THE ARAB-ISRAELI CONFLICT:
A DOCUMENTARY HISTORY

Dr. Ronen Zeidel

Course Number: 702.2126
Class Time: TBA
Class Location: TBA
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Course Description:
The study of the conflict through its documentary history provides a clear chronological and
textual foundation for examining its origins, evolution, and ramifications, with an eye to various
proposals for conflict-resolution.

The resolution of the conflict should begin with a probing diagnosis of the longevity and
intensity of the subject, prior to proposing the requisite remedy or treatment for the problem. This
is to proceed logically and rationally as befits a scientific enterprise.

The tragedy of the conflict is a subject for historical introspection or humanitarian empathy. It
can be a catalyst for efforts to solve the conflict.

The focus of the conflict as reflected in our course of study is the local-territorial dimension
within Eretz-Israel, called Palestine throughout the centuries. We shall however take account of
broader regional aspects of the Arab-Israeli conflict – thus the course title.

The course will provide a clear historical line with the documents serving as the backbone of the
conflict and the attempts by both sides, as well as the international community to solve it.

Course Requirements: Students must read all course materials and bring critical thinking to the
topics addressed. Students will be required to read Haaretz (English version) or the Times of
Israel every day.

Midterm Paper: 20%

Final Paper: 60%

Active Participation 20% (includes 5% for summarizing the document read in class in advance,
focusing on its main points). Active participation also includes: attendance in class, questions to
the lecturer and answers, relevant initiatives by the students (for example, bringing a current
subject to be discussed and explained at the beginning of class).
Syllabus:

1. THE HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Early history of Zionist settlement in Palestine and primordial Palestinian nationalism in the 19th century. WWI and the British invasion to Palestine.


Document: The Balfour Declaration 1917

2. THE BRITISH MANDATE IN THE 1920S

Explaining the novel term “mandate”, surveying the geographical formation of Palestine by the British and the ceding of the east bank of the Jordan river to the Emir Abdulla. The evolution of a split community in Palestine and the birth of the national conflict in Palestine.


James L.Gelvin, pp. 76-92.

Document: Mandate for Palestine, 1922

3. PALESTINE IN THE 1930S: VIOLENCE AND PARTITION

The arrival of an increasing number of Jewish immigrants accelerates the violent turn of the conflict. The Arab revolt of 1936-9 breeds the vision of partition among British and Jews. The White paper of 1939 signifies a change in British policy and a repeal of Balfour and the Mandate for Palestine.
4. END OF MANDATE AND UN RESOLUTION ON PARTITION OF PALESTINE 1945-1947

The end of WWII and the tragic fate of European Jewry hasten British need to mend Palestine policy. Decolonization brings the end of the British mandate within sight but worries of an imminent violent confrontation loom. The UN accepts a resolution on partition which gives international legitimacy to a Jewish state in part of Palestine.


Gelvin, 121-126.

Smith, 187-199.

Document: UN Resolution on Partition of Palestine, 1947

5. 1948: KEY YEAR IN THE CONFLICT

The Israeli War of Independence evolving from a local war of communities to a regional war with the invasion of Arab armies to Palestine. We shall read the Israeli Declaration of Independence, follow the military developments of the war, and discuss the creation of the Palestinian refugee problem.

6. POST 1948
We will follow the challenges facing the new state of Israel in its first decade and the Palestinian refugees in their diasporas
Gelvin, pp.134-143.
Document: UN Resolution 194, 1948

7. THE ROAD TO 1967 AND THE 1967 WAR
The rise of Nasserism and Pan Arab ideology bring Israeli-Arab relations, after a tensed period of 19 years, to war in 1967. The 1967 war is another important landmark in the history of the conflict with the Israeli victory and the occupation of territories including East Jerusalem, the West Bank and Gaza. The decline of Nasserism signifies the conversion of the conflict from Arab-Israeli to Palestinian–Israeli.
Smith, pp.271-294.
Document: UN Security Council Resolution 242 (Peace in the Middle East), 1967

8. PEACE WITH EGYPT 1979
The rise of a new Egyptian president, Anwar al-Sadat, results in the 1973 war following which Egypt forsook the road of war to achieve its territories. Egypt initiates a peace initiative and abandons the Arab camp. Israel withdraws from the Sinai Peninsula and agrees to grant autonomy to the Palestinians. The conflict returns to be Palestinian-Israeli.
9. THE ROAD TO THE INTIFADA, 1987

The Lebanon War of 1982 and the PLO defeat in it, the consolidation of Israeli hold on the West Bank and Ghaza, the expansion of Jewish settlements in the territories, the strategic change in PLO policy led by Arafat. This is the background of the outburst known as the Intifada in late 1987.


Gelvin, pp.212-221.


10. THE ROAD TO THE DECLARATION OF PRINCIPLES (OSLO), 1993

Another crisis of the PLO following the Gulf War, economic crisis in Israel and the return of the Labor party under Rabin and Peres, give vent to negotiations with the PLO. With the signing of the DOP in Washington DC, a new era opens: the Palestinians establish the Palestinian Authority. Israel improves relations with the Arab world and peace is signed with Jordan in 1994.

Discussion on the heritage of Oslo


Smith, pp.432-442.

Gelvin, pp.229-238.

Document: DOP/Oslo Accord between Israel and PLO, 1993

The failure of summit in Camp David, the outburst of the second Intifada shattering hopes on both sides, the rise of violence. Hudna with the Hamas, unilateral disengagement from Gaza, followed by seasonal outbreaks of hostility on that front.

The second Lebanon war 2006. Abu Mazin’s campaign to achieve international recognition in a Palestinian state. The rift in the Palestinian camp. Above all, the lack of will on both sides to reach a solution

Smith, pp.499-514.
Gelvin, pp.238-255.
http://www.mideastweb.org/campdavid2.htm

12. CONCLUSIONS:

What are the existing paradigms for a solution? Are they viable? What are the chances for a change? Is a breakthrough possible? Are there any changes in the positions of both sides? An open discussion.