



## Ten Myths about Israel

*Ilan Pappé*

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## Ten Myths about Israel Ilan Pappé

### What are the myths--and reality--behind the state of Israel?

Ilan Pappe is one of the most outspoken and radical thinkers writing on the history of Israel. In this groundbreaking and controversial book he examines ten of the most contested ideas concerning the origins and identity of the contemporary state of Israel. Once and for all he explodes the myths that justify the rights of the Israeli state, asking,

- Was Palestine an empty land at the time of the Balfour Declaration?
- Were the Jews a people without a land?
- Is there no difference between Zionism and Judaism?
- Is Zionism not a colonial project of occupation?
- Did the Palestinians leave their homeland voluntarily in 1948?
- Was the June 1967 War a war of -no choice-?
- Is Israel the only democracy in the Middle East?
- Were the failed Oslo negotiations of 1992 the PLO's fault?
- Was it a question of national security to bomb Gaza?
- Is the Two States Solution still achievable?

Written for the general reader, this book will prompt a huge, and necessary, debate.

## Ten Myths about Israel Details

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## From Reader Review Ten Myths about Israel for online ebook

### Ayala Levinger says

EVERYONE needs to read this book

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### Jonas says

Når den ikke var forvirrende og dårlig oversatt, var den veldig bra. for fem stjerner burde den ha vært: 1. mindre forvirrende; 2. bedre oversatt.

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### Vishal Misra says

During my undergraduate studies in law, I became intensely interested in the creation of, and the position of, Israel as a matter of public international law. Subsequently, I studied for my postgraduate studies in criminal law, where again, it was the nation of Israel that caught my eye. This time, I was interested from a position of international criminal law, and the complicity of the Israeli government in the international crime of apartheid. So, this year's paperback release of Pappe's "Ten Myths About Israel" caught my eye, and a brief glance through its contents page made me realise that I had to read this book.

The book comprises 10 chapters, and each chapter speaks to a myth and/or fallacy that is peddled as common knowledge pertaining to the discourse of Israel. Part I deals with the "fallacies of the past", whilst Part II deals with the "fallacies of the present". Finally, the single chapter Part III looks to the future. To anyone with a passing interest in international law, politics or history, none of these fallacies is anything new. However, what the book does do, is to condense the basic myths into easy to follow and well referenced chapters. This means that the book is ideal to a total newbie, whilst also containing supremely useful nuggets for the seasoned Israel/Palestine watcher.

Part I is split into 6 chapters. The first two are not hugely complex. The simple thrust of the argument is that Palestine was not empty. As the Ottoman Empire was collapsing, there was an important pan-Arab movement, seeking to create something akin to the United States. However, these federalist dreams were dashed by Anglo-French Imperialism. Thus, a more localised nationalism was born, and one of those national movements was Palestine (or South Syria). The first Zionist settlers knew they had arrived in to a populated country, and yet they continued to aggressively expound the myth that virgin land was awaiting cultivation. Whilst the second chapter deals with the notion that "Jews" did not have a homeland. Pappe debunks this wonderfully by pointing out that the Ashkenazi Jews were European, and had homes in Europe. The Mizrahi Jews also had homelands. In order to effectively peddle the myth, the would-be colonisers needed to rely on the Bible, and contemporary Christian support. Driven by anti-Semitism, and financial interests, we learn that "Zionism, as we can see, was therefore a Christian project of colonisation before it became a Jewish one." By relying on British support, the colonial mission was able to get off the ground.

Chapters 3 and 4 deal with the all-encompassing myth that conflates Zionism with Judaism, and that Zionism is not colonialism. The conflation is easily debunked as most Orthodox Jews were against Zionism at its inception. As Pappe puts it: "When Zionism made its first appearance in Europe, many traditional rabbis in

fact forbade their followers from having anything to do with Zionist activists. They viewed Zionism as meddling with God's will to retain the Jews in exile until the coming of the Messiah." It was not until the mid-1950s that strong anti-Zionist tendencies would fade in the face of the realities on the ground. In order to debunk the myth of Zionism not being a colonial movement, Pappe points out that Palestinians were never allowed to resist their displacement through civil means. He documents the number of non-violent protests brutally crushed by the Israeli army. Alongside this, he debunks the myth that Palestinian resistance is driven by anti-Semitism: "The diaries of the early Zionists tell a different story. They are full of anecdotes revealing how the settlers were well received by the Palestinians, who offered them shelter and in many cases taught them how to cultivate the land."

Myths 5 and 6 deal with the "voluntary" departure of the Palestinians and how Israel had no choice but to fight the war of 1967. In 1937, Ben-Gurion had written numerous letters stating that it would be necessary to remove the Palestinians from their villages by force. This, coupled with how the UN peace committee effectively worked alongside Israel to ensure that Palestinian voices regarding their living situations in their own homes were never heard puts lie to the idea that this was a voluntary exodus. Through clever manipulation of Arab leaders, and by double crossing the Egyptians, Ben-Gurion pushed Israel in to a position where the 1967 war would happen. Taking an ever more aggressive and militaristic stance towards the Palestinians, the Israelis hoped for guerrilla retaliation from the Palestinians. When it inevitably came, the Israelis could paint the conflict as 'self-defence'. Subsequently, Israel seized swathes of land, including the West Bank and the Golan Heights.

Myth 7 is that Israel is the only democracy in the Middle East. This is a total fallacy, as Palestinians not incarcerated in the West Bank or Gaza Strip, who live within Israel proper, are denied basic rights. They have lesser access to labour, and they cannot purchase land. This basic denial of rights would suggest that this is no democracy, but given that any Jew may lay claim to Israeli citizenship, regardless of where they were born reveals that Israel is an ethnocracy, or an apartheid republic.

Myth 8 deals with the Oslo process, which Pappe demonstrates was designed by Israel to fail. The Israelis initially wanted to negotiate with the Jordanians (not the Palestinians), then decided to negotiate with the PLO. This led to an Israeli demand of 80% of the territory, with Palestinians to be siphoned off into small cantons (or Bantustans in apartheid parlance), denying Palestinians the right to travel between the cantons. The map would have resembled a Swiss cheese. Finally, whilst granting a "right of return" to any international Jew, Israel callously refused to countenance the notion that Palestinian refugees may want to return to their villages. Thus, to join the UN, the Israelis committed to the right of return, and reneged as soon as they were admitted to the UN.

Myth 9 deals with Gaza. Here Pappe destroys the notion that Hamas et al are salivating Islamist fundamentalists. They are, rather, non-secular people who mobilise regional particularities to resist a colonial occupation. They provide the Palestinians squeezed in to the ghetto of Gaza with medicine, welfare and schooling. In the face of this, the Israeli state controls the electricity and water supply of Gaza (so much for not being colonisers). Ultimately, it is Israeli policy to lay siege, deny access of food and medicine, and to economically destroy Gaza. This has led to the Israeli sponsored destruction of UNESCO Heritage sites in the name of their colonial project. In this manner, it is clear that whilst doing everything that can be done to undermine peace, provoking an armed response and then to respond with overwhelming force, declaring civilian structures such as schools and hospitals to be "barracks", another myth is peddled. That there is no one for Israel to negotiate peace with. This is by design, because on the ground, the Israeli state does not want peace.

The final myth deals with the "two-State solution", which is so flawed for all the reasons above. It is not

deliverable, believable or sustainable. However, it salves Liberal, European consciences to continue to peddle this 'solution'. What is clear is that the "Jewish settlers are now an organic and integral part of the land. They cannot, and will not, be removed. They should be part of the future, but not on the basis of the constant oppression and dispossession of the local Palestinians."

This is an important book, and Pappe reveals the importance of BDS and other anti-imperialist policies that are slowly gaining ground in international civic societies. More and more people in States that support the Israeli government are aware as to what is being supported. This means that the status quo is time limited, and like apartheid in South Africa, the regime is living purely on borrowed time. For now, that status quo can be upheld by popular appeal to Islamophobia. Eventually, though, even this will have to wear thin.

Read this book, it is wonderful and cogently argued. Unashamedly partisan (it is anti-colonial), and with a wealth of resource to draw on. The numerous letters and diary entries that Pappe has found and presented to the reader is in itself a treasure trove of insight. This is an important book, read it.

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### **Paul Bryant says**

This is a short book but dense, like a black hole from which no light can escape. These ten myths have been, according to Ilan Pappe, promoted and repeated so often they have been accepted as facts, and he intends to disprove each one of them. The ten myths are divided into FALLACIES OF THE PAST (6 of those), FALLACIES OF THE PRESENT (3 of those) and LOOKING AHEAD (one final myth). I could understand the myths of the past reasonably well, but I got lost in the present and baffled by the future. Pretty much like everyone else, then.

We will start with the easy stuff. You've heard of the slogan "a land without people for a people without land". It was coined not by Zionists but by Christians in the mid 19th century - the type of prophecy-minded Christians who wanted to see the Jews re-established in Palestine so that the Last Days and the Second Coming and so forth could happen. The prophecies required the Jews to return first. Later the Zionists took up the slogan. It breaks down into two myths :

#### **1. Palestine was an Empty Land.**

Well, of course, it wasn't. The theory in the 19th & early 20th centuries was that the Ottoman empire had neglected Palestine and the land was turning back into desert and the population dwindling away. Pappe flatly contradicts this and claims a proto-Palestinian identity was being formed just prior to the first Zionist settlements. Anyway, this was obviously a myth.

#### **2. The Jews were a People without Land.**

Pappe gets all bogged down here. Were "the Jews" one people? Well – they thought they were! But really, did they share the same DNA with those who were kicked out of Palestine by the Romans in the first century? Well, who could possibly know? Were there a whole lot of non-Zionist Jews? Sure. Pappe could easily have reframed this as : were the Jews an identifiable people who did not have their own nation state? And could hardly have answered "no they weren't". In this sense, of course, the Jews were no more hard done to politically than all the other submerged nations of the world (Kurds, Catalans, Sikhs, Uigars, the list is a long one). For me, then, this myth was not obviously a myth.

### **3. Zionism is Judaism.**

Meaning : Jews are Zionists. Pappe here investigates the strong Jewish opposition to Zionism. These anti-Zionists said that Zionism would only exacerbate the pogroms and antisemitism in the various European countries, for example, by calling into question Jewish patriotism to their current countries. Anyhow, with all radical ideas, I was not surprised to find it was profoundly controversial. Pappe never convinced me that the majority of Jews have sought to equate Zionism with Judaism.

### **4. Zionism is not Colonialism.**

Pappe unfortunately does not indicate how or by whom these ten myths are promoted. I can't believe anyone would be able to straight-facedly say that Zionism was not a form of colonialism. The Jewish settlers displaced the original population – one way or another – just as the European settlers displaced the native populations of north and south America, Australia and New Zealand. Okay, there is an argument based on religion which says that the Palestinian people, in fact, were the colonists, because they took over when the Jews were ejected by the Romans. And the land really belongs to the Jews, because the Bible says so. Just as the Bible says that the Jews were given permission by God to take over Palestine (the Biblical land of Canaan) from its aboriginal inhabitants. (See the Book of Judges if you want to read the gruesome details.) What the Bible confirms is that the Jewish people were always temporary and uncertain occupants of this land.

### **5. The Palestinians Voluntarily Left their Homeland in 1948.**

Pappe says :

*The official Israeli line has not changed for years : the Palestinians became refugees because their leaders, and the leaders of the Arab world, told them to leave Palestine before the Arab armies invaded and kicked out the Jews, after which they could then return. But there was no such call – it is a myth invented by the Israeli foreign ministry*

Pappe plunges into massively contentious stuff here (okay, the WHOLE BOOK is contentious, I know) when he says

*half of those who became refugees – hundreds of thousands of Palestinians – had been expelled before the war had even commenced. Moreover, I claim that the war was initiated by Israel in order to secure the historical opportunity to expel the Palestinians.*

### **7. Israel is the Only Democracy in the Middle East.**

A curious chapter. He does not talk about voters, political choice or fair and transparent elections at all. He talks about the crushing of the Palestinian people's human rights, and says that no society can be called a democracy which tolerates such abuses. I can't agree with that. Yes, these abuses are real and terrible. But what about the USA and UK carrying out an invasion of Iraq without UN sanction? That's pretty serious. Could be called anti-democratic, in Pappe's sense. Leading to the question – are there any actual real democracies at all? (The answer is probably Sweden, it always is.)

Three of these myths were really complicated, too much for this review (the 1967 War, the Oslo Accords, the Gaza Strip) leaving one last one –

## **10. The Two States Solution is the Only Way Forward.**

He ends the book on a completely gloomy note. The Two States solution, he says, means what the South African apartheid system used to call bantustans – it would be disconnected enclaves of territory set aside for the Palestinian people with no real political rights attached. I.e. the non-Israeli state in the two states solution would not really be a state. He makes no mention of any alternative.

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I was trying to enlighten myself a little bit about this whole subject but as usual feel like I got my head caught in a cement mixer.

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### **Ali Faqih says**

Distinguished Israeli historian Ilan Pappe challenges numerous myths and false presuppositions that virtually anyone involved in the Israel-Palestine conflict often encounters. This book provides great ammunition for anyone engaged in the topic of Israel-Palestine conflict.

The history presented in this book is ideal for anyone who wants to scan a brief history of the past and the current events of the conflict without going too deep into details, if you are looking for more details, then by all means get Pappe's other books (which are better imo). I also find the timeline of events as an appendix at the end of the book to be invaluable. (On side note, there are tiny forgivable footnote misplacement errors in footnote 34, 35, 36 of Chapter 9 "The Gaza Mythologies", 1st edition verso).

I only find myself in disagreement with the premise of Chapter 10. Pappe argues in that chapter that one-state solution is the only way forward, this is a case where I think great historians are not always the best political thinkers...

If Israel won't abandon the west bank, as Pappe writes: "the reality of the current colonization of vast parts of West Bank by Israel renders any two-state solution an improbable vision" (Pg-141), what makes him think that it would be easier for Israel to give up its rights to be a Jewish state?

I wasn't convinced how the two-state solution along the 1967 border (the international consensus) is unachievable, and how the one-state solution which he advocates, is more feasible than the two-state solution?

If the two-state solution is unfeasible as Pappe claims, then a one-state solution -- where people would run civil rights/anti-apartheid struggle -- is fantasy thinking in my opinion. Pappe writes; "The settler movement that arrived there in the late nineteenth century now accounts for half of the population and controls the other half through a matrix of racist ideology and apartheid policies" (pg-143), which is true, but I am not sure what makes him think that these issues would be easier to overcome under a one-state scenario, and why would any movement for liberation throw away the international law card, particularly when international law is on your side.

The book covers a lot of information about Zionism and its history, however In terms of solving the conflict and besides learning about the history of Zionism, I personally find the conversations regarding Zionism to be counterproductive at times. I think people committed to end the conflict can easily use the vocabulary and points of reference of human rights and justice without the need to refer to Zionism. I am ultimately drawn back to the concluding paragraph of Professor Finkelstein's lecture at Case Western Reserve University in

2008;

“The Caribbean poet Aimé Césaire once wrote, “There’s room for everyone at the rendezvous of victory.” Late in life, when his political horizons broadened, Edward Said often quoted this line. We should make it our credo as well. We want to nurture a movement, not hatch a cult. The victory to which we aspire is inclusive, not exclusive; it is not at anyone’s expense. It is to be victorious without vanquishing. No one is a loser, and we all are gainers if together we stand by truth and justice. “I am not anti-English; I am not anti-British; I am not anti-any government,” Gandhi insisted, “but I am anti-untruth—anti-humbug, and anti-injustice.” Shouldn’t we also say that we are not anti-Jewish, anti-Israel, or, for that matter, anti-Zionist? The prize to which our eyes should be riveted is human rights, human dignity, and human equality. What, really, is the point of the ideological litmus test: Are you now or have you ever been a Zionist? A criterion of membership that would exclude a Richard Goldstone from our ranks is transparently counterproductive. Shouldn’t we use a vocabulary and points of reference that register and resonate with the public conscience and the Jewish conscience, winning over the decent many while isolating the diehard few? Shouldn’t we instead be asking: Are you for or against ethnic cleansing, for or against discriminatory laws, for or against house demolitions, for or against Jews-only roads and Jews-only settlements, for or against torture, for or against massacres? And if the answers come, against, against, and against, shouldn’t we then say: Keep your ideology, whatever it might be—there’s room for everyone at the rendezvous of victory?”

Could have easily been a bigger book with more debunked myths.

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### **Jay says**

This volume is a great introduction for those unfamiliar with the Israel - Palestine conflict as it tackles ten myths of the conflict in compressed chapters offering a broad overview of the conflict. However the value of this book goes beyond a simple first step; as concise as the chapters are, together they offer an extensive accounting rectifying multiple misconceptions underlying western understanding of the colonisation of Palestine. In the process, Pappe tackles several layers of the situation from pre 1948 history to recent developments from the Oslo accords to the current savagery inflicted against Gaza. This will appeal to those familiar with Palestine as well as acting as an effective first step for those wanting to learn more.

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### **Randall Wallace says**

For Israel, it’s all about casting “doubt on the Palestinian’s moral right to the land.” The estimate of percentage of Jews in Israel prior to the rise of Zionism is “2 to 5 percent”. Without the sudden increase in Zionism, “Palestine would probably have gone the same way as Lebanon, Jordan, or Syria.” Zionism can be found connected to the revival of Hebrew and writings about the need to “colonize Palestine”. Zionist records show its natives as “an obstacle, an alien and an enemy.” “Most of the Kibbutzim were built on destroyed Palestinian villages whose populations had been expelled in 1948.” Imagine the U.S. press saying this amazing Gandhi quote: “Palestine belongs to the Arabs in the same sense that England belongs to the English, or France to the French. It is wrong and inhuman to impose the Jews on the Arabs...Surely it would be a crime against humanity to reduce the proud Arabs so that Palestine can be restored to the Jews partly or wholly as their national home.” JFK was “the last American President to refuse to provide Israel with vast military aid; after his assassination, the faucet was fully open.”

Ethnic cleansing is an action to drive out an ethnic group from an area to make it a pure one, one example is the Nakbah. The Jewish state was born out of sin, out of ethnic cleansing - the Nakbah destroyed 531 Palestinian villages in seven months and taught a very important lesson: you can “expel half a country’s population and destroy half its villages with impunity”. What a great moral example Israel is provided the world. Once Israel decided to deny citizenship to Palestinians coupled with zero chance for independence, it knew Palestinians would be left “without basic civil and human rights”. This was only tolerated because Israel said it’s temporary, ha ha... Meanwhile world leaders have no problem referring to Gaza as the world’s largest open-air prison. A prison for non-citizens who had their citizenship stolen for settler-colonial racist reasons. Those who left before ’48 can’t ever see those family members who remained in Israel. How thoughtful. Hebron averages 100 attacks per month by settlers against locals. When Palestinians fight back, all Palestinian residential areas become treated as combat zones which gives us these figures: “15,000 Palestinians have been killed ‘unlawfully’ by Israel since 1967. Among them were 2,000 children.” “Since 2000, almost 4,000 Palestinians have been killed by Israeli forces, half of them children.” “Hamas is branded as a terrorist organization, both in the media and in legislation. I will claim it is a liberation movement, and a legitimate one at that.” In closing the author Ilan would like you to remember: to redefine “Zionism as colonialism, Israel as an apartheid state, and the Nakbah as ethnic cleansing.” Great writing - Noam loves Ilan’s work for good reason.

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### **Michael Gilbride says**

Ilan Pappe takes a sledgehammer to the official narrative that the Israeli state wants people to believe. “Narrative” is a kind way of saying blatant propaganda. That many academics and intellectuals fall for complete fabrications of history that belie the official Israeli narrative underscore how big an issue this is. It is Pappe’s assertion that until Israel and the US are honest about Israel’s past and present, the Palestinian people will not get the justice that they are entitled to. Anyone vaguely criticising the Israeli state tends to be labelled an anti-Semite yet, as Pappe observes, “from the very beginning, Palestine resistance was depicted as motivated as hate for the Jews” when in fact it was nothing of the sort.?In his excellent short book with Noam Chomsky, *The War on Gaza*, Pappe used the word ethnic cleansing to describe the actions taken on behalf of the Israeli state. Here, he goes one step further and deems it genocide. I am not sure that it fits Raphael Lemkin’s original definition of the word but, certainly, Pappe makes a strong case for this, saying that it is exactly “what the Israeli army has been doing on the Gaza Strip since 2006”. He cites a United Nation’s report that predicts that Gaza will be uninhabitable by 2020. Pappe does not deal in falsehoods and supports his assertions with facts.?

The first myth he torpedoed is Israel’s claim that when they first began settling Palestine in the 1880s, it was an empty land with few indigenous people present. Pappe details the history of how the Romans named the land “Palestina” when it became an imperial province of the Roman Empire, who in 70 CE ethnically cleansed Jews from Jerusalem. For most of the next two thousand years there were few Jewish people in Palestine: just before the Zionist movement began in earnest, their population numbered about 5,000. By the eighteenth century, new historical records show that there was what Pappe deemed a “thriving Arab society” present in Palestine, with a breakdown of 85% Muslim, 10% Christian and 5% Jewish people. The myth that Palestine was, to all intents and purposes, empty, supports the Israeli assertion that there was no Palestinian national movement preceding Israeli colonisation, yet Pappe details historical Palestinian leaders, such as Khalidi and Muslih, to prove that Palestinian national identity existed long before the influx of Zionists in the nineteenth century. It is pure fiction to suggest otherwise. “Without the appearance of Zionism on its doorstep, Palestine would probably have gone the same way as Lebanon, Jordan, or Syria . . .

[Palestine] was a pastoral country on the verge of entering the twentieth century as a modern society, with all the benefits and ills of such a transformation. Its colonisation by the Zionist movement turned this process into a disaster for the majority of the native people living there".?

Pappe explodes the myth that Zionism is not colonisation. Specifically, he terms the Zionist movement a form of settler colonialism. "The diaries of the early Zionists are full of anecdotes revealing how the settlers were well received by the Palestinians, who offered them shelter and in many cases taught them how to cultivate the land. Only when it became clear that the settlers had not come to live alongside the native population, but in place of it, did the Palestinian resistance begin". By 1945, Jewish people owned 7% of the land, which they did not consider enough, so they had to "remove the natives from their homeland. Zionism is thus a settler-colonial project, and one that has not yet been completed".?

Another humdinger that is prevalent in modern Israeli propaganda is that Zionism is Judaism. Of course, the very fact that there are people like Pappe writing a different version of Israeli history refutes this myth. Pappe cites the fact that Theodore Herzl considered settling in Uganda at the 1897 global conference on Zionism as proof that Judaism was not his primary consideration. That the Jewish secularists totally rejected Zionism until 1948 is more evidence that Zionism is not Judaism. The American Council of Judaism (ACJ) reminded the world, in 1993, that Zionism was a minority movement among Jews - a point that is often lost. The picture that Pappe paints is that Zionism consumed all the movements around the fringes, eventually including them under the umbrella of Zionism and leaving only a small number of dissidents.?

Socialist Jews, who were a big influence in early to mid-twentieth century Jewish society, did not fully buy into Zionism. Even the ultra-Orthodox Jewish establishment was not originally Zionist. Although the Bible was not the sole text used for Zionism, it was used to justify an enormous amount of settlement expansion. "Yigal Aron used the Bible to build a Jewish town, Qiryat Arba, on land expropriated from the people of Hebron...people selectively chose biblical chapters and phrases that in their eyes justified the dispossession of the Palestinians". Pappe states that "since 1882 the Bible has been used as a justification for dispossession". He reveals that "Israeli educational textbooks now carry the same message of the right of the land based on a biblical promise" following a letter sent to all schools from the Ministry of Education in 2014.?

One of the ten myths that Pappe dismisses, that the Palestinians left their land voluntarily in 1948, is so ludicrous that the mind boggles that even the most ardent Zionist could believe this to be the case. Former President of Israel, David Ben-Gurion, had said in 1938 "I favour compulsory transfer" of the local Palestinian villages, anticipating the Nakba.?

The biggest misconception I can see in defence of Israel is that it is a peaceful democracy. This does not stack up. Pappe details the Kafr Qasim massacre of 1956, when 56 Palestinian civilians were attacked and killed by Israeli border police, ostensibly for being outdoors after a 5pm curfew and really because the official Israeli dictat was to consider all Palestinians hostiles. The victims were a group of field labourers returning home from the valleys, who were unaware of the newly-imposed curfew, and upon whom the Israelis opened fire in nine separate shooting incidents between 5 and 6:30 p.m. Among their number were 23 children and teenagers shot to death, the youngest of whom was only 8 years old. Many injured survivors were left to lie suffering in the streets, with no assistance for 24 hours due to the curfew, and the bodies of the dead were put in a mass grave. Only months of lobbying and protests induced the Israeli justice system to act: even then, the brigade commander who ordered the killings was found not guilty of murder and symbolically fined only one Israeli cent. Of the 8 officers and soldiers found guilty of murder, not a single one served their full prison term. Murderers Shmuel Malinki and Gabriel Dahan, with sentences of 17 and 15 years respectively, were granted so many reductions, pardons and remissions that they were out of prison

in less than 3 years – not only this, the Israeli state reinstated their careers within the state apparatus and gave both men significant promotions. This is the antithesis of democracy in action.?

That the poorest Israeli settlement is richer than richest Palestinian one is more proof for Pappe that the Israeli state is inherently undemocratic. After an election in the Gaza Strip, Israel overthrew the democratically elected Hamas. "When the Palestinians did resist - as they did in 1987, 2000, 2006, 2012, 2014, and 2016 - they were targeted as soldiers and units of a conventional army. Thus, villages and towns were bombed as if they were military bases". This demonstrates that Israel deliberately targets civilians. After the 1967 occupation of the West Bank and the Gaza strip, the Israeli army poured concrete into the windows and doors of Palestinian civilians. Pappe cites the 2015 Amnesty International Report which stated: "In the West Bank, Israeli forces committed unlawful killings of Palestinian civilians". He also quotes a Middle East Monitor list of 200 methods that the Israeli state use to torture Palestinians. This list was based on a similar UN report, which stated that the Israeli police force-twisted testicles of male prisoners, poured hot and cold water on prisoners and chained prisoners to railings for hours on end. This is obviously closer to a totalitarian nightmare than a liberal democracy.?

On the Gaza strip, Pappe puts forward the theory that the Israeli state had strong links to Sheikh Yassin, one of the founders set of Hamas. In a move similar to Assad releasing thousands of jihadis from Syrian prisons months after their 2011 revolution, Israel wanted the political leadership in Gaza not to appear secular but extremist. This is part of the broader post-9/11 narrative of The West versus Muslim extremism which must be challenged. It is simply not applicable to the core of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, which is a geographical dispute about who has the right to the land. As with the extremist groups that took hold in Syria and protected civilians from Assad, "Hamas is now deeply emboldened in Palestinian society thanks to its genuine attempts to alleviate the suffering of ordinary people". The people had no choice in the face of the violence undertaken, like the punitive actions carried out by the Assad regime in 2012.?

My experiences online lead me to believe that Israel has a highly effective and professional online presence. Look at the comments sections under any article discussing Israel and you will see coordinated waves of comments militantly promulgating Zionist views and denouncing any criticism of the Israeli government as anti-Semitic. I consider Israeli online presence second only to the Russian internet army in its organisation, influence and pernicious dissemination of untruths. It is refreshing to read a book that lays out the truth so uncompromisingly and so honestly about a history which is essentially dishonest. This is the very least the memories of the 15,000 Palestinian (including 2,000 children) killed since the illegal 1967 occupation deserve. The fact that one in five Palestinians continues to undergo "imprisonment without trial" is a fact that will not change until Israel as a society begin to be honest about their past and present. As Gandhi put it, "Palestine belongs to the Arabs in the same sense England belongs to the English".?

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### **Beorn says**

Essential reading for anyone who has or wants either an opinion on the situation in Israel/Palestine or an entry into researching the subject more, beyond propagandised news bulletins and the like.

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### **Nick Patten says**

Read on kindle...

A necessary wake-up call, especially for Americans, our tax dollars each year are used to support a systemic cycle of settler colonialism, apartheid, and genocide.

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### **Emad (TheBookCritic) says**

?????????

**“History lies at the core of every conflict. A true and unbiased understanding of the past offers the possibility of peace. The distortion or manipulation of history, in contrast, will only sow disaster.”**

What an amazing book!

Maybe it is the best book I've read so far that tackled the Palestinian issue.

In this book, the most important and widespread myths about Israel were uncovered, and the counter arguments were masterly illustrated. And it is important to notice that the author of this book is not a Palestinian or an Arab. He is an Israeli historian, and he knows what he's talking about.

I found so many passages that deserve quoting, and I highlighted them all. And I think it's a shame that such a wonderful book is not translated yet into Arabic. I think everyone MUST read it. This wouldn't be the only book I read for Ilan Pappe. This year I must read most of his books. Last night I watched some of his interviews and debates, and I loved him even more.

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### **Asha says**

This was so powerful. It took me forever to finish but I'm so glad I did, as I now have a deeper understanding of the relations between Israel and Palestine and how many of the accepted views about Israel are false. Only by discussing the future of these two states without believing the myths discussed in this book will a solution be reached. Super important to read, or at least understand this topic!

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### **Dee says**

Nothing new here for this "Palestinian Rights Activist" - but a well-put, succinct discussion on a subject that many will find off-putting and/or upsetting. I can think of a number of people that I'd like to recommend this book to - but won't, because I know that they (like many other intelligent progressives - sometimes called PEP or "Progressive Except for Palestine!") see the whole "Israel/Palestine" issue from the only perspectives readily available to them - the "mainstream" news media - and are unwilling to look at it from another viewpoint!

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## Shira says

I've been holding off on reviewing this book for over a week now, because it frightens me to review this book, and it makes me feel ashamed not to review this book. Or rather, I feel shame at my own reluctance to review this book. I have already lost friends over the years even as I endeavored not to discuss these issues, and was pressed, forced finally, into telling my reluctant opinion. And then I was ostracized for it.

What he says is in very great measure true. The modern State of Israel is not a democratically run state by the rules of Good Governance (especially given the uneven treatment of varying groups within the state, and the control of all life-cycle events and the Kotel by the Chief Rabbinate, which excludes most Jewish officials). Many things being done by the government are unethical and inexcusable, and the state of Israel does not speak for the Jewish people. And no one, these days to my knowledge, still claims that the land was empty at the time of the start of the Zionist movement. I may be wrong there, but I seem to think that it has been clear for years that British authorities were playing both sides against the middle during the Mandate period. Nor does anyone universally equate Zionism with Judaism, even if the majority of Jews declare as Zionists out of fear of where to go in the event of another Holocaust. Many, and that number is growing, Jews are speaking out as non-Zionists and advocating changes in the liturgy to reflect more universalist trends within Judaism (see J Street, The First Jewish Catalog: A Do-It-Yourself Kit , and siddur Siddur Birkat Shalom by Havurat Shalom in Somerville, MA).

Yet, also, the idea he puts out that the Jews had multiple homelands is simply not so. And his chapter does not address this, but rather chronicles how the British pushed for a Jewish state in the Palestinian Mandate area even before the Ottoman empire lost it. This may be true, but negates the rejection of Jews all around the world during WWII.

I admit to being shocked by what he said about the 1967 war, and also about the Oslo accords. That left me disheartened and depressed, particularly as he also negates the possibility of a 2-state solution. What then is left?

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## John says

If Jared Kushner is supposed to have the job of devising Trump's Middle-East policies and a hoped-for peace settlement for Palestine, he should read this book before he starts. As Pappe says, all conflicts carry their own histories and this is especially the case with the Israel-Palestine conflict, where both sides seek their justification in their interpretation of past events. But Pappe also says that no one can intervene successfully without knowing the true history of a conflict, with all its nuances. Those who rely on the myths they are told, as (apparently) did Tony Blair when he was an emissary of the 'Quartet' of major powers aiming to find a solution to the conflict, could therefore only fail.

Pappe takes ten of the most commonly-related myths about the conflict - that Palestine was an empty land before Jewish settlers arrived, that the settlement was not 'colonialism', that the Palestinians weren't evicted from their lands but left voluntarily, etc. He demolishes each one with the care of an historian who knows his sources. No one could read this book without at least questionning, if not rejecting, the myths he lays bare. No one should claim to understand the reasons why the conflict exists, without looking seriously at the truth

behind the myths that Pappe exposes here.

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