

# **Arab–Israeli Wars and US Foreign Policy**

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## **Summary**

American policy toward the Arab–Israeli conflict has reflected dueling impulses at the heart of US–Middle East relations since World War II: growing support for Zionism and Israeli statehood on the one hand, the need for cheap oil resources and strong alliances with Arab states on the other, unfolding alongside the ebb and flow of concerns over Soviet influence in the region during the Cold War. These tensions have tracked with successive Arab–Israeli conflagrations, from the 1948 war through the international conflicts of 1967 and 1973, as well as shifting modes of intervention in Lebanon, and more recently, the Palestinian uprisings in the occupied territories and several wars on the Gaza Strip. US policy has been shaped by diverging priorities in domestic and foreign policy, a halting recognition of the need to tackle Palestinian national aspirations, and a burgeoning peace process which has drawn American diplomats into the position of mediating between the parties. Against the backdrop of regional upheaval, this long history of involvement continues into the 21st century as the unresolved conflict between Israel and the Arab world faces a host of new challenges.

## **Keywords**

United States, Arab–Israeli conflict, Israel, Palestine, Egypt, Syria, Jordan, Lebanon, peace process, Cold War

## **1948: The Creation of Israel and the *Nakba***

In the aftermath of World War II, the United States assumed a new position of prominence in the Middle East, filling the power vacuum left by departing colonial powers.<sup>1</sup> The guiding motivation behind US involvement in the region after 1945 was marked by a strategic interest in securing access to oil resources and containing the Soviet Union with the onset of the Cold War. At the same time, the nascent Arab–Israeli conflict emerged as a site of contestation between competing impulses at the heart of American foreign policy in the region. On the one hand, growing ideological support for Zionism, a modern national movement seeking the establishment of a Jewish state in Palestine, could be found in the White House and Congress. This approach conflicted with more cautious attitudes in the Department of State, the Department of Defense, and the Central Intelligence Agency. How could the United States balance its emerging alliances with Arab states, domestic sympathies for political Zionism, and the disintegration of the British Mandate in Palestine?

Many US officials watched the 1947 UN partition vote to divide Palestine into a Jewish and an Arab state with apprehension, fearful that territorial division would sow chaos and invite Soviet intervention.<sup>2</sup> A State Department initiative to replace partition with a trusteeship model stalled, as the disparity of forces on the ground became clear. To the surprise of many of his advisors, President Harry S. Truman was the first foreign leader to recognize the newly created state of Israel in 1948. A host of reasons had pushed Truman toward recognition, including domestic pressures and the global impact of World War II. The Jewish plight during the war engendered greater sympathy for Zionism, and a mounting US rivalry with the Soviets pushed Truman to swiftly support Israel as a regional ally.<sup>3</sup> Israel’s declaration of statehood on May 14, 1948 and the country’s subsequent military victory in the first Arab–Israeli war (known in Israel as the War of Independence) encouraged US officials to reconsider their view of the regional

balance of power. Truman prohibited the State Department from pressuring Israel to relinquish territorial gains. At the United Nations, the US diplomat Ralph Bunche negotiated several bilateral armistice agreements between Israel and Egypt, Lebanon, Jordan, and Syria.<sup>4</sup>

In the course of the fighting, however, more than 700,000 Palestinians were expelled or fled to neighboring Arab states, an event described as the *nakba*, or “catastrophe.”<sup>5</sup> American officials had mounting concerns about the creation of a large-scale Palestinian refugee problem and its potentially destabilizing effect. The United National General Assembly passed Resolution 194, which adopted language on resolving the core issue of contention, including the adjudication of boundaries and crucial language on the refugee issue: “Refugees wishing to return to their homes and live at peace with their neighbors should be permitted to do so at the earliest practicable date, and that compensation should be paid for the property of those choosing not to return and for loss of or damage to property which, under principles of international law or equity, should be made good by the Governments or authorities responsible.”<sup>6</sup>

Although the United States voted for this resolution, American policymakers reduced pressure on Israel to comply and focused on the humanitarian needs of these refugees rather than the political dimension of their dispossession. This approach was reflected in the extensive support for the refugee resettlement work of the United Nations Relief Works Agency (UNRWA). It also shaped the course of American relations with Israel and the Arab world in the ensuing decades, as the burgeoning refugee population in neighboring Arab countries faced the consequences of prolonged statelessness and highly uneven integration.

## **Border Wars and Containment**

After the 1948 war, the United States generally displayed an even-handed stance toward Israel and the Arab world as part of a broader Cold War containment strategy. During the administration of President Dwight D. Eisenhower, American strategic priorities and ambitions to stabilize regional unrest yielded the Eisenhower Doctrine, a strategy aimed at wresting individual Arab countries away from the Soviet Union.<sup>7</sup> The outbreak of a series of cross-border infiltrations and Israeli reprisals between 1949 and 1956 raised American concerns, but regional power dynamics led to a closer Israeli alignment with Britain and France and the maintenance of positive relations with the United States.<sup>8</sup>

In July 1956, Egyptian President Gamal Abdel Nasser nationalized the Suez Canal Company in a bid to cement Egyptian independence from the former colonial powers, burnishing the cause of Arab nationalism. Eisenhower's cautious approach culminated with his forceful opposition to the British, French, and Israeli Tripartite Aggression during the Suez Crisis of 1956. The President's critical stance was a result of persistent concerns that Israeli actions were undermining US interests in the region.<sup>9</sup> An explicit alliance with Israel could have undermined relations with Arab states. As Secretary of State John Foster Dulles noted, "backing Israel might be very costly to vital United States national interests."<sup>10</sup> Although Eisenhower forced Israel to withdraw from the Sinai Peninsula during the Suez campaign, at the same time he also acknowledged the legitimacy of Israeli security concerns. In the background, the Eisenhower Doctrine was serving to contain Arab nationalism, from Egypt to Jordan and Syria, and it enabled a massive US intervention in Lebanon in 1958.<sup>11</sup>

John F. Kennedy's arrival in the White House heralded a shift in US policy toward the Middle East, with the new president taking bold steps to engage with adversaries like President Nasser in Egypt in a bid to promote regional stability.<sup>12</sup> American officials were mindful of the

need to reduce Arab–Israeli tensions over territory, arms, and the refugee issue in order to avoid the eruption of violence.<sup>13</sup> Yet the reality of the Cold War also pushed the United States much closer to Israel, and Kennedy began to treat the young country as a bulwark against growing Soviet interests in the Middle East. To this end, US policymakers stressed shared values with the Jewish state and offered military and economic aid to assert regional influence. Kennedy, in the view of one Israeli scholar, “was the first president to define US–Israeli relations as special, to take seriously Israel’s security problems, and to provide Israel with major defensive arms.”<sup>14</sup> Within this inviting context, Israel managed to introduce a nuclear program despite Kennedy’s deep concern with proliferation.<sup>15</sup>

The replacement of Israeli Prime Minister David Ben-Gurion with Levi Eshkol in 1963 and the onset of Lyndon B. Johnson’s presidency further strengthened US–Israeli relations. Closer ties were also pursued with Arab states like Jordan and Saudi Arabia, whereas tensions mounted with the United Arab Republic (UAR) over Egyptian intervention in Yemen and Soviet arms supplies.<sup>16</sup> The White House did continue to push for nuclear nonproliferation, and Eshkol gave way by allowing for periodic US inspection of the Dimona nuclear reactor in return for greater military coordination and aid. Johnson, who in the view of one American expert was personally “warm and admiring” toward Israel, supplied the country with direct arms shipments, including Skyhawk aircraft with strike capability.<sup>17</sup> Having also supplied arms to Saudi Arabia and Jordan, Johnson’s alignment with Israel was seen as a move to counter Soviet regional influence. As tensions grew across the border with Syria, along with the creation of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) in 1964, conditions in the region deteriorated and the possibility of regional conflict mounted.

## 1967 and Its Consequences

Lyndon Johnson's focus on Vietnam may have shifted the Middle East to a lower priority for policymakers, but the outbreak of a full-scale Arab–Israeli war in June 1967 (known in Israel as “the Six Day War”) moved the region and the fate of US relations with Israel and the Arab states to center stage. Nasser had expelled UN troops policing the Sinai and closed the Straits of Tiran to Israeli shipping, which elicited Johnson's swift efforts to mediate the crisis and avert a full-scale war. At the same time, Israel was given a yellow light to preemptively strike the UAR, and America's crucial political backing “enabled Israel to realize its military aims free of the threat of Soviet intervention.”<sup>18</sup>

Israel's swift victory in the 1967 war was a watershed moment, not least because it secured control of Arab territory in the Sinai Peninsula, East Jerusalem, the West Bank, the Gaza Strip, and the Golan Heights. Johnson decided there should not be a return to the status quo, supporting Eshkol's bid to retain the territories until the Arab states recognized Israel and made peace.<sup>19</sup> This stance was codified in November 1967 via UN Security Council Resolution 242, which was understood internationally as a guideline for pursuing an exchange of “land for peace,” but according to some opinions did not call for a full withdrawal from all the territories. The resolution also did not refer to the Palestinians directly, calling for a “just settlement to the refugee problem,” without mentioning the fate of the West Bank and Gaza Strip.<sup>20</sup>

In the wake of the war, a fierce debate broke out in the Israeli cabinet about the future of the newly occupied territories and how to manage the Palestinian population under direct state control. As meticulous historical research reveals, the government of Levi Eshkol made a “decision not to decide” on the fate of the territories, preferring indefinite control over the land without conferring rights on the inhabitants who lived there.<sup>21</sup> The creation of the first

settlements in the aftermath of the 1967 war augured the start of a decades-long occupation that would indelibly mark US involvement in the region.<sup>22</sup>

In the Arab world, the 1967 war launched an intellectual search for answers about the limits of pan-Arab solidarity and the cultural consequences of defeat. Israel's victory and territorial conquest haunted Arab thinkers from North Africa to the Levant and underscored profound changes afoot, from the growing influence of Islamism to the structural challenges of internal governance.<sup>23</sup> It also damaged relations between the United States and the Arab world, with popular protest and hostility toward American policy reaching new heights across the region. In a coordinated reaction that demonstrated the growing threat of oil embargoes, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Iraq, Libya, and Algeria banned oil shipments to the United States. Non-Arab countries diverted supplies to the United Kingdom and West Germany, diminishing the initial shock, but revealing a weakness in the market that would be further exposed in the 1970s.<sup>24</sup> Egypt also accepted Soviet arms supplies to reverse the humiliation of defeat, leading to new cross-border tensions in the wake of the June 1967 War.<sup>25</sup>

## **1973 and the Road to Egyptian–Israeli Peace**

After Israel's victory, the Arab–Israeli conflict moved to the center of Cold War diplomacy. In working with Egypt, Moscow wanted to secure a political settlement to avoid further military confrontation in the Middle East. Richard Nixon's 1968 election and the policy of détente paved the way for potential change, as the new president was suspicious of Washington's tilt toward Israel and equally apprehensive that missteps in the Arab world had undermined US strategic interests in the region. Soon after he entered office in 1969, Nixon told Secretary of State William Rogers that he sought an "even-handed policy," including Israel's return of the

territories occupied in 1967, but he faced opposition both from Israel and members of his own administration.<sup>26</sup> National Security Advisor Henry Kissinger, who opposed Nixon's plan for a regional peace settlement, stated, "The longer Israel holds its conquered Arab territory, the longer the Soviets cannot deliver what the Arabs want."<sup>27</sup>

A crucial development in US relations with Israel and the Arab states followed after Egyptian President Gamal Abdel Nasser's death in September 1970. The new Egyptian president, Anwar al-Sadat, pivoted his country westward, seeking to align with the United States rather than the Soviet Union. In a bid to force a settlement to the Arab–Israeli conflict, Sadat launched the 1973 October War against Israel. As historian Craig Daigle has argued, Sadat wanted to create a "crisis of détente" so as to break the region's status quo. Following an Arab attack on the morning of Yom Kippur, the holiest day on the Jewish religious calendar, Israel's leadership sought US aid to turn the tide of the fighting. A massive American airlift of tanks and airplanes reversed Egyptian and Syrian advances and further solidified close US–Israeli relations. This close relationship was challenged by the mid-1970s when the Organization of Arab Exporting Petroleum Countries (OAPEC) initiated a 1973 oil embargo against the United States and other countries on account of their support for Israel, igniting an energy crisis that hampered global economic development.<sup>29</sup>

With Nixon distracted by the Watergate scandal, Kissinger negotiated the terms of agreement to end the war. They were passed as UN Security Council Resolution 338, which called for a "just and durable peace in the Middle East" along the lines of UN Security Council Resolution 242 after the 1967 war. Kissinger, as Nixon's envoy and later as Secretary of State to President Gerald Ford, pursued a step-by-step approach to achieve a diplomatic solution between

Israel and its neighbors. But these attempts at negotiating a comprehensive solution favored piecemeal stages that separated the Palestinian issue from broader regional concerns.<sup>30</sup>

Palestinian national aspirations, which were emerging as a central point of contention between Israel and the Arab states, were ignored by Kissinger's diplomatic initiatives. His "shuttle diplomacy" instead focused on bilateral agreements that secured ceasefires between Israel, Syria, and Egypt, while restoring US relations with the Arab world. Both the United States and the Soviet Union convened a short-lived Geneva Conference in December 1973, which included representatives from Egypt, Jordan, and Israel, but did not achieve a comprehensive solution to the Arab–Israeli conflict. Building on the ceasefire efforts, Kissinger secured the Sinai II agreement between Egypt and Israel during the administration of Gerald Ford, while at the same time promising not to recognize the PLO or initiate diplomatic initiatives without consulting Israel.<sup>31</sup> The consequences of 1973, therefore, may have strengthened US–Egyptian and US–Israeli relations, but prolonged regional conflict indefinitely.

## **Camp David and Palestinian Autonomy**

By the mid-1970s, a small number of American officials and international experts began to recognize the necessity of limited Palestinian rights, fueled by the broader wave of decolonization around the globe.<sup>32</sup> The election of President Jimmy Carter in 1976 helped crystallize this paradigm shift. The Carter administration took a regional rather than a strictly Cold War approach to Israel and the wider Middle East, marked by a concern with localized political dynamics and awareness of the need to deal with the Palestinian issue head on.<sup>33</sup> A proponent of human rights in the making of US foreign policy, Carter asserted that the Israel–Palestine dispute was at the heart of the Arab–Israeli conflict and should be tackled

directly. He also spoke openly of the need for a “Palestinian homeland” in 1977, making him the first US leader to use that term.<sup>34</sup>

Carter’s critics bitterly opposed such an approach, fearful about the emergence of a Palestinian state. The militant activity of the PLO and other Palestinian nationalist groups had raised the global profile of the Palestinian struggle since the late 1960s, but also generated widespread condemnation due to the Palestinian use of violence to achieve nationalist ends.<sup>35</sup> Nevertheless, by singling out the Palestinian question for substantive consideration while engaging Israel on the need for permanent territorial borders, the Carter administration helped reshape the parameters of any eventual settlement. This effort was further complicated by the election of Israeli Prime Minister Menachem Begin in 1977, which brought the first ever Likud government to power in Israel. Begin was a revisionist Zionist with deep-seated ideological opposition to Palestinian territorial rights. He was also a believer in settlement expansion in the occupied territories, which he pursued with the help of Ariel Sharon, his agriculture minister and later defense minister.

The comprehensive US vision for a regional settlement instead gave way to a narrower initiative to secure a resolution to Israel’s conflict with Egypt. Alongside the diverging vision of the Begin government, a key driver was the stance of Egypt. Sadat was a vocal proponent of Palestinian rights, but his willingness to focus exclusively on Egypt’s domestic needs ultimately facilitated a retreat from a demand for self-determination. While the Egyptian president’s widely covered and taboo-breaking trip to Jerusalem in November 1977 reordered global and local perceptions of Arab efforts toward peace, Palestinian leaders and the Arab League harshly criticized Sadat for betraying regional interests.

Instead of diplomacy that may have led to a possible state, Begin unveiled a detailed autonomy plan for what he called the “Arab residents of Judea and Samaria,” preferring the Biblical name for the occupied territories. As subsequent negotiations between the United States, Israel, and Egypt faltered, Jimmy Carter invited Sadat and Begin to the presidential retreat in Camp David for thirteen days of negotiations. The Camp David accords were reached on September 17, 1978 and led to a formal Egyptian–Israeli peace treaty signed by Sadat and Begin on March 26, 1979. Although Camp David was comprised of two treaties, one focused on regional peace and the second on an Israeli–Egyptian treaty, in effect the Accords yielded a bilateral peace while deferring the Palestinian question to separate autonomy negotiations between 1979 and 1982. For Carter, the summit was a great diplomatic victory, but also an incomplete one in light of his ambitious aim to tackle Palestinian aspirations and resolve the wider Arab–Israeli conflict.<sup>36</sup>

Egyptian–Israeli peace had secured the return of the Sinai Peninsula to Egypt in exchange for recognition, relieving military pressure on Israel’s southwest border and bringing the major phase of interstate Arab–Israeli conflict to an end. Begin’s price was the retention of the West Bank, Gaza Strip, and East Jerusalem. Roughly five thousand Jewish settlers lived in the occupied territories when Begin entered office, but the number of settlers continued to rise steadily in the wake of the Accords, reaching over eighty thousand by the late 1980s.<sup>37</sup> Additionally, the agreement included more military and economic aid to Israel than had been given under any previous administration: \$10.2 billion over four years, a little less than half in grants. Egypt and Saudi Arabia also received military aid and security guarantees, highlighting the emerging spectrum of US allies in the Middle East.

## Lebanon and the Limits of a Strategic Relationship

Ronald Reagan's election victory in 1980 signaled a return to global Cold War geopolitics, reconstituting the Middle East as a site of contestation between the United States and the Soviet Union. Given this new reality, relations with Israel were granted strategic priority. General Alexander Haig, Reagan's hawkish secretary of state, articulated a policy of "strategic consensus" between the United States, Israel, and pro-American Arab governments. The Reagan administration also signed a Memorandum of Understanding enshrining bilateral cooperation with Israel on November 30, 1981. This strategic alliance included military cooperation between the United States and Israel, and US policymakers afforded Israel the special status of an ally for the first time. As William Quandt, a leading scholar of US foreign policy, has written, "the entire relationship was given a strategic rationale that had previously been missing."<sup>38</sup>

Despite this alliance, divergent regional interest emerged in the 1980s, beginning with Reagan's decision to sell Airborne Warning and Control Systems (AWACS) and F-15 aircraft to Saudi Arabia. American officials were aware of the need to engage on a strategic level with Arab states as well, attentive to military considerations and the growing footprint of US troops in the Middle East. The limits of the Israeli–American relationship emerged most visibly during Israel's 1982 war in Lebanon. The invasion was initially portrayed as an attempt by Israel to contain Palestinian attacks on its northern border towns, but it quickly escalated into a full-scale effort to remake Lebanon as Israel's Christian ally. Ever since the 1970 outbreak of civil war in Jordan, the PLO had regrouped in Lebanon, building a "state within a state" and putting the Palestinian question back at the center of regional politics. Alongside internal rivalries that contributed to the outbreak of the 1975 Lebanese civil war, the Syrians were drawn into the

fighting as Maronite politicians promoted an alliance with Israel in their fight against the PLO and leftist allies.

Begin's government had already entered south Lebanon in 1978, in the aftermath of the Fatah-led Coastal Road Massacre, and Defense Minister Sharon was eager for a more expansive incursion. As new evidence makes clear, US Secretary of State Alexander Haig was informed of Israel's war plans by Sharon in May and offered a green light for what he called a "lobotomy" in Lebanon.<sup>39</sup> A dissident Palestinian attack on Israel's ambassador to Great Britain in June provided justification, and what was claimed to be a forty-kilometer incursion quickly extended all the way up to the Lebanese capital. Israel's unprecedented siege and saturation bombing of Beirut in the summer of 1982 disturbed Reagan deeply and led to a confrontation with Prime Minister Begin. After Reagan and his advisors realized that Israel's actions posed serious challenges to their broader Middle East strategy, the President remarked to Begin that "Your actions in Lebanon have seriously undermined our relationship with those Arab governments whose cooperation is essential to protect the Middle East from external threats and to counter forces of Soviet-sponsored radicalism and Islamic fundamentalism now growing in the region. . . . US influence in the Arab world, our ability to achieve our strategic objectives, has been seriously damaged by Israel's actions."<sup>40</sup>

The United States was not a mere bystander to the war. Through the involvement of US diplomat Phillip Habib, American officials helped facilitate the departure of Yasser Arafat and thousands of PLO fighters to other Arab countries as a means of ending the conflict. The PLO's evacuation from Beirut in August seemed to provide a window of stability for more expansive diplomatic action. Reagan unveiled his administration's new peace plan, dubbed "The Reagan Plan," in a primetime address on September 1, 1982. Building on Carter's Camp David

framework, he acknowledged that implementation of the Camp David Accords had been slow. “Israel exists; it has a right to exist in peace behind secure and defensible borders; and it has a right to demand of its neighbors that they recognize those facts,” the President remarked.<sup>41</sup> Reagan continued: “[W]e must also move to resolve the root causes of conflict between Arabs and Israelis.” The central question, he said, was “how to reconcile Israel’s legitimate security concerns with the legitimate rights of the Palestinians.” For Reagan, this meant “self-government by the Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza in association with Jordan,” as well as “the immediate adoption of a settlement freeze by Israel.”<sup>41</sup> The Reagan Plan reflected a return to the notion of comprehensive peace; however, it did not support outright the creation of a Palestinian state, opting instead for Palestinian self-government in association with Jordan. Begin was incensed with the new plan issued by the White House. He and his cabinet issued a swift rejection, and the Reagan Plan became the last serious attempt to broker a solution to the Arab–Israeli conflict in the 1980s.

US involvement with Lebanon increased in the wake of Israeli military action, paving the way for further bloodshed. Reagan redeployed American Marines to Beirut out of guilt over the failure to protect Palestinian civilians slaughtered in the Sabra and Shatila massacre of September 1982. As newly uncovered evidence reveals, the United States was unwittingly complicit in this notorious episode of violence.<sup>42</sup> In October 1983, the bombing of the US Marine barracks by Syrian and Iranian proxies led to the death of 241 US servicemen, the highest number of American military deaths in one day since the Vietnam War. Having grown resentful of the Israeli and American presence in their country, local opposition militias metastasized into the birth of Hezbollah, an Iranian-backed paramilitary organization that emerged as a key player in the region during the early 1980s. “American Cold War naïveté

opened the door for Iran in Lebanon,” said one scholar of the period.<sup>43</sup> In this regard, the Lebanon War can be seen as a wider turning point in the history of the Middle East and US involvement in the region, in addition to its transformative legacy for perceptions of Israel and Palestinian nationalism around the globe.

## The First Intifada and the Peace Process

Palestinian agitation continued to grow in the occupied territories in the wake of the PLO’s expulsion from Beirut, compounded by continuing efforts to marginalize the national movement. By December 1987, Israel’s twenty-year control over the Palestinian territories was seen as intolerable, and spontaneous protests erupted in the Gaza Strip and spread to the West Bank. The first *Intifada* (“shaking off”) had started, demonstrating that Israel’s treatment of the Palestinians could not be ignored. Largely a nonviolent uprising comprised of mass strikes and civil disobedience, Israeli Defense Minister Yitzhak Rabin publicly sanctioned “a policy of beatings and breaking of bones.” Before long, “images of savage Israeli beatings of Palestinian youngsters were a part of the American evening television news.”<sup>44</sup> Israel’s image in the mind of the United States, long informed by cultural assumptions of a biblical David (Israel) fighting Goliath (the Arab states), had been overturned. Domestic supporters of Israel, already distressed by the events in Lebanon, were acutely aware of increasingly negative perceptions of the state in light of this latest confrontation.

The PLO, based in exile in Tunis, was taken by surprise with the uprising. It was entirely generated from within the territories, a spontaneous unplanned eruption. Seeing an opportunity to capitalize on popular discontent in order to secure political clout, the PLO began to play a leadership role in the *Intifada*—as did the Muslim Brotherhood’s Palestinian offshoot, giving

rise to Hamas, the Islamic Resistance Movement.<sup>45</sup> However, it was the Palestine Liberation Organization, long maligned by Israel and the United States as a terrorist organization, that would gradually emerge as the sole representative of the Palestinian people.

In one of President Reagan's final acts in office, the United States agreed to begin a dialogue with the PLO. Its longstanding leader, Yasser Arafat, formally accepted UN Resolution 242 in December 1988, acknowledging Israel's right to exist and renouncing terrorism. The PLO's recognition of Israel and acceptance of the "two state solution" had begun to emerge in the mid-1970s, and was implicitly endorsed as part of the November 1988 Palestinian Declaration of Independence. Arafat's accompanying public statement in Geneva ended on a triumphal note: "Victory is at hand. I see the homeland in your holy stones. I see the flag of our independent Palestine fluttering over the hills of our beloved homeland."<sup>46</sup> It was a vision that he would not live to see in his lifetime and that remains unfulfilled over thirty years later, despite extensive American efforts at brokering peace since the 1990s.

The election of George H. W. Bush precipitated new opportunities and challenges for American policymakers who hoped to resolve the Arab-Israeli conflict. During Bush's tenure, and with the help of Secretary of State James Baker, the peace process was revitalized as a key foreign policy goal for the United States. The context for this re-emergence was the end of the Cold War, which had removed the Soviet threat, and the outbreak of the first Gulf War in 1990. Israel's special relationship with the United States suffered as its strategic value in the region was undermined by international events, and Reagan's personal warmth toward Israel gave way to the tougher stance of Bush and Baker. The two men did not appreciate the obstinacy of Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir and viewed his settlement policy as "a deliberate attempt to foil US peacemaking."<sup>47</sup> One particularly bitter debate erupted around the US refusal to grant Israel

loan guarantees of \$10 billion in light of ongoing settlement expansion. Baker publicly recited the number of the White House switchboard at a press conference, telling the Israelis, “When you are serious about peace, call us!”<sup>48</sup>

Bush and Baker launched the Madrid Conference in October 1991. It was the first official face-to-face gathering that included representatives from Israel, Lebanon, Syria, Jordan, and the Palestinian Territories. The Palestinians were part of a joint Jordanian delegation coordinating closely with the PLO leadership in Tunis, who were prevented from attending the conference by Israel. President Bush and Soviet President Mikhail Gorbachev co-chaired these direct multilateral negotiations, which were significant in their symbolism but short-lived. The bulk of negotiations happened in Washington between 1991 and 1993, where progress was halting and the same questions that had bedeviled Camp David persisted fifteen years later. How could sovereignty be achieved for Palestinians on territory of their own? Would settlement building cease? What of the refugee question and the fate of Jerusalem?

Unbeknownst to the delegates in Washington, the PLO leadership had begun secret talks with Israeli leaders in the Norwegian capitol of Oslo. The resulting Oslo Accords, which were signed on the south lawn of the White House on September 13, 1993, were considered a breakthrough in the Israeli–Palestinian conflict. William Jefferson Clinton, the former governor from Arkansas who had developed close ties with Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin, invited the parties to the Washington signing. Rabin famously shook hands with Yasser Arafat as their deputies signed the Declaration of Principles, and a beaming Clinton burnished his own reputation as a skillful diplomat and broker in the Arab–Israeli arena. In the words of Vice President Albert Gore, this convergence was “the closest we have with any of our friends and allies anywhere in the world.”<sup>49</sup> Alongside Israeli recognition of the PLO and Palestinian

recognition of Israel, the Accords marked the start of a multi-year peace process between the parties.

But the peace process launched by the Oslo Accords was nowhere near as picture perfect as the famous handshake suggested. At the time, critics warned that the Accords set aside the most contentious issues left unresolved from earlier efforts while enshrining limited autonomy rather than statehood for Palestinians. In September 1995, Arafat and Rabin signed the Interim Agreement on the West Bank and Gaza Strip, or Oslo II, establishing the Palestinian Authority (PA) and dividing the West Bank into three separate zones of control. There was enormous skepticism of Arafat's move in the Arab world, where he was seen as selling out meaningful Palestinian sovereignty for the sake of his own return to the West Bank and subsequent appointment as president of the PA. Oslo II granted the PA limited self-government, for an interim period of time, providing the vestiges of statehood without actual content. The process around Oslo lulled its proponents into the false belief that real issues like Jerusalem, refugees' right of return, settlements, and security were being dealt with. In this regard, the United States also undermined its position as an honest broker, with some of Clinton's own officials describing a pattern of serving as "Israel's lawyers" in the context of the discussions.<sup>50</sup>

Extremists on both sides of the conflict were wary of Oslo and its consequences, attempting to undermine the interim milestones it aimed to secure. In Israel, Rabin's concessions in negotiating with the Palestinians set off denunciations by right-wing politicians and incitement against the prime minister. On November 4, 1995, after a peace rally to support Oslo, Rabin was assassinated by a religious extremist. Benjamin Netanyahu, a fierce critic of the Oslo process and leader of the Likud party, defeated Labor leader Shimon Peres in the 1996 elections to replace Rabin. A spate of suicide bombings by Hamas inside Israel prompted support of a hardline

politician outspoken against terrorism. Clinton worked to revive the floundering Oslo process, and he brought Netanyahu and Arafat together at the Wye River Plantation outside Washington, DC in October 1998. The memorandum that resulted advanced the interim steps of Oslo and signaled an agreement to resume permanent status negotiations.

Yet despite the best efforts of the United States, the Oslo Accords were beset by structural deficiencies and the erosion of trust between the parties. The PA never got control of more than 18 percent of the territory in the West Bank, and settlements continued to expand at a rapid pace, with the number of Israeli settlers doubling between 1993 and 2000. Daily life for Palestinians did not improve, given the ongoing restrictions of movement and the limited Israeli military redeployment in the territories. Hamas, which rejected the concessions of Oslo, was increasingly seen as a counterweight to the corruption-prone environment developing around Arafat and his advisors. Determined to overcome these shortcomings, Clinton launched a hasty summit at Camp David in July 2000.

Ehud Barak, a Labor leader with more moderate views than Netanyahu, had been elected prime minister in May 1999 with a mandate to carry on with Rabin's pursuit of peace. Clinton invited Barak and Arafat to join him at Camp David in an effort to break the logjam around the peace process, but it was a piecemeal attempt that left key issues unresolved. There would not be a full return to the 1967 borders, and issues such as sovereignty over Jerusalem and the right of return for Palestinian refugees remained unresolved. The debate over Barak's final offer and Arafat's refusal is a fierce one, yet blame for the collapse of the summit was pinned entirely on the Palestinians by Clinton and his advisors.<sup>51</sup> In a final attempt to revive the failed talks before leaving office, Clinton crafted a set of parameters in December that led to the Taba Summit in January 2001, by which point the *Al-Aqsa Intifada*, or the second *Intifada*, had erupted.

# Collapse and Retrenchment: The Second Intifada to the Gaza Wars

The second *Intifada* lasted for five years and took the lives of over 1,000 Israelis and 3,000 Palestinians, including military and civilian casualties. The unrest extended to general strikes, like the first *Intifada*, but also armed Palestinian attacks on soldiers and civilians, Israel's massive use of force in the occupied territories, assassination attempts against Israeli and Palestinian leaders, and a manifold increase in suicide bombings. These attacks, which often targeted civilians, shook Israeli society to the core and engendered a rightward shift in domestic politics. The psychological trauma of recurring violence was no less intense for Palestinians. In both West Bank cities and the Gaza Strip, the PA was targeted, urban centers were reoccupied by Israeli soldiers, and an expanded network of checkpoints controlled daily movement. There was a marked increase in Israel's use of targeted assassinations against Palestinian militants in densely packed urban areas, resulting in scores of civilian deaths as well.

For many Americans, the attacks of September 11, 2001 emerged as a primary reference point for understanding this violence in the Middle East. Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon, who defeated Ehud Barak in the elections of February 2001, encouraged such a strong link. He found a stalwart ally in US President George W. Bush, whose rubric of fighting the War on Terror resonated with Sharon's own tactics at home. Sharon refused to meet with Yasser Arafat; Bush made it clear that he would not deal with Arafat either. The Israelis launched "Operation Defensive Shield" in March 2002, the largest post-Oslo incursion into the Palestinian territories, to "rout out . . . terrorist infrastructure."<sup>52</sup> The destruction of the PA infrastructure in tandem with

Sharon's isolation of Arafat exacerbated divisions between the ruling Fatah faction of Palestinian nationalists and Hamas, which would extend to a violent rupture several years later.

US foreign policy during the Bush years had a formative impact on events in the Middle East, from the launching of two wars in Afghanistan and Iraq to a sweeping policy of democracy promotion in the Arab world. Bush's vision for addressing the Israeli–Palestinian conflict was unveiled in his “Roadmap for Peace.” In a speech on June 24, 2002, Bush outlined a vision of two states, conditioned on the removal of Arafat. The PLO leader died in France on November 11, 2004, and Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza chose Mahmoud Abbas as his successor. In January 2006, Palestinian Legislative Council (PLC) elections brought Hamas to power, further upending Palestinian politics. US officials opted for a policy of boycotting Hamas, which it viewed exclusively as a terrorist organization. The Quartet (United Nations, United States, European Union, and Russia) cut funding to the PA, and Israel withheld tax revenues it had collected.

Sharon was working on an alternative Israeli vision to a two-state solution. He had unveiled a unilateral plan for withdrawal from the Gaza Strip settlements by the fall of 2005. Rather than pursue negotiations, the prime minister believed that Israel had to create a different path. In the words of his chief advisor, Dov Weisglass, the disengagement plan was part of a broader diplomatic agenda for Israel vis-à-vis the Palestinians. “The significance of the disengagement plan is the freezing of the peace process. . . . When you freeze that process, you prevent the establishment of a Palestinian state, and you prevent a discussion on the refugees, the borders and Jerusalem. Effectively, this whole package called the Palestinian state, with all that it entails, has been removed indefinitely from our agenda. And all this with authority and permission. All with a presidential blessing and the ratification of both houses of Congress.”<sup>53</sup> As Weisglass

suggested, the United States played a crucial role in facilitating this move, a clear sign that the pattern of US mediation between the Israelis and Palestinians had fully evolved into active alignment with the agenda of one side during the Bush years.

Sharon suffered a massive stroke in January 2006 and would remain in a coma until his death in 2014. Ehud Olmert, the former mayor of Jerusalem and Likud politician, succeeded him as prime minister. Olmert promised to continue with Sharon's disengagement plan and extend it to the West Bank. The outbreak of the Second Lebanon War on July 12, 2006 shifted Olmert's plans, as he responded with overwhelming force to Hezbollah's abduction of two Israeli soldiers along the northern border. The ensuing thirty-four-day war, during which Israel targeted Hezbollah as well as the Lebanese civilian infrastructure and Hezbollah launched Kaytusha rockets into Israel, led to the death of over 1,000 Lebanese and 165 Israelis.<sup>54</sup> Within the Palestinian territories, mounting internal divisions and international pressure led to fighting between Fatah and Hamas, with Hamas taking over the Gaza Strip in 2007 and Fatah remaining entrenched in the West Bank. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice led the Bush administration's revival of US efforts to mediate peace without engaging Hamas and invited Israelis, Palestinians, and other Arab representatives to a conference in Annapolis, MD in November 2007.

The parties agreed to meet regularly after Annapolis in order to implement Bush's Roadmap for a two-state solution and conclude a peace treaty by the end of 2008. On the day the conference ended, Olmert warned of the consequences of not reaching a solution with the Palestinians in an interview with the Israeli newspaper *Ha'aretz*: "If the day comes when the two-state solution collapses, and we face a South African-style struggle for equal voting rights (also for the Palestinians in the territories), then, as soon as that happens, the State of Israel is finished. . . . The Jewish organizations, which were our power base in America, will be the first

to come out against us . . . because they will say they cannot support a state that does not support democracy and equal voting rights for all its residents.”<sup>55</sup> It was a startling and frank admission by the prime minister, who continued negotiating with Abbas over the most contentious issues, including the division of Jerusalem and the Palestinian right of return. Observers claim that the two leaders came very close to a resolution, meeting twenty-six times between Annapolis and the outbreak of the Gaza War on December 27, 2008.<sup>56</sup>

“Operation Cast Lead” was a twenty-two-day air campaign and ground invasion by Israel that pounded the coastal strip of Gaza, resulting in the death of over 1,100 Palestinians and 13 Israelis. Olmert intended to rout out rocket attacks and weapons smuggling into Gaza, with an undeclared goal of removing Hamas from power, but attacks from the movement intensified during the confrontation. A unilateral Israeli ceasefire, followed by a similar proclamation from Hamas, was declared on January 18, 2009.<sup>57</sup> A special UN Mission, led by former South African Justice Richard Goldstone, investigated the war and found both Palestinian militants and the Israeli army guilty of potential war crimes.<sup>58</sup> Goldstone, coming under pressure by Israel, would later retract his claim that the Israelis deliberately targeted Palestinian civilians in the attack, having been unable to corroborate evidence without Israel’s cooperation or to gather evidence in Gaza without Hamas’ full cooperation.<sup>59</sup> But the legacy of the Gaza War remained a troubling one, given the humanitarian catastrophe that confronted the population of the Strip and Israel’s deepening isolation globally. As the *New York Times* reported on the war’s impact, Israel faced its “worst diplomatic crisis in two decades.”<sup>60</sup> Ehud Olmert, besieged by corruption charges, announced his intention to resign, and Israeli elections in February 2009 elections brought Benjamin Netanyahu back to office once more.

# The United States and the Arab–Israeli Conflict into the 21st Century

In the United States, the 2008 presidential elections sent Illinois Senator Barack Obama to the White House. It was a heady time for supporters of a new American role around the globe, given the widespread disillusionment with President Bush.<sup>61</sup> Obama's victory spurred hopes in the Middle East that the United States would return to a more even-handed policy when it came to the Arab world and Israel. In his first few weeks in office, the President appointed former US Senator George Mitchell as his Special Envoy for Middle East Peace, a position intended to demonstrate the importance the Obama administration placed on a resolution to the Israeli–Palestinian conflict. More broadly, Obama wanted to change the image of the United States in the region. "My job to the Muslim world is to communicate that the Americans are not your enemy," Obama said in a January interview with *Al-Arabiya*; "We sometimes make mistakes. We have not been perfect."<sup>62</sup> This theme would be expanded in Obama's speech at Cairo University on June 4, 2009, where he charted a new path for US engagement in the Middle East and singled out Israel and the Palestinians as a primary concern. "America will not turn our backs on the legitimate Palestinian aspiration for dignity, opportunity, and a state of their own," Obama remarked. "The only resolution is for the aspirations of both sides to be met through two states, where Israelis and Palestinians each live in peace and security."<sup>63</sup>

As it had been for Carter and Begin thirty years earlier, Obama's disagreement with Netanyahu over the settlements would derail his ambitious first-term agenda for a resolution to the conflict. Ten days after Obama's Cairo speech, Netanyahu delivered his own address at Bar-Ilan University, where he formally accepted the principle of two states living side by side.<sup>64</sup> For

Netanyahu, however, the content of that Palestinian state was far less than they would be willing to accept: It was to be “demilitarized,” with Jerusalem remaining the capital of Israel, and the Palestinians giving up on the right of return. Netanyahu also argued that natural growth for existing Jewish settlements on the West Bank would be permissible. The President met with Netanyahu at the White House on March 26, in an encounter that by most accounts was unpleasant. Obama asked for written guarantees that an existing settlement freeze would be extended, but Netanyahu refused to give them. Reports about US–Israeli relations were filled with recrimination and anger in the media, having hit the lowest point in years. After resigning as secretary of defense some months later, Robert Gates reportedly remarked that Netanyahu was “ungrateful” to the United States, who received “nothing in return” for ensuring Israel’s security.<sup>65</sup>

Obama publicly declared his support for the demarcation of an Israeli–Palestinian border along the 1967 lines in the spring of 2011. At the same time, the political costs of the President’s involvement in Israeli–Palestinian peacemaking had become abundantly clear ahead of the 2012 elections. Upheaval in the Arab world, which had begun in Tunisia at the end of 2010, had also shaken the US position in the region. The “Arab Spring”—a contested term used to describe events as disparate as the Egyptians overthrow of long-standing President Hosni Mubarak to the nonviolent protests against the authoritarian President Bashar al-Assad in Syria that turned into a full-scale civil war—reoriented US involvement in resolving the Arab–Israeli conflict given the proliferation of other regional crises.<sup>66</sup> This was particularly contentious when it came to Obama’s efforts to secure a nuclear deal with Iran in his second term, as well as another war in Gaza in 2014. After sixty plus years since the Truman administration had first tried to navigate

both an alliance with Israel and wider American policy toward the Arab world, the United States was still hamstrung by some of the same tensions in finding an effective approach to the region.

With the 2016 election of Donald J. Trump as the 45th president of the United States, circumstances markedly changed in Israel and in Netanyahu's favor. Trump's controversial recognition of Jerusalem as Israel's capital, his defunding of UNWRA, his decision to recognize Israeli sovereignty over the occupied Golan Heights, and efforts to resolve the Israeli–Palestinian conflict with a “deal of the century” pointed to a fundamental reorientation away from a two-state solution. New regional dynamics also played a large part in this transformation, with arrangements that at one time seemed unthinkable swiftly appearing on the table. This included the unprecedented and de facto normalization between Israel and many Gulf countries, stemming from a joint effort to counter Iranian influence in the region.<sup>67</sup> The early years of the Trump administration underscored a major reorientation in US policy, over seven decades since the creation of Israel marked the start of American involvement in the Israeli–Palestinian and wider Arab–Israeli conflict.

## Discussion of the Literature

There is a robust literature on American policy toward the Arab–Israeli conflict, and it is growing in new directions alongside extensive scholarship on Israeli, Palestinian, and wider Middle Eastern history. International approaches to the burgeoning field of US–Middle East relations have combined American sources with regional archives, while political and diplomatic perspectives have been enriched by cultural and social histories of the US relationship with Israel and the Arab world.

For accounts of the origins of US policy toward the conflict that challenge older narratives with new sources, see Irene Gendzier and John Judis.<sup>68</sup> On the 1948 War and the making of the Palestinian refugee crisis, see Rogan and Shlaim; Sa'di and Abu-Lughod; and Morris.<sup>69</sup> An excellent overview of Israel's relations with the Arab world by a leading Israeli scholar is Avi Shlaim's *The Iron Wall*.<sup>70</sup> An authoritative account of Palestinian political history by a leading Palestinian scholar is Yezid Sayigh, *Armed Struggle and the Search for a State*.<sup>71</sup>

On the developments in the 1950s, see Salim Yaqub and Peter L. Hahn.<sup>72</sup> The Kennedy years are well covered by Warren Bass, while Nathan Citino has brought the lens of modernization to the forefront of US engagement with the region in *Envisioning the Arab Future*.<sup>73</sup> On the regional and international history of 1967 and its aftermath, see William Roger Louis and Avi Shlaim, eds., *The 1967 Arab–Israeli War: Origins and Consequences*; Guy Laron; Avi Raz; Gershom Gorenberg; and Tom Segev.<sup>74</sup> The leading study of US policy toward the Arab–Israeli conflict from 1967 remains William B. Quandt's *Peace Process*.<sup>75</sup>

For the 1970s, Salim Yaqub's *Imperfect Strangers* brings a much-needed transnational lens to bear on the decade, while Paul Chamberlin focuses on the PLO's Cold War transformation in *The Global Offensive*.<sup>76</sup> Craig Daigle's *The Limits of Détente* forces a rethinking of Soviet and Egyptian policy on the eve of 1973, while new approaches to the war itself can be found in Rabinovich, *The Yom Kippur War*; Kipnis, *1973*; Asaf Siniver; and Ginor and Remez.<sup>77</sup> The Carter era has been the subject of several recent studies taking advantage of newly declassified sources, including Daniel Streiff's *Jimmy Carter and the Middle East*; Jørgen Jensehaugen's *Arab–Israeli Diplomacy under Carter*; and Seth Anziska's *Preventing Palestine: A Political History from Camp David to Oslo*, which extends into the Reagan era, examining the 1982 Lebanon War and the roots of Oslo.<sup>78</sup>

Extensive discussion about the “peace process” and developments since the 1990s includes Eisenberg and Caplan, *Negotiating Arab–Israeli Peace*; Shlomo Ben-Ami, *Scars of War, Wounds of Peace*; Rashid Khalidi, *Brokers of Deceit*; Mahmoud Abbas, *Through Secret Channels*; Uri Savir, *The Process*; Dennis Ross, *The Missing Peace*; and Itamar Rabinovich, *Yitzhak Rabin*.<sup>79</sup> On the role of domestic American Jewish as well as Arab-American politics, see Edward Tivnan’s *The Lobby*; Michael Barnett’s *The Star and the Stripes*; and Pamela Pennock’s *The Rise of the Arab-American Left*.<sup>80</sup> These works are complemented by a rich and growing field that looks at social and cultural developments in the United States and their influence on perceptions of the Arab–Israeli conflict. Early examples include Peter Grose’s *Israel in the Mind of America*; Kathleen Christison’s *Perceptions of Palestine*; Melani McAlister’s *Epic Encounters*; and Douglas Little’s *American Orientalism*; with Shaul Mitelpunkt’s *Israel in the American Mind*; and Amy Kaplan’s *Our American Israel* offering important new narratives in which to situate US policy and popular attitudes toward Israel and the Arab world.<sup>81</sup>

## Primary Sources

For the US perspective on the Arab–Israeli conflict, it is best to start with the available *FRUS* volumes on the Arab–Israeli dispute, which appear from Truman through the Carter era, with Reagan era volumes under declassification review. These can be supplemented by extensive material available at US presidential libraries, private papers of individual diplomats and officials at the Library of Congress, individual memoirs, online tools such as the CIA’s Record Search Tool (CREST), the National Security Archive at George Washington University, and the Wilson Center’s Cold War International History Project. Further papers of key figures in the Arab–Israeli conflict and US policy are available at Boston University’s Howard Gotlieb

Archival Research Center, Stanford University's Hoover Institution Archives, and Yale University Library's Manuscript Division.

In delineating the Israeli perspective on this history, the Israel State Archives in Jerusalem has a wide range of Hebrew material, along with a great deal in English, some of which can be found on their online collection. There are also several relevant collections of Israeli Prime Ministers throughout the country, which include private papers. To recover the broader political voice of Palestinians, Beirut's Institute for Palestine Studies is invaluable. Along with extensive documents, newspapers, and bulletins published in Arabic and English by various Palestinian factions, the regional perspective can be supplemented with memoirs by key figures and extensive press sources throughout the Middle East.

For international context and a non-American perspective on the Arab–Israeli conflict, the National Archives of the United Kingdom in Kew, London is a key repository. For the domestic influence of a key interest group in the United States, see the Dorot Division of the New York Public Library, the American Jewish Congress papers at the American Jewish Historical Society, and the archives of the American Jewish Committee and the Joint Distribution Committee in New York City.

Lastly, oral history collections are a crucial resource, with relevant collections including the Liddell Hart Centre for Military Archives at King's College London, the Avraham Harman Institute of Contemporary Jewry at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, and Columbia University's Center for Oral History, among others. The opportunity for researchers to conduct their own interviews with retired diplomats, military officials, communal leaders, and ordinary citizens who lived through these events is an ideal source base as well.

## **Links to Digital Materials**

\*Akevot: Institute for Israeli-Palestinian Conflict Research[<https://www.akevot.org.il/en/>]\*.

\*The American Presidency Project, University of California, Santa Barbara[<https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/>]\*.

\*Central Intelligence Agency,

CREST[<https://www.cia.gov/library/readingroom/collection/crest-25-year-program-archive/>]\*.

\*Declassified Documents Reference

System[<http://galenet.galegroup.com/servlet/DDRS?locID=columbiau>]\*. Farmington Hills, MI: Gale Group, 2015.

\*Frontline Diplomacy[<http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/collections/diplomacy/index.html>]\*.

Manuscript Division, Library of Congress.

\*Israel State Archives[<https://www.archives.gov.il/en/>]\*, Online Archive.

\*Israeli Ministry of Foreign

Affairs[[https://mfa.gov.il/MFA/ForeignPolicy/MFADocuments/Pages/Documents\\_Foreign\\_Policy\\_Israel.aspx](https://mfa.gov.il/MFA/ForeignPolicy/MFADocuments/Pages/Documents_Foreign_Policy_Israel.aspx)]\*: Historical Documents.

Miller Center. University of Virginia, \*Presidential Oral Histories[<https://millercenter.org/the-presidency/presidential-oral-histories>]\*.

\*National Archives and Records Administration[<https://www.archives.gov/>]\*.

\*The Palestinian Revolution[<http://learnpalestine.politics.ox.ac.uk/>]\*.

## Further Reading

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Sayigh, Yezid. *Armed Struggle and the Search for State: The Palestinian National Movement 1949–1993*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997.

Shlaim, Avi. *The Iron Wall: Israel and the Arab World*, rev. ed. New York: W. W. Norton, 2014.

Yaqub, Salim. *Imperfect Strangers: Americans, Arabs, and U.S.–Middle East Relations in the 1970s*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2017.

## Notes

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- <sup>1</sup> See Rashid Khalidi, *Sowing Crisis: The Cold War and American Dominance in the Middle East* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2009); and Osamah F. Khalil, “The Crossroads of the World: U.S. and British Foreign Policy Doctrines and the Construct of the Middle East, 1902–2007.” *Diplomatic History* 38, no. 2 (April 2014): 299–344. The discussion of these early decades also draws on Seth Anziska, “Israel and the U.S.,” in *Great Decisions 2014 Briefing Book* (New York: Foreign Policy Association, 2013), 15–28.
- <sup>2</sup> Irene Gendzier, *Dying to Forget: Oil, Power, Palestine and the Foundations of U.S. Policy in the Middle East* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2015), 84, 90.
- <sup>3</sup> Gendzier, *Dying to Forget*, 167–168.
- <sup>4</sup> Peter Hahn, *Crisis and Crossfire: The United States and the Middle East since 1945* (Washington, DC: Potomac Books, 2005), 26.
- <sup>5</sup> On 1948, see Ahmad H. Sa’di and Lila Abu-Lughod, eds., *Nakba: Palestine, 1948, and the Claims of Memory* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2007); and Benny Morris, *The Birth of the Palestinian Refugee Problem Revisited* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2004).
- <sup>6</sup> <https://www.unrwa.org/content/resolution-194>.
- <sup>7</sup> See Osamah Khalil, “Pax Americana: The United States, the Palestinians, and the Peace Process, 1948–2008,” *The New Centennial Review* 8, no. 2 (2008): 4; and Salim Yaqub, *Containing Arab Nationalism: The Eisenhower Doctrine and the Middle East* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004).

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- <sup>8</sup> On the cross-border infiltrations, see Benny Morris, *Israel's Border Wars, 1949–1956* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993).
- <sup>9</sup> See Peter L. Hahn, *Caught in the Middle East: U.S. Policy toward the Arab–Israeli Conflict, 1945–1961* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004); and Yaacov Bar-Siman-Tov, “The United States and Israel since 1948: A ‘Special Relationship?’” *Diplomatic History* 22, no. 2 (1998).
- <sup>10</sup> Quoted in Bar-Siman-Tov, “The United States and Israel since 1948,” 234.
- <sup>11</sup> See Yaqub, *Containing Arab Nationalism*; and Irene Gendzier, *Notes from the Minefield: United States Intervention in Lebanon, 1945–1958* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2006).
- <sup>12</sup> Robert Rakove, *Kennedy, Johnson, and the Nonaligned World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012).
- <sup>13</sup> Hahn, *Crisis and Crossfire*, 48.
- <sup>14</sup> Bar-Siman-Tov, “The United States and Israel since 1948,” 236–237.
- <sup>15</sup> See Warren Bass, *Support Any Friend: Kennedy's Middle East and the Making of the U.S.-Israel Alliance* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003). As Avner Cohen shows, they did so by deceiving the Americans, who only found out during the Johnson administration. See Avner Cohen, *Israel and the Bomb* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999).
- <sup>16</sup> Hahn, *Crisis and Crossfire*, 49.
- <sup>17</sup> See William Quandt, *Peace Process: American Diplomacy and the Arab–Israeli Conflict Since 1967* (Washington, DC: Brookings Institution Press, 2005), 23; and Bar-Siman-Tov, “The United States and Israel since 1948,” 238.
- <sup>18</sup> Bar-Siman-Tov, “The United States and Israel since 1948,” 240.
- <sup>19</sup> William Quandt, “Forty Years in Search of Arab–Israeli Peace,” *Macalester International* 23, no. 9 (2009): 25. On Johnson and 1967, see Olivia Louise Sohns, “Lyndon Baines Johnson and the Arab–Israeli Conflict” (PhD diss., University of Cambridge, 2014).

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- <sup>20</sup> On the making of 242, see Nigel Ashton, “Searching for a Just and Lasting Peace? Anglo-American Relations and the Road to United Nations Security Council Resolution 242,” *International History Review* 38, no. 1 (2016): 24–44.
- <sup>21</sup> Avi Raz, *The Bride and the Dowry: Israel, Jordan, and the Palestinians in the Aftermath of the June 1967 War* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2012), 44.
- <sup>22</sup> On the history of the settlements, see Gershom Gorenberg, *The Accidental Empire: Israel and the Birth of the Settlements, 1967–1977* (New York: Times Books, 2006); and Idith Zertal and Akiva Eldar, *Lords of the Land: The War over Israel’s Settlements in the Occupied Territories, 1967–2007* (New York: Nation Books, 2007). On the history and practices of the occupation, see Gershon Shafir, *A Half Century of Occupation: Israel, Palestine, and the World’s Most Intractable Conflict* (Oakland: University of California Press, 2017); and Neve Gordon, *Israel’s Occupation* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2008).
- <sup>23</sup> See Rashid Khalidi, “The 1967 War and the Demise of Arab Nationalism: Chronicle of a Death Foretold,” and Fawaz A. Gerges, “The Transformation of Arab Politics: Disentangling Myth from Reality,” in William Roger Louis and Avi Shlaim, *The 1967 Arab–Israeli War: Origins and Consequences* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 264–314. For an extensive treatment of Arab intellectual self-critique after 1967, see Elizabeth Suzanne Kassab, *Contemporary Arab Thought: Cultural Critique in Comparative Perspective* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2009).
- <sup>24</sup> Samantha Gross, “The 1967 War and the ‘Oil Weapon,’” *Markaz* blog, Brookings Institution, June 5, 2017. \*[<https://www.brookings.edu/blog/markaz/2017/06/05/the-1967-war-and-the-oil-weapon/>]\*  
[NOTE: this had been moved to the wrong fn, it belongs here!]
- <sup>25</sup> Hahn, *Crisis and Crossfire*, 55.

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<sup>26</sup> Craig Daigle, *The Limits of Détente: The United States, the Soviet Union, and the Arab–Israeli Conflict* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2012), 17.

<sup>27</sup> Daigle, *The Limits of Détente*, 72.

<sup>29</sup> On the 1970s and the oil crisis, see Victor McFarland, “Living in Never-Never Land: The United States, Saudi Arabia, and Oil in the 1970s” (PhD diss., Yale University, 2014); Daniel Sargent, *A Superpower Transformed: The Remaking of American Foreign Relations in the 1970s* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2015); and David Wight, *Oil Money: Middle East Petrodollars and the Transformation of US Empire, 1967–1988* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, forthcoming). <<AU: UPDATE?>> NO—still listed as forthcoming:  
<https://his.uncg.edu/faculty/wight.html>.

<sup>30</sup> For an essential study of Kissinger’s deliberate creation of step-by-step diplomacy and the onset of conflict management rather than conflict resolution toward the Arab–Israeli arena, see Salim Yaqub, “The Weight of Conquest: Henry Kissinger and the Arab–Israeli Conflict,” in Frederik Logevall and Andrew Preston, eds, *Nixon in the World: American Foreign Relations, 1969–1977* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 227–248.

<sup>31</sup> Hahn, *Crisis and Crossfire*, 61.

<sup>32</sup> See Victor V. Nemchenok, “‘These People Have an Irrevocable Right to Self-Government’: United States Policy and the Palestinian Question, 1977–1979,” *Diplomacy and Statecraft* 20, no. 4 (2009): 595–618. For the rise and growing visibility of the PLO in the international context of the late 1960s and early 1970s, see Paul Thomas Chamberlin, *The Global Offensive: The United States, the Palestine Liberation Organization, and the Making of the Post-Cold War Order* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012).

<sup>33</sup> On Carter’s regional approach to foreign policy, see Betty Glad, *An Outsider in the White House* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2009); Zbigniew Brzezinski, *Power and Principle: Memoirs of the National Security Adviser, 1977–1981* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1983); and Cyrus R.

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Vance, *Hard Choices: Critical Years in America's Foreign Policy* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1983).

<sup>34</sup> President's News Conference, Clinton, MA, May 12, 1977,  
[www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/index.php?pid=7495](http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/index.php?pid=7495).

<sup>35</sup> See Chamberlin, *The Global Offensive*; and Yezid Sayigh, *Armed Struggle and the Search for State: The Palestinian National Movement 1949–1993* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997).

<sup>36</sup> See Seth Anziska, *Preventing Palestine: A Political History from Camp David to Oslo* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2018).

<sup>37</sup> For maps and figures, see Anziska, *Preventing Palestine*, 276–277; and Gordon, *Israel's Occupation*.

<sup>38</sup> William Quandt, *Peace Process: American Diplomacy and the Arab–Israeli Conflict Since 1967* (Washington, DC: Brookings Institution Press, 2005), 289.

<sup>39</sup> See Anziska, *Preventing Palestine*, 201–202.

<sup>40</sup> Summary of the President's meeting with Prime Minister Menachem Begin of Israel, June 21, 1982, "Near East and South Asian Affairs Directorate, National Security Council: Records." Box 91987/3, Ronald Reagan Library (RRL).

<sup>41</sup> "Address to the Nation on United States Policy for Peace in the Middle East, September 1, 1982," Public Papers of Ronald Reagan (hereafter PPRL), RRL.

<sup>42</sup> Seth Anziska, "'A Preventable Massacre[<https://www.nytimes.com/2012/09/17/opinion/a-preventable-massacre.html>]\*,'" *New York Times*, September 16, 2012.

<sup>43</sup> David Crist, *The Twilight War: The Secret History of America's Thirty-Year Conflict with Iran* (New York: Penguin, 2012), 153.

<sup>44</sup> Quandt, *Peace Process*, 274.

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<sup>45</sup> On the origins and history of Hamas, see Tareq Baconi, *Hamas Contained: The Rise and Pacification of Palestinian Resistance* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2018).

<sup>46</sup> Quoted in Paul Lewis, “Arafat, in Geneva, Calls on Israelis to Join in Talks,” *New York Times*, December 14, 1988.

<sup>47</sup> Bar-Siman-Tov, “The United States and Israel since 1948,” 256.

<sup>48</sup> “Baker Ultimatum to Israel: ‘Call Us if You Really Want Peace,’” *Los Angeles Times*, June 13, 1990, [http://articles.latimes.com/1990-06-13/news/mn-371\\_1\\_mideast-peace-talks](http://articles.latimes.com/1990-06-13/news/mn-371_1_mideast-peace-talks).

<sup>49</sup> Bar-Siman-Tov, “The United States and Israel since 1948,” 259.

<sup>50</sup> See Aaron David Miller, *The Much Too Promised Land: America’s Elusive Search for Arab–Israeli Peace* (New York: Bantam, 2008).

<sup>51</sup> For the debate over Camp David’s legacy, see Hussein Agha and Robert Malley, “\*Camp David: The Tragedy of Errors[<https://www.nybooks.com/articles/2001/08/09/camp-david-the-tragedy-of-errors/>]\*,” August 9, 2001.

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