

# BORDERS AND TERRITORY: A PRIMER



## STATE 194: ABOUT THE FILM

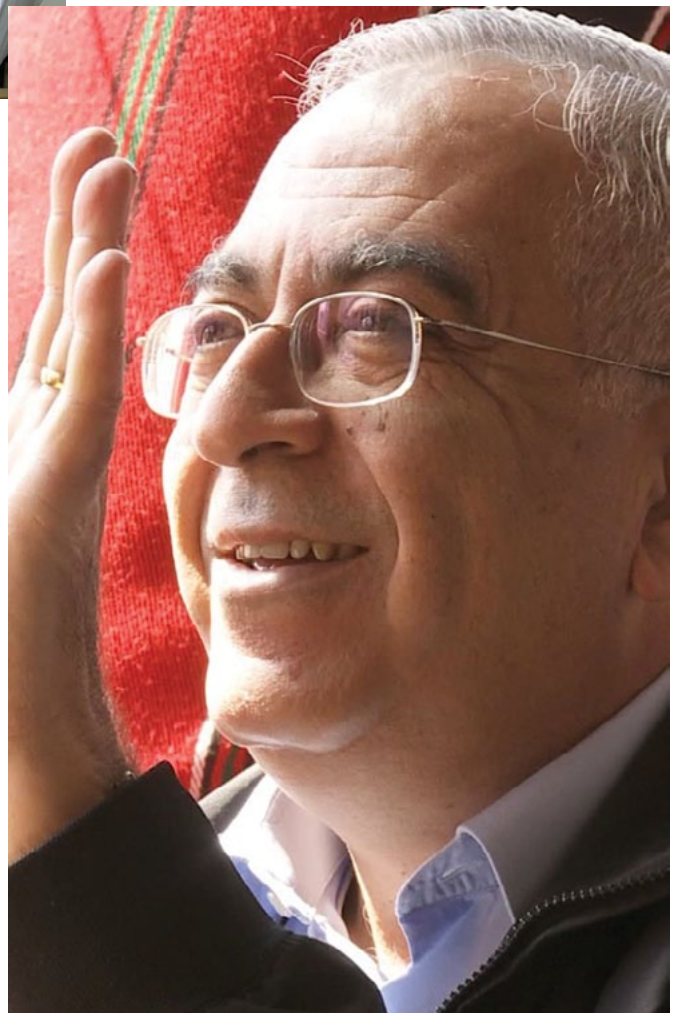
In 2009, Palestinian Prime Minister Salam Fayyad launched a plan to demonstrate that his people were deserving of statehood, inspiring them to change their destiny and seek UN membership. Since then, they've made remarkable progress, but the political quagmire--and Fayyad's recent resignation from office--may destroy the most promising opportunity for peace in years.



Parents Circle members Yitzhak Frankenthal (left) and Nabeel Sweety (right)



Israeli Minister of Justice Tzipi Livni



Former Palestinian Prime Minister Salam Fayyad

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## INTRODUCTION AND SUMMARY

The Israeli-Palestinian conflict is at heart a conflict over who may exercise rights in and sovereignty over the same strip of land, resources and holy sites. In the peace process that began in Oslo, Norway in 1993 and has since stalled to the point of near collapse, these central questions have turned on the future status of the West Bank, Gaza Strip and East Jerusalem, based on the ultimate goal of “Two States for Two Peoples.” The question of where the borders between these two states should be drawn has been a central hurdle in negotiations.

It has often been hard for observers from the outside to understand Palestinian and Israeli positions and seeming intransigence. What is the meaning of various proposals on borders to Palestinians and to Israelis? How did these interpretations come into being and how do they frame the current conversation?

Defining borders may be the most basic step to resolving the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, and this primer is offered as an introduction to the historical and interpretive contexts for contemporary Israeli and Palestinian territorial disputes. It is by no means a comprehensive presentation of the history of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, but rather focuses on pivotal moments in the evolution of Palestinian and Israeli perspectives on the land in dispute. These include fluid political and ideological currents of the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the dramatic changes wrought by the 1967 War, and the rise and deterioration of the peace process from the 1990s through the present moment. Each of these eras was foundational in shaping the markedly different lenses through which Palestinian Arab and Israeli Jewish societies view the issue of borders.

## JEWISH AND PALESTINIAN CLAIMS TO THE LAND (EARLY 20<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY)

By the start of the 20th century, the geographic area between the Mediterranean Sea and the Jordan River had been a land of shifting and amorphous boundaries for four millennia. The area had been known by many names: Palestine, Land of Israel, Holy Land, Judea and Samaria, Canaan, and Southern Syria. In the 19th century the area was a province of the Ottoman Empire, and included indigenous communities of Jews, Christians and Muslims, each of which traced their roots to the advent of their respective faiths. As part of the province of Ottoman Syria, the area included modern Israel, the West Bank, Gaza, Syria, Lebanon, and parts of Iraq and Turkey.

At the end of World War I, the victorious Allied powers divided up the former Ottoman Empire into multiple newly-formed political mandates. As part of this geographic realignment, Palestine—a name first given to the region by Rome—was put under British mandate. The violent confrontation between two emergent national movements for self-determination -- Zionism, or Jewish nationalism, and Arab-Palestinian nationalism – surfaced soon after the British established their Mandate in Palestine.

By that time British officials had already pledged the land of Palestine to both Arab leaders and Jewish leaders, setting up clashing expectations that the same territory would be given over to Arab independence and a Jewish national homeland. These opposing expectations cemented and expanded what had already become two clashing narratives of rightful ownership to the land.

### JEWISH-ISRAELI NARRATIVE

Jewish-Israeli narrative roots Jewish claims to the land in the birth of the Jewish people in the Land of Israel and their two-thousand year old dream of returning to their homeland, a longing rehearsed in daily prayers and ritual. A continuous though small Jewish presence remained in the Land of Israel throughout these centuries, a remnant of their prior history of political autonomy.

During the second half of the 19th century, the ongoing oppression of Jewish communities in Europe led many Jews to despair of the possibility for true emancipation and integration, and articulate a modern version of the age-old Jewish aspiration to restore a national Jewish homeland in the Land of Israel in the form of a nationalist movement called Zionism.

In **1917**, Zionism won a major victory in international recognition when the British issued the Balfour Declaration calling for “the establishment in Palestine of a national home for the Jewish people.” A few years later, this declaration won official support of the League of Nations.

According to the Jewish-Israeli narrative, Arabs began forging a distinct national identity in

### PALESTINIAN-ARAB NARRATIVE

Palestinian Arabs see themselves as the primary indigenous population of Palestine. From a Palestinian perspective, before the emergence of Zionist immigration from Europe, Palestinians co-existed harmoniously as Muslims, Christians and Jews for hundreds of years on the same land, to which all attached religious significance as followers of the three Abrahamic traditions.

Although Jews claim unique historical rights to Palestine, as Palestinians see it, there had not been any Jewish sovereignty in Palestine for over 2000 years prior to the State of Israel. Since the Jews were expelled from Jerusalem in 135 AD, the world’s various lands have changed ownership many times. As historian Sami Hadawi puts it: “If all nations were to adopt this strange Zionist logic, the world would be in utter chaos.”

Palestinian leaders began aspiring to national autonomy toward the end of the Ottoman Empire, initially calling for geographical unity with Syria and then for Palestinian self-rule. They assumed that after World War I, national governments would be formed in the former Ottoman Empire based on the free choice of the people. During the war, Britain had pledged to

JEWISH-ISREALI NARRATIVE (CONTINUED FROM PREVIOUS PAGE)

Palestine in 1920. Before then, they had identified with the greater Muslim Arab nation that replaced the Ottoman Empire, declared their affiliation with Greater Syria and called the Land of Israel “southern Syria-Palestine.” Neither the British nor the international community recognized the Arab community in Palestine as a separate national community.

### Great Britain’s Division of the Mandated Area

## 1921-1923



<http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsourc/History/mandate2.html>

In the Jewish-Israeli telling, the land promised for a future Jewish state was continuously whittled down during the period of British rule. In 1922, the British siphoned off 78% of the British Mandate of Palestine to form Transjordan under King Abdullah. Still, the 22% that remained truly became the refuge for the Jewish people beginning in the 1930s, practically the only one in the world. 60,000 Jews came from Germany following Hitler’s rise to power, and after Israel’s founding, more than a million Jewish refugees fled to Israel from Europe

PALESTINIAN-ARAB NARRATIVE (CONTINUED FROM PREVIOUS PAGE)

grant national independence to Arab countries including Palestine. But these promises were soon betrayed as Britain and the Allied powers created a series of declarations -- most importantly the Balfour Declaration of 1917 -- that Palestinians say completely disregarded their rights and desires, though they were then the overwhelming majority of the population (then 90%).

In the Palestinian telling, British imperialism allied itself to Zionism to pursue its own economic and strategic interests in the Middle East. British colonialism meanwhile gave Zionism international and economic support to facilitate its expropriation of Palestinian land from its non-Jewish, native inhabitants, but who had lived on and farmed the land for centuries.

The Balfour Declaration in **1917**, according to many Palestinians, paved the way for trampling Palestinian national aspirations and seizing Palestinian land and resources, as was done to other colonized peoples throughout the world. The Balfour Declaration contradicted everything Britain and the Allied powers had stood for in World War I, namely the right to self-determination. “Britain granted a land it did not possess to a group who did not own it, at the expense of those who possessed and had the right to it.” (Sami Adwan, Daniel Bar-On and Eyal Naveh, Side by Side).

In **1937**, the British for the first time recommended partition of Palestine into two states, a Jewish state and an Arab state (the Peel Commission). The Arabs rejected the partition plan because for them it meant the establishment of a European Jewish state on Arab land, whose owners alone had a right to establish a modern state.

In 1947, the United Nations recommended the partitioning of Palestine into two states in a plan that seemed thoroughly unjust to Palestinians. The Jewish state would comprise 56% of the area of Palestine, contrasted with only 6-7% of the area that Jews held at the time, and Jews constituted less than 35% of the population. In the words of Palestinian historian Walid Khalidi, the Palestinians “failed to see why it was not fair for the Jews to be a minority in a unitary Palestinian state, while it was fair for almost half of the Palestinian population – the indigenous majority on its own ancestral soil – to be converted overnight into a minority under alien rule in the envisaged Jewish state.”

JEWISH-ISRAELI NARRATIVE (CONTINUED FROM PREVIOUS PAGE)

as well as Arab and Muslim countries. In the words of Israel's first President, Chaim Weizmann: "Six million Jews are captive in places where they are not wanted. Six million people in whose eyes the world is divided into places where they cannot live and places they cannot get into" (testimony before the Peel Commission, 1937).

Beginning in **1937**, Britain recommended that two states be established side by side, a Jewish state and an Arab state: "While neither race can fairly rule all Palestine, each race might justly rule part of it" (Peel Commission). Most Zionists accepted this premise, even if they disagreed about where the exact border should go.

In 1947, the UN adopted a resolution embracing Partition and declaring the establishment of two independent states in the Land of Israel. Many Jewish-Israelis emphasize that the Jews of Israel rejoiced, with singing in the streets, while Palestinians and surrounding Arab states rejected Partition and initiated a war against Israel.

At the end of this war, the Arab countries still refused to recognize the existence of the State of Israel, and Israel refused to relinquish territories it had conquered during the war that hadn't been included in the Partition Plan. Under internationally brokered armistice agreements, the remaining territory of what had been Mandatory Palestine was divided between Egypt, which held the Gaza Strip, and Jordan, which held the West Bank.

For many Jews, even secular Jews, the birth of the State of Israel in the historic Land of Israel was nothing short of miraculous. How was it possible that just a few years after the death camps were liberated, this nearly-extermiated people emerged victorious against multiple armies hell-bent on the destruction of their fledgling nation?

Dominant Jewish-Israeli narrative sees the tragedy befalling Palestinian Arabs in **1948** as largely self-inflicted. Having rejected the opportunity of Partition and denied the Jewish right to self-determination, Palestinians did not get their own state and were forced to live under the sovereignty of Israel, Jordan, Egypt, and other countries.

Moreover, the newly-established State of Israel - roughly the size of New Jersey - was a tiny,

PALESTINIAN-ARAB NARRATIVE (CONTINUED FROM PREVIOUS PAGE)

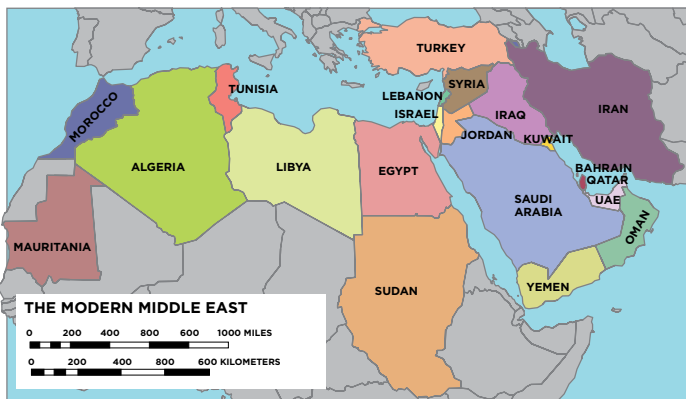
By the end of the **1948** war - described as Al-Nakba (the catastrophe) by the Palestinian people - the West Bank had fallen under Jordanian rule, where Palestinians were not allowed to mention the name Palestine, exercise their national rights or maintain their national identity. The Gaza Strip was placed under Egyptian rule, which also repressed Palestinian efforts at self-rule.

As Palestinians saw it, they had been made to pay for the persecution the Jews suffered at the hands of Christians in Europe. The Balfour Declaration marked the beginning of an era of homelessness and tragedy cemented with the Nakba. Having committed no crime other than living on land that others wanted, hundreds of thousands of them were now displaced, living with unjust borders, and suppressed from pursuing their own self-determination. In the words of Palestinian historian Albert Aghazarin: "I do not discount what the Jews suffered. Nobody can. I know that they suffered in Europe. But to me it is as if they jumped from a burning building and they happened to land and break the neck of a man who was passing. And when the man says, 'Hey, you've broken my neck', they say, 'Sorry, it's because of the fire.' And when the man says, 'Yes, but my neck's broken', they just break his arm in order to try to shut him up. And when he doesn't shut up, they break his other arm. Then they break his leg. Then his other leg. All in the hope that one day he'll shut up. But, you see, I don't think he will."

JEWISH-ISREALI NARRATIVE (CONTINUED FROM PREVIOUS PAGE)

vulnerable strip of land surrounded by hostile Arab states. While the Arab world is wider than the United States -- with twenty-two sovereign Arab nations in relative pan-Arab and/or pan-Muslim solidarity -- one could drive in an hour from the easternmost to the westernmost point of Israel's 1949 borders. As Eric Black captures it: "While Arabs control a vast territory and many nations, there is no Jewish state other than tiny Israel. Nowhere else is Hebrew spoken. No other nation is dedicated to the survival of the Jewish people. And the experience of centuries has shown that the Jews cannot survive without a national home of their own. The Jews have nowhere else to go" (Parallel Realities).

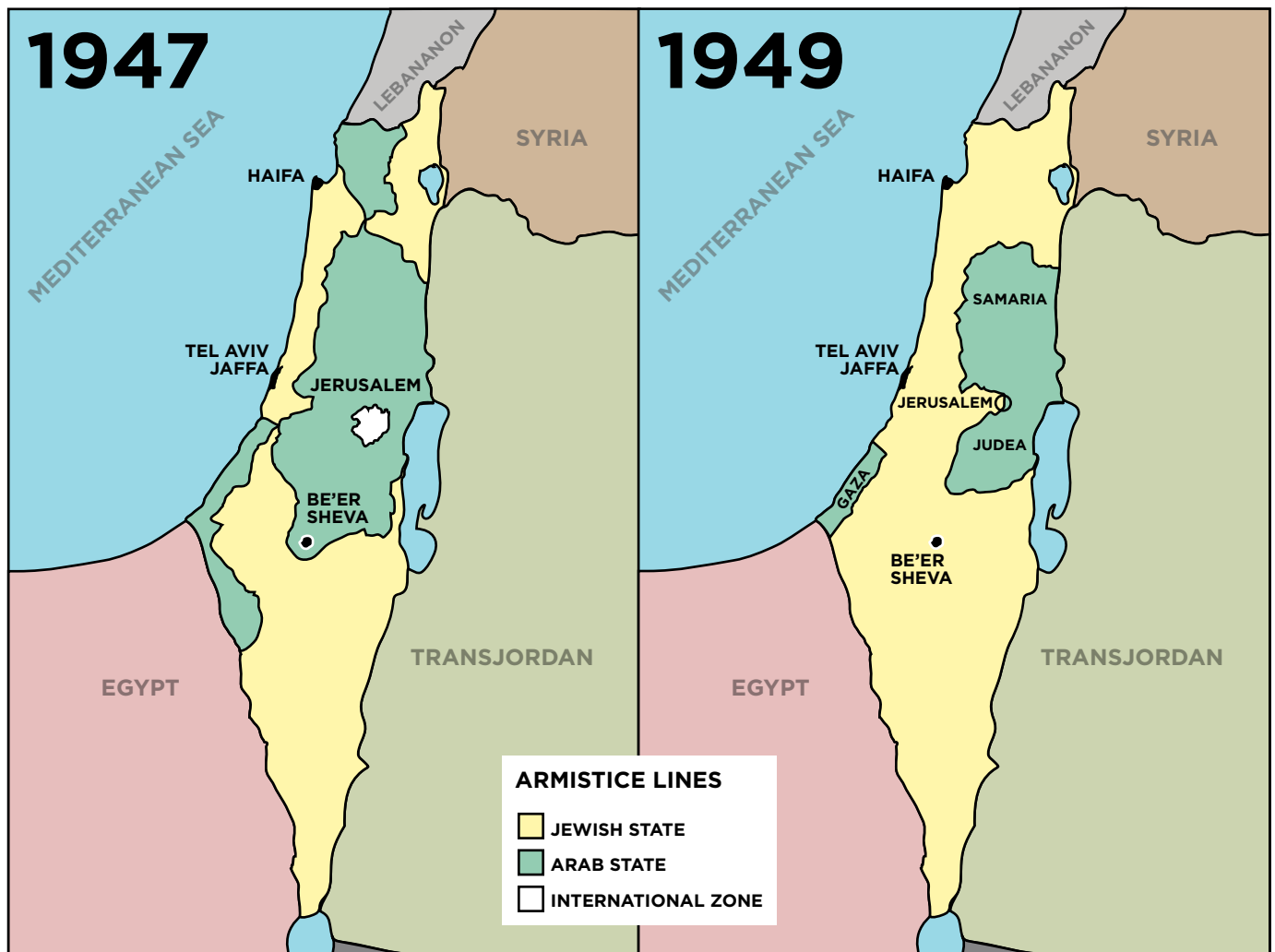
### Israel amidst the Arab world



<http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/History/modernmap.html>



UN PARTITION PLAN 1947 AND 1949 ARMISTICE LINES



<http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/images/maps/partitionnick.gif>

<http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/History/49lines.html>

## THE 1967 WAR

The 1967 war was perhaps the most pivotal event in the evolution of contested borders in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict since the creation of the State of Israel. Despite ongoing hostilities from 1948-1967, there were no significant border changes during this era, and Israel's territory was largely recognized as determined by the 1949 Armistice Line (also known as the "Green Line"). This catalytic event reshaped Palestinian-Arab and Jewish-Israeli narratives in dramatically different directions.

### JEWISH-ISRAELI NARRATIVE

For Israeli Jews, the sheer number of Arab enemies surrounding them sustained an anxiety of Israel's supreme vulnerability. This anxiety reached an apex in the lead up to the 1967 war, when Israel found itself again surrounded by enemy states mobilizing troops and calling for "total war." In the words of then-Egyptian President Nasser: "Our fundamental goal will be to destroy Israel." The Israeli public felt that Israel's very existence was at stake as it braced for a combined Arab strike against its narrow territory.

By the end of this defensive war, Israel had captured the West Bank, Gaza Strip, Golan Heights, Sinai Peninsula, and East Jerusalem. Returning from the brink of annihilation, according to the Jewish-Israeli telling, Israelis were shocked and euphoric by this decisive victory, but almost immediately divided over what should happen with the newly-conquered territories. Israeli society divided into two primary camps, and the debate between these camps dominated Israeli politics for much of the next four decades.

1. "Land for Peace." The "Land for Peace" camp believes that peace negotiations should be based on an Israeli withdrawal from most or all of the territories conquered in 1967. Most in this camp believe Israel cannot retain these territories without a military occupation that sabotages the state's democratic character for at least two reasons: one, Israel cannot rule over a hostile population without repressive force and human rights violations; and two, Israel cannot grant citizenship and democratic rights to Palestinians in the West Bank without soon losing its Jewish majority.
2. Supporters of "Greater Israel." Supporters of "Greater Israel" oppose returning the lands conquered in 1967. This group can be further subdivided into secular and religious. The secular subgroup argues that

### PALESTINIAN-ARAB NARRATIVE

The 1967 War is known in the Arab world as "the Aggression of June the 5th," because despite claiming that it was a war of self-defense, many Arabs argue that Israel declared and initiated the war. Since its founding, this perspective argues, Israel had awaited the right pretense to wage an attack against surrounding Arab countries in order to realize its expansionist ambitions. As Israel's first Prime Minister, David Ben-Gurion stated in 1948: "The Jewish State now being offered to us is not the Zionist objective. Within this area it is not possible to solve the Jewish question. But it can serve as a decisive stage along the path to greater Zionist implementation. It will consolidate in Palestine, within the shortest possible time, the real Jewish force which will lead us to our historical goal." Israel, according to this argument, exploited statements by President Nasser in order to portray itself as a victim forced into pre-emptive war rather than an aggressor invading neighboring countries to expand its borders.

JEWISH-ISREALI NARRATIVE (CONTINUED FROM PREVIOUS PAGE)

Israel needs the West Bank (a.k.a. Judea and Samaria) – or at least large sections of it – to have secure and defensible borders. These lands are also the areas to which the Jewish people hold their strongest historic ties. The religious subgroup sees this land as belonging to Israel based on Biblical boundaries-- the core of the Land promised to Abraham, where Judaism was born, and the site of the holiest sites in Judaism. They link the victory in the 1967 war to a vision of divine intervention and messianic redemption.

### “OCCUPIED” VS. “DISPUTED” TERRITORIES

As debates raged over what to do with the newly acquired land, a parallel debate emerged as to the legality of these options. Much of the Israeli public views the West Bank (and formerly the Gaza Strip) as “occupied territories.” The Israeli High Court of Justice has ruled that “Judea and Samaria [West Bank] and the Gaza area are lands seized during warfare, and are not part of Israel,” and “are held by the State of Israel in belligerent occupation.”

Nonetheless, the official position of the Israeli government has been that the West Bank is a “disputed territory,” since it was never internationally recognized as part of Jordan: “Politically, the West Bank...is best regarded as territory over which there are competing claims which should be resolved in peace process negotiations. Israel has valid claims to title in this territory based not only on its historic and religious connection to the land, and its recognized security needs, but also on the fact that the territory was not under the sovereignty of any state and came under Israeli control in a war of self-defense, imposed upon Israel” (“Israeli Settlements and International Law,” Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs).

Israelis who support this position cite, for example, former State Department Legal Advisor Stephen Schwebel, who later headed the International Court of Justice in the Hague. Schwebel wrote in 1970 regarding Israel’s case: “Where the prior holder of territory had seized that territory unlawfully, the state which subsequently takes that territory in the lawful exercise of self-defense has, against that prior holder, better title.” That is

PALESTINIAN-ARAB NARRATIVE (CONTINUED FROM PREVIOUS PAGE)

With the territories Israel seized in the 1967 war, Egypt, Jordan and Syria lost crucial oil and other natural resources, control over the Jordan river, and many other strategic advantages. Most significantly, from a Palestinian-Arab perspective, large Palestinian lands and several million Palestinians were now captive to Israel – which Israel could exploit to its advantage in all future negotiations.

### OCCUPATION AND SETTLEMENTS

Since 1967, Palestinians living in Gaza<sup>1</sup> and the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, have lived under Israeli military rule (a.k.a. occupation) Palestinians have lived without citizenship, individual or collective political rights, or the protection of a state within the international community.

From the Palestinian perspective, the aftermath of the 1967 War exponentially intensified the tragic dispossession of the Palestinian people of a land that is rightfully theirs and compounded that dispossession with the daily indignities and struggle of life under occupation. Israel, in the view of most Palestinians, has tried to confiscate as much land as possible and as few Palestinians as possible. This is why, Palestinians believe, Israel hasn’t annexed the West Bank, giving rights and citizenship to Muslim and Christian Palestinians there. To do so, would mean an end to Israel as a Jewish democracy. Yet Israel, many Palestinians believe, wants their land and resources more than it wants peace.

Today Palestinians see themselves as trapped in ever-shrinking, open-air prisons, surrounded by growing Israeli settlements. Israelis in settlements have access to water and relative freedom, whereas Palestinians cannot even freely move between their own towns and villages.

According to Palestinians, Israel adopted a number of economic measures to subjugate them in order to create total economic dependency, alongside control of education, transportation of people and goods, water and other natural resources. Israel further confiscated lands throughout the Occupied Territories and built hundreds of Jewish settlements, a settler road system, and other

<sup>1</sup> Gaza, according to many Palestinians, still lives under Israeli occupation despite Israel’s formal military withdrawal in 2005, as Israel continues to control borders, imports/exports, sea access and airspace, including the electromagnetic sphere.

## JEWISH-ISRAELI NARRATIVE (CONTINUED FROM PREVIOUS PAGE)

-- according to this narrative -- there was no legally recognized sovereign control over the West Bank prior to 1967; Jordan was itself an occupier, as a consequence of their illegal invasion of Israel in 1948. Furthermore, Israel conquered this territory in a defensive war that was aggressively imposed on it. Therefore Israel, this Israeli camp argues, has at least as much right to these territories as do Palestinians. Using the politically-loaded term “occupation” serves to prop up the Palestinian side of the argument, justify Palestinian violence, and delegitimize Jewish-Israeli claims to the land by presenting Israel as a “foreign occupier.”

Of crucial importance to this point of view is that the 1948-1967 border (a.k.a. 1949 Armistice or “Green Line”) was never accepted by Arab or international leadership as permanent, but rather was declared an interim border by Arab insistence. As stated by the Israel-Egypt Armistice Agreement of 1949: “The Armistice Demarcation Line is not to be construed in any sense as a political or territorial boundary, and is delineated without prejudice to rights, claims and positions of either Party to the Armistice as regards ultimate settlement of the Palestine question.” A similar agreement was signed with Jordan.

Soon after 1967, several Israeli leaders rejected the permanence of the Armistice Line on the grounds of security. Prime Minister Golda Meir said the pre-1967 borders were so dangerous it would “be treasonable” to accept them. Foreign Minister Abba Eban stated that the pre-1967 borders “have a memory of Auschwitz.” Several Israeli leaders described them as “suicide borders.”

## PALESTINIAN-ARAB NARRATIVE (CONTINUED FROM PREVIOUS PAGE)

infrastructure in order to create new realities on the ground and hindrances to a Palestinian state. As former Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon put it in 1973: “We’ll make a pastrami sandwich of them. We’ll insert a strip of Jewish settlement in between Palestinians, and then another strip of Jewish settlement, right across the West Bank, so that in 25 years time, neither the United Nations, nor the United States, nobody will be able to tear it apart.”

For Palestinians, any suggestion that the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, and the Gaza Strip is not occupied strikes them as absurd. They routinely note near-universal consensus that these territories are occupied—and that that consensus includes Israel’s own High Court, as well as organs of the United Nations and the International Court of Justice. The West Bank is not recognized as part of Israel by any world government, and the application of the Geneva Convention – which prohibits a state from transferring its population into a territory it holds under military control following a war – has been upheld by the International Court of Justice, UN General Assembly, UN Security Council, and Israel’s own High Court. Palestinians say that any attempt to describe the West Bank and Gaza Strip as “disputed” are political ploys to grant credence to the settlement movement, which they note is viewed as illegal by almost every country around the world.

JEWISH-ISREALI NARRATIVE (CONTINUED FROM PREVIOUS PAGE)

## SETTLEMENTS (A.K.A JEWISH COMMUNITIES OF JUDEA AND SAMARIA)

A settlement is a Jewish civilian community built on lands Israel captured in the 1967 war. As of 2012, there were approximately 350,000 Israeli Jews living in the West Bank (and another 300,000 in East Jerusalem; see additional primer on Jerusalem). The West Bank (a.k.a. Judea and Samaria) includes areas where many Biblical stories took place, and many religious Jews see both a positive value of living there and an obligation to ensure that it be made part of the Jewish state. Other Israelis live there for economic reasons: a number of subsidies and other government-sponsored incentives encourage Israelis to live in the West Bank. Finally, regardless of religious, historical, or economic motivations, some Israelis believe that settlements are critical to helping Israel achieve security objectives by providing Israel with greater strategic depth and preventing arms smuggling from Arab countries.

The Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs argues that since the territories are not occupied, these settlements break no international laws. Many Israelis nonetheless view the settlements as obstacles to peace, and believe that a peace agreement with the Palestinians will require the removal of some or most Jewish settlements in the West Bank (as happened with the settlements in Gaza), and the integration of the settlers into Israel. Many also believe settling the territory has undermined rather than fostered Israel's defense by strengthening the hostility of its neighbors; Israel's security depends on an agreement with Palestinians and the rest of the Arab world, as well as definite, recognized borders.

"Greater Israel" proponents have taken advantage of Israel's lack of a clear policy regarding the settlements to establish "facts on the ground," residential communities that once rooted to the land, become difficult to dismantle politically and emotionally.

PALESTINIAN-ARAB NARRATIVE (CONTINUED FROM PREVIOUS PAGE)

Palestinians view these illegal settlements serve as de facto barriers to a Palestinian state or two-state solution since they carve the West Bank into non-contiguous parts. The presence of settlements also requires Israeli military control, undermining Palestinians' self-governance and freedom of movement. Extremist settlers, meanwhile, have grown increasingly violent toward Palestinian civilians, and their terror is generally treated with impunity by Israeli authorities. Some Palestinians suggest that Jews would be welcome to remain in the West Bank as citizens of Palestine, just as there are Palestinian citizens of Israel, but that it's unreasonable for there to be islands of Israel sprinkled throughout Palestine.

### PALESTINIAN LOSS OF LAND, 1947 - PRESENT



[http://www.kibush.co.il/show\\_file.asp?num=553](http://www.kibush.co.il/show_file.asp?num=553)

## PEACE NEGOTIATIONS, TWO STATES AND ALTERNATIVES

The framework put in motion in 1967 continued to dominate the dynamics of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, until the peace process in 1993 appeared to initiate a breakthrough and new paradigm. For a brief window, many Israelis and Palestinians believed an agreement was inevitable and there was no turning back; in the two decades that have followed, these hopes and expectations have all but disappeared. Over the course of the vacillations of the peace process, the meanings each party has historically attributed to borders and territory have both framed the peace process and in turn been reshaped by it.

Since the early 1990s, most of the world – including Israel, the PLO, the US, and most Arab states – treat UN Security Council Resolution 242 as the foundational document for a resolution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict through a two-state solution. The resolution calls in part for Israeli withdrawal from “territories occupied” in the 1967 War. Yet Israelis and Palestinians differ substantially on its interpretation. Israelis believe the resolution does not require Israel to withdraw from all of the territory, and is conditional on the Arab states granting recognition to Israel’s “right to live in peace within secure and recognized boundaries.” Palestinians believe the resolution affirms their claims for the establishment of a Palestinian state on the entirety of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. All parties affirm their support of the Resolution, while insisting that the other parties are not abiding by its requirements.

### JEWISH-ISRAELI NARRATIVE

The majority of Israelis greeted Oslo and the principle of two states for two peoples with enthusiasm and optimism. A 1979 peace treaty with Egypt -- in which the Sinai Peninsula was returned to Egypt in return for peace and recognition of Israel’s right to exist – validated those in Israel who had championed a “land-for-peace” approach. Oslo seemed to be a culminating achievement for that camp. Israelis have increasingly lost faith and trust in both the peace process and the land-for-peace logic, and have come to believe Palestinians at both leadership and popular levels lack readiness for territorial compromise and recognition of Israel’s legitimacy.

Israeli officials argue that they offered Palestinians the vast majority of West Bank territory – most famously in the Camp David Summit of 2000, which they say included as much as 96% of the West Bank and withdrawal from more than sixty Jewish settlements. Much of the Israeli public believes that Palestinian rejection of this offer – already too great a compromise, according to 58% of Israelis -- demonstrates that Palestinians will stop at nothing but a single Arab state in all of “Historic Palestine,” rather than accept independent Jewish and Arab states side-by-side.

### PALESTINIAN-ARAB NARRATIVE

Most Palestinians seek to secure their right to self-determination in a sovereign state, with full control over land, natural resources, water, and political and economic affairs. For Palestinians, the viability of that state requires that it be adequate in size, resources, and contiguity to function and flourish. For those who support the two-state solution, the 1967 boundaries with slight modifications are seen as the basis of a viable territory.

Though Oslo was initially embraced by the majority of Palestinians, the vast majority have near total distrust and cynicism toward Israeli peace proposals due to perceived Israeli duplicity.

As Palestinians see it, in 1948, Israel was established on 78% of “Historic Palestine.” They believe they have already made enormous compromises by ceding the land on which Israel was built, which displaced hundreds of thousands of Palestinians who were then the indigenous majority. For most Palestinians, agreeing to the 1967 borders is already generous; it is unrealistic and unfair to expect Palestinians to compromise on the remaining 22%. And yet Israel has extorted concessions again and again, making every excuse to continue its century-long project of land confiscation and ethnic cleansing.

## JEWISH-ISREALI NARRATIVE (CONTINUED FROM PREVIOUS PAGE)

The unleashing of Palestinian terror – including dozens of suicide attacks on Israeli civilian cafes and buses from 1994 on and especially from 2000-2006 – all the more so hardened Israeli popular sentiment and intensified cynicism and distrust. Some argue that the Palestinian leadership is trying to weaken Israel's position through diplomatic means, while cooperating underhandedly with extremist elements to finish the job. That is, the peace process is just part of the PLO's declared "phased plan" of 1974, whereby the Palestinian leadership will accept part of the land only so as to use it as a base of operations from which to destroy the Israel in stages.

Many believe that Jewish withdrawal from the West Bank would reward violence – with Palestinians seeing terror as a weapon to chase Jews from the land -- and would also be returned with more violence, just as were Israel's withdrawals from Gaza in 2005 and southern Lebanon in 2000, which were followed by barrages of rocket attacks on Israeli civilians. They believe Israel would give up lands of great value in terms of both security and cultural significance, and get nothing in return: "territory for rockets, rather than territory for peace."

In short, many Israelis believe that Palestinian leadership deceived the Israeli public at Oslo and was never genuinely ready for conciliation or compromise. At the levels of both the negotiating table and the street, Palestinians, in this view, want all of "Historic Palestine" and view Israelis as "invaders" in their heart of hearts. Terrorism and war will erupt again regardless of what Israel offers; Palestinians simply will not ultimately accept a two-state solution or Jewish State on 80 or 50 or 20 percent of the Land of Israel. Many believe in this generation there is no solution but to defend the country and live by the sword, because "Palestinians will only listen to force." That is, they believe that Palestinians will only tolerate Israel's presence when they perceive a power asymmetry, and never accept Israel's legitimacy even if Israel were to offer them the moon.

Many Israelis furthermore want most settlers to remain in their homes by annexation of the Jewish settlement blocks adjacent to Israel. Some believe these lands were promised to the Jewish people by God, while others are simply concerned with preserving the homes of Israeli citizens, many of whom have lived their whole lives as residents of Judea and Samaria (the West Bank).

## PALESTINIAN-ARAB NARRATIVE (CONTINUED FROM PREVIOUS PAGE)

Palestinians saw Israel's purported "generous offer" at the Camp David Summit as anything but generous: rather than giving Palestinians an opportunity for freedom and an independent state, Israeli offers kept the most important land for Israel, while atomizing a future Palestinian state. Palestinians saw these "peace offers" as insincere attempts to get Palestinians to renegotiate what they see as the terms of their imprisonment rather than their freedom, while blaming them for "rejecting peace."

In short, Israeli offers, according to most Palestinians, do not provide enough or contiguous territory for establishing a viable state, the territory is not Israel's to "offer," and Israel has not proposed realistic or just solutions. Many see the peace process as a cover for an Israeli land grab and "security agreement" that relegates policing the Palestinian population to the Palestinian Authority without granting them real sovereignty. Moreover, Israel has built more settlements since the start of the Oslo peace process than in the twenty-five years prior, dividing Palestinians into isolated enclaves, and separating Palestinians both from one another and from their lands and sources of subsistence. Palestinians liken this to two parties negotiating over how to share a pizza while one of them keeps eating it. Twenty years after Oslo, the Palestinian Authority still controls less than 18% of the total area of the West Bank, exercising civil and security control in most population centers but not in surrounding territory. Israel still exercises full control over border areas, settlements, and Israeli military security areas, including most of the land of the West Bank. Many Palestinians note that they have "gained" less land as a result of peace agreements than Israel has confiscated for the purpose of building new settlements and settler roads.

Palestinians are still hoping they will be able to lead a dignified life of peace, security, and self-determination on their own land.

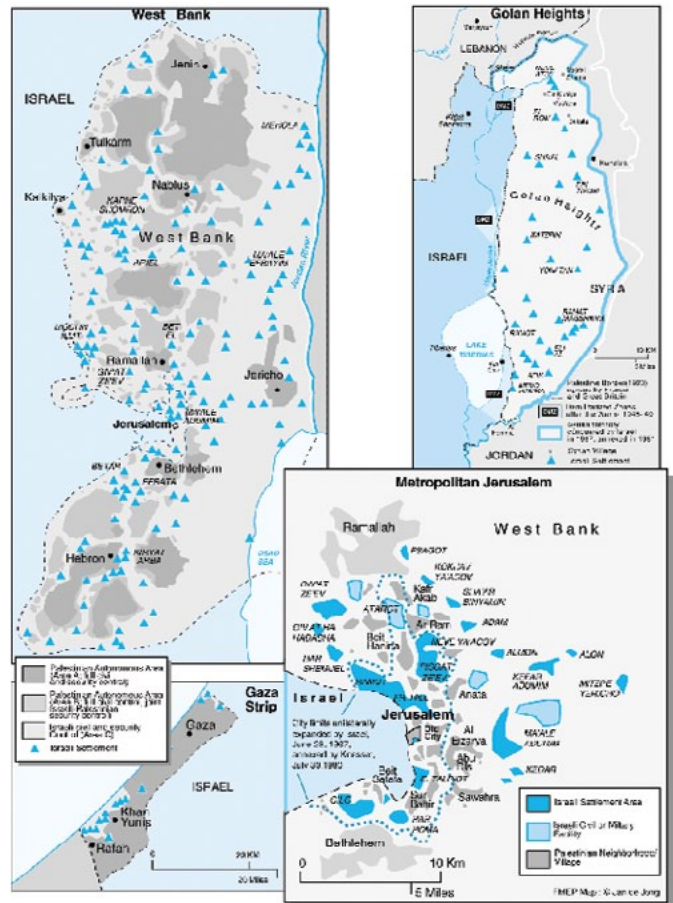


JEWISH-ISREALI NARRATIVE (CONTINUED FROM PREVIOUS PAGE)

Some argue that Israel has already historically compromised by giving up 78% of the original British Mandate of Palestine and lands promised by the British in the Balfour Declaration, when Jordan was formed in 1921. Similarly, some argue that Israel already gave up 93% of the lands conquered in the 1967 war when it gave up the Sinai Peninsula to Egypt in 1979, demonstrating its willingness to exchange land for peace when there was any hope of achieving it. Many wonder – given these compromises -- why Israel shouldn't retain at least some of the lands conquered in the defensive war of 1967, when there is only one tiny sliver of land for the Jewish state, and Arabs have so many other countries.

Nonetheless, many other Israelis argue that retaining the West Bank undermines Israel's security interests more than it advances them, and corrupts if not destroys Israel's democracy and soul. Given demographic realities, they argue, Israel can have any two of these three terms – Jewish, democratic, and “Greater Israel” -- but it cannot have all three.

FOUNDATION FOR MIDDLE EAST PEACE



Israeli Settlements in the Occupied Territories - 2002

[http://www.fmep.org/maps/settlements-population/occupied-territories2002.gif/image\\_view\\_fullscreen](http://www.fmep.org/maps/settlements-population/occupied-territories2002.gif/image_view_fullscreen)

## CONCLUSION

Both Israelis and Palestinians want their states to be as safe and viable as possible. There are safety and security concerns that arise from each map drawn. There are religious, historical and cultural connections to the land for both peoples on both sides of the Green Line. Both sides have near-complete erosion of faith in the other side. Both Israelis and Palestinians argue that they have already made significant compromises, and that further compromise should not be necessary. The popular sensibilities of each side are rooted in longstanding, tenable national storylines about their own rootedness in the land, concessions for the sake of peaceful co-existence, and violations at the hand of the indelibly untrustworthy other.

While many Israelis and Palestinians oppose the principles prevalent in the negotiations arena, most negotiations experts argue that if a two-state solution is ever implemented, the border will:

1. Resemble the 1967 lines, although this has been a point of contention: Current Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu argues, along with some other Israelis, that the 1967 lines, even with slight modifications, would critically jeopardize core Israeli security interests. Current Palestinian leadership in the West Bank and Arabs have argued the future Palestinian State must be based on the 1967 lines, with minor modifications. However, the Palestinian leadership is currently divided and many factions do not support a two-state solution and consider all of historic Palestine “occupied.”
2. Be modified with land swaps: Some Israeli settlements would be incorporated into Israel; in exchange, Israel would give the future Palestinian state tracts of land within Israel.
3. Include a link between the West Bank and Gaza Strip: Transportation, utilities and communications links would be critical for the economic and political viability of a future Palestinian state in a two-state model. Multiple link scenarios have been explored in previous negotiations.
4. Accommodate unique interests in Jerusalem: Jerusalem presents a special set of issues, due to its religious and economic significant both to Israel and Palestinians. These issues are presented in more detail in the Jerusalem primer.

While most diplomacy is working toward a two-state solution, as negotiations stall indefinitely and settlement infrastructure proliferates, some argue that the window for a two-state solution has already closed. The idea of a single bi-national or non-national democratic state is gaining momentum. Some Jewish and Muslim groups envision a single Jewish (“Greater Israel”) or Islamic state. Single-state proposals are not generally seen as realistic in general discourse, though popular support for them is rising. Perhaps most noteworthy is the sense on both sides that no proposal is seen as achievable, with a growing fatalism dominating both sides’ views on possibilities for a negotiated future.

In this context, in 2012, the Palestinian Authority made the unilateral decision to apply for admission as a United Nations non-member state, and the resolution was passed in Nov. 2012. No Palestinian state yet exists except on a symbolic level. Israel argues that an actual Palestinian state can only come into existence through peace negotiations with Israel. Palestinians argue that -- given Israel’s continued building of settlements and the closing window on a viable Palestinian state -- they have no choice but to take history into their own hands as Israel did in 1948.

In the words of former Palestinian Prime Minister Salam Fayyad: *“The resolution doesn’t get us what we want now, in the sense of what we want being a fully independent and sovereign state of Palestine where our people can live in freedom and dignity. But it’s significant, certainly, given that it was something that happened [in] precisely that forum that some 65 years ago gave Israel its birth certificate”* (NPR, Dec. 1, 2012).