

Review

Reviewed Work(s): *One Land, Two Peoples: The Conflict over Palestine, Dilemmas in World Politics* by Deborah J. Gerner

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As for the use of military force, a noteworthy shift toward a more dovish position within Labor took place, of course, during the war in Lebanon, as the national mood changed after the siege of Beirut, and the raids on Sabra and Shatilla. Labor party leadership including Rabin and former Chief of Staff Mordechai Gur was against the air strike on the Iraqi nuclear reactor in 1981. During the 1991 Gulf War some one hundred members of the Knesset, including many Labor representatives, signed a letter to former Prime Minister Begin thanking him for his decision to destroy the reactor ten years earlier.

In his concluding chapter on the move to the left Inbar observes that, as is commonly the case among voters everywhere, Israeli public opinion often goes along with the elite rather than influencing them. Likud over time has shifted toward the center, as Begin's acceptance of the Camp David Accords and peace with Egypt, demonstrates, along with the modified policy of settlement in "Judea," "Samaria," and Gaza after the first National Unity Government was established in 1984. Again the reader needs to keep in mind that the author regards "hawks," "doves," "left," and "center" as relative terms applied to a specific polity. Shamir is center compared to right-wing members of Likud such as Ariel Sharon and others who have called him on occasion "weak, indecisive and timid," "a dangerous man who can never be forgiven for anesthetizing the people," "a rotten apple," "a con man," and the unkindest cut of all, "a short man on the basketball court." To the right of Likud are several cabinet coalition parties.

Inbar argues that the move leftward that he perceives in the 1980s results from a lack of consensus in the country over what to do with the territories. He maintains that it is quite clear that the public wants to disengage from the Arabs of the territories and that Labor's policy for a permanent agreement involving a territorial compromise has the largest following with the public and in the Knesset. He sees Labor, despite its electoral decline over time and its continuing internal struggles, as still a major force in Israel with a potential for leading the country in war and peace.

Inbar's study is a significant and readable book that is well documented and organized. It is a thoroughly scholarly study that deserves serious consideration by those interested in war, peace, and security issues in Israeli politics.

DEBORAH J. GERNER, *One Land, Two Peoples: The Conflict Over Palestine, Dilemmas in World Politics* (Boulder, Colo.: Westview Press, 1991). Pp. 235.

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Although the voluminous material on the Palestinian-Israeli conflict occupies a sizable share of library shelves, professors teaching this seemingly intractable problem often find it difficult to locate appropriate, objective, easily understood, and yet analytical textbooks to assign to their students. By combining her knowledge of the region with theories of international relations, Deborah Gerner in her *One Land, Two Peoples* offers students of international affairs and of Middle East politics an invaluable tool for understanding the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. Drawing from historical events and analyzing the dynamics of political developments, Gerner probes the complex facets of this conflict, examining how it evolved and concluding by offering some possible solutions for putting it to rest.

The thesis of this work can perhaps best be grasped from the stated objective of the book: to allay feelings of despair among those who think that the conflict is insoluble. Indeed, the conflict over Palestine is one of the most complicated dilemmas the international community has faced and this book is a sincere effort to show readers that, in spite of all the complexities,

“feelings of confusion and helplessness” (p. 1) should not predominate. Taking the reader back to the 19th century, Gerner relies on the historical approach to investigate the evolution of the conflict for, as she suggests, the “Israeli–Palestinian conflict is fundamentally embedded in history and the differing interpretations of that history by the principal actors” (p. 3). Because of this Gerner warns us not to dismiss the past. She stresses that “it is literally impossible to say, as is frequently suggested, ‘Why not forget the past? Let’s start over and figure out how to deal with the conflict as it exists today without worrying about who did what to whom in 1921 or 1936 or 1948.’ Few Jewish Israelis or Palestinians are either willing or able to do this—the past is alive in the present for them” (p. 4).

Gerner tells us that the conflict over Palestine is primarily motivated by conflicting quests for national identity and self-determination by the Palestinian people and the Jews. Although the conflict is embedded in external (superpower) and regional (Middle Eastern) contexts, it is important not to neglect the fact that it is determined no less by internal referents unique to Palestinians and Zionists. “If the United States and the Soviet Union formed an alliance tomorrow, the Israeli–Palestinian conflict would still remain” (p. 2), Gerner theorizes. This does not mean, Gerner cautions us, that the superpowers have not played a considerable role in influencing the conflict. Even before the United States and the Soviet Union defined and worked to enhance their interests in the Middle East, Britain, particularly through the 1917 Balfour Declaration, was instrumental in fanning the flames of a conflict whose consequences are still with us today. She asserts, however, that the involvement of the various actors in the Palestinian–Zionist conflict—principal and secondary—is substantially motivated by internal forces, such as the governmental and/or subgovernmental structure, the role of public opinion and interest groups, personality traits of leaders, and the role of religion. In addition to examining the nature of external and internal factors, the role of international organizations and international law is not ignored by Gerner.

Not neglecting the powerful force of the Jews’ biblical and historical attachment to Palestine, Gerner alerts her audience to the reality that the first Zionist Congress, held in Basel, Switzerland, in 1897, would not have been successful in crafting a program for the colonization of Palestine had the political environment not been conducive and amenable to the imposition of European ideas on regions such as the Middle East: “The European attitude toward colonialism in the late 1880s and early 1990s conveyed the clear message that Africa, Asia, and the Middle East were the property of any European who wished to settle there, ‘bring civilization to the masses,’ and tap its natural resources” (p. 15). Given that atmosphere, “imperialism—the establishment by force or coercion of political and economic control by a state or empire over foreign territories—was viewed as an honorable activity, with little recognition of the exploitation accompanying it” (p. 15). The idea of “pioneering” was the fashion of the day: European settlers, it was argued then, performed a civilizing mission among the peoples they controlled. The Zionist project for colonizing Palestine was viewed as part and parcel of that civilizing mission.

Similarly, twenty years later, the Balfour Declaration would perhaps not have seen the light of day were it not for the fact that the domestic political environment in Britain, combined with the external political environment in the international system made it possible for “His Majesty’s Government” to turn its back on the right of the Palestinian people to self-determination. Furthermore, the 1947 U.N. General Assembly resolution to partition Palestine would not have been transformed from a recommendatory into a binding resolution were it not for the influence exerted by the United States to bring it about and help implement it. The same can be said of the various Arab–Israeli conflicts: they have been fought because of internal dynamics in the Middle East region and facilitated by the fact that the Middle East has been one of the most active regions in the world in arms procurement from the major powers. Finally, as is the case in the whole fabric of the Palestinian–

Israeli conflict, the Palestinian Intifada against the Israeli occupation would not have endured for nearly four years were it not for the determination of both principal parties to the conflict to achieve their objectives and were it not for the fact that the international environment, particularly as far as the United States–Israeli relationship is concerned, made the resolution of this dilemma unlikely.

In *One Land, Two Peoples*, Gerner constantly makes us aware of her objective for the reader: to realize that the conflict is multifaceted and that it is deeply rooted in history influenced by internal and external factors as well as by psychological/motivational forces affecting its leaders. The origins of the conflict go back to ancient times, she tells us, but its makeup is still contemporary.

In spite of the enormity of the issues involved, however, Gerner's optimism that the conflict is resolvable is evidenced throughout the book. She concludes her volume by offering concrete solutions to the conflict from which students of Middle East politics, international relations, and conflict resolution as well as decision makers can benefit.

In sum, Gerner's well-written and nicely structured volume is an excellent portrait of how and why the Palestinian–Israeli conflict has evolved. It is a textbook presented with tremendous care: it contains maps, tables, and photos (many of which were taken by the author herself), discussion questions, suggested readings, notes, glossary, and an index. It is to Gerner's credit that she provides an invaluable list of recommended films (and their distributors) that can be used by professors to spark student interest and awareness through vivid portrayals of the realities of the Palestinian–Israeli conflict.

Of course, one can hardly find a book free of errors, whether typographical or factual. Gerner's work is no exception. For example, while the caption of a picture of the PLO chairman reads that "Yasir Arafat has been the PLO Chairperson since 1967 . . ." (p. 120) he in fact assumed that post in 1969. But given Gerner's expertise and knowledge of the region and its actors, it is reasonable to conclude that this is a typographical error.

In conclusion, Gerner's *One Land, Two Peoples* is useful to students not only of Middle East politics but also of international relations. In a very readable style Gerner succeeds in illuminating pertinent theories of international relations through her examination of the Palestinian–Israeli conflict. She reminds us that the "real world" of international relations, as is the case of the Palestinian–Israeli conflict, is intimately affected by relevant issues such as "national identity and self-determination, the increasing importance of nonstate actors, the role of natural resources and strategic location in determining the 'political significance' of a country, Great Power involvement in the Third World, the role of religion . . . , global militarization, the relative impotence of international law and international organizations such as the United Nations (UN) in dealing with very complicated conflicts, and forms of violent and nonviolent conflict resolution" (p. 2).

Given the difficulty in deciding on appropriate textbooks on the Palestinian–Israeli conflict, this reviewer recommends Gerner's work and believes that it is an asset to the curriculum of international relations and Middle East politics.

STEWART REISER, *The Israeli Arms Industry: Foreign Policy, Arms, Transfers, and Military Doctrine of a Small State* (New York: Holmes and Meier, 1989). Pp. 266.

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As the title suggests this is a volume about Israel's arms industry, including every imaginable facet of its development, expansion, and modification, and its relation to the country's