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Contrasting Narratives of Palestinian Identity[**]

Narrativas contrastantes de la identidad palestina

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I

What are the limits of Palestine? Where does it end and where does Israel begin, and are those limits spatial, or temporal,[1] or both? More specifically, what delimits the modern history of the Palestinian people from that of the Israelis, who over the past half century have come to dominate the country both peoples claim? Finally, what is it that demarcates Palestinian history from the larger canvas of Middle Eastern and Arab history, and from the history of the neighboring Arab states, Lebanon, Syria, Jordan, and Egypt? In other words, what in Palestinian identity is specific and unique, and what must be understood in the context of broader historical narratives, whether those of Zionism and the state of Israel, or those of Arabism and the neighboring Arab nation-states, or those of Islam and the Muslims?

Although Palestinian identity undoubtedly involves unique and specific elements, it can be fully understood only in the context of a sequence of other histories, a sequence of other narratives. Stuart Hall and others have argued that this is true generally: that identity "is partly the relationship between you and the Other" (Hall, 1989). As Edward Said puts it in the new afterword to *Orientalism*: "[…] the development and maintenance of every culture require the existence of another, different and competing *alter ego*. The construc-

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[1] For a succinct statement of how a society's representations of time and space can affect the definition of national identity, see Finkelstein, 1994: 36-37. For a treatment that focuses on different treatments of space over time as part of the definition of the nation, see Smith, 1986: 356-357.

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tion of identity […] involves the construction of opposites and 'others' whose actuality is always subject to the continuous interpretation and reinterpretation of their differences from 'us'" (Said, 1994).

Clearly, this relationship between definition of the self and of the other is characteristic of many peoples in the Middle East and elsewhere, particularly those in the numerous nation-states established since World War I. For all of these peoples, transnational identities (whether religious or national), local patriotism, and affiliations of family and clan have competed for loyalty. The pull of competing loyalties has been considerably stronger for the Palestinians than for others, so that these multiple foci of identity are characteristic features of their history.

Why is this the case? Part of the answer is relatively simple: unlike most of the other peoples in the Middle East, the Palestinians have never achieved any form of national independence in their own homeland. In spite of some success in asserting their national identity inside and outside Palestine, they have consistently failed over the years to create for themselves a space where they are in full control or are fully sovereign. The Palestinian "state within a state" in Lebanon from the late 1960s until 1982 was a partial exception, but it was ultimately not a happy experience for any of those concerned, for it had no sovereign authority, was not in Palestine, and existed at the expense of the Lebanese, many of whom came to resent it bitterly (Khalidi, 1984b; Brynen, 1990). The newly formed Palestinian Authority in the West Bank and Gaza Strip is explicitly denied sovereignty in the accords of 1993 and 1995 between the PLO* and Israel which established it, and has only the most limited forms of control over a fraction of the territory of these two regions.

This absence of sovereignty throughout their history has denied the Palestinians full control over the state mechanisms —education, museums, archaeology, postage stamps and coins, and the media, especially radio and television— which myriad recent examples show is essential for disseminating and imposing uniform "national" criteria of identity. The new Palestinian Authority has control of some of these tokens of self-rule, but many others are still firmly under Israeli control, while Palestinian self-determination and independence are currently excluded for at least a five-year interim period, which is supposed to end in 1999, but may well continue beyond that date. Explaining this failure thus far to achieve statehood and sovereignty, in terms of both the external and internal factors responsible, is a central problem of modern Palestinian historiography.

The Palestinians resemble a few other peoples in the modern era who have reached a high level of national consciousness and have developed a clearly defined sense of national identity, but have long failed to achieve national independence. In the Middle East, these

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include the Kurds and (until their recent achievement of independence) the Armenians. All three peoples had reason to expect the self-determination promised by Woodrow Wilson's Fourteen Points in the wake of the breakup of the multinational Ottoman state during World War I, and all were disappointed. In spite of the sufferings of Kurds and Armenians, however, they are now in some respects freer than the Palestinians, and less subject to domination by others. The Armenians finally have an independent republic, albeit one engaged in border conflicts with neighboring Azerbaijan, and located in only part of their ancestral homeland. The Kurds, although denied statehood, currently enjoy an ambiguous international protection in northern Iraq, while a decade-long conflict with the authorities in Turkish Kurdistan continues. In spite of these differences, all three of these Middle Eastern peoples are in some ways comparable. They have all been denied self-determination by the great powers in the settlements imposed on the Middle East after World War I,[2] they live in disputed homelands that overlap with those of other peoples, and the territory they claim has ambiguous and indeterminate boundaries.

Given these similarities, an exploration of Palestinian identity thus has the potential to clarify the specific history not only of Palestine and its people in the modern era, but also of others in the Middle East, including all those with whom the Palestinians have been so intimately involved. It touches as well on broader questions of national identity and the overlapping frontiers of national narratives, national myths and national histories that are relevant far beyond the Middle East. This can help us to understand how a polity which can be understood as a unified people for certain purposes can also be subject to fragmentation. It thus employs the history of a people that has still not fully or successfully defined itself in the eyes of others to illuminate the processes at work in the self-definition of more "successful" peoples, including the neighbors of the Palestinians themselves.

What follows is not a reinterpretation of the history of Palestine or the Palestinian people, grounded in new research in primary sources (although it is largely based on such research). It is, rather, an exploration of the interplay between the different narratives that make up Palestinian history, meant to illuminate aspects of the identity of a people about which much has been written and said, but little is understood. Beshara Doumani concludes his book, *Rediscovering Palestine: Merchants and Peasants in Jabal Nablus, 1700-1900*, with the words:

[2] The Kurds and Armenians were candidates for self-determination during the negotiations over the post-war settlements, notably in the unratified 1920 treaty of Sevres, but were ultimately abandoned to their fate by the European powers. Among the inhabitants of the Arab lands that fell under the League of Nations mandate system, only the Palestinians were never considered for self-determination by the powers. Unlike the mandates for Syria and Iraq, meant from the outset to prepare them to become "independent states", the Mandate for Palestine omitted any mention of independence or self-determination for the Palestinians, referring rather to the establishment of a "national home for the Jewish people" in Palestine. In the Balfour Declaration, which was incorporated into the text of the Mandate, the Palestinians (94 percent of the population at the time) were referred to as "existing non-Jewish communities in Palestine", whose civil and religious (but not political or national) rights were to be protected by the mandatory power.

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> until we can chart the economic, social and cultural relations between the inhabitants of the various regions of Palestine during the Ottoman period, we cannot have a clear understanding of the politics of identity, nor can we confidently answer the questions of when, how, why, and in what ways Palestine became a nation in the minds of the people who call themselves Palestinians today. (Doumani, 1995: 245)

This book does not purport to do anything so ambitious, although it delves into the cultural, social, and economic relations that Doumani correctly emphasizes as the basis of identity. It is not even an attempt to define fully those much written-about and heavily contested terms, "Palestine" and "Palestinian people". One of the subjects it does explore, however, is why such a great deal of attention has produced so little useful scholarship, for the degree of heat that is often generated by the very mention of the terms "Palestine" or "Palestinian" is notable in itself. It is even more striking in contrast to the small amount of light cast on the subject by these copious writings.

The best explanation for this phenomenon of intense polemical heat combined with scant intellectual light is that in Palestine many powerful and contradictory views of self and of history are conjoined. These may be religious, whether Jewish, Christian, or Muslim; or secular, as for example the focus of Masonic ritual on the Temple in Jerusalem; or they may be national or supranational, whether Arab or Jewish. Whatever their nature, however, these narratives of self and history that focus on Palestine have an influence far beyond its boundaries, reaching millions who know of this land only through the texts produced by these various currents of thought and belief, or perhaps in consequence of brief pilgrimages. All of these people nevertheless feel that they know the country intimately, whatever name they give it, and however they visualize its boundaries.

Moreover, those who hold these views often do so with an intense passion combined with a dogmatic certainty about their beliefs, against a background of nearly complete ignorance of Palestine and its history. This unique combination of deeply held beliefs related to Palestine and little concrete knowledge of it helps to explain the level of conflict the country has witnessed in the past. To take a distant example, an otherwise almost incomprehensible sequence of events like the Crusades —a series of ultimately futile attempts over more than two centuries by northern Europeans to conquer and colonize part of West Asia— can be understood only in terms of a combination of passion and ignorance. Thus, the fervor of the Crusaders' yearning for Palestine, which was apparent in the willingness of so many to set off on such a daunting endeavor, was matched only by these northern European knights' obliviousness to the complex political, cultural, and religious realities of Palestine and adjacent parts of the Islamic world in the eleventh, twelfth and thirteenth centuries. The ignorance of the Crusaders, however, was no bar to their lengthy and intense involvement in the affairs of the region.

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To this day, the Crusades have a powerful resonance in Palestine and far beyond its confines. For Palestinians and Israelis in particular, the Crusades have been invested with special meaning, for one people as representing the ultimate triumph of resistance to alien invasion and colonization, and for the other as an episode to be contrasted unfavorably with the more successful Zionist enterprise. Each side thus sees in the Crusades only what it wants to see, and indeed we shall see many direct and indirect references to the Crusades by Palestinians in the pages that follow.[3] This continuing resonance is a testament both to the ferocity of this two-century-long conflict, and to the power of self-contained and self-reflective narratives like those of the Crusades. Such accounts are grounded in the history of the country —for it was of course the Christian connection to Jerusalem and the Holy Land that originally provoked the Crusades— but they have an autonomous dynamic growing out of forces and passions whose original locus is elsewhere, and a raison d'être all their own, defined primarily in terms of medieval European history. Thus the story of the Crusades is often told in isolation from its context, neglecting the social implications of these massive military campaigns inside Europe as well as their powerful and often disastrous impact on the Jewish communities of Europe, the Byzantine Empire, and the Islamic societies of the Middle East.[4]

II

It is certainly not a coincidence that virtually all narratives about Palestine —religious and secular, Jewish, Christian, and Muslim, Palestinian, and Israeli— revolve around the city of Jerusalem, which has long been the geographical, spiritual, political, and administrative center of Palestine. Indeed, it is in and over Jerusalem, which has such great significance to so many people in so many different ways, that the contrasting narratives regarding Palestine come most bitterly into conflict. It is in Jerusalem as well that one sees the most extreme instances of the various local parties' attempts to assert physical control over the country, and to obtain validation of their conflicting claims to the space they share.

In Jerusalem, as elsewhere in Palestine, such validation is achieved notably by the act of naming. This process is already strikingly evident in the disputed naming of Palestine/Israel by the two peoples who contest the same land: most Israelis and Palestinians today have

[3] A typical example of the extensive modern popular literature in Arabic on the subject is the small volume on the battle in 1187 in which the Crusaders were decisively defeated by Saladin: Yusuf Sami al-Yusuf, *Hittin*, 2nd ed. (Acre: Dar al-Aswar, 1989).

[4] Most scholarly literature on the Crusades, like the magisterial work of Sir Steven Runciman (1951-1954), depends on Western sources rather than the voluminous Islamic and Eastern Christian sources. For the Arabic sources see Gabrieli, 1969; Maalouf, 1985; Hitti, 1987. In the main, literature on the Crusades treat them as an extension of Western European history, albeit one taking place in an exotic locale.

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in mind essentially the same country, from the Mediterranean to the Jordan River, and from the deserts in the south to the southern foothills of the Lebanese mountains and Mount Hermon in the north, although they have different names for it. This process of seeking validation for conflicting claims is most fittingly symbolized, however, by the unremitting struggle over the naming of Jerusalem. The city is called *Yerushalaim* in Hebrew (a word derived from the Aramaic, meaning, ironically, "city of peace"). The English derivative of this Hebrew name is Jerusalem, while translated into Arabic it is rendered *Urshalim*. Since early in the Islamic era, however, Arabic-speakers have almost without exception called Jerusalem either *Bayt al-Maqdis*, meaning the House of Sanctity (a term that may itself be drawn from the original Hebrew term for the Temple), or most commonly *al-Quds al-Sharif*, the Noble Holy Place.[5]

But while Jerusalem might be expected to have different names in different languages, what is at issue here is an attempt to impose on one language a name based on usage in another. Thus in its Arabic-language broadcasts, Israeli radio refers to the city exclusively as "*Urshalim/al-Quds*", and this is the name found on all official Israeli documents in Arabic. Israeli television weather forecasts in Arabic shorten this to *Urshalim*. Those who have mandated this usage seem to want to force Palestinians to recognize the Hebrew name for the place, although speakers of Arabic have had a perfectly serviceable name of their own for the city for well over a millennium.

Although such measures may seem petty, they are related to the significant process of attempting to signal control by imposing place names. This has, for example, rendered the West Bank as Judea and Samaria in the official terminology used for Israel's Hebrew, English, and Arabic pronouncements and publications. For the past few decades many such archaic or invented place names have been imposed throughout Palestine over the Arabic ones employed for many centuries and still used by most of the present-day population (many of these Arabic names, ironically, are based on earlier Hebrew, Aramaic, Greek, Latin, or French Crusader names for the same sites).[6] This process of naming is an attempt to privilege one dimension of a complex reality at the expense of others, with the ultimate aim of blotting the others out, or decisively subordinating them to Israeli domination.[7]

[5] Early Muslims also called the city "*Ilya*", derived from the Roman name, Aelia Capitolina, used before the Islamic period. Throughout this book, I will use the most commonly accepted English names for Palestinian place-names, irrespective of their derivation: thus Jerusalem rather than *al-Quds*, and Hebron rather than *al-Khalil*.

[6] Benvenisti (1986: 191-198) observes that under the Israeli map of the country, there lies another Arab map. His recent book (Benvenisti, 1995), examines these matters afresh. As deputy mayor of Jerusalem, Benvenisti played a part in Israeli settlement of Arab areas annexed to the newly expanded municipality after 1967; earlier, his father was one of the geographers assigned to give Hebrew names (some of them Hebrew versions of the original Arabic names) to localities throughout the country, a process accelerated after 1948, when more than 400 Arab villages were obliterated after their inhabitants had fled or been expelled. See the study compiled under the direction of Walid Khalidi, 1992.

[7] Smith, 1986: 356 ff., looks at how what he calls "educator-intellectuals" created a shared sense of attachment to a homeland via "historicizing natural features" and "naturalizing historical features" of a chosen area in order to obtain the same ends as Israeli geographers.

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Another aspect of this process is visible in the sphere of archaeology. Attempts to privilege one archaeological stratum over others are predicated on a belief both that one stratum is "superior" or unique, and that the past can be manipulated to affect the present by "proving" this superiority. Thus, if one specific stratum of a city can be privileged, if one set of names derived from that stratum (or taken from the Bible or another ancient text and applied to that stratum) can be given pride of place over all others below or above it, then a certain contemporary "reality" claiming roots in the past can be imposed on the present, and further consecrated.[8]

This phenomenon is illustrated in the Arab neighborhood of Silwan, which has developed out of an ancient village adjacent to and immediately south of the walls of the Old City in Jerusalem. Israeli settlers who have occupied several homes in the midst of Silwan are attempting to impose exclusive use of the name "City of David" (after the hillside where King David is supposed to have built his capital alongside the earlier Jebusite city), thereby giving their current claims the patina, prestige, and legitimacy of a connection some 3 000 years old.[9] In this they are aided by various maps, tourist guides, and road signs produced by the Israeli government, the Jerusalem municipality, and the Israeli tourist authorities, which use the archaic name "City of David" wherever possible in place of Silwan, the name used for centuries by the Arab inhabitants (ironically, this Arabic name is derived from the biblical Siloam, site of the pool of the same name!).

This contest over names has in the past had dimensions other than the Palestinian-Israeli one. For example, books in Arabic published in Jerusalem by Catholic presses in the early nineteenth century referred to the place of publication as *Urshalim* (the name for the city used by Eastern Christian churches that utilize Arabic in their liturgy), rather than as *al-Quds al-Sharif* or *Bayt al-Maqdis*. A work published in Arabic by the Franciscan press as late as 1865 still uses the term *Urshalim* for the place of publication, even though the work is a petition presented to the local government, which is described in the text of the petition itself as that of "*al-Quds al-Sharif*".[10] Similarly, a book on the history of the Orthodox

[8] A striking attempt to do this is the slide show for visitors to the excavations along the Western Wall of the *Haram al-Sharif*, which are controlled jointly by the Israeli Ministry of Religion, the Israel Antiquities Authority and the Jerusalem municipality. This excavation involves subterranean tunnels driven through a substructure of arches constructed by Umayyad and Mameluke master-builders as foundations for several superb monuments of Islamic architecture at what is currently ground level, yet the slide show blots out everything but one segment of the city's history, linking the present to a "privileged" period 3 000 years ago. This process reached its logical extension in recent Israeli celebrations of the "3 000th anniversary" of Jerusalem, a city with a recorded past of more than 5 000 years. See Abu El-Haj, 1995: chapter 3.

[9] The most notable attempt to do this was the massive "Jerusalem 3000" celebration just referred to, organized by the Israeli government and the Jerusalem municipality in 1996, which highlighted King David's conquest of the city as marking its foundation, and ignored the preceding two millennia of the city's recorded history. For details, see Asali, 1994, 1996.

[10] The cover of the pamphlet reads: "*Tajamat al-kurras al-mad'u muhamat 'an huquq Terra Sancta filmaghara al-*

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Church in Jerusalem, published in 1925 in Jerusalem, uses the term *Urshalim* in the title, and the term *al-Quds al-Sharif* to describe the place of publication (Khuri & Khuri, 1925).

This vestigial reluctance to use the common Arabic name, with its Islamic overtones, even in works referring to that name somewhere on their title pages, represents the last flickering of a rivalry for control of Jerusalem between Islam and Christianity —a rivalry that began in the seventh century with the city's conquest by Muslim armies from Byzantium, was greatly intensified during the Crusades, and abated only in the early twentieth century.[11] More recently, the devotion of some fundamentalist Western Christians to Israel, and their visceral hostility to Islam and the Arabs, shows that a few embers of this ancient rivalry have not been entirely extinguished (Haddad & Wagner, 1986).

The conflict over names in Jerusalem goes beyond the name of the city itself. Jerusalem's most prominent geographical feature, as well as its most important site historically and religiously, is the vast man-made plateau in the southeast corner of the Old City within its Ottoman walls. This spacious rectangular platform (about 480 by 300 m.) is located around a huge stone which is all that remains of the peak of Mount Moriah, where Jews, Christians, and many Muslims believe the prophet Abraham to have been commanded by God to sacrifice his son.[12] From this stone, Muslims believe, the Prophet Muhammad alighted on the miraculous night journey from Mecca to Jerusalem described in the Qur'an (17: 1). The entire site, known in Arabic as *al-Haram al-Sharif* —the Noble Sanctuary— encompasses a number of strikingly beautiful Islamic structures, notably the al-Aqsa Mosque and the Dome of the Rock, which have dominated and adorned this space for the past thirteen centuries.[13]

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mad'wwa magharat al-halib alka'ina bil-qurb min Baytlahm. Mu'alafa wa mugaddama ila hukumat al-Quds al-Sharif min al-ab Rimigio Busayli, katib Terra Sancta, haziran sanat 1865. Tubi'a bi-Urshalim fi Dayr al-Ruhban al-Fransiscan". The pamphlet, which defends the rights of the Franciscan Terra Sancta order to a cave located in Bethlehem, is addressed to the Ottoman authorities.

[11] The editorial entitled "Jerusalem" in *The Times*, December 11, 1917, the day General Allenby entered Jerusalem, begins by stating that "The deliverance of Jerusalem […] must remain for all time a most memorable event in the history of Christendom"; describes the war itself as "a crusade for human liberties"; states that "the yoke of the Turk is broken for ever"; and discusses at length the history of the Crusades, indicating that a consciousness of this religious rivalry still remained alive. See Storrs, 1945, the autobiography of the man who was British military governor of the city from 1917 until 1920, for further evidence of this consciousness.

[12] Most later Islamic traditions —the text of the Qur'an (37: 100-111) is not explicit— place the sacrifice at Mecca, although the Islamic commentators on the Qur'an state that Abraham was "in the fertile land of Syria and Palestine" at this time, according to the commentary on this passage in Yusuf (1989: 1149) [this is a reprint of the official Saudi translation of the Qur'an (Medina, 1405/1985)]. The only other divergence among the beliefs of adherents of the three monotheistic faiths is that the Muslim commentators unanimously consider Isma'il, Abraham's eldest son, to have been the intended victim, rather than Isaac. Although the relevant verses of the Qur'an are ambiguous in not mentioning Isma'il by name, the subsequent reference to Isaac and the clear implication that the intended victim was Abraham's eldest son bear out the traditional interpretation of these verses by the commentators as concerning Isma'il.

[13] The mosque was first constructed some time between 636 and 670, and the dome was erected in 692 by the Umayyad caliph 'Abd al-Malik. See Khalidi (1992), for more details on problems related to areas around the Haram al-Sharif.

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The same site is known to Israelis and others as the Temple Mount. Six centuries before the advent of Islam, it was dominated by the great Temple built by Herod.[14] This structure, destroyed by the Roman general Titus, son of the Emperor Vespasian, in 70 A.D., was built in turn on what was believed to be the site of earlier structures, going back to the Temple described in the Bible as having been constructed by Solomon. Much of the outer enclosure wall of the Herodian Temple compound survives in its lower courses of finely finished cyclopean masonry, which constitute the foundations for the eastern, southern, and western walls of the *Haram al-Sharif* enclosure, built in its present form on the identical site by the Umayyads in the seventh century.

Needless to say, Arabs and Israelis recognize only their own respective names for this site, demonstrating that in much of what it does, each side chooses to be oblivious to the existence of the other, or at least pretends to be.[15] In a sense, each party to this conflict, and every other claimant, operates in a different dimension from the other, looking back to a different era of the past, and living in a different present, albeit in the very same place. These two peoples, however, live cheek by jowl perforce, and their awareness of this enforced coexistence is occasionally illustrated in striking and bloody fashion, ranging from the so-called Wailing Wall riots of 1929 (although sparked by clashes over the rights of the respective communities to this site, most of the violence took place elsewhere), to the October 1990 clashes in which Israeli security forces shot and killed 18 Palestinians and wounded more than 300 others inside the precincts of the *Haram al-Sharif*.[16]

The conflict over this site, and over its name, extends down to levels of even greater detail. Thus, as we have seen, the southernmost section of the western wall of the *Haram al-Sharif* includes in its lower courses part of the outer enclosure of the Temple compound built by Herod. Known as the "Wailing Wall" or the Western Wall, *ha-Kotel ha-Ma'ravi* in Hebrew, this site has been the scene of public Jewish worship since the sixteenth or seventeenth cen-

[14] Herod, who was imposed on Judea as a ruler by the Romans after the extinction of the Hasmonean dynasty, was "a Jew by religion" but not by origin. His father was Jewish, but his mother was a Nabatean princess from what is today Jordan. Culturally, Herod was thoroughly Roman. The words are those of the Israeli archaeologist Meir Ben-Dov (1985: 62).

[15] This is true even in a relatively enlightened work such as that of Ben-Dov (1985). In it, he devotes 380 pages to a study of excavations around the southern end of the *Haram al-Sharif*, including his own discoveries of a series of massive and hitherto unknown seventh or eighth century Umayyad buildings of great significance, without once mentioning the term *Haram al-Sharif*, the name used by Muslims for thirteen centuries for what he calls the Temple Mount.

[16] The pretext later invoked for the shootings was that the Palestinians inside the *Haram* were throwing stones at Jewish worshippers at the Wailing Wall plaza below, an allegation that careful journalistic investigation later revealed was false. It is impossible to see the plaza from the *Haram*, given the high arcade that surrounds the latter, and the Palestinians were in fact throwing stones at Israeli security forces shooting at them from atop the *Haram*'s western wall and adjacent roofs. It has since been established that most Jewish worshippers were gone before stones thrown at the soldiers went over the arcade and into the plaza. See Emery (1990: 25-29), and the reportage by Mike Wallace on *60 Minutes*, December 2, 1990. For a detailed account based on testimonies of eyewitnesses, see Shehadeh (1992: 24-29).

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tury, before which time such worship took place on the Mount of Olives overlooking the eastern walls of the *Haram*.[17] Precisely the same section of this western wall is considered by Muslims to be the site where the Prophet Muhammad tethered his winged steed *al-Buraq* on the night journey "from the *Masjid al-Haram* [in Mecca] to the *Masjid al-Aqsa* [in Jerusalem]" described in the Qur'an (17: 1). As such, the spot has long been venerated by Muslims.[18]

The very same wall is thus among the holiest of sites to two faiths, and is naturally considered by each to be its exclusive property. Immediately inside the wall of the *Haram*, near the *Bab al-Maghariba* gate, is a small mosque *called Jami' al-Buraq*, commemorating the spot where *al-Buraq* was supposedly tethered.[19] The entire area to the west of the wall, until 1967 a residential quarter called *Haret al-Maghariba*, or the Moroccan quarter, was established as a Muslim waqf, or inalienable pious endowment, in 1193 by al-Malik al-Afdal, the son of the Ayyubid Sultan Salah al-Din (Saladin), who retook the city from the Crusaders. A few days after Israel's occupation of East Jerusalem in 1967, the entire Moroccan quarter, including the four Muslim religious sites it encompassed, was demolished, and its approximately 1 000 residents evicted, in order to create the large open plaza that now exists west of the wall (Khalidi, 1992). In addition to its frequent use for Jewish religious observances,

[17] For details, see Khalidi (1992). Moshe Gil writes in *A History of Palestine, 640-1099* (1992: 646-650), of a Jewish synagogue during the early Muslim period which he locates in the vicinity of the Western Wall, but his pinpointing of its location seems singularly vague. He does state that in Jewish sources of that period, "we find that the Western Wall is mentioned almost not at all" (1992: 646), while with regard to *Bab al-Rahme* (sometimes known as *Bawabat al-Rahme*, or Gates of Mercy) on the eastern side of the *Haram*, he notes (1992: 643) that "the Jews of this period […] used to visit the gate and pray alongside it, and write about it, mentioning its name (in the singular or the plural) in letters".

[18] Gil (1992) is a revised version of his Hebrew-language work, *Eretz Israel during the First Muslim Period* (a more apt title than the English one, given the book's focus on the history of the Jewish community in Palestine), states that the Muslims' veneration for Jerusalem began decades after they took the city, but fails to account for manifold indications of its sanctity to the earliest Muslims. These include the attention supposedly paid to Jerusalem and to the *Haram* by the caliph 'Umar, which Gil himself describes; the building of a large mosque on the site of the present *al-Aqsa* mosque, traditionally ascribed to 'Umar, but historically datable at least as far back as 670, when a large wooden structure was described in an account by a Christian pilgrim, Bishop Arculf; the sanctity attached to Jerusalem by the Prophet Muhammad in making it the first direction of prayer before Mecca was finally chosen; and the reference to *al-Masjid al-Aqsa* ("the farthest mosque") in the Qur'an. Gil argues that traditions relating this verse to Jerusalem are late ones, begging the question of how the earliest Muslims understood this verse, if not as referring to Jerusalem.

[19] Ben-Dov (1985: 286) claims that Muslim devotion to this site dates back only to the nineteenth century, and was a response to the growth of Jewish interest in the adjacent Wailing Wall. He refers to a fifteenth-sixteenth century work by the historian 'Abd al-Rahman b. Muhammad al-'Ulaymi, known as Mujir al-Din, to show that Muslims earlier connected *al-Buraq* to *Bab al-Rahme* on the eastern side of the *Haram*. Mujir al-Din (d. 1521) does suggest this in *al-Uns al-jalil bi-tarikh al-Quds wal-Khalil* [The glorious history of Jerusalem and Hebron], 2 vols. (Amman: Maktabat al-Muhtasib, 1973), 2:28. But a much earlier source, *Ba'ith al-nufus ila ziyarāt al-Quds al-mahrus* [Inspiration to souls to visit protected Jerusalem] (Khalidi Library MS), by Ibrahim b. Ishaq al-Ansari, known as Ibn Furkah (d. 1328), states (p. 26) that *al-Buraq* was tethered outside *Bab al-Nabi*, an old name for a gate that both Gil himself (1992: 645), and Mujir al-Din (*al-Uns al-jalil*, 2:31), identify with the very site along the southwestern wall of the Haram venerated by Muslims today! This dispute about the tethering place of an apocryphal winged horse shows that otherwise sober scholars risk getting carried away where religious claims in Jerusalem are concerned.

Revista Mexicana de Ciencias Políticas y Sociales | Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México
Nueva Época, Año LXX, núm. 255 | septiembre-diciembre de 2025 | pp. 381-413 | ISSN-2448-492X
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this plaza has since 1967 become the site of Israeli national and patriotic mass gatherings, such as torchlight ceremonies celebrating graduation from training for recruits to elite army units, and political demonstrations by right-wing parties.

This disputed site thus displays elements of the various conflicting narratives —going back to those relating to the patriarch Abraham, venerated by followers of all three monotheistic faiths— that lie behind the complex identity of the Palestinians, the Israelis, and many others. This conflict is illustrated by the archaeological excavations carried out for many years after 1967 immediately to the south of the *Haram al-Sharif*, on a site immediately abutting the *al-Aqsa Mosque*, and the Western Wall/*al-Buraq* plaza. According to Meir Ben-Dov, the Israeli field director of the dig, this site "contains the remains of twenty-five strata from twelve distinct periods" (Ben-Dov, 1985: 378). Each stratum is part of the identity of the Palestinian people as they have come to understand it over the past century —encompassing the biblical, Roman, Byzantine, Umayyad, Fatimid, Crusader, Ayyubid, Mameluke, and Ottoman periods.[20] At the same time, several strata have special importance to others who revere Jerusalem (the Byzantine and Crusader strata for Western Christians, for example, or the stratum containing the southern steps of the Herodian temple —where Jesus encountered the money-changers— for Christians and Jews alike), and they are not treated equally by any means.[21]

Most importantly, central though Jerusalem is to the Palestinians and to their self-image, it is also central to the self-image of their Israeli adversaries. For both, it is important today as a space, and historically, over time, as an anchor for modern identity.[22] Yet the Israelis control Jerusalem, and are able to expropriate, excavate, label, and describe antiquities there as they please. They can thus put the stamp of authority on narratives that give extraordinary weight to selected strata, thereby successfully manipulating both the spatial and temporal aspects of identity, in pursuit of a clear nationalist political agenda. Their success can be seen from the tides of foreign tourists that choke the narrow alleys of the Old City

[20] Two contrasting but complementary perspectives on the role of history and archaeology in the construction of Palestinian identity can be found in Litvak, 1994: 24-56; Glock, 1995: 48-59.

[21] For details on how Christian and Muslim antiquities unearthed at this and other sites in the Old City of Jerusalem are treated, and the "privileging" of some, see Abu El-Haj, 1995: chapter 3. Another perspective on the significance of Jerusalem can be found in Murphy-O'Connor (1986), a work of erudition that occasionally betrays the author's preference for biblical antiquities over those of succeeding eras. Fr. Murphy-O'Connor sometimes goes beyond the mere expression of preferences, as with his occasional derogatory comments on structures associated with the Eastern churches, such as parts of the Holy Sepulcher (e.g., 1986: 49, where he describes the monument over Jesus' tomb as a "hideous kiosk"), or his description of Nablus: "the town has nothing to offer visitors, and the uncertain temper of the populace counsels speedy transit" (1986: 309). Besides slighting the blameless inhabitants of Nablus, this judgment ignores such antiquities as the late Mameluke-era (fifteenth-sixteenth century) Qasr Touqan, an extensive palace-fortress in the heart of the old *qasaba* which was dynamited and partially destroyed by the Israeli military in reprisal for the killing of a soldier in 1989.

[22] Smith (1986: 357-358) is particularly illuminating on "the uses of history" by "nationalist educator-intellectuals" to "direct the communal destiny by telling us who we are, whence we come and why we are unique".

Revista Mexicana de Ciencias Políticas y Sociales | Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México
Nueva Época, Año LXX, núm. 255 | septiembre-diciembre de 2025 | pp. 381-413 | ISSN-2448-492X
DOI: https://doi.org/10.22201/fcpys.2448492xe.2025.255.93961

for much of the year, most of them in groups led by Israeli tour guides propagating a specific version of the city's history.

It is interesting to speculate what a Palestinian version would look like (there are a few clues to this already), and even more interesting to contemplate the possibility of a multidimensional narrative that would reproduce all of Jerusalem's ambiguity and the overlapping traditions it represents, instead of reducing the complexity of the city's history to a single narrow dimension.

III

One of the central arguments of this chapter is that several overlapping senses of identity have been operating in the way the Palestinians have come to define themselves as a people, senses that have not necessarily been contradictory for the Palestinians themselves, but can be misunderstood or misinterpreted by others. As Palestinian identity has evolved over time, its elements have varied, with some eventually disappearing and others newly emerging. What follows is a discussion of this process, and of the ways in which both collective traumas and major obstacles have played a role in shaping and expressing a separate Palestinian identity, even while problems internal to Palestinian society have helped prevent —thus far at least— the realization of the Palestinian "national project".

It is characteristic of both time and place that the intellectuals, writers, and politicians who were instrumental in the evolution of the first forms of Palestinian identity at the end of the last century and early in this century (among them Sa'id al-Husayni, Ruhi al-Khalidi, Najib Nassar, 'Isa al-'Isa, Muhammad Hassan al-Budayri, 'Arif al-'Arif, Khalil al-Sakakini, and Musa al-'Alami), identified with the Ottoman Empire, their religion, Arabism, their homeland Palestine, their city or region, and their family, without feeling any contradiction, or sense of conflicting loyalties.[23]

By the late 1920s and the 1930s, the way in which such individuals or others like them related to these foci of identity had changed greatly. The Ottoman Empire had disappeared, the importance of religion in public life had declined somewhat, Arab nationalism and its association with Syria had suffered defeats at the hands of the French (whose troops drove

[23] Sa'id al-Husayni and Ruhi al-Khalidi were deputies for Jerusalem in the Ottoman Parliament elected in 1908, and put forward Palestinian and Arab concerns there, while remaining loyal to the Ottoman state; Najib Nassar and 'Isa al-'Isa were the most prominent newspaper editors of this period, whose papers, al-Karmil and Filastin were instrumental in shaping early Palestinian national consciousness and in stirring opposition to Zionism; Muhammad Hassan al-Budayri and 'Arif al-'Arif were the editors of a newspaper called *Suriyya al-Janubiyya* [Southern Syria], a pan-Arab journal of the post World War I era, and the main nationalist organ before its suppression by the British in 1920; Musa al-'Alami was a prominent lawyer, educator, and political figure, whose autobiography (al-'Alami, 1969), shows how he looked at these different sources of identity.

Revista Mexicana de Ciencias Políticas y Sociales | Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México
Nueva Época, Año LXX, núm. 255 | septiembre-diciembre de 2025 | pp. 381-413 | ISSN-2448-492X
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an Arab nationalist government out of Damascus in 1920), and Britain had received a mandate for Palestine within fixed frontiers, wherein national rights had been promised for the Jewish minority, but not mentioned for the Arab majority. All these changes intensified and transformed the preexisting identification with Palestine of such people, their contemporaries, and the generation that followed them into politics, education, and journalism, although they still continued to identify with religion, Arabism, and their localities and families.

This process of identification with new entities —nation-states, or nation-states-in-embryo in most cases— was not particularly unusual for its time and place. The main difference was that unlike Egyptians, Iraqis, Syrians or Lebanese, all of whom developed a loyalty to some form of nation-state nationalism over approximately the same period (albeit in different ways in every case, and with markedly different understandings of what the nation-state was, and how it related to the nation),[24] the Palestinians had not only to fashion and impose their identity and independent political existence in opposition to a European colonial power, but also to match themselves against the growing and powerful Zionist movement, which was motivated by a strong, highly developed, and focused sense of national identification, and which challenged the national rights of the Palestinians in their own homeland, and indeed the very existence of the Palestinians as an entity.

Although the Zionist challenge definitely helped to shape the specific form Palestinian national identification took, it is a serious mistake to suggest that Palestinian identity emerged mainly as a response to Zionism.[25] Important though Zionism was in the formation of Palestinian identity —as the primary "other" faced by the Palestinians for much of this century— the argument that Zionism was the main factor in provoking the emergence of Palestinian identity ignores one key fact: a universal process was unfolding in the Middle East during this period, involving an increasing identification with the new states created by the post-World War I partitions. In every case, this was based on the development of preexisting loyalties and the inception of new ones, just as with the Palestinians. In every case, these new identities can be shown to have been contingent, conjunctural, and dependent on circumstances rather than essential or primordial. As part of this universal process, moreover, Lebanese, Syrians, Egyptians, Iraqis, and Jordanians all managed to develop their respective nation-state nationalisms during the same period without the dubious benefit of a Zionist challenge.[26]

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[24] On the way this process developed in these countries, see, *inter alia*, Gershoni and Jankowski, 1986, 1995; Batatu, 1978; Khoury, 1987; Salibi, 1988.

[25] An extreme, albeit typical, example of this view can be found in Curtis, Neyer, Waxman and Pollack (1975: 4): "Palestinian Arab nationalism, stimulated by and reacting to the Jewish national liberation movement of Zionism, is even more recent. […] Its chief impetus has come from opposition to Jewish settlement and to the State of Israel".

[26] For more on the stimuli to Palestinian nationalism other than Zionism, in particular the disillusionment of many leading Palestinian Arabists with the incarnation of Arab nationalism in Faysal's state in Syria in 1918-1920, and their reaction to the nation-state nationalism of Syrians and others in Damascus during this period, see Muslih (1988b).

Revista Mexicana de Ciencias Políticas y Sociales | Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México
Nueva Época, Año LXX, núm. 255 | septiembre-diciembre de 2025 | pp. 381-413 | ISSN-2448-492X
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The existence of overlapping senses of identity —including transnational, religious, local, family, and nation-state loyalties— is to be expected in such polities as these Arab states, where new national narratives have developed in the context of the existence of many separate loyalties. In some cases champions of different narratives of the nation have come into conflict, which has resulted in the absence of even a minimal consensus on national identity, as was long the case in Lebanon.[27] Most often, however, such a consensus has eventually emerged. Although the phenomenon of overlapping senses of identity characterizes all the neighbors of the Palestinians, including the Israelis, there is one vital difference: these neighboring peoples have lived for most of the past half century under the rule of increasingly strong independent states, which gave substance to their national narratives and propagated them domestically and internationally in an authoritative fashion.

In contrast, the lack of a strong state —indeed of any state of their own— has clearly had a great impact on the Palestinian sense of national identity. In other Arab countries under European colonial and semicolonial rule during the interwar period, a strong central state under at least nominal indigenous control was accepted as a given (and indeed was a required feature of the other Mandates conferred on Britain and France), although it was also generally a site of fierce contestation among local elites, and between them and the colonial power. In Palestine throughout the Mandate period, however, the power of the state accrued exclusively either to the British or to their Zionist protégés, and was rigorously denied to the Palestinians. We shall see how being deprived of access to formal state power then and afterward has affected the growth of Palestinian identity, and what took its place, whether in the form of traditional social structures dominated by the old notable families, or parastate formations like the PLO.

The major currents that have swept the Middle East during the twentieth century, such as the Western powers' definition of state boundaries, as well as Arabism, Islamic trends, Zionism, and the growth of nation-state nationalisms in the Arab states, all affected the process of Palestinian self-definition, but so did several more parochial factors —among them a strong religious attachment to Palestine among Muslims and Christians,[28] the impact over time of living within long-standing administrative boundaries,[29] and enduring regional and local

[27] The best analysis of conflicting Lebanese national narratives is by Kamal Salibi, in his *A House of Many Mansions*. This is one of the most radical critiques extant of the national myths of any Arab country, and of some shared Arab national myths. See also Beydoun (1989).

[28] In Schölch (1993) shows convincingly how the idea of the Holy Land which had developed over centuries among Christians and Muslims helped to shape the modern concept of Palestine as a unit in the minds of its Arab inhabitants.

[29] The Ottomans in 1874 elevated the Jerusalem *sancak*, or district (including the area from the Jordan to the sea, and from a line north of Jaffa and Jerusalem to the region south of Beersheba, and encompassing Jerusalem, Jaffa, Gaza, Beersheba, Hebron, and Bethlehem) to the status of an independent administrative unit reporting directly to Istanbul. Earlier, Palestine was usually included as the separate *sancak*'s of Jerusalem, Nablus, and Acre in the *vilayet* [province] of Sidon, or in the *vilayet* of Syria. Under the Ottomans, Palestine was always administratively separate from the area east of the Jordan, which was governed directly from Damascus. The administrative boundaries of Ottoman Palestine

Revista Mexicana de Ciencias Políticas y Sociales | Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México
Nueva Época, Año LXX, núm. 255 | septiembre-diciembre de 2025 | pp. 381-413 | ISSN-2448-492X
DOI: https://doi.org/10.22201/fcpys.2448492xe.2025.255.93961

loyalties. These loyalties involved the intense attachment of the urban population to their cities and towns, of the peasantry to their villages and lands, and of both to their home regions.[30] While studies of Palestinian nationalism have concentrated on its evolution in recent decades, in fact most elements of Palestinian identity —particularly the enduring parochial, local ones— were well developed before the climactic events of 1948, although they continued to overlap and change both before and after that date. The existence of such local identities was not peculiar to Palestine, of course; but there, and elsewhere in the Arab world, these parochial loyalties served as the bedrock for an attachment to place, a love of country, and a local patriotism that were crucial elements in the construction of nation-state nationalism.

In 1948 half of Palestine's 1.4 million Arabs were uprooted from their homes and became refugees, while the traditional Palestinian political and social leadership was scattered and discredited. In addition, the political structures this class had dominated were pulverized, not to be replaced for over a decade and a half, during which time there existed a leadership vacuum. Although a very few members of the traditional notable families remained politically active in the years that followed, none of them has since played a prominent leadership role in Palestinian politics (Faysal al-Husayni may prove to be the first exception to this rule). Were a basic core sense of national identity not already in place among key segments of the Palestinian people, the catastrophic shock of these events might have been expected to shatter the Palestinians as a people, eventually leading to their full absorption into the neighboring Arab countries. This indeed was what many of their opponents hoped would happen.[31]

After 1948 the Palestinians in fact were to some degree integrated into the Arab host countries, whether socially, economically, or politically, as might be expected given the overlapping identities of the Palestinians with many of their neighbors. But instead of causing their absorption into these countries, the trauma of 1948 reinforced preexisting elements of identity, sustaining and strengthening a Palestinian self-definition that was already present. The shared events of 1948 thus brought the Palestinians closer together in terms of their collective consciousness, even as they were physically dispersed all over the Middle East

were finally fixed in the 1880s, when the *sancak*s of Nablus and Acre were attached to the new *vilayet* of Beirut, an arrangement that remained stable until 1918.

[30] Beshara Doumani (1995), is an excellent study of regional loyalty focusing on Jabal Nablus; he quotes a nineteenth century foreign observer as noting that its "inhabitants […] are most proud of it, and think there is no place in the world equal to it" (Doumani, 1995: 21). Doumani describes the Jabal Nablus region as a "social space" similar to Jabal al-Quds and Jabal al-Khalil, the regions centering on Jerusalem and Hebron respectively, noting how each differed from the other in significant respects.

[31] This was the premise of the Johnston Plan, which American policymakers in the 1950s hoped would lead to the assimilation of the refugees into the surrounding countries: see Gerner (1995). After a visit to the region, Secretary of State John Foster Dulles expressed the belief in a radio address to the nation on June 1, 1953 that most of the Palestinian refugees (described by him as "Arab refugees who fled from Palestine as Israel took over") should "be integrated into the lives of the neighboring Arab countries".

Revista Mexicana de Ciencias Políticas y Sociales | Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México
Nueva Época, Año LXX, núm. 255 | septiembre-diciembre de 2025 | pp. 381-413 | ISSN-2448-492X
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and beyond. The catastrophic experience of 1948, and its impact on different segments of the Palestinian people, is still a common topic of discussion among Palestinians of diverse backgrounds and generations, and ultimately a potent source of shared beliefs and values.

The overt obstacles to the expression of a separate Palestinian identity in national terms are thus worth examining, alongside the ideologies that competed for the loyalty of the Palestinian people or exerted influence on them, from Ottomanism and Arabism, to Islam, to the nation-state nationalism of the neighboring Arab nation-states. Whether as elements of the Palestinians' overlapping sense of identity, or as obstacles to, or opponents of, the expression of this identity, all of these "others" contributed, albeit in markedly different ways, to the Palestinians' self-definition.

The main obstacles to the expression of a separate Palestinian identity included the external powers that have dominated the region during the twentieth century, Britain and the United States, both of which at different times perceived Palestinian nationalism as a threat to their interests. As we have seen, the Balfour Declaration and the League of Nations Mandate for Palestine (which governed British policy in Palestine for three decades), explicitly excluded Palestinian national rights, and did not even mention the Palestinians *per se*, whether as Palestinians, Arabs, or Syrians. They were referred to instead solely in negative terms, as "the non-Jewish communities in Palestine". This negation was an important prerequisite both for the denial of self-determination to the Palestinians, and for the British decision to favor Zionism: for if the Palestinians had no determined identity,[32] they were unworthy of self-determination, or at least less worthy than the Jews, who clearly had a determined identity, now being posed in national rather than religious terms. At the same time as they denied Palestinian identity, both documents enshrined the establishment of a Jewish "national home" as Britain's primary responsibility in governing Palestine. Except for a brief period following the issuance of the 1939 White Paper, Britain remained essentially faithful to this dual approach until 1947-48, when it successfully colluded with Jordan (and indirectly with Israel) to prevent the emergence of the Palestinian state which was provided for in the United Nations General Assembly's plan for the partition of Palestine, embodied in resolution 181 of November 1947.[33]

As for the United States, although in 1947 it supported the partition of Palestine and the creation of a Palestinian state alongside Israel, it did nothing to help that state come into be-

[32] On this matter many Zionist leaders and British officials were agreed in 1918, when Chaim Weizmann wrote that "The present state of affairs would necessarily tend towards the creation of an Arab Palestine, if there were an Arab people in Palestine", and William Ormsby-Gore (Assistant Secretary of the War Cabinet and later Colonial Secretary) stated that […] west of the Jordan the people were not Arabs, but only Arabic-speaking" (cited in Warriner, 1972: 32-33).

[33] The details are recorded in Shlaim, 1990; Wilson, 1988. Although the British in 1939 modified the unconditional support they had shown for Zionism for more than two decades, this change in policy was itself limited by Winston Churchill (as Prime Minister from 1940 to 1945), perhaps the most ardent Zionist in British public life, and by the fact that British hostility to Palestinian aspirations and leadership remained unabated.

Revista Mexicana de Ciencias Políticas y Sociales | Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México
Nueva Época, Año LXX, núm. 255 | septiembre-diciembre de 2025 | pp. 381-413 | ISSN-2448-492X
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ing against the machinations of Jordan, Britain, and Israel, but instead materially assisted the nascent state of Israel. Since 1948, the United States has followed essentially the same course as Britain, supporting Israel but never conceding the validity of Palestinian national rights or the self-determination and statehood that their implementation would entail, and indeed frequently making efforts to prevent their implementation. This policy was consistent, although different administrations edged ambiguously toward accepting certain Palestinian political rights, while invariably excluding the most important right, that of national self-determination. For example, while the 1978 Camp David agreement includes the phrase "the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people", it is clear from the context that these are less than full rights of self-determination and independence. Little has changed since then, whether in the U.S.-brokered framework for the Middle East peace negotiations which started in October 1991, or in the PLO-Israel Declaration of Principles signed on the White House lawn in September 1993, and the self-rule agreement that resulted from it signed in the White House in September 1995. All of these documents produced under American patronage fail to provide for Palestinian self-determination or statehood.

The obstacles to the achievement of Palestinian national rights also included the Zionist movement, which since its implantation in Palestine at the end of the last century has strongly opposed any expression of independent Palestinian nationalism, Palestinian claims to the country, and the exercise of Palestinian national identity. With few exceptions (Ahad Ha-Am and Judah Magnes stand out among them), early Zionist leaders, and Israeli politicians since the founding of the state, have tended to see their conflict with Palestinian nationalism as a zero-sum game.[34] Beyond winning most of the early rounds of this game on the ground in Palestine, they were able to carry their battle back to the international "metropolises" of the era, whether London and Paris before World War II or Washington and New York since then. In doing so, they succeeded in gaining world support for their own national aspirations, while at the same time they delegitimized those of their Palestinian opponents before key segments of international public opinion.

Since the early days of the Zionist movement, Palestinian intellectuals and political figures perceived that Zionism had objectives that could be achieved only at the expense of Palestinian aspirations, whether framed in Ottoman, Muslim or Christian, Arab, Syrian, or narrowly Palestinian terms, and they too generally came to hold a zero-sum view of the conflict.[35] One of the earliest recorded Palestinian reactions to Zionism was a letter sent to the first leader of the modern Zionist political movement, Theodor Herzl, in 1899 by Yusuf Diya' al-Din Pasha al-Khalidi [hereafter Yusuf Diya' al-Khalidi], former mayor of Jerusalem

[34] Although much past writing on this subject has blurred this harsh reality, more recent research has borne it out: e.g. Shapira, 1992; Masalha, 1992; Lockman, 1996.
[35] Mandel (1986a) is the best work on this early period. See also Khalidi, 1982: 105-124.

Revista Mexicana de Ciencias Políticas y Sociales | Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México
Nueva Época, Año LXX, núm. 255 | septiembre-diciembre de 2025 | pp. 381-413 | ISSN-2448-492X
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and deputy for the city in the 1877-78 Ottoman Parliament. In it, he warned that the Palestinians would resist the aspirations of political Zionism, which they understood could be achieved only at their expense, and concluded, "leave Palestine in peace".[36]

It may be asked why, given this early awareness, the Palestinians were not more effective in their resistance to the Zionist movement. For the effective and successful expression of Palestinian identity—meaning the achievement of a greater measure of independent national existence, up to and including sovereignty—was not obstructed solely by external obstacles, powerful and numerous though these were. Internal factors, resulting largely from the nature of the social structure of Palestine in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, have also contributed to maintaining the Palestinians in a state of dependence until the present day.

The general outlines of this social structure, fragmented along regional, class, religious, and family lines, were not peculiar to Palestinian society: indeed they were common to many others in the Arab world in this period. Other Arab countries, however, generally succeeded in transcending these divisions, at least in times of national crisis. At similar times, the lack of cohesion of Palestinian society repeatedly hindered effective, unified responses to the challenges posed by the formidable foes of Palestinian nationalism.

It is illuminating to study the differences between the Palestinians and the Arab peoples who over the past century developed national frontiers and state structures and secured independence from the same Western powers that denied these things to the Palestinians. Both Egypt and Tunisia showed a high degree of cohesiveness, in spite of deep societal divisions, and managed to negotiate the difficult transition from foreign occupation to independence with limited instability, dissension, or domestic repression. In Syria and Iraq, the passage was stormier, with national consensus harder to build, and less mutual tolerance and pluralism in political life than in Egypt or Tunisia. The result was that before and after independence in Syria and Iraq, internal sectarian, social, and political tensions repeatedly exploded in bloody domestic strife, leaving both countries with repressive, authoritarian states as the price of this transition.[37]

In the Palestinian case, what had to be achieved was more difficult than in other Arab countries, for as we have noted, the opposition of both Britain and the Zionist movement had to be taken into account. But from 1918 until 1948, the Palestinians also demonstrated less ability to transcend local, family, and political rivalries and to unify their efforts against

[36] The entire text of the letter is quoted in Manna', 1994: 190.

[37] Iraq was far more afflicted by these problems than Syria, partly because the three Ottoman provinces, Basra, Baghdad, and Mosul, out of which the British had created Iraq, had little in common with one another, and their population was deeply divided on sectarian, ethnic, and other grounds —between Sunni and Shi'a, Arab and Kurd, urban and rural, settled and tribal populations. See Batatu, Old Social Classes. Syria suffered from some of these problems, but was a more homogenous society than Iraq, with a larger urban and settled population, a clear Sunni majority, less diversity among regions, and only two Ottoman provinces, Damascus and Aleppo, to be subsumed under the structure of a single state.

Revista Mexicana de Ciencias Políticas y Sociales | Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México
Nueva Época, Año LXX, núm. 255 | septiembre-diciembre de 2025 | pp. 381-413 | ISSN-2448-492X
DOI: https://doi.org/10.22201/fcpys.2448492xe.2025.255.93961

their common enemies than did Egyptians, Tunisians, Syrians, Iraqis, and even the religiously divided Lebanese. In all these cases, the respective national movements managed to display greater cohesiveness and solidarity at critical moments in the struggle with the colonial power than did the Palestinians: Egypt in 1919 and 1936; Tunisia in the mid-1950s; Syria in 1925-26 and 1936; Iraq in 1941 and 1946-48; and Lebanon in 1943. At times, the outcome was not an unequivocal victory, but in all cases the ultimate result was independence.

Certainly, the lack of access after 1918 to state structures (or indeed to any meaningful level of government: the top posts in the mandate administration were reserved for the British)[38] hindered the Palestinians by comparison with their Arab neighbors. Most other Arab countries either had a preexisting state with a degree of independence, as in Egypt or Tunisia, which had autonomous, hereditary regimes under the Ottomans before European occupation in the 1880s, and retained them afterwards; or the European powers were bound by the terms of League of Nations mandates to create such state structures and eventually to hand over power to them. We have already seen that this was not the case with regard to the Palestine mandate. Moreover, in Palestine the Zionists built their own exclusive, well-funded parastate structures with the blessing of the mandatory authority and in keeping with the terms of the Mandate, even while benefiting inordinately from the British-created administrative structures of the Government of Palestine.

But in addition to these special disadvantages affecting the Palestinians, it might also be argued that Palestine, and especially the hilly central Nablus-Jerusalem-Hebron axis whence came most of the political leaders, was simply less developed economically, and therefore had evolved less socially and politically, than had the urban areas of Egypt, Syria, Iraq, and Lebanon during this period.[39] Moreover, even in neighboring Lebanon and Syria, which were most similar to Palestine, political leadership tended to come not from the towns of the relatively isolated hill areas, but rather from the middle and upper classes of the larger and more socially, economically, and politically developed cities of the coast and the interior plains: Beirut, Aleppo, and Damascus. In 1942, these cities had populations of 233 000, 257 000, and 261 000 respectively, while the three largest cities in Palestine with Arab populations —Jerusalem, Haifa, and Jaffa— had populations of 143 000, 116 000, and 89 000, with only about 180 000 of the three cities' total population of 348 000 being Arabs (Bonné, 1945: 3-4).

[38] For the best account of how the Mandate systematically excluded Palestinians from senior positions of responsibility, see Wasserstein, 1991: 166-195.

[39] The British tactic of reinforcing and manipulating traditional social structures in rural areas as a prop for their rule is examined by Miller (1985). This policy was continued by Jordan in the West Bank from 1948 until 1967, and by Israel in Arab areas incorporated into Israel after 1948, and in the occupied West Bank after 1967. For an analysis that stresses the dichotomy between the coastal plain and the hill areas, see Kimmerling and Migdal (1993). For a more sophisticated approach showing the interrelations between them in an earlier period, see Doumani (1995).

Revista Mexicana de Ciencias Políticas y Sociales | Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México
Nueva Época, Año LXX, núm. 255 | septiembre-diciembre de 2025 | pp. 381-413 | ISSN-2448-492X
DOI: https://doi.org/10.22201/fcpys.2448492xe.2025.255.93961

In Palestine, by way of contrast, while in the early part of the twentieth century Jaffa and Haifa were the fastest growing cities, and were the commercial and economic foci of the country, as well as centers of intellectual and cultural life and of press activity (and by 1948 had the largest Arab populations of any cities in the country —larger even than Jerusalem), Jerusalem, Nablus, and other cities and towns of the hills tended to dominate political life. The implication is that Palestinian politics tended to be most influenced by these hill areas where religious, clan, family and parochial perspectives were more prevalent, rather than by the coastal cities where working class associations, radical urban religious groups, commercial and business concerns, and intellectual and social organizations were most active (for more on the coastal cities: Seikaly, 1995; Lockman, 1996; Kimmerling & Migdal, 1993).

Certainly, political party organization, sustained mass political mobilization, a vigorous independent political press, and many other features of "modern" politics, which had burgeoned rapidly at this time in other Arab countries, were relatively underdeveloped in Palestine when the crucial test of the 1936-39 revolt arose.[40] Palestinians showed great solidarity in the opening phases of this revolt, which was started and sustained by the grassroots rather than the traditional political leadership. It is also true that the strong religious, family, and local loyalties that characterized this society were initially a great asset during the revolt (Swedenberg, 1988, 1995). Nevertheless, in the end the lack of organization, and of nation-wide structures, as well as the urban-rural, class, and family divisions that bedeviled Palestinian society reemerged, splintering the internal front even as the British mounted a fierce campaign of repression in late 1938. The result was a crushing military and political reverse for the Palestinians. This reverse was perhaps inevitable, since it is difficult to imagine the British Empire accepting defeat at the hands of the Palestinians, however sophisticated their leadership and organization, at this crucial juncture just before World War I, and in an area the British considered to be of vital strategic importance to them. The likely inevitability of this reverse made it no less devastating.

The decisive defeat in 1936-39 had fatally weakened the Palestinians by the time of their desperate final post-World War II struggle with the Zionist movement to retain control of some part of what they passionately believed was their country. In consequence, when expeditionary forces of four Arab armies entered Palestine on May 15, 1948, the Palestinians had already been militarily overwhelmed by the forces of the Haganah, the Palmach, and the Irgun in a series of sweeping routs which ended in the loss of Jaffa, Haifa, Acre, Tiberias, and many other cities, towns, villages, and strategic communications routes. The defeat created a political and military vacuum the nascent Israeli state rapidly filled, together with the

[40] Although the press was extremely active, and a number of political parties existed in Palestine in the 1930s, most of these parties were essentially vehicles for narrow family or individual interests, as were some of the newspapers. Hizb al-Istiglal al-'Arabi, founded by 'Auni 'Abd al-Hadi, was probably the most developed example of a modern political party in Palestine. It is the subject of Matthews (1997).

Revista Mexicana de Ciencias Políticas y Sociales | Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México
Nueva Época, Año LXX, núm. 255 | septiembre-diciembre de 2025 | pp. 381-413 | ISSN-2448-492X
DOI: https://doi.org/10.22201/fcpys.2448492xe.2025.255.93961

armies of several Arab states, which proceeded to lose much of the rest of Palestine to the victorious Israelis.

It was not until the mid-1960s that the rebirth of Palestinian nationalism would put the Palestinians back on the political map of the Middle East. By this time, a new middle class leadership had emerged at the head of effectively organized political structures like Fatah and the Movement of Arab Nationalists, eclipsing the traditional leaders who had failed during the mandate period.[41] The legacy that those leaders left to their successors included the heavy burden of repeated political defeats culminating in the disaster of 1948, and the complete frustration of Palestinian aspirations for independence and sovereignty.

Yet this sequence of setbacks, far from weakening it, seems to have reinforced the sense of Palestinian national identity that had emerged over the preceding decades out of the disparate strands of religious and local attachments to Palestine, commitment to Arabism, and resistance to what Palestinians perceived was the creeping encroachment of the Zionist movement on their homeland. The Palestinians held fast to this strong sense of identity after 1948, both those who became refugees, and those who remained in their homes inside Palestine. Even while it continued to evolve and change, this sense of identity remained the foundation upon which the Palestinian nationalist groups that emerged after 1948 were to build.

IV

Given this background, how has the way Palestinians define their identity changed over time? While it is difficult to date precisely when a distinct sense of Palestinian identity first emerged, there is little doubt that it emerged unevenly —in different ways among different groups and in different areas— and that it always coexisted with other forms of identification, such as religion or family. Important roots of this identity go back before the development of modern national consciousness. But there is considerable evidence that much of the population of Palestine came, in Benedict Anderson's term, to "imagine" themselves as a political community, with clear boundaries and rights to sovereignty, early in the twentieth century.[42] This section recapitulates some of the stages in this process, concluding with a warning of the pitfalls that threaten those who study the topic.

[41] With the reestablishment of the Palestinian national movement in the West Bank and Gaza Strip after the PLO-Israel accords, it remains to be determined to what degree the development of effective modern institutions and structures that transcend these parochial divisions will make it possible to overcome the persistence of personal, family, regional and sectarian rivalries.

[42] In Anderson (1991: 6) defines a nation as "an imagined political community […] imagined as both inherently limited and sovereign".

Revista Mexicana de Ciencias Políticas y Sociales | Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México
Nueva Época, Año LXX, núm. 255 | septiembre-diciembre de 2025 | pp. 381-413 | ISSN-2448-492X
DOI: https://doi.org/10.22201/fcpys.2448492xe.2025.255.93961

The incipient sense of community-as-nation can be seen in an article by Najib 'Azuri, a former Ottoman official in Palestine, in the newspaper *Thamarat al-Funun* on September 23, 1908. 'Azuri suggested that the newly restored Ottoman Parliament expand the existing *sanjag* of Jerusalem northwards to include the northern regions of Palestine which at that time were part of the *vilayet* of Beirut, stressing that "the progress of the land of Palestine depends on this".[43] The idea of a clearly defined political unit called "the land of Palestine", with frontiers approximating those later given to the country under the mandate, must have been clearly present in 'Azuri's mind, and also in the minds of his readers, for him to have made such a proposal. His proposal specifies a primary unit of territory to which the residents of Palestine belonged and owed their loyalty, and through which they should be represented in the Ottoman Parliament. In 'Azuri's case, we know from his book *Le Réveil de la nation arabe*[44] that he had a clear sense of Palestine as a country —the book contains an entire chapter on the history, geography, population and administration of Palestine— and of the potential impact on it of the rise of the Zionist movement. There are many other indications that such an "idea of Palestine" existed at this time, among them the founding in Jaffa in 1911 of the influential newspaper *Filastin* (meaning Palestine), which in the decades to follow was instrumental in spreading this idea.

Before the twentieth century, as we have seen, Ottoman Palestine had been subject to a variety of administrative arrangements. The existing sense of Palestine as a country, however, was little affected by Ottoman administrative changes, in part because this sense was based on the longstanding and firmly held religious idea common to all three monotheistic faiths that Palestine within generally recognized borders was a holy land. The importance of this idea for shaping the nascent nationalist consciousness of Palestinians in the late nineteenth century has been well traced by the late Alexander Schölch, in his masterful study, *Palestine in Transformation: 1856-1882*.[45] As he points out, for Muslims this sense of Palestine as a country went back to the "*Fada'il al-Quds*" (or "merits of Jerusalem") literature, which described Jerusalem and holy sites and places of note throughout Palestine, including Hebron, Jericho, Bethlehem, Nablus, al-Ramla, Safad, Ascalon, Acre, Gaza, and Nazareth for pilgrims and visitors to Palestine, and for the devout and inquisitive elsewhere.[46] These

[43] The article was published after the Ottoman Constitutional Revolution of July 1908, which liberated the press from the censorship of the old regime, making possible the freer expression of nationalist ideas.

[44] 'Azuri (1905) predicted an inevitable collision between Zionism and Arabism in its opening paragraph. On 'Azuri, who was Lebanese by origin, see Mandel, 1986b: 49-52.

[45] Cited in n. 36. References to "the land of Palestine" are widespread in the Arabic-language press in Palestine and elsewhere before 1914. A typical example is a lengthy article on Zionism in the Beirut newspaper (1910) *al-Ittihad al-'Uthmani* (*559*): 2, which warns against "Zionist colonization, in other words foreign seizure, of the land of Palestine".

[46] These sites are mentioned repeatedly, e.g., in Mujir al-Din's fifteenth century *al-Uns al-jalil*, and in earlier works of this genre. They refer also to sites throughout Syria that are seen as having a certain sanctity, although a special place is reserved for Palestine, and Jerusalem in particular. Eleven sayings attributed to the Prophet Muhammad that have this same focus are recorded in the standard hadith compilations: Jarrar, 1987: 6-8.

Revista Mexicana de Ciencias Políticas y Sociales | Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México
Nueva Época, Año LXX, núm. 255 | septiembre-diciembre de 2025 | pp. 381-413 | ISSN-2448-492X
DOI: https://doi.org/10.22201/fcpys.2448492xe.2025.255.93961

place names suggest that a clear idea of the rough boundaries of Palestine, as a sort of sacred —if not yet a national— space, already existed in the minds of authors and readers of this Islamic devotional literature. A similar idea existed for Christians, as well as for Jews.

This sense of Palestine as a special and sacred space recurs in the historical record. In 1701, the French consul in Sidon paid a visit to Jerusalem, an innovation never before permitted by the Ottoman authorities. This produced a strong reaction from the local Muslim population, whose representatives met in the *Haram al-Sharif*. There, more than eighty Muslim leaders representing the city's main families, together with several local military officials and large numbers of the populace "including poor and rich", deliberated and signed a petition demanding that the Ottoman ruler, Sultan Mustafa I, revoke permission for such a visit(Cohen, 1985; Göçek, 1987).

The terms this document uses are telling.[47] The petitioners remind the Sultan that Jerusalem, called *Bayt al-Maqdis* throughout the document, is the first of the two *qibla's*, or directions of prayer, and the third of the Islamic holy places.[48] They salute the Sultan using his various titles, prominently including that of protector of Jerusalem (*hami Bayt al-Maqdis*). They state that the consul carried with him an imperial document issued in Istanbul which gave him permission to remain in Jerusalem, something that had never been allowed to a foreign diplomat under Islamic rule since the conquest of the city by 'Umar Ibn al-Khattab in the seventh century, or its recovery from the Crusaders by Saladin in the twelfth.[49]

Those present at the meeting argued to the qadi and the governor that the consul's visit to Jerusalem violated the conditions imposed by 'Umar Ibn al-Khattab and later caliphs, and that his behavior was a great evil, "especially since our city is the focus of attention of the infidels", suggesting considerable concern that the events of the Crusades could be repeated. The petition warned that "we fear that we will be occupied as a result of this, as happened repeatedly in past times", another clear reference to the Crusades. The qadi and the governor agreed with those present and requested the consul to leave, which he did. In conclusion, the petitioners asked that foreign consuls continue to be posted in Sidon, as had always been the case in the past, and requested that the Sultan prevent the French consul from remaining "in this holy land" (*al-diyar al-qudsiyya*).[50]

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[47] This undated document in Arabic is located in the Khalidi Library in Jerusalem together with more than 300 documents that originate in the local Islamic court, the mahkama shariyya, from the seventeenth through the early twentieth centuries. During this time, members of the Khalidi family often held the senior local post in this court, as chief secretary and deputy to the qadi, who was appointed from Istanbul, and generally served for only one year. For more on the Islamic religious hierarchy under the Ottomans, see Zilfi, 1988; Repp, 1986.

[48] *Awwal [sic] al-qiblatayn wa thalith al-haramayn al-sharifayn*.

[49] The assembled dignitaries expressed their displeasure that the Frenchman was entitled by the document he carried to receive treatment "like the Muslim Beys", including riding a horse and carrying weapons.

[50] The wording could also mean "this region of Jerusalem", but either reading is possible, and there is an implication of sanctity in both cases. That this petition was not exceptional in its stress on the sanctity of Jerusalem is indicated by another more routine one in Ottoman Turkish, dating from later in the eighteenth century. In this undated petition,

Revista Mexicana de Ciencias Políticas y Sociales | Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México
Nueva Época, Año LXX, núm. 255 | septiembre-diciembre de 2025 | pp. 381-413 | ISSN-2448-492X
DOI: https://doi.org/10.22201/fcpys.2448492xe.2025.255.93961

This petition recapitulates the idea of Palestine as a special and sacred land with Jerusalem as its focus. Such a notion is found throughout the *fada'il al-Quds* literature, and shows that the sense of Palestine as an entity, whose importance Schölch stresses for the late nineteenth century, was in fact clearly present at least two centuries earlier. A careful reading of the petition shows that this idea of Palestine's special importance is, at least in part, rooted in the heightened Islamic concern for Jerusalem and Palestine that followed the traumatic episode of the Crusades. This idea was widespread, and persisted for centuries thereafter. One of the most eminent eighteenth-century religious figures in Jerusalem, Shaykh Muhammad al-Khalili, in a *waqfiyya* document of 1726 establishing an endowment that survives to this day, warned that the transfer of waqf property to foreigners in Jerusalem constituted a danger to the future of the city, which must be built up and populated if Jerusalem were to be defended against the covetousness of these external enemies (Asali, 1996: 219).

Thus the assertion that Palestinian nationalism developed in response to the challenge of Zionism embodies a kernel of a much older truth: this modern nationalism was rooted in long-standing attitudes of concern for the city of Jerusalem and for Palestine as a sacred entity which were a response to perceived external threats. The incursions of the European powers and the Zionist movement in the late nineteenth century were only the most recent examples of this threat.[51]

These themes are reiterated during one of the earliest cases of organized opposition to Zionist land purchase in Palestine: the al-Fula (or 'Afula) incident of 1910-1911. Many newspaper articles written in opposition to this sale stressed the special place of Palestine, for it was one of the biggest purchases up to that point, and one of the earliest to lead to the eviction of large numbers of Palestinian peasants. In two anonymous articles in the Damascus paper *al-Mugtabas*, later reprinted in newspapers in Haifa, Beirut, and elsewhere, much is made of the presence on this land of the "fortress" of al-Fula, supposedly built by Saladin, and shown in an illustration accompanying one article.

This ruin, located at the center of the present-day Israeli settlement of Merhavia, was what remained of the Crusader castle of La Féve. Although not built by Saladin, it was captured by his forces in 1187, and is not far from Mount Tabor, a site dominated in the twelfth century by a still-extant Crusader fortress. The important thing was not whether the ruin had originally been built by Saladin: it was that these newspapers' readers believed that part of

a large number of Jerusalem notables complain about the misbehavior of local military personnel in the city. The petition begins by stressing that Jerusalem is the "third of the holy places, its nobility protected until the day of Resurrection". The document, signed by the qadi of Jerusalem, Ma'nzade Muhammad, is also located in the Khalidi Library, Jerusalem.

[51] The two articles were in nos. 551 and 552, December 19 and 20, 1910. Two later articles deal with the sale, one of a series of sales by the wealthy Sursuq family of Beirut of property in the fertile and strategic Marj Ibn 'Amir (Jezreel Valley). For more on the al-Fula sale and its repercussions, see chapters 5 and 6 below.

Revista Mexicana de Ciencias Políticas y Sociales | Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México
Nueva Época, Año LXX, núm. 255 | septiembre-diciembre de 2025 | pp. 381-413 | ISSN-2448-492X
DOI: https://doi.org/10.22201/fcpys.2448492xe.2025.255.93961

the heritage of Saladin, savior of Palestine from the Crusaders, was being sold off (by implication, to the "new Crusaders") without the Ottoman government lifting a finger.

The government's alleged dereliction of its duty to restrict Zionist colonization was the focus of speeches made in Parliament on May 16, 1911, by Ruhi al-Khalidi and Hafiz Sa'id, deputies for Jerusalem. They were joined in their critique by Shukri al-'Asali, the newly elected deputy of Damascus and former *qa'immaqam* (district governor) of the Nazareth district, who had fought the al-Fula land sale in his previous post (and was probably the author of the anonymous articles in *al-Mugtabas* about it). In his Parliamentary intervention, al-'Asali specifically mentioned the fortress, saying that it had been captured by Saladin from the Crusaders. But while this use of the Saladin/Crusader theme evoked the danger of Zionism in the Palestinian and Arab press,[52] it produced only derision in the Ottoman Parliament, where other speakers demanded that the three deputies stop wasting the chamber's time with nonexistent problems such as that of Zionism.[53]

In Palestine, by contrast, such ideas were seriously received, for al-Khalidi was reelected the following year in an election rigged by the government to rid itself of opposition in the Arab provinces, even though government loyalists described the debate on Zionism that he initiated as an anti-governmental ploy (Khalidi, 1984a). He retained his seat at a time when other critics of the government lost theirs, at least in part because in his speeches on Zionism before Parliament, which were widely reprinted in the local press, al-Khalidi appealed to ideas that resonated with his Palestinian constituents.[54] These long-standing ideas about Palestine as a holy land under threat from without, to which these men and others appealed, offered a focus of identity that was central to the local Palestinian patriotism which was the forerunner of modern Palestinian national consciousness.

This local patriotism could not yet be described as nation-state nationalism, for the simple reason that the prerequisites for modern nationalism did not yet exist, notably the means for a political leadership to mobilize large numbers of people and rapidly win them over to a single set of ideas, especially the idea that they partook of the same fate and were a single community. Yet the ideas represented in the 1701 petition were not restricted to the elite, as is attested by the mass nature of the meeting at which it was adopted. This continuing attachment to Palestine in the face of an external threat constituted one of the bases upon which mod-

[52] Articles on the subject were widely reprinted in such papers as *Filastin* in Jaffa and *al-Karmil* in Haifa, as well as *al-Mugtabas* in Damascus and *Lisan al-Hal* in Beirut. In an article entitled "Majlis al-Mab'uthan: Jalsat 16 Ayyar" (1911) *Filastin*: 1-2, carries lengthy citations from the texts of the Parliamentary speeches, having earlier carried summaries. The most extensive account of al-'Asali's speech, including his reference to Saladin, is "al-Isti'mar al-sihuyini fi majlis al-umma: Khitab rannan" (1911) [Zionist colonization in the Chamber of Deputies: A ringing speech] al-Mugtabas (*691*): 1-2.

[53] This parliamentary debate will be discussed further.

[54] Zionism concerned al-Khalidi so greatly that he made an extensive study of the subject, about which he was completing a book when he died in 1913.

Revista Mexicana de Ciencias Políticas y Sociales | Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México
Nueva Época, Año LXX, núm. 255 | septiembre-diciembre de 2025 | pp. 381-413 | ISSN-2448-492X
DOI: https://doi.org/10.22201/fcpys.2448492xe.2025.255.93961

ern Palestinian nationalism was built when the prerequisites for its emergence —the press, historical novels, modern communications, the spread of education, and mass politics— appeared in the early decades of the twentieth century.

Following the 1908 Ottoman revolution, all these factors began to function together. As before, Jerusalem was the focus of concern for Palestinians,[55] and the center of their responses to all external challenges. As in 1701, many Palestinians feared the territorial ambitions of external powers, albeit with somewhat more reason than their eighteenth-century predecessors. In the 1911 Parliamentary speeches just mentioned, expressions of this fear were prominent: al-Khalidi warned that "the aim of the Zionists […] is the creation of an Israeli kingdom [*mamlaka isra'iliyya*] whose capital will be Jerusalem", while al-'Asali declared that the Zionists intended "to create a strong state, for after taking possession of the land they will expel the inhabitants either by force or through the use of wealth".[56]

In spite of these early warnings, the Palestinians have been less successful in defending their country in the face of the external and internal challenges they have faced in the twentieth century than were their ancestors in 1701. Although Palestinian leaders in recent years have had access to newspapers and rapid means of communication and organization, while being able to wield new ideological tools giving them more power than their predecessors to mobilize people, these instruments of modern politics were not yet fully developed for most of the twentieth century, nor had society changed rapidly enough to respond to them fully. Moreover, even though in many ways the Palestinians had become a unified people, in others they were still fragmented, and understood their history in terms of a multiplicity of narratives. Finally, the Palestinians now faced foes with considerably greater abilities to organize and mobilize than those they possessed.

To obtain a nuanced understanding of Palestinian history, we need to comprehend how and why success in meeting these challenges eluded the Palestinians, and why, in consequence, the Zionist movement triumphed at their expense. In order to do so, we must give proper weight to all the factors of unity and diversity that affect them, and all the different narratives that intertwine to make up Palestinian identity. Our objective should be scholarship that respects the specificity of the Palestinian experience without sacrificing the sophistication derived from an appreciation of how all these disparate narratives interact. This may help prevent the study of Palestinian history from sinking to the level of shameless chauvinistic self-glorification prevalent in much nationalist-influenced Middle Eastern historiography, whereby the writing of much Arab, Turkish, Iranian and Israeli history has

[55] The first use of the term "Palestinians" ("filistiniyun" in Arabic) which has been found is in the press of the 1908-1914 period.
[56] Quotes are from *Filastin* and *al-Mugtabas*, cited in n. 65.

Revista Mexicana de Ciencias Políticas y Sociales | Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México
Nueva Época, Año LXX, núm. 255 | septiembre-diciembre de 2025 | pp. 381-413 | ISSN-2448-492X
DOI: https://doi.org/10.22201/fcpys.2448492xe.2025.255.93961

yielded to ideological distortion, and a blindness to the different strands that comprise the current reality of each modern nation-state in the region.

In the Arab world what has most often been lacking —partly as a result of the influence of early Arab nationalist historiography— is an appreciation of the Ottoman and Islamic heritage in the genesis of existing Arab nation-states. This deficiency is frequently combined with an overemphasis on even the most tenuous Arab connections, a tendency to "Arabize" much Islamic and pre-Islamic history, and an overemphasis on colonial influences. Turkish historiography has similarly slighted the Ottoman roots of the modern republic, as well as the Islamic and non-Turkish contributions to the Ottoman heritage, while rewriting earlier history in light of modern Turkish nationalist canons. Much Iranian historiography has minimized the influence of either non-Iranian or non-Islamic elements in Iranian history, while over-stressing that of either Iranian or Islamic factors (the Islamic revolution of 1979 is the demarcation line between these contradictory trends). Israeli historiography and archaeology have often looked obsessively for evidence of a Jewish presence in Palestine, the majority of whose population for millennia were non-Jews, while neglecting elements of the larger pattern, except as background to Jewish history.[57]

The possible pitfalls for the study of Palestinian identity include similar obsessions with the larger framework into which the Palestinian case fits, particularly the Arab or Islamic contexts. There is also often a tendency to see an essential Palestinian identity going well back in time, rather than the complex, contingent and relatively recent reality of Palestinian identity, and to stress factors of unity at the expense of those tending toward fragmentation or diversity in Palestinian society and politics. Another unique pitfall is the tendency to focus on the external reasons for the failure of the Palestinian people to achieve self-determination, to the exclusion of internal ones. The alignment between Britain and Zionism for thirty years of the twentieth century, and that between the United States and Israel since then, has unquestionably engendered a daunting set of external challenges. But these facts cannot absolve students of Palestinian history from asking whether the Palestinians could not have improved their chances to realize their national project at certain critical junctures, and if they could have, what structural or other reasons prevented them from doing so.

Focusing on Palestinian social dynamics, I have suggested answers to these questions, and while there are other possible avenues of investigation, this would seem to be a fruitful one. It is hard for historians who are part of a society still suffering from the direct effects of such a series of historic failures to look self-critically at that society's fissures and flaws, while the consequences of not doing so are obvious. Much of the historical writing on

[57] For a discussion of all of these problems, see Khalidi, 1991: 1363-1364; Gil (1992) illustrates the final ones mentioned perfectly: of its 840 pages, the last 350 are devoted almost exclusively to the history of the tiny Palestinian Jewish community, as are generous sections of the earlier parts of the book.

Revista Mexicana de Ciencias Políticas y Sociales | Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México
Nueva Época, Año LXX, núm. 255 | septiembre-diciembre de 2025 | pp. 381-413 | ISSN-2448-492X
DOI: https://doi.org/10.22201/fcpys.2448492xe.2025.255.93961

this subject has been done by Israelis and others who harbor little apparent sympathy for their subject. It is necessary for those with empathy, as well as that unique access to and understanding of sources that often go with it, to address such questions rigorously. Without rigor, the writing of Palestinian history risks being tainted by the same chauvinism and disguised emotionalism that have already affected the writing of much other modern Middle Eastern history. These factors are partly responsible for leaving the Middle East field behind others, mired in naked partisanship, engaged in provincial debates of little interest to others, and cut off from trends that affect the wider historical community. Although the study of Palestinian identity is far from a *tabula rasa*, perhaps it is not too late to avoid these pitfalls.

Revista Mexicana de Ciencias Políticas y Sociales | Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México
Nueva Época, Año LXX, núm. 255 | septiembre-diciembre de 2025 | pp. 381-413 | ISSN-2448-492X
DOI: https://doi.org/10.22201/fcpys.2448492xe.2025.255.93961

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