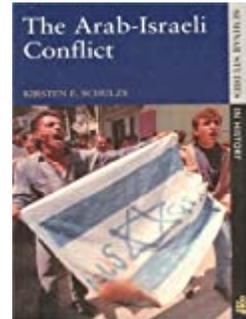




Kirsten E. Schulze. *The Arab-Israeli Conflict*. London and New York: Longman, 1999. vii + 148 pp. \$14.66 (paper), ISBN 978-0-582-31646-1.



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Published on H-Diplo (October, 2000)

A Good Pocket Primer to the Arab-Israeli Conflict

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This work, part of the *Seminar Studies in History* series edited by Clive Emsley and Gordon Martel, discusses a condensed version of the Arab-Israeli and more particularly the Israeli-Palestinian conflict from a chronological perspective. Kristin Schulze's book is representative of this series, whose stated goal has two purposes: to bridge the gap between specialists and generalists, and to present a short work that clarifies issues of great complexity.

The book's format is presented in four parts. It begins in Part I with a discussion of the events surrounding the emergence of Arab and Jewish nationalism prior to World War I. The author characterizes this time frame as a conflict between competing nationalisms that she believes not only followed parallel developmental courses, but were also forged by the political and historical contexts of their environments. This section does not necessarily offer insights that add to the scholarly debate regarding the Middle East conflict, but what it does do is admirably set the tone for the remainder of the work.

The meat of this book appears in Part II and is concerned with the overriding issues of war and peace in the region. This section is presented as a conflict chronology and the author devotes a chapter to each of the following, spanning the years from 1948 through 1997: the 1948 War, the 1956 Suez-Sinai campaign, the 1967 War, the 1973 October War, the Egyptian-Israeli peace process, the 1982 Lebanon War, the Intifada, and the Middle East peace process after 1991. It has been fifty years since the emergence of the state of Israel, and new explanations have been formulated concerning the Middle East region's modern historiography. To this point, this has been the first work for the generalist that has been able to encapsulate both the revisionist and more traditional historiographic interpretations in one setting. Beginning with her analysis of the 1948 conflict, Schulze makes her contribution to the literature by capably framing the debate between the "old" and "new" historians with respect to the following: the emergence of the State of Israel, the role of Great Britain, the exigencies of the refugee crisis, the role of Arab armies, the myth of Israeli military inferiority, the relationship(s) between Israel and Jordan, and the problems with the search for peace. The presentation

of her analysis in this section is concise, easily readable, and evenhanded, which will probably incur her a rebuke from the hawks on both sides.

Part III concludes the book with an assessment, at least until 1997, of the Israeli-Palestinian efforts toward conflict resolution. Here again Ms. Schulze adds to the scholarly literature with her examination of the key points from the chronology and attempts to place them within a context for potential conflict resolution. For her, the 1948 events were the key because this specific conflict set the standards for the continuing conflict between Palestinians and Israelis that was only briefly modified by the emergence of the Oslo mediation process in 1991. She believes that the 1948 conflict not only led to Palestinian displacement and marginalization, but that historical circumstances mediated against the careful consideration of their cause until the Oslo process. Finally she notes that the security and territorial issues that frame today's debate came into play at that time including most importantly the status of Jerusalem.

By 1967, she continues, things changed significantly including the boost to Israel from the war, the emergence of the Israeli right wing's greater Israeli ideology, and the PLO. She observes that it was not until 1973, as a result of the October War, that cracks began to appear regarding the Israeli myth of invincibility. The Lebanon crisis and its twenty year aftermath further fueled this debate, or at least the Israeli internal debate. Finally, the more formalized Palestinian institutional order was rocked by the grass roots democracy of the Intifada. These ideas are not particularly new, but I believe that they may be helpful to the generalist scholar looking for a quick read to gain insights into the modern history of Middle East conflict.

Schulze concludes by presenting her characterization of both sides regarding the conflict resolution process, and this is where I as a practitioner of Middle Eastern conflict resolution gained my greatest insights from her work. Her first point is that both Israelis and Palestinians

have tended to view the process of negotiations within a framework of maximum demands that they refuse to scale back to facilitate the process of negotiations. Second, these efforts are further bedeviled by extended positions, dubious motives by either the leaders or competing domestic factions and poor timing. Finally, she is disheartened by the fact that leverage, even with the inducements of outside mediators, never seems to work and it is only through either the process of attrition or the threat of force that events proceed. I would add that in cross cultural conflicts, such as that between Israelis and Palestinians, there is also another dimension for consideration. I refer to this as conflict fatigue. It is the point after many years of the stalemated struggle where the population of both opposing groups simply tires of the conflict, and looks for means, often less than perfect, to resolve it. Here often a hard line pragmatic leadership on both sides emerges to forge a consensus that conflict cessation, and perhaps a potential normalization of relations, has more benefits than continuing with the struggle.

Finally, I found this condensed work to be an excellent contribution to the literature especially with regard to how it discussed the major points of historiography within a definitive chronology of events. A small work of this type obviously has limits and will never ultimately give succor to the specialists who are hungry for the intimate contextual details of each historical period. Having noted this concern what Schulze's book does do is admirably present the events surrounding the Arab-Israeli and the Israeli-Palestinian relationship. Thus it accomplishes its mission by supplying detail for the specialist and a broad contextual framework for the generalist to facilitate their understanding of the complexities of the Middle East.

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Citation: Mark Kass. Review of Schulze, Kirsten E., *The Arab-Israeli Conflict*. H-Diplo, H-Net Reviews. October, 2000.

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