



## A History of the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict (Indiana Series in Arab and Islamic Studies)

*By Mark Tessler*

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### **A History of the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict (Indiana Series in Arab and Islamic Studies) By Mark Tessler**

Mark Tessler's highly praised, comprehensive, and balanced history of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict from the earliest times to the present?updated through the first years of the 21st century?provides a constructive framework for understanding recent developments and assessing the prospects for future peace. Drawing upon a wide array of documents and on research by Palestinians, Israelis, and others, Tessler assesses the conflict on both the Israelis' and the Palestinians' terms. New chapters in this expanded edition elucidate the Oslo peace process, including the reasons for its failure, and the political dynamics in Israel, the West Bank, and Gaza at a critical time of transition.

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**A History of the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict (Indiana Series in Arab and Islamic Studies) By Mark Tessler Bibliography**

- Sales Rank: #351295 in Books
- Brand: imusti
- Published on: 2009-03-24
- Released on: 2009-03-24
- Original language: English
- Number of items: 1
- Dimensions: 9.25" h x 1.88" w x 6.12" l, 3.16 pounds
- Binding: Paperback
- 1040 pages

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### Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

"Objectivity without detachment" is the author's self-proclaimed goal, and his detailed account of this intractable 20th-century conflict is certainly more even-handed than many. Part of the Indiana Series in Arab and Islamic Studies, Tessler's work provides a useful review of the numerous failed diplomatic solutions over the years concluding on a cautiously optimistic note with the September 1993 handshake between Rabin and Arafat. It is a fallacy, however, to believe that the "truth" of any contested issue must always reside dead center between the two sides--and this work is unlikely to sway any reader who already holds a considered opinion. Tessler (coauthor of *Israel, Egypt, the Palestinians*) is closest to achieving his goal when he devotes two long opening chapters to sympathetic histories of the Jews and the Arabs, respectively. Yet even here the symmetry is flawed, and he must engage in a song and dance to explain why he gives the history of the Arab world rather than the Palestinians specifically if, as he asserts, "the Palestinians are descendants of two ancient peioples, the Canaanites and the Philistines." A technique the author frequently employs is to set forth the arguments--including audacious propaganda--before stepping in to evaluate them critically or, more often, to equivocate. In this regard, he cites a touching anecdote recounted by Arafat, only pointing to its spurious character in a footnote. Although similar lapses throughout partially erode the credibility of the author's objective stance, one has to admire his herculean effort, and current events ensure that this is a timely history.

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From Library Journal

Tessler, a political scientist, provides a thorough historical and political analysis of the current Arab-Israeli conflict. Going back to ancient times, he juxtaposes the history of the ancient Hebrews with that of the Arabs, bringing their respective developments up through time to the present. With a great deal of clarity, the author describes the origins of modern political Zionism and Arab nationalism, their emergence and evolution through the period of the British mandate, and the establishment of the State of Israel with the commensurate Arab opposition efforts. Tessler's analysis is made current by a discussion of the intifadah. His method of presenting complementary histories of the two peoples leads to the author's thesis that a solution to the conflict can come only with mutual recognition of the respective histories of the Israelis and Palestinians and the establishment of two states. This is the best book on the subject at present. Highly recommended.

*Sanford R. Silverburg, Catawba Coll., Salisbury, N.C*

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From [Booklist](#)

Objectivity without detachment is the goal of Tessler, a political science professor and director of the Center for International Relations at the University of WisconsinMilwaukee, in tracing the history of the Mideast struggles of Israelis and Palestinians. Centrally, Tessler assumes both Israeli Jews and Palestinian Arabs have legitimate and inalienable rights . . . rooted in the historical experience of each people. After sketching the congruent origins of modern Zionism and Arab nationalism in the nineteenth century, he focuses on the period from the last years of the Ottoman Empire to 1993's Israeli-Palestinian accord. On the dozens of questions of historical fact that divide the adversaries, Tessler strives to present both positions fairly, recognizing and empathizing with the real injuries suffered over the decades on both sides. Partisans who deny the symmetry of Israeli and Palestinian aspirations and oppose mutual recognition and a two-state solution will no doubt attack Tessler's effort to achieve a balanced historical assessment of this long and troubled conflict. Readers whose minds are relatively open, however, will find this demanding comprehensive study fascinating and enlightening. Includes 20 maps and well over 100 pages of notes and

bibliography. *Mary Carroll*

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