

COUNCIL *on* FOREIGN RELATIONS

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Teaching Notes

Crisis Guide: The Israeli-Palestinian Conflict

CFR.org's award-winning multimedia Crisis Guide series aims to provide a detailed, tailored resource for the exploration of the world's most complex disputes with context and depth of expertise not generally associated with online publications. This edition of the series, "Crisis Guide: The Israeli-Palestinian Conflict," tackles arguably the most contentious of all modern disputes. The Crisis Guide makes no attempt to steer the audience toward a certain conclusion, nor does it prescribe particular formulas or solutions. Instead, by laying out the facts and grievances in a digestible and easily referenced way, the Crisis Guide can serve as a tool to stimulate intelligent discussion.

The Crisis Guide is divided into Chapters, each of which provides an overview of a particular aspect of the conflict and allows students to dig deeper, often using links to other, more comprehensive content housed on CFR.org. Following a brief cinematic introduction, the Guide's contents are organized as follows:

Chapter I: The Historical Context: A thirteen-minute video presentation of the conflict's background, plus a detailed photographic timeline breaking the conflict into three distinct eras beginning with its modern inception during World War I.

Chapter II: The Territorial Puzzle: Narrated by CFR senior fellow for Middle Eastern studies Steven A. Cook, a Middle East expert, this chapter employs animated maps to trace the territorial disputes and the history of territorial exchanges during major conflicts.

Chapter III: The Diplomatic Efforts: A reverse timeline (beginning with the Annapolis conference in 2007) of major diplomatic initiatives. Princeton University's Daniel C. Kurtzer, a former U.S. ambassador to Egypt and Israel, provides audio analysis.

Chapter IV: Parties to the Conflict: Succinct descriptions of the posture of each of the major state and nonstate actors involved in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, with links to deeper material and primary source documents for each.

Chapter V: Resources: A clickable list of CFR experts, primary source documents and treaties, additional readings for each chapter, and other think tanks with resources on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

The Crisis Guide is suitable for courses on:

- General U.S. foreign policy or international relations
- The Middle East or Islamic affairs
- Military history or national security strategy

Discussion Questions

General Courses on U.S. Foreign Policy or International Relations

1. What are Washington's primary interests in the Middle East? How important is the Israeli-Arab conflict to U.S. interests in the Middle East?
2. How would you characterize the history of U.S. efforts to mediate peace in the Middle East? Has there been a consistent approach to the problem? Can the United States force peace on the region if it chooses?
3. What are the determinants of close U.S.-Israel ties? Given these links, can the United States be an "even-handed" interlocutor between Arabs and Israelis? Is it desirable for the United States to be "even-handed?"
4. Is there a link between the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and the global "war on terror?" How has Osama bin Laden sought to leverage the Israeli-Palestinian conflict in grievances against the West?
5. When did U.S. diplomatic efforts succeed? Why? When did they fail? Why?

Courses on the Middle East or Islamic Affairs

1. Is the Israeli-Palestinian problem a conflict over territory or is it a battle between faiths? What are the obstacles to peace? Is peace possible?
2. Do organizations like Hamas and Hezbollah as well as states such as Iran and Syria pose existential threats to Israel? If so, how? Are there other developments or trends that pose a threat to Israel's survival?
3. Discuss this assertion: Suicide bombing is a logical recourse for a poorly armed, dispossessed population facing a highly-trained, western-supplied armed force.
4. How might the rulers of Arab states have better served the Palestinians since the founding of Israel? Should the Arab states have pursued such policies? Why have most Arab countries, with the exception of Jordan, denied Palestinians citizenship?
5. How have Iran's efforts to extend its influence in the Middle East affected the Arab-Israeli conflict? What has been the Arab response to Iran's efforts?

Courses on Military History or National Security Strategy

1. The performance of the Israeli military between 1948 and 1973 gave Israel a sense of security that has since come to be diluted. Discuss the factors that have contributed to this change in recent years.
2. Given the advancing threat of nuclear proliferation, should Israel openly declare its nuclear capability or continue its policy of nuclear ambiguity? Are the Israelis right to oppose a nuclear-free zone in the Middle East?
3. What is the relationship between territory and security in the modern era? Should Israel accept the emergence of a nuclear Iran?

Further Projects

Partition Simulation

Divide students into four groups and assign each group one of the following roles: Israeli, Arab, British, United Nations. (The UN group should include a Soviet, American, French, Chinese, and “non-aligned” member). Instruct students that it is 1947 and that Britain has announced its intention to withdraw from Palestine. With the benefit of sixty years of hindsight, have the students negotiate a territorial solution with a goal of preventing future conflict.

Memorandum to the President

Ask students to write a memo based on the following scenario: You are the Secretary of State-designate. It is the day after the U.S. presidential election, and you are to inherit the job of managing U.S. foreign policy. How much emphasis do you put on solving the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, and why? Rank it in terms of the United States’ top ten international concerns. Then, provide a blueprint for moving things forward during the president’s first term, including a strategic plan and interim goals. How do you enlist other international actors?

Treaty of Peace

Ask students to draw up a ten-point treaty of peace between Israel and the Palestinian Authority.

Op-Ed

Assign students to write a 900-word opinion article on some aspect of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

Speech

Ask students to draft up to three pages of themes for a presidential speech designed to launch a new phase of diplomacy.

Supplementary Books

Humphreys, R. Stephen, *Between Memory and Desire: The Middle East in a Troubled Age* (Berkeley, California: University of California Press, 1999).

Laqueur, Walter, *A History of Zionism: From the French Revolution to the Establishment of the State of Israel* (New York: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, 1972).

Miller, Aaron David, *The Much Too Promised Land: America's Elusive Search for Arab-Israeli Peace* (New York: Bantam Books, 2008).

Morris, Benny, *The Birth of the Palestinian Refugee Problem, 1947–1949* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1987).

Quandt, William B., *Peace Process: American Diplomacy and the Arab-Israeli Conflict since 1967* (Washington, DC: Brookings Institution Press; Berkeley, California: University of California Press, 2001).

Robinson, Glenn E., *Building a Palestinian State: The Incomplete Revolution* (Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press, 1997).

Said, Edward, *The Question of Palestine* (New York: Times Books, 1979).

Şayigh, Yazid, *Armed Struggle and the Search for State: The Palestinian National Movement, 1949–1993* (Oxford: Clarendon Press and New York: Oxford University Press, 1997).

Shipler, David K., *Arab and Jew: Wounded Spirits in a Promised Land* (New York: Times Books, 1986).