



Beyond Chutzpah

On the Misuse of Anti-Semitism
and the Abuse of History

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Introduction

IN THE COURSE of writing this book, I passed a small milestone in my life. Twenty years ago, while researching my doctoral dissertation on the theory of Zionism, I came across a newly published book on the Israel-Palestine conflict: *From Time Immemorial: The Origins of the Arab-Jewish Conflict over Palestine* by Joan Peters.¹ Promising to revolutionize our understanding of the conflict, the book was adorned on the back cover with glowing praise from the Who's Who of American Arts and Letters (Saul Bellow, Elie Wiesel, Barbara Tuchman, Lucy Dawidowicz, and others), and it went on to garner scores of reviews in the mainstream media ranging from ecstasy to awe. Its first edition, eventually going into seven hardback printings, became a national best seller. The central thesis of Peters's book, apparently supported by nearly two thousand notes and a recondite demographic study, was that Palestine had been virtually empty on the eve of Zionist colonization and that, after Jews made the deserted parts of Palestine they settled bloom, Arabs from neighboring states and other parts of Palestine migrated to the Jewish areas and pretended to be indigenous. Here was the, as it

1. New York: Harper and Row, 1984.

were, scientific proof that Golda Meir had been right after all: there was no such thing as Palestinians.

As it happened, *From Time Immemorial* was a colossal hoax. Cited sources were mangled, key numbers in the demographic study falsified, and large swaths plagiarized from Zionist propaganda tracts. Documenting the hoax and the rather more onerous challenge of publicizing these findings in the media proved to be a turning point for me. From then on, much of my life has, in one fashion or another, centered on the Israel-Palestine conflict.²

Looking back after two decades of study and reflection, I am struck most by how *uncomplicated* the Israel-Palestine conflict is. There is no longer much contention among scholars on the historical record, at any rate for the foundational period from the first Zionist settlements in the late nineteenth century to the creation of Israel in 1948.³ This wasn't always the case. For a long time two acutely divergent narratives on the Israel-Palestine conflict coexisted. On the one hand, there was the mainstream, or what one might call, with considerable accuracy, the *Exodus* version of the past—basically the heroic, official Zionist tale immortalized in Leon Uris's best-selling historical novel.⁴ On the other hand, beyond the margins of respectable opinion, a small dissenting body of literature challenged prevailing wisdom. To take one indicative example, the mainstream Israeli account maintained that Palestinians became refugees in 1948 because Arab radio broadcasts had instructed them to flee. Yet already by the early 1960s, Palestinian scholar Walid Khalidi and Irish scholar Erskine Childers, after examining the archive of Arab radio broadcasts from the 1948 war, concluded that no such

2. For background on the Peters affair, see esp. Edward Said, "Conspiracy of Praise," in Edward Said and Christopher Hitchens (eds.), *Blaming the Victims: Spurious Scholarship and the Palestinian Question* (New York, 2001); for extensive documentation of the Peters fraud, see Norman G. Finkelstein, *Image and Reality of the Israel-Palestine Conflict*, 2nd ed. (New York, 2003), chap. 2; for recent developments in the fraud, see *ibid.*, p. xxxii.

3. A few pockets of scholarly dispute remain: e.g., whether or not the Zionist leadership intended from early on to "transfer" the Palestinians out of Palestine. Arguments over the June 1967 war and its aftermath spring mostly from two sources: the main Israeli archives are still closed, and more important, the political repercussions of the June war—notably Israel's occupation—are still with us. The only more or less live political issue from the foundational period is the Palestinian refugee question, which is perhaps why some, albeit limited, controversy still surrounds it.

4. Putting aside its apologetics for Zionism, the sheer racism of Uris's blockbuster bears recalling. The Arabs, their villages, their homes—to the last, they're "stinking" or engulfed in "overwhelming stench" and "vile odors." Arab men just "lay around" all day "listless"—that is, when they're not hatching "some typical double-dealing scheme which

official Arab exhortations had been given.⁵ But revelations such as these had little or no impact on mainstream opinion. Beginning in the late 1980s, however, a steady stream of scholarly studies, mostly by Israelis, dispelled much of the Zionist mythology enveloping the origins of the conflict.⁶ Thus, it was now conceded by all serious scholars that the “Arab radio broadcasts” were a Zionist fabrication and that the Palestinians had been ethnically cleansed in 1948, and scholarly debate now focused on the much narrower, if still highly pertinent, question of whether this cleansing was the intentional consequence of Zionist policy or the unintentional by-product of war. Ultimately, on this and related issues, the dissenting narrative, proving closer to the truth, displaced the official Zionist one while, after heated polemics, a broad scholarly consensus on the historical record crystallized.

A similar process of displacement and simplification occurred, coincidentally at just about the same time, on human rights questions. Up until the late 1980s, two fundamentally conflicting claims were put forth regarding Israel’s human rights record in the Occupied Territories. The official Israeli contention, echoed by mainstream media, was that Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza benefited from the most “liberal” and “benign” of occupations. However, a handful of dissidents, mostly Israeli and Palestinian human rights activists like Israel Shahak, Felicia Langer, Lea Tsemel, and Raja Shehadeh, charged, for example, that Israel systematically ill treated and tortured Palestinian detainees. Only a small number of independent human rights organizations existed back then, and these few either whitewashed or maintained a discreet silence on Israel’s egregious human rights violations. It was

seemed perfectly legitimate to the Arab,” or resorting to “the unscrupulous ethics of the Arab . . . the fantastic reasoning that condoned every crime short of murder,” or “becom[ing] hysterical at the slightest provocation.” As for Palestine itself before the Jews worked wonders, it was “worthless desert in the south end and eroded in the middle and swamp up north”; “a land of festering, stagnated swamps and eroded hills and rock-filled fields and unfertile earth caused by a thousand years of Arab and Turkish neglect. . . . There was little song or laughter or joy in Arab life. . . . In this atmosphere, cunning, treachery, murder, feuds and jealousies became a way of life. The cruel realities that had gone into forming the Arab character puzzled outsiders. Cruelty from brother to brother was common.” Truth be told, not much has changed in official Zionist propaganda (Leon Uris, *Exodus* [New York, 1959], pp. 181, 213, 216, 227, 228, 229, 253, 334, 352–53).

5. Walid Khalidi, “Why Did the Palestinians Leave?” *Middle East Forum* (July 1959). Erskine Childers, “The Other Exodus,” *Spectator* (12 May 1961).

6. Apart from the scholarship itself, a voluminous secondary literature commenting on it has proliferated. As good a place as any to begin is “The New Historiography: Israel and Its Past,” in Benny Morris, *1948 and After: Israel and the Palestinians* (Oxford, 1990), pp. 1–34.

notable—indeed, a scandal of sorts—that Israel’s torture of Palestinian detainees first became known to a wider public (if still largely ignored), not on account of a human rights organization like Amnesty International but due to an investigative study published by the London *Sunday Times*.⁷ At the end of the 1980s, as I said, things started changing.⁸ Israel’s brutal repression of the largely nonviolent first intifada, which erupted in late 1987, proved impossible to conceal or ignore, while new human rights organizations, both local Israeli and Palestinian as well as international, started springing up, and older, established ones stiffened resistance to external pressures.

In the course of preparing the chapters of this book devoted to Israel’s human rights record in the Occupied Territories, I went through literally thousands of pages of human rights reports, published by multiple, fiercely independent, and highly professional organizations—Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch, B’Tselem (Israeli Information Center for Human Rights in the Occupied Territories), Public Committee Against Torture in Israel, Physicians for Human Rights—Israel—each fielding its own autonomous staff of monitors and investigators. Except on one minor matter, I didn’t come across a single point of law or fact on which these human rights organizations differed. In the case of Israel’s human rights record, one can speak today not just of a broad consensus—as on historical questions—but of an *unqualified* consensus. All these organizations agreed, for example, that Palestinian

7. See Chapter 6 of this book.

8. To be sure, the first big blow inflicted on Israel’s radiant image—its first public relations debacle—was the June 1982 Lebanon invasion. The reason Israel’s actual practices finally came to light then merits attention. Although the sheer brutality and density of Israel’s crimes during the 1982 invasion were undoubtedly contributing factors, the main reason, according to veteran Middle East correspondent Robert Fisk, was apparently that, unlike during previous wars, neither the Arab dictatorships nor the finely tuned public relations machinery of Israel could fully control, or manipulate, the reportage: “For the Lebanese government was too weak and its security authorities too divided to impose censorship upon the Western journalists based in Beirut. . . . Reporters travelling with Israeli troops were subject to severe restrictions on their movements and sometimes to censorship, but their opposite numbers in Beirut could travel freely and write whatever they wished. For the very first time, reporters had open access to the *Arab* side of a Middle East war and found that Israel’s supposedly invincible army, with its moral high ground and clearly stated military objectives against ‘terrorists,’ did not perform in the way that legend would have suggested. The Israelis acted brutally, they mistreated prisoners, killed thousands of civilians, lied about their activities and then watched their militia allies slaughter the occupants of a refugee camp. In fact, they behaved very much like the ‘uncivilised’ Arab armies whom they had so consistently denigrated over the preceding 30 years. The reporting from Lebanon . . . was a new and disturbing experience for the Israelis. They no longer had a monopoly on the truth.” Here is yet another indication of just how disastrous the numbing repression in the Arab world has been for the Arab peoples (Robert Fisk, *Pity the Nation* [New York, 1990], p. 407; emphasis in original).

detainees have been systematically ill treated and tortured, the total number now probably reaching the tens of thousands.

Yet if, as I've suggested, broad agreement has been reached on the factual record, an obvious anomaly arises: what accounts for the impassioned controversy that still swirls around the Israel-Palestine conflict? To my mind, explaining this apparent paradox requires, first of all, that a fundamental distinction be made between those controversies that are real and those that are contrived. To illustrate real differences of opinion, let us consider again the Palestinian refugee question. It is possible for interested parties to agree on the facts yet come to diametrically opposed moral, legal, and political conclusions. Thus, as already mentioned, the scholarly consensus is that Palestinians were ethnically cleansed in 1948. Israel's leading historian on the topic, Benny Morris, although having done more than anyone else to clarify exactly what happened, nonetheless concludes that, morally, it was a good thing—just as, in his view, the “annihilation” of Native Americans was a good thing—that, legally, Palestinians have no right to return to their homes, and that, politically, Israel's big error in 1948 was that it hadn't “carried out a large expulsion and cleansed the whole country—the whole Land of Israel, as far as the Jordan” of Palestinians.⁹ However repellent morally, these clearly can't be called *false* conclusions. Returning to the universe inhabited by normal human beings, it's possible for people to concur on the facts as well as on their moral and legal implications yet still reach divergent political conclusions. Noam Chomsky agrees that, factually, Palestinians were expelled; that, morally, this was a major crime; and that, legally, Palestinians have a right of return. Yet, politically, he concludes that implementation of this right is infeasible and pressing it inexpedient, indeed, that dangling this (in his view) illusory hope before Palestinian refugees is deeply immoral. There are those, contrariwise, who maintain that a moral and legal right is meaningless unless it can be exercised and that implementing the right of return is a practical possibility.¹⁰ For our purposes, the point is not who's right and who's wrong but that, even among honest

9. Ari Shavit, “Survival of the Fittest,” interview with Benny Morris, *Haaretz* (9 January 2004). For perceptive commentary, see Baruch Kimmerling, “Is Ethnic Cleansing of Arabs Getting Legitimacy from a New Israeli Historian?” *Tikkun* (27 January 2004); for Morris's recent pronouncements, see also Finkelstein, *Image and Reality*, pp. xxix–xxx.

10. See, e.g., Salman Abu Sitta, “The Implementation of the Right of Return,” in Roane Carey (ed.), *The New Intifada: Resisting Israel's Apartheid* (New York, 2001), pp. 299–319.

and decent people, there can be real and legitimate differences of political judgment.

This having been said, however, it bears emphasis that—at any rate, among those sharing ordinary moral values—the range of political disagreement is quite narrow, while the range of agreement quite broad. For the past quarter century, the international community has held to a consensus on how, basically, to resolve the Israel-Palestine conflict: a two-state settlement based on full Israeli withdrawal from the West Bank and Gaza and full recognition of Israel within its pre-June 1967 borders. Apart from the United States, Israel, and, usually, this or that South Pacific atoll, the United Nations General Assembly, in a rare and consistent display of near unanimity, annually reaffirms this formula. A 1989 General Assembly resolution, *Question of Palestine*, effectively calling for a two-state settlement and “[t]he withdrawal of Israel from the Palestinian territory occupied since 1967” passed 151 to 3, the only dissenting vote apart from those of the United States and Israel being cast by the island state of Dominica. Fifteen years later and notwithstanding sweeping geopolitical changes—an entire social system disappeared in the interim while many new states were born—the consensus continued to hold. A 2004 General Assembly resolution, *Peaceful Settlement of the Question of Palestine*, that stresses “the necessity for a commitment to the vision of the two-State solution” and “the withdrawal of Israel from the Palestinian territory occupied since 1967” passed 160 to 6, the dissenting votes apart from the United States’ and Israel’s being cast by Micronesia, the Marshall Islands, Palau, and Uganda.¹¹ Were debate to focus solely on real areas of disagreement, the conflict could probably be resolved expeditiously—if not to the liking of Israeli and American elites.

Most of the controversy surrounding the Israel-Palestine conflict is, in my view, contrived. The purpose of contriving such controversy is transparently political: to deflect attention from, or distort, the actual documentary record. One can speak of, basically, three sources of artificial disagreement: (1) mystification of the conflict’s roots, (2) invocation of anti-Semitism and The Holocaust,¹² and (3) on a different plane,

11. U.N.G.A. Resolution 44/42, *Question of Palestine* (6 December 1989); U.N.G.A. Resolution 58/21, *Peaceful Settlement of the Question of Palestine* (22 January 2004). For more on these U.N. votes, see Finkelstein, *Image and Reality*, pp. xvii–xviii.

12. In this text “Nazi holocaust” denotes the actual historical event whereas “The Holocaust” denotes the ideological instrumentalization of that event. See Norman G. Finkelstein, *The Holocaust Industry: Reflections on the Exploitation of Jewish Suffering*, 2nd ed. (New York, 2003), p. 3 and chap. 2.

the vast proliferation of sheer fraud on the subject. In this introduction I will briefly discuss each of these in turn. The bulk of this study focuses on the second and third points.

The Israel-Palestine conflict is often said to pose questions of such unique profundity or complexity as to defy conventional analysis or resolution. It's been variously cast as a cosmic clash of religions, cultures, civilizations. Even normally sober observers like Israeli writer Meron Benvenisti used to contend that its essence was a "primordial, irreconcilable, endemic shepherd's war."¹³ In fact, such formulations obfuscate rather than illuminate. No doubt, the conflict raises thorny theoretical and practical problems, but not more so than most other ones. It is also perfectly amenable to comparative analysis, bearing in mind, as always, the limits to any historical analogy. The obvious reason Israel's apologists shun such comparisons and harp on the *sui generis* character of the Israel-Palestine conflict is that, in any of the roughly comparable cases—the Euro-American conquest of North America, the apartheid regime in South Africa—Israel comes out on the "wrong" side in the analogy.¹⁴

Serious analysis of the Israel-Palestine conflict rarely makes resort to ponderous explanations, if for no other reason than because its origins are so straightforward. In 1936 a British royal commission chaired by Lord Peel was charged with ascertaining the causes of the Palestine conflict and the means for resolving it. Regarding the aspirations of Palestinian Arabs, its final report stated that "[t]he overriding desire of the Arab leaders . . . was . . . national independence" and that "[i]t was *only to be expected* that Palestinian Arabs should . . . envy and seek to emulate their successful fellow-nationalists in those countries just across their northern and southern borders." The British attributed Arab anti-Jewish animus to the fact that the Jewish claim over Palestine would deny Arabs an independent Arab state, and to Arab fear of being subjugated in an eventual Jewish state. It concluded that there was "*no doubt*" the "underlying causes" of Arab-Jewish hostilities were "first the desire of the Arabs for national independence; secondly their antagonism to the establishment of the Jewish National Home in Palestine,

13. Meron Benvenisti, "Two generations growing up in Jerusalem," *New York Times Magazine* (16 October 1988); for similar formulations, see his *Intimate Enemies: Jews and Arabs in a Shared Land* (Berkeley, 1995), pp. 9 ("a primeval contest, a shepherds' war"), 19 ("its endemic intercommunal nature").

14. For comparison with the Euro-American conquest of North America, see Norman G. Finkelstein, *The Rise and Fall of Palestine: A Personal Account of the Intifada Years* (Minneapolis, 1996), pp. 104–21; for comparison with apartheid, see Finkelstein, *Image and Reality*, p. xxvii and chap. 7.

quicken by their fear of Jewish domination.” Eschewing airy formulations like Benvenisti’s “primordial, irreconcilable, endemic shepherd’s war” and, again, pointing up the manifest sources of the turmoil in Palestine, the commission wrote:

Nor is the conflict in its essence an interracial conflict, arising from any old instinctive antipathy of Arabs towards Jews. There was little or no friction . . . between Arab and Jew in the rest of the Arab world until the strife in Palestine engendered it. And there has been precisely the same political trouble in Iraq, Syria and Egypt—agitation, rebellion and bloodshed—where there are no “National Homes.” *Quite obviously*, then, the problem of Palestine is political. It is, as elsewhere, the problem of insurgent nationalism. The only difference is that in Palestine Arab nationalism is inextricably interwoven with antagonism to the Jews. And the reasons for that, it is worth repeating, are *equally obvious*. In the first place, the establishment of the National Home [for Jews] involved at the outset a blank negation of the rights implied in the principle of national self-government. Secondly, it soon proved to be not merely an obstacle to the development of national self-government, but apparently the only serious obstacle. Thirdly, as the Home has grown, the fear has grown with it that, if and when self-government is conceded, it may not be national in the Arab sense, but government by a Jewish majority. That is why it is difficult to be an Arab patriot and not to hate the Jews.¹⁵

The injustice inflicted on Palestinians by Zionism was manifest and, except on racist grounds, unanswerable: their right to self-determination, and perhaps even to their homeland, was being denied. Several sorts of justification were supplied for the Zionist enterprise as against the rights of the indigenous population, none of which, however, withstood even cursory scrutiny. Belief in the cluster of justifications put forth by the Zionist movement presumed acceptance of very specific Zionist ideological tenets regarding Jewish “historical rights” to Palestine and Jewish “homelessness.” For example, the “historical rights” claim was based on Jews having originated in Palestine and resided there two thousand years ago. Such a claim was neither historical nor based on any accepted notion of right. It was not historical inasmuch as it voided the two millennia of non-Jewish settlement in Palestine and the two millennia of Jewish settlement outside it. It was not a right except in mystical, Romantic nationalist ideologies, implementation of which would wreak—and have wreaked—havoc. Reminding fellow

15. *Palestine Royal Commission Report* (London, 1937), pp. 76, 94, 110, 131, 136, 363; emphases added.

Zionists that Jewry's "historical right" to Palestine was a "metaphysical rather than a political category" and that, springing as it did from "the very inner depths of Judaism," this "category . . . is binding on us rather than on the Arabs," even the Zionist writer Ernst Simon was emphatic that it did not confer on Jews any right to Palestine without the consent of the Arabs.¹⁶

Another sort of justification conjured away the injustice inflicted on the indigenous population with the pretense that Palestine was (nearly) vacant before the Jews came.¹⁷ Ironically, this argument has proven to be the most compelling proof of the injustice committed: it is a back-handed admission that, had Palestine been inhabited, which it plainly was, the Zionist enterprise was morally indefensible. Those admitting to the reality of a Palestinian presence yet functioning outside the ideological ambit of Zionism couldn't adduce any justification for Zionism except a racist one: that is, in the great scheme of things, the fate of Jews was simply more important than that of Arabs. If not publicly, at any rate privately, this is how the British rationalized the Balfour Declaration. For Balfour himself, "we deliberately and rightly decline to accept the principle of self-determination" for the "present inhabitants" of Palestine, because "the question of the Jews outside Palestine [is] one of world importance" and Zionism was "rooted in age-long traditions, in present needs, in future hopes, of far profounder import than the desires and prejudices of the 700,000 Arabs who now inhabit that ancient land." For Cabinet Minister (and the first British high commissioner of Palestine during the Mandate period) Herbert Samuel, although denying the indigenous population majority rule was "in flat contradiction to one of the main purposes for which the Allies were fighting," it was nonetheless permissible because the anterior Jewish presence in Palestine "had resulted in events of spiritual and cultural value to mankind in striking contrast with the barren record of the last thousand years." And for Winston Churchill, testifying before the Peel Commission, the indigenous population had no more right to Palestine than a "dog in a manger has the final right to the manger, even though he may have lain there for a very long time," and no "wrong has been done to these people by the fact that a stronger race, a higher grade race, or at any rate, a more worldly-wise race, to put it that way, has

16. Yosef Gorny, *Zionism and the Arabs, 1882-1948: A Study of Ideology* (Oxford, 1987), p. 197. For analysis of these Zionist rationales, see Finkelstein, *Image and Reality*, pp. 101-2.

17. For background and discussion, see Finkelstein, *Image and Reality*, pp. 89-98.

come in and taken their place.”¹⁸ The point is not so much that the British were racists but rather that they had no recourse except to racist justifications for denying the indigenous population its basic rights. Pressed to justify what was done, they became racists not from predilection but from circumstance: on no other grounds could so flagrant a denial be explained.

If only because of its eminent provenance and frequent quotation, one last argument merits consideration. The Marxist historian Isaac Deutscher put forth, in the form of a parable, less a justification than a largely sympathetic *ex post facto* explanation for Zionism’s trampling of Palestinian rights:

A man once jumped from the top floor of a burning house in which many members of his family had already perished. He managed to save his life; but as he was falling he hit a person standing down below and broke that person’s legs and arms. The jumping man had no choice; yet to the man with the broken limbs he was the cause of his misfortune. If both behaved rationally, they would not become enemies. The man who escaped from the blazing house, having recovered, would have tried to help and console the other sufferer; and the latter might have realized that he was the victim of circumstances over which neither of them had control. But look what happens when these people behave irrationally. The injured man blames the other for his misery and swears to make him pay for it. The other, afraid of the crippled man’s revenge, insults him, kicks him, and beats him up whenever they meet. The kicked man again swears revenge and is again punched and punished. The bitter enmity, so fortuitous at first, hardens and comes to overshadow the whole existence of both men and to poison their minds.¹⁹

This account gives Zionism both too little and too much credit. The Zionist denial of Palestinians’ rights, culminating in their expulsion, hardly sprang from an unavoidable accident. It resulted from the systematic and conscientious implementation, over many decades and despite vehement, often violent, popular opposition, of a political ideology the goal of which was to create a demographically Jewish state in

18. Isaiah Friedman, *The Question of Palestine: British-Jewish-Arab Relations, 1914–1918* (London, 1992), pp. 13–14 (Samuel), 325–26 (Balfour); cf. 331. Clive Ponting, *Churchill* (London, 1994), p. 254. Most versions of the non-Zionist justification synthesized the “empty land” thesis with the racist one: namely, Palestine had remained sparsely populated and barren in Arab hands, while Jews, as the bearers of civilization and progress, would—or, after the fact, had—put the land to productive use, thereby earning title to it.

19. Isaac Deutscher, *The Non-Jewish Jew and Other Essays* (New York, 1968), pp. 136–37; for similar formulations, see pp. 116, 122.

Palestine. To suggest that Zionists had no choice—or, as Deutscher puts it elsewhere, that the Jewish state was a “historic necessity”²⁰—is to deny the Zionist movement’s massive and, in many respects, impressive exertion of will, and the moral responsibility attending the exertion of this will, in one rather than another direction. The expulsion of Palestinians did not come about on account of some ineluctable, impersonal objective force compelling Palestinians to leave and Jews to replace them. Were this the case, why did the Zionists conscript, often heavily-handedly, the Jewish refugees after World War II to come to Palestine and oppose their resettlement elsewhere? Why did they stimulate, perhaps even with violent methods, the exodus of Jews from the Arab world to Palestine? Why did they call, often in deep frustration and disappointment, for the in-gathering of world Jewry after Israel’s establishment? If Zionist leaders didn’t make the obvious amends after the war of allowing Palestinians to return to their homes and sought instead to fill the emptied spaces with Jews, it’s not because they behaved irrationally, but rather, given their political aim, with complete rationality.

Deutscher, of course, knows all this. Indeed, he acknowledges that “[f]rom the outset Zionism worked towards the creation of a purely Jewish state and was glad to rid the country of its Arab inhabitants.”²¹ To claim that Zionist leaders acted irrationally in refusing to “remove or assuage the grievance” of Palestinians,²² then, is effectively to say that Zionism is irrational: for, given that the Palestinians’ chief grievance was the denial of their homeland, were Zionists to act “rationally” and remove it, the *raison d’être* of Zionism and its fundamental historic achievement in 1948 would have been nullified. And if seeking to “rid the country of its Arab inhabitants” was irrational, how can the “positive” flipside of this goal, a Jewish state, have been a “historic necessity”? It’s equally fatuous to assert that Palestinians act irrationally when they “blame” the Zionists “for their misery” and not accept that they were “the victim of circumstances over which neither of them had control.” It’s only irrational if Zionists bore no responsibility for what happened. Yet Deutscher is nearly breathless in his praise for the achievements of the Zionists in Palestine: “The emergence of Israel is indeed . . . a phenomenon unique in its kind, a marvel and a prodigy of

20. *Ibid.*, p. 112.

21. *Ibid.*, p. 137.

22. *Ibid.*, pp. 137–38.

history, before which Jew and non-Jew alike stand in awe and amazement.”²³ Isn’t it pure apologetics to sing paeans to the summoning of material and moral energy that made possible such undoubtedly real accomplishments, yet deny, in the name of “historic necessity” and “fortuitous” “circumstances,” that any real responsibility is incurred for the dark underside of them?²⁴ The selfsame concentrated will, meticulous attention to detail, and lucid premeditation that created Israel also created its victims.

Although in violation of the indigenous population’s elementary right and in contradiction of avowed international principle, a second socioeconomic entity (in addition to the native Palestinian Arabs) came into existence in Palestine and, inevitably, demanded *its* right to self-determination. Unlike the prior Zionist claim to Palestine, based on an imaginary “historical right,” this one seemed to be grounded in generally accepted criteria of right: the Jewish settlements now comprised a vital, organic, distinct community. The creation of this community, however, had been contingent on the resort to force: without the “steel helmet and the gun’s muzzle” (Moshe Dayan) of the Zionist settlers, crucially supplemented by the “foreign bayonets” (David Ben-Gurion) of the British Empire in the form of the Mandate, a proto-Jewish state could never have come into being.²⁵ The question of at what point a claim acquired by might becomes one anchored in right is complicated, indeed probably insoluble on an abstract level. The intuitive argument that a moral-legal threshold has been crossed when a new generation, born on the land, stakes its claim on the basis of birthright poses as many questions as it resolves. Doesn’t this give incentive to hold out as long as possible in defiance of international law and public opinion? This, of course, was the essence of the Zionist approach: if sufficient facts were created on the ground and sufficient time elapsed, hard reality could not be reversed.

23. *Ibid.*, p. 118.

24. In fact, Deutscher’s reflections on Zionism, although remarkable in their acuteness—not a single page passes without another novel insight or uncannily accurate prediction—are nonetheless marred, at any rate before his scathing denunciation of Israel after the June 1967 war, by typical Zionist and racist apologetics: the kibbutzim were “Jewish oases scattered over the former Arabian desert” (p. 99); prior to Zionist settlement “no established society existed in the Palestine desert” (p. 100); the Zionist claim that “Palestine is and never ceased to be Jewish” is on a par with the Arab claim that “Jews are . . . invaders and intruders” (p. 116); and so on.

25. Benny Morris, *Israel’s Border Wars, 1949–1956* (Oxford, 1993), p. 380 (Dayan). See Finkelstein, *Image and Reality*, pp. 98–110, for discussion (Ben-Gurion at p. 106).

This brings to the fore a related consideration. The United Nations crowned the Zionist movement with legal title to more than half of Palestine some thirty years after Zionist settlers began in earnest, in the wake of the Balfour Declaration and despite overwhelming indigenous opposition, to create, “dunum by dunum, goat by goat,” facts in Palestine. Yet more than thirty-five years have elapsed since Jewish settlers began creating facts in the West Bank and Gaza. Haven’t these by now acquired legitimacy as well? In any event, when the Peel Commission first proposed in 1937 partitioning Palestine on the ground that a distinct Jewish entity had crystallized, Palestinian Arabs rejected the legitimacy of a Jewish claim founded on force over and against the rights of the indigenous population, as they did in 1947 when the United Nations General Assembly ratified the partition resolution. (Although officially opposing the Peel recommendation and officially accepting the U.N. recommendation, in fact the Zionist movement was rather more ambivalent in both instances.)²⁶ It’s not hard to see the argument on their side,²⁷ although in hindsight it’s also not hard to see the imprudence of rejecting partition.

Complex as this conflict over rights emerging out of forcible Zionist settlement is at the abstract level, it found practical resolution after resurfacing in modified form following the June 1967 war. Confronted by the inescapable reality of Israel’s existence and lacking viable political options, Palestinians cut the theoretical Gordian knot in the mid-1970s by effectively conceding legal title to some 80 percent of their historic homeland. Apart from the refugee question, the only truly complicated element of the Israel-Palestine conflict was thus overcome. Yet this resolution remains provisional and fragile. If Israel has created new facts on the ground in the Occupied Territories that preempt a two-state settlement, a new complication of the conflict will have arisen. But it won’t be on account of a “primordial, irreconcilable, endemic shepherd’s war” or “historic necessity” or “fortuitous” “circumstances.” Just as the prior conflict originated in conscious, willful Zionist denial of basic Palestinian rights, so the intractability of a new conflict will originate in this same premeditated injustice, indeed, in denial of even a severely attenuated form of Palestinian rights.

26. See Appendix III to this book.

27. For a forceful restatement of the reasons behind the Palestinian rejection of the partition resolution, see Walid Khalidi, “Revisiting the UNGA Partition Resolution,” *Journal of Palestine Studies* (autumn 1997), pp. 5–21.

Benny Morris, although approving the ethnic cleansing of Palestine and nearly pathological in his hatred of Palestinians,²⁸ nonetheless anchors Palestinian opposition to Jewish settlement in a perfectly rational, uncomplicated motive: “The fear of territorial displacement and dispossession was to be the chief motor of Arab antagonism to Zionism.”²⁹ What’s remarkable about this formulation isn’t so much what’s said but, rather, what’s not said: there’s no invoking of “Arab anti-Semitism,” no invoking of “Arab fears of modernity,” no invoking of cosmic “clashes.” There’s no mention of them because, for understanding what happened, there’s no need of them—the obvious explanation also happens to be a sufficient one. Indeed, in any comparable instance, the sorts of mystifying clichés commonplace in the Israel-Palestine conflict would be treated, rightly, with derision. In the course of resisting European encroachment, Native Americans committed many horrendous crimes. But to understand why doesn’t require probing the defects of their character or civilization. Criticizing the practice, in government documents, of reciting Native American “atrocities,” Helen Hunt Jackson, a principled defender of Native Americans writing in the late nineteenth century, observed: “[T]he Indians who committed these ‘atrocities’ were simply ejecting by force, and, in the contests arising from this forcible ejection, killing men who had usurped and stolen their lands. . . . What would a community of white men, situated precisely as these Cherokees were, have done?”³⁰

To apprehend the motive behind Palestinian “atrocities,” this ordinary human capacity for empathy would also seem to suffice. Imagine the bemused reaction were a historian to hypothesize that the impetus behind Native American resistance was “anti-Christianism” or “anti-Europeanism.” What’s the point of such exotic explanations—unless the obvious one is politically incorrect? Of course, back then, profound explanations of this sort weren’t necessary. The natives impeded the wheel of progress, so they had to be extirpated; nothing more had to be said. For the sake of “mankind” and “civilization,” Theodore Roo-

28. He’s called the Palestinian people “sick, psychotic,” “serial killers” whom Israel must “imprison” or “execute,” and “barbarians” around whom “[s]omething like a cage has to be built.” See the *Haaretz* interview and the pages on Morris’s recent pronouncements in *Image and Reality* cited above.

29. Benny Morris, *Righteous Victims: A History of the Zionist-Arab Conflict, 1881–1999* (New York, 1999), p. 37.

30. Helen Hunt Jackson, *A Century of Dishonor* (New York, 1981), p. 265.

sevelt wrote, it was “all-important” that North America be won by a “masterful people.” Although for the indigenous population this meant “the infliction and suffering of hideous woe and misery,” it couldn’t have been otherwise: “The world would probably not have gone forward at all, had it not been for the displacement or submersion of savage and barbaric peoples.” And again: “The settler and pioneer have at bottom justice on their side: this great continent could not have been kept as nothing but a game preserve for squalid savages.”³¹

It was only much later, after the humanity of these “squalid savages” was ratified—in any event, formally—that more sophisticated rationales became necessary. In the case of the United States, the “hideous woe and misery” inflicted could be openly acknowledged because the fate of the indigenous population was, figuratively as well as literally, in large part a dead issue. In the case of Palestine it’s not, so all manner of elaborate explanation has to be contrived in order to evade the obvious. The reason Benny Morris’s latest pronouncements elicited such a shocked reaction is that they were a throwback to the nineteenth century. Dispensing with the ideological cloud making of contemporary apologists for Israel, he justified dispossession on grounds of the conflict between “barbarians” and “civilization.” Just as, in his view, it was better for humanity that the “great American democracy” displaced the Native Americans, so it is better that the Jewish state has displaced the Palestinians. “There are cases,” he baldly states, “in which the overall, final good justifies harsh and cruel acts that are committed in the course of history.” Isn’t this Roosevelt speaking? But one’s not supposed to utter such crass things anymore.³² To avoid outraging current moral sensibilities, the obvious must be papered over with sundry mystifications. The elementary truth that, just as in the past, the “chief motor of Arab antagonism” is “[t]he fear of territorial displacement and dispossession”—a fear the rational basis for which is scarcely open to question, indeed, is daily validated by Israeli actions—must, at all costs, be concealed.

To evade the obvious, another stratagem of the Israel lobby is playing The Holocaust and “new anti-Semitism” cards. In a previous study,

31. For these and similar formulations, see Theodore Roosevelt, *The Winning of the West* (New York, 1889), 1:118–19, 121; 4:7, 54–56, 65, 200, 201.

32. In fact, one isn’t even allowed to remember that Roosevelt said them: one searches recent Roosevelt biographies in vain for any mention of the pronouncements of his just cited, or scores of others like them pervading his published writings and correspondence.

I examined how the Nazi holocaust has been fashioned into an ideological weapon to immunize Israel from legitimate criticism.³³ In this book I look at a variant of this Holocaust card, namely, the “new anti-Semitism.” In fact, the allegation of a new anti-Semitism is neither new nor about anti-Semitism. Whenever Israel comes under renewed international pressure to withdraw from occupied territories, its apologists mount yet another meticulously orchestrated media extravaganza alleging that the world is awash in anti-Semitism. This shameless exploitation of anti-Semitism delegitimizes criticism of Israel, makes Jews rather than Palestinians the victims, and puts the onus on the Arab world to rid itself of anti-Semitism rather than on Israel to rid itself of the Occupied Territories. A close analysis of what the Israel lobby tallies as anti-Semitism reveals three components: exaggeration and fabrication; mislabeling legitimate criticism of Israeli policy; and the unjustified yet predictable “spillover” from criticism of Israel to Jews generally. I conclude that if, as all studies agree, current resentment against Jews has coincided with Israel’s brutal repression of the Palestinians, then the prudent, not to mention moral, thing to do is end the occupation. A full Israeli withdrawal would also deprive those real anti-Semites exploiting Israeli policy as a pretext to demonize Jews—and who can doubt they exist?—of a dangerous weapon as well as expose their real agenda. And the more vocally Jews dissent from Israel’s occupation, the fewer will be those non-Jews who mistake Israel’s criminal policies and the uncritical support (indeed encouragement) of mainline Jewish organizations for the popular Jewish mood.

I began this introduction recalling the *From Time Immemorial* hoax, since a main reason so much controversy swirls around the Israel-Palestine conflict is the vast proliferation of sheer fraud masquerading as serious scholarship. Although imperfect, a mechanism for quality control nonetheless exists in intellectual life. In practice it usually takes the form of a sequence of skeptical questions. If someone quotes a book putting forth an altogether aberrant thesis, he or she is usually asked, “Where does the author teach?” or “Who published the book?” or “Who blurbed the book?” or “What sorts of reviews did it receive [in the main professional journals]?” The answers to these questions generally provide a more or less accurate gauge of how much credence to put in the publication. It is one of the egregious features of the Israel-Palestine conflict, however, that these mechanisms of quality control

33. Finkelstein, *Holocaust Industry*.

function barely, if at all.³⁴ The book's author can teach at a first-rank university, and the book itself can be published under a prestigious imprint, receive lavish blurbs as well as reviews in prominent mainstream publications, and yet still be complete nonsense. The most recent addition to this genre and the subject of the second part of this book is the best seller *The Case for Israel* by Harvard law professor Alan Dershowitz.³⁵ It can fairly be said that *The Case for Israel* surpasses *From Time Immemorial* in deceitfulness and is among the most spectacular academic frauds ever published on the Israel-Palestine conflict. Indeed, Dershowitz appropriates large swaths from the Peters hoax. Whereas Peters falsified real sources, Dershowitz goes one better and cites absurd sources or stitches evidence out of whole cloth. The core chapters of the present book juxtapose the findings of all mainstream human rights organizations about Israel's human rights record in the Occupied Territories against Dershowitz's claims. I demonstrate that it's difficult to find a single claim in his human rights chapters or, for that matter, any other chapter of *The Case for Israel* that, among other things, doesn't distort a reputable source or reference a preposterous one. The point, of course, is not that Dershowitz is a charlatan. Rather, it's the *systematic institutional bias* that allows for books like *The Case for Israel* to become national best sellers. Were it not for Dershowitz's Harvard pedigree, the praise heaped on his book by Mario Cuomo, Henry Louis Gates Jr., Elie Wiesel, and Floyd Abrams,³⁶ the favorable notices in media outlets like the *New York Times* and *Boston Globe*,³⁷ and so on, *The Case for Israel* would have had the same shelf life as the latest publication of the Flat-Earth Society.

34. Revealingly, this caveat applies to the field of "Holocaust studies" as well. For pertinent criticism by Raul Hilberg, dean of Nazi holocaust scholars, see Finkelstein, *Holocaust Industry*, p. 60.

35. All references in this book are to the first hardback printing of *The Case for Israel*, published in August 2003 by John Wiley and Sons, Inc. Almost immediately after publication of *The Case for Israel* I publicly charged, and provided copious evidence, that it was a fraud (see www.NormanFinkelstein.com under "The Dershowitz Hoax"). In the first paperback edition of his book, published in August 2004, Dershowitz entered some revisions.

36. See their laudatory comments for the book posted on www.Amazon.com.

37. In the *New York Times Sunday Book Review*, Ethan Bronner praised Dershowitz for his "intelligent polemic" and ability "to construct an argument" and for being "especially effective at pointing to the hypocrisy of many of Israel's critics" ("The New New Historians," 9 November 2003). Bronner sits on the *Times's* editorial board, where he's its "expert" on the Israel-Palestine conflict. In the *Boston Globe*, Jonathan Dorfman waxed rhapsodic about how Dershowitz "goes after Israel's enemies . . . with the punch and thrust of courtroom debate" and praised the author for having "restated some obvi-

The purpose of *Beyond Chutzpah* is to lift the veil of contrived controversy shrouding the Israel-Palestine conflict. I am convinced that anyone confronting the undistorted record will recognize the injustice Palestinians have suffered. I hope this book will also provide impetus for readers to act on the basis of truth so that, together, we can achieve a just and lasting peace in Israel and Palestine.

ous truths about Israel—truths its friends need to convey, its enemies need to confront, and the chattering classes need to learn before they venture forth with pronouncements about Israel that are simple, easy—and wrong” (“Dershowitz makes the ‘Case,’” 26 November 2003). Both these reviews appeared *well after* evidence had been widely disseminated demonstrating that Dershowitz’s book was rubbish.