Academic Exchange Briefing Book

The purpose of this briefing book is to provide some basic information on Israel for those of you who may not have had extensive contact with the country or the region. The briefing book is organized around a series of issues that are likely to be of most interest to political scientists and students of international law and that will come up in the course of the trip. Each module is accompanied by a short list of references that we hope are useful if you choose to read further or integrate a discussion of these issues into your own courses. The chapter on the evolution of Israel’s borders also contains an Appendix with all of the relevant UNSC Resolutions cited in the text. The briefing book concludes with two brief timelines.

International Relations and the Palestinian Issue

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An important caveat at the outset. This is the first time Academic Exchange has experimented with a briefing book. It is impossible to write about Israel or the Middle East without antagonizing someone. We don’t imagine everyone (or anyone) will agree with everything written here. But we consider this a work in progress, a kind of wiki briefing book and curriculum that will be modified as we move forward. Please feel free to send your comments, criticism and annotation and we will work to incorporate them. If there are other topics or materials, or ways of approaching the existing topics, that you think would be helpful, we’d also like to hear your thoughts on that as well.

Acknowledgement:

The briefing book was put together by a team under the direction of Asher Susser (Senior Research Fellow at the Moshe Dayan Center for Middle Eastern and
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<td>Hamas</td>
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The Evolution of Israel’s Borders: Political and Legal Arrangements

The territory that encompasses today’s Israel and the occupied Palestinian territories became a separate entity under British rule on July 24, 1922. Known as the British Mandate of Palestine, it also included Transjordan until 1946. From the outset, the territory east of the Jordan River was not open to Jewish settlement, which was restricted by the British to Western Palestine until the end of the Mandate in May 1948.

British rule in Mandate Palestine became increasingly complicated under the pressure of the competing national interests of the Arab and Jewish populations in the territory. Arab-Jewish tensions resulted in riots and violence and erupted into large-scale rebellion by the Arabs in 1936, which lasted until 1939. In 1937, the British issued a proposal to divide the territory between its Arab and Jewish populations. The partition proposal was rejected by the Arabs and subsequently withdrawn by the British. In 1947, Great Britain announced its decision to withdraw from the Mandate and placed the Palestine question before the United Nations. The Special U.N. Committee on Palestine (UNSCOP) recommended that two separate Jewish and Arab states should be created, while Jerusalem should be placed under international administration.

On November 29, 1947, the United Nations General Assembly adopted Resolution 181 by a two-thirds majority of the votes, recommending implementation of the partition plan (see Appendix for all UNSC resolutions mentioned in the text). The Jewish leaders in Mandate Palestine accepted the partition, while the Arab leaders voiced their rejection to it. Civil war between the Jews and the Arabs in Palestine broke out the day after the passage of the resolution marking the start of Israel’s War of Independence.

On the day that the British forces finally withdrew from the mandate on May 14, 1948, the Jewish leadership declared the establishment of the State of Israel. The United States was the first country to officially recognize Israel, soon followed by the USSR. Fifty-four countries recognized Israel within the first year of its establishment, including most European and South American countries.

One day after Israel’s declaration of independence, a coalition of Arab forces from surrounding countries Egypt, Lebanon, Syria, Jordan and Iraq invaded Palestine. The war in Palestine transformed from a civil war between the Jews and the Arabs in Palestine into the first Arab-Israeli war and generated the Palestinian refugee problem.
In 1949, armistice agreements were signed between Israel and the various Arab countries, officially ending the hostilities. These agreements established an armistice line between Israel and its Arab neighbors known as “The Green Line”. Under these arrangements, the West Bank including East Jerusalem and the Old City of Jerusalem, remained under Jordanian control. Egypt withdrew to the borders that demarcated the former frontier between Egypt and Mandatory Palestine, but remained in control of a strip of land along the coast, which became known as the Gaza Strip. Egypt did not annex the territory of Gaza, but left it under military administration. Jordan, however, annexed the West Bank in 1950, and granted the citizens of the West Bank Jordanian citizenship as a result of this decision. Overall, as a result of the 1948 war, the Arab-controlled territory of Palestine was significantly reduced and was no longer contiguous (see maps on page 7), in contrast to the partition plan offered by the U.N. in 1947.

In 1967, Israel captured the territories of the West Bank and East Jerusalem from Jordan during the Six Day War. It also gained control over the Sinai Peninsula and the Gaza Strip that were previously held by Egypt, and it captured the Golan Heights from Syria. In the aftermath of the war, the U.N. Security Council passed Resolution 242, calling for Israeli withdrawal from territories it had occupied during the recent conflict in exchange for an end to the state of belligerency. This resolution, which called for the implementation of the “land for peace formula”, formed the basis of the Arab-Israeli peace process after 1967 and for later peace treaties signed between Israel and Egypt (1979) and Israel and Jordan (1994). “Land for peace” also served as the basis for the Oslo Accords signed between Israel and the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO) in 1993 and 1995.

The Sinai Peninsula and the Gaza Strip

After 1967, Israeli forces remained in the Sinai Peninsula until 1982. In that year, Israel completed its withdrawal from the territory as part of the agreements reached with Egypt after the 1973 Arab-Israeli war and the 1979 Israeli-Egyptian peace treaty.

At the same time, Egypt ceded its claims on the Gaza Strip to the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO). However, the strip remained under Israeli military administration until 1994, when control over Gaza (except for a few settlement blocs and military areas) was transferred to the Palestinian Authority (PA) as part of the Oslo Accords. Gaza’s borders and air space remained controlled by Israel, as outlined by the Oslo Accords.
In the summer of 2005, the Israeli government followed through on a decision to unilaterally disengage from the Gaza Strip. It dismantled all the Israeli settlements within the territory, leaving the Strip's administration to the PA. In 2006, Palestinian parliamentary elections were held in the West Bank and Gaza, in which the Islamist movement Hamas won the majority of the seats in the Palestinian Legislative Assembly. A short-lived unity government of the Hamas and Fatah factions was established, until fighting broke out in the Strip between the two parties. The coalition government ended in June 2007 as Hamas seized control of the Strip. Since then, Hamas has boycotted all local elections held in the Fatah-controlled Palestinian Authority. In June 2014, Hamas and Fatah agreed to form a unity government, but it fell apart a year later. In 2016, Hamas announced its willingness to participate in Palestinian municipal elections to be held in the Gaza strip in 2017.
The Jewish State was to be 5,500 square miles with a population of 826,000 Jews and 397,000 Arabs.

The Arab State was to be 4,500 square miles with a population of 804,000 Arabs and 10,000 Jews.

**U.N. PARTITION PLAN - 1947**
(Resolution 181)
November 29, 1947

**1949-1967 ARMISTICE LINES**

**PEACE WITH EGYPT AND THE WITHDRAWAL FROM SINAI**

**1967 CEASE-FIRE LINES**
As Hamas refused to respect previous agreements that the PA made with Israel and to abandon the use of violence, Israel and Egypt maintained a land, sea and air blockade on the Gaza Strip, permitting only controlled import and export of goods. This also means that the population of the Gaza Strip has been dependent on Israel for the import of basic necessities, including energy. Israel maintains that the blockade is vital for preventing Hamas from obtaining weapons and supplies that would permit rocket and other attacks on Israel.

In May 2010, there was an attempt to break the blockade by a flotilla headed to Gaza from Turkey with the stated aim of delivering humanitarian aid. Israel requested that the six ships head for the Israeli port of Ashdod so that the aid could be transferred via land to Gaza. When the flotilla rejected the suggestion, Israeli troops boarded the ships before they could reach Gaza and came under attack on one of them (the *Mavi Marmara*). The clashes resulted in the death of nine Turkish activists and a further deterioration in the Turkish-Israeli relationship.

Despite the blockade, smuggling tunnels to Egypt enabled the movement of goods and people in and out of Gaza. Under the leadership of ‘Abd al-Fattah al-Sisi, the Egyptian army launched a campaign to destroy the smuggling tunnels, since they also serve Sinai-based Islamist insurgent groups. As part of its crackdown on Islamist militants, the Egyptian government also started building a buffer zone between Gaza and Egypt in 2014 in order to prevent the passage of militants and weapons from one territory to the other. For the same reason, and because of its adversarial relationship with Hamas, Egypt keeps the Rafah border crossing closed most of the time.

Hostilities between Israel and Hamas have continued since 2007, including major military engagements in 2008 (Operation Cast Lead), 2012 (Operation Pillar of Defense) and 2014 (Operation Protective Edge). These conflicts are discussed in more detail below.

**The Golan Heights**

In 1981, Israel passed the Golan Heights Law, effectively annexing the territory. The U.N. condemned the annexation of the territory with the passage of UNSC Resolution 497 and has repeatedly urged Israel to withdraw and engage in negotiations with neighboring country Syria. During the 2000s, the two parties engaged in negotiations several times, in which they discussed the return of the Golan to Syria in exchange for security guarantees for Israel. No final agreement was reached. Lebanon, especially Hezbollah, also lays claim to a very small part of the
Golan (the Shebaa Farms), but that claim is not supported by the United Nations which considers the Shebaa Farms as part of Syria.

Since 1967 Israel has established numerous settlements on the Golan Heights. The strategic depth and the mountainous terrains and valleys of the Golan Heights hold immense military benefits for Israel in terms of providing defensible borders. Economically, water resources play a key role too. Some of the main sources of the Jordan River, which flows into Israel’s only sweet water lake, are situated there.

After the Six Day War, a few thousand Syrians remained in the Golan Heights, most of them belonging to the Druze minority. The vast majority still holds Syrian passports, but were also offered Israeli passports in the 1970s. Most of the Druze living in the Golan are permanent residents of Israel and enjoy social welfare benefits. Reluctance to accept Israeli citizenship was either based on continuing loyalty to Syria or fear for reprisals should the Golan Heights be returned to Syria. Generally, the Druze community in the Golan remains divided about their loyalty to Israel or Syria. In recent years another split has emerged between those in the Golan who are pro- and anti-Assad.

Since 1974, a buffer zone between Israel and Syria has been monitored by the United Nations Disengagement Observer Force. The border has largely been quiet, except for several instances of unrest as a result of the Syrian civil war that started in 2011, including live fire, bombardments and even the kidnapping of U.N. soldiers by Islamic

Figure 1: UNDOF Deployment, December 2014 (Source: www.un.org)
militants from Syria.

Jerusalem

The issue of Jerusalem is at the heart of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and the national, religious and political discourses of both sides. At the moment, Israel has de-facto authority over the city. In 1980, Israel passed a Basic Law in the Knesset, declaring all of Jerusalem, “complete and united”, as its capital. The U.N. did not recognize Israel’s de-facto annexation of the eastern part of the city (UNSC Resolution 478), neither did any foreign governments accept the claim.

The Palestinian Authority (PA) claims Arab Jerusalem, including the Temple Mount, as the capital of a future Palestinian state, and argues that West Jerusalem should also be subject to permanent status negotiations. The PA considers Jerusalem a symbol of Palestinian national identity, and believes it should be its geographical, political, administrative and spiritual capital. In 2000, the PA passed a law proclaiming Jerusalem as the capital of the State of Palestine, a law that was ratified by Arafat in 2002.

Formally, the U.N. still maintains that Jerusalem should be a ‘corpus separatum’ with a separate international status as stipulated in the 1947 Partition Plan (UNSC Resolution 181). In practical terms, the present international consensus, including in subsequent U.N. resolutions, is that the city should be divided between Israel and the Palestinians.

The 1993 Oslo Accords left the
status of Jerusalem undecided. According to the Declaration of Principles (DOP) signed by the parties, the issue of Jerusalem was to be negotiated in the so-called “final status” negotiations within five years. The Camp David peace talks in 2000, convened by U.S. President Bill Clinton, did not bring any solution to the question of Jerusalem either, primarily because of a lack of agreement regarding the sovereignty over the Temple Mount.

Five distinct issues complicate the issue of Jerusalem:

- The Holy sites
- The Old City and the Historic Basin,
- Municipal boundaries
- Jewish neighborhoods in East Jerusalem
- The security barrier

The Holy sites form the first obstacle to a future agreement. The Temple Mount site has religious significance for both sides: in Judaism, it is believed to be the location where King Solomon built the ‘First Temple’ and the place where the ‘Second Temple’ stood. It is also believed to be the site of the ‘Holy of Holies,’ the inner sanctuary of the tabernacle where God’s presence dwelt and where the Ark of the Covenant was kept. Both Jews and Muslims believe this is the place where Abraham was asked by God to sacrifice his son. Immediately below the Temple Mount lies the Western Wall plaza, which provides access to the Jewish holy site of the Western Wall (or ‘Wailing Wall’), which is the only accessible remnant of the Second Temple construct and one of the closest points Jews are allowed to get to the ‘Holy of Holies.’

Today the Temple Mount (referred to as al-Haram al-Sharif – ‘The Noble Sanctuary’ – by Muslims) contains two Islamic holy places: The Dome of the Rock and the Al-Aqsa Mosque. The construction of the Dome of the Rock was ordered by Umayyad Caliph ‘Abd al-Malik in the 7th century on the place from where Mohammed had traveled to heaven to speak to God and where he had left a footprint. The Dome was moreover built over the rock that Muslims believe to be the altar on which Abraham’s son was to be sacrificed. The Al-Aqsa Mosque is considered the third holiest site in Islam (after the Ka’ba in Mecca and the Prophet’s Mosque in Medina) and symbolizes the place to which Mohamed traveled during the ‘Night Journey’ “from Mecca to the farthest (“Al-Aqsa”) mosque”. Until replaced by Mecca, the Temple Mount served as the first qibla (the direction of prayer for Muslims).
In 1967, Israeli Prime Minister Levi Eshkol signed a law regarding the Protection of Holy Places. The law stipulated that the holy places in Jerusalem’s Old City shall be protected from desecration and that freedom of access shall be ensured to the members of the different religions to the places that are most sacred to them. The administration of the Temple Mount has remained in the hands of the Jordanian Waqf, an Islamic religious institution. The Israeli authorities control the Western Wall Plaza below as well as the rest of the Old City.

Until 2000, there were no restrictions on those who wanted to visit the Temple Mount, except during Islamic prayer times, as long as one dressed in a respectable way. Non-Muslims, however, are not allowed to pray inside the compound, or carry religious objects with them including yarmulkes, Bibles or prayer shawls. Since 2000, the situation has grown increasingly tense and the site was at times closed to visitors for security reasons.

A second issue complicating Jerusalem’s status is the Old City and the ‘Holy Basin’ (the Old City and its immediately adjacent religious sites). The Old City is a mere 0.9 km2 walled area within the city of Jerusalem that consists of a Jewish, a Christian, a Muslim and Armenian quarter. This is also where most of the holy sites with special meaning to Judaism, Christianity and Islam are located. Both on the Israeli and the Palestinian side there are those who refuse to divide the Old City and envision it as part of their future capital. During past peace negotiations, two solutions were discussed but rejected by the Palestinians: one proposed a division of sovereignty (Camp David process, 2000-01 and the Annapolis process, 2008).

The remaining points that impede an agreement on the final status of Jerusalem are related to the city's border regime and municipal administration, Jewish neighborhoods in East-Jerusalem, and the security barrier. Developments on the ground since 1967 have complicated these issues. Most notably, Israel has expanded Jerusalem’s municipal borders and established Jewish neighborhoods on the eastern side of the city, decreasing the prospect of the unification of the Arab populated parts of the West Bank and East Jerusalem in any future peace agreement.

Of similar importance is the fact that in 2002, Israel began building a barrier between the West Bank and Israel in order to prevent suicide bombers from crossing the border into Israel. In Jerusalem, the impact of the barrier has been especially notable, since it cuts off some Arab neighborhoods on the northern and eastern edge of Jerusalem from the rest of the city. Moreover, a large part of the city and surrounding area has become difficult to access for the Palestinian population.
of the West Bank, and Palestinian villages and land holdings in some cases were separated.

In 1967, Israel granted the Arab residents of East Jerusalem permanent residency status. With this document, they are allowed to live and work in Israel, have social benefits and vote in local elections. Under certain conditions, however, this permit may be revoked. Palestinians in Jerusalem can apply for Israeli citizenship if they fulfill certain criteria, including swearing allegiance to Israel and renouncing all other citizenships, but the great majority has chosen not to do so. The Palestinian Authority currently views East-Jerusalem as territory occupied by Israel. It objects to the isolation of Jerusalem from the West Bank, and has declared that all of Jerusalem should be an open city without physical boundaries, enabling the free movement of people.

Following the inauguration of President Donald Trump in the United States in January 2017, Israel announced new construction in the Jewish neighborhoods of East Jerusalem and the West Bank. Trump’s supposedly acquiescent attitude to settlement building emboldened the Israeli government to lift restrictions on building in these disputed areas. Before his election, Trump moreover vowed to move the U.S. Embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem. This is considered a controversial idea, because it would mean a de facto recognition of Jerusalem as Israel's capital, while leaving the Palestinians’ claim on Jerusalem unaddressed. Palestinian and Arab leaders have staunchly opposed the idea to relocate the embassy.

The West Bank

The majority of the international community as well as the Palestinians define the West Bank as ‘occupied territory’, according to which any Israeli settlements within the territory are illegal. Israel argues, however, that the territory is not occupied, since before 1967 the West Bank was not under the recognized and legitimate sovereignty of any state (Jordan’s control being unrecognized for the most part, as its 1950 annexation was considered illegal according to the Fourth Geneva Convention). Therefore, in the Israeli government’s view, the territory is ‘disputed’ rather than occupied, and its final status ought to be determined in negotiations.

After 1967, the West Bank (referred to as Judea and Samaria by Israel) remained under Israeli military administration. In 1979, the U.N Security Council
declared Israeli settlements in the West Bank illegal (UNSC Resolution 446) and called on Israel to uphold the Fourth Geneva Convention, according to which it is not allowed to alter the legal, geographic and demographic composition of an occupied territory by relocating its own citizens to the territory. As noted, Israel has rejected these arguments on the grounds noted above: that the territory is not “occupied” but “disputed”. Israel also argues that this remains the case as long as no permanent borders have been established or recognized.

In 1988, Jordan withdrew all its claims on the West Bank in favor of the PLO as the sole legitimate representative of the Palestinians. The First Palestinian Intifada (uprising), which broke out shortly before this decision, had anti-Jordanian overtones that also encouraged the Jordanians to disengage. From 1950 until 1988, the Arab residents of East Jerusalem and the West Bank had held Jordanian citizenship. This Jordanian citizenship was revoked with Jordan’s disengagement in 1988. In 1967, Israel granted the Arab residents of East Jerusalem permanent residency status, but not citizenship.

Between 1993 and 2000, Israel and the PLO signed a series of agreements concerning the transfer of power from the Israeli military to the Palestinian Authority, which was created in 1994 in the context of the Oslo peace negotiations. In 1993, the two parties signed the Oslo I Accord, the DOP mentioned above, which established the framework of the negotiations. The Oslo II Accord, signed in 1995, was an Israeli-Palestinian Interim Agreement concerning the redeployment of Israeli forces on the West Bank and Gaza Strip, according to which the West Bank was divided into three areas--A, B and C--with the exception of the city of Hebron and Arab Jerusalem. Area A was characterized by significant Palestinian autonomy; Area B by limited autonomy; while Area C remained under Israeli control:

- Area "A" comprised the six cities of Jenin, Nablus, Tulkarem, Qalqilya, Ramallah and Bethlehem (as well as Jericho from which the Israeli forces had withdrawn in the earlier phase of the Oslo accords. The IDF had thus effected a withdrawal from the largest Palestinian population centres. In these areas, the Palestinian Authority would have full responsibility for internal security, public order, and civil administration.
- Area "B" comprised the smaller Palestinian towns and villages in the West Bank. In these areas, the PA exercised full civil authority and was charged with maintaining public order, while Israel would remain in charge of security.
- Area "C" comprised the unpopulated areas of the West Bank, areas of strategic importance to Israel, and the Jewish settlements. In those areas, Israel retained full responsibility for security and public order. (see Figure 3 on page 15).
Since 1991, Palestinians need to obtain exit permits from the Israeli military to travel to Israel, Jerusalem or Gaza, a procedure that was formalized by the Oslo Accords. Within the West Bank, travel between the major Palestinian towns and villages are possible for Palestinians but cumbersome because of the numerous Israeli roadblocks and checkpoints that slow down and complicate freedom of movement. Most of these movement restrictions have been put in places to specifically restrict Palestinian access to roads used by Israeli settlers or to areas near or controlled by settlements.

Figure 3: Division of the West Bank into Area A, B and C according to the Oslo II Accord (Source: The United National Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs)
Special arrangements applied to the city of Hebron because of the sensitive historical and religious aspects of the city and the Jewish presence in the heart of Hebron. The arrangements for the transfer of power in this city were outlined in the Hebron Protocol, signed in 1997, which stated that Israeli forces were to exercise their responsibilities vis-à-vis the Israeli residents living in Hebron, in an area referred to as H-2, and were to remain in control of the Old City and the entire area.

Figure 4: Division on Hebron according to the 1997 agreement (Source: Palestinian Academic Society for the Study of International Affairs)
that links the Jewish Quarter to the adjacent Jewish settlement of Kiryat Arba and the Tomb of the Patriarchs / the Ibrahimi Mosque (a shared Jewish and Muslim holy site). Other Israeli military forces would be redeployed, except for places and roads where their presence was necessary in order to ensure the safety and protection of Israeli citizens. At the same time, Palestinian police would be responsible for Palestinian residents, in the area referred to as H-1. (see Figure 4 on page 16)

As part of the Oslo II agreement, Israel withdrew its military from designated areas of the West Bank in a concrete step towards facilitating the future establishment of a Palestinian state in the West Bank. Although the autonomous divisions have remained largely in place, developments in the 1990s and early 2000s slowed down the peace process and changed the prospects for a future peace agreement. Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin--a central figure in signing the Oslo Accords--was assassinated by Yigal Amir, an Israeli right-wing activist; there was a significant rise in terror attacks perpetrated by Palestinian militants; and the Second Intifada broke out in September 2000. As a result, economic and social interaction between Palestinian citizens of the West Bank, the citizens of Gaza, and the citizens of Israel dropped to a minimum.

Following the rise in terrorist attacks and suicide bombings on Israeli soil, Israel started the construction of a barrier (mostly a fence, but a wall in some places) between the West Bank and Israel. Israel argues that the barrier has contributed significantly to the prevention of illegal border crossings by Palestinian terrorists and that it has decreased the attacks. Israeli fatalities from terrorist attacks declined from hundreds a year to close to zero since the barrier construction. The General Assembly of the United Nations has adopted a resolution declaring that a part of barrier is in contradiction with international law, since it does not follow the Green Line but cuts into the West Bank in some places, thereby effectively annexing territories to Israel. The International Court of Justice (ICJ) issued an advisory opinion in 2004 according to which Israel’s building of a barrier in occupied Palestinian territory was held to be illegal. The territories in question especially concern areas where the barrier was built around Jewish settlements and religious sites in order to protect them and to facilitate their access to and from Israel. The barrier, as well as numerous Israeli checkpoints and roadblocks, continue to restrict and control the internal movement of Palestinians in the West Bank.
Appendix. Full Text of Main U.N. Resolutions Concerning Israel

UN General Assembly Resolution 181 (Partition Plan)
November 29, 1947

United Nations General Assembly Resolution 181 called for the partition of the British-ruled Palestine Mandate into a Jewish state and an Arab state. It was approved on November 29, 1947 with 33 votes in favor, 13 against, 10 abstentions and one absent. The resolution was accepted by the Jews in Palestine, yet rejected by the Arabs in Palestine and the Arab states.

[The actual text of the resolution is not inserted here because of its extensive length].

U.N. Security Council Resolution 242
November 22, 1967

The Security Council,

Expressing its continuing concern with the grave situation in the Middle East,

Emphasizing the inadmissibility of the acquisition of territory by war and the need to work for a just and lasting peace, in which every State in the area can live in security,

Emphasizing further that all Member States in their acceptance of the Charter of the United Nations have undertaken a commitment to act in accordance with Article 2 of the Charter,

Affirms that the fulfillment of Charter principles requires the establishment of a just and lasting peace in the Middle East which should include the application of both the following principles:

Withdrawal of Israeli armed forces from territories occupied in the recent conflict; Termination of all claims or states of belligerency and respect for and acknowledgement of the sovereignty, territorial integrity and political independence of every State in the area and their right to live in peace within secure and recognized boundaries free from threats or acts of force;

Affirms further the necessity for guaranteeing freedom of navigation through international waterways in the area;
For achieving a just settlement of the refugee problem;

For guaranteeing the territorial inviolability and political independence of every State in the area, through measures including the establishment of demilitarized zones;

Requests the Secretary General to designate a Special Representative to proceed to the Middle East to establish and maintain contacts with the States concerned in order to promote agreement and assist efforts to achieve a peaceful and accepted settlement in accordance with the provisions and principles in this resolution; Requests the Secretary-General to report to the Security Council on the progress of the efforts of the Special Representative as soon as possible.

**U.N. Security Council Resolution 446**

*March 22, 1979*

The Security Council,

Having heard the statement of the Permanent Representative of Jordan and other statements made before the Council,

Stressing the urgent need to achieve a comprehensive, just and lasting peace in the Middle East,

Affirming once more that the Fourth Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War of 12 August 1949 is applicable to the Arab territories occupied by Israel since 1967, including Jerusalem,

1. Determines that the policy and practices of Israel in establishing settlements in the Palestinian and other Arab territories occupied since 1967 have no legal validity and constitute a serious obstruction to achieving a comprehensive, just and lasting peace in the Middle East;

and 2254 (ES-V) of 4 and 14 July 1967, 32/5 of 28 October 1977 and 33/113 of 18 December 1978;

3. Calls once more upon Israel, as the occupying Power, to abide scrupulously by the 1949 Fourth Geneva Convention, to rescind its previous measures and to desist from taking any action which would result in changing the legal status and geographical nature and materially affecting the demographic composition of the Arab territories occupied since 1967, including Jerusalem, and, in particular, not to transfer parts of its own civilian population into the occupied Arab territories;

4. Establishes a Commission consisting of three members of the Security Council, to be appointed by the President of the Council after consultations with the members of the Council, to examine the situation relating to settlements in the Arab territories occupied since 1967, including Jerusalem;

5. Requests the Commission to submit its report to the Security Council by 1 July 1979;

6. Requests the Secretary-General to provide the Commission with the necessary facilities to enable it to carry out its mission.

7. Decides to keep the situation in the occupied territories under constant and close scrutiny and to reconvene in July 1979 to review the situation in the light of the findings of the Commission.

August 20, 1980

The Security Council,

Recalling its resolution 476 (1980) of 30 June 1980,

Reaffirming again that the acquisition of territory by force is inadmissible,

Deeply concerned over the enactment of a "basic law" in the Israeli Knesset proclaiming a change in the character and status of the Holy City of Jerusalem, with its implications for peace and security,
Noting that Israel has not complied with Security Council resolution 476 (1980),

Reaffirming its determination to examine practical ways and means, in accordance with the relevant provisions of the Charter of the United Nations, to secure the full implementation of its resolution 476 (1980), in the event of non-compliance by Israel,

1. Censures in the strongest terms the enactment by Israel of the "basic law" on Jerusalem and the refusal to comply with relevant Security Council resolutions;

2. Affirms that the enactment of the "basic law" by Israel constitutes a violation of international law and does not affect the continued application of the Fourth Geneva Convention of 12 August 1949 Relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War in the Palestinian and other Arab territories occupied since June 1967, including Jerusalem;

3. Determines that all legislative and administrative measures and actions taken by Israel, the occupying Power, which have altered or purport to alter the character and status of the Holy City of Jerusalem, and, in particular, the recent "basic law" on Jerusalem, are null and void and must be rescinded forthwith;

4. Affirms also that this action constitutes a serious obstruction to achieving a comprehensive, just and lasting peace in the Middle East;

5. Decides not to recognize the "basic law" and such other actions by Israel that, as a result of this law, seek to alter the character and status of Jerusalem and calls upon all Members of the United Nations:

(a) to accept this decision;

(b) and upon those States that have established diplomatic Missions in Jerusalem to withdraw such Missions from the Holy City;

6. Requests this Secretary-General to report to the Security Council on the implementation of this resolution before 15 November 1980;

7. Decides to remain seized of this serious situation.

Syria complained to the Security Council after the Knesset adopted the Golan Heights Law on 14 December. The following resolution was adopted unanimously and called on Israel to rescind forthwith its decision. Text:

The Security Council,

Having considered the letter of 14 December 1981 from the Permanent Representative of the Syrian Arab Republic contained in document S/14791,

Reaffirming that the acquisition of territory by force is inadmissible, in accordance with the United Nations Charter, the principles of international law, and relevant Security Council resolutions,

1. Decides that the Israeli decision to impose its laws, jurisdiction and administration in the occupied Syrian Golan Heights is null and void and without international legal effect;

2. Demands that Israel, the occupying Power, should rescind forthwith its decision;

3. Determines that all the provisions of the Geneva Convention Relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War of 12 August 1949 continue to apply to the Syrian territory occupied by Israel since June 1967;

4. Requests the Secretary-General to report to the Security Council on the implementation of this resolution within two weeks and decides that in the event of non-compliance by Israel, the Security Council would meet urgently, and not later than 5 January 1982, to consider taking appropriate measures in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations.
References

Israel and its Neighbors

Egypt

Until the peace agreement between Israel and Egypt signed in 1979, the two countries had fought each other in a number of wars. Egypt was one of the leading parties in the Arab coalition that declared war on Israel following its declaration of independence on May 14, 1948. During this war, Egypt occupied the Gaza Strip. Despite the armistice agreements of 1949, in the years that followed, small guerilla groups referred to as ‘Fedayeen’ continued to carry out attacks on Israel from the Gaza Strip.

When Gamal Abdel Nasser became president of Egypt in 1954, he positioned himself as a leader of the Arab world and declared one of his main objectives was to end the British occupation of the Suez Canal. Nasser used fierce rhetoric against Israel, which he viewed as an extension of the imperialist forces in the region and an act of Zionist aggression against the Palestinian people. In 1956, the Sinai War or ‘Suez Crisis’ broke out after Nasser nationalized the canal. A coalition of Israeli, British and French forces invaded Egypt in response to Nasser’s move, but was checked by the United States. Israel withdrew its forces from the Sinai Peninsula in exchange for an Egyptian pledge that the attacks from the Fedayeen would come to a halt. A UN emergency force was stationed in a buffer zone between Israel and Egypt. Overall, the campaign increased Nasser’s standing in the Arab world.

In 1967, the Six Day War or June War broke out as Israel carried out a surprise attack on Egypt in response to the Egyptian blockade of the Gulf of Aqaba, Nasser’s dismissal of the UN emergency force and Egyptian military preparations in the Sinai Peninsula. During this war, Israel occupied the Gaza Strip and the Sinai Peninsula. Egyptians have generally referred to the war as al-Naksa, Arabic for ‘the setback’. Soon after Egypt’s defeat, Nasser launched a War of Attrition (1968-1970) along the Suez Canal in an effort to unsettle Israel’s hold over the territories Egypt had lost in the 1967 war. Egypt and Israel agreed to an American-brokered ceasefire in the summer of 1970.

Three years later, Egypt and Syria staged a surprise attack on Israel in an attempt to recapture the territories occupied by Israel in 1967. This was the Yom Kippur War of 1973, referred to by the Egyptians as the Ramadan War, the ‘October Victory’ or ‘the Crossing of the Canal’ in which Egypt managed to win part of the Sinai desert back. After the U.N Security Council adopted Resolution 338 on October
22, a cease-fire came into effect on October 25, 1973. Egypt repeatedly violated the ceasefire until the so-called 'six-point agreement' for the stabilization of the ceasefire was signed by the two parties on November 11, 1973. In January 1974, U.S. Secretary of State Henry Kissinger mediated the conclusion of the Sinai I Agreement, which outlined the disengagement of forces as a first step towards a just and durable peace. One year later, in September 1975, Israel and Egypt signed the Sinai II Interim Agreement, which reinforced the commitment of both parties to implement Resolution 338 and resolve their conflict through peaceful means, and which called for further withdrawal of forces from the Sinai.

Only a few years later in 1977, Egyptian President Anwar Sadat made history when he visited Jerusalem and gave a speech to the Knesset in which he reached out to Israel with a call for peace. On September 17, 1978, President Sadat and Israeli PM Menachem Begin signed the Camp David agreement under the auspices of US president Jimmy Carter, which paved the way for the 1979 Israeli-Egyptian peace treaty. By signing the Camp David Accords, Egypt recognized Israel’s right to exist, in return for which Israeli forces would withdraw from the Sinai. Diplomatic relations were officially established on February 21, 1980. Egypt has an embassy in Tel Aviv and a consulate in Eilat, while Israel has an embassy in Cairo and a consulate in Alexandria. The peace treaty also allowed for the development of economic relations between the two countries, especially Egyptian export of oil and gas to Israel, as well as agricultural cooperation. Both Begin and Sadat received the Nobel Peace Prize for their historical move.

However, Sadat’s approach was seen in the region as an effort to reach a separate peace and Egypt was expelled from the Arab League. Sadat was assassinated by an Islamic militant group in 1981. Moreover, Egyptian public support for the normalization of relations with Israel has always been limited and the peace is often described as a cold one. When Hosni Mubarak assumed the presidency, he sought to advance a more comprehensive Arab-Israel peace and Egypt has continued to play a central role as mediator in the Middle East peace process.

After the Egyptian Revolution of 2011 and the fall of Hosni Mubarak, Egypt's relations with Israel reached a low point. Israel worried about the future of the peace treaty especially as the Muslim Brotherhood rose to power. These concerns were confirmed when the Morsi government decided to open the Rafah border crossing with Gaza, undermining Israel’s blockade of the Gaza Strip. At the same time, protestors in Cairo attacked the Israeli embassy, while a gas pipeline transporting Egyptian gas to Israel and Jordan was also repeatedly blown up.
Relations between Egypt and Israel improved dramatically after Egypt’s military ousted the Morsi government in a coup on July 3, 2013. Currently, the countries have common strategic interests in fighting Islamist groups active in the Sinai Peninsula, particularly given those groups’ ties to militant groups in the Gaza Strip itself. For this purpose, Israel has allowed Egypt to deploy forces in the Sinai, making an exception to security agreements stipulated in the peace treaty. Moreover, Egyptian President al-Sisi closed the Rafah border crossing and has sought to destroy smuggling tunnels between Gaza and Egypt. In 2016, Egypt reinstated its ambassador in Tel Aviv, and the Egyptian Foreign Minister paid an official visit to Israel. Al-Sisi has declared Egypt’s willingness to continue its role as mediator in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

Jordan

In 1922 Britain established Transjordan as a separate territory within the Mandate of Palestine. This decision was significant because it indicated that the Jewish national home outlined in the Balfour Declaration would only apply to Palestine west of the Jordan River, while the East Bank would be excluded from Jewish settlement. Early on, Amir (later King) Abdullah developed an interest in Palestine. To that end, Abdullah was in regular contact with Zionist leaders through secret backchannels. In 1947 he and the Zionists discussed the possibility of his control of Arab Palestine following the UN partition plan. Because of its membership of the Arab League, however, Transjordan was one of the Arab countries that participated in the Arab-Israeli war of 1948. After the 1949 armistice agreements, King Abdullah I basically received what he had hoped for as Transjordan remained in control of the West Bank including East Jerusalem. Jordan formally annexed the territory in 1950. Only the United Kingdom and Pakistan recognized this annexation and most Arab countries strongly condemned King Abdullah I’s decision. He was assassinated in 1951 in Jerusalem by a Palestinian.

In 1967, Jordan, tied to a defense treaty with Egypt, took part in the war against Israel. During that war, Israel captured the West Bank from Jordan, but annexed only East Jerusalem. Hundreds of thousands of Palestinians fled to Jordan, posing major demographic and political challenges to the Jordanian monarchy and now accounting for an estimated 50% of the Jordanian population. These problems were compounded by the fact that the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO), established in 1964, was at loggerheads with the Jordanians over control of the Palestinians in the Kingdom. In 1970, a power struggle ensued between the Jordanian King Hussein and the PLO, as the King engaged in silent diplomatic efforts to reach an agreement with Israel regarding the West Bank. The PLO tried to
overthrow King Hussein, culminating in a civil war referred to as 'Black September.' The PLO forces were eventually forced to surrender, and its supporters expelled to Lebanon, where the organization assumed its new headquarters in Beirut.

Jordan did not take a direct part in the 1973 war with Israel, but sent some of its forces to fight on the Syrian front.

The Arab League’s decision of 1974 to recognize the PLO as the “sole legitimate representative” of the Palestinian people was received with dismay by King Hussein. Eventually, however, Jordan withdrew all its claims on the West Bank in 1988 in favor of a peaceful resolution to be reached between Israel and the PLO. An additional motive for the Jordanian disengagement was no doubt the First Intifada (beginning in 1987), which also had strong anti-Jordanian undertones. With the Jordanian disengagement, the Palestinians of the West Bank lost their Jordanian citizenship as well and became effectively stateless.

On October 26, 1994, Israel and Jordan signed a peace treaty, making Jordan the second Arab country to normalize relations with Israel. With this agreement, Jordan officially recognized the State of Israel, and remaining land and water disputes were settled. As for the issue of Jerusalem, Israel recognized Jordan’s special responsibility for the Muslim holy shrines in the city. Despite that this is merely a formal role, the continued symbolic administration of the compound by the Jordanian Waqf Ministry helps to hold in check the competing Palestinian and Israeli claims for control over the site. The treaty paved the way for cooperation with respect to security and intelligence as well as trade and tourism.

**Syria**

Syria and Israel have never had any diplomatic ties. The two countries fought each other in the War of 1948, the Six-Day War of 1967 and the Yom Kippur War of 1973. They have maintained a long-standing truce since 1974 when the separation of forces agreement was signed in the aftermath of the Yom Kippur War. The tensions between the countries have risen at various points since then, but these have not led to a renewal of open confrontation.

In the 1948 Arab-Israeli War, Syria was one of the Arab states that declared war against the newly established state of Israel along with Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon and Iraq. According to the plans devised by the Arab League, Syria and Lebanon were to invade Israel from the north, while Jordanian and Iraqi forces were to attack from the east. With the defeat of the Arab coalition forces, the 1948 War came to a
close and a series of armistice agreements were signed between the warring parties. The agreement with Syria was signed on July 20, 1949, which established a special demilitarized zone between the two countries.

In the period prior to the outbreak of the Six-Day War of 1967, the points of tension between the two countries centered on Syria’s use of the Golan Heights as a springboard for attacks against Israel, water issues arising from Israel’s use of the Sea of Galilee and the Syrian scheme to divert the sources of the Jordan River. The Syrian regime also supported the Palestinians in carrying out operations against Israel by allowing Fatah to use Syrian territory. During the war, Israel took over the Golan Heights from Syria. In the aftermath of the war, UN Security Council Resolution 242 was adopted leading to creation of the “Land for Peace” formula, which called for Israeli withdrawal from territories it had occupied in exchange for peace with its Arab neighbors.

In the 1973 Yom Kippur War, Syria’s objective was to regain the Golan Heights, which it failed to achieve. Israel, on the other hand, captured an additional strip of territory in the Golan. At the end of the war, a separation of forces agreement was signed on May 31, 1974 between Israel and Syria. Israel withdrew from the eastern strip of the Heights it had captured in 1974, the city of Quneitra and other smaller areas it had occupied in 1967, but remained in full control of the remainder of Golan Heights. Prisoners of war were returned immediately by both sides. The new separation line, which was established in 1974, still remains in force.

Israel and Syria came face to face once more during the Lebanese War of 1982, which was conducted by Israel with the objective of driving the PLO out of Lebanon. The Syrian regime considers Lebanon within its sphere of influence; Syrian forces occupied parts of Lebanon from 1976 to 2005. As a result, Syria assisted the Lebanese during the 1982 War and continued to support the Lebanese case against Israel until the latter’s withdrawal from Lebanon in 2000.

During the 1990s, the first high-level talks between Syria and Israel took place in the Madrid Peace Conference of 1991. The negotiations continued intermittently throughout the 1990s, but failed as the two sides were unable to come to an agreement over Syria’s demand that Israel withdraw to the positions it held before the Six-Day War of 1967.

The level of hostility between Israel and Syria increased during the 2000s. First, the Syrian support for Palestinian terrorist groups during the Second Intifada (beginning in 2000) led to an IDF military operation (Ain al-Sahab Airstrike) in
October 2003 on a Palestinian training camp situated 15 km north of Damascus. This marked the first Israeli attack inside the Syrian territory since 1973.

The relations further soured due to Syrian support for Hamas in the Gaza Strip and Hizballah in Lebanon during the 2006 Lebanese War. After the war, Syria rearmed Hizbullah with sophisticated weaponry together with its close ally Iran and served as a bridge through which Iranian supplies could reach the Shi’ite militant group. In September 2007, Israel launched Operation Orchard to destroy a suspected nuclear facility in Syria apparently designed and constructed with North Korean assistance. The attack on the Syrian nuclear reactor echoed a similar attack by Israel in 1981, in which Israel destroyed the Osirak nuclear reactor in Iraq.

Peace efforts were briefly revived when Turkey, a growing regional power with aspirations for regional leadership, served to mediate talks between the two countries in 2008. The efforts came to naught, as Syria withdrew from the talks as a response to Israel’s 2008 Gaza War. In 2010, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu reportedly engaged in secret, American-brokered negotiations with Syria. The aim of these negotiations was to broker a peace treaty based on full Israeli withdrawal from the Golan Heights. However, the negotiations also came to an abrupt end with the outbreak of the Arab Spring in early 2011, which quickly spread to Syria.

Although Israel has generally stayed out of the Syrian civil war, a number of cross-border incidents have occurred, most of which the Israeli government has denied. Among other things, Israel has allegedly conducted air and rocket strikes targeting strategic positions and weapon convoys of Hizballah in Syria, as well as ISIS assets. For example, in January 2017, an explosion took place near a major military airbase outside of Damascus as a result of a strike on rocket launchers. Multiple attacks have been carried out over the past few years, though Israel has never admitted any involvement.

**Lebanon**

Lebanon was one of the participants in the Arab-Israeli War of 1948. At the end of the war, an armistice agreement was signed between Israel and Lebanon, which drew a demarcation line between the two countries along the international boundary that had existed between Lebanon and Mandatory Palestine. As part of the agreement, Israel also withdrew from 13 Lebanese villages that it had occupied during the war.
After 1948, Palestinian refugee camps were established in southern Lebanon and the area gradually became a center of Palestinian political activity. After Black September of 1970, in which the PLO was removed from Jordan and subsequently relocated in Lebanon, Fatah and other forces carried out attacks from Lebanese territory against Israel.

One such attack by Fatah in March 1978, the hijacking of a bus on Israel’s coastal highway, which left 38 Israelis dead (Coastal Road Massacre) and prompted the Israeli invasion of Lebanon a few days later up to the Litani River in the south of the country. At the end of the Israeli military operation, the PLO retreated north of the Litani River. Israel withdrew from Lebanon later in 1978 in accordance with UN Security Council Resolution 425. The Resolution also created the UN Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) to confirm the Israeli withdrawal and establish security in the region.

The PLO factions, however, continued to occupy areas in southern Lebanon and were increasingly engaged in domestic politics in the country. During the Lebanese civil war (1975-1990), Palestinian militants fought against the Maronite Christians. As part of its security policy, Israel supported a break-away section of the Lebanese army, the South Lebanon Army, which was fighting the PLO in southern Lebanon. The escalation of the civil war and the strengthening of the PLO forces eventually led to the second Israeli invasion of Lebanon in 1982. The Israeli objectives were two. First, Israel sought to expel the PLO from Lebanon altogether. Second, it sought to install a pro-Israeli Christian government led by Bashir al-Jumayyil. Although Israel succeeded in accomplishing its first objective, it failed in its second when al-Jumayyil was assassinated in September 1982.

The Lebanon War of 1982 lasted until 1985, but had long-lasting consequences. The ouster of the PLO paved the way for the rise of other militant groups inside Lebanon most notably Hizballah. The war also resulted in a long Israeli occupation of parts of southern Lebanon. Although Israel withdrew from most of southern Lebanon at the end of the war, it remained in the area known as the South Lebanon Security Belt—which consisted of about 10% of the total territory of the country—for 18 more years.

During the period of the Israeli occupation, there were frequent tensions between Israel and Hizballah. In late July 1993, Israel launched a week-long attack (Operation Accountability) in response to rocket attacks and the killing of five IDF soldiers in an attempt to weaken Hizballah’s presence in southern Lebanon. Israel conducted a similar operation (Operation Grapes of Wrath) in April 1996, again
seeking to suppress Katyusha fire on Israeli settlements adjacent to the Israeli-Lebanese border. During this operation, a UN compound in the village of Qana in southern Lebanon was inadvertently hit claiming the lives of 106 civilians and bringing the operation to an early conclusion.

In 2000, Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Barak withdrew from the security zone to behind the Blue Line, the internationally recognized border between Israel and Lebanon as demarcated by the UN in June 2000. Following the end of the Israeli occupation of southern Lebanon, Hizballah's power grew significantly. In June 2006, Hizballah launched a cross-border attack against an Israeli military patrol killing three soldiers and kidnapping two others. Hizballah demanded the release of Lebanese prisoners held in Israel in exchange for the release of the abducted soldiers.

The Israeli response was a large-scale military campaign inside Lebanon, marking the beginning of the 2006 Lebanon War. The conflict started on July 12, 2006 and was marked by IDF airstrikes and artillery fire on Hizballah targets. The war lasted 34 days and ended on August 14, 2006 with the passage of UN Security Council Resolution 1701. The Resolution called for the disarmament of Hizballah, complete Israeli withdrawal from Lebanon, the deployment of Lebanese soldiers and a UNIFIL force in the south in order to create a buffer zone on Israel's northern border free of Hizballah presence. Israel lifted its blockade on Lebanon and withdrew its forces on October 1, 2006. The remains of the two kidnapped Israeli soldiers were returned to Israel by Hizballah in a prisoner exchange deal in 2008. The disarming of Hizballah was not achieved, as no international party was in a position to force Hizballah to lay down its weapons. During the conflict, Lebanese infrastructure was severely damaged, approximately one million Lebanese and 300,000-500,000 Israelis were temporarily displaced. According to the Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 44 Israeli civilians and 119 IDF soldiers were killed during the war. According to the Human Rights Watch report, the Lebanese casualties numbered 1109, among whom most were civilians.

A very delicate status quo has been established between Hizbullah and Israel since the war in 2006. One major reason for Hizballah restraint is probably the Iranian desire to preserve Hizballah's capability as a deterrent against an Israeli attack against Iran on the nuclear issue. Over the past few years, Hizballah's resources have largely been diverted to its engagement in the Syrian civil war in support of President Assad's forces. Out of fear that Hizballah will be able to gain access to advanced weapons systems provided by Russia or Iran, Israel has
reportedly carried out strikes against Hizballah targets in Syria to weaken its positions.
References

The Palestinian National Movement

The origins of the Palestinian national movement can be found in the initial Arab opposition to the Zionist project in Palestine that emerged after the First World War. This section therefore starts with a description of Zionism and early contact and conflicts between Jews and Arabs before turning to an historical overview of the Palestinian movement: the evolution of the movement through the mid-1980s; the First Intifadah and Oslo Process, the emergence of the Palestinian Authority, the Second Intifadah, and recent developments in Gaza. The next chapter addresses the refugee problem.

The Zionist Project and Initial Arab Responses

Zionism, the national movement of the Jewish people, originated in Europe in the latter part of the 19th century. Jews were first emancipated in France and later step-by-step in other parts of Europe. However, this did not mean that they enjoyed equal rights, as exemplified in the infamous Dreyfus Affair. Alfred Dreyfus, an artillery officer of Jewish descent in the French army, was unjustly accused of espionage because of his Jewish background. After a long legal battle, Dreyfus was exonerated and returned to his post in the army. However, his case became a symbol of the Jewish predicament in Europe: despite emancipation and acculturation, Jews faced continuing discrimination. In Eastern Europe, the situation was markedly worse as Jews still fell victim to periodic pogroms. For example, as late as 1903, the two-day long Pogrom of Kishinev in present day Moldova resulted in the deaths of 49 people and many more displaced.

Hungarian-born Jewish journalist Theodor Herzl (1860-1904), the father of political Zionism, saw the solution to the “Jewish question” (*die Judenfrage*), in the creation of a state for the Jewish people in their historical homeland, Eretz Israel (the Land of Israel). In 1896, he outlined his vision in a pamphlet titled *Der Judenstaat* (The State of the Jews). The First Zionist Congress (1897), which Herzl himself chaired, produced the so-called Basel Program, which declared that “Zionism aspires to create a publicly guaranteed homeland for the Jewish people in the land of Israel.”

Inspired by the Zionist national movement, waves of immigration (*aliyah*) from Europe to Ottoman Palestine ensued. During the First Aliyah, which began in 1882 and continued intermittently until 1903, some 35,000 Jews, mainly from Eastern Europe, came to Palestine. In the Second Aliyah that took place between 1904 and 1914, 20,000 Jews immigrated to Palestine. The Balfour Declaration of
1917 also gave a certain impetus to the Zionist project in Palestine. The Zionists understood this letter from the British Foreign Secretary Arthur James Balfour addressed to Baron Rothschild as an open declaration of British support for a Jewish state.

The Arabs of Palestine, however, had their own expectations from the British. In a series of letters exchanged in 1915-16 between Hussein Ibn Ali, the Emir of Mecca and the central figure of the Arab nationalist movement during the First World War, and Sir Arthur McMahon, the British High Commissioner in Egypt, the British declared their support for the creation of an independent Arab state as well. In exchange, the Arabs offered the British their assistance against the Ottoman Empire.

In the wake of the First World War, the Ottoman Empire was effectively dismantled. In the San Remo Conference of 1920, much of the former Ottoman-ruled territories in the Middle East were allocated to Britain and France as mandates. Britain received the mandate for Palestine and Iraq, while France gained control of Syria including present-day Lebanon. The Balfour Declaration was incorporated into the British mandate for Palestine, thereby upgrading the British commitment to the Zionist enterprise, which now became an international commitment of Great Britain also to the League of Nations.

The Arab Opposition

Although Arab opposition to the Zionist idea was apparent before the First World War, the first organized opposition came in the wake of the war in the form of Muslim-Christian Associations, a number of clubs established in almost every major city in Palestine. These associations organized a total of seven congresses between 1919 and 1928. These congresses opposed the idea of a Jewish national home in Palestine, the Balfour Declaration and mass Jewish immigration. They sought Arab independence, initially as part of Greater Syria.

According to the League of Nations’ Interim Report on the Civil Administration of Palestine, the population of Palestine was 700,000 in 1920 but four-fifths of the total population was Muslim with the Jews numbering only 76,000. Rising tension in Arab-Jewish relations resulted in riots in Jerusalem in 1920 and in Jaffa in 1921. A pinnacle of violence against the Jews came in 1929, as riots broke out in Jerusalem and Hebron, the worst that had taken place until that time in Palestine.
From the early phase of the British mandate, the leader of the Arabs in Palestine was Hajj Amiwn al-Husseini (1897-1974) a man of religion from a wealthy landowning family in Jerusalem. He was appointed by the British as the Grand Mufti of Jerusalem in 1921. Hajj Amin al-Husseini’s political objective was specifically centered on blocking Jewish national aspirations in Mandatory Palestine.

During the 1930s, the rise of fascism in Europe resulted in massive Jewish emigration to Palestine. The initiator of the armed Arab resistance was Izz al-Din al-Qassam, a Syrian-born Muslim preacher active in Haifa in northern Palestine. He established al-Kaff al-Aswad (the Black Hand), an anti-Zionist and anti-British militant organization, advocating resistance against the Zionists. He was killed in 1935 by the British. His death caused widespread outrage within the Arab community and set the stage for the outbreak of the Arab Rebellion in 1936. (The military wing of Hamas, Izz al-Din al-Qassam Brigades as well as the Qassam rockets that the organization uses against Israel bear his name.)

The Arab Rebellion lasted for three years and although it had many failures, it was nevertheless important in terms of its contribution to the formation of a national identity and movement. The Arab Higher Committee was established in April 1936 on the initiative of Hajj Amin al-Husseini as the main political organ of the Arab community in Mandatory Palestine. The Committee comprised the leaders of major Palestinian Arab families and political parties, and was outlawed in September 1937 by the British after the killing of a senior British official by an Arab assailant. The members of the leadership were arrested and deported. Hajj Amin al-Husseini fled and went into exile in Beirut.

The exile of the leadership of the Palestinian Arab national movement put the Arabs in a disadvantageous position in their struggle against the Zionists. With the leadership outside the country, it now had to control affairs from afar, while the Zionist leadership was in Palestine all along. The Palestinian national movement’s inherent weaknesses and internal divisions led to an ever-increasing reliance, for better or for worse, on support from Arabs outside of Palestine.
Hajj Amin al-Husseini’s support for Hitler and Nazi Germany during World War II only made matters worse for the Palestinian national movement. His international legitimacy was seriously undermined while the Jewish cause gained increasing international recognition and sympathy after the Holocaust.

In 1947, Great Britain handed over the issue of Palestine to the UN, which developed the UN Partition Resolution 181 (November 1947) to be implemented in Palestine following the termination of the British Mandate. It accorded 55% of Palestine to the Jews, who were one-third of the population (taking into consideration the expected mass immigration Jewish refugees from Europe); and 45% to the Arabs, who were two-thirds of the population. The Arabs rejected the Partition Plan in principle and declared war against the partition and the newly established State of Israel when it was declared in May 1948.

During the Arab-Israeli War of 1948, the All-Palestine government was founded by the Arab League in the Egyptian-controlled Gaza Strip. However, it did not have any executive role and eventually came under Egyptian military administration.

**The Palestinian National Revival**

The institutions that led the Palestinian national movement in the following decades were conceived in the Palestinian refugee diaspora. In the mid-1950s,
Palestinian refugees in the Gulf States founded the Fatah movement, which emphasized the liberation of Palestine through armed struggle. One of the founders of Fatah was Yasser Arafat. At the same time, there were public pan-Arab efforts on the Palestinian issue. These resulted in the establishment of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) in 1964 by the Arab League under the leadership of Ahmad-al-Shuqayri, who became its first chairman.

The Six-Day War in 1967 and the Arab defeat by Israel brought the West Bank, East Jerusalem and the Gaza Strip under Israeli control. After failure to establish a base of resistance in the West Bank, the Palestinians continued their armed struggle against Israel from the other side of the river, the East Bank in Jordan. In March 1968, Israeli forces conducted an operation in the village of Karameh in the southern Jordan Valley against Fatah's bases situated there. Although most losses suffered by the Israeli forces were inflicted by the Jordanian army, the Karameh Operation became a symbol of the success of Palestinian armed struggle against Israel. It also established Yasser Arafat as a national hero and the strength of Fatah grew exponentially. In February 1969, Arafat was elected chairman of the PLO, establishing Fatah dominance of the organization which became an umbrella for the various Palestinian fighting groups.

The Karamaeh Operation also enhanced the PLO's position inside Jordan. The PLO gradually took control of strategic positions inside the country, undermining the integrity of the Jordanian state and gradually becoming a kind of "state-within-a-state" inside the kingdom. The tension between the Palestinian and Jordanian forces eventually led to a major clash in 1970 known as Black September, which ended with the expulsion of the PLO forces from Jordan. Having lost their Jordanian base of operations, the Palestinian forces had to relocate to Lebanon where they resumed their operations against Israel.

However, Black September exposed the difficulties of conducting an effective armed struggle against Israel from the outside because of its implications for host countries and for the refugees. Moreover, the resumption of the Middle East peace process after the 1973 Yom Kippur (October) War forced the PLO to reevaluate its strategy. As a result, it developed the "Strategy of Phases," which introduced the idea of employing diplomacy in addition to military struggle, paving the way for negotiations.

In 1982, Israel invaded Lebanon with the objective of expelling the PLO, which it did. The PLO leadership was forced to relocate to Tunis. The loss of the PLO's Lebanese base of operations marked the beginning of a critical shift in the
center of gravity of Palestinian politics from the diaspora into the West Bank and Gaza.

The Intifada and Oslo

The outbreak of the First Palestinian Intifada (uprising) in the West Bank and Gaza in 1987 aptly illustrated the extent of this shift. The spontaneous, unarmed civilian uprising was brought about by a combination of factors including the tightening Israeli grip over the Palestinian territories, economic hardship and political deadlock. A new local “inside” leadership emerged in the West Bank and Gaza under the name of the Unified National Leadership of the Uprising (UNLU) comprised of the local members and leadership of various Palestinian organizations including Fatah. Though never entirely independent of the PLO in Tunis, they played the central role in mobilizing grassroots support during the uprising.

Another major development during the First Intifada was the rise of the Islamists in the Palestinian territories. Soon after the Intifada broke out, Hamas (*Harakat al-Muqawama al-Islamiyya*, Islamic Resistance Movement) was established in 1988 with the aim not only of putting an end to the Israeli occupation in the territories but of establishing an Islamic state in the area covering the entirety of modern-day Israel, the West Bank and Gaza. Hamas was an offshoot of the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt and presented the only real challenge to the UNLU. The Hamas military wing, Izz al-Din al-Qassam Brigades, was established in mid-1991. Another offshoot of the Muslim Brotherhood in Palestine was Islamic Jihad established in 1981. It shared the same objectives with Hamas: the two organizations opposed any negotiations with Israel and cooperated on a number of armed operations. Hamas and Islamic Jihad were responsible for the most violent acts that took place during the Intifada. During the First Intifada, which lasted from 1987 to 1993, about 1,400 Palestinians and 200 Israelis lost their lives.

The First Intifada marked a change in the hierarchy of the Palestinian national movement by bringing the people of the West Bank and Gaza to the center of the national struggle. The emergence of an effective civil society also meant that the outside PLO leadership now had to adapt. The Palestine National Council, the legislative body of the PLO, convened in November 1988 and made a series of very important decisions. The PLO now accepted the UN Partition Resolution of 1947 and UN Resolution 242, which had been passed in the aftermath of the Six-Day War of 1967 and established the principles that were to guide the Middle Eastern peace process, without explicitly recognizing Israel.
However, the outbreak of the Gulf War of 1990-91 and Yasser Arafat's support of Saddam Hussein undermined the PLO's international standing. Moreover, Hamas emerged as a contender for Palestinian leadership during the Intifada. Because of its stand on Iraq, the PLO was not even invited to the Madrid Peace Conference, which convened in late 1991 with the purpose of resuming negotiations between Israel, the Palestinians and the other Arab players.

At Madrid the Palestinians were represented by a delegation of leaders from the West Bank and Gaza. The PLO and Yasser Arafat, fearing being eclipsed by the insiders, were desperate to find ways get back to the West Bank and Gaza themselves in order to control political developments. After secret negotiations between Israel and the PLO in Norway, the parties came to a historical breakthrough in the summer of 1993 with the Oslo Accords. The agreement included mutual recognition, a staged Israeli withdrawal (Gaza and Jericho first) and a transition phase of five years, at the end of which Israelis and the Palestinians would come to a final agreement. Although the Oslo Accords did not specifically speak of the creation of a Palestinian state, they set in motion a process of state-building by calling for the establishment of the Palestinian Authority (PA). The Palestinian Authority, the Palestinian interim self-government body, was established in 1994 pursuant to the Oslo Accords to govern the West Bank and the Gaza Strip and provided the opportunity for the PLO to re-enter the territories.

The Palestinian Authority

The establishment of the PA meant the creation of two important institutions: the presidency; and the legislative assembly of the PA known as the Palestinian Legislative Council (PLC). The PLC was designed to function as the Palestinian legislature as well as a check on the presidency and government of the Palestinian state-in-the-making.

In January 1996, the first general elections were held for the presidency and the PLC. Hamas boycotted the elections in line with its opposition to the Oslo process and any compromise with Israel. Yasser Arafat won the presidency with 88.2% of the votes. Fifty of the 88 council seats went to Fatah, increasing to 55 and a two-thirds majority when some council members later joined the Fatah ranks. As stipulated in the Oslo Accords, participation in the elections was restricted to the residents of the West Bank and Gaza, thus limiting the direct political influence of the diaspora and underlining the centrality of Palestinian politics in the territories.
However, the momentum of peace was hampered by opponents of the peace process both in Israel and among the Palestinian community. Some on the Palestinian side argued that the Oslo Accords meant putting the creation of a state above the complete liberation of Palestine and the return of refugees who had been displaced or fled. On the Israeli side, the right and religious right of the political spectrum opposed the idea of withdrawal from the West Bank and Gaza. Suicide and other bombing attacks in Israel’s major cities and towns carried out by Hamas and Islamic Jihad from 1994 onwards and continued building of Israeli settlements in the Palestinian territories made the implementation of the Oslo Accords virtually impossible.

In a final effort for a breakthrough, Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Barak and Yasser Arafat held a round of talks at Camp David under the auspices of US President Clinton in the summer of 2000. These talks failed too. At Camp David, Israel presented the Palestinians with the most generous territorial offer ever made by an Israeli government: withdrawal from about 80% of the West Bank. This fell short of the Palestinian expectations of a full Israeli withdrawal. According to Prof. Asher Susser, reference points probably mattered. The Israeli point of departure was 1967, whereas that of the Palestinians was 1948. According to the Israeli point of view, Israel conceded handsomely on the “1967 issues” (Jerusalem, territories) in the hope that the Palestinians would, in turn, soften their stance on the “1948 issues” (right of return, collective rights of Palestinian people who are citizens of Israel). However, the Palestinians argued that Israel already had 78% of historical Palestine (Israel as it existed until 1967), while the West Bank and Gaza made up only 22%. The Palestinians, therefore, were unwilling to concede the part of historical Palestine that remained.

Against this tense background, Ariel Sharon, leader of the Likud Party and in the opposition at the time, visited the Temple Mount complex in Jerusalem in September 2000 as part of his election campaign. Escorted by a phalanx of police, his visit sparked outrage amongst the Palestinians.

The Second Intifada

The outbreak of the Second Intifada in 2000, also known as the Al-Aqsa Intifada, followed almost immediately on the heels of Sharon’s visit. It started with riots in the Old City of Jerusalem and quickly spread to the West Bank and Gaza. In the following months, Arab citizens of Israel, who identified with their Palestinian brethren in the West Bank and Gaza, also clashed with the Israeli police inside Israel proper. After a series of suicide bombings in Israel, which took hundreds of Israeli
lives, 135 in March 2002 at its peak, the Israeli Defense Forces launched a large-scale military operation in the West Bank in April 2002. The operation, known as Defensive Shield, was an attempt to stop the attacks against Israel and was the largest military operation conducted by the IDF in the West Bank since 1967. Shortly thereafter the Israelis also began the construction of the security barrier between the West Bank and Israel. The campaign and the barrier put an almost complete end to attacks on Israel from the West Bank.

The First Intifada was a bottom-up uprising born out of a deep frustration with the Israeli occupation. It was dominated by local groups and was largely non-violent. Although the initial characteristics of the Second Intifada were similar to those of the First Intifada (demonstrations and the use of rocks and molotov cocktails), it later developed into a very different form of confrontation. The Second Intifada was staged by the PA and Hamas and employed violent means such as the frequent use of suicide bombings as a key weapon against the Israelis. The fatalities incurred by both populations were also markedly higher. During the Second Intifada, over 3000 Palestinians and about 1000 Israelis were killed.

The Second Intifada came to an end at the Sharm al-Sheikh Summit of February 2005, during which President Mahmud Abbas, who had succeeded Arafat after his death in 2004, and the Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon who had defeated Ehud Barak in the elections of 2001, agreed to stop all acts of violence and declared their commitment to the Road Map for peace.

The Road Map was an internationally devised peace plan, proposed in 2003 by the U.S., the UN, the EU and Russia to resolve the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. It demanded the implementation of a series of confidence building measures as the first stage of the plan such as the dismantling of Israeli settlements, the cessation of Palestinian violence and the reforming of Palestinian institutions. The second stage was to be the creation of an independent Palestinian state to be followed by the third stage, in which final status issues (borders, Jerusalem and Palestinian refugees) were to be resolved.
The Roadmap was not implemented either. Rather, in the summer of 2005, Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon carried out a unilateral withdrawal of the Israeli army from Gaza and the dismantling of all Israeli settlements in the Gaza Strip. After the failure of Oslo, Sharon had a major change of thinking. He believed that the long-term occupation did not serve Israel’s interests and therefore it was preferable to give up a densely populated Palestinian territory even in the absence of a peace agreement in order to maintain the Jewish majority in the State of Israel proper. Settlers who refused to leave, were evicted by the Israeli security forces. In addition to the settlements in the Gaza Strip, the disengagement plan also included the dismantling of four settlements in the northern West Bank area.

The Hamas Electoral Victory

Hamas took credit for the Israeli withdrawal, as thousands rallied in Gaza City waving Hamas flags and chanting pro-Hamas slogans. In the municipal elections held in December 2005 in the West Bank and Gaza, a few months after the Israeli withdrawal, Hamas did well. Assured by its growing popularity and strength, Hamas fielded candidates in the January 2006 general elections, which it had refused to do in 1996. The election results were a sweeping victory for Hamas, which won 74 of the 132 seats in the Legislative Council. Fatah won only 45 seats with the rest
divided between a number of much smaller parties. In March 2006, Hamas leader Ismail Haniya formed the new government with the majority of the cabinet members from the ranks of Hamas. Following the formation of the government, sanctions were imposed on the Hamas-dominated Palestinian Authority by Israel and the Middle East Quartet. As part of the 2006-07 sanctions, the Quartet ceased all international aid to the PA government. Israel began withholding tax revenues that it collected for the PA and introduced restrictions of movement within the Palestinian territories including transport of goods. The sanctions would only be lifted if Hamas renounced violence, recognized Israel and accepted all the previous agreements between Israel and the PA.

The Hamas-led government lasted for only a year until March 2007, when a government of national unity was formed by Hamas and Fatah. Three months later, the conflict between Hamas and Fatah that had been simmering since the Hamas victory in the 2006 general elections culminated in open clashes in Gaza. The result was that Hamas took complete control of the Gaza Strip, effectively ending the Fatah presence in that territory. With the Hamas takeover of Gaza, the Palestinian territories were divided into two entities: the Hamas-controlled Gaza Strip and the PA-controlled West Bank.

After Hamas’ assumption of administrative control in Gaza, Israel sealed its border with Gaza and imposed an air, land and sea blockade over the territory, although the blockade was never total and trucks with food and other supplies entered on a daily basis. Partly as a result of the Israeli embargo, Hamas and other Islamist militant organizations increased their rocket attacks against Israel, which prompted Israeli retaliation. The conflict between Hamas and Israel has escalated into military interventions on three occasions in recent years:

- December 27, 2008 – January 18, 2009: Following Hamas and Islamic Jihad rocket fire on southern Israel, Israel launched a 22-day long offensive known as Operation Cast Lead (Mivtza Oferet Yetzuka) During the operation, IDF targeted weapons caches, rocket firing platforms as well as administrative institutions. An Israeli ground invasion began in early January 2009. The conflict ended with Israel’s unilateral declaration of a ceasefire, followed by a similar announcement from Hamas. According to the IDF, 1166 Palestinians, 11 Israeli soldiers and 3 Israeli civilians were killed during Operation Cast Lead.

- November 14-21, 2012: Following the intensification of rocket attacks conducted by Palestinian military groups, Israel launched another military offensive against Gaza called Operation Pillar of Defense (Mivtza Amud
Anan), with the aim of crippling Hamas’ ability to launch attacks. 167 Palestinians were killed during the operation. Israeli casualties were 6 (4 civilians, 2 soldiers).

![Figure: Number of rockets fired from Gaza into Israel during Operation Pillar of Defense](Source: Shabak)

- **July 8 – August 26, 2014:** On June 12, 2014, three Israeli teenagers were kidnapped in the West Bank and later murdered. A group of Israeli nationalists retaliated with the kidnapping and murder of a Palestinian teenager from East Jerusalem. In the meantime, firing of rockets from Gaza escalated. As a response, Israel embarked on another military offensive known as Operation Protective Edge (*Mivtza Tzuk Eitan*). The operation, which was conducted through airstrikes first, was expanded into a ground operation on July 17th with the aim of destroying the Hamas tunnel system, designed both as shelters for Hamas fighters and for infiltration into Israel). Over 2200 Palestinians and 70 Israelis, 64 of them soldiers, were killed. During the operation Hamas fired a total of 4564 rockets into Israel.

Reconciliation attempts have so far failed to resolve the ongoing conflicts between Hamas and the PA, despite the formation of a short-lived unity government from June 2, 2014 until June 17, 2015. Palestinian municipal elections are currently scheduled for 2017, after being suspended in 2016 by the Palestinian court amid Fatah-Hamas divisions. The elections would be the first to be held in all of the Palestinian Territories since the Hamas takeover of Gaza in 2007.
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The Palestinian Refugee Question

The adoption of the UN Partition Plan for Palestine on November 29, 1947 at the UN General Assembly was immediately followed by the outbreak of a civil war between the Jewish and Arab communities in Palestine, which marked the beginning of the first phase of the 1948 War.\(^1\) In itself, the Civil War can be divided into two stages. The first stage was characterized by an Arab offensive with Jews on the defensive, while the second stage was marked by a Jewish offensive led by the Jewish defense forces, the Haganah, and subsequent Jewish territorial gains from April to mid-May 1948.

The Origins of the Refugee Problem

The first casualties of the civil war occurred on November 30, when an armed Arab band ambushed a bus with Jewish passengers, killing five. On the same day, similar attacks were carried out against Jewish buses in Jerusalem and Haifa. In reprisal, Zionist paramilitary organizations, the dissident right-wing Irgun and Lehi, attacked Arab workers in Haifa. The fighting in the first days established a pattern that was seen in following months: small scale attacks and counterattacks as well as ambushes along the roads. With the start of the hostilities, Arab families mainly in mixed towns and some villages began to abandon their homes, thus marking the beginning of the refugee problem.

Against the background of continuing Arab successes in the battlefield and what soon turned into the war for the main roads of Palestine, Jewish forces adopted a new offensive strategy. The urgency for a new departure became increasingly apparent in March 1948 when it became apparent that that the international community might backpedal on partition in favor of a UN trusteeship on Palestine as a result of continued Arab resistance. In April 1948, the Haganah began the implementation of “Plan D.” In its broadest terms, Plan D called for securing all the territory earmarked by the UN for the Jewish state as well as areas like West Jerusalem and Western Galilee with substantial Jewish populations. The preamble dispatched to the brigades stated the aim of Plan D in the following terms: “to take control of the territory of the Jewish State and to defend its borders, as well as [defend] the blocs of settlement and the Jewish population outside these borders

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\(^1\) Historians divide the 1948 War into two phases: 1. A civil war between Jews and Arabs that lasted from 30 November 1947 until 14 May 1948; 2. An Arab-Israeli war between the newly founded State of Israel and the surrounding Arab countries of Trans-Jordan, Syria, Egypt and Iraq that lasted from 15 May 1948 to 20 July 1949.
against a regular enemy, semi regular[s], and irregulars.”² Plan D opened the way for the conquest of Arab villages, although the decision on the fate of each village and its residents was ultimately vested in brigade commanders.

At this stage, one of the most controversial events of the 1948 War – the Deir Yassin massacre – took place. Deir Yassin was a Palestinian Arab village near Jerusalem with a population of around 600 people. On April 9, 1948, Irgun and Lehi conducted an attack on the village killing 100-120 of its inhabitants. The rest of the villagers were driven out, while some fled. The media campaign that raged both in Palestine and the Arab world produced the unintended result of sparking fear and panic among the Palestinians, resulting in further flight from Arab villages and towns. Deir Yassin was one of the turning points in the acceleration of the Palestinian refugee problem during the 1948 War.

Despite their superiority in numbers (1.2 to 1.3 million Palestinian Arabs and 630,000 Jews), the Palestinian Arabs suffered from a number of disadvantages that contributed to further Palestinian flight and eventual defeat in the war. As they faced each other in 1948, the Yishuv enjoyed far greater military power in terms of both manpower and weaponry, economic independence, national institutions and a highly organized and motivated society. Palestinian Arab society, on the other hand, was deeply divided along family and religious lines, economically weak and without an effective leadership that could lead a push for statehood.

The Israelis sustained very heavy losses. Some 6000 men and women, one percent of the entire population, were killed in the war. The Palestinians suffered similar losses; although more difficult to ascertain precisely, it is estimated that some 8000 Palestinians were killed in the fighting. On the Palestinian side, some 700,000 people (or just over half their entire population) fled or were forced inland or out of the country altogether by Israeli forces. Cases of expulsion took place especially after the invasion of Palestine by the regular armies of the neighboring Arab states in the second phase of the war that began in May 1948 with Israel’s declaration of independence. In some instances Arab refugees evacuated their homes on the orders of various Arab leaders and commanders. It would be fair to say that the Palestinian refugee problem was created as a result of the combination of Palestinian societal collapse and flight as well as expulsion.

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Benny Morris, one of the “new” Israeli historians (see below), and unquestionably the leading authority on the birth of the refugee problem has summed up the complexity of the issue as follows:

The first Arab-Israeli war, of 1948, was launched by the Palestinian Arabs, who rejected the UN partition resolution and embarked on hostilities aimed at preventing the birth of Israel. That war and not design, Jewish or Arab, gave birth to the Palestinian refugee problem. But the displacement of Arabs from Palestine or from the areas of Palestine that would become the Jewish state was inherent in Zionist ideology...[Even so] there was no pre-war Zionist plan to expel 'the Arabs' from Palestine or the areas of the emergent Jewish State; and the Yishuv [the Jewish community in Palestine] did not enter the war with a plan or policy of expulsion...³

During the negotiations between Israel and the Arab states after the 1948 War, Israel offered to allow the return of 100,000 Palestinian refugees to Israel on the condition that the Arab states make full peace with Israel and settle the rest of the refugees in their own countries. This offer was rejected by the Arab states and since then has not been proposed again by Israel.

The Historiographical Debate

The war of 1948 was a seminal event for both the Israelis and the Palestinians. Therefore, the ensuing historiographical debate on the issue has been equally intense. Points of contention include historical responsibility for the events, the refugee question and the terminology describing the war. The Palestinians call 1948 al-Nakba (the disaster, the catastrophe), while the Israelis use terms such as the War of Liberation (Milhemet Hashihrur) and the War of Independence (Milhemet Ha’aztma’ut).

Beginning in the late 1980s, a group of Israeli historians began publishing a series of books and articles about the War of 1948, in which they used hitherto unavailable Israeli and Western sources. These 'New Historians', as they became known, offered a new more critical perspective and interpretation of the history of the Arab-Israeli conflict as well as Zionism (see references). There has been some self-criticism on the side of the Arabs as well. Most notably, Syrian-born philosopher Sadiq al-‘Azm criticized the use of the term al-Nakba arguing that simply the use of

the expression, which means a natural catastrophe in Arabic, is an apologetic refusal of the Palestinians to accept any responsibility for the events of 1948.

UN Assistance to Palestinian Refugees since 1949

As a result of the 1948 Arab-Israeli war, more than 700,000 Palestinians were forced to relocate to the West Bank, the Gaza Strip, and surrounding Arab countries. In December 1949, the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) was established and tasked with registering and assisting the Palestinian refugees. In the absence of a solution to the refugee problem, the mandate of UNRWA has been extended each year, most recently until June 2017. UNRWA has provided health care, education and social services to Palestinian refugees living in the West Bank, the Gaza Strip, Jordan, Lebanon and Syria, and has administered refugee camps in these territories. Over the years, Palestinian refugee camps have developed into urban neighborhoods, in which the living conditions are generally poor, due to the high population density and the lack of infrastructure, hygiene and public services.

In 2016, UNRWA reported that 1.31 million registered Palestinian refugees lived in the Gaza strip, while the West Bank is home to more than 790,000 refugees. One quarter of these live in the West Bank's 19 refugee camps, the largest of which is 'Balata' near the city of Nablus. The majority of the registered refugees, however, live in various towns and villages of the West Bank. As for Gaza, less than half of the refugees live in the eight camps designated by UNRWA.

UNRWA defines a Palestinian refugee as a person “whose normal place of residence was Palestine during the period June 1, 1946 to May 15, 1948, and who lost both home and means of livelihood as a result of the 1948 conflict.” Refugee status is also extended to descendants of this group. Hence, under UNRWA criteria, Palestinians "inherit" their refugee status from their parents, regardless of where they were born. As a result, the number of Palestinian refugees has grown from 700,000 in 1949 to approximately five million.5

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4 This is the number stated by historian Benny Morris. The number of refugees became a major point of dispute: Israeli official sources established the number at 520,000, while Palestinians spoke about 900,000 to 1,000,000 (Righteous Victims: A History of the Zionist-Arab Conflict, 1881-1999, p252)
5 This is the approximate number of registered refugees eligible for UNRWA services. However, the current total number of refugees is debated. The Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics reported that in 2010, the number of Palestinian refugees worldwide amounted to about 10 million.
The UNRWA definition of Palestinian refugees is unique and does not appear to comport with the 1951 Refugee Convention. It is argued that the inheritance of the refugee status has played an important part in perpetuating the sense of displacement among generations of Palestinians. At the same time, however, the loss of homeland, displacement and refugee status are now at the very core of Palestinian national identity. Therefore, the Palestinian refugee issue and its emphasis on Palestinian statelessness are central to the Palestinian nationalist discourse. Although the vast majority of refugees today were not personally uprooted in 1948, they still express a strong connection to the birthplace of their ancestors. Many still have the keys and the proof of ownership of their family's former homes, which are passed on from generation to generation.

**Palestinian Refugees in Arab Host Countries**

The determined effort to preserve a political identity based on Palestine as a homeland has also served as one of the main obstacles to complete integration of Palestinian refugees outside of Israel, the West Bank and Gaza. After 1948, some of the displaced Palestinian community looked beyond the refugee camps for better living circumstances, education and employment, and migrated to other countries, notably to the Gulf region.

However, there was generally no Arab effort to assimilate the waves of Palestinian refugees, in part for political reasons. Rather, the Arab states have pursued a policy of purposeful non-integration of the Palestinian immigrants. In 1959, the Arab League issued resolution 1457, which stated: "The Arab countries will not grant citizenship to applicants of Palestinian origin in order to prevent their assimilation into the host countries." In 1965, the Arab League issued the Casablanca Protocol on the Treatment of Palestinians in Arab States, granting Palestinians the right to work and own property in the host countries while retaining their Palestinian nationality (see appendix I).

Jordan—which currently accounts for about 2.14 million of the refugees—was the only Arab country to grant full citizenship to the Palestinians. As a result, only 18% live in the UNRWA camps. In the other Arab countries, they lack important civil rights. In 2016, Syria was home to an estimated 560,000 Palestinian refugees, while more than 458,000 lived in Lebanon where they cannot acquire citizenship. Partly as a result, around 50% of the country’s Palestinian refugees live in refugee

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6 The numbers are adopted from the UNRWA Report [UNRWA in figures 2016](https://www.unrwa.org/sites/default/files/2016-UNRWA-in-Figures.pdf)
camps. Work and education opportunities are limited because of legal restrictions and the incidence of poverty is high.

Since 1948, additional migration waves have taken place among the Palestinian population of the Arab states, for example as a result of the 1967 war, the expulsion of the PLO from Jordan in 1970, the Israeli invasion of Lebanon in 1982, the first Gulf war in 1990-1991, the expulsion of Palestinians from Iraq in 2006, and most recently, the Syrian Civil War. Jordan has received the bulk of the refugees from most of these additional migration waves. For example, after the Gulf War, about 300,000 Palestinian refugees came to Jordan from Kuwait. The relatively high number of Palestinians in Jordan (estimated between 45% and 60% of Jordan’s population) has caused domestic tensions over the years.

These tensions have now been severely compounded by the influx of Syrian refugees into Jordan, estimated by The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) to have reached over 655,000 refugees by January 2017. The influx of refugees has put significant pressure on Jordan’s infrastructure and its already scarce water and agricultural resources. The refugee crisis has caused tensions in society over jobs, housing, water supplies and other resources.

The Refugee Question and Final Status Negotiations

The refugee question is among the final status issues in the Israeli-Palestinian negotiations on which no agreement has been reached. The difficulty in finding a solution is first and foremost related to the diverging narratives of the 1948 war. Israelis and Palestinians disagree over who bears historical responsibility for the creation of the refugee problem: the initial responsibility for starting the war; the extent to which the refugees left on their own initiative or were expelled; and the respective roles of the Arab leadership and the Jewish forces in the evacuations.

Several options have been discussed for solving the refugee problem, including a right of return, compensation, absorption by Arab states or resettlement outside the region. The core difference among the parties centers on the issue of choice. Proponents of the right of return invoke clause 11 of UN Resolution 194 that was passed in 1948 (see appendix II). The Arab parties interpreted the clause as a comprehensive inalienable right of all refugees and their descendants to freely

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7 External Statistical Report on UNHCR Registered Syrians as of 31 January 2017
choose whether they wish to return to their villages and towns of origin, which are today located in the State of Israel.

Israel, on the other hand, claims that it retains the sovereign right to choose whom to admit to its territory; a right of return could only be applicable to some of the refugees and at Israel’s discretion. The refugee question also touches on the fate of Israel as the nation state of the Jewish people. An unlimited right of return would result in a fundamental shift in the country’s demographics (discussed in more detail in the next section). Israel, therefore, has focused instead on alternative arrangements such as resettlement, compensation and socio-economic rehabilitation. Israel has also pointed out that a similar number of Jewish refugees had to flee Arab countries after the establishment of the State of Israel. Israel absorbed these Jewish refugees, implying that the Arab countries have a similar responsibility to absorb the Palestinians.

In the 1960s and 1970s, Israel launched several initiatives to rehabilitate refugees and effect changes in their living conditions by providing them with permanent housing or plots of land in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. These measures were, however, rejected by the Palestinians. In their view these were simply devices to thwart Palestinian resistance instead of arriving at an acceptable political solution. The Palestinian leadership has categorically rejected any permanent resettlement in host countries and continues to express the hope of repatriation, which remains essential for correcting the perceived injustice of the events of 1948.
Appendix I. Text of the Protocol on the Treatment of Palestinian Refugees in Arab States (Casablanca Protocol). For political reasons, the Arab states have pursued a policy of purposeful non-integration of Palestinian immigrants. The Casablanca Protocol grants Palestinians the right to work and own property in the host countries while retaining their Palestinian nationality.

Regulations adopted by the League of Arab States
September 10, 1965

On the basis of the Charter of the League of Arab States and its special annex pertaining to Palestine, and of the LAS Council resolution concerning the Palestinian issue, and, in particular, of the Special resolution pertaining to safeguarding Palestinian existence,

The Council of Foreign Ministers of Member states agreed, in its meeting in Casablanca on 10 September 1965, upon the following regulations, and called upon member states to take the necessary measures to put them into the sphere of implementation:

(1) Whilst retaining their Palestinian nationality, Palestinians currently residing in the land of ...... have the right of employment on par with its citizens.
(2) Palestinians residing at the moment in ...... in accordance with the dictates of their interests, have the right to leave and return to this state.
(3) Palestinians residing in other Arab states have the right to enter the land of ...... and to depart from it, in accordance with their interests. Their right of entry only gives them the right to stay for the permitted period and for the purpose they entered for, so long as the authorities do not agree to the contrary.
(4) Palestinians who are at the moment in ......, as well as those who were residing and left to the Diaspora, are given, upon request, valid travel documents. The concerned authorities must, wherever they be, issue these documents or renew them without delay.
(5) Bearers of these travel documents residing in LAS states receive the same treatment as all other LAS state citizens, regarding visa, and residency applications.

Appendix II. UN General Assembly Resolution 194 (III)
December 11, 1948

[The following text contains the part of the Resolution that is relevant to the refugee question].

The General Assembly,

Having considered further the situation in Palestine, [...]

11. Resolves that the refugees wishing to return to their homes and live at peace with their neighbours should be permitted to do so at the earliest practicable date, and that compensation should be paid for the property of those choosing not to return and for loss of or damage to property which, under principles of international law or in equity, should be made good by the Governments or authorities responsible;

    Instructs the Conciliation Commission to facilitate the repatriation, resettlement and economic and social rehabilitation of the refugees and the payment of compensation, and to maintain close relations with the Director of the United Nations Relief for Palestine Refugees and, through him, with the appropriate organs and agencies of the United Nations [...].
References

The Demography of Israel and the Palestinian Territories

Population growth plays a particularly important role in the politics of Israel because of divergent demographic trends across communities. According to Israel’s Central Bureau of Statistics, Israel’s current population is 8,522,000. As of 1967, population figures included residents of East Jerusalem, and as of 1982, the Druze and Muslim populations in the Golan. Also included in the data are an estimated 190,000 non-citizen foreign workers.

According to the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics, the population of the West Bank was 2,930,000 in 2016, with about 360,000 Israeli citizens living in settlements on the West Bank in 2014 (not including Jewish residential areas of East Jerusalem). The population of the Gaza Strip in 2016 was 1,880,000. No Israeli citizens remain in Gaza.

Since it’s founding, an Arab minority has existed in Israel. In 2016, 75% of Israel's total population was Jewish (6,377,000 people) and 20% was Arab (1,771,000). These shares have remained largely constant since independence since Jewish immigration has largely balanced out the differences between the population growth rates of the two communities. In the period since the establishment of the state until 2015, Jewish immigration to Israel totaled 3,177,644 immigrants (30% of which were born in Asian and African countries, and 70% from Europe and America). By 2016, about 75% of the Jewish population had been born in Israel.

While 75% of the population is Jewish, 43.9% describe themselves as ‘not religious’ or ‘secular’, 36.2% as ‘traditional’, 10.5% as ‘religious’, and 9.4% as ‘ultra-Orthodox’ (2014 data). Israel's Arab population includes Muslims (82% of the Arab Community) Christians (roughly 10%) and Druze (8%). The largest number of Muslims live in the city of Jerusalem, with significant concentrations in Rahat, Nazareth, and Umm al-Fahm. More than half of the Muslim population is concentrated in the North of Israel and only about 1% lives in the Tel Aviv.

The Christian community—about 2% of the population—includes multiple denominations, including Russian- and Greek-Orthodox, Armenian, Catholic, and

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9 All statistics were derived from Israel Central Bureau of Statistics and the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics and reflect the demographic situation between 2014 and 2017.
10 As of 2000, the population estimates also include the Lebanese citizens who entered Israel in May 2000 and were given Israeli identity cards as a result of their cooperation with Israel in the Lebanon conflict. These include soldiers of the Southern Lebanese army and their family members, and amounted to a population of 2,600 people by the end of 2013.
Protestant. Of the Christians in Israel, about 80% are Arab. The rest are non-Arab Christians who immigrated to Israel with their families under the Law of Return (based on a Jewish ancestor or spouse), mostly from Russia, and who had children in Israel.

The Druze are a small minority religious community whose members are spread across Israel, Syria, Lebanon and Jordan, mostly in mountain villages. Their monotheistic religion is said to have developed as a branch of the Isma’ili Shiite interpretation of Islam and was established during the Fatimid period in the eleventh century. The Druze are recognized as a religious minority and are seen as loyal to the state of Israel; for example, most of them complete mandatory service in the Israeli Defense Forces. Israel’s Druze population lives mostly in the Northern and Haifa Districts.

Of the total population of Israel, 91% live in urban localities (that is, towns and cities with more than 2000 residents), while 9% live in rural localities (‘moshavim’11, ‘kibbutzim’12, and other rural localities). The 28 Bedouin tribes are not included in any of the localities. In 2013, about 96% of Israel’s population lived within the green line; 4% lived in Israeli settlements in the West Bank. Jerusalem is the largest city in Israel with 849,800 residents. Tel Aviv is Israel’s second-largest city with 426,100 residents.

In government statistics, Israeli cities and villages are classified as either Jewish or non-Jewish communities, based on the majority population in the town. By this measure, only 125 of 1,205 localities were majority Arab. Nine were defined as having a Jewish majority population, yet also a significant Arab minority: Jerusalem, Tel Aviv-Jaffa, Haifa, Acre, Ramle, Lod, Maalot Tarshicha, Nazareth Illit (since 1983) and Neve Shalom (as of 1985).

Demographic trends

In 2015, Israel’s average annual population growth rate was 1.7. Throughout the history of the state, most of the growth of the Arab population was due to natural increase13, except for a population increase resulting from the annexation of

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11 A type of agricultural cooperative community of individual farmers, introduced by Labour Zionism in Israel’s pre-state years
12 A type of collective community that was the utopian expression of a socialism and Zionism. Traditionally, the kibbutz was an agricultural community, but it has adopted increasingly industrial forms over the years.
13 Births minus deaths
East-Jerusalem and the Golan Heights following the Six Day War (in 1967 and 1981, respectively). By contrast, the growth of Israel’s Jewish population is the result of both natural increase and international migration.

**Jewish Immigration** (*aliyah*) **to Israel**

In 1948, only 6% of the world’s Jewish population (at that time 11,500,000 people) lived in Israel. By 2016, 43% of the world’s Jewish population (about 14,300,000 people) lived in Israel, with immigration playing a role in this dramatic increase in share.14

Jewish immigration to Israel is largely regulated by the "Law of Return". This law was issued in July 1950 and allows the immigration of Jews and their families from the Diaspora to Israel (*‘aliyah’*), granting them automatic citizenship. The law applies to those individuals who have at least one Jewish grandparent, or parent of spouse. Immigration took place in waves (Figure 5 and 6, page 60). The first immigration wave took place immediately following independence (1948-1951), and resulted in doubling the size of the country’s population within only four years. 48% of immigrants who arrived during this wave came from Europe (mostly from Eastern Europe, especially Poland and Romania), 34% came from Asia (over half from Iraq, but also from Yemen, Turkey and Iran), 14% from Africa and less than 1% from America. The second large immigration wave (1955-58), brought nearly 170,000 immigrants mostly from the Arab countries of North Africa. The third wave began in 1961 and lasted until 1964, and brought close to 230,000 immigrants, mostly from North Africa, although a substantial number of immigrants also arrived from Romania and Poland.

The influx of immigrants between the 1967 Six Day War and the 1973 Yom Kippur War was not large, but was unique in composition. Immigrants arrived from Western Europe (primarily France and the United Kingdom), North America (the United States and Canada), South America (especially Argentina) and Australia. In those same years, the Soviet authorities opened the gates for emigration and so thousands of immigrants arrived to Israel from the former USSR.

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14 The other largest Jewish populations in world nowadays are located in the United States (5,700,000), France (475,000), Canada (385,000), the United Kingdom (290,000) and Russia (186,000).
With the exception of a few years, the period from 1967-1989 saw a decline in immigration.\textsuperscript{15} This decline ended abruptly with the fall of the Iron Curtain. The years between 1990 and 2001 again saw waves of mass immigration to Israel that reached a total of 906,500 immigrants, the majority coming from the Soviet Union and successor states, before once again slowing in the 2000s.

\textbf{Figure 5: Immigration to Israel, 1948-2015}
(Source: Israel Central Bureau of Statistics. Translated by Joyce van de Bildt)

\textbf{Figure 6: Immigrants, according to continents of origin and immigration period, 1948-2011}
(Source: Israel Central Bureau of Statistics. Translated by Joyce van de Bildt)

\textsuperscript{15}In 1978 and 1979, more than 60,000 immigrants arrived, mostly from the former USSR; and in 1984, the first major operation took place to bring Ethiopian Jews to Israel ("Operation Moses"), during which more than 8,000 immigrants arrived.
Since 2013, the majority of new Jewish immigrants have come from Ukraine, Russia, France, the USA and Ethiopia (Figure 7). Aliya from France is particularly noteworthy. It has increased as a result of the country’s mediocre economic performance, but also legislation restricting Jewish practices, the strengthening of far-right parties, and rising anti-Semitism. Since 2011, the number of immigrants from France to Israel has quadrupled from 1,619 immigrants in 2011 to 6,628 immigrants in the year 2015.

As for outmigration, the number of Israelis emigrating fell between 2005 and 2009 from about 21,000 Israeli leaving per year to about 16,000 in 2009, and has remained relatively constant since. Compared to other OECD member countries, Israel’s emigration rates are low.
Non-Jewish immigration

Until 1989, the bulk of international migration to Israel was the result of Jewish immigration or *aliyah*, and constituted a significant factor in maintaining the Jewish majority in the country. However, while the wave of immigrants from the former Soviet Union allowed many people to immigrate under the "Law of Return" because they had Jewish family members, immigrants themselves were not necessarily Jewish.

At the same time, as a result of changes in the structure of the Israeli labor market, the Israeli government began to allow the entrance of foreign workers to support certain industries. In 2016, there were over 93,000 regular and irregular foreign workers in Israel from countries as diverse as Thailand (26%), the Philippines (23%), the former Soviet Union (10%), Romania (9%) and China (8%).

Differential Birth and Fertility Rates

Differences in birth rates are seen by some as constituting a challenge to the Jewish identity of Israel but these concerns are exaggerated within Israel itself. The natural growth rate of Israel’s Jewish population stands at 1.7%, compared to 2.4% among its Muslim population, 1.6% among the Christian population and 1.5% among the Druze population. In 2013, the total fertility rate16 among the Jewish population stood at 3.1 compared to 3.4 children per woman among Muslim women, 2.2 among Druze and 2.1 for Christians. (Muslim birth fertility rates have fallen sharply in recent decades, from a high of 4.7 in 2000.) Despite the diverging average growth and fertility rates, 73% of the population will still be Jewish in 2035 (as opposed to 75% nowadays), and 23% will be Arab (as opposed to 20% nowadays).

Several demographic trends raise significant issues. First, the higher birth and fertility rates of the Muslim population means it is younger, with nearly 50% under 19 years old; 34% of the Jewish community is less than 19 years of age. This raises questions of the absorption of young Arabs into the work force.

Second, the birth and fertility rates of the Arab population living in the territories is even higher than that of Arab population in Israel: the current natural growth rate of the Arab population of the West Bank stands at 2.6, while the total fertility rate was 4.1 children per woman between 2011-2013. Considering these

16 The average number of children a woman is expected to have during her lifetime
high numbers, one of the most common arguments offered in favor of a two-state solution is to preserve a Jewish majority in the State of Israel. Indeed, the territory that is considered by some as the historic land of *Eretz Israel* (the land from the Mediterranean Sea to the Jordan River), now holds an Arab majority.

And finally, fertility is significantly higher among Israel’s Haredi population: between 6 and 7 children per woman. Over the years this could significantly change the ratio of Haredi to secular population. Not only would this change the character of the State of Israel significantly, it is also an economic concern since Haredi men have traditionally valued Torah study over entering the job market and until recently have generally not served in the Israeli military.

**Education**

Since the State Education Law was passed in 1953, Israel’s primary and secondary education system is divided according to four types of supervision: state schools (attended by the majority of students); state religious schools; Druze and Arab schools; and private schools operating under various religious and international auspices. In 2013, 52.5% of those with "Hebrew" education received high school diplomas that met university entrance requirements, qualifying the students as potential candidates for further study (usually after finishing mandatory military service of three years for men and two years for women). This compared to 61.5% among the Christian Arabs, 47% among the Druze and 38% among Muslims.

Among those enrolled in higher education during the 2014-2015 academic year, about 268,164 students attended universities and colleges: 48% at universities; 52% at colleges, in addition to 46,208 more studying at the Open University (a system largely based on correspondence and self-study). Institutions of higher education in Israel are open to all those who meet the academic standards, and hence include students of all ethnic backgrounds and religions. According to the Israeli NGO *Sikkuy*, an increasing number of Arab students have entered the higher education system since the 1970s, although they are still relatively underrepresented and instruction is overwhelmingly in Hebrew. In the 2014-2015 academic year, Arabs constituted 14% of undergraduate students, 10.5% of graduate students and 6% of doctoral students.
Employment and income

Among the Jewish population, 81.5% of Jewish men aged 25-64 were employed in 2016, compared to 78% in 2002. In 2013, 79% of Jewish women aged 25-64 were employed, compared with 66% in 2002. The employment rate of the Haredi sector has generally diverged from this number, although it has notably increased over the years. In 2015 the employment rate among Haredi men aged 25-64 was 50%, but this was an increase from the 40-50% in the years 2002-2011. Also among Haredi women, a significant change could be noted as it reached 73% in 2015, while in the years 2002-2011 it had fluctuated around 50%.

The labor force participation rate among Muslims in 2014 aged 15 and above was much lower, at 44.3% and with a very different gender pattern (63.5% for men and 24.9% for women). Unemployment among Muslims aged 15 and over was 8.1%, higher than among Jews, Christians and Druze (5.7%, 6.1% and 7.3%, respectively). }

In 2016, the monthly average wage of an Israeli full-time employee was NIS 9,596 ($2,561); in 2015, the median salary was NIS 6,884 ($1,857). There remains a significant gap in the average salaries earned by Jews and Arabs. The differences are not simply between Jews and Arabs, but also between men and women and between Ashkenazi and Mizrahi Jews. (Average monthly salary for Arabs was NIS 6,076 ($1,551) in 2014, less than two-thirds of Jews.)
References


Israel's Electoral System

Israel is a parliamentary democracy. Its *de jure* head of state is the President, elected for seven years by the Parliament. The position is currently held by Reuven Rivlin and is largely symbolic and apolitical. Executive power is exercised by the Israeli government, headed by the Prime Minister. In addition to the Cabinet, the Prime Minister and a select group of ministers (seven or eight) form the "Security Cabinet", which is in charge of foreign and defense policy.

Elections for the Knesset are scheduled every four years; the voting age is 18. Early elections are common, however: the last four governments have lasted three, three, four and two years, respectively. An unusual feature of the Israeli electoral system is that it is based on proportional representation, but the entire country constitutes a single electoral district and thresholds are low (previously 2%, recently raised to 3.25%). The result is a highly-fragmented party system; in the last election, ten parties won seats with the Likud winning only 23% of the popular vote, amounting to 30 seats. Given the typical requirement of securing 61 seats, governments are formed with a number of smaller parties who often hold substantial power because of their ability to determine the formation and stability of the government. Theoretically, minority governments may be formed as long as they receive a vote of confidence from the Knesset. In practice, minority governments in Israel only occurred as a result of a loss of support base during the governing term. The last government involved four parties (*Likud-Israel Beiteinu, Yesh Atid, The Jewish Home, and HaTnuah*); the current one 5 parties (*Likud, The Jewish Home, Kulanu, Shas, United Torah Judaism*).

Most recently, Israeli elections were held in March 2015, after an 18 month-old coalition led by Prime Minister Netanyahu collapsed over internal political disagreements relating to the economy and a proposed nationalism law that many feared might prove to be discriminatory towards Israel’s Arab minority. The March 2015 elections were won once again by Netanyahu and his Likud party, overcoming a serious challenge coming from the center-left electoral alliance "The Zionist Union", led by Isaac Herzog and Tzipi Livni. During these elections, Israel’s various small Arab political parties united for the first time to ensure that they would cross the threshold into one electoral alliance titled "The Joint Arab List". They were very successful, winning 13 seats, emerging as Israel’s third largest party. No Arab party has ever participated in an Israeli government.

Israeli politics has undergone major changes in recent decades. From 1948 until the mid-1970s, Israeli politics was dominated by labor-left parties that were...
generally considered to be the 'founders' of the State of Israel (see chart on page 69).

Other parties were active at the same time, including Herut (the predecessor of today's Likud) and several smaller liberal, religious and communist parties. Being largely an immigrant society, in the years after its establishment, Israel was clearly fragmented along societal lines, according to the origin of the immigrants and their social background. Jewish Israelis of Ashkenazi (European) descent were clearly predominant in society at the expense of Jewish Israelis of Mizrahi (North African and Middle Eastern) descent and the Arab minority that remained in the country. The Mizrahi Jewish immigrants, feeling overlooked by Mapai's Labour establishment, tended to vote for Menachem Begin's Herut party and later for Likud.

In 1971, the 'Black Panther' party was established, which grew out of a social movement with the aim of advancing the interests of Mizrahi Jews, but their move into electoral politics was without success.

In recent decades, many but not all of the Israelis of Mizrahi background have managed to climb the social ladder, while some, but certainly not all, of the immigrants from the former Soviet Union and more recent Jewish immigrants from Ethiopia have come to form a new Jewish 'underclass' together with the Haredi community. The Russian immigrants that arrived during the 1990s have tended to vote for parties like Yisrael BaAliyah (formed in 1996 by Natan Sharansky) and Yisrael Beiteinu, which were established specifically as a platform to express their interests.

The party system has undergone a profound transformation since the end of the 1970s with the Labor Party losing substantial influence to the right-wing and religious parties. The terms right-wing and left-wing in Israel do not exactly correlate with the use of these terms in U.S. politics. On the one hand, the political left and right in Israel are largely defined with regard to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict; right-wing generally indicating a reluctance to concessions in negotiations with the Palestinians political right, and vice versa. At the same time, right-wing parties may be more conservative, nationalist or more religious, but not exclusively so. For example, the right-wing "Israel is our Home" is a secular party. Similarly, when it comes to the economy or the role of the government in society, parties that belong to the political right-wing may advance left-wing agendas. For example, the religious party Shas may be considered a right-wing party when it comes to its position towards the Israeli-Palestinian conflict; however, it advocates extensive social welfare services by the State. Indeed, the political right in Israel is very diverse.
Over the past two decades, Israeli politics has shifted to the right and new right-wing and religious nationalist parties, such as "Israel is our Home" (Yisrael Beiteinu) and “The Jewish Home” (HaBayit HaYehudi), have come into existence. These parties have carried novel—and controversial--policy proposals. The leader of “The Jewish Home” party, Naftali Bennett, is currently Minister of Education and has introduced reforms to deepen Jewish education at Israeli schools, a move that is considered unwelcome by part of the secular Israeli population. Bennett also expressed his objection to a two-state solution and advocates the outright annexation of large Jewish settlements in the West Bank to Israel. The leader of the “Israel is our Home” party, Avigdor Lieberman, has promoted a similar proposal to annex Jewish settlements to Israel in exchange for Arab-populated territories in Israel, specifically those in the “Triangle” area, a concentration of Arab villages in Israel’s central region adjacent to the Green Line. Arab citizens of these territories would lose Israeli citizenship and those remaining would have to pledge an oath of allegiance to the state in order to keep their citizenship. Lieberman’s plan aims to reduce the Arab population of Israel and the Jewish population of the West Bank, creating two more ethnically homogenous territories.

At the same time, the influence of Israel’s traditional left-wing party, now called Meretz, has waned. The more successful efforts in countering the move to the right have come from political parties at the center-left or center of the political spectrum, led by politicians such as Isaac Herzog and Tzipi Livni of the Zionist Union (based mainly on the historical Labor party), Yair Lapid of the Yesh Atid (“There is a Future”) party and Moshe Kahlon of the Kulanu (“All of us”) party. The Kadima party, founded by PM Ariel Sharon in 2005, is another example of an effort to moderate Israeli politics.
### Israeli governments: 1948-present

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Knesset</th>
<th>Government + formation date</th>
<th>Prime Minister + party</th>
<th>Comments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1st Knesset</td>
<td>Provisional govt. May 14, 1948</td>
<td>David Ben Gurion, Mapai</td>
<td>Temporary cabinet until first elections are held in the newly established State of Israel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1st government</td>
<td>March 10, 1949</td>
<td>“ “</td>
<td>PM Ben-Gurion resigns on Oct. 15, 1950 over issues regarding ministerial appointments and education in the immigrant camps</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2nd government</td>
<td>November 1, 1950</td>
<td>“ “</td>
<td>Government resigns on Feb. 14, 1951 over proposals on registration of schoolchildren</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3rd government</td>
<td>October 8, 1951</td>
<td>“ “</td>
<td>Government resigns on Dec. 19, 1952 following arguments about IDF conscription for women, immigrant absorption and religious education. Elections were held in the shadow of severe economic crisis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4th government</td>
<td>December 24, 1952</td>
<td>“ “</td>
<td>PM Ben-Gurion resigns on Dec. 6, 1953 and retired to Kibbutz Sde Boker in the Negev</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5th government</td>
<td>January 26, 1954</td>
<td>Moshe Sharett, Mapai</td>
<td>PM Sharett resigns on June 29 1955 after a vote of no-confidence after the government defends Rudolf Kastner, a Hungarian Jew accused of collaboration with the Nazis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7th government</td>
<td>November 3, 1955</td>
<td>David Ben-Gurion, Mapai</td>
<td>PM resigns on Dec. 3, 1957 after ministers leak classified information to the press</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8th government</td>
<td>January 7, 1958</td>
<td>“ “</td>
<td>PM Ben-Gurion resigns on July 5, 1959 after two government parties vote against selling arms to West Germany</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9th government</td>
<td>December 17, 1959</td>
<td>“ “</td>
<td>PM Ben-Gurion resigns on Jan. 31, 1961 after a motion of no-confidence following the Lavon Affair (a failed Israeli covert operation conducted in Egypt in 1954)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10th government</td>
<td>November 2, 1961</td>
<td>“ “</td>
<td>PM Ben-Gurion resigns on June 16, 1963, for which the reasons are disputed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11th government</td>
<td>June 26, 1963</td>
<td>Levi Eshkol, Mapai</td>
<td>PM Eshkol resigns over a dispute with Ben-Gurion concerning the Lavon affair</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12th government</td>
<td>December 22, 1964</td>
<td>“ “</td>
<td>General elections were held in Nov. 1965</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

17 An outgoing government continues its duties until a new government and PM begin their term
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Party</th>
<th>Prime Minister</th>
<th>Government Number</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The Alignment</td>
<td>“ ”</td>
<td>8th Knesset</td>
<td>March 10, 1974</td>
<td>Continuation of the National Unity Government. General elections held in Oct. 1969; 2 years after the Six Day War victory, but in the midst of the War of Attrition.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Alignment</td>
<td>Yitzhak Rabin</td>
<td>9th Knesset</td>
<td>June 2, 1974</td>
<td>Continuation of the National Unity Govt. 1st govt. to last a full 4-year Knesset term.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Likud</td>
<td>Menachem Begin</td>
<td>10th Knesset</td>
<td>June 20, 1977</td>
<td>The shortest-lived government in Israeli political history. PM Meir resigns on Apr. 11, 1974 over report on the Yom Kippur War. Rabin replaces her as party leader.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Alignment</td>
<td>Shimon Peres</td>
<td>13th Knesset</td>
<td>September 13, 1984</td>
<td>National Unity Government with Likud causes a split in the Alignment alliance. In Oct. 1986, Shamir replaces Peres as PM in accordance with a rotation agreement.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Alignment</td>
<td>“ ”</td>
<td>15th Knesset</td>
<td>December 22, 1988</td>
<td>Continuation of the National Unity Govt. The Alignment pulls out after Shamir’s refusal to accept a U.S. peace initiative.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“ ”</td>
<td>“ ”</td>
<td>16th Knesset</td>
<td>June 11, 1990</td>
<td>Referred to as the most right-wing government in Israel’s history. Three parties left the coalition in protest to Shamir’s participation in Madrid peace conference.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Labor</td>
<td>Yitzhak Rabin</td>
<td>17th Knesset</td>
<td>July 13, 1992</td>
<td>PM Rabin assassinated on Nov. 4, 1995. Shimon Peres takes over as interim PM.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Labor</td>
<td>Shimon Peres</td>
<td>18th Knesset</td>
<td>November 22, 1995</td>
<td>Shimon Peres continues Rabin’s coalition government until the May 1996 elections.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Likud-Gesher-Tzomet</td>
<td>Benjamin Netanyahu</td>
<td>19th Knesset</td>
<td>June 18, 1996</td>
<td>Labor wins May 1996 Knesset elections, but Peres is defeated by Benjamin Netanyahu in the country’s first direct elections for PM. Next elections for PM held in May 1999.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Likud</td>
<td>“ ”</td>
<td>20th Knesset</td>
<td>November 22, 1995</td>
<td>Government collapses following the</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>16th Knesset</td>
<td>March 7, 2001</td>
<td>Ariel Sharon, <em>Likud</em></td>
<td>Sharon wins PM elections but Likud is not the largest party in the Knesset, resulting in a National Unity Government with Labor. Direct PM elections abolished</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17th Knesset</td>
<td>May 4, 2006</td>
<td>Ehud Olmert, <em>Kadima</em></td>
<td>Knesset elections held in March 2009</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18th Knesset</td>
<td>March 31, 2009</td>
<td>Benjamin Netanyahu, <em>Likud</em></td>
<td>National Unity Coalition with <em>Kadima</em> formed on May 8, 2012. <em>Kadima</em> leaves coalition two months later over the Tal Law</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20th Knesset</td>
<td>March 18, 2013</td>
<td>Benjamin Netanyahu, <em>Likud</em></td>
<td>The 61-member coalition is Israel’s smallest postelection government in 34 years</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Overview of the current major political parties

- **Likud**, meaning "unification" or "consolidation", is a conservative party that is located at the center-right of Israeli politics. The party was established in 1973 as a union between Menachem Begin’s *Herut* party and a number of liberal parties. While the *Herut* party had functioned as an outspoken right-wing, hawkish party in the Israeli political spectrum, Likud’s orientation is that of a more moderate right. Among its main principles are nationalism, social equality, a free market economy, and preservation of Jewish tradition and culture. Likud prioritizes security matters and believes in Greater *Eretz Yisrael* (that all of the historical Land of Israel is the patrimony of the Jews). However, the party is not entirely monolithic and is divided between more centrist and hardline ideologues. The Likud was formed as a secular party, but it has adopted some more religious Zionist features over the years. It has generally been reluctant to negotiate on concessions to the Palestinians, though under Menahem Begin, the party negotiated a peace with Egypt in 1979. Since 2005 until the present, the party has been led again by Benjamin Netanyahu.

- **The Zionist Union**, (in Hebrew: *Mahane HaTsioni*) is the joint list established in 2014 by the Labor party ("Avoda"), led by Isaac Herzog, and "The Movement"
("HaTnuah") led by Tzipi Livni. Presenting itself as a movement for change, Herzog and Livni joined forces in order to make a reasonable chance to counter Netanyahu's popularity among voters, and replace his government with a center-leftist one. Herzog and Livni blame a sequence of Netanyahu governments for Israel's weak public services, the high cost of living, a fragmented society, a deteriorating security situation, and Israel's isolation in the world. Therefore, key issues on its political agenda were to reduce the cost of housing, health care, education, and basic goods, with the aim to narrow the gap between the rich and the poor. The Zionist Union also believed Israel should re-enter negotiations with the Palestinians in a bilateral process supervised by the international community, as well as halt construction in isolated settlements in the West Bank. The Zionist Union lost the March 2015 elections to Netanyahu’s Likud party, winning 24 seats as opposed to the 30 of Likud.

- **The Joint Arab List** is an electoral alliance that was formed ahead of the 2015 elections and consists of the largest four Arab political parties in Israel: Hadash, Balad, Ra'am, and Ta'al. The move was unprecedented, marking the first time the Arab parties ran as one single list despite their diverse ideological platforms and political orientations when it comes to religion, economy, Palestinian nationalism and gender issues:

  - **Hadash** (a Hebrew acronym for “Democratic Front for Peace and Equality”) is a far-leftist party that is inspired by Marxist ideology and was formed in 1977. It supports workers’ rights, the development of social services, and Jewish-Arab cooperation. Although the party is mainly Arab, it also has Jewish members. The party favours the Israeli withdrawal from the West Bank and the establishment of a Palestinian state. It also supports the right of return for Palestinian refugees to Israel and calls for the official recognition of Israeli Arabs as a national minority. Hadash's voters are mainly secular and middle class Israeli Arabs, as well as Arab Christians in Israel. Notably, Hadash has also drawn votes from thousands of Jewish left-wing Israelis. The party has consistently been part of the Israeli parliament since 1977. Since 1996, it has run on several joint Arab lists. Today, Hadash forms part of the Joint Arab List.

  - **Balad** (in Arabic: “Country”) is a Palestinian nationalist, secular political party that was founded in 1995 under the leadership of ‘Azmi Bishara. It fights for the rights of Israel's Arab population, the elimination of discrimination, and the implementation of the two-state solution according to the borders of 1967, meaning it would include East-Jerusalem, the West
Bank and the Gaza Strip as part of the Palestinian State. It also promotes the return of Palestinian refugees to Israel and the return of the Golan Heights to Syria. *Balad* envisions Israel as a democratic state with rights for all its citizens. Balad argues that the definition of Israel as a Jewish state is inherently undemocratic. In 2007, Bishara was accused of treason for passing on information to the Lebanese militant organization *Hezbollah*. He was replaced as party leader by Said Naffaa, who was succeeded by Haneen Zoabi, the first Arab woman in the Israeli parliament. Despite several requests to disqualify the party or its members from running in elections, based on accusations of disloyalty to the state or even subversive activities, *Balad* had held several seats in the Knesset ever since 1996. Nowadays it is led by Jamal Zahalka and forms part of the Joint Arab List.

- **Ra’am** (a Hebrew acronym for “United Arab List”) is an Israeli Arab, Islamist political party in Israel. It advocates equal rights for Israel’s Arab citizens and supports the creation of Palestinian state in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, with East-Jerusalem as its capital. The party enjoys support among nationalist and religious Muslim Arabs within Israel, as well as from Israel’s Bedouin population. The party held two to five seats in successive parliaments since its establishment in 1996. Since its alliance with Ahmed Tibi’s party *Ta’al* in 2006, it has consistently held four seats in the Knesset. Nowadays it forms part of the Joint Arab List.

- **Ta’al** (a Hebrew acronym for “Arab Movement for Renewal”) is a secular Israeli Arab political party in Israel whose activities revolve around improving the civil and legal status of Israel’s Arab citizens. It was founded in the mid-1990s by Ahmad Tibi, who served as a political advisor to Yasser Arafat between 1993 and 1999. The party seeks full equality between Israel’s Jewish and Arab citizens and emphasizes the Palestinian national identity of Arabs with Israeli citizenship. It does not recognize Israel as a Jewish state and suggests the removal of icons that represent a special status for the Jewish majority of the country, such as the national anthem and the flag. It supports the Israeli-Palestinian peace process, with the aim to establish a Palestinian state alongside Israel according to the June 1967 borders, with Jerusalem as its capital, and a comprehensive solution to the Palestinian refugee problem.

Since the establishment of the Knesset, Arab lists were never included in any governing coalition, and used the parliament mainly as a platform for protest, with little impact on legislative processes or in Knesset committees. Over the
years, this situation led to a decrease in Arab confidence in the Israeli government and Knesset, and to a generally low voter turnout among Arab citizens. Arab voter turnout increased significantly in the last election and the new coalition won 14 seats, becoming the third-largest faction in the parliament.

- **Yesh Atid**, meaning “There is a future”, was established in January 2012 by Israeli TV personality Yair Lapid as a result of the major civil protests against the deteriorating socio-economic situation held in 2011. The party is middle-class oriented, secular and located at the center of the political spectrum. Among its main agenda items are lowering the cost of living, tax reduction, obligatory military service for Israel’s Haredi citizens, reducing government subsidies allocated to Israeli settlements in the West Bank, and reviving the peace process. In the 2013 election, Yesh Atid won 19 seats and joined the governing coalition. Minister Yair Lapid was then fired by Netanyahu in December 2014 and was one of the reasons early elections were held in 2015. **Yesh Atid currently has** 12 seats in the Knesset.

- **Kulanu**, meaning “All of us”, is a center-rightist party established in November 2014 that focuses mainly on economic issues affecting the middle class, especially income inequality, the housing crisis, and poverty. The party is led by a former Likud member of parliament, Moshe Kahlon. **Kulanu** became the fifth party in the 2015 elections, winning 10 seats.

- **The Jewish Home**, (in Hebrew: *HaBayit HaYehudi*) is a right-wing political party with an overwhelming religious Zionist orientation. The party was established in 2008 as the successor to the National Religious Party (known in Hebrew as *Mafdal*). The party’s main emphasis is on the Jewish character of the State of Israel; yet, it has pledged its commitment to protecting the rights of Israel’s minority populations. The Jewish Home opposes the establishment of a Palestinian state, and though it believes all of Judea and Samaria belongs to Israel, it advocates partial annexation of the territories as the most practicable option at this stage. It advocates the annexation of the so-called ‘Areas C’, that were established by the Oslo Accords and include most of the Israeli settlements in the West Bank. Its economic platform promotes a free market economy and seeks to reduce the gap between rich and poor by breaking monopolies and stimulating educational and business initiatives in Israel’s periphery. The Jewish Home party is led by former software entrepreneur Naftali Bennett and enjoys wide popularity among Israel’s modern-Orthodox Jews, winning 8 seats in the 2015 elections.
• **Shas**, is a religious political party that promotes the interests of Haredi Sephardic and Mizrahi Jews. It advocates for a Jewish religious character for the State of Israel, as well as extensive welfare services for lower-income classes and large families. Aside from Haredi voters, the party enjoys widespread support among Israel’s modern-Orthodox and secular Mizrahi Jews. The party was established in 1984 with the aim of improving facilities and services for Sephardic Jews and promoting religion among the Sephardic youth. Former Sephardic Chief Rabbi of Israel, Rabbi Ovadia Yosef, led the party and remained its spiritual leader until his death in 2013. Shas has participated in a number of governing coalitions and has had considerable influence, especially regarding the conscription of Haredi citizens to the military. The party is currently led by Aryeh Deri and won 7 seats in the 2015 elections.

• **Israel is Our Home**, (in Hebrew: *Yisrael Beiteinu*) is a secular right-wing nationalist political party, led by the Moldavian-born Avigdor Lieberman who is a former member of the Likud party. The party was established in 1999 in an attempt to create a political platform to voice the interests of immigrants from the former Soviet Union and to strengthen their position in Israeli society. The party’s position towards the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is one of non-compromise and zero-tolerance of terrorism. The party supports the creation of a Palestinian state side by side with Israel, and has suggested territory and population exchanges via swaps of Arab-inhabited territories inside Israel for Jewish-populated ones in the West Bank. Yisrael Beiteinu prioritizes the preservation of a Jewish majority within Israel; according to their position, non-Jewish citizens would be free to remain in Israel as long as they declared loyalty to the Israeli state. Yisrael Beiteinu won 6 seats in the 2015 elections.

• **United Torah Judaism**, is a non-Zionist religious party created in a merger between *Agudat Israel* (Union of Israel) and *Degel HaTorah* (Flag of the Torah) in 1992. They believe a Jewish state can only come about through divine intervention. Rabbis function as the spiritual leaders of the party and give instructions to the party members. United Torah Judaism has joined several coalition governments with significant authority as a pivotal group. They have exerted leverage to obtain funding for religious institutions.

• **Meretz**, meaning “Vitality” is a social-democratic, secular left-wing party. Meretz is a proponent of a Palestinian state in the West Bank and in Gaza. It advocates for a withdrawal of the Israeli military from the Palestinian territories and the dismantling of the settlements. Meretz maintains a close relationship with the Israeli Peace movement. Meretz’s platform promotes issues of social justice,
human rights, women’s empowerment, environmentalism and limiting religion in public life. Viewed as the ultimate left-wing representative in Israel, the party was relatively popular after its foundation in the 1990s (10-12 seats), but its popularity has dwindled and they currently have 5 seats in the Knesset.

Composition of the current Knesset (2015)
Other Israeli political parties

- **Kadima**, meaning “Forward”, is a moderate, centrist party that was established in 2005 by former PM and member of Likud Ariel Sharon, with the aim of breaking the stalemate of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. During his time as Prime Minister, Sharon unilaterally disengaged from Gaza and dismantled the Israeli settlements. The move caused a split in the Likud party between hardliners and moderates, and was one of the factors that led Sharon to resign in late 2005 and establish Kadima. The party proposed the creation of a Palestinian state, with Jerusalem and large settlement blocs remaining under Israeli control, largely in line with the Roadmap for Peace designed by the Middle East Quarter in 2002. After Sharon suffered a stroke in 2006, his party won the majority of the seats in the ensuing election under party leaders Ehud Olmert and Tzipi Livni. In 2012, Livni lost internal party elections to the more conservative Shaul Mofaz, and she left the party. Kadima’s has disappeared from Israeli politics.

- **Mapai**, “The Worker’s Party of Eretz Israel”, used to be Israel’s major leftist party dominating politics until its merger with Labor in 1968. A social-democratic party that represented Labor Zionism, Mapai was founded in 1930 under the leadership of David Ben-Gurion. Mapai played a significant role in the development and security of the Jewish communities in Mandate Palestine in the pre-state era. Under Mapai, a welfare state was established, including a minimum income, low-cost access to housing, health and social services and compulsory education.

- **Labor** (in Hebrew: Avoda) is a secular, center-leftist political party that pursues a social-democratic policy. Shortly after its establishment it formed an alliance with Mapam under the name of “The Alignment”. During the 1970s, Israel’s welfare state was expanded under successive Labor governments. Labor became an opposition party in 1977 when it lost the elections to Likud. In the 1980s, The Alignment under Shimon Peres agreed to join a unity government with Likud, which caused a split in the party. In 1992, Labor won the election and introduced new social benefits, insurance, allowances and incomes support. The unity government signed the peace treaty with Jordan, and Labor’s name became connected to the Oslo Accords and the peace process. Among prominent leaders of the Labor party were Levi Eshkol, Golda Meir, Yitzhak Rabin, Shimon Peres and Ehud Barak.

- **Mapam** “The United Workers Party”, was a socialist party that is considered the forerunner of today’s Meretz party. Mapam was established in 1948 as the result
of a merger between various workers’ parties. It originally had a Marxist-Zionist orientation and was pro-Soviet. Notably, the party was a proponent of a bi-national Jewish-Arab state. In 1969, the party formed an alliance with the Labor Party, called “The Alignment”, until it broke away from the alliance in 1984 as its leader Shimon Peres agreed to join a unity government with the Likud party. In view of the party’s declining support of the years, it eventually decided to join two other parties (Ratz and Shinuy) to form the leftist, social-democratic party Meretz in 1992.

• **Herut**, meaning “Freedom”, used to be the main rightist party in Israel until it merged into the Likud. A conservative, secular party that represented Revisionist Zionism, Herut was founded in 1948 under the leadership of Menachem Begin. It was a successor to the paramilitary group Irgun (or Etzel) led by Begin that had been active during the Mandate period. As the largest opposition group during the post-state years, Herut took several notable positions: it maintained that Israel should control both banks of the Jordan River, it was in favour of the Jewish immigration from North Africa and the Middle East and, in the economic realm, it opposed state intervention. It also organized a hard-fought and bitter campaign against the Restitution Agreement that Israel signed with Germany in 1952. In 1965, it formed an alliance with the Liberals called Gahal. This merged into Likud in 1973, which won the 1977 elections and eventually became a unified party in 1988.

• **Kach** is a marginal right-wing organisation that was outlawed in Israel in 1994. The founder of Kach was Rabbi Meir Kahane, who believed that the Jewish people have a righteous claim to the territory of “Greater Israel”, including the West Bank and parts of Jordan. To that end, Kach favoured the expansion of Israel’s borders, the expulsion of its Arab citizens, and the introduction of Jewish religious law. To achieve its goals, Kach did not refrain from the use of violence and bombing attacks. The party won one seat in the Israeli Knesset from 1984 to 1988, but was banned from participating in the elections after a new law was adopted in 1985, banning parties with a racist platform from participating in the elections. Kahane was assassinated in New York in 1990, after which the movement split into two: Kach and Kahane Chai (“Kahane Is Alive”). Both movements were outlawed in Israel in 1994, when one of Kach’s members, Baruch Goldstein, perpetrated a terrorist attack in a mosque in Hebron in which 29 people were killed. It is presumed that the organizations’ activities have continued underground albeit with a very small circle of supporters.
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Governance and Judicial Review

Israel does not have a formal written constitution. However, the country does have a set of Basic Laws. These constitute Israel’s operative constitution, laying down the foundations of the system of government and the rights of the individual. These laws were promulgated by the Knesset but were gradually recognized as the foundations of the Israeli political system and as the equivalent of a binding constitution by the Supreme Court. This brief outlines the historical background to the Basic Laws, including the legal status of the Declaration of Independence, the Basic Laws themselves, the judiciary system and some current debates about the legal system.

Independence and Background to the Basic Laws

Israel’s Declaration of Independence mentions a draft constitution to be prepared by a Constituent Assembly no later than October 1, 1948. However, the discussions regarding the constitution ended in deadlock. The religious parties vehemently opposed the idea of adopting a constitution other than the Torah. Prime Minster David Ben-Gurion also opposed drafting a formal constitution, arguing that there were more pressing issues facing the country. In 1950, a compromise was reached in what came to be known as the Harari Resolution. The Resolution stated the following:

“The First Knesset instructs the Constitution, Law and Justice Committee to prepare a draft constitution for the state. The constitution will be built, chapter by chapter, in such a way that each will constitute a separate basic law. The chapters shall be presented to the Knesset when the committee completes its work, and all the chapters together shall comprise the constitution of the state.”

In short, the Harari Resolution stipulated that Israel’s constitution would be created gradually through a series of basic laws instead of one single written document with an attached bill of rights. Today, there is a majority view that the basic laws constitute Israel’s constitution. They have supremacy over Knesset legislation and restrictive power over the government. As examples from its rulings below illustrate, the Israeli Supreme Court plays an extraordinary role in shaping the Basic Laws into a de facto constitution through the process of judicial review.

Over the years, cases brought before the Supreme Court have sought to argue that principles embedded in the Declaration of Independence establish fundamental
legal norms. But these cases have failed. Shortly after the establishment of the state in 1948, the Supreme Court issued a judgment in the Ziv case, in which the petitioner relied on the Declaration of Independence to annul a Knesset bill that condemned his property. The Supreme Court refused to ascribe a constitutional status to the Declaration stating that the only object of the Declaration was to affirm the establishment of the State of Israel for the purposes of its recognition in international law.

Another key ruling on the status of Israel’s Declaration of Independence was given in 1970 in the Rogozinsky case. The case concerned the Rabbinical Courts Jurisdiction Law regarding marriage and divorce, and a petition of a non-believing couple who requested to be relieved of the obligation to undergo a religious ceremony. The couple argued that the Rabbinical Courts’ jurisdiction over issues of marriage conflicted with the values of freedom of religion and conscience embedded in the Declaration of Independence. The Supreme Court rejected the couple’s claim on the basis that the Declaration could not be treated as having fundamental constitutional status.

References to the Declaration of Independence were made for the first time in 1992 with the enactment of the Basic Law: Human Dignity and Liberty, and Basic Law: Freedom of Occupation. The first line of the Basic Law: Human Dignity and Liberty reads as follows: “Basic human rights in Israel are based on the recognition of the value of the human being, and the sanctity of his life and his freedom, and these will be respected in the spirit of the principles of the Declaration of Independence of the State of Israel.”

In 1995, the Supreme Court’s landmark ruling on the Bank Mizrahi case is considered to have marked the beginning of the so-called constitutional revolution in Israel. In this case, the Supreme Court decided to treat Israel’s Basic Laws as its formal constitution. The judgment established constitutional guidelines for judicial review and established the supremacy of the Basic Laws thereby committing the Knesset to ensuring that all its legislation would be in accordance with the Basic Laws. The ruling thus gave the Supreme Court the authority to invalidate legislation that violated the Basic Laws and was thus seen as unconstitutional. Since this decision, the judicial review of Knesset legislation by the Supreme Court has become part and parcel of Israel’s legal and parliamentary life.
The Basic Laws

There are eleven Basic Laws, which are divided between ‘entrenched’ and ‘non-entrenched’ laws. Entrenched laws can only be amended or rescinded by a special majority of Knesset members and most of them are protected against emergency ordinances. Non-entrenched laws, on the other hand, can be amended by quorum of Knesset members present at the time of voting. The entrenched laws are Basic Law: The Knesset; Basic Law: President of the State; Basic Law: The Judiciary; Basic Law: Human Dignity and Liberty; Basic Law: Freedom of Occupation; and Basic Law: The Government. These laws cannot be changed by either regular laws or emergency regulations passed by the Knesset.

The basic laws are:

- **The Knesset (1958, entrenched):** Establishes the functions of the Israeli parliament.
- **Israel Lands (1960):** Ensures that all state lands remain national property.
- **The President of the State (1964, entrenched):** Establishes the status, election and powers of the president.
- **The State Economy (1975):** Regulates payments made by and to the State.
- **The Military (1976):** Establishes military forces as subordinate to the government and regulates the legal basis of operation of the Israeli Defense Forces (IDF).
- **Jerusalem, the Capital of Israel (1980):** Establishes Jerusalem as the capital of Israel and asserts the unity and integrity of the city.
- **The Judiciary (1984, entrenched):** Deals with the authority, institutions, principle of independence, openness, appointment, qualifications, and powers of the judiciary.
- **The State Comptroller (1988):** Deals with the powers, tasks, and duties of the supervisor of government bodies, ministries, institutions, authorities, agencies, persons, and bodies operating on behalf of the state.
- **Human Dignity and Liberty (1992, entrenched):** Declares that basic human rights in Israel are based on the recognition of the value of the person, the sanctity of life and the fact that individuals are free. Defines human freedom as the right to leave and enter the country, privacy (including speech, writings, and notes), intimacy, and protection from unlawful searches of one's person or property. This law includes instructions regarding its own permanence and protection from changes by means of emergency regulations.
• The Government (1968; replaced by 1992 law and then restored with amendments by the 2001 law, entrenched): Determines the composition of the government, its roles and authorities, and qualifications for ministers serving in the government.

• Freedom of Occupation (1992; amended in 1994, entrenched): Guarantees every Israeli national or resident the “right to engage in any occupation, profession or trade”. Any violation of this right shall be "by a law befitting the values of the State of Israel, enacted for a proper purpose, and to an extent no greater than is required."

The Judicial System

The Israeli judicial system is composed of a general court system and a number of specialized courts. Special courts include the labor court system, the military courts and the religious courts.

There are three types of courts in the general court system: magistrates’ courts, district courts and the Supreme Court. Magistrates’ courts have jurisdiction in most criminal and civil matters. Criminal and civil matters that fall outside the jurisdiction of magistrates’ courts are dealt with by district courts. The Supreme Court is the highest court of appeal and also has the power of original jurisdiction. It consists of fifteen justices (presently 11 men, of whom one is an Arab, and 4 women) appointed by a free-standing Judicial Selection Committee. The Committee was established in 1958 in order to prevent outside political pressure in the process of the appointment of judges. It has nine members: the Justice Minister, another cabinet minister, two Knesset members, two members of the Israeli Bar Association, the Chief Justice and two other judges of the Supreme Court. Once elected, judges have tenure until the age of 70.

Recent Debates about the Legal System

After a number of proposals by members of the Knesset from different parties, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu proposed the introduction of a new Basic Law in May 2014. The new law would redefine Israel as “the national homeland of the Jewish people” rather than as “Jewish and democratic,” as it presently appears in existing Israeli legislation. The law would further anchor the Jewish character of the State of Israel. The proposal in its various approved drafts seeks to remove Arabic as an official language and to limit rights for non-Jewish citizens to “individual rights according to the law” in an effort to reaffirm the sole right of Jewish citizens to national self-determination in Israel. In November 2014,
the Cabinet approved the proposal. The many critics of the new legislation argued that it would undermine the democratic character of Israel and codify discrimination against Arab Israelis.

Netanyahu responded to the criticisms by stating that the new Basic Law would respect the rights of non-Jewish minorities living in the country in accordance with the country's Declaration of Independence. As a response to Netanyahu's nationality bill, Hilik Bar from the Labor Party proposed an alternative bill in December 2014, which called for the adoption of the Declaration of Independence, with its emphasis on equality for all citizens, as an integral part of the country's Basic Laws. Netanyahu's controversial bill still has to be approved by the Knesset.

In the process of forming a coalition government after the March 2015 general elections, Netanyahu was also seeking to reduce the power of the Supreme Court during his next term in office. As part of a judicial reform package, an “override clause” was devised to allow the Knesset to re-legislate and pass laws declared unconstitutional by the Supreme Court. If the law passes, the Knesset will be able to push laws through with an additional round of voting, even if they have been deemed unconstitutional by the Supreme Court. However, no progress has been made with regards to this proposed law. Another reform that Netanyahu wanted to implement is to increase the number of politicians in the Judicial Selection Committee from four to six, with the aim of ending the majority of the legal profession in the Committee.

Netanyahu's crafting of a bill to curb the power of the Supreme Court has been sharply criticized by Chief Justice Miriam Naor, who argued that “the court is the last barrier against harm to human dignity and other fundamental rights. This is one reason Israel is seen as part of the family of democratic nations.” It has also been criticized by the State's President Reuven Rivlin and the major partner in Netanyahu's current coalition, the Kulanu Party.
State Structure in Israel and Its Institutions:

- **Head of State**
  - President

- **Legislature**
  - Speaker
  - Knesset
  - Committees
  - Mayors and Council Heads
  - Local Councils

- **Executive**
  - Prime Minister
  - Government
  - Ministries

- **Judiciary**
  - Court System
  - Attorney General

- **Electorate**

- **State Comptroller, Ombudsman**
References

Israel's Economy

Israel's GDP per capita is about $35,000, putting it among the advanced industrial states; since 2010 they have been members of the OECD (Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development). Among the distinctive features of Israel’s 21st century economy has been the emergence of significant technological capabilities. The country ranks 1st in availability of scientists and engineers, number of start-ups per capita, and venture capital investments per capita. Israel’s growth record since 1960 is displayed in Figure 1.

Figure 1: Israel's GDP growth rates, 1960-2015 (Source: Trading Economics)

A Brief Economic History

The Early Years

Although the State of Israel was established in 1948, the roots of its economy are found in the pre-state Yishuv period (the Jewish community in Palestine prior to
the establishment of the State of Israel), and in the dominant role played by Labor Zionism in shaping early economic policy. Labor Zionism was a fusion of Zionism and socialism, grounded in the belief that a Jewish state could only be built through the agency of the Jewish working class and the doctrine of Jewish labor (avoda ivrit). Labor Zionism’s championing of a socialist economy paved the way for the founding of kibbutz settlements, rural collectives based on agriculture. The first kibbutz was founded in 1909 in Degania. An organization of trade unions, the Histadrut (General Organization of Workers in the Land of Israel) was established in 1920 and became one of the most powerful institutions in the country. Functioning as more than a trade union, the Histadrut was also a major employer and provider of services.

Even prior to independence, the high educational level of the immigrants, the import of capital, the investment in the Yishuv and the expansion of the work force led to the rapid growth of the Yishuv economy—a remarkable 13% per annum from 1922-1947—predominantly but not exclusively in agriculture. By the late 1930s, the Jewish output in sectors such as agriculture, construction and manufacturing surpassed that of the Arab economy. In 1939, Jews made up only 31% of the total population but accounted for 89% of net industrial output.

**The First Decades of Independence**

Following independence, the government adopted an emergency-style state-controlled management style, in line with interventionist policies seen across the developed and developing countries at the time. The system included rationing and price controls, introduced in 1949. However the demands for infrastructure, housing and employment pushed an expansive monetary policy and resultant inflation, fueling a substantial black market and an overvalued currency. In 1952, the government began to open up the economy; price controls were relaxed and the currency devalued. The government replenished foreign reserves through the sale of State of Israel bonds overseas and the signing of a Reparations Agreement with the Federal Republic of Germany in 1952 ($800 million over 12 years). As well, the orientation of government policy shifted from agriculture to the promotion of manufacturing. The government subsidized loans and grants to business, and new industries benefited from inflows of immigrants and foreign investment. By the early 1960s, GNP was growing at about 11% per annum.
Setbacks and Restructuring in 1970s and 1980s

Israel's growth virtually came to a halt in 1973, the result of a dramatically changed security environment. The share of GNP spent on defense had risen to 25% after the Six-Day War of 1967 (from 10% during the previous 20 years) and reached a staggering 45% of GNP at the time of the Yom Kippur War. The war in 1973 also coincided with the first oil shock, resulting in a deterioration in the terms of trade and accelerating inflation. Matters worsened with the 1983 Bank Stock Crisis, during which the stocks of the four largest banks in Israel collapsed forcing a major government bailout. By 1984 inflation had reached an annual rate of almost 450%. As a result, the Israeli government adopted the 1985 Economic Stabilization Plan, which included significant cuts in government expenditures and the deficit; a sharp devaluation of the shekel; temporary wage and price controls; a monetary policy that would control the growth of credit. The Plan succeeded in bringing the inflation rate to below 20% in less than two years and is considered one of the more successful stabilizations in postwar economic history. By the mid-1980s the government's role in the economy had decreased substantially and growth was being spurred by private sector investment.

Start-Up Nation of the 1990s

Growth of technology industries was fueled by a number of factors. First, almost one million immigrants arrived in the 1990s from the former Soviet Union, many of whom were highly educated. Second, the country's high-tech sector saw unprecedented development. Some of this new technology had roots in agriculture, such as drip irrigation systems developed by Netafim, a company founded in Kibbutz Hatzerim. But the security situation in Israel was an additional factor that contributed to the development of the high-tech industry. What eventually became the Israeli Military Industries (IMI) was initially established in 1933 and produced a variety of land, air and naval combat systems for the Israeli Defense Forces (IDF), the U.S. Military and for NATO nations. Among its most well-known product is the Uzi submachine gun. Another government-owned defense company, which was formed in 1953, the Israel Aircraft Industries (IAI), produced missile systems, satellites and space systems, robotics, and unmanned aerial systems. ECI Telecom Ltd., another world-renowned Israeli high-tech company, was founded in 1961 as a manufacturer of advanced telecommunications equipment for the Israeli military but eventually broadened into the commercial market.

Israel's academic institutions and government research institutions was a
third driving force behind Israel’s record in technological innovation. Israel’s oldest academic institutions were established during the pre-state period. The first of these was the Technion (Israel Institute of Technology) founded in 1924. The Hebrew University of Jerusalem was opened a year later. The Weizmann Institute of Science was inaugurated in 1946. In 2014, four Israeli universities ranked among the world’s top 300: Hebrew University (#138), Israel Institute of Technology (#190), Tel Aviv University (#195), and Ben-Gurion University (#292). In 1968, the Israeli Industry Center for R&D (MATIMOP), the executive agency of the Office of the Chief Scientist, was established within the Ministry of Economy in order to promote and encourage science-based high-tech industries. The chief scientist acts as advisor to the minister on matters of industrial R&D and implements government and ministerial decisions in this area; the government budget for R&D in Israel is the highest in the world, in relative terms. According to the Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Israel currently hosts 1,800 R&D based companies.

Finally, the financial sector and particularly venture capital came to play an important role in the start-up economy. The first Israeli venture capital fund, Athena Venture Partners, was founded in 1985. The government set up the Yozma venture capital program in 1993, offering attractive tax incentives to foreign venture-capital investments in Israel with a promise to double any investment through government funding. The Israeli government also established technological business incubators in the early 1990s, where highly qualified immigrants who had arrived from the former Soviet Union, were absorbed into the high-tech industry. Favorable taxation laws for individual investors also contributed to the growth of the sector. As a result, the sector grew at a phenomenal rate having raised more than $1 billion by 1996.
Today, there are 24 incubators in Israel, spread across Israel including 8 that are located in the periphery of the country. In 2014, Israeli startup companies raised $15 billion from going public and being acquired, doubling the numbers achieved in 2013. Mobileye, the developer of an anti-collision system designed to prevent car accidents by warning the driver in real time about dangerous situations and driving conditions, raised almost a billion dollars in its initial public offering (IPO) on the New York Stock Exchange in 2014, the largest-ever IPO of an Israeli company in the U.S. Over the last two years, the number of acquisitions of start-ups has decreased as many entrepreneurs are now seeking private funding.

**Output and Employment**

Figures 3 and 4 show the sectorial distribution of output and employment in the Israeli economy. The country follows the general advanced industrial state pattern of a high share of services, although with a substantial industry share as well. The distribution between private and public employment is also somewhat different than elsewhere in the OECD with a substantial non-private share including not only the public sector but also state-owned enterprises, non-profits and cooperatives.
At 5.9%, Israel had one of the lowest unemployment rates in the developed world in 2014, reflecting largely frictional unemployment. There are challenges in bringing more Orthodox Jews and Israeli Arabs into the workforce, however. While the unemployment rate among Israeli Arabs dropped to 7.8% in 2014 from 9.4% the year before, it is consistently higher than the national average. Increasing orthodox men’s participation in the workforce has been an even slower process,
although employment among Orthodox women is higher than overall female participation in the workforce (80% vs. 75%).

**Main Economic Sectors**

1. **High-Tech**: Besides the defense industry, the main high-tech activities in Israel are computer component manufacturing, software engineering, medical technologies and pharmaceuticals.

2. **Defense Industry**: Israel is one of the world's leading exporters of military equipment and the defense industry is a major employer in the country. Three Israeli companies were listed on the 2015 Stockholm International Peace Research Institute’s (SIPRI) ranking of the top 100 arms-producing and military services companies in the world: Elbit Systems (#29), Israel Aerospace Industries (#32), Rafael (#43). There are over 150 active defense companies based in the country with combined revenues of more than $3.5 billion annually.

3. **Pharmaceutical Industry**: The country has more than 76 pharmaceutical companies involved in drug discovery and delivery. Teva, the world's largest generic pharmaceutical company, is headquartered in Israel. In 2013, the pharmaceutical market was worth approximately $1.9 billion with the medical device market bringing in an additional $1.3 billion.

4. **Agriculture**: Agriculture accounts for around 2% of the GDP and the proportion of agricultural exports decreased from 60% in 1950 to less than 2% of total exports by the end of the 2000s. However, development of agricultural technologies is a significant part of the high-tech sector.

5. **Diamonds Industry**: Although the Israeli diamond industry has stagnated during the last few years, it continues to be a major producer and exporter of cut diamonds. In 2010, 9% of the world diamonds were polished in Israel. In the same year, Israel also became the chair of the Kimberley Process Certification Scheme, which was established to prevent conflict diamonds from entering the markets worldwide.

6. **Natural Gas Industry**: Natural gas fields discovered off Israel's coast in 2009 have been a boost to Israel’s economy (discussed in more detail below). Together with the Leviathan gas field nearby, Tamar field has the potential to turn Israel into a major energy player in the region.

7. **Construction**: Although the contribution of the construction industry to the GDP has shrunk over the years, it has subsequently developed into an export sector with 450 companies providing global construction services.
8. Tourism: Although tourism contributes less than 3% to the GNP, it has an 85% foreign currency added value and is a major employer. In 2013, a record number of more than 3.5 million tourists visited Israel bringing in revenue of approximately $5 billion.

The External Sector

As a developing country, Israel consistently ran a large current account deficit and that pattern continues to this day (See Figure 5).

![Figure 5: Monthly data and yearly average of Israeli imports and exports in US dollars, 2006-2014 (Source: Ministry of Finance)](image)

![Figure 6: Foreign direct investment in Israel, January 2012-January 2015 (Source: Trading Economics)](image)
Foreign direct investment is a significant source of foreign financing. After a marked slow-down in FDI during 2009-10 as a result of the global economic crisis, foreign direct investment in Israel has subsequently recovered.

In terms of the direction of trade, Israel has diversified its export markets, increasing its engagement with Asia. Long-dependent on the United States and Europe, Asia now accounts for a significant share of exports and countries such as China have become major sources of imported products as well.
As would be expected, Israel's exports are dominated by manufactures, and particularly high-technology manufactures. Outside of the substantial diamond trade, imports are concentrated in capital and intermediate goods and raw materials.

Figure 9: Percentage of total industrial exports (diamonds excluded), 2014 (Source: Ministry of Finance)

Figure 10: Percentage of total 2014 import (Source: Ministry of Finance)
Although trade with the Palestinian Authority accounts for a small share of Israeli trade, it clearly dominates the PA’s external economic relations, accounting for about 80 percent of total Palestinian exports. The PA runs a substantial deficit with Israel, financed in part by exports and labor payments. Security checks cause substantial delays in the transfer of goods between the two destinations increasing the costs of trade. The lack of an automated banking connection also hampers the development of commence.

Current Debates about Economic Policy

Housing

Housing prices have soared a staggering 55% over the last five years in Israel, making it one of the more expensive markets in the world relative to incomes. Rental prices rose 30% during this period as well. During the 2011 social justice protests in Israel, housing was one of the main issues. The Netanyahu government responded with a promise to add 50,000 more apartments to the country’s housing stock but has been criticized for moving too slowly. In 2015, Israelis needed 146 months of average salary to buy a home, as opposed to 192 months in 2008, when housing prices started to rise significantly.

The Settlement Economy

The settlements are often portrayed as a political issue, but they have been driven in part by the extreme housing shortage. Consecutive Israeli governments have encouraged settlements, defining roughly three quarters of the settlements as “national priority areas” eligible for discounts on land and favorable mortgage terms. The government has also invested heavily in infrastructure and education in the settlements.

Israeli settlements are a source of economic activity. Although accounting for a very small percentage of overall Israeli exports (for example, 2% of Israeli exports to the EU or about $300 million), these have declined over a third in 2014 because of the BDS boycott.
Palestinian Workers in Israel

A quota of roughly 50,000 Palestinian workers are allowed to enter Israel with work permits issued to them after a security check. An additional 25,000 Palestinians work illegally inside the West Bank settlements. Palestinian workers have to go through checkpoints in order to enter Israel, they are subjected to long wait times and face occasional cases of mistreatment by security officials. A series of violent incidents, in which Israeli civilians were attacked by Palestinians, have put illegal Palestinian workers in the spotlight. The Israeli government is likely to harden its stance against those who smuggle Palestinians into the country as well as those who assist them while in Israel. Palestinians working legally in Israel have voiced their fear of being subjected to discrimination and possible vengeance attacks as a result of these recent incidents.

Orthodox Jews in Labor Force

There has been a growing demand from the secular sector of Israeli society that the Haredim (Orthodox Jews) should equally contribute to the national economy and share the tax burden. Many Haredi men receive stipends from the government to study the Torah and do not participate in the labor force, leaving Haredi women as the main breadwinners. Partially motivated by the 2011 social justice protests, the Israeli government has passed a series of bills since 2013 aimed at integrating the Haredim into the country’s workforce and military. In March 2014, the Equal Service Bill was passed in the Knesset, mandating military or civil service for Haredim and levying criminal penalties on those who refuse to serve in the IDF. Since the passage of the law, there has also been a three-fold increase in the number of Haredi men seeking work through government agencies.

Gas Deposits

The discovery of a rich gas reservoir in Israel’s national waters is expected to lower energy costs, create 12,000 additional jobs and increase growth. Since 2010, Israel’s major electric plants have been transitioning to natural gas. It is estimated that 70% of Israel’s electricity will be gas-generated by 2040.

The Tamar gas field was discovered in January 2009 west of the northern city of Haifa and started to provide gas to the domestic market in 2013. It is located in Israel’s exclusive economic zone and is believed to have 223 billion cubic meters of natural gas. The country is now entering into export contracts. In March 2015, the
Tamar partnership signed a $1.2 billion deal with an Egyptian company. In April 2015, the Israeli government authorized the export of natural gas from the Tamar field to Jordan in a $500 million deal.

The Leviathan gas field was discovered in December 2010 in the southwest of the Tamar gas field. Lebanese Hizballah initially argued against Israel’s rights over these gas fields, but the Lebanese government ultimately acknowledged that they were outside its legitimate territorial claims. Leviathan is estimated to contain 16 trillion cubic feet of natural gas. The expected date of production is 2017. Larger than the neighboring Tamar field, Leviathan is considered to be a potential game changer for the energy map of the entire eastern Mediterranean. However, expectations were damped to a certain degree with the discovery of the enormous Zohr gas field off the coast of Egypt in August 2015. The Zohr field is 40% larger than Israel’s Leviathan field and is described as a "supergiant." A framework deal reached in August 2015 would give control over the Leviathan gas field to U.S. oil and gas producer Noble Energy Inc and Israel’s Delek Group. After the resignation of Israel’s Minister of Economy in November 2015, Prime Minister Netanya planned to finalize the deal, thereby bypassing antitrust laws and civil protestors who oppose the establishment of a private monopoly over the natural resource.
References

Timeline:
Post-Independence Politics

1948   David Ben-Gurion becomes Prime Minister of Israel
1949   Elections for the 1st Knesset won by Mapai
1949   Beginning of mass immigration wave from Europe
1950   Law of Return adopted
1951   Elections for the 2nd Knesset won by Mapai
1954   Moshe Sharett becomes Prime Minister of Israel
1954   Bank of Israel founded
1955   Elections for the 3rd Knesset won by Mapai; David Ben-Gurion again Prime Minister of Israel
1955-1957  Mass immigration waves from North-Africa
1959   Elections for the 4th Knesset won by Mapai
1960   Basic Law 'Israel Lands' adopted
1961   Elections for the 5th Knesset won by Mapai
1961   The Trial of Adolf Eichmann
1961-1964  Mass immigration waves from North Africa
1963   Levi Eshkol becomes Prime Minister of Israel
1964   Inauguration of the National Water Carrier (transfers water from the Sea of Galilee to the center and the arid south)
1965   Elections for the 6th Knesset won by 'The Alignment'
1967   Law of Protection of the Holy Place (guarantees the protection of the holy sites in Jerusalem from desecration and any other violations)
1969   Elections for the 7th Knesset won by 'The Alignment,' Golda Meir becomes Prime Minister of Israel
1973   Elections for the 8th Knesset won by 'The Alignment'
1974   Yitzhak Rabin becomes Prime Minister of Israel
1977 Elections for the 9th Knesset won by Likud for the first time; Menachem Begin becomes Prime Minister of Israel
1980 Basic Law adopted which established Jerusalem, “complete and united,” as Israel’s capital
1981 Elections for the 10th Knesset won by Likud
1983 Yitzhak Shamir becomes Prime Minister of Israel
1983 Bank Stock crisis, followed by the nationalization of major banks
1984 Elections for the 11th Knesset won by ‘The Alignment,’ Shimon Peres becomes Prime Minister of Israel
1984 ‘Operation Moses’ to bring Ethiopian Jews to Israel
1985 Implementation of the Economic Stabilization Program
1986 Yitzhak Shamir again Prime Minister of Israel
1988 Elections for the 12th Knesset won by Likud
1990-1991 Mass immigration waves from the former U.S.S.R.
1992 Elections for the 13th Knesset won by Labor, Yitzhak Rabin again Prime Minister of Israel
1994 Kach party outlawed in Israel
1995 Yitzhak Rabin assassinated
1996 Elections for the 14th Knesset won by Labor
1996 Benjamin Netanyahu wins separate Prime Ministerial elections
1999 Elections for the 15th Knesset won by center-left alliance ‘One Israel’ led by Ehud Barak who wins Prime Ministerial elections as well
2001 Ariel Sharon wins Prime Ministerial elections
2002 Knesset passed the ‘Tal Law’, authorizing the continuation of a special exemption for yeshiva students from army service
2003 Elections for the 16th Knesset won by Likud
2006 Prime Minister Ariel Sharon enters a coma
2006 Elections for the 17th Knesset won by Kadima
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Event</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2006</td>
<td>Ehud Olmert becomes Prime Minister of Israel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009</td>
<td>Elections for the 18th Knesset won by Kadima, government formed by Likud, Benjamin Netanyahu again Prime Minister of Israel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010</td>
<td>Discovery of the Leviathan gas field</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011</td>
<td>Major social justice protests erupt in Israel's main cities</td>
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<tr>
<td>2011</td>
<td>Jerusalem Light Rail inaugurated</td>
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<tr>
<td>2013</td>
<td>Elections for the 19th Knesset won by Likud Yisrael Beiteinu</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2015</td>
<td>Elections for the 20th Knesset won by Likud</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Timeline:
Israel in Historical and International Context

1050 – 931 BCE United Kingdom of Israel
931 BCE Split of Kingdom of Israel into Kingdom of Israel
     and Kingdom of Judah
597 BCE Babylonian exile (the exile of the Jews of the Kingdom of
     Judah after the conquest of the kingdom by the
     Babylonians)
587 BCE Destruction of the First Temple by the Babylonians
516 BCE Consecration of the Second Temple
167 – 160 BCE Maccabean Revolt (led by a Judean rebel group known
     as the Maccabees against the Seleucid Empire)
140 – 30 BCE Hasmonean Kingdom
37 – 4 BCE Rule of Herod the Great
66 – 73 CE First Jewish-Roman War (the Great Revolt)
70 CE Destruction of the Second Temple by the Romans
132 – 136 CE Bar Kokhba Revolt (led by the Jews of Judea Province
     against the Roman Empire)
1492 Expulsion of Jews from Spain
1894 Dreyfus Affair
1896 Publication of Theodor Herzl's Der Judenstaat
1897 First Zionist Congress, Basel
1902 Publication of Theodor Herzl's Altneuland
1917 Balfour Declaration
1920 – 1948 British Mandate in Palestine
1947, November 29 UN Partition Plan for Palestine, UN General Assembly
     Resolution 181
1948, May 14 Establishment of the State of Israel
1948, May 15 War of 1948 begins
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Event</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1949, March 19</td>
<td>War of 1948 ends</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1949</td>
<td>Armistice Agreements (signed between Israel and neighbors [Egypt, Lebanon, Jordan and Syria])</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1956</td>
<td>Sinai Campaign</td>
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<tr>
<td>1965</td>
<td>First Fatah attack in Israel</td>
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<tr>
<td>1965</td>
<td>First Fatah attack in Israel</td>
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<td>1967, June 5-10</td>
<td>Six-Day War</td>
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<td>1967, November 22</td>
<td>UN Security Council Resolution 242 (established the principles that were to guide the Arab-Israeli peace settlement after the Six-Day War)</td>
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<tr>
<td>1968</td>
<td>Karameh Operation (conducted by the IDF against PLO camps in Jordan)</td>
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<tr>
<td>1973, October 6-25</td>
<td>Yom Kippur (October) War</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1973, October 22</td>
<td>UN Security Council Resolution 338 (called for a ceasefire in the Yom Kippur War)</td>
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<tr>
<td>1979</td>
<td>Peace with Egypt</td>
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<tr>
<td>1982 – 1985</td>
<td>First Lebanon War</td>
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<tr>
<td>1987 – 1991</td>
<td>First Intifada</td>
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<td>1991</td>
<td>Gulf War</td>
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<td>1991, October-November</td>
<td>Madrid Conference</td>
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<td>1993</td>
<td>Oslo Accords</td>
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<td>1993</td>
<td>Operation Accountability (IDF operation against Hizballah in Lebanon)</td>
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<tr>
<td>1994</td>
<td>Peace with Jordan</td>
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<tr>
<td>1996</td>
<td>Operation Grapes of Wrath (IDF operation against Hizballah in Lebanon)</td>
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<tr>
<td>2000</td>
<td>Israeli withdrawal from Lebanon</td>
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<td>2000</td>
<td>Camp David Negotiations between Israel and the PLO</td>
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<td>2000 – 2005</td>
<td>Second Intifada</td>
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<td>2005</td>
<td>Israel’s disengagement from the Gaza Strip</td>
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<td>2006</td>
<td>Second Lebanon War</td>
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<td>Year</td>
<td>Event</td>
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<td>2007</td>
<td>Operation Orchard (Israel destroys a suspected nuclear reactor in Syria)</td>
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<td>2008</td>
<td>Operation Cast Lead in Gaza</td>
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<td>2010</td>
<td>Mavi Marmara Incident (military operation by Israel against the flotilla organized by pro-Palestinian Turkish organizations carrying humanitarian aid to Gaza)</td>
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<td>2010</td>
<td>Israel joins the OECD</td>
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<td>2011</td>
<td>Israel-Hamas prisoner swap, the Gilad Shalit Affair</td>
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<tr>
<td>2012</td>
<td>Operation Pillar of Defense (Gaza)</td>
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<tr>
<td>2014</td>
<td>Operation Protective Edge (Gaza)</td>
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