Daniel Jeffrey[1]
University of Exeter

The Establishment of Israel into the De-Facto 1949 Borders: The Effect of Public and Private Discursive Spheres and the 1947-1949 Wars

Introduction

Last year (2008) marked the sixtieth anniversary of the creation of Israel. The circumstances surrounding its conception have remained contentious and the focal point of fierce political, academic and popular debate, with Palestinians and their supporters labelling it al-Nakba (the catastrophe), and pro-Israelis regarding it as the achievement of 'Independent Statehood for their rightful homeland', as well as an achievement comparable to David defeating Goliath. In order to fully appreciate and understand the issues that are involved with this highly complex situation and its origins one must consider the reasons and motivation for its triggers.

Due to the complex history of this period the paper is structured thematically rather than chronologically. These themes can be broadly described as the *Public Sphere Discursive Logic*; the *Private Discursive Sphere*; and the *1948-9 War and Intra-Arab State Politics*. The first theme shall explore the discursive tactics that united the Jewish diaspora across Europe and elsewhere, which in turn led to the concept of, and movement for, a Jewish state to be more than mere idealistic rhetoric and indeed to become an almost tangible right. The second theme will examine how the Yishuv,[2] who used their influence and power to manipulate and mould the interests of the great powers of the time so as to gain the physical land needed to fulfil the obligations and promises that were set out in the public sphere. In this section the author will also examine the rational creation of institutions that allowed the Yishuv to expand into Eretz-Israel,[3] whilst using the British as a legal, political and security shield. The final theme will address why the Arab states were not

---

[1] Daniel Jeffrey's (jeffery1985@hotmail.co.uk) academic interests primarily include the Palestinian/Israeli conflict, inter and intra relations across the Levant, the Iraqi insurgency, counter-terrorism & insurgency, radicalisation, suicide bombing tactics, identity politics and Middle East and American relations. He holds a qualifying LLB law degree (2007) and a Master of Arts in International Relations of the Middle East (2008) from the University of Exeter, and was awarded the Nazih Ayubi Memorial Prize in 2008 for outstanding dissertation in Middle East Politics.

[2] Yishuv refers to the body of Jewish settlers who were present in the Holy Land prior to the establishment of the state of Israel in 1948.

[3] The area, according to the Hebrew Bible, that was given by God to the descendents of Abraham.

able to counter the creation of Israel, which ultimately led to their defeat in the 1948 War. The paper concludes with the contention that one of the underlying core factors that provided the impetus for the creation of Israel was the effect of an ethical and legal scotoma or blind-spot which permeated the conscience of the Western states, and helped to justify the corrosion of the indigenous Palestinians' rights. The Zionist movement accomplished this through discursive manipulation in both the public and private sector which had the effect of garnering political support, legal justification and vital material assistance, without which the ambition of its cause could not have been realized.

The Public Sphere Discursive Logic

The Zionist movement employed a sophisticated and highly effective discursive policy throughout their campaign for a homeland (circa 1882-1949) in order to garner public support. One aspect of this policy was the use of reflexive traditionalisation, an appeal to the diaspora which was intended to evoke empathy within non-Jewish communities, especially in the post-Second World War period. [4] The aim was to strengthen support for their cause by solidifying the identity of the Jewish diaspora through a process of homogenisation comparable with that outlined by Rae, the greatest difference being that the Zionist movement, although a non-state actor, nevertheless used a 'number of … strategies that state-builders have employed to signify the unity of their state' such as 'securing mass identity to accompany and bolster the incipient state'.[5] The Zionist movement invoked a sense of 'Jewish Identity' through 'the articulation and rearticulating of signifying elements' that transcended borders, language, and material backgrounds. [6] They were able to succeed in invoking this notion by the instigation of a process of reflexive traditionalisation, whereby a selective, altered, 'radicalized … or created anew' interpretation of identity symbols and/or traditions such as 'ancestral homelands, unique suffering … and acts of betrayal' are articulated which in turn 'strengthens [the] discourses that reaffirm the identity of one's own side'.[7] It was after this process of reflexive traditionalisation had occurred that the Zionist discursive practices ceased being mere rhetoric and became symbolic truth and reasoned discursive logic.

[4] For greater discussion on this theoretical position see John. S. Dryzek, *Deliberative Global Politics* (London: Polity, 2006).

[5] Dryzek, *Deliberative Global Politics*, p. 55; H. Rae, *State Identities and the Homogenization of Peoples* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002).

[6] D. Howarth and Y. Stavrakakis, *Introducing Discourse Theory and Political Analysis* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000).

[7] Dryzek, *Deliberative Global Politics*, pp. 21, 30.

This process was formed around what Laclau and Mouffe describe as nodal points, which signify, and reinforce 'a particular system of meaning'.[8] These nodal points primarily consisted of 'the Jewish State', acting as the main theme throughout the Zionist discourse. [9] This nodal point was fleshed out and justified to the target audience with 'signifiers' and 'moments' that were symbolic to Jewish identity and with represented themes such as repression, assimilation of identity, vulnerability and an inherent right of the Jewish population to the land of Israel.[10] For example:

> '… we have met here to lay the foundation-stone of the house that will some day shelter the Jewish people'[11]

> '… to restore to the Jews the political independence they have been deprived of for these two thousand years'[12]

> '… a land without people for a people without a land'[13]

The implication of these statements is centred around the notion of the Jewish State even though their justification is different. This articulation led the Jewish population who adhered to it to undergo a process of reflexive traditionalisation, as the ideas of inherent rights, states-ship and belonging by virtue of being Jewish were planted into the psyche of the Jewish population. These sentiments, combined with the political climate of the time, including the notion that Jewish communities were being subjected to severe discrimination, helped to cement Jewish identity and underlined that 'once established, national identities can be extraordinarily persistent even in the face of change'.[14]

With a potentially unified Jewry in place, the Zionist public discourse machine had the foundation for the fulfilment of its goal, however, as Dryzek aptly states, 'those

---

[8] Howarth and Stavrakakis, *Introducing Discourse Theory*, p.11.

[9] See for example quotes made by influential Zionists such as Ben-Gurion in S. Teveth, *Ben Gurion and the Palestinian Arabs From Peace to War* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985), p.66; T. Herzl, *The Jewish State 1896*, (New York: Dover Publications 1988) also speeches made by Herzl, Sharett, Weizmann, et al, available at <http://www.palestineremembered.com/Acre/Famous-Zionist-Quotes/Story638.html> [accessed 30 May 2008].

[10] S.R. Johnson, *Historical Fictions and Hellenistic Jewish Identity* (California: University of California Press, 2005).

[11] T. Hezl at the First Zionist Congress Convention in Bessel 1987. For a plethora of similar quotes and speeches visit <http://www.palestineremembered.com/Acre/Famous-Zionist-Quotes/Story638.html> and <http://www.zionism-israel.com/zionist_quotes.htm> [accessed 30 May 2008].

[12] V. Dubnow -October 1882, <www.palestineremembered.com/Acre/Famous-ZionistQuotes.html> [accessed 30 May 2008].

[13] Israel Zwangwill-*The Return to Palestine*-1901, <www.palestineremembered.com/Acre/Famous-ZionistQuotes.html> [accessed 30 May 2008].

[14] M. Moore, 'Beyond the Cultural Argument for Liberal Nationalism', *Critical Review of International Social and Political Philosophy 2* (1999), pp. 26-47.

subscribing to national identity are normally only satisfied if they have a state to go along with it - or at least some formal recognition of that aspiration'.[15] Even though the first Aliyahs (periods of immigration to Israel before it became a state) did not see a vast migration, the ideational seeds had been sewn to facilitate such a development.[16] What was needed were material factors to be present in order to compel these ideational factors. The Zionist public discursive logic tactic started to bring the Jewish population closer to being defined as having a national identity with a:

> well demarcated and bounded territory, with which the … 'national' identity involves some sort of political community, however tenuous. A political community… implies at least some common institutions and a single code of rights and duties for all the members of the community. It … suggests a definite social space members identify and to which they feel they belong.[17]

Measured against these criteria, the Zionist movement had achieved significant progress towards achieving its aims; it had fixed the 'social space' (as identity was based on the virtue of being a Jew); delineated the 'bounded territory' (Israel), to which the 'members identify' (the "historical homeland" of the Jews); established 'common institutions' (World Zionist Organization, for example); and developed a 'code of rights and duties' (the inherent right of Jews to inhabit Israel and their duty to do so). What remained was for the Zionist cause to try and set the conditions needed in order to make the Jewish community 'feel they belong', which is where the notion of the Private Sphere Discourse becomes critically important.

The Private Sphere Discourse

Idealism played a secondary role in this discursive sphere to material and strategic logic, employing, as it did, such methods as manipulative diplomacy within the corridors of international power.[18] At the Versailles conference following the end of the First World War it became obvious that there was a substantial disparity of influence and institutional representation between the Zionist cause and that of the Palestinian Arabs. It is argued that the organisational institutions and structures put in place not only served to lay the foundations of a state, but also led to the disintegration of the economy and the societal

---

[15] Dryzek, *Deliberative Global Politics*, p. 36.

[16] Indeed it only grew by 1% from 1900-1922. M. Gilbert, W. Morrow, *Israel: A History* (London: Turner Books, 1998), p. 5.

[17] A. Smith, *National Identity* (London: Penguin Books, 1991), p. 9.

[18] Ideational factors were still important in the early stages especially with regards characters such as Lord Rothschild. Dryzek's theory of instrumental rationality seeks to explain this phenomenon. Dryzek, *Deliberative Global Politics*, pp. 113-7; L. Tribe, 'Technology Assessment and the Fourth Discontinuity: The Limits of Instrumental Rationality', *Southern California Law Review*, 46 (1973), pp. 617-60.

structures of the indigenous Palestinian population through a process of forced economic modernisation which, in part, explains the 1948 exodus. The theory of rational choice in conjunction with Dryzek's theory of instrumental rationality are used here to explain how premeditated calculations were set in place to 'adapt to incentives and opportunities, and pursue means that are logically connected to their ends'.[19]

The most significant result arising from the events that befell Palestine at this time was the emergence of the Zionist movement itself which, although a non-state actor, nevertheless managed to transform 'Arab Palestine … into Jewish Israel'.[20] Before assessing the Zionist discursive strategy, however, it is prudent to outline the themes and dogma of Zionism as an ideology in order to put Zionist discursive strategy and its causational factors into context and therefore understand it in depth. Political Zionism, as an entity was, 'the national movement for the return of the Jewish people to their homeland and the resumption of Jewish sovereignty in the Land of Israel'.[21] Defined as a recidivist movement, it was conceived in the nineteenth century as a response to the erosion of Jewish identity largely through oppressive, anti-Semitic policies practiced by, and fostered within, a number of European states including France, Ukraine, and Russia.[22] Morris argues that 'Zionism was a colonizing … expansionist ideology and movement' that was 'in practice necessarily and elementally expansionist'[23] as well as 'a political system concerned only for the welfare of Jews'.[24] Zionism based its legitimacy on the Torah and stated that it was the Aliyahs (1882-1903, 1904-14, 1919-23, 1924-9, 1929-39 and 1933-48 [the illegal Aliyah]), as well as the concept of the return to the rightful home of Israel, that was legitimized and meant that the prophecy, 'that the return of the Jews to Zion would only happen once the Messiah returned', could be set aside.

---

[19] M. M. Hafez, Rationality, Culture and Structure in the Making of Suicide Bombers, Studies in Conflict and Terrorism (London: Routledge, 2006) p. 166.

[20] M. Adams, 'What Went Wrong in Palestine', Journal of Palestinian Studies, 18 (1988), p. 81.

[21] 'A Definition of Zionism-Jewish Virtual Library', The American-Israeli Cooperative Enterprise (2008).

[22] Israel Shahak, 'Zionism as a Recidivist Movement: Origin of its Separatist Aims' in Anti-Zionism: Analytical Reflections, ed. by R. Tekiner, S. Abed-Rabbo, N. Mevinsky (Brattleboro, VT: Amana Books, 1989).

[23] Benny Morris, Righteous Victims: A History of the Zionist-Arab Conflict, 1881-1999, (New York: Vintage, 2001). See also Noam Chomsky, Peace in the Middle East? Reflections on Justice and Nationhood (New York: Vintage Books, 1974) and Maxime Rodinson, Israel: A Colonial Settler-State? (New York: Harmondsworth, 1973).

[24] Kathleen Christison, Review of Books, 1989) in Review: Critique of Zionism, Journal of Palestine Studies, 18 (1989), pp. 138-40; Benny Morris, Righteous Victims: A History of the Zionist-Arab Conflict, 1881-1999, (New York: Vintage, 2001). See also Chomsky, Peace in the Middle East? Reflections; Maxime Rodinson, Israel: A Colonial Settler-State? (New York: Harmondsworth, 1973).

With the dawn of the twentieth century the Zionist movement began to expand and institutionalize in earnest. To secure the Zionist goal of a Jewish state there needed to be a discursive policy and tactic in place that affected those in power. This was accomplished via a process of instrumental rationality whereby 'actors ask "Does action X help constitute a world that I find attractive?" rather than 'Does action X help achieve goal Y within the context of the world as it is?'. Essentially the Zionists influenced the British to behave with an 'instrumental focus' at the expense of constitutive reasoning, which led them to gain 'immediate goals' pertinent to their own immediate national interests, such as the preservation of alliances during the First World War and the pursuance of imperial interests, as well as maintaining influence in the Middle East, while at the same time reducing the influence of France in the region.[25] As Yapp observes, 'the requirements of a Near Eastern strategy may explain the British desire to control Palestine [but] they cannot explain the linking of control to support for Zionism, for the Zionist program would make the government of Palestine much more difficult'.[26] What is implied here is that, although the ends were clear and rational, the means by which they were attempted were clouded by an instrumental focus upon short-term gains. The question that now needs exploring is: how did the Zionist movement come to be in such a position so as to be able to sway the British away from constitutive reasoning and towards an instrumental focus?

The Zionist movement had a presence within the 'corridors of power', a significant ingredient of which was the presence of Chaim Weizmann as the 'Zionist spokesman in London [and who] also played a significant role in British policymaking'.[27] By using his influence he was able to frame the Zionist cause in terms of not only because 'British support for Zionism had the potential to serve imperial interests' (instrumental focus) but also because Zionism needed 'external governmental backing … to fulfil the Basel program of a legally recognized home for the Jewish people in Palestine' (constitutive reasoning).[28] This framing had the effect of implying that support for a Jewish state was the means to the end of British interests in the Middle East, when in fact Zionism saw

---

[25] Dryzek, *Deliberative Global Politics*, pp. 113-4. It was believed that the creation of a Jewish state would draw 'radical enthusiasts of the Jews of Eastern Europe away from Bolshevism and, therefore, help to stabilize Russia as it was 'on the verge of military collapse and social revolution' and also solidify the US support due to the influential Jewry present there. M.E. Yapp, *The Making of the Modern Near East, 1792-1923*, (London: Longman, 1987, p. 327; W. L. Cleveland, *A History of the Modern Middle East: Third Edition* (London: Westview, 2004), p. 245.
[26] Yapp, *Making of the Modern Near East*, p. 329.
[27] Cleveland, *History of the Modern Middle East*, p. 244.
[28] Cleveland, *History of the Modern Middle East*, pp. 243, 247; Yapp, *Making of the Modern Near East*.

the British as a means to the end of a Jewish State that would have the 'political and military protection it needed during its formative phase'.[29] British adoption of this 'planted' idea goes a long way to explain the support Britain gave to the Zionist movement in terms of their support of the Palestinian Mandate (1920) and the implementation of the Balfour Declaration (1917).

The achievement of both these aims demonstrated with uttermost clarity the influence of the Zionist private discursive logic and the instrumental focus of British policy. The sixty-seven-word declaration was, on the face of it, even-handed and allowed for equality of both the Arabs and the Jewish settlers. However, from the outset the egalitarian nature of the document proved to be no more than a facade. As Balfour, in private correspondence to Lord Curzon, stated:

> … we do not propose even to go through the form of consulting the wishes of the present inhabitants of the country. The Four Great powers are committed to Zionism. And Zionism… is rooted in age-long traditions, in present needs in future hopes, [is] of far profounder import than the desires and prejudices of the 700,000 Arabs who now inhabit that ancient land.[30]

Although this statement represented the general attitude of those in power at the time, such views were not universal. Lord Grey raised serious concerns as to the effect of the declaration by stating that the one sentence alone of the Balfour Declaration 'seems to involve … exceedingly great difficulty in fulfilment'.[31] However, these sentiments were ignored and, given the presence of influential actors such as Weizmann, Balfour et-al, and the fact that the British ultimate agenda meant that the means provided by the British had to be in terms of instrumental rationality, the dominant Zionist discourse was followed. This was to be the tone that governed the situation throughout the Mandate period up until time of the UN partition plan when the British became 'superfluous to Zionist purposes'.[32]

Prior to the Mandate period, the Zionist discursive tactic was effective. The Western powers' willingness to employ instrumental rational choice rather than adhere to

---

[29] W. Khalidi, 'The Palestine Problem: An Overview', *Journal of Palestine Studies*, 21 (1991), pp. 5-16.
[30] Mr. Balfour to Lord Curzon, Memorandum to the Cabinet 11th August 1919, cited from P. Yapp, *The Traveller's Dictionary of Quotation: Who Said What, About Where*, (Australia: Law Book Co Of Australasia, 1983) p. 514.
[31] M. Adams, 'What Went Wrong In Palestine', *Journal of Palestine Studies*, 2 (1988), p. 73.
[32] Khalidi, 'The Palestine Problem: An Overview', 5-6.

constitutive reasoning was due to the inability of the Arab states to be heard on the world stage at this juncture, due to their 'weak bargaining position' and infant status.[33] The Arabs did not have any firm representation from Western states, suffering as they did from lack of a unified coherent voice which could represent the aspirations of a greater Arab nation. Instead, the Arab voice at Versailles was fragmented and disjointed. Those Arab leaders (i.e. King Faysal of Iraq) who may have been in a position to prevent or at least influence the implementation of the Balfour Declaration so as to ameliorate its duality and precedence, traded their leverage in return for the tenure of independence in a 'rational manner' and pursued 'their interests according to expected-utility theory'.[34] Even though the Faysal/Weizmann pact of 1919 became void once France gained its mandate, the pact did allow the Zionist movement to establish itself in Palestine by initiating immigration and institution building without, at that time, the potential threat of a hostile Syria. This was because, despite the Wilsonian ideational rhetoric of the right to self determination, the Arab leaders were subjected to having their desired territories divided up by the French and the British to suit their own strategic interests.

In the wake of the Second World War, the discursive logic used by the Zionist movement, America, Russia (and to a limited extent Britain) to justify the policies regarding Palestine was ideational logic couched in terms of the 'humanitarian argument, by the need to rescue the victims of Hitler's persecution' and the divine argument of the 'fulfilment of Biblical prophecy'.[35] Even though the justification was in ideational terms, the motives were based in strategic concerns, given the emergence of the Cold War and the Jewish lobby in America.[36] As Pappé states 'the Israeli terminology …was… constructed carefully so as to confer upon Zionism the equivalent status of a third world liberation movement'.[37]

---

[33] L. Fawcett, *International Relations of the Middle East* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), Chs. 1, 7 & 10.

[34] Khalidi, 'The Palestinian Problem: An Overview', p. 15; J. A. Caporaso, 'International Relations Theory and Multilateralism: The Search for Foundations', *International Organisation*, 46 (1992); S. Sagen, 'The Perils of Proliferation: Organization Theory Deterrence Theory and the Spread of Nuclear Weapons', *International Security*, 18 (1994).

[35] E. M. Wilson, 'The American Interest in the Palestine Question and the Establishment of Israel', *Annals of the American Political and Social Science-America and the Middle East*, May (1972), p. 66.

[36] A. Krammer, 'Soviet Motives in the Partition of Palestine 1947-48', *Journal of Palestine Studies*, 2 (1973), pp. 102-19; A. Shlaim, 'The Impact of U.S. Policy in the Middle East', *Journal of Palestine Studies*, 17 (1988), pp. 15-28.

[37] I. Pappé, 'Post Zionist Critique on Israel and the Palestinians: Part 1: The Academic Debate', *Journal of Palestine Studies*, 26 (1997), pp. 29-41; M. Adams, 'What Went Wrong in Palestine', *Journal of Palestine Studies*, 18 (1988), pp. 71-82.

Also vital to the Zionists' agenda was the institutional and legal framework that they put in place, without which the movement would have been unable to achieve its goal of creating a Jewish state. The primary Zionist structure was the World Zionist Organization (WZO). It was this entity that promoted the immigration programme prior to its formal legal recognition and, post-Mandate, it was given authority to do so under Articles IV and VI. Primarily the role of the WZO was to 'coordinate the activities in Israel … in the development and settlement of the country'.[38] This was highly important in the creation of the de-facto borders because the 'facts on the ground' that the immigration programme provided gave legitimacy to Zionist policies in the wake of the Second World War and the War of Independence (1947-8), as well as providing a subject of discourse in the justification and legitimisation of those policies. The reach of the WZO was greater than just the Jewish people, as evidenced by its ability to influence British policy during the Declaration and Mandate period.[39] Its lobbying prowess was shown not only by the ability of Weizmann, but also its ideological reach which touched those who were of a Zionist persuasion within the fabric of government.[40] This was in stark contrast to any Palestinian structure at the time.

One of the key Zionist institutions was the Jewish National Fund (JNF)[41] whose objective was to 'purchase … or acquire any land … for the purpose of settling Jews' and that any land such acquired could only be let and/or bought 'by any Jew' and not by an indigenous Palestinian Arab.[42] It was also written into the contracts that the aforementioned lands 'prohibited the use of non-Jewish labor on JNF land'.[43] These protectionist policies essentially established a landless class within the Palestinian community, a class that had previously not existed. During the British presence in Palestine, 'landowners sold a great deal of land at inflated prices to the Zionist Organization' which had the effect, due to the nature of the contracts, of displacing

---

[38] World Zionist Organisatio-Jewish Agency (Status) Law; Rabbi Elmer Berger, 'Zionist Ideology: Obstacle to Peace' in *Anti-Zionism: Analytical Reflections*, ed. by R. Tekiner, S. Abed-Rabbo, N. Mevinsky, (Battleboro, VT: Amana Books, 1989).

[39] Cleveland, *History of the Modern Middle East*; and Yapp *Making of the Modern Near East*.

[40] For example Lord Rothschild was 'a prominent figure in British Zionist circles' as well as the first High Commissioner Sir Herbert Samuel, who was also an 'ardent Zionist'. Cleveland, *History of the Modern Middle East*, pp. 244-5.

[41] For an in-depth analysis of the Jewish National Fund see U. Davis and W. Lehn, 'And the Fund Still Lives: The Role of the Jewish National Fund in the Determination of Israel's Land Policies', *Journal of Palestine Studies* 7 (1978).

[42] Clause 3 of the Memorandum of the Juedischer Nationalfonds (Kajemeth Le Jisroel) Limited (JNF).

[43] I. Khalaf, 'The Effect of Socioeconomic Change on Arab Societal Collapse in Mandate Palestine', *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, February (1997), p. 95.

many rural Palestinians in a process 'resembling a project of settler colonization'.[44] This migration subsequently created an urban wage-earning labour force, as many people were pushed from rural areas to the cities to find work. This uprooting of traditionally based rural workers was a direct result of JNF activity prior to the Mandate period, and subsequently proliferated due to the sanctioning, institutionalisation, and legalisation of the Zionist cause and the Zionists policy of 'strategic land acquisition'.[45] The process of land acquisition and the contracts that were inherent within it was accelerated through the increase in immigration from 1933 following the emergence of Nazism in Germany and elsewhere within Europe. The presence of the JNF was one of the major causes of the breakup of Palestinian society since it forced the Palestinians to adapt from an agrarian economy to one of based on waged labour. Such modernisation led to a 'rapid and chaotic breakdown and disintegration of village and urban political and social organization and leadership' which in turn led the 'rural bonds of the peasants … to be … weakened … and left to float between rural and urban economies'. The process was further exacerbated by 'the expansion of the world market into Palestine under the aegis of the British', a development to which the Yishuv could adapt but the indigenous Palestinians could not.[46]

These institutions by themselves could not have instigated the creation of the state of Israel. Also required was a legal framework that would provide 'legitimacy' to the Zionist cause, while at the same time fortify the support of the British. The presence of this legitimising framework helps to explain why Israel was able to expand into the 1949 borders, allowing the Zionists to lay the foundation of a state, while hiding behind this legal shield and the protection of the British until the conditions for Israeli autonomy could be reached. It also clarifies why the indigenous population failed to successfully resist such expansion.

The drafting of the Balfour Declaration (and subsequently the Mandate into which it was incorporated) made a distinction between 'Jewish' and 'non-Jewish' inhabitants of Palestine, and needed to be worded in such a way that it would have the effect of legally constituting a world that the British and Zionists found attractive. Given the

---

[44] Khalaf, 'The Effect of Socioeconomic Change'; p. 95; Walid Khalidi, 'From Haven to Conquest', Institute for Palestine Studies, (1971), pp. 761-70.
[45] See Khalidi, 'The Palestine Problem: An Overview', pp. 5-16.
[46] Khalaf, 'The Effect of Socioeconomic Change', pp. 94-5.

interdependent aims of the British and the Zionist elite, the adoption of the Declaration,

and subsequently the Mandate, the terms maximised the interests of the Jewish and the

British through the most efficient means. By labelling the Palestinians 'non-Jewish' the

notion of Palestinian and Palestine faded from the conscience of the international

community, thereby giving credence to the notion of 'a land with no people for a people

with no land'.[47] This clarification was crucial for the fate of the Palestinians since such

labelling constitutes who actors are and what they can do.[48] In this situation there was

only 'one identity [that] could be validated ... or constituted by suppression of another'.[49]

Drafting the declaration in this way had another effect upon the Jewish identity insofar as

it gave them a sense of legality whereby 'they feel they belong' while at the same time

eroding any such feeling within the Palestinian population.[50] The continuing legalisation

and institutionalisation of the Zionist cause, the increased physical Jewish presence

within the structure of Palestine and the forced modernisation that emerged with it

meant that Palestinian society 'was on the brink of disintegration', typified by the

disparity between its own institutions and those of the Yishuv.[51] While the latter was

sanctioned through the obligations contained within the terms of the Mandate, there was

no such provision within it for the Palestinians.

It is important to note that, while the Balfour Declaration was not legally binding, the

Mandate was and therefore the British had a duty to ensure that the obligations

contained in it were fulfilled. As such, the Mandate gave Zionist dogma legal traction in

the eyes of the international community at the expense of the indigenous Palestinian

population. Article VI, for instance, stated that there was a legal obligation to 'facilitate

Jewish immigration', echoing what was already inherent in the Balfour Declaration.[52]

Complimentary to this was Article IV, which recognised the Zionist Organization as a

public body that was to work with the Mandatory Administration in order to fulfil Article

VI. The legitimisation of a Jewish public body only further cemented the Zionist regime

within the fabric of the Palestinian state. From this position the Zionist Organization

---

[47] Zwangwill, *The Return to Palestine-1901*, www.palestineremembered.com/Acre/Famous-
ZionistQuotes.html, [accessed 30 May 2008].
[48] P. Bourdieu, *The Field of Cultural Production* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1993), Chs.1-4.
[49] Dryzek, *Deliberative Global Politics*, p. 46.
[50] Eugene L. Rogan, 'The Emergence of the Middle East into the Modern State System', in Fawcett,
International Relations of the Middle East (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), pp. 23-37.
[51] Khalaf, 'The Effect of Socioeconomic Change', p. 93.
[52] Article VI of the Palestinian Mandate 1920.

had the tools it needed to create and enhance the organisational infrastructure required for a Jewish state, as well as its economic, social and political underpinnings.[53]

Conversely, the Palestinian institutions were not autonomous in the same way as those of the Yishuv. The British had the power of appointment and they used it to their strategic advantage. To a limited extent, this was a rational choice since, by selecting individuals for representative posts, the British could maintain weak Palestinian political power and mobilisation ability through the cultivation and manipulation of familial divides. This was seen by the appointment of Hajj Amin al-Husayni as the grand Mufti as a means of counterbalancing the appointment of Raghib Nashashibi as Mayor of Jerusalem. Nurturing internal divides not only allowed the British to control the indigenous population, it also had the effect of allowing the Zionist movement to gain momentum and increase its influence within the state through their co-operation with the British. Even with the limited representation afforded to the Palestinian population, the British dismantled the Arab Higher Commission in 1937, after the murder of a British Commissioner to Galilee. This development stifled any legitimate representation of the indigenous population or the formation of any forum from which to have indigenous grievances heard. From a functionalist perspective, the dismantling of the Arab High Commission deprived the Palestinians of a 'social release valve'; afterwards, the only way their voice could be heard was via 'deviant and violent behavior'.[54] Indeed it was this lack of representative identity, coupled with the economic and social malaise that accompanied the growing entrenchment of the Zionists within the state, that led to the 'identity crisis' which culminated in the revolt of 1936-9.[55]

The subtle legalisation process and the distinction made between Jewish and non-Jewish inhabitants in the Holy Land had the effect of creating a scotoma in the eyes of the international community, a situation which became of increasing importance after 1933, following the rise of Nazism in Europe and the 'restrictive immigration quotas imposed in … USA, and Canada'.[56] Both factors contributed to greater migration to Palestine in the fifth Aliyah (1929-39) and added to tensions between the two communities, tensions which boiled over during the revolt of 1936-9. In the wake of the Second World War,

---

[53] Fawcett, *International Relations*, pp. 7-9; Article IV, British Mandate.
[54] T. Parsons, *Social Systems* (London: Routledge, 1991), Chs. 9-10.
[55] Erik Erikson, *Identity, Youth and Crisis* (New York: WW Norton, 1968).
[56] Cleveland, *History of the Modern Middle East*, p. 254.

support for the Zionist movement meant that the sentiments of the 1939 White Paper and the restriction on Jewish immigration were set aside as the 'conscience of the West came to embrace the notion that the settlement of the surviving Jews … could atone for the horrors that … had [been] inflicted upon them'.[57] Essentially, in the wake of the barbarity of the Holocaust, the rights of the Palestinian Arabs were offered up as a sacrificial lamb to appease the guilt of the West.

Following the Second World War, the Yishuv applied great pressure on a Great Britain 'weakened by six years of warfare'.[58] The Yishuv 'adapt[ed] to incentives and opportunities, and pursued means that [were] logically connected to their ends', namely dislodging the British who had now become irrelevant to the Zionist cause.[59] When the UN passed General Resolution 181 (or the United Nations Partition Plan for Palestine) in 1947, the Yishuv, unlike the Palestinians, accepted it because they believed that it reflected their objectives. In essence it 'was a tactical acceptance … a springboard for expansion when circumstances proved judicious'.[60] Indeed, by the time that the partition plan within Resolution 181 had been adopted in November 1947, the British had already declared unilaterally that they were to withdraw from Palestine. This declaration allowed the Yishuv to expand during the inter-communal war of 1947-8 without being hindered by the British who were, by this time, ambivalent about the creation of a Jewish state and already planning to withdrawal on 15 May 1948. This ambivalence was manifested in the lack of governmental institutions in place at the time of the British departure which had the effect of creating a power vacuum, and ultimately allowed David Ben-Gurion to state on 14 May 1948:

> We, members of the people's council, representatives of the Jewish community of Eretz-Israel and of the Zionist movement, are here assembled on the day of the termination of the British Mandate over Eretz-Israel and, by virtue of our natural and historic right and on the strength of the resolution of the United Nations General Assembly, hereby declare the establishment of a Jewish state in Eretz-Israel, to be known as the state of Israel.[61]

---

[57] Cleveland, *History of the Modern Middle East*, p. 261.

[58] Thomas. R. Mockaitis, *The 'New' Terrorism: Myths and Reality* (London: Greenwood Publishing Group, 2007), p. 23.

[59] Hafez, *Making of Suicide Bombers*, p. 167.

[60] S. Flapan, *The Birth of Israel-Myths and Realities* (New York: Pantheon, 1987), p. 63.

[61] D. Ben-Gurion, Declaration of Independence of the State of Israel, 14 May 1948, http://www.science.co.il/israel-declaration-of-independence.asp [accessed at May 2008].

The 1948-9 War and Intra-Arab State Politics

The final factor to consider regarding the establishment of the state of Israel is the role of the surrounding Arab states. Ultimately, internal power disputes and rivalries between Israel's Arab neighbours, as well as continuing international support for the Zionists during this period made it impossible for them to form a cohesive policy with respect to Israel and successfully prevent its creation. These factors were highlighted in the Arab states' inability to defeat the newly formed state of Israel militarily even though, as Ben-Gurion observed, Israel was outnumbered 'one against forty'.[62] By the end of the civil war and the War of Independence, Israel would have expanded itself into the de-facto borders which now accounted for '77% of the country' and created '750,000 refugees (60% of the population) … and the total destruction of … Palestinian villages'.[63]

The motivation for the Arab states to attack Israel was born of both ideational and strategic security considerations. Ideationally the Arab states objected vehemently to the presence of a non-Arab state in the heart of the Arab world and saw Israel as a strategic threat, but their ability to diplomatically or militarily overcome the nascent state was weakened by their own internal political divides. The Arab Liberation Army (ALA) was led by Fawzi al-Qawuqji, appointed not for his military skills or leadership but because he was 'valued more as an enemy' of, and was seen therefore as a counter weight to, the grand Mufti, Husayni.[64] It was believed that al-Qawuqji could curtail the grand Mufti's influence over the shaping of Palestine, but this was not the only political divide within the Arab camp. The conflicting interests and visions for Palestine between the Hashemite (who envisaged a greater Syria) and the anti-Hashemite (who wanted Egypt to be the regional hegemonic power) blocs meant that the invading force acted in accordance with their own national agendas and interests and not that of a united front.[65] Tactically, there was no cohesion between the states, meaning the Israelis could drive a wedge through the already burgeoning cracks of Arab state cooperation.

---

[62] Israel State Archives, Protocol of the Provisional Government Meeting of 16 June 1948, pp. 35-6.
[63] Fawcett, International Relations, p. 9.
[64] R. Khalidi, 'The Palestinians and 1948: The Underlying Causes of Failure' in The War For Palestine: Rewriting the History of 1948, ed. by E. L. Rogan and A. Shlaim (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 2001), pp. 12-36.
[65] Fawcett, International Relations, Chs. 1 and 10.

Such fissures were manifest in the relationship between the Zionists, who could see the prospect of 'security maximization', and King Adbullah of Transjordan.[66] The Israelis realised that they shared a common goal with Abdullah by virtue of their mutual distaste for Husayni and potential Palestinian nationalism. This led to an informal agreement being reached whereby the British-trained and operated Arab Legion would only occupy the areas designated to the Palestinians under Resolution 181. They also agreed to delay plans to start their advance to allow the Haganah time to organise themselves.[67] The Jewish believed that by forming this pseudo alliance, 'the[y] could generate mistrust, foment rivalry, and leak poison to weaken the coalition of their Arab adversaries', as well as neutralize the most effective military unit at the Arab's disposal.[68] In this way the Zionists were able to put themselves in a position whereby, rather than having to react to a situation as and when one arose, they preferred to create the situations that benefited themselves. However, the anti-Hashemite states successfully reined in Abdullah by making him commander of the Arab forces. This, like the appointment of Qawuqji, was not based on merit but out of a desire 'to curb Abdullah's territorial ambition and forestall his bid for hegemony in the region'.[69] Moreover, the internal suspicion and power politics of the Arab states meant that the leaders of these states acted only with immediate gains in mind, rather than devising a policy based upon long-term considerations such as the prevention of a Jewish state.

During the 1948-9 War, the Israelis used guerrilla warfare and brutal tactics on strategically important villages such as Dayr Yasin. They not only attacked military targets, but they also employed the use of 'intense bombardment of heavily populated urban areas' such as Jaffa and Haifa that were near the 'main arteries of transportation'.[70] This created an air of panic and terror which led to not only to civilian deaths but also furthered the collapse of Palestinian moral and social structure and led to the mass exodus of the Palestinian population. According to Frinklestein these strategies were

---

[66] For an in-depth discussion on security maximisation see generally K. Waltz, *Theory of International Politics* (Reading Mass: Addison-Wesley, 1979).

[67] Translated as the Defence, the Jewish paramilitary organisation between 1920 and 1948, and precursor to the Israeli Defence Forces.

[68] A. Shlaim, 'Israel and the Arab Coalition in 1948' in *The Modern Middle East: A Reader* ed. by A. Hourani, P. Khoury and M. C. Wilson (Berkeley: I. B. Tauris and Co., 1993), p. 546. However even though there were some minor clashes between the Arab Legion and the IDF these were around Jerusalem and not the areas that were involved in the pseudo alliance. See E. Karsh, 'Historical Fictions', *The Middle East Quarterly*, September (1996).

[69] E. Karsh, 'Benny Morris and the Reign of Error', *The Middle East Quarterly*, 6 (1999) available at < http://www.meforum.org/article/466>.

[70] Simha Flapan, 'The Palestinian Exodus of 1948', *Journal of Palestine Studies*, 16 (1987), p. 8-9.

deliberate and born out of policies, rather than the pressures of war, carried out and formulated by experienced military personnel, and to which the comparatively inexperienced Palestinians and Arabs had no reply.[71] The tactics employed during the wars were designed to create a climate of fear, fear for personal safety, fear for the confiscation of land and fear of reprisals for returning.[72] The intended result was to wound the Palestinians psychologically until they were 'panic-stricken into fleeing'.[73] From an Israeli perspective this was the rational choice, as 'destroying hope is a critical project' for defeating any enemy; it certainly contributed to the societal liquidation of the Palestinian Arabs.[74]

The material support that was given to the Jewish cause by the Western powers, especially the European states, was denied to the Arab states. With the increased presence of the Jewish lobby, and the support they found in the American President Truman, the US placed an 'arms embargo in December 1947' that was in place 'until the end of the Arab-Israeli war'.[75] Such material deprivation was exacerbated by the fact that the British followed suit even though it meant breaching treaty obligations with the Arab states. These measures were disastrous for Iraq, Transjordan and Egypt; in contrast, 'Israel imported from all over Europe' an array of weaponry, an act that was in violation of the UN arms embargoes.[76] According to Flapan, the Israeli forces were far superior in terms of competency and number when compared to the Arab forces. This inequality of military strength and the subordination of international law in favour of national interest meant that the inability of the Arab states to stop the expansion of Israel 'was not a miracle' synonymous with that of David versus Goliath, 'but a faithful reflection of the underlying Arab-Israeli military balance'.[77]

Conclusion

---

[71] N. Frinkelstein, 'Myths Old and New', *Journal of Palestine Studies*, 21 (1991), pp. 66-89. For a counter argument to this see B. Morris, *The Birth of the Palestinian Refugee Problem Revisited* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), although, due to evidence provided in Y. Nimrod, *Meeting at the Crossroads; Jews and Arabs in Palestine During Recent Generations* (Haifa University, 1984) and S. Teveth, *Ben Gurion and the Palestinian Arabs* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985), it should be noted that the author himself is not in support of Morris' position.

[72] Morris, *The Birth of the Palestinian Refugee Problem Revisited*, pp. 128-31.

[73] Flapan, 'The Palestinian Exodus' pp. 3-25.

[74] N. Chomsky, *Hegemony or Survival: America's Quest for Global Dominance* (London: Metropolitan Books 2003), p. 10.

[75] A. Shlaim, 'Britain and the Arab Israeli War of 1948', *Journal of Palestine Studies*, 16 (1987), p. 60.

[76] Shlaim, p. 60.

[77] Shlaim, p. 298.

The purpose of this paper has been to explain how the state of Israel was able to establish itself within its de-facto 1949 borders, by examining the methods and discursive tactics of the Zionist movement and their consequent effects, a factor of paramount importance in any assessment of its creation. It postulates that without such an effective and powerful discourse inspiring the diaspora – which created a scotoma on the conscience of the powerful international elite, thereby enabling Israel to dictate the regional foreign policy - the Zionists' ambition could never have been realized. Indeed this articulation, coupled with the rational creation of institutions to undermine the existing Palestinian population's socio-economic fabric, served as the prelude to the exodus of 1948 and influenced the interpretation of the War of Independence by creating the myth of the Israeli David versus Arab Goliath for the benefit of those supporting Israel in the West. Given the wrangling and internal divides of the Arab army, the appropriate metaphor is that of the Jewish Hercules against the Arab Hydra. Five hundred years ago Machiavelli wrote:

> he who considers it necessary to secure himself in his new principality, to overcome either by force or fraud, to make himself beloved and feared by the people … to exterminate those who have power or reason to hurt him, to change the old order of things for new… to maintain friendship with kings and princess in such a way that they must help him with zeal and offend with caution.[78]

If one was to encapsulate the circumstances and tactics of the creation of Israel and the policies that followed, then there is surely nothing more concise, pertinent and poignant than Machiavelli's advice.

---

[78] N. Machiavelli, The Prince, (Oxford: Oxford World's Classics, 2005), p. 51.

Bibliography

Adams, M., 'What Went Wrong in Palestine', *Journal of Palestinian Studies*, 18 (1988), pp. 71-82

Bourdieu, P., *The Field of Cultural Production* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1993)

Caporaso, J. A., 'International Relations Theory and Multilateralism: The Search for Foundations', *International Organisation*, 46 (1992), pp. 599-632

Chomsky, N., *Hegemony or Survival: America's Quest for Global Dominance* (New York: Metropolitan Books, 2003)

Chomsky, N., *Peace in the Middle East? Reflections on Justice and Nationhood* (New York: Pantheon, 1974)

Cleveland, W. L., *A History of the Modern Middle East: Third Edition* (London: Westview, 2004)

Davis, U. and W. Lehn, 'And the Fund Still Lives: The Role of the Jewish National Fund in the Determination of Israel's Land Policies, *Journal of Palestine Studies*, 7 (1978), pp. 3-33

Dryzek, J. S., *Deliberative Global Politics* (London: Polity, 2006)

Erikson, E., *Identity, Youth and Crisis* (London: Faber and Faber, 1968)

Falha, R., *Winning and Losing the War Against Global Terror* (London: Abris, 2003)

Fawcett, L., *International Relations of the Middle East* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005)

Flapan, S., *The Birth of Israel-Myths and Realities* (New York: Pantheon, 1987)

Flapan, S., 'The Palestinian Exodus of 1948', *Journal of Palestine Studies*, 16 (1988), pp. 3-26

Frinkelstein, N., 'Myths Old and New', *Journal of Palestine Studies*, 21 (1991), pp. 66-89.

Gilbert, W. Morrow, *Israel: A History* (New York: Turner Books, 1998)

Hafez, M. M., *Rationality, Culture and Structure in the Making of Suicide Bombers, Studies in Conflict and Terrorism* (London: Routledge, 2006)

Hartman, D. and J. Malino, *Judaism and Modernity: The Religious Philosophy of David Harman* (London: Ashgate, 2004)

Hourani, A, P. Khoury and M. C. Wilson, *The Modern Middle East: A Reader* (Berkeley: I. B. Tauris & Co., 1993)

Howarth. D and Y. Stavrakakis, *Introducing Discourse Theory and Political Analysis* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000)

Israel State Archives, Protocol of the Provisional Government Meeting of 16 June 1948, pp. 35-6

Jewish Virtual Library, *The American-Israeli Cooperative Enterprise*, 2008

Karsh, E., 'Benny Morris and the Reign of Error', *The Middle East Quarterly*, 6 (1999), pp. 15-28

Karsh E., 'Historical Fictions', *The Middle East Quarterly*, 3 (1996), pp. 55-60

Khalaf, I., 'The Effect of Socioeconomic Change on Arab Societal Collapse in Mandate Palestine', *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, 29 (1997), pp. 93-112

Khalidi, W., *From Haven to Conquest* (Beirut: Institute for Palestine Studies, 1971)

Khalidi, W., 'The Palestine Problem: An Overview, *Journal of Palestine Studies*, 21 (1991), pp. 5-16

Krammer. A., 'Soviet Motives in the Partition of Palestine 1947-48', *Journal of Palestine Studies*, 2 (1973), pp. 102-19

Machiavelli, N., *The Prince* (Oxford: Oxford World's Classics, 2005)

Memorandum of the Juedischer Nationalfonds (Kajemeth Le Jisroel) Limited (JNF)

Mockaitis, T. R., *The 'New' Terrorism: Myths and Reality*, (London: Greenwood Publishing Group, 2007)

Moore, M., 'Beyond the Cultural Argument for Liberal Nationalism', *Critical Review of International Social and Political Philosophy*, 2 (1999), pp. 26-47

Morris, B., *Righteous Victims: A History of the Zionist-Arab Conflict, 1881-1999* (New York: John Murray, 1999)

Morris, B., *The Birth of the Palestinian Refugee Problem Revisited* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004)

Nimrod, Y., *Meeting at the Crossroads; Jews and Arabs in Palestine During Recent Generations* (Haifa: Haifa University, 1984)

<palestineremembered.com/Acre/Famous-Zionist-Quotes/Story638.html>

Pappé. I., 'Post Zionist Critique on Israel and the Palestinians: Part 1: The Academic Debate', *Journal of Palestine Studies*, 26 (1997), pp. 29-41

Parsons, T., *Social Systems* (London: Routledge, 1991)

Rae, H., *State Identities and the Homogenization of Peoples* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002)

Rodinson, M., *Israel: A Colonial Settler-State?* (London: Harmondsworth, 1968)

Rogan, E. L. and A. Shlaim, *Rewriting the History of 1948* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001)

Sagen, S., 'The Perils of Proliferation: Organization Theory, Deterrence Theory and the Spread of Nuclear Weapons', *International Security*, 18 (1994), pp. 66-107

<science.co.il/israel-declaration-of-independence.asp>

Shlaim, A., 'Britain and the Arab Israeli War of 1948', *Journal of Palestine Studies*, 16 (1987), pp. 50-76

Shlaim. A., 'The Impact of U.S. Policy in the Middle East', *Journal of Palestine Studies*, 17 (1988), pp. 15-28

Shlaim, A., 'Israel and the Arab Coalition in 1948' in *The Modern Middle East: A Reader*, ed. by A. Hourani, P. Khoury and M. C. Wilson (Berkeley: I. B. Tauris and Co., 1993)

Smith, A., *National Identity* (London: Penguin Books, 1991), pp. 535-56

Tekiner, R., S. Abed-Rabbo and N. Mevinsky, *Anti-Zionism: Analytical Reflections* (Brattleboro, VT: Amana Books, 1989)

Teveth, S., *Ben Gurion and the Palestinian Arabs From Peace to War* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985)

Tribe, L., 'Technology Assessment and the Fourth Discontinuity: The Limits of Instrumental Rationality', *Southern California Law Review*, 46 (1973), pp. 617-60

Waltz, K., *Theory of International Politics* (Reading ,MA: Addison-Wesley, 1979)

Wilson, E. M., 'The American Interest in the Palestine Question and the Establishment of Israel', *Annals of the American Political and Social Science*, 401 (1972), pp. 64-73

Yapp, M. E., *The Making of the Modern Near East, 1792-1923* (London: Longman, 1987)