier chapters in this textbook excel at depicting the nuances and complexities of both Israeli and Palestinian society and politics, even in the short space allotted.

As mentioned, there are some significant problems in the later chapters. The failure of the Oslo peace process is a contested issue that requires an explanation from more than one perspective, but sadly, the book falls short in this regard. The subheadings show that the

authors intended to provide insights from both sides: “Problems with the Oslo Process: Two Perspectives” (470). The Palestinian perspective is addressed first and it is somewhat insightful. Various observations may help the reader to be able to better understand events from the Palestinian vantage point, such as the observation that “Palestinians became disillusioned with the peace process and with Arafat’s one-man rule” (472). Also perceptive is the observation that “Palestinians began to feel that the PA was becoming as oppressive as the Israeli occupation forces had been” (471). After that, the intention to present the perspectives of the actors devolves into an analytical argument about why Israeli support for the peace process began to dwindle.

One the whole, the authors present a deficient explanation for Israeli disillusionment with the peace process. They mention that “ Hamas bombings” and the prospect of a Palestinian state “brought to the forefront of public concerns the sensitive issue of security,” but they do not elaborate on that key point, or endeavor to shed light on life in Israel during the suicide bombings of the second intifada (472). Instead, they assert that the main cause for opposition to the peace process was increasing religiosity in Israeli society. The authors take this argument further when they say that the statements of “Jewish religious spokesmen” about the sanctity of the land can be compared to the statements of Hamas’s founders (472). The authors go on to argue that ideological “Israeli militants, like their counterparts in Hamas, resorted to violence like Hamas to express their opposition to the Oslo Accords,” and they offer Baruch Goldstein and Yigal Amir as examples (473). This argument is problematic for several reasons. First of all, it is strange to compare Baruch Goldstein and Yigal Amir to Hamas militants. Baruch Goldstein (who carried out a shooting massacre against Palestinian civilians) and Yigal Amir (who assassinated Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin) are both private citizens that acted on their own, whereas Hamas militants were members of an armed group that functioned like a coherent military organization having different units and a chain of command. Goldstein’s massacre of Palestinian civilians bears the most resemblance to Hamas’s attacks because he targeted civilians, but unlike Hamas’s suicide bombers, who are eulogized and commemorated by Hamas’s political leadership as martyrs, Goldstein was designated as a terrorist by the Israeli government.

In spite of an elegant passage earlier in the textbook which provides a good deal of insight about the role of religion in Israeli society and politics (326-329), the authors take a wrong turn in the concluding section when they argue that biblical interpretations of the conflict derailed the Oslo process. The authors argue that “Jewish religious spokesmen,” increasingly “framed the conflict in religious terms,” generating greater Israeli militancy and a decreased willingness to compromise. However they fail to factor in the statements of many influential rabbis, including chief rabbis, who have supported the notion of compromise with the Palestinians. For example, Rabbi Ovadiah Yosef, who was regarded as the most important living halakhic authority until his death in 2013, famously ruled that territorial compromise is permissible because Jews have a religious duty to save lives.<sup>5</sup> Cleveland and Bunton acknowledge that the relatively large and influential, ultra-Orthodox Shas party (the party which he founded) did not object to the peace process, but they did not factor this into their overall analysis (476). In their view, the main obstacle to peace has

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<sup>5</sup> See Shlomo Fischer, “Excursus: Concerning the Rulings of R. Ovadiah Yosef Pertaining to the Thanksgiving Prayer, the Settlement of the Land of Israel, and Middle East Peace,” *Cardozo Law Review*, Vol. 28, No 1 (October 2006), pp. 229-244.

been radical religious interpretations of the conflict in Judaism. However, important studies have concluded that radical religious interpretations of the conflict did not penetrate Israel's non-religious-nationalist majority.<sup>6</sup> The Israeli military, it should be noted, is vastly secular, and ultra-orthodox men, for the most part, prefer to be exempted from military service. This consideration, among others, attenuates the argument that religious rationale is the main source of Israeli militancy and intransigence. Religious rationale inside of Israel does play a role in prolonging the conflict, but it is not the only factor or the only spoiler, as this book claims.

The main problem with the argument about flagging support for the peace process in Israel in the mid-90s, however, is not that it treats Baruch Goldstein as an illustration of "a threatening undercurrent of violence," but rather that the Hamas and Islamic Jihad members who terrorized Israeli society are not part of the equation. The reader is not given to understand that in the five year period that followed the Oslo Accord (1993-1998), nineteen suicide and other bombing attacks were carried out in shopping malls, cafes, buses and markets. In several passages, the authors even go so far as to blame Israel for Hamas's suicide bombings, describing them as a pattern that was "caused" by "Israeli provocations" (475, see also 480). It would have been worthwhile in this textbook—and especially in the section that was supposed to present an Israeli perspective—to let the reader understand this phenomenon from the perspective of Israelis. The psychological impact of terrorism on Israeli society is a well-researched subject.<sup>7</sup> Moreover the relationship between trauma and political views and voting patterns or between trauma and views of the "other" are crucial components of conflict studies. Without an understanding of how Israel experienced the terrorism, it is very difficult to understand why Israeli support for the peace process dwindled during the Oslo years.

Throughout the sixth part, there is a conspicuous preference for the traditional Palestinian narrative about where the blame should lie. The authors fall into a pattern of describing Israel's "violations" of agreements and "violation" of international law and they describe how Palestinians were affected by these violations but the question of whether Palestinians committed any violations is not examined (see for example, 474, 475, 481 and 508). From Israel's perspective Arafat violated the Oslo Accords with his incitement to violence and his failure to halt terrorism. Cleveland and Bunton hold that Arafat was unable to rein in terrorism but they neither explore the evidence for or against this claim, nor do they examine the implications of such on the prospect of peace (475). It would have been worthwhile and beneficial to expose the reader to the different debates about the intersection between Arafat and terrorism as well as the conflicting statements that he made which caused Israelis to doubt his sincerity. Sadly, this is missing. As a result of a one-sided narrative, especially in this last section, Israel receives the lion's share of criticism for the failure of peace while Palestinian agency is down-played.

In sum, Cleveland and Bunton's *A History of the Modern Middle East* is a mixed bag. Earlier chapters are mostly free of rhetoric, word choices and oversimplifications that

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<sup>6</sup> See for example, Yitzhak Reiter, "Religion as a Barrier to Compromise in the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict," in *Barriers to Peace in the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict*, edited by Yaacov Bar-Siman Tov (Jerusalem Institute of Israel Studies in cooperation with the Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung in Israel, 14 March 2011), pp. 228-263.

<sup>7</sup> 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).

exhibit a clear preference for one national narrative over another. But a considerable bias for the Palestinian version of events becomes apparent toward the end. The earlier chapters include a well-written and penetrating historical, political analysis of the Arab-Israeli conflict, effectively situated within the context of the wider global and regional processes that have shaped it. Israel's history and involvement in the conflict is elucidated succinctly and effectively. There is also a good deal of insight about Palestinian history and society, but there are two areas in which the book was lacking in this regard. The book does not provide adequate insight about how Palestinians experienced the events of 1948, and it misrepresents the nature of the PLO in the first two decades after its establishment. The part of the book that relates to the Oslo process and the second intifada exhibits a palpable preference for the established Palestinian narrative of events. Here the textbook could have benefited from a more careful examination of the literature that explicates Israeli perspectives on the failure of Oslo. The narrative places the blame on the Israeli side, arguing that religious interpretations of the conflict within Judaism are to blame for the lack of peace, and at the same time it minimizes the role of radical Islamist interpretations. The textbook which provides a more reasonable narrative about Israel's experience with the conflict in its earlier chapters, takes a sudden turn and promotes the official Palestinian version of events toward the end.

**James Gelvin, *The Modern Middle East: A History*, 4<sup>th</sup> edition (2016)**

James Gelvin is a professor of history at the University of California, Los Angeles. Among other books, he is the author of *The Israel-Palestine Conflict: One Hundred Years of War* (2014), which was included in Working Paper No. 1. The focus of this review is the treatment of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict in Gelvin's comprehensive textbook, *The Modern Middle East: A History*. The fourth edition, surveyed here, was updated to include the events of the so-called "Arab Spring."

The Israeli Palestinian conflict, as a topic, comprises a very small portion of this textbook. This in and of itself is not a criticism. The Israeli-Palestinian conflict need not be given an outsized role to play in a book that covers the entire region. The chapter covering the conflict is found in Part III, World War I and the Middle East State System, Chapter 14. A number of primary source documents or excerpts of documents are included alongside the chapter. The relevant inclusions are a selection from Theodor Herzl's diary on the topic of "the Jewish Question," the text of the Balfour Declaration and a poem by Mahmud Darwish. There is also a suggested reading list. On the topic of the conflict, Gelvin lists his own textbook, *The Israeli-Palestinian Conflict: One Hundred Years of War* and he lists Charles Smith's textbook, *Palestine and the Arab-Israeli Conflict*, both of which are reviewed in the first working paper in this series. Unfortunately, scholarly works based on original research are not included. It may have been germane, given the ample white space remaining, to include the pivotal studies by the most influential scholars in the field, such as Benny Morris, Rashid Khalidi, Anita Shapira, Ziad Abu Amr and others.

The chapter, "The Israeli-Palestinian Conflict," includes several maps and photos, but there is no contemporary political map. Unfortunately, the maps that were included betray a political bias. The most recent map that is provided is a map showing the territories that Israel occupied in 1967 including the Sinai Peninsula. It is labelled "Israel and the Occupied Territories after 1967" (241). But there is no map that shows how the borders changed after the 1979 Israel-Egypt Peace Treaty, which resulted in full Israeli withdrawal from the Sinai (completed in 1982). As a result, the most updated map shows Israel in possession of a huge swath of Egyptian territory which it no longer possesses. Another map that appears in this text, a map labelled "Palestine and the Middle East" is also very dishonest. It depicts the modern political boundaries of the Middle East, including the boundaries of Gulf Arab states that were determined in 1971 and the boundaries of united Yemen, which date back to 1990. But the geographical area that approximates to the modern State of Israel together with the occupied territories, the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, are blocked out and labelled "Palestine" (231). In other words, it is a contemporary political map, which shows the borders of all of the other states in the region, but omits Israel's borders, and in place of Israel and the Palestinian territories is a representation of pre-1948 Palestine. This type of map is an exemplar of propaganda that de-legitimizes the State of Israel. One wonders why it was reprinted in a textbook without critical comment.

Gelvin's narrative of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is an uncritical adoption of the conventional Palestinian narrative. The War of 1948 does not receive much attention in this chapter, but the result is clear: "the war for Palestine led to the creation of the State of Israel" (237). Israel is described in pejorative terms, as a "consequence" of Zionism, the

result of a colonial settler movement that took up residence on someone else's land (230). For Gelvin, the territorial conflict is between two peoples, European immigrants and their descendants on the one side, and the "indigenous," rightful inhabitants of Palestine on the other (230-232). In his narrative, Jewish interest in the land began in 1882. There is no mention of Jewish history in the land, nor is there mention of Jewish tradition concerning the land, which has been a central part of Jewish liturgy, ritual and observances since Roman times. After briefly describing the first three waves of Jewish immigration to Palestine, Gelvin describes the fourth and fifth waves, focusing on the disparity in numbers. Between 1924 and 1939, "in a period of only fifteen years, close to three times as many Jews emigrated to Palestine as had done so over the course of the previous forty years" he points out (234). But he fails to identify the context for this. There is no mention of the stimulus of virulent anti-Semitism in Europe, or the rise of the Nazi party in Germany. With no regard for causation, or the unique calamity that befell the Jewish people, the Jewish exodus from Europe in the decades preceding WWI is cited as an exemplar of "the period of the greatest migration of humans in history" (234).

After painting the picture of Zionist immigration with broad strokes, Gelvin turns to a discussion of Palestinians' self-perceptions and interaction with Zionism. The story of the Palestinian experience with Zionist immigration is faithful to the official Palestinian narrative. Even while scholarly consensus faults inept Palestinian leadership with at least part of the blame for what happened in 1948, Gelvin depicts their actions and decisions as inevitable, judicious and sensible. For example, he argues that the Palestinians' failure to organize themselves or take advantage of the Mandate was an inevitable outcome of their rejection of the legitimacy of British policy and mandatory rule (235). In making this assertion, the author relies on slippery slope logic. He asserts that Palestinians' failure to act was an unavoidable outcome of their rejection of British policy, without any argument for the inevitability of their inaction. The author's logic is flawed but his overarching message is clear—Palestinians do not bear any responsibility for what happened to them in 1948. Gelvin attributes responsibility entirely to the British and the Zionists.

Readers familiar with the events of 1936-1939, in which Palestinians revolted against the British administration of Mandatory Palestine and against Jewish immigration, will hardly recognize Gelvin's narrative of the same events. He depicts these events not as a revolt, but as a trauma; the narrative he advances would be more appropriately termed, "the great victimization" of 1936-1939. He omits mention of labor strikes, heightened nationalist sentiment and political protest. He also omits mention of the violent attacks perpetrated by armed bands against British authorities and the Jewish population, and describes only the blows suffered by Palestinians when the British put down the insurgency (236-237). Soon it becomes clear that Gelvin's narrative of the Great Revolt is not intended to inform the reader about the past, but rather to shape his or her views about the present: "the British launched a counterinsurgency campaign, employing tactics all too familiar to Palestinians today: collective punishment of villages, 'targeted killings' (assassinations), mass arrests, deportations and the dynamiting of homes . . ." writes Gelvin (236). Sadly, this narrative can serve as a prime example of how, even in a history textbook, the past can be deliberately dismissed for the sake of a political agenda.

This textbook contains errors and omissions of fact that color the whole story with a pro-Palestinian bent. For example, Gelvin states that the goal of the Palestine Liberation

Organization (PLO) at its inception was to establish a sovereign Palestinian state (238). He likens the PLO and its militant tactics to other national liberation movements in the age of decolonization (238, 243). But this characterization omits a significant point, and a point without which the evolution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict cannot be understood: the PLO's basic objective at the time of its establishment was the liberation of all of Palestine—a goal which simultaneously meant the destruction of Israel. This was explicitly stated in its charter, both in the 1964 and in the 1968 versions.

Elsewhere, there is a tendency to employ false parallels in order to paint a rosy picture of Palestinian terrorism. In an apparent effort to make the hijackings and terror attacks of the early 1970s more palatable to the reader, Gelvin asserts that the “PLO played the same role for Palestinian nationalism as the Balfour Declaration played for Zionism” (243). His comparison of a dynamic, nationalist organization with a document, however significant it may have been, is confusing and misleading.

Overall, the chapter devotes a disproportionate amount of space to violence committed by Israel and evades discussion of violence committed by Palestinians. For example, Israel's harsh reaction to the first intifada, widely regarded within Israel as a grave mistake and a dark stain on Israel's history, is described with emotive and vivid detail (245). But the second intifada, which was witness to the deployment of Palestinian suicide bombings against civilian targets, is hardly given a mention, even though it was widely viewed as an enormous strategic and moral failure on the part of the Palestinians (246). The problem is not that Gelvin chronicles Israel's many failures; it is that Palestinian failures receive far less attention. Without insights into the failures of both sides it will be very hard for the reader to understand why there has been no resolution of the conflict.

In summary, *The Modern Middle East*, 4<sup>th</sup> edition, by James L. Gelvin, does not offer a balanced narrative of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. In many ways, this chapter on the conflict fails to meet the criteria identified as the markers of a good history textbook. Its chapter titled “The Israeli-Palestinian Conflict,” is a rather one-sided narrative. Instead of presenting a comprehensive account, or examining different viewpoints, historiographical debates and competing schools of thought, Gelvin presents an adaptation of the inherited Palestinian narrative of dispossession without consideration for the Israeli narrative of national self-determination in the land of their forefathers. The chapter also suffers from factual errors, misleading maps and rhetoric that evince a perceptible political agenda. Instructors aiming to choose a textbook on the history of the modern Middle East that includes a balanced and accurate narrative of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict should look elsewhere.

**Louise Fawcett, ed. *International Relations of the Middle East*, 3<sup>rd</sup> edition (2013)**

*International Relations of the Middle East*, 3<sup>rd</sup> edition, edited Louise Fawcett is an edited volume containing seventeen chapters written by different scholars representing the fields of political science and Middle East Studies. In the introduction, the editor explains that the volume is an effort to foster engagement between the two fields (14). It features an impressive range of international experts addressing a range of topics through the lenses of different methodologies and theoretical lenses. While the volume is generally rich and varied, the content that focuses on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict was less so. In fact, the editor opted to include chapters by Charles Smith and Avi Shlaim, two authors that both express clear preferences for the Palestinian narrative of the conflict.

This book is chock full of reader-friendly textbook features. Each chapter has a distinctive header, stylistically formatted and set apart from the rest of the text, which includes the chapter's table of contents and an overview paragraph (like an abstract). This design, which includes a good amount of margin space, allows the reader to quickly grasp the contents of each chapter at a glance and even jot down some notes about it. It is a very reader friendly layout. Each chapter has a clearly labelled short conclusion followed by a list of further readings. Several chapters include chronological lists which put key events in order, and some contain charts and graphs. Some chapters list a few footnotes at the very end; although, footnotes, it seems, were optional. At the end of the book is a bibliography and index. As an extra feature, this book provides the option of an online resource center containing additional information, including an interactive timeline, links to online primary documents and news websites, chapter exercises and power point slides corresponding to each chapter.

The editor's major error, in regard to the content about the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, was in selecting two scholars who, more or less, view the history of the conflict in the same way and present the same conclusions. Both provided historical narratives that lay the blame for the conflict at the feet of Israel. Avi Shlaim's main conclusion is that the Oslo accord "failed because Israel, under the leadership of the Likud, reneged on its side of the deal" (268). Charles Smith concludes that "Israeli state militancy" and "Likud expansionism" were mostly to blame for the failure of peace (264). Smith's narrative paints a fairly black and white portrait of Israel as a militant state standing in sharp contrast with what he views as peace-seeking actors such as Gamal Abdel Nasser (253) and sensible dissenters such as Hamas (260). Smith's narrative focuses on the details of diplomacy and negotiations with little reference to the intifadas that were raging or the Israeli and Palestinian populations' perceptions of the process. Both chapters present detailed critiques of Israeli and American policy, and neither chapter provides an in-depth look at Palestinian politics, or Palestinian ideologies and constraints.

The chapters written by Smith and Shlaim can be found in part three of the volume, a section dedicated to a discussion of key issues and actors in the Middle East. Charles Smith's chapter is broadly defined, "The Arab-Israeli Conflict," whereas Avi Shlaim's chapter is more narrowly defined, "The Rise and Fall of the Oslo Peace Process." Both authors have published their own well-known works on the Israeli-Palestinian or Arab-

Israeli conflict. Avi Shlaim is an Israeli revisionist historian, best known for his works *Collusion across the Jordan: King Abdullah, the Zionist Movement and the Partition of Palestine* (1988) and *The Iron Wall: Israel and the Arab World* (2000). Charles Smith's popular textbook *Palestine and the Arab-Israeli Conflict* (2013) was reviewed in the first installment of this series, MDC Working Paper No. 1.

In his chapter, "The Arab-Israeli Conflict," Charles Smith, a historian, promises to question one of the basic premises of the realist school of thought in international relations theory by examining the case of the Arab-Israeli conflict. The realist school, he points out, views states' domestic factors, such as identity, as marginal in determining state interests. He promises to "consider the question of identity politics as key to the definition of nationality and whether such a definition corresponds to the basis of the state" (246). However, in spite of the promise to focus on the intersection between identity and state interests, the chapter quickly deviates toward a chronological historical narrative. For example, he describes Saddam Hussein's decision to invade Kuwait as "the catalyst for an apparent breakthrough toward a resolution of Arab-Israeli matters" (259) and neglects to frame the shift in the analytical context that is most significant for international relations—the shift from a bi-polar to a unipolar balance of power in the international system. His tendency to revert back to the logic of a historian, placing a focus on individual leaders and the impact of their decisions, will disappoint readers that are seeking insights about international relations.

The beginning of the chapter is made up of a seemingly disparate assortment of different sections distinguished by headings and subtitles. Not all of them are listed in the article's table-of-contents and, in fact, at first glance, it is not obvious why the various topics were chosen or how they relate to each other. The first section is titled "Realism," and it contains the sub-headings "Israel," "Egypt" and "United States" (246-248). Smith begins by arguing that Israeli right-wing ideology—linked to a national identity that requires keeping the West Bank—has prevented a resolution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict (246-247). The author's apparent point—that identity has been an obstacle to Israel's withdrawal from the West Bank—is made, perhaps, but it somewhat gets lost among other details. After that, the logical flow of the section really breaks down. There is a section titled "Egypt," containing three sentences offering some seemingly random observations about 1967 (that Nasser may not have been completely in control of the Egyptian military prior to Israel's 1967 attack) which the author does not tie in to his overall argument (247). Similarly, under the heading "United States," he provides various observations about American policy in the Middle East over the course of decades, but it is not clear how these observations tie into the overall argument (247-248). Following another thematically organized section (248-250) the chapter shifts to a chronological narrative of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict starting with the year of 1947.

Smith's rendering of the story contains a few historiographical problems and exhibits a definite preference for the traditional Palestinian narrative about where the blame should lie. Like the traditional Palestinian narrative, Smith views the Balfour Declaration as the source of the conflict (245). As Smith would have it, the conflict began when European powers endorsed a text that acknowledged Jewish rights in Palestine. The traditional Israeli narrative, which Smith does not acquaint the reader with, asserts that the conflict began with the Arabs' denial of the Jews' national rights, prominently expressed in the Arab

rejection of the UN Partition Plan. Here, the reader could have benefitted from multiple viewpoints about the cause of the conflict.

In a similar vein, Arab-Israeli wars are portrayed in a one-sided fashion, in which selection and omission of facts and details portray Israel as the militant party and Arab states as the peace-seekers. For example, Smith, citing State Department memoranda, asserts “Israel attacked Egypt on 5 June 1967 after being informed by the US that an Egyptian envoy would arrive in the US on 7 June to seek terms for resolving the crisis peacefully” (253). The assertion is partially true, in the sense that Israel was informed of Nasser’s decision to dispatch the vice-president of the United Arab Republic (UAR) to Washington, but it omits key details which affect the interpretation. One of those key details was that in spite of US efforts to persuade Egypt to keep the publicity down to a minimum, US intelligence estimated that “it was evident that a heavy propaganda play by Cairo would create difficulty for the Israelis.”<sup>8</sup> Israeli intelligence was similarly suspicious of Nasser’s intentions. Israel believed that by sending an emissary to Washington, Nasser was trying to pull a diplomatic stunt that would corner Israel and make it more vulnerable to Arab pressure. By cherry picking the archival source, Smith portrays Israel as a state that was hasty to make war and Egypt as a state that tried in vain to make peace when in fact the reality was much more complex.

The anti-Israel and pro-Palestinian bent comes into sharper focus toward the end of the chapter where the omission of key details presents a one-sided picture. For example, Smith says that Israel imposed “naval restrictions on Gaza fishing” (262). To put it this way is to make Israel’s actions appear petty and arbitrary. The author neglected to mention that Hamas was using fisherman to smuggle weapons and materials used to manufacture rockets into the Gaza Strip. Similarly, Israel’s self-perception—as a country that uses its military in its own defense—is often ignored. For example, Smith describes the 2008-09 Gaza War as an “Israeli attack on Gaza” and states, that it was just as much an outcome of Israeli domestic politics during an election year, as of “any presumed Hamas violation of ceasefires” (262). Here, with the inclusion of the word “presumed,” Smith seems to suggest that, in spite of claims to the contrary, Hamas did not actually violate any ceasefires, or more specifically, the ceasefire brokered by Egypt on 19 June 2008. How can it be that 486 rockets and 309 mortars fired at Israeli towns and cities in the two months prior to Israel’s attack on 27 December 2008 did not violate any ceasefires?<sup>9</sup> One could also consider whether Israel’s actions violated the ceasefire, but to ignore Hamas’s rocket attacks and to portray the war as a one-sided and arbitrary Israeli aggression is not intellectually honest.

Other oddities appear in Smith’s “Key Events” list (265-267). The list includes the assassination of Yitzhak Rabin and omits the assassination of Anwar Sadat. It is worthwhile to include both events because it is important for students of the conflict to understand that there were extremists and significant obstacles to peace on both sides. In

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<sup>8</sup> See Foreign Relations of the United States, 1964-1968, Volume XIX, Arab-Israeli Crisis and War, 1967, edited by Harriet Dashiell Schwar, (Washington D.C.: Government Printing Office, 2004), Document 148, “Minutes of the Ninth Meeting of the Middle East Control Group,” Available at <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1964-68v19/d148> (Accessed 31 July 2017).

<sup>9</sup> “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.

this list, Smith tells us that in June 2008 Israel and Hamas agreed to a tentative truce and then he tells us that an Israeli assault on Gaza occurred in December 2008. He omits Hamas's assault on Israel that preceded the Israeli assault on Gaza, and in doing so, depicts Israel as a country that carries out assaults on Gaza for no reason (266-267). This is intellectual dishonesty.

In this timeline, Smith also includes "Israel's rejection of the Saudi Arabian peace initiative." Firstly, this topic does not constitute an "event." The Saudi-led initiative adopted with modifications on 27 March 2002 at the Arab summit in Beirut is best understood as a Saudi-coordinated Arab "posture" or "position" toward the Israeli-Palestinian conflict—not as a basis for negotiation or an action plan. When they presented this initiative, the Saudis did not offer to mediate or get involved or call both parties to the negotiating table.<sup>10</sup> In other words, the "proposal" and the "rejection of the proposal" was a drama that was played out only in statements reported by the media—not in a real exchange between state leaders such as was done during Camp David and Oslo. The Saudi-led initiative represents a turning point in the Arab states' posture toward Israel, and as such, it should be mentioned on the timeline. But it should have been rendered "Saudi-led Peace Initiative was endorsed by the Arab League" in March 2002 (not rejected by Israel in February as it states). In treating the topic the way he does, Smith ignores the context and purpose of the Saudi initiative, something that the reader should have been permitted to understand on its own terms.

Smith concludes that the lack of peace is Israel's fault and more specifically, it is a consequence of the ideology of the Likud party, which has led the Israeli government from 2009 to the present. He states that the Likud, with the support of the US, "embraces ideological perspectives requiring the subjugation of neighbors" (264). The author's critique of Israel in general and Likud in particular is very interesting and has many merits, but it is strange to lay the blame on Israel without having considered the role of Palestinian actors. Intellectually honesty requires that, before blaming one side, the ideologies, strategies, decisions and constraints of both sides should be considered.

In this chapter, Smith does not provide a critical analysis of the Palestinian arena. The most conspicuous omission is a critical evaluation of the role of Hamas in the conflict. He describes Hamas's platform as a "mirror image of Likud's platform" and yet, in his view, Hamas should not be blamed for the lack of peace; in his view, only Israel should be blamed (249). Hamas's ideology is rich in national, religious and territorial imperatives. From Israel's vantage point, the lack of peace in the Israeli-Palestinian arena has been largely due to Hamas's unwillingness to concede its ideological imperatives and its violent methods and the Palestinian Authority's variable unwillingness or inability to rein it in. But in this chapter, the reader is not given to understand how or why the majority of Israelis blamed Hamas and other Palestinian terrorists for the lack of peace.

The second chapter about the conflict in this edited volume, Avi Shlaim's "The Rise and Fall of the Oslo Peace Process," has the same limitations. It is also a diplomatic history. And it is also a one-sided history—a history which examines and blames Israel without

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<sup>10</sup> Joseph Kostiner and Chelsi Mueller, "Egyptian and Saudi Intervention in the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict (2006-09): Local Powers Mediation Compared," in Uzi Rabi, *International Intervention in Local Conflicts: Crisis Management and Conflict Resolution since the Cold War*, London: I.B. Taurus, 2010, pp. 202-221.

providing insights about the Palestinian arena. Shlaim traces the diplomatic history of the Oslo process with particular attention to Israel's part in it. He analyzes letters that were exchanged, committees that were formed, and concessions there were made or not made—but he ignores the context in which it all happened. He fails to situate Israel's negotiating behavior within the wider context of escalating violence that introduced significant constraints into the process and also affected the outcomes of elections in Israel. The 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. To ignore this context in which Oslo took place is not intellectually honest.

Shlaim identifies various “landmarks” in the Oslo process related to Israel's decision-making and willingness to make concessions, but he does not devote the same level of attention to landmarks in the Palestinian arena. For example, in his section titled “The road to Oslo” he characterizes Israel's decision to hold talks with the PLO as a “diplomatic revolution” and he attributes it to three decision-makers—Yitzhak Rabin, Shimon Peres and Yossi Beilin. He goes on to analyze the reasons for their decision to change course (270). But he does not explain why the PLO's decision to formally recognize the right of the state of Israel to exist was also a “diplomatic revolution.” The PLO's professed *raison d'être* from the time of its inception until the 1991 Madrid conference was the “liberation of all of Palestine” by means of “armed struggle.” Thus, the PLO's decision to formally recognize Israel's right to exist was a game-changer, but Shlaim ignores it. Shlaim goes on to analyze “Rabin's conversion to the idea of a deal with the PLO,” but does not analyze the evolution of Yasser Arafat's attitude toward the idea of a deal with Israel (271). The narrative goes on like this, analyzing the behavior and decisions of Israeli decision-makers at each turn, while turning a blind eye to the Palestinian side of the equation. To conclude by placing blame on one side, without having investigated both sides seems to indicate a lack of fairmindedness.

The two chapters related to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict included in the textbook, *International Relations of the Middle East* edited by Ellen Lust, are different in scope, but similar in their approach and in their conclusions. The chapter by Avi Shlaim focuses on the Oslo process while the chapter by Charles Smith is a summary of events spanning almost 100 years. Both present a narrative of the conflict that focuses on international history. Charles Smith states that the realist school of thought is insufficient to explain the lack of peace in the Israeli-Palestinian arena, even while most of his chapter is a diplomatic history without reference to international relations theory. Avi Shlaim provides a diplomatic history of the Oslo years without reference to theory. There is very little analysis of what happened on the ground in the Israeli-Palestinian arena. Significant events that influenced the outcome of the peace process, such as the second intifada, are not factored into the analysis. Both chapters scrutinize Israel while failing to provide meaningful insights about Palestinian politics and the Palestinian role in the conflict. Both chapters blame Israel for the failure of peace. It may have been more beneficial for the reader to find within the pages of this textbook, two different perspectives, perhaps two contrasting narratives, to encourage the application of critical thinking skills and

independent thought. In conclusion, these two chapters, which both read like indictments of Israel, are insufficient by themselves as a basic reference or as background reading on the conflict which involves two distinct peoples.

**Mehran Kamrava, *The Modern Middle East: A Political History Since the First World War*, 3<sup>rd</sup> edition (2013)**

The third edition of *The Modern Middle East: A Political History Since the First World War* by Mehran Kamrava focuses primarily on the post-Ottoman period. This volume consists of two parts: the first presents a history of the Middle East in chronological order, and the second focuses on specific issues in Middle Eastern politics, one of them being the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Included are a number of photos, maps, tables and a bibliography. In his section on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, Kamrava articulates his goal “to highlight the competing notions of identity among the Palestinians and Israelis...” and he aims to “as much as possible present a picture of the circumstances on the ground, especially those created and perpetuated by each side to further its national agenda” (300-301). Unfortunately, the textbook narrative presents a very distorted picture of the conflict due to numerous errors, faulty and outdated source material, misreading of sources, disproportionate attention to the issues affecting one side, and cherry-picking of the facts.

Like most textbooks, the story of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict begins with a discussion of Zionism. Kamrava depicts Zionism as a type of European settler colonialism. Basing himself on the writings of Edward Said, he contends that “the central assumptions of Zionism were that only God’s chosen people should be in the Promised Land, that the backward trespassers who were there had no rights to it, and that the problems posed by their existence on the land could be easily dispensed with” (77-78). In support of this characterization, Kamrava cites slogans, such as “A people without a land for a land without a people,” and borrows quotations from Said’s book, *The Question of Palestine*, such as a Theodor Herzl’s (in)famous diary entry of 12 June 1895, “We shall have to spirit the penniless population across the border . . .” (77-78, 418). The problem here is that it is not honest to present an evaluation of Zionism based on slogans, polemics and diary musings. If Kamrava had read the whole diary as well as Herzl’s two published books, he may have been forced to contend with Herzl’s fluctuating ideas and, in fact, his wide knowledge gaps about the land and people of Palestine.

Here it is worthwhile to put Herzl’s 12 June 1895 diary excerpt, which Kamrava quotes, into context. Working as a journalist for a Viennese and a French newspaper, Theodor Herzl covered a number of stories which touched on the issue of growing anti-Semitism in Europe. In January 1895 he covered the sentencing of Alfred Dreyfus, a Jewish officer in the French army who was wrongly convicted of treason in January 1895. The “Dreyfus Affair” exhibited unmistakably anti-Semitic overtones which had a profound effect on Herzl’s thinking about this issue. By late April or early May, he had arrived to the conclusion that the Jews needed a nation state of their own. In June he began to flesh out his ideas in a diary. The diary in its printed form totals more than 2,000 pages. Many of the earlier entries are paper scraps on which he jotted down disorganized and disjointed ideas that came across his mind. Later on he used the diary to record accounts of trips and meetings, to draft letters, flesh out ideas and vent frustrations.<sup>11</sup> Neither the infamous 12 June 1895 diary passage nor sentiments of a comparable nature made it into Herzl’s

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<sup>11</sup> Shlomo Avineri, “Theodor Herzl’s Diaries as a Bildungsroman.” *Jewish Social Studies*, Is. 5, No. 3 (1999), pp. 1-46, <https://muse.jhu.edu/> (Accessed March 21, 2018).

published works or public speeches. This suggests that many of the diary entries were just fleeting thoughts, fleshed out on paper in a writing frenzy and abandoned later, perhaps due to changed sentiments, impracticality or new and conflicting information. Nevertheless, Israel's harshest critics have often treated this particular diary entry as if it spells out the programmatic principles of Zionism.

After quoting Herzl's diary passage, Kamrava continues,

Some of Herzl's disciples were not as discreet, nor were they always willing to pay for Palestinian land. By most accounts, by 1948, only 6 percent of the land belonging to Palestinians had been bought by Zionists. Most houses were either simply destroyed or appropriated. One Israel researcher has estimated that nearly four hundred Palestinian villages were "completely destroyed, with their houses, garden-walls, and even cemeteries and tombstones, so that literally, a stone does not remain standing, and visitors are passing and being told 'it was all desert'" (79).

The "Israeli researcher" cited here is Israel Shahak, a chemistry professor, and the comment was made in his capacity not as a researcher but as an activist. Kamrava goes on to say:

"Many of the demolitions and other similar military operations in the Yishuv were carried out by one of the three active military organizations, the Haganah, the Irgun and the so-called Stern Gang." (79).

This is a major error. Shahak's comment about the War of 1948 and its aftermath is mistakenly applied to the Mandate period (1920-1948). During the Mandate period (the last two decades of the Yishuv) it was the British mandatory authorities—not Jewish militias—that demolished homes. One of the homes that the British authorities demolished belonged to Jews.<sup>12</sup> Demolition of Palestinian villages and homes by Jewish armed forces occurred during the War of 1948, after the new state of Israel was invaded by five Arab armies, and in its aftermath. The reasons for such have been the subject of intense scholarly debate between Israel's so-called "new" and "old" historians. Unfortunately, this highly significant error functions as the intellectual foundation for Kamrava's central argument—that Zionism constitutes a denial of Palestinians' rights to "exist" in the Jewish Holy Land and that its inexplicable goal since the beginning has been to drive them off the land (77-84, 316-323).

In a similar vein, the author bungles the narrative about the War of 1948. He describes the events of 1947-48 as "the death of a country and the birth of a new one" (82). "Palestine," he says, "was systematically extinguished, and a new country, the state of Israel, was created in its place" (82, see also 39). There is a popular misconception—and here this textbook perpetuates it—that there was once a country called Palestine, that it was defeated and dismantled and a state called Israel was set up on its ruins. Such did not happen. Mandatory Palestine was a geographic entity under British administration that had been carved out of Ottoman southern Syria after the First World War. It was a swathe of land

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<sup>12</sup> See for example, Matthew Hughes, "The Banality of Brutality: British Armed Forces and the Repression of the Arab Revolt in Palestine, 1936-39," *The English Historical Review*, Vol. CXXIV, Is. 507 (1 April 2009), pp. 313-354.

defined and demarcated by the European powers, having about 700,000 inhabitants that had once been ruled by the Ottoman Turks. There was a Muslim majority, and Christian and Jewish minorities, and a British administration.<sup>13</sup> Thus, the birth of the State of Israel on a portion of the territory administered by Britain marked the end of the British Mandate or perhaps the “death” of the British Mandate as Kamrava would have it. The problem with his word choice is that it feeds the mistaken belief that Zionists dismantled a country called “Palestine” and set up a country called “Israel” on its ruins.

As mentioned, Kamrava quotes heavily from Israel’s harshest critics. On the topic of “plan dalet,” for example, he quotes a large portion of material penned by the anti-Zionist scholar, Ilan Pappé. The passage is a summary of Pappé’s assertion that “plan dalet” was a blueprint for the “ethnic cleansing of Palestine” (83). The quotation may have been appropriate had Kamrava juxtaposed it with another that expresses an opposing scholarly viewpoint—such as Benny Morris’ contrasting thesis that “plan dalet” was defensive in nature, and that it was a war plan designed to secure the Jewish state against the Arab invasion. Pappé and Morris have engaged in a lively historiographical debate played out on the pages of prominent English-language newspapers and available to the public. Sadly, the reader will not be acquainted with this debate, or be exposed to the different scholarly viewpoints. Instead, Ilan Pappé’s controversial thesis is presented as the final truth on the matter.

The discussion of the 1967 War also includes errors of fact and elements of misinterpretation, though they are less consequential. The Six Day War, referred to as the “Six Days’ War” (108, 117) is depicted in ten pages with a map and a photo. In describing its immediate causes, Kamrava says that the Soviet Union “announced” that Israel was amassing troops on Syria’s border (117). It could not have been more the opposite. Nothing was announced publicly. Because Moscow has denied having any role in the 1967 War, scholars have been forced to hypothesize and speculate about the nature of private communications between the Kremlin and the Syrian and Egyptian governments on the eve of the war.<sup>14</sup> The mistakes do not end there. Kamrava notes “within the first few hours of the war, the Israeli air force managed to destroy almost all of the Egyptian airplanes that were parked in air bases within range of its jet fighters” (119). This explanation is very strange. The fact is, within the first few hours Israel decimated Egypt’s air force, including its jet fighters.

Another related passage raises serious concerns about the quality of sources consulted: In his narrative about the aftermath of 1967, Kamrava writes, “The Fatah, in the meantime, had scored an impressive military victory of sorts over Israel, when early in 1968 it managed to down six Israeli jets and destroy twelve tanks in one of the frequent border skirmishes” (123). The fact is, Fatah did not down any Israeli jets. Kamrava does not identify the confrontation(s) that he refers to, but it is most likely that he refers to the Battle of Karameh, a military confrontation between Israel and the combined forces of the Jordanian Armed Forces and the PLO/Fatah that took place in March 1968. This was a

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<sup>13</sup> Druze were counted as Muslims in the tally. See Herbert Samuel, “An Interim Report on the Civil Administration of Palestine, 1 July 1920-30 July 1921” (Geneva: League of Nations, 1921).

<sup>14</sup> See for example, Boris Morozov, “The Outbreak of the June 1967 War in Light of Soviet Documentation,” *The Soviet Union and the June 1967 Six Day War*, edited by Yaacov Ro’i and Boris Morozov (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 2008), pp. 43-64.

conflict for which all sides claimed victory. Israel, Jordan and the PLO all produced various accounts of the battle, with conflicting data about casualties and the number of tanks destroyed. Fatah's propaganda depicted Palestinian resistance fighters as Israel's most important adversaries, though by its own accounts the Palestinian fighting force was just 300 men. Palestinian narratives highlight the "suicidal heroism" of the guerrilla fighters who blew themselves up under armored vehicles and climbed tanks in order to throw grenades inside their hatches. Israeli and Jordanian accounts tell a story of a ground battle that was mostly fought between their two respective armies (most of Jordan's air force had been destroyed in 1967). None of the accounts make the claim that six Israeli jets were downed. Several historians mention that one Israeli jet crash landed in Israeli territory and that the pilot parachuted to safety.<sup>15</sup> Not only is it implausible that the PLO downed six Israeli jets when it possessed no aircraft and no anti-aircraft capability, but such a claim is not made in any of the sources.

There are other instances in which Kamrava evinces a misunderstanding of the sources he consulted. An example is his assertion that Yitzhak Rabin "was unwilling to engage in the necessary negotiations [with the Palestinians] in the aftermath of the 1973 War, since, he reasoned, the Arabs might take this as a sign of Israeli weakness" (135). He goes on to say "Not until 1993, exactly two decades after the 1973 War, did Rabin finally negotiate with the PLO . . ." (135). The source he cites is a passage by Shlomo Avineri quoted in Avi Shalim's book *The Iron Wall* on the topic of a conversation that Avineri had with Rabin during his first tenure as Prime Minister in the mid-1970s. However, the conversation that Avineri described did not relate to the question of negotiations with the Palestinians. The Israeli government did not contemplate negotiations at that time. Also the Palestinians, as represented by the PLO and Arafat, did not contemplate negotiations at that time. The PLO's professed goal from the time of its inception until the late 1980s was the "liberation of all of Palestine" by means of "armed struggle." The two parties began to contemplate mutual recognition of each other (a precursor to negotiations) only in the late 1980s. Avineri's comments that are reproduced in Shalim's book relate to a conversation that took place in the mid-1970s about the question of whether and when Israel should unilaterally disengage from certain occupied territories (135f78). Therefore, Kamrava's assertion is a misreading of the source and it evinces a fundamental misunderstanding of how the conflict evolved over time. When discussing the Israeli and Palestinian positions toward the conflict in the 1970s it would have been germane to mention that neither side entertained the idea of negotiating with the other and to explore the reasons for such.

This textbook also contains some minor errors that do not have bearing on the reader's understanding of the conflict. Some of these are cultural mistakes; for example, Jews are said to "celebrate" Yom Kippur, when in fact, Yom Kippur is a day of solemn fasting and repentance in Judaism (131). There are semantic mistakes, particularly in the rendering of Hebrew words (see for example, 303-307). Israel's military operation which was named "Cast Iron" (2008-09) is mistakenly referred to as "Iron Cast" (339). The name that the IDF gave to its November 2012 military operation is also rendered incorrectly (339). And there are also minor historical errors; for example, the author states that that the PFLP hijacked three commercial airplanes on 6 September 1970 and landed them in the Jordanian city of Zarka (124). Actually two of the planes hijacked that day were landed on

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<sup>15</sup> For a summary of the different narratives, see Andrew Terrill, "The Political Mythology of the Battle of Karameh," *The Middle East Journal*, Vol. 55, Is. 1 (Winter 2001), pp. 91-111.

a remote desert airstrip near Zarka but the third was diverted first to Beirut and then to Cairo. Three days later a fourth plane was hijacked and re-routed to Jordan where it joined the other two planes.

Besides the harmless errors, there are errors which could have some bearing on the reader's understanding of the conflict. For example, Kamrava states in a footnote "Although Israeli authorities consider the two as members of separate communities, the Druze are actually Muslims with their own ethno-sectarian identity" (440f93). In fact, the Druze do not identify as Muslims. Moreover, some of the "Israeli authorities" are Druze. A little known, but meaningful, insight is that the Druze are non-Muslim Arab citizens of Israel who serve in the Israeli armed forces, police and especially border police. Elsewhere Kamrava states that "Arab Muslim citizens of Israel are *barred* from military service" (246, emphasis added), when it would have been more accurate to say that Arabs are *exempt* from military service (aside from the Druze who are drafted). Some, in fact, do choose to serve.<sup>16</sup> This knowledge would be helpful for the reader who is aiming to better understand the complexities of the conflict, but sadly the textbook does not provide these kinds of insights.

Kamrava's reliance on outdated sources further erodes the quality of the narrative. Quoting from a book published in 1997 he asserts "no Arab citizen of Israel has ever held a leading position in any state institution . . ." (246). By the time this textbook was published in 2013, Israel's Knesset had sworn in two Arab ministers, one Muslim and one Druze. Moreover, Israel's Supreme Court had sworn in two Arab justices, the first in 1999 and the second in 2003. Undeniably, there are many ways in which Arab citizens of Israel face discriminatory treatment, but Kamrava's depiction does not inform the reader about where the contemporary problems lie. In a similar way, outdated data taints his lengthy discussion of the "Ashkenazi-Mizrachim [sic] ethnic divide" (302-307) due to his reliance on books from the 1980s and early 90s. The 1990s brought a fresh wave of immigrants from the former Soviet Union to Israel, setting in motion a new dichotomy in Israeli society—this was a dichotomy between the Israeli Hebrew-speaking Jew and the incoming Russian, many of whom were not viewed as Jews for various reasons. By this time, Israelis of "Mizrachi" or "Sephardic" origins had made strides in the political, economic, educational and cultural arenas giving way for the newer Hebrew-Russian dichotomy to begin to overshadow the importance formerly attached to the Ashkenazi-Mizrachi dichotomy. At the time of this writing, the focal point of such frictions has shifted again, with the new debate being about the influx of African refugees and economic immigrants that have entered Israel since 2006. Unfortunately, Kamrava's depiction of the main cleavages in Israeli society is woefully out of date.

The discussion of the conflict concludes with two sections sub-titled "The Situation on the Ground," and "The Elusive Search for Peace" (316-346). "The Situation on the Ground" paints a detailed picture of Palestinian suffering at the hands of Israelis from 1948 until the 2000s. What is missing is an equally detailed description of the "situation on the ground" inside of Israel. While suicide bombings are mentioned and data is given, nowhere does the author give a sense of how Israel experienced the suicide bombings of the second intifada or the rocket attacks from the Hamas-run Gaza Strip. There is a serious problem of

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<sup>16</sup> See for example, Michal Yaacov Yitzhaki, "An Officer and a Muslim Zionist," *Israel Hayom*, 7 September 2012, <http://www.israelhayom.com/2012/09/07/an-officer-and-a-muslim-zionist/> (Accessed 26 February 2018).

imbalance. Eight pages are dedicated to a critique of Israel's actions, while two sentences are allotted to the suicide bombings of the second intifada. As a result, Palestinian agency in the conflict is ignored, and the conclusion is a one-sided harsh indictment of Israel. The second problem is that the author builds a case against Israel based on dubious assumptions. He assumes that Israel's policy toward the Palestinians is driven by its basic "denial of Palestinians' rights to exist on Jewish Holy Land" (317). The situation "on the ground" is much more complex than that. A majority of Israelis do not believe that Palestinians have national rights to the land, but at the same time, a clear majority is in favor of the two state solution and in favor of co-existence.<sup>17</sup> In other words, acceptance of the narrative of the "other" may not be necessary for a peaceful resolution of the conflict. These are paradoxes that the reader should have been permitted to contemplate on their own terms.

In general, Kamrava's narrative about the Israeli-Palestinian conflict lacks the multiplicity of perspectives that one would expect from a textbook about a conflict between two peoples. An example is his treatment of the "house demolition" policy. He asserts "the main danger of life in the occupied territories is that of having one's house demolished by Israeli military authorities" (318). But important details and perspectives are left out. Firstly, many Israelis would point out that Palestinians can choose the path of non-violence. In recent years the demolition of homes was primarily applied to the homes of terrorists. Kamrava misses this point, but he also misses the historical evolution of this phenomena. Home demolitions, which were revived during the first intifada, were discontinued in 1998, and then renewed again in 2002 after a terror attack at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem killed nine Israelis. The first house demolished (after the moratorium) belonged to the suicide bomber who killed 21 Israelis, including 16 teenagers, when he blew himself up at a discotheque in Tel Aviv. The third point of criticism is that Kamrava treats this policy as an inviolable consequence of Israeli identity, when in fact, the efficacy and legality of house demolitions have been hotly debated and contested in Israel (317, see also 310). Moreover, Israeli NGO's such as B'Tselem provided much of the data that Kamrava relies on. In other words, there are Israelis who have no sympathy for a terrorist's family whose home is destroyed, but there are also Israelis who view this act as immoral and their opposition is not always in vain: Israel's vibrant civil society, which encompasses political activism, social change organizations and critical academic debates, has within it the potential to engender change. This was seen in 2005, when an IDF committee became convinced that home demolitions had little deterrent effect and were counter-productive, and Israel's defense ministry called for a stop to the practice of destroying houses of suicide bombers (though they have demolished a variety of structures for other reasons).<sup>18</sup> These complexities are not part of Kamrava's story and that is a distinct disadvantage for the reader hoping to gain a basic knowledge of the issues and debates surrounding the conflict.

At times, Kamrava's narrative seems exculpatory toward Palestinian political violence. His unqualified characterization of suicide bombers as "martyrs" is symptomatic of this (323). He asserts that "Palestinians' frustrations turned them into stone throwers in the late 1980s

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<sup>17</sup> See for example the survey findings in Sammy Smooha, "Still Playing by the Rules: Index of Arab-Jewish Relations in Israel, 2015," <http://www.iataskforce.org/sites/default/files/resource/resource-1510.pdf> (Accessed 28 February 2018).

<sup>18</sup> BBC News, 17 February 2005, [http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle\\_east/4274977.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle_east/4274977.stm) (Accessed 28 February 2018).

and the early 1990s and . . . into suicide bombers in the late 1990s” (323). In Kamrava, those who adopt violent methods are portrayed, not as moral agents, but as “noble savages,” victims of the occupation who simply do what is inevitable and therefore cannot be held accountable for their actions.

Another clear indication of bias in this textbook is the selection of photographs related to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Besides photos of public figures, there are seven photos that portray the intersection between Israelis and the conflict. Three of them depict Orthodox and ultra-Orthodox settlers and three depict Israeli soldiers. It stands to reason that the space could have been better used to give expression to the diversity that Israeli society comprises, and to depict the ways in which Israel’s secular Jewish and non-Jewish citizens, together comprising more than half of the total population, have also suffered from the conflict.<sup>19</sup> There are four photos depicting the ways in which Palestinians have suffered, while there are none depicting Israeli suffering. For example, there are two photographs of Palestinians walking through the rubble of homes damaged by Israeli missile strikes, a photo of an Israeli settler throwing wine on a Palestinian woman and a photo of a dead Palestinian child carried by three men, presumably family members. Conversely, there is one photo depicting Israeli school children taking cover next to a bus during a rocket attack. It is an authentic and informative photo but it does not depict suffering. Yet there has been no dearth of suffering on the Israeli side. Had the author wanted to convey the message that both sides have suffered he could have selected a photo of an Israeli walking through the rubble of a home destroyed by a Hamas rocket. Or he could have selected one of the many aerial photos depicting the carnage that ensued after a suicide bomber detonated himself on a crowded bus. Sadly, the selection of photographs tells a one-sided story.

Mehran Kamrava’s *The Modern Middle East: A Political History Since the First World War* is an attractive, well-organized, easy to use textbook. The content relating to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is unmistakably biased in favor of the Palestinian side. There is an abundance of errors. Some are inconsequential, but others serve to multiply and intensify Israel’s transgressions. Many of the text’s faults can be attributed to faulty source material or inaccurate transcription of source material. There is also a tendency to quote extensively from Israel’s harshest critics, writers such as Norman Finkelstein, Edward Said, and Ilan Pappé, while the intellectual output of Palestinian historians and political scientists, such as Nur Masalha, Yezid Sayigh and Khalil Shikaki are not factored in. As a result, the story is not a presentation of the traditional Palestinian narrative; rather it is a polemic that was built upon the rantings of activists and anti-Zionists. The book devotes a disproportionate amount of space to violence committed by Israel and avoids or dismisses violence committed by Palestinians. Sadly, the content related to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict in this textbook omits discussion of scholarly debates and fails to provide multiple perspectives on subjects for which there is disagreement. Like the narrative, the photographs that were selected also tell a one-sided story. Instructors looking for a textbook on the politics of the modern Middle East that includes a balanced and accurate narrative of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict should look elsewhere.

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<sup>19</sup> Israel’s Religiously Divided Society, Pew Research Center, 8 March 2016, <http://www.pewforum.org/2016/03/08/israels-religiously-divided-society/> (Accessed 6 March 2018).

**Andersen, Seibert, and Wagner, *Politics and Change in the Middle East*, 10<sup>th</sup> edition (2012)**

*Politics and Change in the Middle East*, 10<sup>th</sup> edition, by Roy Andersen, Robert Seibert and Jon Wagner is a textbook published by Longman, an imprint of Pearson Education, a leading publisher of K-12 and higher education curriculum and assessments. It was jointly authored by three professors, all from Knox College, an economist, a political scientist and an anthropologist (xix). The target audience is undergraduates “not specifically acquainted with the Middle East” (xvi). The stated goal of the book is “to acquaint the student with the necessary fundamentals regarding the history and the culture of the area” focusing on two themes, conflict and social change (xvi, xxi). After six chapters which approach the history of the region chronologically, there are another nine chapters, organized thematically, which “examine specific issues important to an understanding of contemporary Middle Eastern politics” (xvi). Overall, the Arab-Israeli and Israel-Palestinian conflict receive more than adequate attention in terms of space in the book and the authors do provide some interesting insights; however, numerous errors abound and the book suffers from a deplorable lack of organization.

Of all the texts reviewed in this study, this book is one of the most textbook-like from the perspective of its large size and two column page format. It has a number of reader-friendly features including maps, charts and tables. Key vocabulary, usually transliterations of foreign terms, are introduced in bold type and again listed at the conclusion of each chapter. There is a short glossary at the end for foreign words. Footnotes appear occasionally in the footer of the relevant page. Unfortunately, footnotes are very infrequent and there is no bibliography which could have given a sense of which sources were used extensively.

The integration of perspectives from three different disciplines—economics, political science and anthropology—makes this book attractive as a reader for a variety of courses on the Middle East. Their inclusions of chapters that address “specific issues” allow the authors to delve into topics that are not covered in standard histories of the conflict. There is, for example, a very informative description of Israeli demographics and electoral politics—a little understood topic which provides many keys to understanding the lack of peace in the Israeli-Palestinian arena (97-102). Likewise, the tortuous relationship between the two main Palestinian factions, Fatah and Hamas, is examined in depth; this is another critical, but oft-neglected subject (141). However, compared to the other books reviewed in this study, this textbook is much less accurate, complete and coherent; the merits of this book are few and widely scattered.

The table of contents catalogs a motley collection of chapters that drift from chronological analysis to state-by-state analysis to themes which are also sometimes defined by timeframe and sometimes not. Some of the chapters defined by timeframe overlap with time periods covered in other chapters. Unfortunately, the looping chronology of the book produces a rendering of the Arab-Israeli story that is extremely repetitive and yet incomplete at the same time.

Not only are the chapter topics arranged in a jumbled way, but subheadings also lack a coherent parallel structure. For example, Chapter 5, titled “The Rise of the State System, 1914-1950,” contains a section heading titled “The McMahon-Husein [sic] Correspondence” (viii). This section contains the sub-headings, “The Balfour Declaration,” and the “World Zionist Organization,” references to an event and an entity that are inter-related and contemporaneous but which do not fall under the umbrella of the Hussein-McMahon Correspondence. There is a relationship between these subjects, but the way that it is organized here—as if one were a subset of the other—is erroneous. Moreover, some content is needlessly repeated, while key facts that are essential to understanding the conflict are omitted. For example, the text states that “the fate of Palestine was left ambiguous” in the Hussein-McMahon correspondence, but it fails to mention that Sharif Hussein, leader of the Arab revolt against the Ottomans, assumed that Palestine was included in the territory promised to him (61-62). Added to that is the absence of Hajj Amin al-Husseini, the most prominent Palestinian leader, from the narrative. And the decision to try to cover topics such as the Balfour Declaration and the World Zionist Organization in dedicated mini segments, prior to the sub-section dealing with the topic “From Palestine to Israel,” renders a text that is repetitive and yet also shallow and deficient.

A prominent example of the garbled story-telling which could severely affect a beginner’s interpretation of history is the description of how events unfolded in the Palestine Mandate in 1947-1948. The civil war of 1947-48 is described as a “Zionist offensive” (75). Then the invasion of Palestine by the armies of five Arab states on the night of 14-15 May 1948 is not mentioned, leaving the reader who is not already familiar with these events to conclude that the War of 1948 was a Zionist offensive:

In November 1947 the United Nations called for a partition of Palestine. The mandate was to end on May 1, 1948, and the two states were to be established on July 1, 1948. The Arab states began to rally their forces in support of the now disorganized Palestinians who had rejected all aspects of the plan, but it was too little too late. A Zionist offensive resulted in victories as the British pulled out. On May 14, 1948, David Ben-Gurion announced the formation of the state of Israel. The Zionists had Palestine, or at least a portion of it (75).

The Arab invasion—which launched the War of 1948—is omitted from the narrative. The passage depicts the creation of the State of Israel as calamitous event and does little to inform the reader about the context into which it was born.

The Palestinian narrative of events is also not included in this textbook. The authors incorrectly assert that “no national Palestinian leadership had arisen before the establishment of Israel” (107). Given that blind spot, there is no mention of Hajj Amin al-Husseini, the most prominent Palestinian leader during the Mandate period, or of the other prominent Jerusalemite families that rivaled the Husseini family, such as the Nashashibis. The Palestinian experience with the War of 1948 is also missing. There is no explanation for the creation of the Palestinian refugee problem (75). Also, because the discussion of their exile is missing, the later assertion, that “Palestinian forces struck Israel” from Lebanon, does not make sense (82). In a separate passage the authors describe the Palestinian exodus as “migration” and they use the traditional Zionist narrative to describe

what happened: “The flight of Arabs out of Palestine from 1947 to 1949 was motivated largely by a concern for personal safety . . .” (101). The textbook fails to provide the basic Palestinian narrative of the nakba, the narrative of the “disaster,” dispossession and forced displacement. Part of the criteria for a good textbook about the conflict is that it includes both traditional narratives, in addition to any critique of those narratives; this textbook fails to meet that criteria.

There are also errors and omissions that are less consequential, yet inexcusable when found in a textbook. The sub-section titled, “The Balfour Declaration” does not mention Chaim Weizmann. This is a serious oversight because Weizmann is generally credited with having played a significant role in persuading senior British officials, including British Foreign Secretary Lord Balfour, to lend Britain’s support to the idea of establishing a Jewish home in Palestine. Weizmann is introduced as an actor in the story only in the parallel sub-section that follows, titled “World Zionist Organization.” In this section, Weizmann is described as a “chemist with connections to high ranking officials in England” and as “a Zionist leader” who pressed the Zionist cause with the British until “finally, an agreement was reached that culminated in the Balfour Declaration” (64). The first observation is that these details should have been mentioned in the previous section about the Balfour Declaration. The second observation is that Weizmann is not adequately identified. At the time, he was the President of the British Zionist Federation and most influential delegate from England at the Zionist Congress. Later in the sub-section titled “From Palestine to Israel,” the text refers to him again with in-adequate identification: “An open letter from the British prime minister to Chaim Weizmann, the highly influential British Zionist, repudiated the latest immigration policy” (73). The letter mentioned here is the 1931 McDonald Paper and the reason it was written to Weizmann is because he was, at that time, the President of the Zionist Organization and the Jewish Agency. It would have been preferable to provide the reader with a full-identification and an indication of his significance on the first mention of Weizmann and thereafter give details only about any new role(s) he made have assumed as the story progressed chronologically. This is not an isolated problem: inadequate and repetitive introductions are found throughout the text. See for example, the ways in which the events of Black September and Israel’s 1982 invasion of Lebanon are introduced and re-introduced (84, 108, 257, 299, and 106-108, 223, and 320 respectively). The same slipshod construction produced a narrative in which Hamas leader Ismail Haniyeh was indexed twice because his name is spelled multiple ways in the text (201, 226, 388).

The story is maimed by a lack of coherence. In myriad places the text could have benefitted from the inclusion of names, proper nouns and other markers that would have made the story more comprehensible. One paragraph, which follows a section about the commission that re-examined the 1936 white paper, begins this way: “A conference in London followed in 1939. The participants worked for a peaceful resolution but they failed to gain acceptance from either side” (74). Who are the participants? Who are the sides? Which specific historical event is this referring to? Answers to the key questions of who, what, why etc. are lacking, even in the preceding paragraph.

Sadly this text is rife with incoherent passages. Another example is a paragraph that begins by stating that the convening of the Seventh Arab Congress (1928) was encouraged by the 1927 decline in Zionist immigration. It goes on to say that a few months after that “rioting

broke out” in Jerusalem in 1929 because Jews waved flags and sang anthems at the Wailing Wall (73). It provides data about casualties on both sides but does not mention that in this instance, most of the Jews were killed by Palestinians and most of the Palestinians were killed by the British police who tried to suppress their rioting.<sup>20</sup> The paragraph ends with an analytical claim: “Arab politics in the 1930s was fragmented at the top and radicalized at the bottom.” This concluding assertion is nowhere elaborated on or supported by the preceding text (73). In fact, the sentences that make up this paragraph do not represent a logical progression from one idea to the next. This jumbled and incoherent paragraph is but one example of the flawed writing style which renders much of the story unintelligible.

The incoherence can be further seen in a passage that follows from the mention of Yitzhak Rabin’s assassination in 1995. The text states, “It was first feared that the peace negotiations would be derailed by the assassination. The road to peace started after the conclusion of the Gulf War. Many bumps and roadblocks had to be negotiated between that time and January 1996 . . .” (134). The disjointed, looping narrative prevents this textbook from being a useful tool for the beginner who is hoping to get a grasp on the timeline, main events and actors.

Whether intentional, or just a corollary of the disjointed narration, the language is, at times, very prejudiced. In the discussion of events that occurred during the Mandate period, the only terrorists in Palestine, according to this textbook, were Jewish terrorists (74). Acts of violence committed by Jews are attributed through use of terms such as “Jewish terrorist,” whereas acts of violence committed by Arabs are conveyed as spontaneous and generalized rioting or expressed with the use of passive verbs that obscure the perpetrator. For example, the text states that in April of 1936 “terrorist violence broke out” (74). In April there were repeated attacks by Arabs on Jews, but the language obscures that. The text says that in September 1937 “fighting broke out again” (74). This probably refers to the assassination of a British official in September 1937, but the use of a passive verb suppresses reference to the Arab perpetrators. This pattern reveals a subtle bias because it makes the violent acts committed by Jews much more overt and the violent acts committed by Arabs less so.

The same pattern surfaces in the discussions about the second intifada. Again the use of the passive voice is unmistakably one-sided: “Tactics changed: A spate of suicide bombers entered the fray; their targets were Israeli civilians” (138). The sentence lacks an actor. The passage continues: “After some time the Israeli military responded by invading most Palestinian cities. Many on each side died” (138). The identification of the actor as “the Israeli military” and the use of an active verb, leaves no doubt about who did what to whom. The reader approaching this without prior knowledge will understand that Palestinians died as defenders while Israelis died as attackers. In this way, Palestinian agency in violence is softened while Israeli agency is accentuated. The passage goes on to say “in July 2002 the Israeli air force . . . dropped a 1,000-pound “smart bomb” into a crowded apartment complex in Gaza city” (138). Again, the identification of the actor as “the Israeli air force” and the use of an active verb leave no doubt about who did what to

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<sup>20</sup> 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).

whom. A sentence found toward the end of the same section further illustrates: “The Israelis had to know that a bomb of such size would kill innocent civilians . . .” (139). The problem here is not that the authors criticize Israel’s actions, but they *only* criticize Israel’s actions. Their decision to use passive voice constructions when discussing Palestinian suicide bombings, in effect, exonerates the terrorists who maimed and killed dozens of civilians, as well as the organizations that recruited and armed them. It is as if Hamas and Islamic Jihad get a “free pass.” Fault-finding should not be avoided, but repeatedly laying blame on just one side is not intellectually honest.

As mentioned, there are some interesting discussions in this book about topics not covered in most textbooks. But these otherwise useful discussions are often plagued with needless errors. Chapter 6 contains a section that discusses Israel’s electoral politics in depth which includes some useful insights. The authors paint a vivid picture of the Israeli political arena and effectively illustrate how Israel’s coalition government structure is often unstable. The text also illustrates some of the ways in which domestic concerns can impact upon foreign policy. Sadly, the section still contains many inaccuracies. Among other errors, is the assertion that the prime minister in Israel is chosen by a direct election (97). In fact, direct election of the prime minister only occurred twice and the separate ballot was discontinued prior to the 2003 election. Given that this book was first published in 2007, there is no excuse for such an error.

Unfortunately, factual errors are a frequent occurrence in this text.<sup>21</sup> In one passage the authors assert that by 2003 the occupation “had been reasserted” (114), when in fact, there had been no interruption. Israeli shipping is said to “reach the port of Aqaba,” where it should have said the port of Eilat (104). Aqaba is in Jordan. The Palestine Liberation Organization 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 dismantle Israel. The nature of Hamas is misunderstood as well. The authors assert that “Hamas initially rejected the idea of peace with Israel. . . But they were persuaded to change their views” (135). This is false. While the PLO has since changed its position, Hamas has not: from the time of its founding in 1987 until the date of this writing, Hamas has maintained that the Israeli-Palestinian peace process is illegitimate and that the only solution to the conflict is the destruction and dismantling of the Jewish state.

Other examples of the inaccuracy include an assertion that “Israeli Arabs generally are not allowed to serve in the Israeli Defense Forces” (136). This is not true. Arab Druze are conscripted following a historic decision by one of their community leaders. Muslim and Christian Arab citizens of Israel are not conscripted but they are permitted to volunteer. Arab Christians volunteer more often than Muslims, and they often opt for national service, but there are some Muslims that also volunteer for the army, notably Bedouin. Another example of inaccuracy is the textbook’s endorsement of the popular misconception that a giant wall separates Israel from the West Bank (139). In fact, most of the length of the barrier is made up of a high-security fence which employs intrusion detection technology; the barrier does not precisely follow the seam line and, at the time of this writing, there are still major gaps in the barrier—places where no physical fence or wall exists. It would have been useful to have an analytical discussion of the barrier, about

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<sup>21</sup> For a fuller list of errors found in this book or any other book examined in this study, please contact the authors.

the terminology used to describe it, about its placement and about the significance of its placement, about whether the barrier really achieves the goals that the government has used to justify it, and about its short and long term implications for the peace process. At the least, the authors should have striven to describe the barrier in a factually accurate manner.

Andersen Seibert and Wagner's *Politics and Change in the Middle East*, 10<sup>th</sup> edition, is an introductory text about the region that contains a lot of student-friendly features and tools. Unfortunately, in the chapters and sections that relate to the Arab-Israeli and Israeli-Palestinian conflict, there are organizational and analytical flaws that render the content ineffectual and incoherent. The textbook abounds with factual errors and omissions of fact that could seriously affect the reader's interpretation. Certain topics are rehashed and repeated across multiple chapters while other topics are not discussed at all. The text is also not factually accurate, as far as the history is concerned. And there are elements of bias as well. Israel receives the lion's share of criticism for the failure of peace while Palestinian agency in the conflict is down-played. But at the same time, the textbook omits the traditional Palestinian narrative of the nakba and fails to explain the causes of the Palestinian refugee problem. A reader who approaches this textbook uninformed about the basics will be hard-pressed to glean the basics from this text, and a reader who is familiar with the topic under discussion will likely feel frustrated at the mangled prose, factual inaccuracies and uninformed rendering of events.

**Ellen Lust, ed. *The Middle East*. 13th edition (2014)**

The 13<sup>th</sup> edition of the *The Middle East*, is a textbook edited by Ellen Lust comprised of 26 chapters by different authors on the “societies and politics of the region” (xxix). The first nine chapters give an overview of specific topics in the Middle East, such as institutions and governance, religion, society and politics. Included in this overview section is a chapter on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict by Mark Tessler. His book, *A History of the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict*, was surveyed in our earlier working paper that addressed textbooks on the Arab-Israeli and Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The second section of Lust’s *The Middle East* consists of “profiles” of different countries in the region including Israel. It also includes a profile of the polity that represents an aspiring state—namely the Palestinian Authority. The chapters on Israel and the Palestinian Authority were written by two political scientists: Lihi Ben Shitrit of the University of Georgia wrote the chapter on Israel, and Benoît Challand of New York University wrote the chapter on the Palestinian Authority.

It was a judicious decision, on the part of the editor, to allocate dedicated chapters to the topic of Israel and to the topic of the Palestinian Authority as distinct from the chapter on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. This will allow the reader to comprehend the two entities on their own terms and to study their distinct and divergent approaches toward the conflict in depth. Other chapters also relate to the conflict in so far as it intersects with different states and issues in the Middle East. This review will focus on the chapter titled, “The Israeli-Palestinian Conflict” by Mark Tessler, and will also provide some general observations about references to the conflict across the entire volume.

One glaring inconsistency throughout the volume as a whole is the erratic use of the term “Palestine.” Inconsistency surrounding the use of this word is a potential source of confusion for the readers—to those who are newcomers to the topic and also those who are looking for new analytical insights. One could infer from the historical narrative that contemporary Palestinians are a people without a sovereign state and that the borders of a would-be Palestinian state have yet to be defined. But the term “Palestine” is variously used without definition of time and context, and at times it is used erroneously. For example, the word, “Palestine” is found alongside Egypt, Jordan and Lebanon, in various lists of contemporary, sovereign states with defined borders (xviii, 234, 242, 400). “Palestine” is listed along with the names of states in select graphs and tables, while other tables refer to, “the West Bank and Gaza,” and still others refer to “the Palestinian Authority” (150, 166, 168, 173, 176, 178, 240, 248, 249, 250, 256, 258). At times, the term “present-day Palestine” is used to refer to the territory included in the historical British Mandate (288, 400) while in other instances the term “Palestine” refers to just the West Bank and Gaza (234, 254, 698). Unfortunately, no effort was made to unify the terminology in the textbook or to help the student untangle the quagmire.

Tessler is more careful about land terminology in his chapter “The Israeli-Palestinian Conflict” with just one caveat. He asserts that the Philistines gave Palestine its “biblical name” (288), but elsewhere he states that Palestine’s biblical name is “Canaan”(287); This could be confusing for the reader. Presumably in the first instance he is making reference to the name *Philistia*, meaning “land of the Philistines.” But he does not point out the many

problems in interchanging the terms *Palestine* and *Philistia*. *Philistia*, the land that was inhabited by the Philistines, was located in the coastal plain. The biblical names for the hill country and the river valley (that approximates to the contemporary West Bank) are *Judea* (referring to Jerusalem and the southern part) and *Samaria* (referring to the northern part). In the second century CE, after quashing a Jewish revolt in Roman Judea, the Roman Emperor combined Judea with Syria and gave them the name *Syria Palaestina*.<sup>22</sup> Many scholars view this act of re-naming as a deliberate effort to weaken the Jewish association with the land. In modern times the use of the terminology “Judea and Samaria” as an alternative to other contemporary terms such as “the West Bank” betrays an attitude of Jewish entitlement and prior claim to the disputed territory (a point that Tessler makes on p. 323). While these observations about biblical nomenclature offer interesting insights, their inclusion in a textbook on the conflict should not be viewed as mandatory, but it would have been preferable to at least use accurate language about the origins and meaning of the word *Palestine*. The Philistines did not lend Palestine its “biblical name,” rather; they were an unwitting source for its modern name.

Land terminology aside, Tessler’s chapter, “The Israeli-Palestinian Conflict,” represents an effort 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. That his intention was to promote a sympathetic understanding of both sides is apparent from his frequent use of the word *understandable*: “Israel’s response to this provocation was *understandable* . . .” (360); “The disturbances were an *understandable* response . . .” (351); “It was inevitable and *understandable*, that Israel would respond . . .” (353); “Arabs responded, *understandably* . . .” (297); (emphasis added. See also 360). On most topics for which there are multiple points-of-view, the author brings in multiple perspectives. For example, he points out that what the Sharon government termed as the “security barrier,” its opponents characterized as the “separation wall” (354). Another observation is that Tessler often goes beyond explaining the different viewpoints of the actors and adds additional insights. For example, he explains that the West Bank barrier (fence/wall) is generally assumed to be a right-wing initiative, and then he goes on to explain that this policy actually sprung from the left side of Israel’s political spectrum and, with difficulty, was embraced by the right (354). In various places throughout the chapter, Tessler draws out contradictions and little understood morsels such as this one which many readers will find intriguing.

In the opening pages of the chapter, Tessler gives an account of the rise of Zionism and its relationship with Ottoman Palestine that is insightful and beneficial (290-295). He also provides a lively and informative account of the intersection between the Britons, Jews and Arabs in Mandatory Palestine. Episodes of violence between the parties are narrated in an intellectually honest manner and situated within their historical context. When giving tallies of casualties, Tessler distinguishes between combatants and non-combatants and he also identifies perpetrators when it is pertinent to the interpretation of events (see for example 297 and 353). In a refreshing way, the competing perspectives of the different actors and groups of actors are illumined for the reader. What is particularly impressive is that the author has managed to convey all of these complexities without forfeiting his own

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<sup>22</sup> In doing so, he was building upon the foundation laid by Herodotus. Herodotus, a Greek historian who wrote in the 5<sup>th</sup> century BCE, was the first known person to use the term *Palaistin* to describe a region inclusive of the coastal plain, the hill country and the Jordan River Valley.

value judgements and appraisals of past decisions. For example he writes, “Although partition was a *logical* response to the deepening conflict, the Peel Commission’s report was rejected by the protagonists” (300, emphasis added).

Tessler provides detailed and contemplative investigations of the events leading up to the Arab-Israeli wars and the consequences of the wars, but sometimes he omits key details about the fighting. For example, it is not clear from his narrative that five Arab armies invaded the new state of Israel in 1948 (302). The author does, however, delve into the refugee problem that the war created (303). He differentiates between the earlier and later stages of the war, in terms of what can be considered root causes of the Palestinian refugee problem. Drawing from two contrasting scholarly books about the topic, he concludes that the refugee problem was created as the result of both expulsion and flight, and that Jewish forces bore part of the responsibility for the refugee problem but not all of it (303-304). This nuanced and multi-faced explanation is fitting for a textbook chapter about the conflict.

In a similar vein, Tessler considers multiple explanations that have been advanced for Nasser’s calculations on the eve of the 1967 War (304-310). Examination of this topic in a short overview of the conflict is a rare find. He also describes the events that constituted a *casus belli* from Israel’s point of view as well as the way that events unfolded from the Syrian point-of-view. Then, in the style that has come to define Tessler, he gives a very brief synopsis of the war followed by a nuanced and thoughtful examination of its consequences for all concerned. This was a fitting choice because, as he points out, “Israel’s capture of the West Bank had demographic as well as territorial implications” (311). Tessler goes on explain how UN resolution 242 which called for the “withdrawal of Israeli armed forces from territories occupied . . .” has been interpreted differently by the different parties (312). After that, Tessler carefully considers the 1973 War from the perspectives of Israel and Egypt, focusing on Israel’s initial shock and heroism in battle and Sadat’s rationale and possible reasons for choosing to go to war (318-319). Syria’s perspective and rationale is overlooked, but perhaps it was not necessary for a short chapter on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

The text contains a treasure trove of invaluable insights about both Palestinian and Israeli perceptions of events. One particularly insightful passage explains why the outbreak of the first Palestinian intifada was a watershed moment for Israel: Tessler identifies a “significant change in the way that most Israelis looked at the West Bank and Gaza after December 1987,” and goes on to say that it was a “change often described as the resurrection of the ‘Green Line,’ in Israeli political consciousness”(338). While most narratives about the intifada focus on Israel’s actions, Tessler illumines a subject that is rarely examined or understood—Israel’s perceptions of the uprising. Tessler goes on to describe how the first intifada changed the political discourse in Israel in tangible ways. He describes how it was interpreted by those committed to “territorial maximalism,” as well as how it as interpreted by the supporters of territorial compromise (339). This type of analysis is commendable because it goes beyond the conventional fault-finding narratives and provides the reader with some cognitive strands that are worthy of further thought and exploration.

Another example of the type of evenness which has come to define Tessler's narration is the section of text about the Oslo Peace Process (341-352). Tessler devotes abundant space to describing and de-constructing the different narratives that have been advanced about the peace talks and the reasons for their failure. He not only summarizes both narratives, he also weighs the plausibility of each, and identifies the proponents of each narrative as well as the political motivations and implications inherent in supporting one narrative over the other.

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. But seasoned readers may find his coverage of the second intifada (2000-2006) and the three Israel-Gaza wars (2008, 2012 and 2014) to be less adequate. The author mentions a number of times that Palestinians carried out suicide bombings against civilian targets in Israel, and he gives credence to the viewpoint that the IDF's excessive reaction may have made the conflict more violent than it needed to be (353, 361), but he fails to make the pertinent connection between the experience of trauma, the issue of security and the general rightward shift of public opinion. As was mentioned earlier, the psychological impact of terrorism on Israeli society is a well-researched subject.<sup>23</sup> Moreover the relationship between trauma and political views and voting patterns or between trauma and views of the "other" are crucial components of conflict studies. Without an understanding of how Israel experienced the terrorism, it is very difficult to understand why Israeli support for the peace process dwindled during the Oslo years. This is a missed opportunity for the inclusion of less-understood but highly relevant insights.

Tessler does a remarkably good job of representing the deep divisions within Israeli society over the future of Israel and the West Bank (see for example 318, 323, 324, 328, 329, and 331); however, his narrative does not give a satisfactory impression about the sharp cleavages and opposing visions within Palestinian society. Above all, he misses the sharp contrast between Hamas and Fatah. Hamas is mentioned for the first time in the context of the suicide bombings of 1994 and 1995. It is described as "an Islamist political movement that had grown up in recent years" (346); in another detailed passage Tessler explains the reasons for Hamas's popularity in Palestinian society (358-359). However, he understates Hamas's significance in the Palestinian arena and in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. In the early 1990s, with its merger of Palestinian nationalism and political Islam, Hamas had already become the most serious challenge to the leadership position of Fatah and Yasser Arafat. With its bloody suicide bombings in Israeli shopping malls, dance clubs, cafes, buses and markets, it sought to convince Israelis to abandon the idea of reaching a deal that would create a separate Palestinian state. Hamas's perspectives, goals and tactics, do not come through in Tessler's narrative. Hamas's position was that no negotiated solution was acceptable save the dismantling of the Jewish state and the establishment of an Islamic Palestinian state on all of historic Palestine.

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<sup>23</sup> 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).

There are other ways in which information about Hamas is muddled in this text. One example is a paragraph which seems to suggest that Hamas and the Islamic movement in the Palestinian territories are separate entities. First, the paragraph discusses Hamas and Islamic Jihad as political parties and offers data, based on a 1998 poll, about their relative popularity among Palestinians, and then it goes on to say “the Islamist movement was *also* building a grassroots organization” that would one day challenge Arafat (emphasis added, 347). The Islamist movement that Tessler mentions here could have been none other than Hamas. It would have been preferable for the author to provide a more detailed and accurate portrait of Hamas, its history, its ideology, its foreign backing and its challenge to Fatah and Israel.

In summary, the 13<sup>th</sup> edition of the *The Middle East*, edited by Ellen Lust, contains a chapter about the Israeli-Palestinian conflict by Mark Tessler, a political scientist who has written one of the most comprehensive and detailed textbooks about the conflict on the market. The textbook contains separate chapters about Israel and the Palestinian Authority. Tessler’s chapter focuses on the ideational aspects of the conflict, such as causes and consequences. It does not give much detail about the conduct of wars or the methods and goals of violence. On the different topics he presents, Tessler routinely considers multiple perspectives and introduces unique and rarely understood angles. Understanding two or more opposing perspectives is crucial to understanding the conflict, and the author clearly sought to include and de-mystify multiple viewpoints. This is especially true for the portions of the chapter that cover the rise of Zionism until the beginning of the Oslo Process. The biggest weakness of the chapter is that it struggles to impart a clear-sighted portrait of Hamas. Hamas is portrayed as a political party, and yet the organization is viewed as a terrorist organization by Israel, the United States, the United Kingdom, Egypt and Saudi Arabia. It would have been worthwhile for the reader if Tessler had devoted space to an examination of the reasons for this and included multiple viewpoints about Hamas. Perhaps if this chapter were to be used as background reading about the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, supplemental reading should be provided about Hamas in order to provide different perspectives on its role in the second intifada and the multiple wars between Israel and Gaza. Aside from that, Tessler’s thoughtful narrative, interwoven with his incisive analysis, will satisfy the needs of the reader that is trying to gain a foundation and it will also provide some valuable food-for-thought for the reader that has already been immersed in the topic.

## **Peter Mansfield and Nicolas Pelham, *A History of the Middle East*, 4th edition (2013)**

Peter Mansfield's *A History of the Middle East* was first published by Penguin in 1991, five years before the author passed away. After his passing, Nicolas Pelham undertook the task of updating and revising Mansfield's book, then in its 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, and released a 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> edition. The book reviewed here is the 4<sup>th</sup> edition, published by Pelham in 2013. Peter Mansfield was an English diplomat, political journalist and historian who spent a major part of his life in the Middle East. He authored a number of noteworthy books, of which his comprehensive study *The Arabs* is generally seen as his magnum opus. Nicolas Pelham, a specialist in Islamic law and an accomplished journalist, explains the ways in which he revised and updated Mansfield's book in the foreword. Suffice it to say, Pelham focused his revisions on the description of historical processes that were underway (such as the Oslo Process) the result of which Mansfield could not have known when he released the book in 1991. Moreover, Pelham picked up where Mansfield left off and wrote the content about the failure of the Oslo process and the events that occurred thereafter.

*A History of the Middle East* is a comprehensive overview of the region's political, social and economic history written in a captivating style. While this book does not contain any of the special bonus features commonly associated with textbooks, it is comprehensive enough to make it an attractive introductory textbook. Its captivating, episodic story-telling style is the kind that will make it hard for the reader to put it down. The book includes four maps, suggestions for further reading and an index, but does not include footnotes or a bibliography. While it is organized both chronologically and thematically, vague chapter titles such as "Years of Turbulence" will not be helpful for the reader who wants to quickly navigate to a specific topic or historical period. Yet, with its captivating style and eloquent story-telling, this defect fades into the background. Indeed, the book is very engaging; however, due to its many errors, omissions of fact, stereotyping and oversimplification, exclusion of historiographical debates and exclusion of competing points-of-view, it is not suitable as a textbook or as a reference book.

As far as topics relevant to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict are concerned, the thread starts in the ancient Levant region when "King David, King of Israel, united the Hebrew tribes, captured the Jebusite town of Jerusalem and made it his capital" (4). The narrative goes on to tell of the arrival of the Hebrew tribes to the land which Mansfield anachronistically refers to as "Palestine." It tells of their exile to Babylon and their limited return in the 6<sup>th</sup> century BCE, and explores aspects of Jewish life in Palestine under the Roman Empire. This is situated within a far-reaching narrative of the ancient civilizations—the Sumerians, Egyptians, Hittites, Amorites, Phoenicians, Babylonians, Assyrians, Persians, Greeks and Romans. With the exception of the land's anachronistic nomenclature, Mansfield's narrative of Jewish origins is respectful and true to tradition. The foundations of Islam are also presented, true to Muslim tradition, in epic story-telling fashion. Mansfield goes on to describe the waves of invasions that swept the region, forging and shaping its linguistic, cultural and religious contours until the modern era.

Mansfield devotes a lot of space to Ottoman history in the region and he includes valuable insights about the demographics, economy and inter-communal relations in Ottoman

Palestine (see for example 75 and 134). Moreover, he displays a knack for including details that will help the reader to relate his or her own knowledge and experiences to the content in the book. An example of that is how he ties the region's economy to Europe's grocery stores: "Jaffa became a household name in Europe," he writes, "through exports of oranges from the great plantations around it." Indeed, he writes, many oranges sold in Europe still bear the "Jaffa orange sticker" (134).

Regrettably, Mansfield's narrative contains some stereotypes and generalizations: "It is not surprising," he writes, "that the Arabs of today are still inspired to the point of obsession by the story of the first achievements of Islam . . ." (15). There are subtle hints that Mansfield wrote to make the enigmatic "Orient" more understandable to a Western audience, such as found in his remark: "Bismark's role could not be Nasser's" (297). But there are times when this "outsiders looking in approach" may impart valuable insights, such as the insight contained in the following remark: "To the outside world the pudgy and half-shaven figure of Arafat seemed to lack appeal, but to his own people he had a powerful charisma and magnetism, especially when speaking in his Arabic tongue rather than coping with Western interviewers" (355).

The biggest flaw in Mansfield's work is his incorrect transcription of several primary source documents. He introduces a passage as "Article 6 of the Balfour Declaration" when in fact it is actually a passage from the "Mandate for Palestine" (230). The narrative also contains a misreading of the statement that was issued by the League of Arab States as their armies were advancing into Palestine in 1948. He writes that "the declared objective of the Arab governments was only to restore order and to protect the 45 per cent of Palestine which had been allotted to the Arabs under the UN partition plan" (267). In fact, their declaration clearly indicates that their intention was to restore all of Palestine to what they viewed as its lawful sovereigns, the Arab inhabitants. The goal of the Arab invasion was to defeat the Zionist forces and dismantle the newly declared state of Israel.<sup>24</sup> In a similar way, Mansfield writes that "plan dalet" was a plan for the "seizure of most of Palestine" (266). Some scholars have characterized it that way, but that is the most radical interpretation. The text of "plan dalet" defines the goal as that of gaining control of the areas allotted to the Jews by the 1947 Partition Plan (UN Resolution 181) and securing the borders of the Hebrew state. The intersection between the plan's intent and the war's conduct and outcome has been the topic of well-documented historiographical debates between historians, but the debates are not mentioned in this book.

The biggest advantage of Mansfield's writing is the complexities that he effectively conveys. Israeli and Palestinian governments and societies are viewed as vibrant peoples with varying opinions and orientations. Mansfield describes how Israeli politicians and parties have differed in their approach toward Israel's borders:

Some, represented by Yitzhak Shamir, saw the West Bank (or Judea and Samaria) and Gaza as part of the land of Israel and could not contemplate abandoning it to an Arab sovereignty. Others, represented by the Labor leader, Shimon Peres,

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<sup>24</sup>United Nations Press Release, "Cablegram dated 15 May 1948 Addressed to the Secretary-General by the Secretary-General of the League of Arab States," Available Online at <https://unispal.un.org/DPA/DPR/unispal.nsf/0/A717E30BD2F6E5EC8525761E0072E9B3> (Accessed 25 May 2017).

although ready to give up some land for peace, still could not face the prospect of an independent neighboring state governed by the PLO under President Arafat (359-360).

This is also true of Palestinians. Arafat along with his nuances and contradictions are depicted in full color but he is not viewed as the sole Palestinian actor and rightfully so. Neither is the PLO or Fatah, its leading faction, depicted as monolithic forces. Palestinian voices of dissent are included in the story as well as differing Palestinian opinions on what the aims of the “resistance” should be (see for example 313, 343, 346, and 354).

Beginning in Chapter 13, “Pax Americana,” a chapter that covers the Gulf War and its aftermath, it is possible to detect a significant shift in the way that the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is narrated. This chapter contains several sub-titles, one of which openly betrays a political leaning: “Israel's Missed Opportunity for Peace” (401). One might wonder, was not the failure of Oslo a “missed opportunity” for Palestinians as well? At this juncture, a preponderance of errors and omissions begin to replace the earlier, more even-handed narration.

Pelham states that Israel’s “officially propagated ideology,” religious Zionism, motivated Yitzhak Rabin's killer and the massacre of Muslim worshippers in Hebron by an American born settler, Baruch Goldstein (401). The first mistake is defining religious Zionism as Israel’s official ideology. If there is an “official” ideology, it is political Zionism. Religious Zionism is but one type. Its adherents (about one-fifth of Jewish Israelis) are less numerous than those who espouse other types such as Labor Zionism and Revisionist Zionism. The desire to fuse Zionism with Orthodox Judaism (which was traditionally opposed to Zionism) produced the ideology known as religious Zionism. Its adherents are still in the minority. It would have been worthwhile to have a disambiguation of these complexities in the textbook.

Another serious error of omission occurs in Pelham’s narrative about the Hebron massacre. In support of his argument about the radicalization of Israeli society, Pelham makes three points: that the Rabbi officiating at Goldstein’s funeral declared “the fingernail of a Jew was worth more than the lives of a thousand Arabs;” that Goldstein’s widow decorated her mantelpiece with his machine gun; and that Goldstein’s grave “became a carefully manicured park” (401). But by mentioning these details and omitting others, Pelham would have us to believe that Israel, by-and-large, condoned the Hebron massacre. But he fails to mention that the “carefully manicured park,” became the subject of an intense legal battle which Goldstein’s supporters lost. The courts defined Goldstein as a terrorist and the army was sent to subdue his supporters while a bulldozer demolished the privately constructed memorial plaza around his gravestone. Further to that, a poll conducted by the Teleseeker polling firm immediately after the massacre, found that 79 percent of Israelis condemned the massacre, 11 percent said “it had to be understood against the background of Arab terror against Jews,” and only 3.6 percent praised Goldstein.<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> Washington Report on Middle East Affairs, April/ May 1994, <https://www.wrmea.org/1994-april-may/public-opinion-israeli-palestinian-support-for-peace-accord-was-dropping-before-massacre.html?Itemid=> (Accessed on 14 May 2018).

Given Pelham's attention to the commemoration of Baruch Goldstein by his sympathizers, one wonders why the commemoration of Palestinian terrorists is not mentioned. It was comparably more widespread and far-reaching. Palestinian ritual commemoration of suicide bombers through instruments such as "martyr posters" has been brilliantly researched from numerous angles; posters of Palestinian suicide bombings have been the subject of numerous exhibitions and have adorned the walls of children's bedrooms. Sadly, this phenomenon is not mentioned within the pages of this book.<sup>26</sup>

The topic of suicide bombings in general is minimized and attacks are sometimes blamed on Israel's leaders. For example Pelham blames Shimon Peres for having "triggered" a series of four bus bombings that occurred in one week (403). The bombing of the Passover meal in Netanya by Hamas on 27 March 2002 (which killed 30 and wounded 140) is mentioned cynically as the excuse for Ariel Sharon's failure to reply to the "eminently conciliatory" Saudi peace initiative, endorsed that same day by the Arab League (411). For Pelham, terrorism is either a result of repressive Israeli policies or a welcome excuse to avoid the negotiating table, but it is not a phenomenon that deserves to be examined on its own terms.

Pelham acknowledges that there is a relationship between Palestinian terrorism and Israeli policy, but he neglects to treat terrorism as a topic worthy of investigation. One problem with this approach is that the Palestinians who planned and carried out attacks were left out of the story. They are treated as "noble savages," who are driven to do what they do and therefore have no choice and no responsibility. This is implicit in the characterizations of Hamas and Islamic Jihad as "refugee camp militias" (410). Who were the Palestinian suicide bombers? How old were they? How many of them grew up in refugee camps? What was their educational and economic profile? What did their recruitment and preparation for an attack look like? What was the role of ideology in this phenomenon? These questions have produced ink wells of literature and yet that knowledge does not factor into Pelham's story. The problem with this approach is that the book fails to communicate one of the central obstacles to peace: the 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. Many experienced the terror first-hand as eye witnesses to the bombings, or as grief-stricken friends or relatives of the victims. All Israelis were exposed to scenes of carnage, on the nightly news channels. Israel's experience with terror has been and still is a significant factor at the ballot box and unfortunately, this book does not convey that.

As with suicide bombings, rocket attacks on Israeli towns and cities are also diminished in Pelham's narrative. For example, he mentions that Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert launched a war in Gaza in December 2008 but he does not endeavor to explain why (467). It is not mentioned that in the November to December 2008 time period, Hamas fired an estimated 486 rockets and 309 mortars at Israeli towns and cities, which Israel named as the *casus belli* for the military operation that Olmert presided over.<sup>27</sup> For Pelham to portray the 2008-09 military operation as just an arbitrary, senseless attack by Israel on

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<sup>26</sup> See for example, Lori A. Allen, "The Polyvalent Politics of Martyr Commemorations in the Palestinian Intifada," *History and Memory*, Vol. 6, No.2 (2006), pp.107-38.

<sup>27</sup> "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.

Palestinians without providing a context for understanding the event is not intellectually honest.

A one-sided rendering of the story is again evident when Pelham chronicles the number of “killings” Israel was responsible for, decade by decade, without the inclusion of any context: “. . . by the fourth decade Israel was killing over 600 Palestinians per year” (469). In his narrative, Palestinian victims are people, such as “Muhammad al-Durra, whose death huddled in his father's arms on a Gaza street was broadcast worldwide . . .” whereas Israeli victims are nameless, faceless numbers appearing only in ratios which seem designed to illustrate Israeli barbarism in the face of Palestinian heroism: “After twenty months of fighting, the Palestinians had reduced the ratio to 2:1” (409). In short, Israeli experiences with the conflict from the 1990s onward are hardly depicted within the pages of this book.

Another major player on the Israeli/Palestinian landscape, Hamas, is woefully misunderstood. Pelham asserts that during the second intifada, Hamas was “denied a place in the peace process [and] opted to spoil it instead” (401). In fact, Hamas did not want to be part of the peace process—Hamas rejected the very notion of peace with Israel. Hamas's renunciation of the peace process and its efforts to terrorize Israeli society were part of its bid to challenge Fatah for the leadership of the Palestinian national movement.<sup>28</sup> This would have been a fascinating issue to examine within the pages of the textbook, but sadly, Pelham restricted his choice of topics to only those that condemn Israel.

There are also errors of fact that have little to no impact upon the author's interpretation of the conflict. Pelham gets a number of particulars about the terrain and its people quite wrong. One of these errors is in his depiction of the holy places. Pelham treats “al-Aqsa sanctuary” as a synonym for “the Dome of the Rock,” when in fact they are two distinct structures in close proximity to each other (407). One of them, the al-Aqsa sanctuary (mosque), is the third holiest site in Sunni Islam while the other—the iconic structure with the blue mosaics and golden dome—houses an important shrine. In describing Ariel Sharon's visit to the platform that houses them (which the Jews refer to as the Temple Mount) Pelham wrongly asserts that “in the close confines of the sanctuary, Sharon's military entourage opened fire on stone-throwers . . .” (409). This is fiction. In fact, Sharon and his entourage left the platform that day without violent incident, but Palestinians viewed his visit as highly provocative. The violence erupted the following day when Palestinians demonstrated and threw stones at a large contingent of Israeli police who responded by firing metal-coated rubber bullets and live ammunition to disperse the demonstrators, killing 4 people and injuring about 200.<sup>29</sup>

Another example of inaccuracy is Pelham's assertion that the “West Bank was hemmed in by a matrix of five-metre-high walls . . .” (469, see also 521). The barrier that he refers to is comprised of walls and fences—and in fact 90% of it is high security fences; contrary to what Pelham says, the concrete wall portion is eight meters high; its route deviates from the green line (it does not neatly “hem in the West Bank” as Pelham would have it) and it

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<sup>28</sup> See for example, Khalil Shikaki, “The Politics of Paralysis II: Peace Now or Hamas Later,” *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 81, No. 1 (January/ February 2002) <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/palestinian-authority/1998-07-01/politics-paralysis-ii-peace-now-or-hamas-later> (Accessed July 29, 2008).

<sup>29</sup> “Report of The Sharm el-Sheikh Fact-Finding Committee,” 30 April 2001. US Department of State Archive, Available online at <https://2001-2009.state.gov/p/nea/rls/rpt/3060.htm> (Accessed 24 May 2017).

is very porous, meaning it has many gaps. Pelham's unqualified use of the term "apartheid wall," also betrays the politicized nature of his historical narrative. The barrier is described by the Palestinian Authority as the "apartheid wall," and by the Israeli government as the "security fence" or "security barrier." Both of the terms have their own connotations as well as affiliations to one side or the other in the conflict. Pelham opts for the emotionally charged, "apartheid wall," without an effort to de-construct the terminology or elaborate on the broader, complex issue (469). The real interesting insights come from asking the deeper questions, such as: How is the case of Israel/Palestine similar to and different from the case of South Africa? If Israel's intention was to prevent West Bank terrorists from reaching Israel, then why is the barrier so porous? Why does the barrier not follow the green line? Why was it constructed along a different route? These fascinating questions are not explored. Indeed such a discussion should be viewed as a bonus feature in a textbook—not a requirement. But at the least, the Pelham should have striven to describe the barrier in a factually accurate manner and to shed light on the terms of reference of both sides.<sup>30</sup>

The maps included in the book are marred with errors. There is a large, two page map of the region after the table of contents and before Pelham's foreword. Israel and Lebanon are colored grey making them appear as part of the Mediterranean Sea. Moreover Jerusalem appears to be in Jordan and Haifa appears to be in Lebanon. The Gaza Strip is part of Egypt, suggesting that the map depicts the border of the region between 1948 and 1967, but at the same time the United Arab Emirates is on the map, even while it was created in 1971. This map will not be useful to readers who are trying to understand the geographical contours of the conflict.

Other factual errors include reference to a geographical area as "what is now Soviet Turkestan" (20); the description of Yom Kippur as a "Jewish feast," when in fact it is a Jewish fast (331). Jews residing in Hebron are described as "colonists" during the Mandate period (231). With a few brief exceptions, Hebron was continuously inhabited by Jews from ancient times until 1948 (when it came under Jordanian sovereignty). This was owing to its significance as the traditional burial place of the Jewish patriarchs, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, as well as the matriarchs, Sarah, Rebekah and Leah. Therefore, "colonists" is not the right word for the Jews residing in Hebron during the Mandate period.

*A History of the Middle East* by Peter Mansfield and Nicolas Pelham is a page-turner; these authors have fashioned an engaging story containing wit, human emotion, vivid description and exciting plot twists. The biggest advantage of this book is the complexities that are effectively conveyed in the earlier chapters. Israeli and Palestinian governments and societies are viewed as vibrant peoples with varying opinions and orientations. In the latter chapters that relate to more contemporary realities, Israeli and Palestinian societies lose their color and diversity. Israeli society is depicted as uniformly religious and ideological and Palestinians are depicted as people without agency. A prominent example is a section that characterizes the failure of Oslo as "Israel's missed opportunity for peace," but does not consider the extent to which it was a missed opportunity for Palestinians as well. In addition to these shortcomings, the book's numerous factual errors and omissions

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<sup>30</sup> For a thorough analysis of the terms and their uses and connotations, See Richard Rogers and Anat Ben-David, "Coming to terms: a conflict analysis of the usage, in official and unofficial sources, of 'security fence', 'apartheid wall', and other terms for the structure between Israel and the Palestinian territories," *Media, War and Conflict*, Vol. 3, Is. 2 (2010).

of fact also make it less useful as a textbook or a reference book. The authors exclude historiographical debates, notably in the discussion of the 1948 War. They exclude competing points-of-view, most prominently in the content about terrorism and the second intifada. Israel receives the lion's share of criticism for the failure of peace while Palestinian agency in the conflict is down-played.

## Summary

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We read and carefully analyzed seven books on the history and politics of the modern Middle East that include significant content related to the Arab-Israeli and Israeli-Palestinian conflict. We compared each textbook's treatment of the conflict to a list of criteria in order to identify those 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 where they exist 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. It can be said that the approach of two of the textbooks, Gelvin and Kamrava, was overtly polemical. Factual errors and omissions were found in all of the textbooks, but excessive errors in three of them—Kamrava, Andersen et. al, and Mansfield—render them inadequate as reference works or as background reading for a course. We found that three of the textbooks, the book edited by Lust, the book authored by Mansfield and updated by Pelham, and the book co-authored by Cleveland and Bunton, presented historical topics from multiple angles and viewpoints while the two chapters dedicated to the conflict in Fawcett were both very one-sided. While three of the textbooks reviewed provided adequate synopsis of the conflict in its formative years, all of them failed to provide an adequate consideration of the different narratives about the failure of the peace process in the Oslo period. 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 and as reference works.

As far as the coverage of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is concerned, Cleveland and Bunton's *A History of the Modern Middle East*, 5<sup>th</sup> edition, has both positive and negative qualities. Earlier chapters are mostly free of rhetoric, word choices and oversimplifications that exhibit a clear preference for one national narrative over another. These chapters include a well-written and penetrating historical, political analysis of the Arab-Israeli conflict, effectively situated within the context of the wider global and regional processes that have shaped it. Israel's history and involvement in the conflict is elucidated succinctly and effectively. There is also a good deal of insight about Palestinian history and society, but there are two areas in which the narrative of events prior to the Oslo years are lacking. The narrative does not provide adequate insight into the Palestinians' experience with war and displacement in 1948, and it misrepresents the nature and goals of the PLO in the first two decades after its establishment. In spite of these shortcomings, the textbook exhibits no discernable agenda in the earlier chapters, but in the last section (part six) it takes a sudden, tangible turn and promotes the official Palestinian version of events about the Oslo years. The three Israel-Gaza wars (2008, 2012 and 2014) are also missing from the analysis. Here the textbook could have benefited from a more careful examination of the literature that explicates Israel's experience with suicide bombings and rocket fire from Gaza and Israeli perspectives on the failure of the peace process. As a result, the concluding chapters leave the impression that Israel bears the lion's share of blame for the lack of peace.

*The Modern Middle East*, 4<sup>th</sup> edition, by James L. Gelvin, does not offer a balanced narrative of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Its chapter titled "The Israeli-Palestinian

Conflict,” is a one-sided narrative. Instead of presenting an account that is inclusive of conflicting viewpoints, historiographical debates and competing schools of thought, Gelvin presents an adaptation of the inherited Palestinian narrative of dispossession without consideration for the Israeli narrative of national self-determination in the land of their forefathers. The chapter also suffers from factual errors, misleading maps and rhetoric that evince a perceptible political agenda. This book has a clear pro-Palestinian agenda. Instructors who are looking for a textbook on the history of the modern Middle East that treats the Israeli-Palestinian conflict in a balanced and accurate way should look elsewhere.

Louise Fawcett’s edited volume, *The International Relations of the Middle East*, 3<sup>rd</sup> edition, contains two chapters about the Israeli-Palestinian conflict by two scholars who have very similar views. The chapter by Avi Shlaim focuses on the Oslo process while the chapter by Charles Smith is a summary of events spanning almost 100 years. Both chapters present detailed critiques of Israeli and American policy, and neither chapter provides an in-depth look at Palestinian politics, or Palestinian ideologies and constraints. Shlaim traces the diplomatic history of the Oslo process with particular attention to Israel’s negotiating behavior. He analyzes letters that were exchanged, committees that were formed, and concessions there were made or not made—but he ignores the context in which it all happened. Palestinian agency is overlooked and the result is a very one-sided history. Smith’s narrative paints a fairly black and white portrait of Israel as a militant state standing in sharp contrast with what he views as peace-seeking actors such as Gamal Abdel Nasser and reasonable dissenters, such as Hamas. Smith’s narrative treats the topics of diplomacy and negotiations with little reference to the intifadas that were raging or the Israeli and Palestinian populations’ perceptions of the process. His narrative is also marred with numerous errors and omissions, of the kind that call into question the intellectual honesty of the presentation. Both chapters blame Israel for the failure of peace. In conclusion, these two chapters, which both read like indictments of Israel, are insufficient by themselves as a basic reference or as background reading on the protracted conflict which involves two peoples.

Mehran Kamrava’s *The Modern Middle East: A Political History Since the First World War*, 3<sup>rd</sup> edition, is an attractive, well-organized, easy to use textbook. The content relating to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is perceptibly biased in favor of the Palestinian side. The textbook omits discussion of scholarly debates and does not provide multiple perspectives on subjects for which there is disagreement. There is also an abundance of factual errors. Some are inconsequential, but others serve to multiply and intensify Israel’s transgressions. Many of the text’s faults can be attributed to faulty source material or inaccurate transcription of source material. The author quotes extensively from Israel’s harshest critics, writers such as Norman Finkelstein, Edward Said, and Ilan Pappé, while the intellectual output of Palestinian historians and political scientists, such as Nur Masalha, Yezid Sayigh and Khalil Shikaki are not factored in. The story is not a Palestinian perspective on the conflict; rather it is a polemic that was built upon the rantings of activists and anti-Zionists. The book devotes a disproportionate amount of space to violence committed by Israel and avoids or dismisses violence committed by Palestinians. Like the narrative, the photographs that were selected also tell a one-sided story. Instructors looking for a textbook on the politics of the modern Middle East that includes a balanced and accurate narrative of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict should look elsewhere.

Andersen, Seibert and Wagner's *Politics and Change in the Middle East*, 10<sup>th</sup> edition, is an introductory text about the region that contains a lot of student-friendly features and tools. Unfortunately, in the chapters and sections that relate to the Arab-Israeli and Israeli-Palestinian conflict, there are organizational and analytical flaws that render the content ineffectual and incoherent. The textbook abounds with factual errors and omissions of fact that could seriously affect the reader's interpretation. Certain topics are rehashed and repeated across multiple chapters while other topics are not discussed at all. The text is also not factually accurate, as far as the history is concerned. There are also elements of clear bias. Israel receives most of the criticism for the failure of peace while Palestinian agency in the conflict is down-played. But at the same time, the textbook omits the traditional Palestinian narrative of the nakba and fails to explain the causes of the Palestinian refugee problem. Thus, this textbook is very confusing. A reader who approaches this book uninformed about the basics will be hard-pressed to glean the basics from this text, and a reader who is familiar with the topic under discussion will likely feel frustrated at the mangled prose, factual inaccuracies and uninformed rendering of events.

The 13<sup>th</sup> edition of the *The Middle East*, edited by Ellen Lust contains a chapter about the Israeli-Palestinian conflict by Mark Tessler, a political scientist who has written one of the most comprehensive and detailed textbooks about the conflict on the market. The textbook contains separate chapters about Israel and the Palestinian Authority. Tessler's chapter focuses on the ideational aspects of the conflict, such as causes and consequences. It does not give much detail about the conduct of wars or the methods and goals of violence. For the topics he does address, Tessler routinely considers multiple perspectives and introduces unique and rarely understood insights. Understanding two or more opposing perspectives is crucial to understanding the conflict, and the author clearly sought to include and demystify multiple viewpoints. This is especially true for the content that covers the rise of Zionism until the beginning of the Oslo Process. The biggest weakness of the chapter is that it struggles to impart a clear-sighted portrait of Hamas. Hamas is portrayed as a political party, and yet the organization is viewed as a terrorist organization by key international players (Israel, the United States, the United Kingdom, Egypt and Saudi Arabia). It would have been worthwhile for the reader if Tessler had devoted space to an examination of the reasons for this and included multiple viewpoints about Hamas. Perhaps if this chapter were to be used as background reading about the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, supplemental reading should be provided about Hamas and its leading role in the second intifada and the wars between Israel and Gaza. Aside from that, Tessler's narrative, interwoven with incisive analysis, will satisfy the needs of the reader that is trying to gain a foundation and it will also provide some valuable food-for-thought for the reader that has already been immersed in the topic.

*A History of the Middle East* by Peter Mansfield and Nicolas Pelham is a page-turner; these authors have fashioned an engaging story containing wit, human emotion, vivid description and exciting plot twists. The biggest advantage of this book is the complexities that are effectively conveyed in the earlier chapters. Israeli and Palestinian governments and societies are viewed as vibrant peoples with varying opinions and orientations. In the latter chapters that relate to more contemporary realities, Israeli and Palestinian societies lose their color and diversity. Israeli society is depicted as being predominantly religious and ideological and Palestinians are depicted as people without agency. A prominent example is a section that characterizes the failure of Oslo as "Israel's missed opportunity

for peace,” but does not consider the extent to which it was a missed opportunity for Palestinians as well. In addition to these shortcomings, the book’s numerous factual errors and omissions of fact also make it less useful as a textbook or a reference book. The authors exclude historiographical debates, notably in the discussion of the 1948 War. They exclude competing points-of-view, most prominently in the content about terrorism and the second intifada. Israel receives the lion’s share of criticism for the failure of peace while Palestinian agency in the conflict is down-played. All in all, the book is an interesting read, but not a good choice for a textbook or a reference book.