

Updated Fourth Edition

A Concise History of the Arab-Israeli Conflict

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And thus is the way of the world. No, rather thus is the way we have made the world.

—Anonymous

Preface

The first edition of this book was written ten years ago. Since then, there have been tremendous changes both in the Arab-Israeli conflict itself, and in the way it has been written about. The Gulf War of 1991, the Madrid peace conference later the same year, the end of the Cold War and dissolution of the Soviet Union, together with the 1993 Oslo accord between Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization, led to a changed dynamic in the relations between Israel and the Arab countries, and to a significant transformation in the relationship between Israel and the Palestinians. Over the next seven years, until mid-2000, remarkable, if halting, measures were taken by both sides toward a peaceful resolution of the complex issues that had divided Jews and Arabs for the past century. Then, dramatically, in September 2000, we witnessed a reversal and a return to an escalating cycle of violence and alienation.

The way the participants, including their respective historians, view, speak, and write about themselves and each other has also significantly shifted in the past decade. The discourse between Palestinians/Arabs and Israelis, and within each group—especially among Israelis—has matured and moderated with the passage of time, and despite recent events, we still believe that a majority on both sides recognize that specific goals are more attainable through peaceful means than by warfare. Bitterness and hatred may once again threaten to destroy the fabric of the peace process built up between Israelis and Palestinians; nevertheless, Israel is now recognized and accepted as a reality by most Arabs, and most Israelis are ready to acknowledge the almost certain possibility of a Palestinian state. Despite extremists in both camps, Arabs no longer call for Israel to be driven into the sea, and Israelis understand that Palestinians are more than a bunch of terrorists. With this new awareness, new questions have arisen, new frameworks through which the past and present can be viewed have been constructed, new histories have been written.

Of course, the circumstances that produced the Arab–Israeli conflict have not changed, nor have old enmities disappeared. Historians cannot ignore or change past events or sentiments. We simply see things differently in the twenty-first century than we did in earlier years. Time provides alternative perspectives with which to interpret events. The most dramatic example of this is to be seen in the way a group of Israeli historians, "post-Zionists"—called the New Historians—have reinterpreted the history of the origins and early history of Israel and have challenged many of what they call the myths of the previous generation of nationalist historians. A similar revision of Palestinian and Arab history will, no doubt, appear in the future.

The Arab-Israeli conflict continues to surprise pundits and commentators, however. It even appears to defy the participants themselves. The unexpected ferocity and level of violence that erupted in late September 2000 seem once again to have transformed the relationship between Israel, the Palestinians, and the Arab states from one of relative calm to one of explosive bitterness and hostility. It is difficult to know what to make of it all, and events are unfolding so quickly as we write that, at times, we ourselves have not always agreed on how to interpret them. A year ago we were optimistic; now we are not so sure.

In this fourth edition of A Concise History of the Arab-Israeli Conflict we have tried to reflect the changes outlined above. Our narrative and chronologies have been updated, and we have reviewed how we interpret many of the events preceding these startling, rapidly changing, and somewhat unpredictable happenings. We have also considered the many new accounts and

interpretations and have included many in the bibliographies at the end of each chapter. In the last chapter of this edition, we have attempted to explain and analyze the meaning of recent frenzied and chaotic events.

The genesis of this book was a history colloquium we team-taught on the Arab-Israeli conflict at the University of Missouri-Kansas City. We discovered that, like the general public, our students had lots of opinions but only fragmentary knowledge. They lacked background information and approached the subject with preconceptions and emotional biases. Our students required a knowledge of the events, but they also needed ready access to the documents most relevant to the issues, they needed maps, and they needed guidance as to their future reading. We found no single book that met these requirements, so we decided to write this text to fulfill that need. The book is basically a chronological narrative; however, within that framework, we have tried to highlight certain themes that we regard as central to the conflict.

As in past editions, we have attempted to achieve some balance and objectivity about a subject upon which most people feel it necessary to adopt a partisan point of view. Throughout the narrative, we have tried to present both sides of the issues, although we realize that even the selection of material to be included reveals some subjective judgment on our part. If the book succeeds in provoking thoughtful discussion of the Arab–Israeli conflict, we will have achieved our goal.

We hope the additions and revisions in this fourth edition will enhance the book's timeliness and usefulness, and that this updated account will be of interest to a wide audience, since the Middle East is an area of significance and importance not only to students but also to an educated public.

We would like to acknowledge the assistance of the University of New South Wales and the University of Missouri–Kansas City, from which we received faculty research grants. We are also appreciative of the detailed and constructive comments and criticisms of Professor Arthur Goldschmidt, Jr., who read the original manuscript for the publisher. We also wish to thank the following reviewers of later editions for their insights and helpful suggestions: John O. Voll, Georgetown University; Sanford R. Silverburg, Catawba College; Stephen L. McFarland, Auburn University; Robert Olson, University of Kentucky; Ronald Davis, Western Michigan University; John Calvert, Creighton University; and Caroline T. Marshall, James Madison University. Thanks are also due "Flexigraphics" Sydney, Susan Baumgart, Bill Clipson, Arthur J. Fisk, Roni Kresner, and Rhonda Roosa who helped with maps; Patrick Burgess, who assisted us with the pronunciation guide; our history department office staffs; and the editorial and production staff at Prentice Hall, especially Steve Dalphin, Bayani Mendoza de Leon, Katy Bsales, Sally Constable, Jenny Moss, Jean Lapidus, Charles Cavaliere, Mary Araneo, and Emsal Hasan.

Finally, we thank Jenny, Tibor, our families, friends, and colleagues for their patience and support.

Ian J. Bickerton Carla L. Klausner

Postscript: In this updated edition we have added an epilogue, taking the narrative from the formation of the Israeli government of Ariel Sharon in March 2001 through September 2003. We discuss the various peace proposals—including the so-called "road map to peace"—put forward during this period, and explore the impact of the events of September 11, 2001 and the subsequent U.S. declared "War on Terrorism" on the relationships among Israel, the Palestinians and the Arab states.

Note: The photograph on the cover of this book, by Jerusalem photographer Raffi Safieh Garabedian, shows the Western Wall and the Dome of the Rock, symbols of the religious and nationalist dimension of the conflict.

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