

# U.S. Interests and the Israel-Palestine Conflict: A Review

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## Fateful Triangle: The United States, Israel, and the Palestinians

By Noam Chomsky

Chicago: Haymarket Books, 2015, 776 pages, \$16.95, ISBN: 1608463990

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## Brokers of Deceit: How the US Has Undermined Peace in the Middle East

By Rashid Khalidi

Boston: Beacon Press, 2013, 208 pages, \$12.91, ISBN: 9780807033241

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## Israel's Colonial Project in Palestine: Brutal Pursuit

By Elia Zureik

New York: Routledge, 2015, 298 pages, \$14.92, ISBN: 9780415836104

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## The Search for Peace in the Arab-Israeli Conflict: A Compendium of Documents and Analysis

Edited by Terje Rød-Larsen, Nur Laiq and Fabrice Aidan

Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014, 1346 pages, \$60.20, ISBN: 9780199216109

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## Obstacle to Peace: The US Role in the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict

By Jeremy R. Hammond

New Delhi: Worldview Publications, 2016, 538 pages, \$35, ISBN: 9780996105811

**T**here is a strong relationship between American journalists and scholars. One of the features that some American journalists and scholars have in common

is their pro-Zionist bias. It has long been realized that Israel has been granted a certain immunity, which is unique in nature. Israel's immunity protects it from criticism in respect

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to journalism as well as scholarship. Journalism and academia are unique with respect to their support for Zionism in the United States. Various examples of different instances of Israel's immunity from criticism have been explained in Chomsky's *Fateful Triangle: The United States, Israel, and the Palestinians*. One of the most powerful instances in this respect is the silence regarding the terrorist attacks conducted against the USS Liberty, the U.S. Navy technical research ship, by Israel. In one of the attacks, in which Israel had "unmistakably identified" and attacked the USS Liberty which resulted in more than 30 American crewmembers died and over 70 were injured.

It would be unimaginable that any other country could bomb installations of the U.S. army especially when we talk about targeting a ship with a terror attack that led to killing and injuring more than 100 men with total impunity. Chomsky has debunked the attempts by staunch apologists belonging to Zionist groups for blaming those who are criticizing Israel in the U.S. media. It has been argued by Chomsky that neither there was any American media against Israel nor had there been lowered levels of professional degree biasness temporarily.

It has been noticed that since Chomsky is highly decisive for the policies as well as activities of Israel, he is not completely anti-Israel. Chomsky has supported the idea of two-state settlements, which included the redrawn borders, a reasonable way to end this historical issue, and guaran-

tees for security for the promotion of the resolution of the conflict in a peaceful way. So, Chomsky has criticized the consistent rejectionism of Israel towards any kind of political settlement that would accommodate the rights of the Palestinian people at the national level and how the U.S. policies made Israel's rejectionism possible.

Chomsky pointed at the hypocrisy of American policies of subsidizing Israel through billions of dollars of yearly aid, as well as criticizing the Israeli policies. The aid from the U.S. has supported the purposes for which Israel uses them for the integration of Palestinian occupied territories, reducing Arab population through various ways, dispersing of scattered refugees, crushing nationalism and culture in Palestine, and imposing control over Southern Lebanon. Thus, nobody can condemn Israel for exploiting its regional power at the time it receives unlimited fund and support from the United States. Considering the continuous aids to Israel, as well as ideological support, the United States' position can be considered hypocritical as they conveniently reshape the historical facts. This helps any Israeli government to not worry for any tempered and intended criticisms against their actions either from Washington or in a newspaper editorial. Based on historical practice, Israeli leaders have come to believe that political elites or opinion-makers in the United States shall support them in their actions. Moreover, even if the reporting of the facts is accurate, as it is in most cases,

the United States' elites will do their jobs and defending Israel against all these reports.

Chomsky's *Fateful Triangle* is a relevant contribution to the literature with respect to the Arab-Israeli conflict. It may be one of the most aspirant works which try to explain the historical issue between the Palestinian people and the Zionists especially with the involvement of the U.S. Chomsky's main aim is to show how Americans and Israelis, especially the former, are rejecting and refusing the idea of peace-solution with the Palestinians. But the Palestinian Authority and the majority of Palestinian people, as Chomsky argues, are trying to accept one big point which is that Israel is a fact on the ground and they should also be a part of peace-solutions with the Israelis. However, there are two kinds of faults found in this argument. One of the faults is its failure to make an inquiry in respect to the level of the responsibility of the Arab states in the rejectionist attitude of the U.S. and Israel against Palestinians. The Arab states have tolerated the irregular balance of authority in the region. This is one of the factors behind the claim that the Arab states are to be made responsible for the increase in the level of profits made in the war of Israel. However, the involvement of the Arab states in the conflict is indirect. The second fault that can be identified in the *Fateful Triangle* is the overestimation made in the conclusion of the book in respect to the capacity of Israel to act on behalf of U.S. policy in an independent way. It has been claimed that

with the increase in the capability of Israel's military, Israel's level of dependency on the largesse of U.S. has also increased.

In *Brokers of Deceit: How the US has Undermined Peace in the Middle East*, Rashid Khalidi demonstrates how the U.S. has failed to play the role of an honest broker in the peace talks, as the country has acted more like a lawyer representing Israel. The United States has cemented its alliance ever tighter with the Zionists and become the junior partner of Israel concerning negotiations with the Palestinians. Khalidi argues that the United States, with its ability to control the corporate media, used tricky language to project an image of itself as a genuine mediator (p. 70). Khalidi opines that negotiators from the United States became very subservient to the interests of Israel, to such an extent that following the conference in Madrid, they became more royalist than the king. However, Israel was negotiating with Palestinians at that time without the knowledge of the United States administration. The President of the Palestinian Authority, Mahmoud Abbas, declared that Israel and Palestine both should adopt the two-state solution agreement and follow the policies that are mentioned in it, so that both Israel and Palestine can enjoy peace and harmony.

Regarding the influence of Israel's lobby, Khalidi states:

This is as true of the lobby's Christian Zionist evangelical wing as it is of the wing rooted in the leading

institutions of the American Jewish community. Both Israel and its outspoken American supporters have gone so far to the right that American “support for Israel” is now taken by them to mean unquestioning support for expanded colonization of the West Bank and Arab East Jerusalem (p. 45).

The lobby placed strict limits on the leverage that U.S. presidents can wield, thereby crippling Washington’s ability to act as an effective mediator. By the early 1990s, in fact, stewardship of the peace process was firmly in the hands of officials drawn from the lobby’s ranks, such as Dennis Ross and Martin Indyk, thereby ensuring that there would be no daylight between Israel’s positions and those of the United States. Indeed, Khalidi describes how U.S. officials routinely cleared proposals with Israel before presenting them to Palestinian negotiators—a procedure dating back to the Ford administration—and occasionally took positions that were more extreme than those of their Israeli counterparts. By acting as Israel’s lawyer rather than an honest broker, the United States guaranteed that the Oslo peace process would end in ignominious failure.

Khalidi concludes by calling for the Palestinians to abandon the discredited Camp David/Madrid/Oslo framework and base their campaign for self-determination on a new foundation: UN Security Council Resolution 242, and UN General Assembly Resolutions 181 and 194. There can be little doubt that Oslo’s

“sell-by” date is long past, but the same is probably true of the two-state solution as well. More suffering lies ahead, for two peoples who have had more than their share, and it might well have been avoided, had Washington pursued a smarter and more fair-minded approach. *Brokers of Deceit* is a powerful and revealing indictment of America’s ignoble role in this continuing tragedy, and history will judge U.S. leaders harshly for their strategically misguided and morally dubious policies.

Palestinian sociologist Elia Zureik has made several groundbreaking contributions to the study of Palestine and the Palestinians. His first book, *The Palestinians in Israel: A Study in Internal Colonialism*, constitutes a milestone in the study of Palestinian society inside Israel, particularly his exploration of the reproduction mechanisms that sustained the initial racial hierarchies between Jewish settlers and native Palestinians, despite considerable socioeconomic changes. In successive publications, Zureik analyzes the strategies, methods, and governance practices that Israel has pursued to ensure its control of the Palestinians. In the coedited volume *Surveillance and Control in Israel/Palestine: Population, Territory, and Power*, Zureik states that his aim is twofold: “First to provide up-to-date information about population control and surveillance in Israel/Palestine on both sides of the Green Line, second, to fuse the mushrooming discipline of Surveillance Studies in the West with theoretical and methodological considerations that have

bearing on the issue of colonialism” (p. 20).

In *Israel's Colonial Project in Palestine: Brutal Pursuit*—the culmination of Zureik’s lifelong research on Palestine— he goes one step further. Covering a wider historical, demographic, and theoretical terrain, Zureik discusses the impact of the Zionist project on the Palestinians since its inception, critically engaging with Michel Foucault’s writings and his theoretical framework, particularly the published seminar *Security, Territory, Population: Lectures at the Collège de France, 1977–1978*. As such, Zureik employs the concepts of colonialism and settler colonialism, biopolitics, territory, and surveillance, drawing largely on scholars who have extended and critiqued Foucault.

In chapter 1, Zureik presents a short survey of the demographic development of the Palestinian people since 1880. One can hardly ignore the implications of Zureik’s data on the pursuit of the Zionist project, according to which “by 2020, it is projected that the number of Palestinians in historical Palestine alone, west of the Jordan River, will reach 7.2 million compared to 6.9 million Jews,” suggesting that Zionism is far from being a successful settler-colonial formation—like white settlers in the United States and Australia—in terms of eliminating the natives (p. 9). Rather, Israel will soon become a state governed by a minority of settlers, a reality that will pose a serious challenge to its legitimacy and will likely drive it to increase its sur-

veillance practices and employment of repression. Zureik continues to chapter 2 by outlining the practices of Zionist colonization in Palestine, comparing them to those used by other European settler colonization projects, including the takeover of land and natural resources, the infringement of native rights, and eventually the destruction of Palestinian society. Moreover, Zureik discusses the use of the language of obfuscation to give such practices an idealistic overtone.

In chapter 3, Zureik explores the indispensability of surveillance for any colonization project, showing how Israel has used and developed surveillance practices to disempower and dispossess the Palestinians, as well as to provincialize their lives and to police their memory. Security, particularly after 9/11, has become the main justification for practices that assail privacy and human rights. Chapter 4 represents an exploration of some unpleasant colonial surveillance notions and practices in relation to biopolitics, which were used by Zionist institutions before 1948 and later on by Israel, including eugenics and racism.

While the majority of the book describes the methods used by Israel to govern the Palestinians and the devastating impact that Zionist colonization has had on Palestinian subjectivities and society, chapter 5 explores how science has been infused in the methods used to inflict suffering and damage on Palestinian bodies, and in some cases to eliminate

them. The cruelest of such methods have been used to punish the Palestinian inhabitants of Gaza. Besides Israel's frequent and devastating military campaigns in Gaza, the population is generally kept on the brink of catastrophe. An advisor to several Israeli governments cynically referred to this practice, stating, "It is like an appointment with a dietician. The Palestinians will get a lot thinner, but won't die" (p. 163). Postmodern theorists refer to such Israeli policies as "urbicide," the destruction of large built areas in densely populated spaces, as happened during the Israeli assault on the Jenin refugee camp in April 2002.

Generally, Israeli colonization is maintained through excessive force. Incarceration, targeted assassinations, and the employment of a militarized force without due attention to civilians' safety are widely-used practices, and the facts supplied by Zureik in this regard are dreadful. For example, between 1967 and 2011, 40 percent of male Palestinians in the occupied territories had been incarcerated at one time or another, making Palestinians "the most imprisoned society in the world" (p. 164). Furthermore, between 2000 and 2012, 259 Palestinians were killed by targeted assassination, in addition to 434 Palestinians who were considered "collateral damage" (p. 171). Probably the clearest indicator of disproportionality in the use of force is the number of persons killed in Gaza versus southern Israel. Between 2001 and 2014, 6,816 Palestinian inhabitants of Gaza were killed, compared to 135 Israelis

across the border in the southern part of the country. The impact that Israeli policies have on the most vulnerable members of the Palestinian population, particularly children, is difficult to overestimate.

In the last chapter, Zureik provides data showing how the internet and other communication technologies are employed by Palestinians as forms of everyday resistance. Palestinians use the internet as a tool to subvert mobility restrictions and communicate with relatives and friends, but also as a way to publicize the Palestinian cause and to mobilize international solidarity, despite their knowledge of Israeli and U.S. internet surveillance. To limit Palestinian use of the internet, Israel is conducting a "digital occupation" of the Palestinian territories through its control of the internet connection between the area and the rest of the world. The book ends with the question of biopolitics, discussing Israel's endeavor to gain international legitimacy as a Jewish state.

The Arab-Israeli conflict has been overwhelming for international society throughout the era of the United Nations and originally goes deeper to centuries if not millennia if we went back in the history. Over the past few years, the Arab-Israeli relationship has been marked by violent conflicts as well as initiatives for making peace between the Arab neighbors and the state of Israel. Israel has made peace with some of the Arab states, namely Egypt and Jordan. However, there is a huge amount of tension around the

inability to maintain peace, especially in respect to arriving at a settlement capable of resolving the status of the territories in Palestine. The level of complication is high.

The development of an Arab-Israeli resolution has been dependent on fully understanding the key regions, and on international processes. Given the mammoth task of finding a mutually acceptable path forward, input has been welcomed from scholars, political scientists, international lawyers, and historians of the Middle East to aid peacemakers in making some kind of sense of the Arab-Israeli conflict.

*The Search for Peace in the Arab-Israeli Conflict* represents a major undertaking made by some of the experts on the matter. It is coedited by Terje Rod-Larsen, a renowned Norwegian diplomat (Jalata, 2016). Rod-Larsen made a contribution toward the initiatives for peace in the 1990s. The book is divided into five thematic parts. The first part concerns the peace agreements, as well as the disengagement of the Israelis from the Gaza strip in 1993. It features Israel's withdrawal from the territories. The second part focuses on the peace proposals as well as the ideas offered by several actors at the international level in 1977. However, most of the proposals presented by the actors would not be familiar to the general reader, although some of them led to small breakthroughs at a particular period of time. The third part contains numerous UN General Assembly resolutions related to the

status of Palestine. These resolutions reveal the support for Palestinian statehood at the international level. The fourth part contains a range of regional documents pertaining to the development of regions of Israel. One such document, dating back to 1916, is the agreement of Sykes-Picot. In this agreement, the spheres of control and rule of the region are determined. The division of the influential areas are agreed upon between the states of the UK and France. The fifth and final part consists of domestic documents from the Palestinian territory and domestic Israel. With the help of the documents given in the fifth part, the contexts, as well as the Palestinian and Israeli perspectives toward the approaching peace can be better understood.

There is a prevailing view that the U.S. and Israel have a strong relationship. Yet both of these countries have been using each other for their own reasons. Some of the reasons have been found to be common in both countries. One of the biggest barriers for achieving the peace between the Palestinians and Israelis has been identified to be the position of the U.S. towards that conflict. Many scholars have tried to write about the problem without an in depth understanding of the relationship between the U.S. and Israel. The language used in *Obstacle to Peace: The US Role in the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict* makes it easy for readers to understand this complex topic.

Hammond focuses on the supportive role played by the U.S. for Israel. He

provides a brief description of the relevant historical events, and the concrete actions taken in the past by the U.S. and Israel. Hammond describes how the actions taken by the U.S. and Israel have been rationalized in reference to international law, as the U.S. and Israel work to manage perceptions and create their own 'narrative.' Hammond offers a strong and finely-structured deconstruction in respect to the language in this narrative – the misleading comments, the obfuscation, and the haze in present in the jargon used by the politicians, pundits, and across the media of all kinds in the U.S. and Israel.

Hammond points out the complicity and subordination of the media in the U.S. It has been found that the Israeli newspaper *Haaretz*, is more critical in comparison to the mainstream U.S. media. Also, the Israel's *Haaretz* has been found to be more accurate when compared to the mainstream media of the U.S. One of the most newsworthy issues relates to Mahmoud Abbas. With Mahmoud Abbas's "quisling nature," Israel has been able to control the people of Palestine in the West Bank areas. Dealing with Abbas has been considered as one of the biggest issues for the U.S. as well as Israel. Abbas' authority has been threatened by cutting down the funds given to him by the U.S. and Israel. Due to this reason, both the U.S. and Israel believe that the war is a better choice rather than having peace with Abbas and the Palestinians, as it allows Israel to control and have more lands from the Palestinians, in addition to

the geopolitical, economic, as well as domestic advantages.

The language that is being used in judicial matters with regard to the conflict, either customary or coded international law, is one of the most important elements. In international law, there are two kinds of laws, customary law and treaty law. Firstly, the customary law which is informal and made up of unwritten rules which have been derived from the practices of the states. Secondly, treaty law which consists of contractual agreements that have been developed in written form. The intention of the contractual agreements is to create binding rights as well as obligations. There are several kinds of treaty laws, such as Geneva Conventions, Environmental agreements, and Trade agreements.

Hammond describes some of the methods that will help changing the dominant U.S. and Israeli narrative of the conflict. Some of the tools that these narratives resort to are, altering the facts, using double standards, manufacturing consent, and managing perception. Hammond has made a strong attempt to deconstruct this narrative that is misleading, and to reveal the obfuscation that has been used in the context by the politicians and mainstream media in the U.S. and Israel, as well.

Changing this narrative will lead to a change in the way other states deal with the conflict between Israel and Palestine. In the last chapter of the book, Hammond mentions the utili-

zation of different kinds of methods used by the U.S. and Israel in their dialogue with the Palestinians. The skewed narrative, double standards, manufactured consent and management of public perceptions in the U.S. and Israel have been found to be primary factors in granting legitimacy to the U.S. and Israeli policies

with regard to the conflict, especially after the Palestinian membership in the UNESCO. One of the obstacles to peace is about understanding the roots of this conflict. The author has only given a narrow description of the past actions and events which would shed more light on the role of the U.S. and Israel in the conflict. ■