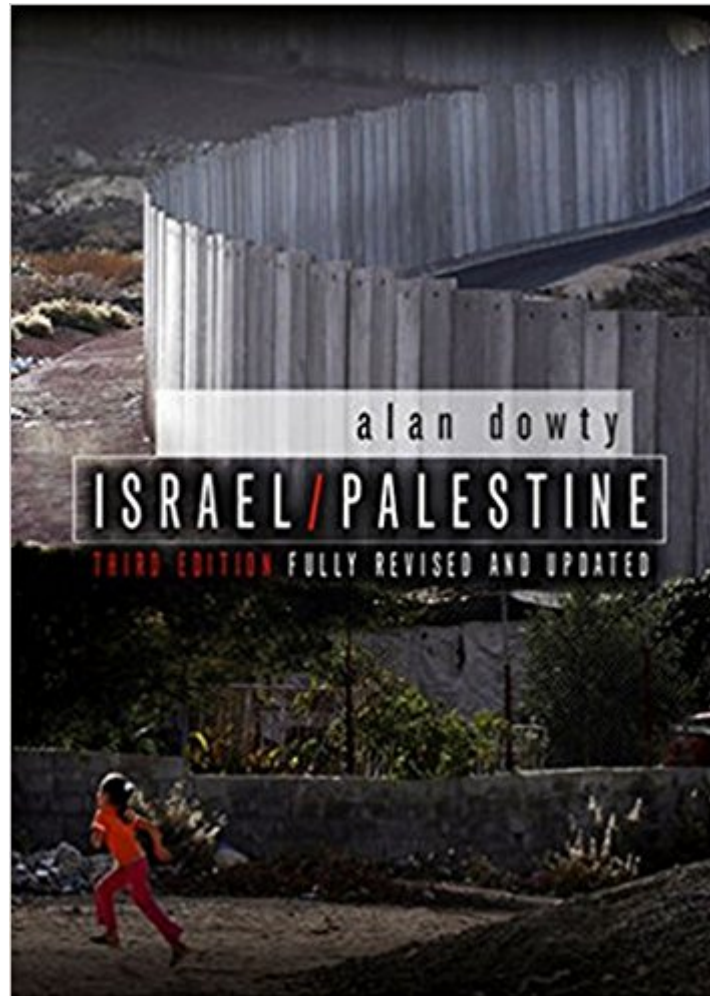




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Israel / Palestine



Synopsis

What explains the peculiar intensity and evident intractability of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict? Of all the "hot spots" in the world today, the apparently endless clash between Jews and Arabs in the Middle East seems unique in its longevity and resistance to resolution. Is this conflict really different from other ethnic and nationalist confrontations, and if so, in what way? In this fully revised and updated third edition of his highly respected introductory text, Alan Dowty demystifies the conflict by putting it in broad historical perspective, identifying its roots, and tracing its evolution up to the current impasse. His account offers a clear analytic framework for understanding transformations over time, and in doing so, punctures the myths of an "age-old" conflict with an unbridgeable gap between the two sides. Rather than simply reciting historical detail, this book presents a clear overview that serves as a road map through the thicket of conflicting claims. This newly expanded edition updates the analysis to include the latest developments, and also integrates into the analysis a fuller account of the regional and international context of the conflict. In this account the opposed perspectives of the two sides are presented in full, leaving readers to make their own evaluations of the issues. The book thus expresses fairly and objectively the concerns, hopes, fears, and passions of both sides, making it clear why this conflict is waged with such vehemence -- and why, for all that, there are some grounds for optimism.

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Customer Reviews

"Simply the best book available for undergraduates. In my many years of teaching I have never

received such universal praise for a textbook on course evaluations." Israel Studies Review
Acclaim for previous editions: "An excellent analysis of the issue at the core of the
Israeli/Palestinian conflict, stripped of the 'subjective' accretions of emotions and passions,
prejudice and ethnic hatred. It is the book to which scholars and belligerents should return in the
heat of battle to remind themselves of the real issue at stake." Australian Journal of Political
Science "Presents clearly the facts that underscore the tragedy for both sides of this conflict."
Journal of Contemporary Religion "A veritable joy for the average Middle East academic
connoisseur." Political Studies Review "Alan Dowty's book now receives pride of place at
the top of my list of concise, illuminating histories of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict to
recommend. This will be a leading contender to be the textbook of choice in basic courses on the
conflict." Middle East Journal

Alan Dowty is Professor Emeritus of Political Science at the University of Notre Dame.

Dowty offers a clear and thorough summary of the Israel/Palestine conflict. He covers the historical
background that informs the positions of each side, and his explication of the stages of the conflict
sheds much light on the reasons for the failure, so far, to find a solution. An excellent source for
those wanting to understand both sides of this on-going problem.

I have been looking for an accurate and balanced book on this historic subject for a while now and I
believe the author has provided it. considered opinions and well sourced.

VERY in depth. As much as I enjoyed the history behind the conflict, the pace my professor had us
reading this book destroyed my social life for 3 weeks.

What I like most about this book is that the author consistently makes an admirable effort to present
the strongest possible argument for each side of the Israel/Palestine debate. I do agree with one
previous reviewer that he spent much more time developing the history of Zionism than
contemporaneous Palestinian Nationalism, but that is the exception. At its best moments, I felt as if I
was reading papers related to the federalist/anti-federalist debate in the early years of the United
States, or the debates about the events leading to the Peloponnesian War recorded by Thucydides.
If you like a vigorous, detailed back-and-forth, this book will not disappoint. The one drawback for me
is that the author omitted a lot to avoid certain murky topics, leaving me with the sense that there is

a lot more going on than this book suggests. For instance, Dowty downplays the extent to which Palestinians have relied on terrorism to further their "resistance." There is no mention of the 1972 Olympics, for instance. I think I can provide a reasonable defense of that omission, and similar ones, on behalf of the author. The aim of the book is to give the best argument on each side. The most credible Palestinian point of view would not endorse terrorism, so it serves only to distort the debate. In addition to that, Israel hasn't behaved angelically either. They recently admitted to running a eugenics program against Ethiopian women. Terrible though this is, it has little to do with the arguments related to Israel's right to exist. Best, then, to leave all such misdeeds out of the picture to avoid the charge of bias. Another thing left out of the book that would have been nice is a more detailed explanation about why feelings run so high about the Palestinian/Israeli conflict globally. Few Americans get into heated arguments at coffee shops about the Kashmir dispute, for instance. Why does the American right, even those who are not particularly religious, identify so much with Israel? Why does the Arab world and the Western academic left identify so much with Palestine? Finally, I would have liked to have seen two side-by-side guest writers, say by Alan Dershowitz and Tariq Ali, arguing it out for real in articles at the end of the book. It's not necessary, but it would have been a nice touch. In the interest of full disclosure, let me end by putting the cards on the table. I was pro-Israel before reading this book, and I am pro-Israel now. It's hard to say if I'm filtering the evidence presented in this book through a distorting, preconceived lens, or if my views turned out to be better supported by the evidence than I had thought, or if this author is biased in the same way that I am. Naturally, I opt for the second option, but a pro-Palestinian might prefer an alternative explanation.

The recent resumption of violence between Israel and the Gaza Strip led me back to Professor Dowty's book, "Israel/Palestine", which I had read last year. Dowty's book provides an excellent introduction to the history of the tragic conflict between those with competing claims to this same region. He provides the history of this conflict with meticulous objectivity and even-handedness, which is quite difficult with a topic that generates so much emotion. He begins by framing the conflict as one between peoples with competing claims to the same piece of land. He presents the history of those competing claims from the perspective of both the Jewish people and the Arab population in Palestine, focusing on the period beginning in the latter part of the 19th century, during the waning days of the Ottoman Empire. He then details the history of the present-day conflict from the creation of the State of Israel to the present, providing the history of the wars, the intifadas, the peace negotiations, the various peace negotiations, and the various solutions that have been offered,

including, of course, the well-known "two state solution." If you are looking for a one-sided polemic, this is not your book. But if you are looking for an objective presentation of the history of the conflict and the issues interfering with the negotiation of a lasting peace, this book provides you with an excellent introduction to that conflict.

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