

Geopolitical Perspectives on Khalidi's Hundred Years' War on Palestine*

*Note: "Hundred Years' War on Palestine" by Rashid Khalidi, 336 Pages, Published: January 26, 2021, ISBN: 978-1250787651, Publisher: Picador Paper; Reprint Edition, Paperback.

Khalidi'nin "Filistin'e Karşı Yüz Yıllık Savaş" Eseri Üzerine Jeopolitik Perspektifler

ABSTRACT

This review examines Rashid Khalidi's The Hundred Years' War on Palestine through the lens of political geography and territorial conflict studies. Khalidi's analysis provides a spatial and historical account of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, exploring interactions among nationalism, territorial governance, and geopolitical relationships. His work discusses how territorial disputes evolve as dynamic processes shaped by historical contexts and political decisions. This review highlights the methodological strengths of Khalidi's spatially informed approach and explores its relevance to broader discussions of sovereignty, territorial management, and conflict resolution in contested regions globally.

Keywords: Political geography, Israeli-Palestinian conflict, nationalism and identity, spatial dynamics, territorial disputes.

ÖZ

Bu inceleme, Rashid Khalidi'nin "Filistin'e Karşı Yüz Yıllık Savaş" adlı eserini, siyasi coğrafya ve bölgesel çatışmalar çalışmaları çerçevesinde ele almaktadır. Khalidi'nin analizi, İsrail-Filistin çatışmasını mekânsal ve tarihsel bir perspektiften değerlendirerek milliyetçilik, toprak yönetimi ve jeopolitik ilişkiler arasındaki etkileşimleri irdelemektedir. Eserde, toprak anlaşmazlıklarının tarihsel bağlamlar ve siyasi kararlarla şekillenen dinamik süreçler olarak nasıl evrildiği ele alınmaktadır. Bu inceleme, Khalidi'nin mekâna dayalı yaklaşımının yöntemsel katkılarını vurgulamakta ve bu yaklaşımın egemenlik, toprak yönetimi ve çatışma çözümü gibi küresel ölçekte tartışılan konulara olan katkılarını değerlendirmektedir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Siyasi coğrafya, İsrail-Filistin çatışması, milliyetçilik ve kimlik, mekânsal dinamikler, toprak ihtilafları.

Introduction

To understand protracted territorial conflicts, one must go beyond diplomatic narratives and examine closely the spatial and geopolitical dimensions underlying these disputes. The Israeli-Palestinian conflict illustrates how land administration practices, settler colonial history and geopolitical influences shape ongoing sovereignty struggles (Khalidi, 2017; Regan, 2020; Pérez, 2023). Rashid Khalidi's book "The Hundred Years' War for Palestine" provides a historically detailed and geographically contextualized examination of this ongoing conflict by analyzing territorial disputes, national identity formation, and the role of external interventions (Khalidi, 2017; Regan, 2020).

Palestine is geographically located in the eastern Mediterranean and is characterized by diverse landscapes, including coastal plains, the central highlands, and the Jordan Valley (Figure 1), making it strategically significant and contested over time (Blanchard, 1918; Lewis, 1980). This diverse geography has profoundly influenced historical settlement patterns, political boundaries and the distribution of resources, further exacerbating territorial disputes (Harker, 2010; Griffiths, 2022).

In this article, Khalidi's analysis is critically reviewed using a comparative geopolitical framework. It extends the discussion to global territorial conflicts such as those in Kashmir, Western Sahara and the South China Sea. Methodologically, this study uses comparative analysis to demonstrate how spatial fragmentation, securitization and settlement expansion serve as mechanisms of territorial control in different geopolitical contexts (Abu Hatoum, 2021; Griffiths, 2022). While Khalidi emphasizes Palestinian resistance as an assertion of spatial sovereignty (Khalidi, 2017; Pérez, 2023), this study broadens the scope and shows that territorial conflicts are not just political crises but structured spatial processes underpinned by infrastructure development, economic dependencies and international geopolitical alliances (Abu Hatoum, 2021).

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Figure 1
Location Map of the Work Area: Palestine.



By placing the Palestinian case in a broader comparative geopolitical context, this work contributes to fields such as political geography, territorial governance and conflict studies. It emphasizes the important role that spatial strategies and land competition play in creating and maintaining global power imbalances. It thus offers valuable insights for geography lecturers, instructors, students and geopolitical journalists seeking an unbiased, comprehensive understanding of territorial conflict.

Dissecting Contemporary Warfare

The discourse on contemporary warfare and territorial conflict necessitates an engagement with structural power asymmetries, spatial contestation, and resistance strategies. The 2023–2024 escalation in Gaza, initiated by Hamas's October 7 operation and Israel's subsequent military campaign, underscores how historical territorial disputes manifest in modern geopolitical confrontations. This renewed cycle of violence reinforces the enduring colonial dynamics that Rashid Khalidi critically examines in *Hundred Years' War on Palestine*. His analysis situates the Israeli-Palestinian conflict within a broader historical and geopolitical trajectory, tracing how settler colonial frameworks, strategic territorial expansion, and shifting international alliances have defined Palestinian dispossession and

resistance. His work underscores the role of spatial governance and geopolitical maneuvering, revealing how Palestinian territorial fragmentation is not simply an outcome of military conflict but a long-term process of engineered geopolitical reconfiguration.

The decline of the Ottoman Empire and the subsequent British Mandate (1917–1948) established the conditions for territorial contestation and Zionist settler expansion, a theme Khalidi rigorously interrogates. His work documents how, in the early 20th century, the Zionist movement leveraged British imperial policies to advance territorial claims, while Palestinian national identity evolved in response to the increasing dispossession of land. The Balfour Declaration (1917), which explicitly endorsed the establishment of a Jewish homeland in Palestine, remains a pivotal moment in geopolitical discourse. As Khalidi notes, this declaration failed to acknowledge Palestinian political agency, reflecting a colonial logic of territorial reallocation rather than an equitable negotiation over national self-determination. The resulting population and land displacement continued well into the Nakba (1948), the occupation of 1967, and subsequent Israeli territorial policies that have institutionalized spatial segregation and geopolitical fragmentation.

A crucial aspect of Khalidi's analysis concerns the ambiguous role of Arab leadership in the Palestinian struggle. While pan-Arab solidarity is often invoked as a rhetorical tool, regional geopolitics have historically followed pragmatic rather than ideological imperatives. His examination of King Abdullah's collaboration with Zionist militias in the West Bank annexation (Bradshaw, 2012) underscores this strategic realignment, demonstrating that Palestinian territorial claims have often been subordinated to broader regional interests. The more recent Abraham Accords (2020) and Saudi-Israeli normalization overtures further reinforce this trend, reflecting an ongoing recalibration of regional alliances that deprioritizes Palestinian sovereignty in favor of geopolitical pragmatism.

Khalidi's assessment of diplomatic efforts—including the Camp David Accords (1978), Oslo Accords (1993), and Abraham Accords (2020)—challenges the prevailing narrative that these agreements constitute meaningful progress toward Palestinian self-determination. Instead, he argues that they have reinforced the geopolitical fragmentation of Palestinian territories, entrenching a spatial governance structure that limits sovereignty. The Israeli State's approach, shaped by settler colonial frameworks, has been historically defined by gradual territorial expansion under the guise of security policies. Figures like Abba Eban, Golda Meir, and later Benjamin Netanyahu have skillfully navigated Western diplomatic networks to consolidate Israeli territorial claims while marginalizing Palestinian political agency (Klagsbrun, 2017; Siniver, 2015; Stein, 2017). Khalidi's comparative analysis of Palestinian and Israeli leadership strategies highlights the power asymmetry inherent in negotiating territorial legitimacy, exposing the structural disadvantage faced by Palestinian representatives in diplomatic forums.

The suppression of Palestinian resistance is another crucial theme in Khalidi's work, particularly in relation to counterinsurgency strategies and geopolitical containment. The Arab Revolt (1936–1939), which sought to challenge British colonial rule and Zionist expansion, was met with severe repression, facilitated by British forces and Zionist militias (Divine, 2020; Hughes, 2020). This historical episode set a precedent for future counterinsurgency operations, many of which continue to define Israeli military responses to Palestinian resistance movements. The ongoing blockade of Gaza (since 2007) and the intensified 2023–2024 military operations exemplify the continuity of spatial containment strategies, wherein the denial of territorial mobility functions as both a security mechanism and a means of political control.

Khalidi also emphasizes how media narratives and epistemic control shape geopolitical legitimacy. The battle over discourse is central to the territorial conflict, as global perception significantly influences diplomatic responses, foreign policy, and public opinion. As journalist Chris Hedges (2020) and other media analysts argue, the asymmetry in coverage often contributes to the erasure of Palestinian counter-narratives, reinforcing dominant geopolitical framings that cast the conflict in security rather than colonial terms. The 2023–2024 escalation has further highlighted the role of information warfare, with real-time war coverage, algorithmic bias, and social media censorship shaping global discourse. Khalidi's critique of historical erasures remains relevant, as contemporary information warfare continues to serve as a tool for legitimizing territorial claims and suppressing alternative geopolitical readings of the conflict.

By foregrounding territorial contestation, diplomatic asymmetries, counterinsurgency strategies, and media control, Khalidi's work provides an essential framework for understanding the Israeli-Palestinian conflict as an ongoing process of spatial reconfiguration rather than a discrete series of diplomatic or military events. His argument underscores how settler colonialism, geopolitical pragmatism, and territorial governance intersect to perpetuate structural inequalities, challenging the conventional framing of the conflict as a bilateral dispute resolvable through traditional state diplomacy.

Christian Zionism and Geopolitical Narratives

The role of Christian Zionism in shaping the geopolitical landscape of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict extends beyond religious advocacy, embedding itself within colonial, ideological, and territorial frameworks that have long influenced Middle Eastern politics. The intersection of theological doctrine and territorial ambition has historically played a pivotal role in legitimizing Zionist settlement policies, with Christian Zionist movements aligning with broader settler-colonial logics. Khalidi's analysis highlights how external religious and political forces have not merely supported Zionist aspirations but have also shaped the geopolitical realities of Palestinian dispossession.

The historical origins of Christian Zionism trace back to British evangelical movements of the 19th century, particularly those championed by figures such as Lord Shaftesbury. As Donald M.

Lewis (2010) explores in *The Origins of Christian Zionism*, pre-millennial evangelical beliefs—centered on hastening the Second Coming of Christ—provided theological justification for British support of Jewish settlement in Palestine. This alignment, while ostensibly rooted in religious conviction, was also embedded within British imperial strategies, reflecting a broader colonial logic of territorial redistribution. Christian Zionist advocacy, therefore, was not merely a spiritual mission but a geopolitical maneuver, reinforcing British hegemony in the region while advancing settler expansion.

The Balfour Declaration (1917) represents a crucial turning point in this religious-political synthesis, as it formalized British support for a Jewish homeland while excluding any explicit recognition of Palestinian political sovereignty. Khalidi situates 1917 as a pivotal moment in Palestinian history, not only because of the formalization of Zionist settlement aspirations but also due to the embedded role of Christian Zionist ideology in shaping British policy. The influx of Jewish immigrants during early waves of *Aliyah* (beginning in 1882) had already altered the region's demographic and territorial composition, a transformation that was both enabled and encouraged by Christian Zionist narratives that framed the land as divinely ordained for Jewish settlement (Barin, 2014).

A critical paradox within Christian Zionism is its simultaneous support for Zionist territorial expansion and perpetuation of anti-Semitic undercurrents within segments of the Christian right. While advocating for Jewish settlement in Palestine, Christian Zionist theology has often been predicated on apocalyptic eschatology, envisioning Jewish relocation as a precursor to Christ's return rather than an affirmation of Jewish self-determination (Sizer, 2021). This ideological framework underscores how religious narratives, rather than simply facilitating Zionist objectives, have also been deeply intertwined with exclusionary and racialized discourses. The reluctance of the British aristocracy to integrate Jewish individuals within Britain, for example, reflects a broader colonial tendency to relocate perceived "others" rather than embrace them within European nation-states (Masur, 2010).

The contemporary geopolitical influence of Christian Zionism remains substantial, particularly in U.S. foreign policy. The alignment between American evangelical movements and right-wing Israeli policies has reinforced unwavering diplomatic and military support for Israeli territorial expansion, often at the expense of Palestinian sovereignty. This relationship was notably amplified during the Trump administration, with the relocation of the U.S. embassy to Jerusalem (2018) and the broader legitimization of settlement policies under the guise of religious and historical claims. Khalidi's critique of settler-colonial dynamics extends to these modern developments, as Christian Zionist advocacy continues to influence American political discourse and diplomatic strategies in ways that solidify territorial fragmentation and undermine Palestinian self-determination.

By examining Christian Zionism as both a historical and contemporary geopolitical force, Khalidi's analysis contributes to a broader understanding of how religious ideologies intersect

with territorial governance and colonial legacies. This perspective is essential for situating the Israeli-Palestinian conflict within a global framework of ideological interventions, where external religious narratives do not merely serve as rhetorical justifications but actively shape policy, diplomacy, and settlement expansion. Recognizing the territorial implications of Christian Zionist advocacy thus remains crucial for understanding the persistence of settler-colonial structures in Palestine and the enduring geopolitical entanglements that reinforce them.

Opposition, Strategic Alliances, and Evolving Resistance

The historical divergence between religious Judaism and Zionist political nationalism underscores the complexity of early territorial aspirations in Palestine. Many practicing Jews initially opposed Zionist leaders such as Theodor Herzl and Chaim Weizmann, viewing political Zionism as a secular-nationalist movement that diverged from religious teachings on exile and redemption. Herzl's early consideration of Argentina as an alternative homeland reflects the pragmatic, rather than purely ideological, motivations behind Zionist territorial ambitions (Ami, 2023; Farhat, 2020). The eventual selection of Palestine, despite practical alternatives, was driven by both its symbolic significance in Jewish history and the strategic advantages of British support during the Mandate period. The geopolitical maneuvering that facilitated this transition remains relevant in contemporary diplomacy, where territorial negotiations, economic incentives, and regional alliances continue to shape Middle Eastern politics—as evidenced by the proposed debt forgiveness to Egypt in November 2023 as part of broader U.S.-Israeli-Arab negotiations.

The historical contestation over national identity formation extends beyond Jewish nationalism. Khalidi's analysis highlights how Palestinian national identity developed in response to territorial displacement and colonial restructuring, much like how Zionism emerged as a response to European anti-Semitism. The argument that Palestinians lacked a cohesive national identity before the 20th century, frequently cited in Israeli nationalist discourse, mirrors early debates on Jewish nationalism in antiquity, where no singular political entity encapsulated all Jewish communities (Kuzar, 2008; Mendels, 1997; Wieland, 2003). The British Mandate (1917–1948) further entrenched disparities in political development, as British authorities facilitated the institutional growth of Zionist leadership while simultaneously undermining Palestinian political and military organization. The British Empire's arming of Zionist militias and transmission of counterinsurgency techniques—adapted from colonial operations in India and Ireland—illustrates how counterrevolutionary tactics were systematically employed to suppress Palestinian self-determination (Hedges, 2001; Hoffman, 2020; Tal, 2016). This institutional and military asymmetry, established during the Mandate era, laid the foundation for later power imbalances that persist in Israeli-Palestinian dynamics.

Khalidi's critique of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) further underscores the strategic limitations that have historically hindered Palestinian resistance. While the PLO positioned itself as the legitimate representative of Palestinian aspirations, its diplomatic strategy often struggled to engage

effectively with global geopolitical currents beyond the Arab world. The rise of a new generation of Palestinian activists, particularly those proficient in Western political discourse and digital advocacy, marks a significant evolution in resistance strategies. Movements such as Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions (BDS) have emerged as transnational mechanisms of protest, leveraging economic and legal frameworks to challenge Israeli policies (Small & Patterson, 2021; Spitka, 2023).

The evolving nature of diasporic and interfaith alliances also plays a crucial role in contemporary resistance. While older generations of Jewish communities globally maintained strong emotional and political ties to Israel, younger Jewish activists increasingly engage in critical discourse on Zionism and Palestinian rights. This shift coincides with the strengthening of alliances between Israeli right-wing factions and Christian Zionist organizations, which now serve as key political and financial backers of Israeli territorial expansion (Burley & Ross, 2019). This changing landscape has profound implications for the future trajectory of advocacy, resistance, and policy influence.

Khalidi's examination of historical warfare and contemporary military ethics also resonates with broader debates on state violence and accountability. A.C. Grayling's analysis of aerial bombardment in World War II and its classification as a war crime under the 1977 Geneva Convention protocol raises important ethical considerations regarding the use of military force against civilian populations (Grayling, 2007). These debates remain acutely relevant in the 2023–2024 Gaza conflict, where allegations of disproportionate use of force, collective punishment, and violations of international humanitarian law continue to shape global diplomatic responses.

By tracing the continuities between early resistance movements, counterinsurgency strategies, and contemporary advocacy, Khalidi's work provides a historically grounded yet forward-looking assessment of Palestinian resistance. His analysis highlights how territorial contestation, military asymmetries, and shifting political alliances have shaped Palestinian agency, challenging the notion that Palestinian resistance is solely reactive. Instead, he situates it within a broader geopolitical and spatial struggle, where sovereignty, narrative control, and international law remain central battlegrounds.

Historical Analogies and the Ethics of Resistance

The ethical dilemmas surrounding warfare often hinge on the selective application of humanitarian principles, as illustrated by the decision to spare Kyoto from nuclear attack during World War II while proceeding with the bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. This strategic calculus, which weighed cultural significance against mass human casualties, underscores a broader moral paradox in military conflicts—where certain populations or sites are deemed more deserving of preservation than others (Reed, 2019). This logic extends beyond historical case studies into contemporary debates on the legitimacy of military strategies in asymmetric conflicts, including the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

Sven Lindqvist's *A History of Bombing* highlights the disproportionate use of aerial bombardment on non-European populations, tracing how colonial powers historically tested and

normalized extreme military tactics in the Global South before applying them in European theaters (Lindqvist, 2003). This pattern underscores a racialized hierarchy in military ethics, where certain lives are implicitly valued over others within the framework of international law and humanitarian interventionism. Khalidi's analysis positions Israeli military operations in Gaza and the West Bank within this historical continuum, examining how territorial control is reinforced through disproportionate use of force, siege tactics, and infrastructure destruction. The 2023–2024 military campaigns further illustrate the persistence of these colonial-era counterinsurgency strategies, where asymmetrical warfare legitimizes systemic violence under the pretext of national security.

The manipulation of language in justifying military actions plays a crucial role in shaping public perception. Orwellian concepts such as doublethink and euphemism have been frequently employed in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, where acts of territorial expansion, military occupation, and civilian displacement are reframed as "security measures" or "counterterrorism operations." This linguistic obfuscation not only simplifies highly complex geopolitical realities but also entrenches binary moral narratives that frame Palestinian resistance as inherently illegitimate while absolving Israeli state actions from critical scrutiny.

Khalidi's engagement with historical resistance movements situates Palestinian struggles within a broader anti-colonial tradition, drawing comparisons to the Haitian Uprising and the Nat Turner Rebellion. Both historical cases highlight the paradox of colonial powers espousing Enlightenment ideals of liberty and equality while denying them to the populations they subjugate. C.L.R. James's *The Black Jacobins* illustrates how the oppressed have often been forced to reconcile revolutionary ideals with the brutal realities of state repression, a dynamic that remains central to Palestinian resistance narratives (Fick, 2017).

The complexity of violent resistance and its ethical justifications is a recurrent theme in Khalidi's work. His acknowledgment of Hamas's tactics, including attacks against civilians, raises critical questions about the strategic logic and moral boundaries of resistance movements. His comparison with Michael Collins and the Irish Republican Army (IRA) underscores the reality that armed insurgency does not guarantee political legitimacy or inclusion within formal state structures (Lynch, 2021). The historical trajectory of Palestinian resistance reveals a persistent struggle for political agency, where periodic military confrontations, diplomatic negotiations, and grassroots mobilization have all intersected without producing a definitive resolution.

By delineating six pivotal periods that have shaped the contemporary Israeli-Palestinian conflict, Khalidi provides a historical framework for understanding the persistence of territorial contestation, military occupation, and shifting political alliances. His analysis challenges simplified Western narratives that reduce the conflict to a binary struggle between democracy and terrorism, instead situating it within a long-term colonial and

postcolonial power dynamic. This historical perspective remains critical for interpreting both contemporary escalations and future possibilities for political transformation in the region.

Conclusion

The Israeli-Palestinian conflict illustrates the complexity of territorial governance characterized by sovereignty, spatial control and geopolitical dynamics (Agnew, 1989). Rashid Khalidi's "The Hundred Year War for Palestine" provides an important analysis of the historical interplay between settler colonialism, regional alliances and external interventions. Alternative scholarly views also enrich the discourse: Newman (2010) highlighted conflict resolution approaches and geopolitical knowledge production; Al-Taher and Younes (2023) introduced critical feminist perspectives on geopolitics and ethnicity; Masalha (2018) emphasized decolonizing methods through oral traditions; and Harker (2011) highlighted the social and familial dimensions of spatial politics.

The geography of Palestine, characterized by the coastal plains, the central highlands and the Jordan Valley, plays an important role in territorial disputes and influences settlement patterns, resource distribution and spatial strategies (Blanchard, 1918; Harker, 2010; Lewis, 1980). Similar spatial processes occur worldwide in conflicts such as those in Kashmir, Western Sahara and the South China Sea, where territorial fragmentation and spatial governance reinforce power asymmetries.

Future research in political geography should incorporate geospatial methods, historical cartography, and analyses of urban restructuring to clarify how territorial control and resistance evolve. A comprehensive understanding of spatial dimensions is crucial for policy makers and scholars dealing with territorial conflicts in Palestine and in comparable geopolitical contexts worldwide.

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