

PALESTINE: A HISTORY OF FOUR THOUSAND YEARS

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The Palestinian-Israeli territorial claim has become one of the most complicated in the history of the Middle East and the World. Each perspective has arguments and data that impact world geopolitical discourse. However, political science often cannot capture this diversity, so it is trapped in shallow justifications. Many historians, even sharing the same breath, are reluctant to accept a different paradigm and exacerbate the situation critically. In addition, mass media makes readers more fanatical with the justifications of ideological historians for decades. As a result, the Arab and Jewish bloc has strengthened the justification of nationalism, racism, colonialism, and Zionism for dozens century. It drags the world into a maelstrom of sorrow and anger. Unlike other countries that have experienced ethnic cleansing, which has been "solved" by writing history (See in India between Hindus, Muslims, and Singh or about the Rohingya in Myanmar, Uyghurs in China), Palestine continues to sink into the complexities of life.

Some historians seeking to be "neutral" may tire of this debate, even though others take their research seriously and disseminate the results, including Nur Masalha, professor of Oriental and African studies at the University of London. He provides a critical perspective on the history of the Palestinian/ Israeli "territory" to make history more clear and objective. His current book strengthens the logic of territorial claims through the history of ethnicity (the nation), which is the root and marker of modern Palestine's social and regional identity. This book seeks to explain Palestine's long, unbroken, neat history. Despite having a sharp and balanced analysis of the dynamics of interpretation over thousands of years, the author admits that this book is not intended to provide a grand narrative of history, so it needs to be critically captured.

The introduction serves as a framework for writing Palestine chronologically into ten chapters, from the late Bronze Age to Israel's usurpation of Palestinian place names. Masalha carefully and brilliantly classifies several writings of different traditions in Palestine. He invites us to understand the historical roots of Palestine and the different interpretations of history. It combines approaches to history 'from be-

low' and history 'from within' the same bloc as Edward Said, Gayatri Spivak, Linda Smith,¹ and several other subaltern study thinkers. However, even if he sometimes elaborates on histories from above, such as through European, Ottoman, and Zionist perspectives (p. 212), he strongly condemns European nationalists who gave birth to 'normal' European traditions and myths. Besides that, he criticizes some Arabic scripts that promote Palestinian political and national goals or pan-Arabism by creating metanarratives to describe Palestinian national identity or Arab nationalism (p. 5).

The wealth of his analysis lies in contemporary concepts and theories, especially in chapters five, eight, and nine. This multi-perspective approach to Palestinian history over time argues that the multi-linear evolution of the Palestinian conceptual experience centers on general and concrete ideas that represent the historical and fundamental characteristics and life experiences of Palestinians and indigenous peoples. The earliest toponym for the area known in Classical Times as 'Palestine' is not related to Cana'an; Retenu and Djahi, used in 14th century BC Egyptian stories. Palestine was the name most commonly used, consistently, and persistently for more than 1200. Herodotus was the first historian to indicate a geographical area called Palaistinê, far more comprehensive than ancient Philistia. Another Palestinian identity is when this region became one of the imperial Provincias Roman rules from year 135 M to 390 CE. Arab Christians contributed to the gradual Arabization and transformed Palestine socially, religiously, economically, and architecturally. Further, in chapter six, Masalha describes the continuation, adaptation, and transformation of Palestine when the Islamic Arabs adapt the previous inheritance in the 7th century AD. Many of the place names in Palestine used by the Greek-speaking Byzantine governments continue to be used by Arab governments. Palestine even manages soft power resources like holy sites, academies, and libraries. During the next period, the Ayyubid, Mamluk, and Early Ottoman periods, Palestinian influence mixed the glory of Arab and European geography and cartography, and Palestine became more known by large because of the continuous maps created and revised. It contains the interests of France in the 18th century and Britain in the 19th century towards Palestine. The term Holy Land even became popular because the Ottomans then used maps of France in Europe to develop religious tourism. However, behind that, Masalha argues that Palestine has been accustomed to "independence" since the occupation of traditional countries.

The last two chapters of this book may feel like cliché knowledge and show the author's side after confirming the myth that is believed to be the establishment of the state of Israel. It describes the Palestinian national identity and the struggle to

¹ Smith, Linda T. (1999). *Decolonizing Methodologies*. [Download \[PDF/EPUB\] Decolonizing Methodologies: Research eBook Free \(readlibs.com\)](#); Spivak, Gayatri C. (1988). Can the Subaltern Speak? [subaltern_speak.pdf \(bahaistudies.net\)](#)

form its state. He cites social memory and the Palestinian mosaic (p. 207) to enrich the analysis. In this point of view, the argument has been stronger than some of the other writing, such as Fukuyama,² which still refers to ethnic and religious similarities as a justification of identity in the Middle East. In chapter eight, the author warns European hegemony and intellectual knowledge, which invites us to understand that the failure of Arab unity was essentially a product of the colonial legacy. Nevertheless, the author just offended a little (p. 19; 212) about the issue of how the campaign for democratic values. History of historical writing immersed in the spirit of the Westphalian system, as well as how the Cold War and the oil war also influenced historians' interpretations. The only problem confirms back, as mentioned in the introduction, that "The 'Arab versus Jewish' narrative (p.5) is a case of confusion at best." He traces new representations to the twentieth century by noting that Palestinian identity, which is complex and layered, does not only compromise Arab, Ottoman, Jewish, or Western identities. Political factors contribute to the construction of Palestinian identity. On the other hand, cultural, social, scientific, and economic activities influenced, imitated, and modified each other for thousands of years.

After the League of Nations mandated Britain over Palestine in 1922, Palestine had a distinct political and administrative entity for the first time. The goal of Palestinian nationalism in post-World War One shifted radically from autonomy and equal citizenship under the Ottomans to an anti-colonial struggle, liberation, and independence during the British Mandate period. After the Second World War, the concept of identity became more complicated as the nation-state debate arose. For decades, the Palestinians experienced a narrowing of meaning by associating the Jews with the Israelites. Many Palestinian anti-colonial organizations and secular institutions were founded. We can understand the author's logic that the Arabs want Palestine, not a Jewish state. Arabs dominates Palestine. Jews were allowed to stay but not become a state, continuing the old pattern. Until the arrival of European Jews to Palestine, the people were all considered Palestinians and Arabs, whether they were Jews, Christians, or Muslims (p. 319; 339; 347). The Arabs do not care about the logic of the Jews believing that Palestine is their land and fearing another Holocaust. Unfortunately, this explanation does not discuss how the West constructs and propagates the definition of radicalism and terrorism inherent in Palestinian anti-colonial fighters and their supporters. Alternatively, as Rachman³ and Chomsky wrote,⁴ the Middle East is a location for military bases to appease allies

² Fukuyama, F. (2022). 'A Country of Their Own,' *Foreign Affairs*, May/June 2022, [Francis Fukuyama: Liberalism Needs the Nation \(foreignaffairs.com\)](https://www.foreignaffairs.com)

³ Rachman, G. (2016). "Preserving American Power After Obama," *National Interest*, January/ February.

⁴ Chomsky, N. (2016). *Who Rules the World?* LLC, USA: Metropolitan Books Henry Holt and Company.

and intimidate foes. Moreover, the last other recent books, such as *World Order*⁵ and *Decolonising Israel*,⁶ are also essential to compare every perspective of Palestine's history.

Nevertheless, Masalha has also painstakingly deciphered the significant sources (even poetry, mosaics, culinary achievements, heritage, etc.) from Ancient Egypt, Assyria, Christianity, and Muslims, showing clear continuity in the mention of 'Palestine' down for the creation of the state of Israel. Throughout his book, he reinforces his explanations by citing 90 times the Bible, 33 times from the Koran, 13 Talmuds, 65 Old Testaments, and 6/7 Torahs (Tawrah) to critique and compare with other primary sources. Regarding the logic in this book, we also need to remember that historiography is subjective and never objective. As a result, Ranke's stream of reading the history of this region is impossible. Precisely herein lies the challenge for readers to be more critical. Readers, especially historians and archaeologists, can also explore primary sources; the author himself has not been able to reach both in terms of access and the original language; Arabic, Latin, Greek, Aramaic, and Hebrew because the author cites the secondary sources. Other sources, such as the internet, require further criticism.⁷ Is the author stuck in a block interpretation historian? The answer may be different. However, he tacitly rejected the Balfour Declaration of 1917 in favor of adopting the norm of self-determination and *uti possidetis Juris*. In addition, he rejected the discourse of modern war relations and Israel's annexation of territory in 1948, 1956, 1967, and 1973; the inheritance of the English division; and the legacy of the Westphalian system as part of geopolitics.

After reading this book, the reader will quickly discover whom the real "natives" are related to citizenship discourse. The Palestinian argument for Palestine permeates almost all interpretations of this book. In addition, it can be concluded that traditional colonialism still exists in Palestine with more sophisticated methods globally. Similar to what Russia might want to emulate in Ukraine when Western bias raises questions from many about how easy it is for the West to impose sanctions on Russia. However, the Palestinian issue is unlike the Kurdistan issue in the Greater Middle East, Taiwan, or Kashmir. Or the division ("gift") of territories, such as Malaysia, Pakistan, Bangladesh, and others, by former colonizers after the Second World War. At the same time, the case for

⁵ Kissinger, H. (2014). *World Order*. New York: Penguin Press. Chapter 3.

⁶ Halper, J. (2021). *Decolonizing Israel*. Northampton England: Pluto Press. [Decolonizing Israel, Liberating Palestine: Zionism, Settler Colonialism, and the Case for One Democratic State \(scribd.com\)](https://www.scribd.com/document/581111111/Decolonizing-Israel-Liberating-Palestine-Zionism-Settler-Colonialism-and-the-Case-for-One-Democratic-State)

⁷ The quoted [Manual of Palestinean Arabic, for self-instruction 1909.png \(459×622\) \(wikimedia.org\)](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Manual_of_Palestinean_Arabic_for_self-instruction_1909.png) (p. 437), only does not show the content, while some cannot be accessed like [198.62.75.1; File:1913 Ottoman Geography Text-book Showing the Sanjak of Jerusalem and Palestine.jpeg - Wikimedia Commons](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:198.62.75.1;_File:1913_Ottoman_Geography_Text-book_Showing_the_Sanjak_of_Jerusalem_and_Palestine.jpeg) (Chapter 9).

Palestine distinguishes it from the concept of modern imperialism, which does not require territorial occupation as long as the local government obeys a powerful state.

