



EIGHTH EDITION

Palestine and the Arab-Israeli Conflict

A HISTORY WITH DOCUMENTS

Charles D. Smith

PALESTINE AND THE ARAB-ISRAELI CONFLICT

Eighth Edition

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PREFACE

As I write this preface to the eighth edition of *Palestine and the Arab-Israeli Conflict* in June 2012, uncertainty clouds the Middle East. Tensions related to Iran and Syria overshadow Palestinian-Israeli and broader Arab-Israeli issues. Israel has threatened military action against Iran to block its efforts at nuclear enrichment. In response, the United States and the European Union have approved extensive trade and financial sanctions against Iran. A major unresolved issue is the interpretation of sanctions and their application in the midst of an American presidential election campaign, with the question of Israeli military action against Iran in the background; most of the world, not just Iran, would assume that the United States collaborated in such an attack.

In addition, the Arab Spring of 2011—the series of political upheavals that erupted in Tunisia in December 2010 and spread throughout the Arab world—adds to the turmoil in the region. The Tunisian and Egyptian governments have been overthrown, and the Assad dynasty in Syria has been seriously threatened by popular uprisings and demonstrations. Russia backs the Assad regime while the United States demands Bashar Assad resign; Sunni Arab money from Saudi Arabia and other Arab Gulf States funds and arms the opposition, which is fragmented. Elsewhere, the Sunni Muslim ruling family in Bahrain, where the U.S. Fifth Fleet is based, appears to have crushed temporarily demands by the Shi'i majority for greater political participation. Finally, Jordan, long an American ally, has begun rescinding citizenship rights granted to Palestinians. King Abdullah II has done this in part out of fear that the demise of the likelihood of a two-state solution to the Palestinian-Israeli dilemma would lead to Jordan being declared the de facto Palestinian state.

In short, the political systems that have dominated the Arab world for the last four decades or more are undergoing fundamental changes. With such an unstable regional political framework, no one can predict what type of state will emerge in any of these lands. Further, the Arab Spring could have major implications for the ongoing Palestinian- and Arab-Israeli conflicts. As Arab populations demand greater input into their own futures in their own countries, they likely will also pressure their new governments to intervene more forcefully on behalf of the Palestinians. Many compare their desire to free themselves from state control and domination to the Palestinian experience in the occupied territories and the hope that a Palestinian state will emerge that represents the will of the Palestinian people. In addition, parties representing Islam will have a much greater say in government than before.

Palestinian and Israeli political frameworks have also shifted as a result of the Arab Spring, resulting in significant splits within Fatah and Hamas on the Palestinian side and among Israeli politicians. Hamas has called for the Assad government to resign, thus distancing itself from Iran, Syria's primary supporter, while Israeli security specialists challenge Prime Minister Netanyahu's focus on Iran.

These recent events underscore the need for a historically sound and current treatment of the Arab-Israeli conflict with regard to Palestine and the broader Middle East. When I introduced my course on the Arab-Israeli conflict, I could not find a satisfactory text for the college student or the general reader. As a historian, I envisaged a book that, in addition to comprehensive coverage of recent history, gave equal weight to the period before Israeli independence in 1948 because it was during this earlier period that Zionism claimed Palestine and Palestinian resistance began. The pre-1948 history of Palestinian-Zionist relations reveals the foundations of subsequent Arab and Israeli attitudes and suggests ways to evaluate today's crises with reference to events that extend back to World War I and earlier. I decided to write such a book, which resulted in the publication of the first edition of *Palestine and the Arab-Israeli Conflict* in 1988. From its inception, this book has given equal emphasis to the modern histories of both Palestine and Israel, beginning with extended treatment of the nineteenth century, the critical era of World War I, and the period of British mandatory rule down to 1947 as points of departure for the era since Israel's independence. Later, as it became clear that students would benefit from reading primary sources from the conflict for themselves, I added documents throughout the book as well.

Because this book is intended primarily for college students and the general reader, and also because I believe that readers should have easy access to my sources, I cite only works published in English and do not claim to have exhausted that material. Depending on the topic, this may mean that I sometimes refer to more works by Israeli scholars than by Arab. On the other hand, much of this Israeli scholarship offers insights and critical perspectives unknown to many Americans.

Inevitably, the question of balance or fairness arises when we deal with subjects that are controversial and that arouse intense emotions. As a historian I believe it necessary to examine other peoples and eras in light of the values and historical processes that produced them. This means that opinions and claims abhorrent to observers removed from the scene may become entirely comprehensible when viewed as part of a people's history and experience in interaction with others. I consider Zionist and Palestinian attitudes to be equally comprehensible in the context of their respective histories and cultures. Moreover, there is no one Zionist/Israeli or Palestinian/Arab view of events or each other, contrary to the polarized perspectives that have gained acceptance in some quarters.

NEW TO THE EIGHTH EDITION

I have extended the book's coverage through the spring of 2012, including the significance of the U.S. and Israeli elections that installed Barack Obama and Binyamin Netanyahu as U.S. president and Israeli prime minister, respectively. Equally important is the population data for Israel and the Palestinian territories (see the Epilogue), which reveals that Jews are no longer a clear majority in Israel and the occupied territories. The expectation that population parity between Jews and Arabs would occur by the year 2020 has been preempted by nearly a decade and increases the urgency of Israel's deliberation over whether to create a two-state solution to maintain Israel's identity as a Jewish state.

As in previous editions, I have updated documents and photos for various chapters to illustrate developments and social processes, with particular attention to the Obama administration's approach to the conflict since it took office in January 2009. I have made a special effort to include more photographs of everyday people and to illustrate issues of gender by adding photographs that portray women at particular points of historical significance.

Likewise, I have updated the Selected Bibliography to highlight recent scholarship, with emphasis on works published since the year 2008. I have sought to identify research on topics beyond the scope of the text, especially studies on social history and gender that examine Israeli and Palestinian experiences. Students should examine these books and also their bibliographies as guides to further study.

As in the seventh edition, I have used Internet sources extensively, particularly in the notes for Chapter 11. I again include a special section in the Selected Bibliography listing Web sites of particular value for the range of sources and information they provide. The companion Web resource *Make History*, located at bedfordstmartins.com/makehistory, provides students and instructors with links to many additional Web sites and primary documents—indexed by this course, topic, and date range—plus all the maps from the book for download or presentation. The *Make History* site also includes research and writing aids, along with documentation guidelines and advice on avoiding plagiarism.

A NOTE ON USAGE AND TRANSLITERATION

I have been generally consistent in my spelling of Arab names but have catered to general usage on occasion. For example, I refer to Gamal Abd al-Nasser, not Jamal Abd al-Nasir. I use the *al-* prefix consistently for names from the mandate period, such as al-Husayni, but for more familiar figures of the recent past I drop the prefix after the first use of the name; al-Nasser thus becomes Nasser and al-Sadat becomes Sadat. Although the prefix is included in index listings, it is not a factor in the alphabetization of entries.

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Charles D. Smith

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