The Fight for National Freedom:

The Establishment of Israel as an

Engine for Conflict and Compromise

Jeremy Linfield

Senior Division

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I.   Introduction

On May 14, 1948, Jewish leaders voted upon the name of the new country in which they would live. Several names were proposed: Zion, Judah, Tzabar, and, as a last-minute suggestion, Israel. After the results were tallied, the name "Israel" prevailed by a vote of seven to three. Israel hearkens back to Jacob's wrestling through the night with a mysterious opponent (Genesis 32:22-32).[1] While this naming may seem insignificant by itself, many important events occurred before 1948 that allowed for these leaders to be in the position to name this new country - and the establishment of Israel caused important events grounded in conflict and compromise to arise afterward.

Conflict and compromise are integral parts of history, shaping the world into what it has become. Conflict refers to a disagreement between two or more groups of people, sometimes leading to violence. Compromise is a solution to the conflict that benefits all groups involved, usually by all groups relinquishing something to mediate the dispute. Examples of conflict and compromise throughout history range from the abolition of slavery in America in the 1800's to the Cold War, a tense political situation following WWII between America and the Soviet Union. While the momentum in the 20th century for a Jewish homeland caused conflict between the Jews, a monotheistic people from Biblical times, and the Arabs in Palestine, a tenuous compromise was reached. This compromise, however, had serious consequences for the people in the region.

II. Context

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[1] Elon Gilad, "Why is Israel Called Israel?" April 20, 2015, accessed February 26, 2017, https://www.haaretz.com/.premium-why-is-israel-called-israel-1.5353207.

Persecution of the Jews, such as the Crusades (a series of Christian military expeditions to regain the Holy Land from Muslims between the 11th-13th centuries that killed Jews on the way) and the Spanish Inquisition (the expulsion of Jews from Spain in the 15th century) led to mass emigration from areas of persecution, and also emphasized the need for a Jewish home or safe haven. In particular, the Russian pogroms from 1881-1921, which consisted of three different periods of looting, raping, and general havoc wrought on the Jewish people by Russian civilians, had two important effects. First, there was mass emigration to Palestine (modern-day Israel) by Russian Jews, and second, there was a new enthusiasm and dedication to Zionism.[2]

A deciding factor that led to the creation of the state of Israel was the Holocaust (1939-1945), a systematic attempt to exterminate the Jews by Adolf Hitler and Nazi Germany through mass murder and concentration camps. These camps were detention centers where Eastern European Jews were forced to perform slave labor and eventually were suffocated in gas chambers. The Holocaust spurred a significant number of Jewish refugees from Europe to emigrate to Israel, adding to the population and the impetus to establish a Jewish homeland. Lastly, the Holocaust made the world more inclined to provide Jews with a homeland after they survived the utmost horror and persecution at the hands of the Nazis. [3]

Perhaps the most powerful factor that led to establishing a Jewish homeland was the pressure by the Zionist movement. The Zionist movement was a collection of various Jewish groups, such as the Mizrachi (religious Zionists) or Socialist factions, whose common goal was to establish a Jewish homeland. Although Zionism had been around for generations, the ideology

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[2] "Modern Jewish History," Pogroms, 1998-2018, accessed February 27, 2018, http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/pogroms-2.

[3] Tomer Kleinman, "Did the Holocaust Play a Role in the Establishment of Israel?" 2002, accessed February 5, 2018, http://www.history.ucsb.edu/projects/holocaust/Research/Proseminar/tomerkleinman.htm.

blossomed in the 19th century. The Jews had yearned for the "Promised Land" of Israel since they were forced into exile in 70 CE. In the words of the Psalms, "If I forget thee, O Jerusalem, let my right hand forget her cunning."[4] Since then, there has always been a remnant of Jews in Palestine.

In 1870, the first wave, or *aliyah* (the hebrew word for the act of going up), of immigration to Israel occurred. Among the immigrants was Eliezer ben Yehuda, who is credited with reviving the modern Hebrew language. In 1882, Leon Pinsker, inspired by the Russian pogroms, developed the basic tenets of Zionism by pushing for Jewish independence and formulating ideas of a national consciousness. Perhaps the most important figure in the Zionist movement was Theodor Herzl, who was able to publicize the Zionist movement and gain worldwide support in the late 19th century. He organized the First Zionist Congress in Basel, Switzerland in 1897.[5] In a speech at the 1903 Zionist Congress, Herzl articulated his firm belief that the Jews must have their homeland in Israel: "It goes without saying that the Jewish people can have no other goal than Palestine and that, whatever the fate of the proposition may be, our attitude toward the land of our fathers is and shall remain unchangeable."[6]

The Zionist movement was composed of heterogeneous groups with divergent views. For example, political Zionists believed that in order to establish a Jewish homeland, the Jews must appeal to a powerful nation for support, such as Britain or the United States. In contrast with this viewpoint, Socialist Zionists believed that Jews must settle in Israel and concentrate on

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[4] Psalms 137:5
[5] "A History of Zionism and the Creation of Israel," accessed February 11, 2018, www.zionismontheweb.org/zionism_history.htm.
[6] "Theodor Herzl Quotes," BrainyQuote, 2001, accessed March 04, 2018, https://www.brainyquote.com/authors/theodor_herzl.

progressing as a Jewish society. The subsequent waves of Zionism, such as the second aliyah

with the Socialist Zionists, swayed world opinion, as can be seen from the Balfour Declaration.[5]

The Balfour Declaration was a letter written by Arthur James Balfour, a British

statesman, to Lord Rothschild, a leader of the British Jewish community. Balfour plainly

declared that "His Majesty's Government view with favour the establishment in Palestine of a

national home for the Jewish people." This was a crucial statement because it showed the support

of the British government toward Jewish aspirations, and would be used later on by the Jews to

ground their claim to Israel.[7]

III. Conflict and Compromise

The mass immigration of Jews to Palestine and the Zionist movement caused growing

tension between the Jews and the resident Arabs in Palestine. The term "Arabs" refers to a group

of people originating from the Arabian peninsula, or Western Asia and Northeast of Africa.

Arabs are mostly Muslim, but some are also Christian. The majority of Arabs believed that

Palestine belonged to them, and that the Jews should not have a Jewish homeland there. Violent

attacks against Jews were common by Arabs when Jews tried to immigrate to Israel and procure

land. As a result of this violence, the Jews in Palestine founded self-defense groups: the

Haganah and the radical *Irgun*. The *Irgun* countered these attacks with violent attacks of their

own against Arabs and the British, who at the time occupied Palestine.[8]

This growing conflict between the Jews and Arabs and the compounding pressure from

the Zionist movement led to the passing of Resolution 181 on November 29, 1947, which

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[7] "The Balfour Declaration," Arthur J. Balfour to Lord Rothschild, November 2, 1917.
[8] "Arab-Israeli Conflict History « Israel-Palestina Informatie," Israel-Palestina Informatie, January 16, 2008, accessed March 04, 2018, http://www.israel-palestina.info/arab-israeli_conflict-html/#The_rise_of_Zionism.

became known as the United Nations Partition Plan. The United Nations (UN) is an international organization dedicated to preserving and promoting peace throughout the world. This resolution passed by the UN created a two-state solution to respond to the conflict between the Jews and the Arabs. According to Resolution 181, "The mandatory Power shall use its best endeavours to ensure that an area situated in the territory of the Jewish State, including a seaport and hinterland adequate to provide facilities for a substantial immigration, shall be evacuated at the earliest possible date and in any event not later than 1 February 1948." Resolution 181 also revoked the British Mandate for Palestine.[9] The British Mandate for Palestine was intended to be a compromise to the tension between Arabs and Jews by allowing both Jews and Arabs to establish respective communities in British Palestine. However, the British, who were in charge of facilitating this mandate, did not maintain what was written in it and hindered Jewish growth, due to pressure from the Arabs.[10]

As further proof of this tension between the Jews and the Arabs, on the day before the Resolution went into effect, Jewish leaders hosted a gathering but kept the location secret until 10 minutes before it started. They were secretive because they did not want to be attacked by Arabs while celebrating.[11] At this ceremony, David Ben-Gurion delivered one of his most famous speeches, in which he stated the importance of the state of Israel to the Jews, while also asking the Arabs in Israel to preserve peace. "We appeal - in the very midst of onslaught

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[9] "Resolution 181 (II). Future government of Palestine," UNISPAL, November 29, 1947, accessed March 4, 2018, https://unispal.un.org/DPA/DPR/unispal.nsf/0/7F0AF2BD897689B785256C330061D253.

[10] "British Palestine Mandate: History & Overview," History & Overview of the British Palestine Mandate, 1998-2018, accessed March 04, 2018, http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/history-and-overview-of-the-british-palestine-mandate.

[11] Gene Currivan, "Zionists Proclaim New State of Israel; Truman Recognizes it and Hopes for Peace," *The New York Times*, May 15, 1948.

launched against us now for months - to the Arab inhabitants of the State of Israel to preserve peace."[12]

While the UN Partition Plan was designed as a compromise to the conflict between the Jews and the Arabs, it incited further conflict between the Jews and the Arabs, in the form of the First Arab-Israeli War in 1948. The day after Ben-Gurion delivered his speech, the combined Arab military forces in Palestine, Egypt, Lebanon, Transjordan, Iraq, and Syria prepared for war. With tacit British support (contrary to the announced intent of the Balfour Declaration), the Arabs were able to acquire arms, block Israeli defenses to the Israeli settlements, block Israeli reinforcements, blockade the Mediterranean Sea, and allow Arab reinforcements from neighboring states to enter. Although the Jews were badly outnumbered and possessed fewer weapons, they were able to ultimately defeat the Arabs in March 1949 due to better military strategy and better use of the three ceasefires that took place during the war. They used the ceasefires better by acquiring more arms and repositioning their troops according to where they were needed most. The war ended after Israel signed armistice agreements with Lebanon, Transjordan (modern-day Jordan), Egypt, and Syria.[13]

The end of this war, however, did not mitigate the tensions between Jews and Arabs over the land of Israel. Even though there have been continued attempts at compromise, the situation has not been resolved. For example, in 1949, the Israeli government offered to neighboring Arab countries to accommodate 100,000 Arab refugees, but they declined because they refused to

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[12] David Ben-Gurion (address, Israel, Tel Aviv), 2003, accessed February 8, 2018, https://www.knesset.gov.il/docs/eng/megilat_eng.htm.
[13] Daniel E. Woodhead, "Factors About The Modern State of Israel's Existence," January 5, 2015, accessed February 5, 2018, http://doctorwoodhead.com/factors-modern-state-israels-existence/.

recognize Israel as an independent country.[14] Even with the armistice agreements in place, organized Palestinian Arab gangs, *Fedayeen*, would methodically raid or harm Israeli civilians near the border. It is estimated that between 1920-1948, 7,105 Jews died and 15,599 were wounded, while 15,203 Arabs were killed and 15,091 were wounded as a result of this conflict.[15] Attempts at compromise have had little to no effect on the ongoing conflict between the Jews and the Arabs.

IV. Effect

Since the Arab-Israeli War in 1948, three other major wars have taken place between the Jews and the Arabs. In October 1956, Israeli troops, along with Britain and France, invaded Egypt after Egyptian president Gamal Abdel Nasser nationalized the Suez Canal, which was used by Israel for trade. With help from the British and French, Israeli forces were able to successfully defeat Egyptian forces and gain Al-Arīsh, Gaza, and Rafah, and the area east of the Suez Canal. After UN intervention, Israel withdrew its forces in March 1957.

The unmediated conflict between the Jews and the Arabs culminated in another war in 1967, known as the Six-Day War. After Syrian bombardment of Israeli villages, Israel shot down six Syrian fighter planes. Interpreting this as an act of aggression, Egypt's President Nasser mobilized his troops along the Sinai border and signed a defense treaty with Jordan. Israel preemptively bombed the air force of Egypt, completely decimating it, before the threatened Arab onslaught could occur. Israel also overwhelmed Syrian forces in the Golan Heights. The entirety of the war lasted for only six days, June 5-June 10, in which Israel gained the West Bank

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[14] "Fact Sheets: No Peace Without Compromise," No Peace Without Compromise, September 2009, accessed March 05, 2018, http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/no-peace-without-compromise.
[15] "Vital Statistics," Total Casualties, Arab-Israeli Conflict, 1998-2018, accessed March 05, 2018, http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/total-casualties-arab-israeli-conflict.

from Jordan, the Golan Heights from Syria, Gaza and the Sinai Peninsula from Egypt, and most importantly, Jerusalem, which Jews, Muslims and Christian deem a holy city.

The conclusion of the Six-Day War did not end the violence between the Jews and the Arabs. Another war erupted on October 6, 1973, on the holiest day of the year for Jews, *Yom Kippur* (Hebrew words for "Day of Atonement"), hence the war is known as the Yom Kippur War. During this war, Arab forces fought with greater effectiveness, which led to more Israeli casualties than in previous wars. Israel ultimately seized the initiative and was able to cross the Suez Canal and advance into Syrian territory. Israel eventually signed a ceasefire with Egypt, effectively ending the war. After the Yom Kippur War, violence continued, until Israel and Egypt entered into a peace treaty on March 26, 1979, which stated that Israel would return the Sinai Peninsula in return for Egypt's recognition of Israel as a state.

The peace treaty between Israel and Egypt, however, did not solve the tension between the Jews and Arabs. Arab rebellion, or the *intifāḍah* (Arabic word for "shaking off") against the Israeli government arose most directly from Israeli settlement in the Gaza Strip, the territory along the west coast of Israel, and the West Bank, the territory along the west bank of the Jordan River. Israel had captured both of these territories in the Six Day War. As a result of this rebellion, a compromise, the Oslo Accords, was reached between Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO). The PLO is an umbrella organization whose mission is to "liberate" Palestinian Arabs, often though with violence against Israeli Jews. The compromise stated the intention of eventual Palestinian self-government in the Gaza Strip and the West Bank. This goal was not able to be reached, as a second *intifāḍah* broke out because the self-government was not achieved. [16]

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[16] The Editors of Encyclopædia Britannica, "Arab-Israeli wars," Encyclopædia Britannica, May 03, 2017, accessed March 05, 2018, https://www.britannica.com/event/Arab-Israeli-wars.

The conflict between the Jews and the Arabs has also caused division between Jews around the world. The division is centered around how Israel should respond to competing claims. Orthodox Jews generally believe that Israel should not give any of its land to Arabs, for both theological and practical reasons. Conservative or Reform Jews generally believe in a two-state solution, with both the Jews and the Arabs sharing the land which is now Israel, to finally solve the conflict between the Jews and the Arabs.[17]

V. Conclusion

The conflict caused by the establishment of the State of Israel continues to echo today. Due to the complex nature of the dispute, it is difficult to find an effective compromise between the Jews and the Arabs. A possible approach is to implement a two-state solution, in which the Jews and Arabs would share the land of Israel. But absent a commitment by both sides to live in peace with the other, this compromise would most likely be ineffective as the UN Partition Plan of 1947, which led to the First Arab-Israeli War in 1948.

VI. Appendix

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[17] Raphael Ahren, "From Annexation to Right of Return: What the Parties Say about the Palestinians," The Times of Israel, March 12, 2015, , accessed March 6, 2018, https://www.timesofisrael.com/from-annexation-to-right-of-return-what-the-parties-say-about-the-palestinians/.

Theodor Herzl, the "Father of Modern Zionism"

David Ben-Gurion reciting the Israeli Declaration of Independence in 1948

Israeli soldiers firing artillery in the First Arab-Israeli War

Israeli paratroopers standing in front of the Western Wall in Jerusalem after the Six-Day War

VI. Annotated Bibliography

Primary Sources:

Ahren, Raphael. "From Annexation to Right of Return: What the Parties Say about the Palestinians." The Times of Israel. March 12, 2015. Accessed March 6, 2018. https://www.timesofisrael.com/from-annexation-to-right-of-return-what-the-parties-say-about-the-palestinians/.
This article explains the different opinions of political parties in Israel regarding a two-state solution. This helps me understand the variety of viewpoints surrounding a two-state solution, and the tendencies of similar political parties.

"The Balfour Declaration." Arthur J. Balfour to Lord Rothschild. November 2, 1917.
The Balfour Declaration documented British support for the establishment of a Jewish home in Palestine. This helped me because the Balfour Declaration was one of the key factors in the establishment of Israel.

Ben-Gurion, David. Address, Israel, Tel Aviv. 2003. Accessed February 8, 2018. https://www.knesset.gov.il/docs/eng/megilat_eng.htm.
The address of David Ben-Gurion provides historical reasons, among other reasons, for the right of the Jews to a homeland of Israel, and states that the Jews want to help other people who live there. This helped me understand what Israel stands for and the belief of the Jews of their right to Israel.

Currivan, Gene. "Zionists Proclaim New State of Israel; Truman Recognizes it and Hopes for Peace." *The New York Times*, May 15, 1948.
This newspaper article describes the circumstances of the day of the establishment of Israel and also provides a detailed description of the ceremony in Tel-Aviv. This article helped me understand the wide range of emotions held by Jews on the day that Israel was officially established.

"David Rubinger, Israeli photographer who took iconic photo of soldiers at Western Wall, dies." Jewish Telegraphic Agency. March 02, 2017. Accessed March 07, 2018. https://www.jta.org/2017/03/02/news-opinion/israel-middle-east/david-rubinger-israeli-photographer-who-took-iconic-photo-of-soldiers-at-western-wall-dies.

This photograph shows three soldiers standing in front of the Western Wall in Jerusalem. This photograph helped me understand the raw emotion these soldiers experienced during the war, and the wonderment of the soldiers finally seeing Jerusalem in Israeli possession.

"Israel Is Born: Photos From the Dawn of a New State, May 1948." Time. May 10, 2010. Accessed March 07, 2018. http://time.com/3722466/born-under-fire-rare-photos-from-the-birth-of-israel/.

This photo shows David Ben-Gurion reciting the Israeli Declaration of Independence in front of the guests at the reception. This photo helps me understand the importance of what Ben-Gurion stated in his speech, and how he was able to captivate the audience.

Lee, Roger A. "The History Guy." Arab-Israeli Wars. November 15, 2012. Accessed March 07, 2018. https://www.historyguy.com/arab_israeli_wars.html.

This picture depicts Israeli soldiers firing artillery in the First Arab-Israeli War. This helps me understand what the fighting in the war was actually like.

Psalms. In *ArtScroll Tanach series / Meir Zlotowitz and Nosson Scherman*. New York: Mesorah, 1976.

This book in the Bible contains an anthology of psalms (hymns), traditionally ascribed to King David. These psalms helped me understand the Jewish yearning to return to Israel.

"Resolution 181 (II). Future government of Palestine." UNISPAL. November 29, 1947. Accessed March 4, 2018. https://unispal.un.org/DPA/DPR/unispal.nsf/0/7F0AF2BD897689B785256C330061D253 .

This resolution expresses the intention to establish Israel, while revoking the British mandate. The resolution set forth a two-state solution, in which the Jews would share Israel with the Arabs. This resolution helps me understand the attempted compromise between the Jews and the Arabs.

"Theodor Herzl, photograph, 19th century." Die Welt der Habsburger. Accessed March 07, 2018. http://www.habsburger.net/en/media/theodor-herzl-photograph-19th-century.

This photo showed Theodor Herzl standing behind a chair. This source helps me understand the respect that he commended because of his status in the Zionist movement.

"Theodor Herzl Quotes." BrainyQuote. 2001. Accessed March 04, 2018. https://www.brainyquote.com/authors/theodor_herzl.

This source provided different quotations from Theodor Herzl. This source gave me examples of the inspiring words that Herzl recited in his quest for a Jewish homeland.

Secondary Sources:

"Arab-Israeli Conflict History « Israel-Palestina Informatie." Israel-Palestina Informatie. January 16, 2008. Accessed March 04, 2018. http://www.israel-palestina.info/arab-israeli_conflict-html/#The_rise_of_Zionism.

This source recounted the factors surrounding the establishment of Israel. It also provided specific instances of conflict after the establishment of Israel. This source helped me understand the particulars of the conflict between the Jews and Arabs, and how compromise has had little success in mediating the conflict. This source also helped me understand the negative ways in which Britain handled the situation in regards to Jewish interest.

"British Palestine Mandate: History & Overview." History & Overview of the British Palestine Mandate. 1998-2018. Accessed March 04, 2018. http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/history-and-overview-of-the-british-palestine-mandate.

This source details what the British mandate was, and how it affected the Jews' quest for a homeland in Israel. This source helped me understand the true interest of Britain in regards to a Jewish homeland in Israel, and what they would do to protect that interest.

The Editors of Encyclopædia Britannica. "Arab-Israeli wars." Encyclopædia Britannica. May 03, 2017. Accessed March 05, 2018. https://www.britannica.com/event/Arab-Israeli-wars.

This source contains an in-depth account of all of the wars Israel has fought against the Arabs. This helped me understand the nature of the wars between Israel and the Arabs, and how the unmediated conflict from one war led to the next one.

"Fact Sheets: No Peace Without Compromise." No Peace Without Compromise. September 2009. Accessed March 05, 2018. http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/no-peace-without-compromise.

This source gave me examples of possible compromises between the Jews and the Arabs, such as solutions to the Arab refugee problem. This helped me understand the different viewpoints to each conflict, and why there were no compromises made.

Gilad, Elon. "Why is Israel Called Israel?" April 20, 2015. Accessed February 26, 2017. https://www.haaretz.com/.premium-why-is-israel-called-israel-1.5353207.

This source recounts the origin of the name of Israel. This helped me provide an interesting story for my paper from which I could build.

"A History of Zionism and the Creation of Israel." Accessed February 11, 2018. www.zionismontheweb.org/zionism_history.htm.

This source provides an in-depth description of the history of the Zionism movement, and how it has changed over time. It also provides the contribution of different individuals to the movement. This source helps me understand the factors that led to the establishment of Israel, such as the Zionist movement.

Kleinman, Tomer. "Did the Holocaust Play a Role in the Establishment of Israel?" 2002. Accessed February 5, 2018. http://www.history.ucsb.edu/projects/holocaust/Research/Proseminar/tomerkleinman.htm .

This source provides a detailed analysis of why the Holocaust was a factor in the establishment of Israel. This source gives me context to help me understand the establishment of Israel.

"Modern Jewish History." Pogroms. 1998-2018. Accessed February 27, 2018. http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/pogroms-2.

This source provided an in-depth description of the Russian pogroms in the late 19th and early 20th century. This source helped me understand the severity of the pogroms, and the effect that it had on the Jewish people, such as mass immigration to Israel and a dedication to Zionism.

"Vital Statistics." Total Casualties, Arab-Israeli Conflict. 1998-2018. Accessed March 05, 2018. http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/total-casualties-arab-israeli-conflict.

This source gave me the number of deaths after each Arab-Israeli clash. It helped me understand the severity of each conflict, and how sides have suffered.

Woodhead, Daniel E. "Factors About The Modern State of Israel's Existence." January 5, 2015. Accessed February 5, 2018. http://doctorwoodhead.com/factors-modern-state-israels-existence/.
This source dissects conflict during the establishment of Israel. It shows that the British supported the Arabs during this conflict. This article helps me understand the root of the conflict between the Jews and the Arabs.