

**Why Blame Israel?**  
**The Facts Behind the Headlines**  
**Neill Lochery**  
**Icon Books (2004)**

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### **A provocative new history of a troubled country at the centre of the world stage.**

For a surprising number of people, Israel has become a pariah state, a threat to world - not just regional - peace and security. Israel gets the blame for half a century of Middle Eastern violence, for inciting Islamic-based terrorism throughout the world, and for stealing land whose historical right of ownership is at best contentious. This book examines the true history of the conflict and asks what could inspire such a caricature, and whether any truth lies behind it. Should Israel shoulder this blame, or are the realities of the conflict far more complex? And how can a geographically tiny state of only 6.5 million people be thought to have such a profound effect on world politics?

This is the first up-to-date, detailed account of the history of the state of Israel, and the resulting Arab-Israeli conflict, from an author who comes from outside the fray.

Neill Lochery uses key events in Israel's history to present a compelling new set of arguments that challenge much of the accepted conventional wisdom on the Jewish state. Beginning with the failed peacemaking attempts of the 1990s, Lochery retraces the roots of the current crisis in the Middle East and looks at the lessons that need to be learnt from the past if Israel and its neighbours are going to peacefully co-exist.

This book is required reading, both for those who wish to understand the essentials of the Middle East crisis, and for those who are looking for deeper answers to the complex questions that surround Israel and its enemies.

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Neill has written numerous scholarly articles and two scholarly books, *The Israeli Labour Party* and *The Difficult Road to Peace*, as well as filing weekly background pieces for UPI, *The Scotsman*, *the National Post*, the *Chicago Sun-Times* and the *Jerusalem Post*, among others.

## Amazon reviews

There are so many inaccuracies and downright falsehoods in this book, it is hard to know where to start. First thing to note is the authors overt Israeli sympathies, which can be judged from a cursory glance at his CV.

The level of criticism he directs at Palestinian terrorism whilst virtually ignoring Zionist terrorism is laughable. Also in chapter 2 entitled 'Birth of a State' he neglects to go into the legalities surrounding the establishment of the Israeli state. John Quigley has written an excellent analysis of these 'uncomfortable truths' in his book called 'The Case For Palestine , An International Law Perspective', which actually demonstrates the partitioning of Palestine and the UN vote itself were both illegal and immoral. Lochery, for obvious reasons, doesn't touch on this. The level of disingenuous discourse in this book is superbly complimented by one of the favourable reviewers of this book recommending readers to read "From Time Immemorial; The Origins of the Arab-Jewish Conflict Over Palestine" by Joan Peters. This fraud of a work by Peters was comprehensively demolished and shown to be fiction by Prof Norman Finkelstein in his superior 'Image and Reality'. If you are truly interested in the Facts Behind The Headlines, I suggest you pick up Prof Finkelsteins book, as well as Quigley's and Colin Chapman's 'Whose Promised Land'.

This book of Lochery's is pro-Israel propaganda dressed up as unbiased analysis. Best avoided for serious students of the conflict, though it does have some merit in analysing propaganda and thinking of the Pro-Israel side of the debate.

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For someone that has read very little on this conflict, this book may appear to be un-biased as in many cases he does state the positions of both sides and weigh up the evidence..... always (and often, to my mind, quite fairly) on balance favouring the Israeli position. Hardly a surprise given his affiliations. However, there are many issues that remain undiscussed because any reasonable analysis of them could only harm his case. For example, much effort is expended in (understandable) righteous denunciations of Palestinian terrorist atrocities, but the terrorist tactics of Begin and Shamir in the Stern Gang days are glossed over and in no way renounced. Also, the startling fact that Israel, in a traditional divide and rule fashion, actually nurtured and funded the reviled Hamas as a counterweight to the PLO is not even mentioned. One can only assume that acknowledging such facts would significantly reduce the stature of the authors high horse (and it is inconceivable that he wouldn't know about the real story of the rise of Hamas, as the original report was from UPI.... who Dr Lochery also writes for).

As with most disputes, the battle lines are drawn along the actual language that the two sides choose to use and he, unfailingly, uses that of the Israeli side. For example (and I hardly no where to start here), the careful use of quotation marks demonstrate his tacit endorsement of the murder of Palestinian children by Israeli F16s: "At the centre of much of Europe's beef with Israel was the policy of targeted assassinations or 'extra-judicial killings'". Israel only responds to force and is never the aggressor: "Many [Europeans] used phrases such as 'cycles of violence' - thus giving credibility to the argument that Israeli responses to violence were no better than the original attacks". He also illustrates his complete lack of understanding of the concept of democracy: Bush will fight the Palestinian corner "with the proviso that a Palestinian state is both democratic and not led by Yasser Arafat". If you fail to see any irony here, you will probably think the book fantastic.

Towards the end of the book, all pretences of neutrality seem to evaporate as the author launches into a full blown reactionary rant about the need for a "a return to a more Hobbesian approach of the absolute sovereign". He speaks of the necessity of "pre-emptive strikes against terrorists and their supporters" and that "it is vital not to enter into negotiations with terrorist groups". Also "Israel needs more coherent and aggressive strategies for dealing with schoolyard bullies". So, in a supposedly balanced book, surely there must be some condemnation of the crimes against humanity committed by Israel over the years, such as at Khiam in Lebanon for example? Or perhaps the acknowledgement that, under international law, the Palestinians have every right to make armed attacks on Israeli soldiers within the occupied territories? Actually, no, but then Dr Lochery's brief was obviously to create a piece of not so subtle propaganda, not to provide a scrupulous examination of all the relevant facts.

All that said, despite my disappointment at the (admittedly stupid, given the book's title) lack of even-handedness, it was an interesting book in some respects and it does successfully lead one to a better understanding of the Israeli mind-set. Many on the left that unhesitatingly condemn Israel often do not acknowledge that the Jewish people have had to fight for all they have, have resisted multiple Arab invasions and still face serious threats to their very existence. However, as others may point out, the crimes of Israel and their tactics in refusing to settle on even a return to pre-1967 borders could hasten a serious regional conflagration with unpredictable consequences and ensure that, should the boot ever find its way onto the other foot, their annihilation would be ensured.