When Israel was formed in Palestine shortly after WWII, mass controversy within Arab nations quickly became to ensue. How could something that created great cheer within the Jews bring such dark anguish and despair to another civilization of people? The unfortunate truth is that the creation of Israel, which brought such elation to the Jewish community prompted the outright displacement of several hundred thousand Palestinian Arabs. The absolute and arbitrary discrimination the Arabs felt compelled them to outset several conflicts against Israel. The question that ultimately creates an immense amount of contention within the Middle East: why is Israel justified for its massive and destructive conquest over Palestine?


Why Palestine? Why was Palestine targeted for the formation of Israel? Brian Orend clarifies the reason for the specific location of Palestine by discussing the origination of Jews and the Zionist movement. The Jews derived from various areas in Palestine. Their flourishing empire, based around Jerusalem, was governed by King David and then his son, Solomon. But provincial control was the Jews’ primary concern as the more powerful and assertive Egyptians and Romans were expressing their interest in the region. The Egyptians and Romans would
eventually challenge the Jews’ power and ultimately took over their land around 800-600 BCE. The imperialism of Jerusalem led to the obvious loss of the Jewish homeland and the start of the Jewish diaspora. This diaspora was the exile of Jews to countries in Europe and North America, though some decided to stay in the Middle East. The diaspora then led to a Jewish nationalist movement called Zionism where the goal was to re-establish and assure protection of an autonomous Jewish community within Palestine.

At this point in Jewish history, their people have an absolute right to form a coalition based solely on cultural nationalism. But if history can tell us anything, it’s that a group formed out of nationalism, though may have the bestest of intentions can result in the worst of outcomes. Nationalism has the pure, incomparable power of uniting people with like minded goals and inducing the regular, everyday, average man to fight. Though the true merit of Zionism is fairly questionable, the Zionist movement had conspicuous reasons for being formed.


Zionism is a highly contested topic when mentioning the conflict in Israel and Palestine. Maxime Rodinson, “a French Marxist historian, sociologist, and orientalist,” who is synonymous for defending Palestinians and being an Anti-Zionist gives his insight about Zionism. Calling the Zionist movement a nationalist movement creates great displeasure and objection in the Arab community. Arabs associate nationalism as a deeply passionate movement with high praise and honor while considering Zionism as “a project of pure banditry, an operation planned by Satanic manipulators which sweeps along the deceived masses or individuals essentially just as evil.”
With this being said, Rodinson still understands that nationalism as a whole is the real problem and not just Zionism itself. All nationalisms have aggressive and combative characteristics and this statement surely includes Palestinian nationalism just as much as Jewish nationalism, but there is a huge anomaly separating these two forms of nationalism. “The Zionist movement took concrete and practical form in the oppression of another people. Consequently, it must be admitted that the Palestinians' resistance to this process falls into the category of nationalist movements of oppressed peoples who deserve support.” Though Palestinian oppression does not justify their approach to Jewish aggression, the significant differences in both nationalisms is what obligates Rodinson to take the side of the Palestinians.

Rodinson makes it clear that the conflict between Israel and Palestine is about oppression. There is glaring merit in nationalism in the form of fighting national oppression and it is evident that the Jews are the oppressor in the current state of Palestine, but he fails to mention the reason Israel was established in Palestine in the first place. I truly believe that Rodinson blames Zionism all too much for the vanishing Palestinian state. The 20th century world wars and the aftermaths of those events are what caused the massive development of Zionism and the establishment of Israel.


Britain’s involvement in Palestine after World War One was the birth of the Palestinians’ wild discontent as well as the beginning of the Jews’ great pleasure. The Balfour Declaration was a critical affair in the eventual establishment of Israel in Palestine. In 1917, Britain’s foreign
secretary, Arthur Balfour sent a rather formal letter to Lord Rothschild, a prominent leading Zionism figure residing in Britain. This letter asserted two ideas: that the British government favoured the installation of the Jewish homeland in Palestine, and that “nothing shall be done to prejudice the civil and religious rights of the existing non-Jewish communities in Palestine.” At the time, this declaration was deemed much more than controversial. The statement that, “nothing shall be done to infringe on any of the rights of the existing non-Jewish communities,” is outright insane considering that about 90% of the population in Palestine were Palestinian Arabs. Michael Adams also references, “Elizabeth Monroe, the chronicler of the rise and fall of British influence in the Middle East, who described the Balfour Declaration as, one of the worst mistakes in our imperial history.” In addition to the Balfour Declaration was the British Mandate for Palestine in 1920. This mandate was granted to Britain by the League of Nations to primarily aid in the provisions of the Balfour Declaration. To uphold the statements made in the declaration, Britain assisted in the immigration of Jews to Palestine. The Balfour Declaration and British Mandate for Palestine caused discernible chaos in the Arab community.

Britain’s ignorance in this matter was without question mind-blowing. To me, the declaration was more than crass towards the Palestinians. To more or less promise that a Jewish state will eventually be formed in Palestine when the population at the time was astoundingly Palestinian is illogical. The Jews were praising their Zionist movement all at the expense of the Palestinians. Other than being under control of the Ottoman Empire, which was no fault of their own, Palestine did nothing wrongful to incite this immigration. Only after World War Two, did the proliferation of Jewish immigration become insufferable to the point of no return for the Arabs.
Devavarat N. Pathak, “a Professor of History & Political Science,” gives his in depth understanding of the Partition Plan. The United Nations (UN) were more than willing to enact a Jewish State after the horrors of the Holocaust and World War Two. In 1947, the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) gathered to negotiate the provisions of the creation of a Jewish state in Palestine. Of course Arab countries were enraged of these talks and demanded, “the termination of the Mandate over Palestine and the declaration of its independence.”

Unfortunately for the Arab nations, this proposal was rejected. The UNGA could not come up with concrete resolutions to please the majority, so the United Nations Special Committee on Palestine (UNSCOP) was created in May 15, 1947. The UNSCOP, “was given the widest latitude to carry on investigations and collect all relevant information.” When the UNSCOP ultimately concluded its research, they compiled three recommendations; a unanimous, majority, and minority report. “The unanimous report laid down the speedy termination of the British mandate as a condition precedent to any lasting solution of the Palestine problem. The majority of the member nations advocated partition of Palestine into an Arab and a Jewish state, economic union and an independent city of Jerusalem. The minority firmly opposed partition and proposed a plan for the establishment of a federal state with Jerusalem as the capital.” The Partition Plan was later passed by the UNGA with a majority vote and, “the Jewish state of Israel was finally proclaimed on May 15, 1948.” Prof. Pathak makes it seemingly clear that he genuinely believes that the Partition Plan was the UN’s greatest accomplishment and a mass success in the
acquisition of harmony and unity, “In the otherwise dull and uninspiring record of the United Nations, the issue of Palestine stands as an instance of a successful venture in the cause of peace and collective security.”

After World War Two, the Holocaust proved as an eminently ample reason for the creation of a sovereign and protected Jewish state. To an extent, I must agree with Prof. Pathak. Though enacting a whole different state in an already entrenched country is ambiguous, an establishment of a Jewish community was essential to their survival. But there is a significant affair between Prof. Pathak and I that creates a discord. Though it must be noted that Prof. Pathak’s writing was published in 1951, he without a doubt coined the Partition plan as a, “success in the cause of peace.” Yes, it was a success… for the Jewish community. The evident success of the Partition Plan was in the deplorable division of Palestine. As for peace… there was no peace. The Partition Plan surely constructed unity among the Jewish community with the establishment of a Jewish state, but what about the Palestinians? What kind of peace was instilled into the Palestinian state? Dividing a nation into separate states plainly doesn’t seem like peace. The Partition Plan was the onset of Middle-Eastern wars and the ongoing conflict in Israel and Palestine.


It was extraordinarily unmistakable that surrounding Arab nations were infuriated by the Partition Plan. “Between 1947 and 1949, according to United Nations statistics, 656,000 Arab
inhabitants of mandatory Palestine fled from Israeli-held territory.” In 1948, Egypt, Iraq, Syria, Lebanon, and Transjordan declared war on Israel. In the beginning of the 1948 Arab-Israeli War, Israel’s army was severely vulnerable in terms of number of soldiers and weapons. But by the end of the year, France and the Soviet Union were able to supply the Israeli army with a sufficient number of soldiers and weaponry to give them an upper hand in war. In early 1949, the UN gathered Israel and their Arab war opponents to conduct a truce or armistice. All five Arab countries agreed to the armistice except Iraq. Though Egypt, Syria, Lebanon, and Transjordan agreed to the armistice, “The Armistice itself proved to be worthless, shredded by the Arabs almost immediately following their signatures. Between 1949 and 1956, some 1,300 Israelis were murdered during Arab raids, and Israel's retaliatory attacks became increasingly severe.”

Under the armistice agreement, “Israel would gain over three-quarters of Palestine land, Egypt would gain the Gaza strip and the Sinai Peninsula, Jordan would control the West Bank, and Syria secured the Golan Heights.” Since Egypt didn’t respect the rules of the armistice, Israel’s ships were being denied entry to the Suez Canal. Much to the Arab nations elation, in 1953, Stalin and the Soviet Union cut ties with Israel and switched sides to aid in the Arab fight. With the ever powerful Soviet Union on their side, Egypt took a chance and decided to exterminate Israel; hence the Suez Canal War of 1956 had begun. To strangle Israel’s only path to the Red Sea, Egypt blockaded the Straits of Tiran and later conquered the Suez Canal. To retaliate, Israel with the help of Britain and France, took control of the the Egyptian territories in Palestine: Gaza Strip and the Sinai Peninsula. This is when the U.S. finally decided to intervene. Dwight Eisenhower, The U.S.’s president at the time, had come out and said that to not skew the sides of the Middle-Eastern conflict too much, the Middle East should only be limited to one “Western
Superpower.” With this U.S. statement being made, and assuming that Egypt won’t remilitarize, Israel had agreed to cede its control over Gaza and Sinai. Thus forward, The United States had become the only, “Western Superpower,” to be involved with the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.


The outcome of the the Six-Day War had a historic impact on the geography of Israel and Palestine. Israel as the victor of the war, was granted significant portions of Egypt, Syria and Jordan’s control of Palestine, “the Sinai Peninsula, the Gaza Strip, the West Bank, and the Golan Heights.” The Six-Day war created extremely crucial territorial lines by very controversial means. The conflict that led to the start of the war was the Israeli preemptive strike on Egypt. This preemptive strike gave Israel a noticeable advantage over their opponents and was a huge factor in why they won the war. The huge controversy lies in whether Israel was indeed justified for their preemptive strike. Egypt was alerted by Soviet intelligence that Israel was preparing to attack Syria, so in response, Egypt deployed tens of thousands of troops on Gaza and Sinai and once again blockaded the Straits of Tiran. Israel certainly saw the blockade and remilitarization as imminent aggression if not aggression, so a preemptive strike was launched against Egyptian air bases. After the Suez Canal War, The authorization of Egyptian remilitarization was not permitted by the U.S., so the U.S. were ready to come to the aid of Israel in case of Egyptian aggression. Israel claimed that their preemptive strike was made in anticipated self-defense of an Egyptian invasion. Arab nations accordingly claimed that the Israeli preemptive strike was
gratuitous. Both sides have merit in their argument, which makes the large portions of land given to Israel even more disputable, thus making the Six-Day War as a whole excessively contentious.

Israel was hugely in part justified for its conquest over Palestine due to the UN, great powers, and the laws of war. Of course after ridiculous persecution and discrimination, the Jewish people deserved a state and community where they felt safe. The eventual formation of a Jewish state was inevitable due to Zionism and the Holocaust, but I extremely disagree with the way the UN and the great powers directed their policies to divide Palestine into two states. The creation of Israel produced tremendous adversity in Palestine as it dawned several hundred thousand refugees and violent territorial wars. Though I believe Palestine and their supporting Arab nations had the right to commit aggression, their approach could’ve unequivocally been revised. Since the Jewish imperialism or so-called immigration was authorized by the UN via the Partition Plan, the Jewish invasion of Palestine was not considered aggression, but rather an establishment of a necessary Jewish homeland for peace and unity. Palestine and surrounding Arab countries had every right to be incensed as their retaliated aggression was a proportionate response to the colonization of Palestine by the Jews; they were expressing their Just Cause right of self-defence and other-defence. But the great powers like the Soviet Union, Britain, France, and the U.S. did not see the Partition Plan as a form of Jewish aggression, so they helped Israel create a strong state by aiding them through several destructive wars over territory. This perspective creates an unfortunate, but somewhat true reality that the world is dictated by the policies of the great powers, which leads to the trampling of small and weak nations. As time goes on, the two-state solution of Israel and Palestine seems more and more catastrophic.
Works Cited


