

Book review: SEPARATE AND UNEQUAL: The Inside Story of Israeli Rule in  
East Jerusalem

by Amir Cheshin, Bill Hutman and Avi Melamed. Cambridge, Mass., Harvard  
University Press. 251 pp. \$27.95.

Reviewed by [Gerald M. Steinberg](#)

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In a span of 3000 years of history, it is naive to think that one can take a tiny slice of thirty years and analyze outside of any historical context. No period in the history of this holiest of cities is disconnected from what came before and what may come after, just as no quarter or neighborhood is isolated from its neighbors.

By failing to consider the impact of the Arab occupation of Jerusalem's Old City from 1948 to 1967, and the broader history of the conflict, the authors of this book cannot hope to explain Israeli policy in this city.

When Teddy Kollek inherited responsibility for all of Jerusalem in 1967, Israelis and Jews discovered that the ancient synagogues, schools and cemeteries in the Old City had been systematically destroyed and desecrated during the occupation. The Palestinian residents fully expected that the Jews would exact revenge, treating their building in the same way, as has been the practice for millennia.

Yet, the Israeli leaders - Eshkol, Dayan and Kollek in particular - did not seek revenge. Their first goal was to maintain the unity of the city, and to insure that Jewish Jerusalem would never be desecrated or closed again. They ensured that the Moslem holy sites, including Al Aksa and the Dome of the Rock, would remain open and controlled by the Moslem authorities. When radical Jewish groups sought to establish a presence on the Temple Mount, they were stopped by the Israeli authorities. Considering the explosive potential in this city, the relatively peaceful coexistence is remarkable, particularly when compared with Belfast, Sarajevo, or Washington DC. The intifada and the waves of suicide bombings were not linked to Jerusalem, per se, but part of broader Palestinian policies.

Despite Cheshin, Hutman, and Melamed's assertion that Israeli policies in Jerusalem have failed, the reality is that Kollek's approach, insuring Jewish control while maintaining stability, were remarkably successful. Without these policies, the "corpus separatum" that the Palestinians and Europeans seek for Jerusalem would be more than a slogan. Although the barbed wire and walls

have been removed, most Jewish and Arab residents chose to maintain their separate identities and community institutions.

Rather than explaining this voluntary division, *Separate and Unequal* is a polemic designed to "prove" that the Arab residents suffer from systematic discrimination. The title reminds the uniformed reader of American racism - and the use of the "separate but equal" theme to justify segregation in school and other public institutions. Kollek and his associates (except for Cheshin and Melamed, who made atonement after leaving their positions in the Jerusalem municipality) are portrayed as villains.

However, the Middle East is not America, the Arabs were not slaves, and the facts do not support such claims. It is true that after over 30 years of Israel control, the Palestinian residents of Jerusalem have lower standards of living, and do not enjoy the same level of services, compared to the Jewish residents. But if the authors (and editors of Harvard University Press) were honest, they would have noted that most Palestinians reject Israeli citizenship and refuse to cooperate with government institutions. Kollek's redevelopment plans for run-down Arab neighborhoods such as Wadi Joz were unrealized because the Palestinians rejected all forms of cooperation with the Israeli government. Efforts to tear down this neighborhood would have been met with violent protests and UN condemnations.

While the Jews of Jerusalem demanded better services, and paid higher taxes, the Palestinians boycotted City Hall. Illegal building continued everywhere in Arab sectors of East Jerusalem, secure in the knowledge that the political costs of demolition would be not worth the benefits. Yet, as the authors note, despite the "discrimination", the Palestinian population of Jerusalem grew from 68,000 in 1967 to 171,000 in 1996. It seems that the balance sheet is not entirely one-sided.

While condemning extrapolation of land near Arab villages on the outskirts of the city, they failed to note that democratic governments around the world use "the right of eminent domain" to acquire land for public projects. Had the authors compared the policies and allocations for Haredi and Arab neighborhoods, they would probably have found that income - not ethnic group - is the prime factor in determining budgetary allocations. If there is systematic and deliberate discrimination in Jerusalem, it goes far beyond the Arab sector.

Behind the facade of altruism, Cheshin et al have a political objective. They believe that by raising their standard of living, Israel can make Jerusalem's

Palestinian population more inclined to compromise in "permanent status" negotiations on the city's future. Citing former GSS head Yaakov Peri, the authors of this book argue that the more the Arabs of Jerusalem have to lose, the less they will resort to violence. This is not the case for Yugoslavia, and it is not true in the Middle East.

For most of its residents, Jerusalem is important for religious, historical, and emotional reasons. Salaries and services in Tel Aviv are far above those of Jerusalem, but few Jewish Jerusalemites leave for this reason. Similarly, no amount of investment in municipal projects or housing will change the Palestinian goal of making Jerusalem their capital, and perhaps one day, restoring the 1948 dividing line and driving the Jews out again. Despite all of their experience and expertise, the authors miss the obvious point -political power, not city projects, is the key to understanding Jerusalem past, and also its future. Bitter experience has shown that if stability and coexistence are to be extended, with or without a "permanent status agreement", the balance of power must be maintained.