***Arabs and Israelis: Conflict and Peacemaking in the Middle East***

**Dominant Narratives from each Chapter**

**Dr. Abdelmonem Said Aly**

**Chapter 1: The Formative Years**

1. The Arab reaction to the question of Palestine largely focused on opposition to the establishment of a Jewish state.
2. Arab objections had intensified during the period of the British Mandate in Palestine, in the aftermath of the First World War and the 1919–20 Paris Peace Conference.
3. With the San Remo Conference of April 19–26, 1920 announcing the adoption of the Balfour Declaration, Arabs concluded that the British and French Mandates in the region would support the creation of a Jewish state in Palestine.

**Chapter 2: The Partitioning of Palestine: “Nakba” and Independence**

1. The Arab states rejected UN Resolution 181 for two main reasons.
2. First, they believed that Palestine was an integral part of the Arab world.
3. Second, the Arab states argued that the United Nations, a body which was created and controlled by the colonial powers (the United States and Western European countries), had no right to grant the Zionists any portion of their territory.

**Chapter 3: Under the Cold War: the 1956 Sinai–Suez War**

1. Israel was considered the primary threat to the Arab states; hence, all Arab nations were urged to unite and place all their military, economic, political, and social resources under a single unified Arab command.
2. Israel’s “true nature” was soon to be defined as part of the neocolonial influence in the region – a depiction seen as confirmed by the assistance that Israel was attracting from Britain and France, the former colonial powers.

**Chapter 4: The 1967 War: The Victory and the “Naksa”**

1. During the run-up to the June 1967 crisis and War the Arab narrative continued unchanged from the earlier periods of the 1948 War and the 1956 Suez–Sinai War. Thus, the Arab narrative continued to view Israel as a band of gangsters and conspirators who were manipulated by the world imperial powers.
2. Israeli policies confirmed Arab views of Israel as an expansionist state. It was during this period that the nuclear issue entered the Arab narrative for the first time.
3. Arab narrative called for all-Arab efforts to support the Palestinian cause and to build capacity for the inevitable confrontation with Israel.

**Chapter 5: From Limited War to Limited Accommodation**

1. While Syria and Egypt cooperated during the run-up and the opening phases of the 1973 October War, through most of this period these countries developed competing narratives about their role, particularly regarding the Arab–Israeli conflict.
2. In both countries’ view, the results of the 1967 war could not be reversed except through the use of force and the reconstituting of the balance of power in the region which had become highly “unbalanced” as a result of the Arab defeat in the war.

**Chapter 6: Camp David and the Lebanon War**

1. The Arab narrative underwent drastic transformations in the period 1975–86.
2. In fact, there were two main Arab narratives during this period: one stressed negotiations and diplomacy as the most promising path toward a resolution of the Arab–Israeli conflict while the second advocated the continuation of the “armed struggle” against Israel.
3. In reality, the Arab world was angry that Egypt had opted for peace and in doing so further weakened the Arab coalition.

**Chapter 7: From the First Intifada to Madrid and Oslo**

1. The Arab world saw itself as supporting the First Intifada as a mode of resistance and resurrection of the Palestinian cause in the aftermath of what seemed to have been failures – failure of Egypt’s efforts to advance that cause in the framework of the Autonomy Talks of the early 1980s, failure of the Fahd and Reagan plans, and failure of the PLO to leverage its 1988 acceptance of the two-state solution – the latter having taken place well after the Intifada was already under way.
2. To the Arab side it seemed clear that the signing of the Oslo Accords and the associated mutual recognition of Israel and the PLO would open the door for Jordan to be the second Arab country to sign a peace treaty with Israel.

**Chapter 8: Failures of Implementation of the Madrid Conference**

1. Different Arab states had developed diverse, competing and often conflicting narratives about this phase of the Arab–Israeli conflict.
2. Particularly divergent were Egypt’s views regarding the multilateral track of the Madrid process and those of Jordan, Saudi Arabia, and some of the smaller Gulf States regarding the same developments.

**Chapter 9: Oslo’s State-building and Peacemaking**

1. The broader Arab narrative regarding Palestinian–Israeli bilateral relations during this period was similar to that of the Palestinians.
2. Israeli arguments were understood as transparent attempts to justify the continuation of the occupation. The results of the 1996 Israeli elections, returning a right-wing coalition to power, were read in different Arab capitals as exposing Israel’s “true face.”
3. At the same time the Arab states’ narrative during this period was that they need not get involved in the detailed implementation of Oslo because the Palestinians were now finally representing their own interests and managing their own affairs with a variety of international actors.

**Chapter 10: The Failure of Permanent Status Negotiations**

1. The Arab world observed closely the convening of the Camp David summit.
2. However, key Arab states, such as Egypt, Jordan, and Saudi Arabia, complained that they were kept in the dark regarding the various aspects and dimensions of the permanent status negotiations.
3. Despite these reservations, Arab countries – and especially Egypt – viewed the Camp David talks as having achieved considerable progress.
4. From the Arab states’ standpoint, however, the eruption of the Second Intifada in late September 2000 was a major setback for the efforts to capitalize on the progress made at Camp David.

**Chapter 11: The Second Intifada**

1. The broader Arab world’s narrative regarding the Second Intifada was not very different from that subscribed to by the Palestinians.
2. The Arab publics viewed Sharon’s visit to al-Haram al-Sharif as a blatant insult to Muslim shrines, thus justifying the Palestinian reaction.
3. Following Sharon’s ascent to power in early 2001 the Arab street regarded the Israeli prime minister as responsible for the escalation of the Intifada – an assessment based on Sharon’s image in Arab countries as a warmonger and a bloodthirsty leader.
4. Accordingly, the Intifada was seen as revealing “the true face of Sharon,” leading to a litany of Arab complaints about his leadership as well as about “the real face of Israel” as basically an aggressive state.

**Chapter 12: From the Second Lebanon War to the Arab Awakening**

1. The Arab narrative of developments in this period was more sophisticated, complicated and nuanced than at any previous period of the Arab–Israeli conflict.
2. The general rise in the level of education and the growth of civil society and political pluralism in some of the Arab states, empowered Arab public opinion.
3. While the specific narrative of some Arab states – notably Syria, Yemen and Algeria – continued to see Israel as a colonial enterprise, other countries now adopted a somewhat different narrative.
4. Without abandoning the colonial perspective, this more nuanced narrative was also critical of Palestinian internal divisions and infighting, especially after Hamas’s violent takeover of Gaza in June 2007.