

THE ZIONIST CLEANSING OF PALESTINE

by

Luke Anthony Lavin

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## ABSTRACT

This thesis addresses the question of the ethnic cleansing of Palestine by examining Zionism as a settler-colonial national movement, and it demonstrates that the realization of Zionism in both its Labor and Revisionist interpretations has inevitably led to continuous policies of ethnic cleansing in Palestine. The thesis begins by defining “ethnic cleansing” and analyzing various cases of population cleansings to determine whether they fit this definition. It then traces the development of Zionism and its national content, and discusses the state of Palestine before the rise of Zionism. To provide the necessary framework for understanding Zionism as a settler-colonial nationalism that embraced ethnic cleansing to achieve and sustain its national content, the thesis discusses the events of 1947-49, the developments in the wake of the 1967 war, and the 2002 and 2008-09 Israeli military campaigns in the West Bank and Gaza. Under the leadership of Labor Zionists, the Jewish community in Palestine launched a campaign of ethnic cleansing in 1947-49 in order to secure a Jewish state with a Jewish majority. The consequences of the 1967 war and the Revisionists’ rise to power in 1977 began a new chapter of ethnic cleansings through land confiscations, illegal settlements, and violent military campaigns against the Palestinians of the West Bank and Gaza. More than sixty years after the *nakba*, Palestinians continue to be forcefully removed from their homes, a consequence of Labor Zionism dominating the Zionist project before 1977, and the powerful influence of the Revisionists ever since.

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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

Since World War II, the Middle East has never been a quiet corner of the world, and in that sense the events of 2011 have been no exception. Popular uprisings have erupted across the region with a very real possibility of making drastic alterations in the political landscape. The world watched mass demonstrations unseat authoritarian rulers in Tunisia and Egypt and threaten to topple the governments of Yemen, Libya, and Syria. Western leaders have publicly supported Arab demands for political and civic freedoms in North Africa and the Middle East, praising the Arab peoples' desire for greater liberties and democracy, the universal pillars of the modern nation-state. In order to protect civilian demands for liberty and democracy, Europe and the United States went as far as to launch military strikes in Libya against government forces loyal to Muammar Gaddafi. Despite having provided substantial support to the very authoritarian regimes the Arab protests targeted (in the case of Egypt and Tunisia), Western states understood the significance of the "Arab Spring" and began diplomatic and economic maneuvers to be a part of the solution rather than part of the problem, highlighted by U.S. President Barack Obama's Middle East policy speech on 19 May 2011. However, European and American political leaders do, and have done, very little to protect the civil liberties and basic human rights of another group of Arabs that are participants in the longest running

conflict in the Middle East. The Palestinian-Israel conflict is approaching the century mark and seems as far from being resolved today as it did in the 1940s. The conflict has consumed billions of dollars and thousands of lives over the roughly ninety years of violence between Jews and Arabs in Palestine, yet the governments of Europe and the U.S. do very little to work constructively towards finding a peaceful and sustainable solution. It would almost seem that the “defenders of the free world” have deemed the Egyptians and Libyans worthy to enjoy the fruits of freedom and democracy but not the Palestinians.

The Palestinian-Israel conflict receives extraordinary attention, with scholars, journalists, political pundits, and religious leaders weighing in on the struggle for Palestine. Yet within this discourse, very little attention until recently has been given to the role played by Zionism as an ethno-religious national movement. A growing body of objective scholarship has begun to rewrite the official narrative of Zionism. No longer is Zionism allowed to play the role of the unquestioned hero of the righteous “David” defending enlightened society’s values in a neighborhood of authoritarian Goliaths. Like most national movements since the nineteenth century, Zionism has prevailed at the expense of another people opposed to its realization. Benny Morris, one of Israel’s revisionist historians, begins his *Righteous Victims: A History of the Zionist-Arab Conflict, 1881-2001* by quoting the Anglo-American poet, W. H. Auden:

I and the public know  
 What all the schoolchildren learn,  
 Those to whom evil is done  
 Do evil in return.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>First published in *The New Republic* in the fall of 1939, “September 1, 1939” was then published in a collection of W. H. Auden’s poems titled *Another Time*, by Faber and Faber in 1940.

These words, then, reflect the reality of the success of Zionism. Marginalized, oppressed, and brutalized, European and Russian Jews fled anti-Semitic policies and violence for Palestine, where they engaged in an ethno-religious state-building program that marginalized, oppressed, and brutalized Muslim and Christian Arabs. Jews have been the victims of cleansing campaigns throughout history, but it is only under the ideology of Zionism that they moved from the role of victim to the role of aggressor. Zionists have perpetuated the violent cleansing of Palestine in one form or another for sixty years, and they have succeeded in not only institutionalizing the cleansing of the “Other” and the colonizing of the “Other’s” lands, but they have done so while simultaneously cultivating the silence and complicity of the world powers (who maintain a publicly strong stance against population cleansings).<sup>2</sup>

In 2007, members of the Catholic German Bishops Conference visited Israel and the Palestinian Territories. A few of the bishops publicly commented on the similarities between the Nazi treatment of Jews and Israeli treatment of Palestinians. Bishop Gregor Maria Hanke drew a comparison between the ghettoizing of the two peoples, telling reporters, “Photos of the inhuman Warsaw ghetto at Yad Vashem in the morning, in the evening we go to the ghetto in Ramallah.”<sup>3</sup> True to form, Israel and its supporters were quick to condemn these comments. Zionists believe their nationalism is the antithesis of fascism, but they are having an increasingly difficult time articulating their stance as

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<sup>2</sup>The term “Other” is used to describe either the generic or specific group who do not constitute part of the “we, the people” identity construction (ethnic, religious, national, political, etc.) Often, the “Other” is a minority group within a heterogeneous population that the majority singles out in order to strengthen the identity of the majority against the identity of the minority. In the case of Israel and Zionism, the “Other” is represented by the non-Jewish peoples of the land

<sup>3</sup>*Ha'aretz*, 6 March 2007.

Israel continues its military occupation of the West Bank and Gaza, illegally settles its own citizens in the Occupied Territories, and denies Palestinians the right to engage freely in civic, political, and economic activities. Contrary to the rhetoric, Israel is not in the vanguard of democracy, freedom, and social justice. In fact, the Zionist ideology behind Israel is a colonial settler movement that uses population cleansing to achieve its nationalist aims. According to Colin Shindler, “the course of Israel’s history since the state’s establishment in 1948 has been determined by two central factors, the guiding influence of a specific Zionist ideology and the need for security,” but the issue of security has been overemphasized in order to justify the unethical and illegal consequences of Zionism.<sup>4</sup>

The realization of Zionist aspirations inevitably included policies of ethnic cleansing in Palestine. Population cleansing was the only solution compatible with the Zionist program of state-building as the competing claims between Zionists and Arabs for the right to a national home within the same territory came to the point where there were only two possible outcomes: either the Zionists drop the Jewish exclusivity that formed the basis of their nationalism, or they remove the Palestinian majority from within the borders of their state. Zionist leaders opted for the latter and began to prepare plans to expel the Palestinians in no uncertain terms. Since the end of the nineteenth century, proponents of Zionism have devised methods to make “Zion Zionist,” implementing the more violent forms of population cleansing. Assimilation was never an option for the Zionists, and once they realized that the Arabs would not consent to population

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<sup>4</sup>Colin Shindler, *A History of Modern Israel* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 10.

exchanges or transfers, the Zionist leadership began to plan for the ethnic cleansing of Palestine. Population cleansing was not limited to ethnic cleansing. Indeed, the unfolding of Zionism during the six decades after Israel declared its independence has introduced deportations, home demolitions, land expropriations, large-scale military campaigns, massacres, and terrorism to solve the “Arab Question” that was first addressed by Zionists during the 1890s. I attribute this to the development of two main ideologies within the Zionist movement and the chronological rise and fall of their respective political leadership.

Labor Zionism and Revisionist Zionism ultimately differ very little, as both endorse the existence in Palestine of a Jewish state with a Jewish majority. The two schools of Zionism differed in that Revisionists called for the use of military force to establish a Jewish state immediately (i.e., more or less at the beginning of the British mandate) in all of historic Palestine while the Labor camp argued that it was better to move slowly by establishing an internationally-supported Jewish home in part of Palestine and worry about expansion later. It is true that Labor Zionism was the more pragmatic tendency within Zionism, but its leaders were responsible for planning and carrying out the ethnic cleansing operations during the end of the 1940s when they controlled first the Yishuv and then the state. On the other hand, Revisionist Zionism provided the political space for the participation of the more militant and radical elements of Zionism, yet Israel, under Revisionist governments, has not directed large-scale ethnic cleansings similar to those which occurred in 1947-49 (though Revisionists are responsible for the decimating military operations against the Palestinians during 2002 and 2007-08). Perhaps the Revisionists would have led campaigns of ethnic cleansing

had they come to power before 1977. Had they carried the day in 1948, all of Palestine would have been subjected to a complete ethnic cleansing (and there would likely be no Palestinian-Israeli conflict today). But as Labor Zionists controlled the Zionist project until 1977, population cleansings were carried out only to the extent that the international community would tolerate them. The Israeli occupation of the West Bank and Gaza in 1967 and the Revisionists' control of Israeli governments since the 1970s have resulted in Zionist policies of population cleansing and subtle ethnic cleansing that have steadily eroded the wide international support Israel once enjoyed. However, like most nationalisms, Zionism has only reinforced its colonial-settler nationalism and its supporting official narrative in the face of criticisms from inside and outside Israel's borders. Presently, the Arabs control the smallest amount of territory west of the Jordan River than at any other point in the history of Palestine, a result of the state-building policies of ethnic cleansing inherent to Zionism's colonial-settler movement, and a testament to the powerful and highly-organized nationalism that is Zionism.

### The Polemics of Zionism

Leaders of Israel today compete to prove their "*Zion-ness*," which demonstrates the strength of Zionism as a national identity. We can also find the deep but artificial roots of this national identity in its historical narrative. Created in step with the establishment and development of Israel, the official narrative of Zionism explained the expulsion of the Palestinians from their homes in 1947-49 in the context of the unintentional consequences of war. This tradition continues to this day and is one of the strongest national narratives in the era of the modern nation-state. As one commentator

on the Zionist historiography commented, “There is no doubt that the essence of the arguments presented in the published material can be described as serving a one-dimensional historical narrative and scholarly recitation that ignore the historical narrative and scholarly recitation of the Other (the Arab and the Palestinian).”<sup>5</sup> Even some of Israel’s “revisionist” scholars, like Benny Morris, argue that the displacement of over 700,000 Palestinians was not the product of official Zionist policy. Morris’ groundbreaking work in 1988, *The Birth of the Palestinian Refugee Problem, 1947-1949*, launched the debate over the events surrounding Israel’s war for independence into the public sphere. *The Birth* drew extensively from Israeli archives, and the story that resulted was the repeated pattern of Jewish military units forcing Palestinian civilians to flee from their villages and cities. Palestinians who chose to remain in their homes were forcefully removed, and their houses were either demolished or quickly occupied by Jewish families. Despite his research, Morris concluded that the creation of the Palestinian refugee population was simply the tragic byproduct of a war between Jews and Arabs.

Other scholars, however, are able to analyze the empirical evidence immune to the parameters set by the Zionist national agenda, and their research clearly reveals that Zionist leaders meticulously planned and executed plans to remove the Palestinian population using any method necessary including, ultimately, ethnic cleansing. Most notable among these objective scholars are Ilan Pappé and Nur Masalha. Both men were educated in Israel where they received a proper education in research and scholarship, but when their training led them to present a narrative that contradicted Zionism’s official

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<sup>5</sup>As‘ad Ghanem, “Ethnic Cleansing as Transfer,” *Journal of Palestine Studies* 30, no. 4 (Summer, 2001), 99.

story, they were ostracized and vilified (both now teach in England). Israel is a unique environment for critical scholarship – on one hand, it provides a public space more accepting of thoughts and opinions critical of Israel and its policies than that tolerated in the United States (specifically regarding Israel), but on the other hand, critical scholars also are the recipients of Zionist-induced violence. Zeev Sternhell, an Israeli historian, was wounded in September 2008 by a pipe bomb left by a right-wing Jewish extremist for speaking out against the Israeli occupation of the West Bank and for advocating Palestinian use of armed resistance against Jewish settlers east of the Green Line. Pappé, who wrote *The Ethnic Cleansing of Palestine*, continued his work in Israel despite constant threats on his life; only after death threats were made against his family did he pack up and leave the country.

In contrast, Benny Morris' conclusion in *The Birth*, condemning but not completely rejecting Zionist policies in 1947-49, is a testament to how deeply rooted Zionism is in the Israeli national conscious as well as in much of the western world. Equally, the Arab world has its own narrative of the greater Arab-Israeli conflict that distorts facts and realities, and it would be unfair and wrong to falsely present the Palestinians as entirely helpless victims of a Euro-Jewish colonizing venture in Palestine. The Palestinians are not without fault in this drawn-out conflict and have contributed to the violence between the two communities dating back to the anti-Zionist demonstrations in the early 1920s. That the Palestinian terrorist campaigns directed at Israeli civilians or the decades of corruption and authoritarian rule within the Palestinian political leadership is omitted from this study is not to be understood as turning a blind eye to the role the Palestinians play in perpetuating the conflict. The various courses taken by the

Palestinians to resist Zionist encroachment of Palestine are beyond the scope of this paper. Seeking to understand the Palestinian-Israel conflict within the context of Zionism as a settler-colonial national movement does not require an examination of the anti-Zionist policies of the Palestinian resistance movements, for the latter is entirely the consequence of the former. Had Zionism not engaged in the colonial cleansings meant to remove the Arab population of Palestine, there may very well have never been a Palestinian Liberation Organization. Both the Zionist and Arab sides of the conflict have developed their own narratives, which they promote within their respective societies. However, only the Zionist narrative has successfully been exported to communities outside of the Middle East. Zionism's continued push to de-Arabize Palestine is also largely ignored by the international community. When the plight of the Palestinians is acknowledged, it is done so without substance (i.e., statements, pledges, and promises are made by U.S., European, and Arab governments but mere words have not changed the situation on the ground). As noted earlier, the European and American response to the recent popular uprisings in the Arab world stands in stark contrast to their silence on the Israeli occupation of the West Bank and Gaza. The founders of Zionism fully understood the importance of securing the backing of a powerful state. Though Britain was initially tabbed for such a role, Zionists eventually began soliciting support in the United States, which has proven to be critical to the success of Zionism.

Support for Zionism has been cultivated to such a degree that, in an era of intense partisan fighting within American politics, the only area political rivals can achieve a consensus on is the U.S.'s unconditional support for Israel. Like most Israeli politicians, U.S. political leaders strive to show that they are more pro-Israel than their opponents. In

the nationally-televised 2008 Vice-Presidential debate on 2 October, Governor Sarah Palin and Senator Joe Biden exemplified the reach of Zionism in American politics. The two bickered over every subject until the moderator brought up the Palestinian-Israel conflict. Palin spoke first, saying, “Israel is our strongest and best ally in the Middle East,” and added that Israel is a “peace-seeking nation.” Biden attempted to one-up his Republican rival, telling the moderator, “no one in the United States Senate has been a better friend to Israel than Joe Biden.” In response, Palin told Biden that she was encouraged to know that they both loved Israel, that this was a good thing to agree on, and that she respected him for such a stance.<sup>6</sup> Anyone who has observed the intensity of the recent partisan bickering in American politics can appreciate the accomplishment of the pro-Israel groups in generating American-consensus on Zionism. The depth of U.S. support for Zionism is a crucial factor in Israel’s long history of removing Palestinians from Palestinian lands; until the U.S. decides to hold Israel accountable for actions that contradict international law and the spirit of democracy and civil liberties, Israel will continue to act as it pleases.

The intense cultivation of pro-Zionist perceptions in the U.S. by pro-Israel lobby groups like the American-Israel Public Action Committee (AIPAC) is part of the explanation of why American policies are heavily biased in favor of Israel, but historically, the majority of Americans have always been sympathetic to Zionism. A Gallup poll taken one month after the U.S. recognized Israel on 14 May 1948 showed that Americans who sympathized with Jews outnumbered Americans sympathetic to the Arab position 3-1. This statistic has remained stable, evident by a poll taken almost fifty-

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<sup>6</sup>Quotes taken from the nytimes.com transcript of the debate, as recorded by CQ Transcriptions.

eight years later to the day, with only 27 percent of Americans saying that U.S. policy in the Middle East favored Israel.<sup>7</sup> Harry Truman's White House chief counsel, Clark Clifford, made the case for recognizing Israel on 12 May 1948. As an American sympathetic to Zionism, Clifford claimed that "recognizing the Jewish state would be an act of humanity that comported with traditional American values," and, furthermore, he supported the Zionist territorial claim to Palestine by quoting the Book of Deuteronomy. Despite strong protests by Truman's Secretary of State, George Marshall, the U.S. recognized the state of Israel two days later, only a mere eleven minutes after the Zionist leaders declared the independence of their state.<sup>8</sup> Truman's decision to recognize Israel as an independent state was not the pure product of Jewish-American lobbying but was in fact a reflection of the views of the great majority of non-Jewish Americans. The significance of Zionism in Christian theology played a crucial role in American support of the establishment of a Jewish state, but many Americans also saw parallels between the history of the United States and the history of Zionism in Palestine. In an article in the May/June issue of *Foreign Policy*, Israel's ambassador to the U.S., Michael Oren, wrote that Israel is the ultimate [American] ally because of its shared values and history:

What is the definition of an American ally? On an ideological level, an ally is a country that shares America's values, reflects its founding spirit, and resonates with its people's beliefs. Tactically, an ally stands with the United States through multiple conflicts and promotes its global vision. . . . An ally helps secure America's borders and assists in saving American lives . . . . Few countries fit this description, but Israel is certainly one of them. As U.S. President Barack Obama told a White House gathering, "The United States has no better friend in the world than Israel."<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>7</sup>Walter Russell Mead, "The New Israel and the Old: Why Gentile Americans Back the Jewish State" *Foreign Affairs* 87 (Summer 2008), 29.

<sup>8</sup>*Ibid.*, 28.

<sup>9</sup>Michael Oren, "The 'Realists' are Wrong: America Needs Israel Now More than Ever," *Foreign Policy*, May/June 2011,

President Obama confirmed the Israeli ambassador's words in the same speech where he pledged his administration's support for the Arab world's shift towards liberal democracy. After scolding the Palestinians for their efforts to secure the support of the United Nations for the pending unilateral declaration of independence in September 2011, Obama told the world that the friendship between the U.S. and Israel is "rooted deeply in a shared history and shared values" and that American commitment to Israel's security "is unshakable."<sup>10</sup> Obama's and Oren's claim that their respective countries have a shared history are quite accurate. The first Americans and the first Zionists left the religious restrictions of Europe behind, and they created a new society based on a "working the land" ideology. Therefore, both people began as colonists and had to dislodge the British presence from their respective colonial homes to establish their independent nations. Americans and Zionists believed they had an exceptional and divine right to "civilize" and develop their desired national territory (and many still do to this day). Finally, the indigenous populations of America and Palestine were cleansed from their ancestral lands as a consequence of the European settlers' nationalisms. However, the "shared values" comments are less credible, for Israel continues to deny democracy and basic freedoms to the Palestinians they control, oppress, and cleanse while the U.S. strongly supports the ideals of democracy, freedom, and self-determination – admittedly, flawed in its support at times – epitomized by the fact that on 19 May, Barack Obama

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[http://www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2011/04/25/the\\_ultimate\\_ally](http://www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2011/04/25/the_ultimate_ally) (accessed on April 25, 2011).

<sup>10</sup>Taken from transcript of speech, "Obama's Mideast Speech," *New York Times*, 19 May 25, 2011, <http://www.nytimes.com/2011/05/20/world/middleeast/20prexy-text.html> (accessed May 23, 2011).

supported the Arab people's push for a new Middle East, and he did so as the first African-American President of the United States.

### Cleansing as a Colonial Tool

Colonialism – the acquisition of control of a nation over a foreign territory, occupying it with settlers, and developing it economically while not extending the political, civic, and economic rights and benefits to the indigenous population – is the foundation of Zionism as a nationalist movement. Colonial movements inevitably contain elements of violence and conflict. The violent actions of the colonists are always directed against the colonized, whether for security or to assert colonial dominance. The other stage of colonial violence is either conflict between competing colonial powers or between the colonists and their distant national government. Zionism was unique in that it had no national metropolis that the colonists had left behind, but that did not mean that it was a colonial nationalism void of the violent friction common to colonial movements. Violence between the Zionist settlers and the native Palestinian population broke out several decades before any major cleansing campaigns began, as a result of the increase in Jewish land purchases and the concomitant growth of colonial settlements, as well as the Palestinians' economic, political, and social frustrations with the privileged status the British bestowed upon the Zionists. However, major population cleansings typically occur in the course of war, and Zionists had to dislodge their colonial protector before they could wage a war against the native population. Zionist terrorist cells attacked British troops and installations in Palestine and, by 1947, had forced Britain to abandon the Palestine Mandate.

The board was set for the Zionists to initiate a war of independence with the primary objective of ethnically cleansing as much territory as possible. The forced expulsion of 750,000 Palestinians occurred in the ideal setting as “such forced movements usually take place when territories are being fought over and thus boundary revision is a real and immediately obtainable possibility – i.e., during armed conflict (whether civil or international), in the context of belligerent occupation, or following the cessation of hostilities.”<sup>11</sup> Contrary to Benny Morris’ argument, the Zionist leaders in Palestine had long prepared to use force to change the demographics of Palestine; early on, however, there was no consensus on what methods would be used to accomplish this. In 1937, Labor and the Revisionists discussed the possibility of launching a military offensive against the Palestinians for the immediate establishment of the Zionist state. The left-wing members of Labor Zionism’s party, Mapai, believed that establishing a Jewish state in the context of armed conflict would not resolve the conflicting claims to Palestine between the Jews and the Arabs. Yitzhak Tabenkin advised his more militant colleague, David Ben-Gurion, that if they established the Jewish state before finding a resolution, it would lead to the “development of a militaristic state” and that there would be “a prolonged conflict with the Arabs.”<sup>12</sup> Ben-Gurion did not agree to the Revisionists’ demand for the establishment of a Jewish state in 1937, but neither did he listen to Tabenkin’s advice and postpone the realization of the Zionist goal until after the conflict between Zionist nationalism and Arab nationalism in Palestine had been resolved. By 2003, the Jewish state operated a military occupation of land captured through armed

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<sup>11</sup>Jennifer Jackson Preece, “Ethnic Cleansing as an Instrument of Nation-State Creation: Changing State Practices and Evolving Legal Norms,” *Human Rights Quarterly* 20, no. 4 (1998), 822.

<sup>12</sup>Shindler, 22.

conflict, exported ten percent of the global defense material trade, purchased billions of dollars of military equipment and weaponry, and had fought no less than five wars against its Arab neighbors. Tabenkin's prediction has indeed proved quite accurate.

However, the defiant colonial attitude of Israel is not entirely problematic, for it commands great respect from many Americans. Americans and Zionists believe they are fighting on the same side in the war on terror, and both have suffered fatal domestic attacks by Islamic extremists. They also share the "settler state" identity:

[The U.S. and Israel are] countries formed by peoples who came to control their current lands after displacing the original populations. Both states have been powerfully shaped by a history of conflict and confrontation with those they displaced, and both have sought justifications for their behavior from similar sources. Both the Americans and the Israelis have turned primarily to the Old Testament, whose hallowed pages tell the story of the conflict between the ancient Hebrews and the Canaanites, the former inhabitants of what the Hebrews believed was their Promised Land. Americans found the idea that they were God's new Israel so attractive partly because it helped justify their displacement of the Native Americans.<sup>13</sup>

Furthermore, the conscious denial of even the existence of a native population made the removal of the Palestinians and Native Americans respectively much more palatable. The influence of private property – the need to own and control property, dating back to John Locke – added a modern and secular justification for the colonizing and cleansing actions of the settler states, as the white civilized settlers had the true right to the land because of their ability to populate and cultivate it. This settler-state paradigm not only justified the removal of the native populations who had allowed the land to become "barren wastelands," but it actually encouraged it. The terrain of nineteenth-century Judea, with its rocky hills and unassuming olive trees, was in stark contrast to the "milk and honey" imagery that Christian and Jewish Zionists in Europe and the U.S. associated with

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<sup>13</sup>Mead, 37-38.

Palestine. This ideology of settler-colonialism – the natural right to a land because of the colonists’ ability to make it flourish – is a major factor in explaining the ease with which Zionists ethnically cleansed Palestine of its indigenous people. Finally, Americans sympathize with – and perpetuate – the Zionist projection of Israel as a victim of Palestinian violence. Israel has framed its use of violence against the Palestinians as a struggle for security and has exploited the tragic history of anti-Semitic violence in doing so. In the vein of the aforementioned W. H. Auden quote, Israel plays the “security dilemma” card as it has continuously attempted to ensure its security at the expense of the security of the Palestinians and constantly uses fear as the vehicle to incite violence against Palestinians as “another distinctly identifiable group.”<sup>14</sup> Thus, Israel fits the bill of the aggressor who views itself, and causes itself to be viewed, as the victim. From an international standpoint, this largely explains how Israel has been able to colonize and cleanse Palestine for nearly one hundred years.

### The Zionist Cleansing of Palestine

The argument being made here – that Zionism in Palestine was (and is) a colonial-national movement that has used violent methods of cleansing to realize its nationalist ambitions – is not new. As mentioned earlier, Ilan Pappé has made the case that the establishment of Israel came on the heels of a centralized program of ethnic cleansing. Gabriel Piterberg, in *The Returns of Zionism*, has argued that Zionism is best understood as a colonial movement. Other scholars have added to the literature of these two themes. What I propose is a synthesis of the two, framed in the context of two different yet

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<sup>14</sup>Michael Mann, *The Dark Side of Democracy: Explaining Ethnic Cleansing* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 24.

similar interpretations of Zionism (Labor and Revisionism). Both Labor and Revisionist Zionism are colonial in national content, but the timing of the rise to power by the leaders of each subideology has resulted in a fluid and continuously-developing colonial Zionism that has adopted new and varying methods to remove the Palestinians from the territory west of the Jordan River. Only by understanding the fundamental difference between these two movements within Zionism and how their politics unfolded historically can we identify the underlying cause of the continuing Palestinian-Israeli conflict.

Chapter One discusses population cleansing and, specifically, ethnic cleansing. In addition to showing the various definitions of ethnic cleansing and proposing a clear and acceptable definition, it places ethnic cleansing in its historical context and looks at a dozen cases of population cleansings to determine what falls under our definition of “ethnic cleansing” and what does not. It is important to place ethnic cleansing in its proper context either of state-building or of securing the stability of the state. Ethnic cleansing and the other violent forms of population cleansing are not the exclusive tools of evil, fascist states. Those running the state often vilify the “Other” regardless of the type of government in place. Nazis projected the Jewish “Other” as unclean vermin, in need of cleansing and, ultimately, extermination; the poison gas used in the extermination camps came from the *DEGESCH*, an acronym for the “German Company for Pest Control.”<sup>15</sup> However, contrary to official U.S. and British statements, the migrations that transpired during the end of World War II and continued after the guns fell silent in Europe were anything but humane. A reporter from the *New York Times* stationed in

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<sup>15</sup>Andrew Bell-Fialkoff, *Ethnic Cleansing* (New York: St. Martin’s Griffin, 1999), 21; Bell-Fialkoff translates *Deutsche Gesellschaft für Schädlingbekämpfung mbH* as the “German Association for the Extermination of Vermin,” which is not as accurate as the translation provided above.

Germany in early 1946 commented on the atrocious nature of implementing the transfer of large populations in an atmosphere rife with vengeance:

It was also agreed at Potsdam that the forced migration should be carried out “in a humane and orderly manner.” Actually, as every one knows who has seen the awful sights at the reception centers in Berlin and Munich, the exodus takes place under nightmarish conditions, without any international supervision or any pretense of humane treatment. We share responsibility for horrors only comparable to Nazi cruelties. . . .”<sup>16</sup>

Any state, adhering to any form of government, is capable of directing violence against another people in the name of nationalism. It is extremely difficult – and likely impossible – to identify one group of people who engaged in state-building or in policies to ensure the security and stability of their state without ever harming another group.

Chapter Two introduces the development of Zionism and its rise to an internationally-supported nationalism. The historical background of the Jews in Europe and in Russia in particular was critical to the emergence of Zionism. Zionism was the product of the intersection of the homogenous European nation-state model and violent anti-Semitism. This intersection produced an ethno-religious national movement with imagined roots in the distant soil of Ottoman Palestine. In the hands of gifted political leaders, Zionism evolved into a transcontinental movement which was prepared to take any and every measure to produce the Zionist state. Theodor Herzl and Chaim Weizmann oversaw the development and organization of the nationalist movement while Ze’ev Jabotinsky founded and directed an alternative vision of Zionism that was not bound to the constraints of working with a great power, namely, Britain. David Ben-Gurion (and, to a lesser extent, Menachem Begin) led the on-the-ground institutions of Zionist state building and guided the formation of the Jewish state in Palestine while planning and

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<sup>16</sup>Preece, 829.

executing the removal of the non-Jewish inhabitants. These men were responsible for developing the two competing camps within the Zionist movement, which has perpetuated the violent colonial attitude of Zionists towards the Palestinians. Chapter Three presents a glimpse of Ottoman Palestine before Zionism became an internationally recognized movement, and it offers an alternative picture to the Zionist perception of a backward, dirty, and miniscule Arab population that enforced the separation of society along sectarian lines and neglected the land. Examinations of Jewish-Muslim relations in Haifa and the self-perception of a Jewish Jerusalemite demonstrate that Palestine on the eve of Zionism was not a society where Arabs and Jews lived “in isolation from each other inhabiting hermetically sealed separate spaces” but was one where Muslims, Christians, and Jews interacted in a shared space in their every-day lives, in which “communal and civic boundaries were formulated, negotiated, upheld, and transgressed.”<sup>17</sup>

By 1900, Palestine had nearly to 600,000 people living within its administrative borders, around 84 percent of whom were Muslim, 11 percent were Arab Christians, and ten percent were Jewish (divided evenly between Ottoman Jews and foreign Jews). The most diverse cities were ‘Akka, Haifa, Safad, Nazareth, Jaffa, and Jerusalem; the Muslim residents made up a majority in each one. There were significant Christian communities in Jerusalem, Jaffa, Haifa, ‘Akka, and Nazareth, whereas large communities of Jews were located in Safad, Tiberias, and Jerusalem. However, Zionist Jews did not form a substantial population in any part of Palestine until after the founding of Tel Aviv in 1909. The demographic reality of Palestine presented an obstacle to achieving Zionist

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<sup>17</sup>Michelle Campos, *Ottoman Brothers: Muslims, Christians, and Jews in Early Twentieth-Century Palestine* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2011), 19.

aspirations, and after World War II, the Arab population of Palestine still greatly outnumbered the Zionists. Chapter Four focuses on how the leaders of Zionism carried out a program of ethnic cleansing to deal with the demographic reality facing the establishment of a Jewish majority in Palestine. The development of “transfer” in Zionist thought, Jewish land acquisitions, the rise of militant Zionists in Palestine, and the failures and successes of these three aspects paved the way for a war of demography that became known as Israel’s war of independence to the supporters of Zionism and as the *nakba* to the Palestinians and their sympathizers.<sup>18</sup> Labor Zionists devised and implemented strategies to force the Arabs of Palestine to abandon their cities and villages. Through threats, attacks, home demolitions, rape, and massacres, Zionist forces terrorized the Palestinians until over half of historic Palestine had been cleansed of its Arab majority. Labor Zionism required the ethnic cleansing of Palestinian Arabs from the territory desired by the Labor Zionists for a Jewish state, but once this was accomplished, ethnic cleansing ceased to be a significant policy.

Chapter Five introduces “act two” of the Zionist cleansing of Palestine. After the Israeli victory in June 1967, Labor Zionists remained divided on what to do with the West Bank and Gaza. While the Israeli politicians debated each other, right-wing Israelis began to build illegal settlements on Palestinian lands in the Occupied Territories. The settler movement introduced a new method of cleansing into the Palestinian-Israel conflict. The Labor-controlled Israeli government half-heartedly tried to prevent the spread of Jewish settlements, but the Revisionist opposition parties supported the settler movement and, in 1977, swept the Labor Zionists out of office. The increase in Jewish

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<sup>18</sup>*Nakba* is the Arabic for “catastrophe,” the term used by Palestinians for the events of 1947-49.

settlement activity went hand-in-hand with confiscations of Palestinian land, restrictions on daily life for non-Jews living in the Occupied Territories, and harsh treatment of the Palestinians. These factors culminated in a popular uprising in the Occupied Territories that redirected the Palestinian national movement and also demonstrated the determination of Zionists, particularly the Revisionists, to hang on to all of historic Palestine at all costs. The *intifada*, a response to Israeli occupation, opened the door for a peace settlement favorable to Israel by shifting the discourse from the refugees in the diaspora to the Palestinians in the Occupied Territories and causing the PLO to make unprecedented concessions. However, under the leadership of the Revisionist Likud Party, Israel rejected the opportunity for peace and, instead, continued the policies of colonizing Judea and Samaria, which had ignited the *intifada* in the first place. Israel's response to the Madrid peace conference further illustrated the fact that Revisionist-oriented Zionism would continue to guide Israeli policies vis-à-vis Palestine.

Israel clearly preferred buttressing Zionism's colonial character over taking actions that would reduce the territorial size of the Zionist state but likely bring greater stability to the region. The final chapter focuses on the colonial nature of Zionism that is entrenched in Israel by examining Israel's military operations in the West Bank in 2002 and in Gaza during the winter of 2007-08. I argue that the return of the Revisionists to power in Israel led to the exploitation of the "War on Terror" in order to launch the violent campaigns of Operation Defensive Shield and Cast Lead. The two military operations were presented as campaigns to disable the "terrorist infrastructure" of the Palestinians but, in fact, were designed to subjugate and demoralize the Palestinian resistance while further transforming Palestinian land into Israeli settlements. In the early

twenty-first century, Zionism no longer has the clear Labor-Revisionist division, as evidenced by Ariel Sharon's founding of a "centrist party" and the Labor Party joining a coalition of extreme right-wing Revisionists in 2009. The rise of the Israeli right has not led to a repeat of the *nakba*, but that does not mean that Zionist policies no longer seek to cleanse Palestine of the Palestinians. The majority of Israelis have added terms like "stationary transfer" and the "transfer of rights" to their "political lexicon, terms that do not necessarily imply the expulsion of Palestinians from their homes."<sup>19</sup> Rather than using forced expulsions to homogenize the territory under Israeli control, contemporary Zionists use violence and marginalization to demoralize the Palestinians, encourage emigration, and provoke Palestinian terrorism to justify disproportionate retaliation, all the while paying lip-service to a peace process that moves at a fraction of the pace of the cleansing of Palestine.

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<sup>19</sup>Robert Blecher, "Citizens without Sovereignty: Transfer and Ethnic Cleansing in Israel," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 47, no. 4 (Oct., 2005), 728.

## CHAPTER II

### ETHNIC CLEANSING ENTERS THE DISCOURSE

#### The Emergence of Ethnic Cleansing

The twentieth century produced unparalleled feelings and perceptions of an ideal world for peoples all across the globe. Notions of freedom and democracy – embodied in self-determination – found receptive audiences in countries that had been both colonizer and colonized. Earlier identities that were either dormant or unknown surfaced and helped create more diverse and vibrant societies. People no longer identified themselves in purely ethnic, religious, or national terms but found new ways to connect to each other through the proliferation of identities. In the wake of World War II, many of the ragged survivors believed a bright new world was on the horizon. However, little of this euphoria has found its way into the twenty-first century.

In global terms, only a relatively small number of people enjoyed the peaceful and prosperous outcomes of democracy and capitalism. The latter half of the twentieth century revealed that the intention to adhere to the principles of democracy and capitalism could no more guarantee social tolerance and economic well-being than totalitarianism or communism. The two World Wars may have ended the massive traditional military conflicts known to earlier generations, but they were replaced by equally tense – if much smaller – conflicts. U.S. President Woodrow Wilson brought

national self-determination to the negotiating table in 1919 when the world (read: victors) was deciding how to emerge from global war. Since then, conflicts between opposing groups desiring political and economic control over the same territory have affected tens of millions of people.<sup>1</sup> Democracy is no guarantor of peace and tolerance; in fact, the combination of modernity and democracy has produced a ‘murderous’ cleansing as alien or minority groups are often seen as the principal threat to the social values and political power of the majority.<sup>2</sup>

In what we may call the contemporary phase of modernity, beginning with the arrival of the twentieth century, cleansings have proliferated. Cleansings no longer only take a religious or ethnic form. While religion and ethnicity still account for most acts of cleansing, other identities – race, nationality, class, and sexual orientation – must also be added to the categories of population cleansing. Furthermore, the methods have evolved in modern times, resulting in much faster and far more devastating campaigns to remove unwanted populations.<sup>3</sup> Though cleansing can take a number of forms, ‘ethnic cleansing’ in today’s vernacular has become the name used for conflicts/campaigns where population cleansing occurs. Ethnic cleansing did not enter the mainstream lexicon of the international community until the first half of the 1990s, when the media made extensive use of the term while covering the violence in the former Yugoslavia. Since then, ‘ethnic cleansing’ has been applied to most violent conflicts all over the world where one group initiates the forcible removal of one or more ‘others.’

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<sup>1</sup>Preece, 818.

<sup>2</sup>Mann, 2.

<sup>3</sup>Bell-Fialkoff, 21.

The term ‘ethnic cleansing’ derives originally from the Serbo-Croatian/Croato-Serbian ‘*etničko čišćenje*’ for “ethnically clean territories” and was most likely a military term used to describe conquered territory from which the enemy had been expelled; the concept of ‘clean’ as ‘without contamination’ and the identification of the enemy as a distinctly different ethnic group provided the concept of ‘ethnic cleansing’ that is used today.<sup>4</sup> The common use of ‘ethnic cleansing’ by the mass media may be a recent development, but population cleansing predates the violence in Bosnia and its neighboring states. Cases of violence directed against an identifiable ‘other,’ whether ethnic or religious (among others), are found throughout human history, but only in the modern era have the perpetrators of such violence sought the complete eradication of a population from a specific territory.<sup>5</sup>

Ethnic cleansing as an official policy of a state or group is often considered a modern phenomenon because of the important role the nation-state plays in population management. The Peace of Westphalia in 1648 at the end of the Thirty Years’ War confirmed the rule of monarchs and the religious identity of their state within clearly demarcated borders. The Age of Enlightenment during the following century sent Europe into a reorganization of political order based not on religion but on the idea of the sovereign state largely within the political boundaries set by the Treaty of Westphalia. During the transition of Europe from a handful of kingdoms to a collection of smaller

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<sup>4</sup>Drazen Petrovic, “Ethnic Cleansing – An Attempt at Methodology,” *European Journal of International Law* 5, no. 3 (1994), 343.

<sup>5</sup>There are cases that can be argued to be exceptions, such as Catholic Spain’s persecution of Jews and Muslims in the Iberian Peninsula, but when conversion is a possibility, the identity rather than the person is eradicated, which in itself is a type of ‘cleansing.’ This is discussed further in the examination of a number of historical events associated with cleansing.

nation-states, religion ceased to be the main justification for rule, and religious minority communities were guaranteed equal rights based on membership of, or citizenship in, a state. The new world order was supposed to end conflict between religions, and to a large extent this was accomplished. Yet ethnicity often replaced the void created by the disappearance of religion as the primary marker of identity in the need for homogeneity. Constitutional nationalism and ethnic nationalism emerged as the two primary bonds of national identity in Europe and, in the case of the latter, ethnicity often became the tool used by political elites to strengthen their control over specific territory. The old borders were redrawn to address the new political realities, and population management – such as manipulating borders or expelling minorities – became an “instrument of nation-state creation.”<sup>6</sup> In doing so, however, new minority groups were created and served as obstacles to the majority’s national agenda. If the minority population could not be persuaded to migrate, they often fell victim to the restrictive – or oppressive – nature of population management. Political leaders employed a strategy of persecution directed at minority groups in their state-building projects, subjecting their minority communities to processes ranging from assimilation at one end to massacre at the other. The peace settlement of 1919 was supposed to be the universal peace that concluded the war to end all wars. Instead, it created new tensions and conflicts between ethno-national groups vying with each other for exclusive control over shared territory. Such struggles are the ideal framework for violent outbursts of ethnic cleansing.

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<sup>6</sup> Preece, 820.

### Defining Ethnic Cleansing

The violence in Bosnia and Herzegovina needed a specific word or term to convey its nature, and ‘ethnic cleansing’ emerged as the term used to describe the “set of human rights and humanitarian law violations in both Bosnia and Herzegovina and Croatia.”<sup>7</sup> However, governments and international organizations quickly adopted the term into the vocabulary of international affairs, and its use has since become common when describing ethnic conflicts throughout the world. Ilan Pappé began *The Ethnic Cleansing of Palestine* by defining ‘ethnic cleansing,’ and it is appropriate to do so here as well. He noted that ethnic cleansing “has come to be defined as a crime against humanity, punishable by international law,” but what exactly is meant by ethnic cleansing?<sup>8</sup>

The Oxford Dictionary defines ‘ethnic cleansing’ as “the mass expulsion or killing of members of an unwanted ethnic or religious group in a society,” while the Merriam-Webster Dictionary defines it as “the expulsion, imprisonment, or killing of an ethnic minority by a dominant majority in order to achieve ethnic homogeneity” and dates the first known use of the term back to 1991. The popular online encyclopedia, Wikipedia, places the arrival of ‘ethnic cleansing’ in 1992 and lists “a purposeful policy designed by one ethnic or religious group to remove by violent and terror-inspiring means the civilian population of another ethnic or religious group from certain geographic areas” as the definition of ‘ethnic cleansing.’

The United Nations accepts these definitions as well, and the UN’s Council for Human Rights includes and specifies certain actions such as age or gender targeted

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<sup>7</sup> Drazen, 342.

<sup>8</sup> Ilan Pappé *The Ethnic Cleansing of Palestine* (Oxford: Oneworld, 2006), 1.

detention and deportation, the separation of families, the destruction of homes, and the repopulation of homes or areas by the aggressor as examples of acts of cleansing. The United States considers the expulsion of a people by force in an attempt to homogenize a mixed population in a specific area as ethnic cleansing and adds that the “eradication, by all means available, of a region’s history” is included in the definition of ‘ethnic cleansing.’<sup>9</sup> Not only does the US State Department agree with these definitions, but it goes a step further by arguing that acts of genocide can occur in the context of ethnic cleansing, pointing to the murderous actions of the Army of Republika Srpska in and around Srebrenica in July 1995 as an example.

In *The Dark Side of Democracy: Explaining Ethnic Cleansing*, Michael Mann referred to ‘ethnicity’ as “a group that defines itself or is defined by others as sharing common descent and culture,” and so “*ethnic cleansing* is the removal by members of one such group of another such group from a locality they define as their own.”<sup>10</sup> In *Ethnic Cleansing*, Andrew Bell-Fialkoff placed ‘cleansing’ within the category of ‘population removal,’ and wrote that “population cleansing is a planned, deliberate removal from a certain territory of an undesirable population distinguished by one or more characteristics such as ethnicity, religion, race, class, or sexual preference.”<sup>11</sup> Bell-Fialkoff’s definition, as he admits, is not for ‘ethnic cleansing’ but for ‘population cleansing.’ The latter, he concludes, can also be called ‘population removal’ and covers a variety of methods in its scale with genocide as the most extreme, emigration under

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<sup>9</sup>Ibid., 2.

<sup>10</sup>Mann, 11.

<sup>11</sup>Bell-Fialkoff, 3.

pressure as the least invasive, while between the two are exchange, transfer, and cleansing/expulsion.<sup>12</sup>

Removing an unwanted population can take various forms. Australia attempted to ‘breed out’ the aborigine – among other methods – in its campaign to remove the indigenous population from settler society. The United States expelled Native Americans from the territories that fell under its control during the expansion westward while assimilating minority communities such as the Irish, Italians, and Germans during the nineteenth century. Thus, ethnic cleansing is a term that has become both very specific and very vague. On one hand, it can take its literal meaning borrowed from the Serbs and Croats, referring to the physical removal of an ethnic population from a designated territory; on the other, it is used to identify any method of population management, such as: “the removal of elected authorities; the prohibition of ethnic associations and minority language use; forced homogenization or assimilation; work restrictions; restricted access to education, housing, medicine, food, or humanitarian aid; forced labor; confiscation of property; political violence in the form of pogroms and purges; or terror campaigns inflicting beatings, rape, castration, and even death.”<sup>13</sup>

Depending on the situation, author and/or audience, ‘ethnic cleansing’ can refer to either ‘ethnic cleansing’ or to ‘population cleansing.’ Here it is extremely important to make a clear separation between the two meanings of ‘ethnic cleansing’ within the context of Zionism in Palestine. I will use ‘ethnic cleansing’ to describe the forced and intentional removal of one ethnic or religious group by another – either through the killing, expulsion, or a combination of both, of the unwanted group from a specific

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<sup>12</sup>Ibid., 4.

<sup>13</sup>Preece, 822.

territory. 'Population cleansing' will refer to the general 'cleansing' of an identifiable population – based on race, ethnicity (shared culture and language), religion, political ideology, class, gender, sexual orientation, or age – using any temporary or permanent method, from assimilation to genocide. The Zionist project in Palestine inevitably led to instances of both types of cleansing. Ethnic cleansing, as placed within the framework of modernity, democracy, and the nation-state, was a new phenomenon for the inhabitants of Palestine; in contrast, population cleansing had a lengthy history in the region, going almost as far back as the beginnings of civilization.

#### Cases of Ethnic Cleansing?

Cases of population cleansing date back to premodern times, and one of its earliest implementations is attributed to the Assyrians in the eighth century BC. The empires of the ancient world pursued campaigns of cleansing for a number of reasons. The Assyrian, Babylonian, Greek, and Roman empires all undertook one form or another of population cleansing, usually accompanied, or soon followed, by resettling their own citizens in the captured territories. While population cleansing appeared to be an inherent aspect of imperial policy, it is debatable if ethnic cleansing, according to our definition of it, was used with any frequency.

One of the reasons why ethnic cleansing did not factor into the strategic plans of conquering powers is that populations were quite small, and that those who controlled the newly acquired territory needed people to work the land and provide foodstuffs and taxes to the central authority. Furthermore, the cost of an operation to remove a population completely would far exceed the cost of simply resettling small groups of agitators or

elites. Populations were decimated or moved only when they rebelled or the imperial capital needed more skilled professionals to repopulate its ranks due to the loss of lives from campaigns. Even with the case of the Jews under King Hezekiah, Sennacherib's commander offered the Jewish rebels a choice between "death or policed deportation." The point of deportations was to remove agitators from troublesome areas, not to eradicate entire peoples, since "people were valuable resources."<sup>14</sup> Political elites, religious leaders, and military commanders typically formed the population that was subjected to forced migration, while the majority of the local inhabitants were left to their daily lives, with the only major change being the destination of their taxes. It was very rare for the removal of an entire population from a specific territory.

That is not to say that there were no cases where entire ethnic or religious groups were forced from their homes. Under European Christian rule in the Middle Ages, massacres and expulsions were the most commonly used methods of population cleansing. Sometimes, conversion was sufficient for the Christian rulers, and while the identity was 'cleansed,' the same people continued to live in the same areas, thereby avoiding the need for ethnic cleansing. Ethnic cleansing did happen, though, and Jews were usually the primary target. They were a distinct minority in Christendom with enough size to constitute a threat to the majority, and in 1290, Jews were expelled from England. Other European powers carried out similar expulsions, as Jews were removed from France and Hungary the following century, and from Austria, Lithuania, and Portugal during the fifteenth century. The various German regions expelled Jews

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<sup>14</sup> Mann, 41.

throughout this period, while Spain enforced the most violent emigration of its Jewish and Muslim subjects.<sup>15</sup>

Cleansings continued past the Middle Ages and into modernity. The introduction of colonialism increased the use of ethnic cleansing as a tool of population cleansing. Colonists identified themselves in opposition to the native inhabitants of the colonized territory and conversely caused the local population to develop a ‘native’ self-identity in opposition to the colonists. Settler colonialism was – and is – a distinct phenomenon that leads to ethnic cleansing because of the need to visibly remove the native population. Colonists considered themselves democratic, but their democracy was not extended to the colonized, who often had their own democratic institutions. The glaring contradiction of this social structuring in colonialism created the conscious or unconscious need to remove the noncolonists.

In addition to the religious motivation used in expelling “other” populations, economic factors (or more appropriately, the greed factor) played an increasingly important role. Colonists desired the land that belonged to the colonized, and ethnic cleansing proved to be the best vehicle to satisfy both. Ethnic cleansing in the colonial context occurred where “four interrelated sets of power networks” merged: military power, economic power (as material interest or control over natural resources is always in play in ethnic cleansing), ideological power, and political power (with both causing the need to remove the contradiction of the enlightened democracy).<sup>16</sup> Imperialism and colonialism became inherited institutions as monarchies and once-dominant maritime

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<sup>15</sup> Andrew Bell-Fialkoff, “A Brief History of Ethnic Cleansing,” *Foreign Affairs* 72, no. 3 (Summer, 1993), 112.

<sup>16</sup> Mann, 30-32.

powers democratized and became capitalist, and their new political and economic landscapes merged with their imperial or colonial holdings to produce a form of colonialism that committed the most violent acts of cleansing. As Michael Mann wrote:

Colonial cleansings did represent the first dark side of emerging modern democracy. Where settlers enjoyed de facto self-rule, these were in local reality the most democratic regimes in the world at the time. Their murderous cleansing was usually worse than that committed by imperial authorities like the Spanish, Portuguese, and British Crowns, their viceroys and governors, plus Catholic and Protestant churches and orders.<sup>17</sup>

In the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, the nation-state became the primary political structure for colonial nations, and the principles of self-determination granted to the colonists or imperialists of the new political entities only reinforced nationalist movements. In Greece and in the Balkans, the nation-state model filled the vacuum left by the retreating Ottoman Empire. Since then, the number of conflicts involving ethnic cleansing increased dramatically, as did ethnic cleansing's violent and most murderous aspects. Ethnic cleansing became a regular feature of contemporary times, whether it was widely publicized or not. From Pol Pot's nationalistic cleansing of millions of ethnic Vietnamese to the persecution of non-Muslim Black Africans in Sudan, cleansings continue to be carried out all around the world. What cleansings are actually ethnic cleansings? An examination of the following cases will demonstrate the difference between 'ethnic' and 'population' cleansings, beginning with some of the most recent.

### The Balkans

There are ongoing conflicts involving ethnic cleansing and population cleansing that began years or decades ago, yet it was the Balkan conflicts of the 1990s that

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<sup>17</sup> Ibid., 107.

somehow internationalized the process of ethnic cleansing and permanently added it to the discourse of the international community. The violence that erupted following the collapse of Yugoslavia was not a spontaneous event. It is true that tensions had existed earlier, most notably around the turn of the century, when Croats violently attacked Serbs and forced conversion to Catholicism, while both Serbs and Croats looked at the ethnically Croatian and Serbian Muslims as 'traitors' for having converted to Islam under the Ottomans. However, the various communities lived in relative peace until the breakup of the formerly federal state of Yugoslavia in 1990. The decline of communism in the region and in Eastern Europe in general had devastating consequences on the industrial sector of these societies. Urbanized workers suddenly found themselves out of work as the cracks in the communist model grew and weakened the economies of the communist countries. Unemployed, thousands of workers returned to the primitive conditions of their villages. The influx of skilled laborers in rural villages created a layer of society composed of idle and unhappy people. The new situation inevitably increased tensions between communities, and the competition for resources in the wake of the breakup of Yugoslavia allowed the tensions to manifest into an extremely violent conflict. By the summer of 1992, roughly 2.5 million people had been displaced by the violence, and when the last round of fighting ended, that number had almost doubled.

It is estimated that 200,000 civilians died in the violence, with countless others wounded or traumatized by the violence. Intimidation, backed by killing and house demolitions, was critical to the campaigns of ethnic cleansing. One of the unique features of the effort to make the area more homogenous was the horrific use of rape. Rape served as a weapon to demoralize the enemy and cause communities to abandon their homes;

between 30,000 and 50,000 women, mostly Bosnian Muslims, were raped during the conflict.<sup>18</sup> No side was immune from playing the roles of victim and perpetrator, but most blame was attached to the actions of Serbian forces under Slobodan Milosevic. This case of cleansing satisfies the earlier definition of ethnic cleansing, as one group (Serbian Orthodox) intentionally used force to remove another group or groups (non-Serbian Orthodox) from specific territory. The ethnic cleansing in the Balkans during the 1990s, however, was not the product of a historic, deep-rooted hatred between two ethnic groups. In fact, it is difficult to argue conclusively that Serbs and Croats hail from measurably distinct ethnicities.

At the end of the twentieth century, the identities separating the combatants were primarily religious and national. Serbian elites exploited a fear of the “Other” in order to strengthen Serbian identity further and solidify the Serbian state, yet their playing on popular fears and using them to achieve political ends “generated a whole new set of fears.”<sup>19</sup> Milosevic exploited the threat that Bosnians and Croats posed to Serbs in Bosnia and Herzegovina as well as in Serbia and garnered wide support for a “strike first” mentality that so often dominates national policy regardless of whether the threat is real or perceived. By exploiting the negative history between Serbs and their neighbors and combining nationalism with the notion of sacred territory (Kosovo), Serbian leaders manipulated their compatriots into engaging in heinous acts to cleanse the land of the “Other.” Relative quiet fell over the Balkans in the early years of the twenty-first century after the violence during the 1990s had altered the demographics of the region, but it

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<sup>18</sup>Bell-Fialkoff, *Ethnic Cleansing*, 47.

<sup>19</sup>Heather Rae, *State Identities and the Homogenisation of Peoples* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 205.

remains to be seen if the quiet will last in the areas where ethnic cleansings were carried out.

### Rwanda

The horrors of ethnic cleansing in the Balkans managed to keep an even more decimating conflict in the background of the international consciousness during the first half of the 1990s. The assassination of the Hutu president of Rwanda, Juvenal Habyarimana, in April 1994 almost instantly ignited what had been a simmering conflict into an inferno. Within 100 days, up to a million Rwandans were killed by government and paramilitary forces, such as the infamous Interahamwe. Rwanda, divided between a Hutu majority and a Tutsi minority, witnessed an increase in violence beginning in 1990 with attacks launched by Tutsi rebels from Uganda, known as the Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF), which ultimately led to civil war. The tensions between the two peoples date back to the end of World War I, when the mandate for the territory, a German colony since 1884, was given to Belgium, whose troops had invaded in 1916. The Belgian government reinforced the Tutsi-Hutu division by empowering a Tutsi elite and using identification cards that clearly identified their holders as Tutsis or Hutus. In the late 1950s and early 1960s, violence between the two groups escalated, and in the process of establishing an independent Rwanda, Tutsi rebels exiled to neighboring countries attacked the Hutu-dominated government while Hutu forces attacked the local Tutsi population. When Habyarimana seized the presidency via a military coup in 1973, the violence largely dissipated though tensions remained.

The civil war that began in 1990 ended three years later with a peace agreement, but the death of Habyarimana unleashed a new vicious cycle of violence between the two people. The upper echelon of Hutu politics, promoting a very nationalistic and anti-Tutsi ideology, capitalized on the fear and anxiety of Hutus displaced by the RPF. The Hutu government and military, with almost enthusiastic support from the Interahamwe and other similar groups, coordinated a cleansing campaign to eradicate the Tutsis from Rwandan soil. Moderate Hutus also found themselves victims of the violence in the “cleansing catastrophe” that took the lives of up to one million people and created a refugee population that at least doubled that number with the RPF-victory over the Rwandan government forces.<sup>20</sup> Ethnic cleansing unquestionably played out in Rwanda as Hutu forces systematically carried out attacks on the Tutsi minority in order to eradicate the latter from Rwandan soil. The murderous cleansing directed at Tutsis and Hutu moderates, regardless of age or gender, went beyond ethnic cleansing. The radical leaders of the political and military institutions did not devise a plan to expel Tutsis but, rather, to eradicate them. Some scholars of population cleansing and ethnic conflicts argue that genocide, with its clause of “intending to eradicate an identified population rather than remove it,” more adequately defines the violence of Rwanda.<sup>21</sup> What transpired in

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<sup>20</sup> Bell-Fialkoff, *Ethnic Cleansing*, 47.

<sup>21</sup> Genocide, the most extreme method of population cleansing, is typically defined as intentional and systematic acts meant to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnic, racial or religious group. However, assigning genocide – a crime that warrants the same punishment as other crimes against humanity including ethnic cleansing – to cases of population cleansing has proven to be politically controversial, whereas the other crimes tend to be much more easily accepted. Scholars of population cleansing are nearly unanimous in their classification of the Holocaust as an act of genocide, but begin to differ on Rwanda and fiercely debate each other over the Turkish massacres of the Armenians. A number of scholars suggest that genocide ended with the Holocaust, as the probability of something similar occurring in the future is extremely

Rwanda in the 1990s was ethnic cleansing at its most violent, irrespective of the debate on whether it constituted genocide or not.

### Nazi Germany, the Holocaust, and the Postwar Transfer

The only case of genocide that has near-universal acceptance is the Holocaust. The systematic and institutionalized nature of the murder of 6 million Jews shocked the international community unlike any other instance of population cleansing. German identity had long been a source of pride, constructed upon the Germanic language and culture that ultimately united the German principalities and states under the efforts of Prussia's Prime Minister, Otto von Bismarck in the mid-nineteenth century. However, in the aftermath of World War I, the foundations of German identity changed. Adolf Hitler and the Nazi Party reoriented Germany away from the intellectual and cultural bonds of identity, and redefined "German" along racial lines. The newly created "ethnic" identity of German became a powerful force in German society and politics, but ethnicity or race was not sole paradigm behind the violence of the Holocaust. The Nazi cleansing of Europe was not restricted to race, as it was carried out on the basis of ethnicity, ideology, and sexual orientation through deportations, expulsions, population transfers, and mass murder.<sup>22</sup> There is no need to dwell on Nazi Germany's policies of ethnic cleansing and genocide, but it is worth noting that Hitler pursued whatever type of cleansing best fit the demands and constraints of the current situation, moving between deportations and

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remote, and the Holocaust has been – and will be – the standard that any potential case of genocide will be measured against. With genocide "off the table," violent ethnic cleansings with synonyms of "annihilation" and "mass destruction," remain as the most extreme forms of population cleansing.

<sup>22</sup>Bell-Fialkoff, *Ethnic Cleansing*, 34-35.

massacres, until his plans culminated in genocide.<sup>23</sup> The Nazis' campaign to make Europe *judenrein* ceased with the end of World War II, but the idea of *rein* found a receptive audience in the Allied Powers, who allowed "the largest and most sweeping [population] cleansing in history: the removal of between 10 million and 14 million [ethnic] Germans from eastern Europe."<sup>24</sup> Heavily influenced by the anti-Soviet propaganda of the Nazis, millions of Germans fled eastern Europe fearing brutal Soviet retaliation.

On 2 August 1945 at Potsdam, the U.S., Britain, and the Soviet Union officially decided to solve the ethnic problems of Europe through an unprecedented transfer of populations. The majority of Germans had already fled eastern Europe before August 1945, but the representatives in Potsdam agreed that any German populations remaining beyond Germany's eastern borders should be expelled. During the transfers in the wake of World War II, it is estimated that 2.1 million Germans died from the harsh conditions, and that the entire operation impacted some 18 million Europeans.<sup>25</sup> A significant percentage of the German population had participated in the ethnic cleansing of other ethnic and religious groups in the decade prior to 1945, and after Potsdam, an unprecedented number of Germans were the victims of cleansing themselves, though not ethnic cleansing. The fear-induced migration that began in 1944 was far from an orderly and secure operation, even after it fell under the direction of the Allied powers. The removal of Germans from eastern Europe overall can be labeled as 'migration' or 'transfer,' but does not meet the definition of ethnic cleansing. The cleansing of Germans

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<sup>23</sup>Mann, 211.

<sup>24</sup>Bell-Fialkoff, *Ethnic Cleansing*, 37.

<sup>25</sup>*Ibid.*, 38, 225.

from eastern Europe was not an intentional program carried out by force, though it likely could have been exactly that, had the Germans not fled on their own volition, trying to outrun the advancing Soviet army.

### Armenians and the Ottoman Empire

While the population transfer in Europe at the end of the war has never been considered genocide despite the death of over 2 million people, the removal of Armenians living in the eastern lands of the Ottoman Empire has become a debate between those who claim that what happened in the early twentieth century was genocide and those who argue that it was not genocide but, rather, a case of ethnic cleansing. Until the end of the nineteenth century, Armenians lived relatively autonomous lives under the Ottoman Empire, although it cannot be said that the Ottoman authorities had *never* persecuted or oppressed their Armenian subjects. The Treaty of San Stefano and the Treaty of Berlin helped facilitate a rise in Armenian nationalism, and, in the case of the Hunchaks, posed an internal threat to the Porte. Armenian revolutionary activity triggered forceful responses from Ottoman authorities as well as from their Muslim neighbors. International conflicts and the rise of nation states had a two-fold effect on the Ottoman Empire: Istanbul constantly lost its European territories to newly formed states in the Balkans at the end of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth, and the Muslim inhabitants of these lands were either forced out or, more often, emigrated voluntarily from their homes fearing the consequences of becoming a minority population. These changes forced Istanbul to deal with an influx of over one million refugees.

When the Ottoman Empire entered World War I on the side of the Central Powers, it perceived the Armenian population on its eastern borders, which generally favored the Russians, as an immediate threat to the state. After Ottoman forces failed to take control over Russian territory adjacent to the border, a number of Ottoman Armenians joined the Russian army, thus causing the ruling Committee of Union and Progress (CUP) to view the Armenians as a fifth column. On 24 April 1915, the Ottoman authorities issued an order that authorized the relocation of the Armenian population from eastern Anatolia. Armenian civilians were massacred during all phases of the relocation operation, and many who survived the massacres perished from exposure to the harsh elements, starvation, and illness. Estimates place the total number of deaths from around 500,000 to over one million. The evidence of a deliberate campaign by the CUP regime to eradicate the Armenian people is inconclusive, and the fact that the Armenian residents of Istanbul and Smyrna were generally left alone indicates that the Ottoman authorities pursued a policy of selective ethnic cleansing that led to an extraordinary death toll. The collapsing state of the Ottoman Empire, fighting a desperate war, was conducive to a brutal cleansing of an unwanted population from a specific territory in 1915-1916, and as a result, roughly ninety percent of the Armenian population was cleansed from its ethnic homeland.<sup>26</sup>

### Algeria

The French conquest of Algiers in 1830 triggered a colonial movement that would last well over a century, cause considerable bloodshed, and drastically alter the

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<sup>26</sup> Bell-Fialkoff, *Ethnic Cleansing*, 24.

demography and social fabric of Algeria. King Charles X ordered the invasion of Algeria in order to divert domestic tensions, and the conquest of Algiers proved to be widely popular. However, many in France did not approve of the invasion, and the French King's efforts failed to preserve his reign, which ended that same month. King Louis-Phillip contemplated withdrawal, but ending the occupation would be much more expensive than continuing the occupation, and thus began the French colonization of Algeria. The indigenous Muslim population protested French occupation, but the resistance was gradually subdued as French troops launched military campaigns against militants and civilians alike. French generals supervised the burning of villages and the destruction of livestock and crops, leaving Algerians to starve to death in the rubble of their homes.<sup>27</sup> The subjugation of the Algerian people coincided with the immigration of European colonists who settled expropriated Algerian land. The number of European colonists sharply increased over the nineteenth century. Numbering less than 40,000 in 1841, *colons* exceeded a quarter of a million people thirty years later.<sup>28</sup> So great was the extent of France's colonization of Algeria that during the Second Republic, Algeria ceased to be a colonial possession and became a part of the French departments, and the "result of the constitutional and administrative arrangements of 1848 was to divide the inhabitants of Algeria into a privileged European and a suppressed Muslim community."<sup>29</sup> Napoleon III chartered a new path for Algerians, offering them French citizenship in exchange for submitting to French civil law, an offer that threatened the

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<sup>27</sup>Robert Aldrich, *Greater France: A History of French Overseas Expansion* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1996), 27.

<sup>28</sup>*Ibid.*, 28.

<sup>29</sup>Jamil M. Abun-Nasr, *A History of the Maghrib* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1975), 250.

special status of the colonists. Settlers' call for Algerian Muslims' conversion to Christianity added tension between the two communities, which was exacerbated by the decimating cholera epidemic in the 1860s. In 1868, an estimated 300,000 native Algerians died while the colonists suffered far less casualties, a result of their privileged economic status.<sup>30</sup>

The end of the reign of Napoleon III served to be a major victory for the colonists, and in October 1870, France formally annexed Algeria. The epidemics, famines, and political developments during the 1860s and early 1870s led to an uprising against French rule in Algeria. The French quickly put down the rebellion and enacted punitive measures that included removing large tracts of land from rebellious tribes which were then settled by European immigrants, many of whom came from the Alsace-Lorraine region that France had lost during the Franco-Prussian War. French authorities had continuously confiscated Muslim lands in Algeria after forcing the indigenous population off the territory, and then turned it over to French settlers or private companies to cultivate. At the conclusion of World War I, Muslims in Algeria had lost an estimated 20 million acres.<sup>31</sup> By 1954, nearly one million *pieds-noirs* (as the European colonists had come to be known as) lived in Algeria, 79 percent of whom were born in Algeria. Having forced the indigenous population from much of its land, then stood by while famine and disease further devastated the Muslim community, and, finally, marginalized them in the new Algerian society, the colonists viewed Algeria as *their* home, and it is not surprising that only a savage and bloody war would dislodge them from the lands they settled. The

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<sup>30</sup>Ibid., 253.

<sup>31</sup>Benjamin Stora, *Algeria 1830-2000: A Short History* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2001), 7.

French settler-colonial movement in Algeria is a clear example of ethnic cleansing, as French troops, supported by European colonists, forced the native Muslim population off the land desired by the immigrating settlers. The Muslims who resisted and tried to remain in their homes were attacked, had their homes destroyed, and those who still remained were killed.

### France and the Huguenots

The Armenians constituted an ethnic and religious minority in the Ottoman Empire, and their ethnic identity served as the primary feature of the Ottoman ethnic cleansing campaign. In earlier times, however, religion served as the primary motive for the cleansing of a population, though ethnic divisions often paralleled religious ones. Cleansings based on religious identity were conducted outward, towards other faiths, as well as inwards against heretics. The Confession of Augsburg in 1530 “explicitly laid down the principle of religious homogeneity as the basis of political order,” and it opened the door to state-sanctioned persecution of minority religious groups.<sup>32</sup> The Peace of Westphalia appeared to reorder Europe along nation-state lines, but the power of the religious identity did not become an idle instrument in state-building projects for European powers. The termination of the Edict of Nantes in 1685 – which had hitherto protected minority groups – proved to be a product of the “othering” of religious minorities. Louis XIV’s revocation of the Edict of Nantes was based on popular mistrust of the Huguenots and sought to consolidate his absolutist rule through a “broad cultural framework of seventeenth-century society” that was based on religion, despite the clear

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<sup>32</sup> Bell-Fialkoff, “A Brief History of Ethnic Cleansing,” 112.

contradictions of this doctrine with the terms of the Peace of Westphalia as well as the domestic and international problems this caused the Catholic monarch.<sup>33</sup> The Huguenots fled France primarily out of fear, not in the face of actual violence, and it is difficult to determine whether or not this constituted ethnic cleansing. In contrast, earlier cases of religious intolerance provide clearer cases of ethnic cleansing.

### Spain and the Inquisition

Religion played a significant role in the formation of political identities, and Spain was no exception. During the fifteenth century, Spain's 'Most Catholic Kings' expanded their political and economic power over the Iberian Peninsula and refused to allow any space for religious minorities in the region's Christian identity. As Isabella and Ferdinand incorporated new territories under their dominion, Jews and Muslims were faced with three choices: convert to Catholicism, migrate to new lands, or be killed. The Spanish crown exploited widespread anti-Semitism "in order to build their own legitimacy," and they used the "available cultural and symbolic resources . . . to define the criteria for the corporate identity of an incipient, but nonetheless centralizing, state."<sup>34</sup> Jews and Muslims were the targets used to legitimize the new Spain.

At first, only Jews were expelled by the Catholic monarchy. After the fall of the Kingdom of Granada, Muslims had secured their religious rights in negotiations, but they soon found themselves victims of the same policies that ended the Jewish presence in the Iberian Peninsula. Forced conversions helped 'cleanse' the population of the religious minorities, but undertaking such centralization required a homogenous population that

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<sup>33</sup> Rae, 113.

<sup>34</sup>Ibid., 81.

eventually had no room for converts, and it was not very long before even converted Jews and Muslims were expelled from Spain (and the Iberian peninsula as a whole). The Inquisition served as the political vehicle for achieving a Catholic state independent of Rome and led to the death of thousands of non-Catholics and the expulsion of several hundred thousand more. The Catholic monarchy provided a very clear example of ethnic cleansing by intentionally and forcefully removing an unwanted population from its kingdom. The Inquisition was only a chapter in the history of population cleansing, and, tragically, Jews frequently served as the victims of cleansing campaigns in many other contexts.

### Conclusion

Cleansing evolved historically as a political and economic tool in antiquity and then evolved into a mostly religious means of control during the Middle Ages. By the modern age, much of the religious character of cleansings had given way to an ethnic and national basis and, ultimately, took on colonial, postcolonial, and ideological features.<sup>35</sup> In the twenty-first century, cleansings have happened for all the reasons cited above, as identities have evolved to a point where people fluidly move from one to another. Any context can be – and has been – used by one group to displace another group. Portuguese traders displaced millions of Africans through the slave trade, though this cannot be considered ethnic cleansing, as there was no intent to remove African tribes from a specified area; financial gain drove the trafficking of human labor between Africa and the New World. Throughout the history of population cleansing, it is hard to argue that a

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<sup>35</sup>Bell-Fialkoff, *Ethnic Cleansing*, 52.

single identity has been the target of cleansing campaigns more often than the Jews, regardless of where and why. The Babylonian Empire expelled a substantial portion of the Jewish population of Jerusalem and the surrounding countryside in 586 BC to quell political uprisings, while political and economic motives factored into the cleansing of Jews in Judea under Roman rule in the first and second century. As mentioned earlier, it is likely that population cleansings as an official state policy began under the Assyrians, and one of the earliest people to be removed from their land under Assyria's state policy were the Israelites in 721 BC.

The early cleansings of Jews from the land west of the Jordan River facilitated the creation of Jewish minorities in many parts of the Mediterranean world, and subsequent cleansings spread the Jewish Diaspora further. Throughout the proceeding centuries, the local "other" inevitably shaped the Jewish identity, but regardless of the transformation of identity, Jewish communities maintained some degree of memory – historical, religious, mythical – of the land of their ancestors. In describing the importance of Kosovo to Serbs, Andrew Bell-Fialkoff wrote that, "a people is shaped by its history, and Serbian history is shaped by Kosovo. Excise Orleans from French or Oxford from English history – and you will begin to appreciate, although not fully (because neither Oxford nor Orleans is *sacred*), the importance of Kosovo for the Serbs."<sup>36</sup> The sacred nature of the land that once held the kingdom of David and Solomon, with Jerusalem as center of the Jewish faith, seeped into the nationalist currents of the late nineteenth century and the early twentieth century and further transformed Jewish identity. The birth and maturation of Zionism thus changed the history of the Jewish people, and this new

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<sup>36</sup> Ibid., i.

identity proved to be the vehicle that finally allowed a persecuted minority to establish a state of their own and, in the process, wield one of the most effective tools of state-building: ethnic cleansing.

## CHAPTER III

### THE EMERGENCE OF ZIONISM

The concept of the return to – and the reestablishment of a Jewish majority in – the land of David and Solomon began as early as 70 CE when Roman troops destroyed the Temple in Jerusalem and expelled a number of the city’s Jewish inhabitants. The Jewish Diaspora maintained varying degrees of yearning for a triumphant return to the land promised to them by God over the centuries that followed. Though a small Jewish presence always remained in what was known as Palestine over the following centuries, it was almost exclusively within the Diaspora community that the idea of a Jewish nation in Palestine was kept alive.<sup>1</sup> At the end of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth century, a number of factors emerged leading to the rise of Zionism, and ultimately, the establishment of a Jewish state in 1948.

Zionism emerged in the mid-1800s, seeking to establish a Jewish identity and community on the model of the modern nation-state, with Nathan Birnbaum, a Viennese

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<sup>1</sup>Palestine derives its name from ‘Philistine,’ after the people who inhabited the region. The earliest possible use of Palestine – *Peleset* – dates back to the twelfth century BCE, referring to a group of people who invaded Egypt. Herodotus mentioned Palestine, as a district of Syria, in the fifth century BCE, and the Israelites refer to Palestine as the coastal territory; after the Roman conquest, ‘Palestine’ was used to designate the territory between the Mediterranean and the Jordan River. Palestine remained in use throughout the following centuries, and acquired its modern political borders after World War I under the British mandate.

Jew, coining the term 'Zionism' in 1885. Not only did Zionism succeed in creating its desired nation-state, but it has maintained the state and served as the "glue" for the members of the state and its supporters abroad ever since. Like most nationalist movements, Zionism required specific territory – Palestine – and the ethno-religious movement drastically changed the face of this territory between the end of the World War I and the conclusion of the British Mandate in 1948. It not only facilitated the establishment of a new community but also, especially in the process of the creation of Israel between 1947 and 1948, decimated the existing one. Similar population cleansings are not uncommon in the history of state-building projects throughout the world, but what is unique is that the process has continued within a colonial context up through the present, with the indigenous population still engaged in the struggle it started with anti-Zionist riots in 1920.

Zionism is defined as an international movement for the establishment of a Jewish national or religious community in Palestine. Zionism was the idea of a Jewish return to Zion, where Jews would claim majority status and establish an independent Jewish state based on the universal values of freedom, democracy, and social justice. For Jews, Zionism was the answer to a Jewish community dispersed throughout the world, one in which they had only minority status in the countries in which they were located. A sovereign Jewish homeland in Palestine could only exist if a Jewish majority was created. From the moment theoretical Zionism was transformed into "practical" Zionism, Zionist leaders understood the obstacle that the demographic reality of Palestine posed to their national ambitions and the need to alter it. Immigration produced the Jewish bodies needed to construct the new community, but their numbers failed to give them a majority.

In addition to immigration, the logic of Zionism required the forced emigration of the native Christian and Muslim Palestinians.

In *The World's Great Restauration or Calling of the Jews*, published in 1621, Sir Henry Finch called for the return of the Jews to the land of their ancestors.<sup>2</sup> Zionism had long existed in one form or another, but only in the latter half of the nineteenth century did it evolve into a coherent movement that would have the power to change the course of Jewish history. The significance of Palestine for Judaism became even more momentous with the incremental rise of anti-Semitism in eastern Europe, particularly Russia, at the end of the nineteenth century. In contrast to the much more feeble development of Arab nationalism in Palestine, Zionism was led by four leaders who worked relentlessly to create a home for the Jewish people in Palestine based on their visions of Zionism.

It was the combination of these factors – charismatic and visionary leaders, continued anti-Semitism, and an identified “national” territory – that enabled Zionism to rise from a more or less dormant religious aspiration to a national movement of considerable force. However, central to Zionism was the attachment to the land of Palestine. In 1891, Baron de Hirsch attempted to create a Jewish home in Argentina, to no avail; other locations in eastern Russia, Africa, Alaska, and Tasmania were proposed for Jewish resettlement but failed to materialize.<sup>3</sup> As Theodor Herzl – widely considered the founder of modern Zionism – discovered, only in the soil of Palestine could the seeds of Zionism grow and blossom into the Jewish State.

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<sup>2</sup>Shindler, 11.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., 12.

### The Development of Zionism

Palestine, known to the Jews as *Eretz Yisrael* or Zion, is the site of the ancient homeland of the biblical Hebrews.<sup>4</sup> The land west of the Jordan River was designated as the “promised land” for the Jews fleeing Egypt. David established the first Jewish kingdom in Jerusalem, and from that point on, the city would be central to the Jewish faith. A sense of longing for a return to Jerusalem began in 586 BCE during the Babylonian captivity. Psalm 137:1-2 captured the centrality of Jerusalem during this period of exile: “By the rivers of Babylon we sat mourning and weeping when we remembered Zion. . . . If I forget you, Jerusalem, may my right hand wither. May my tongue stick to my palate if I do not remember you, if I do not exalt Jerusalem beyond all my delights.” Indeed, long after the destruction of the temple in 70 CE, Jews of the Diaspora would commonly conclude the Yom Kippur service with the words, “Next Year, in Jerusalem.” The same prayer was a common toast used during the Passover Seder, and continues to be used today.<sup>5</sup>

The significance of Jerusalem and Palestine remained in the hearts of many of the Diaspora community while a small community continued to exist in Palestine itself. The Jews of Palestine formed only a tiny fraction of the overall population, focusing on religious studies and supported to some degree by international donations. Most Jews who did venture to Palestine did so late in life in order to die and be buried in Jerusalem.

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<sup>4</sup>The name for all of biblical Israel, including the West Bank of the Jordan River, known as Judea and Samaria.

<sup>5</sup>Walter Laqueur, *A History of Zionism* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1972), 40; on 1 June 2011, Israeli Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu used a modified version of the prayer to commemorate Jerusalem Day (the holiday which celebrates Israel’s conquest of the Old City in 1967) in the face of international pressure to end Israel’s occupation by concluding, “Next Year in a united Jerusalem.”

Over the centuries, Jewish immigration to Palestine existed but remained insignificant. By 1850, before the rise of Zionism, roughly 13,000 Jews lived in Palestine; they made up approximately 3 percent of the population in 1882.<sup>6</sup> Though it was not until the latter half of the nineteenth century that the rise of nationalism and of anti-Semitism sparked the rise of Zionism, the historical importance of Palestine and the existing, albeit small, Jewish communities concentrated in Jerusalem, Safad, Hebron, and Tiberias helped facilitate Jewish immigration to the lands west of the Jordan River.

Throughout the history of the Jewish people, feelings of anti-Semitism emerged wherever they settled. The Christians of Europe often turned on their Jewish neighbors when social conditions created a need for a scapegoat. The Crusaders, en route to Jerusalem, attacked Jewish communities in Eastern France and Germany before turning their attention to the Muslims and Christians of the Middle East. In 1290, England expelled its Jews, not allowing them to return until the mid-seventeenth century. Throughout Europe and Russia, the 'Christian' authorities forced Jews to live in designated communities, regularly banned them from higher education or politics, and levied special taxes on them. In contrast, Jews residing in Muslim-ruled domains experienced greater freedoms; they were free to practice their faith and often held respected posts in education and government. It is no wonder, then, that the rise of Zionism occurred in Europe and Russia, where sentiments of anti-Semitism had always been most acutely felt and expressed.

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<sup>6</sup>Justin McCarthy, *The Population of Palestine: Population History and Statistics of the Late Ottoman Period and the Mandate* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1990), 10.

The nineteenth century in Europe was the proverbial rollercoaster for Jews wishing to assimilate and achieve equality to their Christian counterparts. In August 1789, the French National Assembly issued the Declaration of the Rights of Man, a liberal and progressive document that confirmed that all men were free and equal in rights. The spirit of secularism seemed to end the hierarchy of religious identity from the termination of the Edict of Nantes. Clermont Tonnerre publicly demanded that Jews deserved the same individual rights as everyone else.<sup>7</sup> For the Jewish community, this signaled their official acceptance in the nations in which they lived. However, the ideals of liberal Europe were not matched by the attitude of ordinary people at the local level. The emancipation of the Jews of Europe coincided with the spread of the Enlightenment, but many Jews still suffered from restrictions imposed on them from above. Though some Jews believed their plight to be only temporary, the contrast between what was preached and what actually existed had an impact on others and directly led to the rise of Zionism during the second half of the nineteenth century.

In Germany, the 1848 Revolution provided Jews with better opportunities and conditions. They experienced greater social and political freedoms over the next fifty years; they entered institutions of higher education and participated openly in politics. Full legal emancipation was granted to the Jews in 1869, but after the euphoria settled, it was clear that the Jews of Germany had not truly achieved the equality they desired.<sup>8</sup> Moses Hess, one of the early authors of Zionism, understood the inability of Jews to fully assimilate to German culture. Convinced that the racial distinction between German and

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<sup>7</sup>Laqueur, 3; Tonnerre's demand was not for Orthodox Jews, but for emancipated Jews, Jews so secular they often appeared to be secular Christians.

<sup>8</sup>Ibid., 30.

Jew could never be bridged, Hess began advocating a solution to the Jewish Question: a national home for a homeless people.<sup>9</sup>

France, which initiated the concept of Jewish emancipation, never fully reached the ideals to which it aspired. After the Declaration of the Rights of Man, Jews continued to be the victims of xenophobia. Even after the Third Republic further integrated the Jewish community into French society, the “Jew continued to represent the quintessential outsider who, despite his intellectual allegiance to the state, could never truly belong because of his foreign blood and spirit.”<sup>10</sup> As Jewish integration increased in French society, so did anti-Semitism. Men like Edouard Drumont published writings, attacking Jews, which played a role in increasing the number of cases of anti-Semitism. One such instance of anti-Semitism served as the catalyst for Zionism’s rise to an international movement, and that was the Dreyfus Affair.

Alfred Dreyfus, a Jew of Alsatian descent and a captain in the French army, was accused of treason, and he was arrested and convicted in November 1894. Two years later, evidence emerged supporting Dreyfus’ innocence, but it was suppressed and he continued his jail sentence. In 1898, the case of Dreyfus became known as the “Dreyfus Affair” after Emile Zola published *J’accuse*, which protested the army’s covering up of the true events. The publicity of the Dreyfus Affair split French society over “the values and ideals on which the French Republic was founded,” with republicans supporting Dreyfus against the anti-Semitic voices of those like Drumont.<sup>11</sup> In the summer of 1906,

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<sup>9</sup>Ibid., 50.

<sup>10</sup>Nadia Malinovich, *French and Jewish: Culture and Politics of Identity in Early Twentieth-Century France* (Oxford: The Littman Library of Jewish Civilization, 2008), 21.

<sup>11</sup>Ibid., 27.

Dreyfus was finally pardoned and reinstated in the army. The final outcome confirmed the belief for some that Jews in the Republic were on the path to equality, while for others – like Theodor Herzl – the saga of the Dreyfus Affair convinced them that assimilation would never work: only a Jewish state could provide the security that Jews were searching for.

While there was a debate on the direction of anti-Semitism in western Europe, the situation in eastern Europe and Russia was much less sympathetic to the Jews. Cleansings that targeted Jews began earlier in eastern Europe than they did in England and France. Jews were expelled from Silesia in 1159, and massacres of Jews during the Crusades occurred in Hungary and further east. The status of the Jewish minorities rarely improved, and violence proved to be the hallmark of the more vigorous anti-Semitic movement in eastern Europe in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.<sup>12</sup> It is true that the state of Jews in Europe had been an important factor in the rise of Zionism, but it was the anti-Semitism in Russia, which materialized in ‘pogroms,’ that provided Zionism with the bodies needed to achieve its goal. “Pogrom” – a Yiddish word for “devastation,” which first appeared in Russia in 1903 – became synonymous with violence directed at Jews after the waves of anti-Semitic violence in 1881-2, 1903-6, and 1919-21.<sup>13</sup> Anti-Semitic policies began with the designation of the ‘Pale of Settlement,’ which limited where Russian Jews could live. Catherine II prohibited Jews from living in the major Russian cities, confining them to the northwestern and southwestern provinces. In the

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<sup>12</sup>Anti-Semitism continued in Russia into the twentieth century, but under the communist regimes, was often cloaked in anti-Zionist ideology rather than blatant anti-Semitism.

<sup>13</sup>John D. Klier, “The pogrom paradigm in Russian history” in *Pogroms: Anti-Jewish Violence in Modern Russian History* John D. Klier and Shlomo Lambroza, eds. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 13.

Pale, the number of Russian Jews grew to nearly three million.<sup>14</sup> Government-initiated reforms under the reign of Alexander II (1855-81) lifted some of the restrictions that Jews faced, but these reforms were short-lived. The assassination of the tsar in March 1881 by leftist terrorists led to major outbreaks of violence against Jews. The government terminated the reforms after determining that an iron fist governed more effectively than the outstretched hand. In addition, Alexander III permitted attacks on Jews as an avenue for peasants to vent their frustrations. The anti-Jewish riots lasted from April until the summer of 1882, and little was done by the Russian authorities to reinstate order.

The pogroms that began in 1881 were largely rooted in the economic hardships of the Russian peasantry and their resentment of Jewish commercial success (and of Jews as moneylenders) in the Pale. In 1882, the May Laws were passed, restricting Jewish involvement in trade and commerce, which, according to S.M. Dubnow, amounted to “legislative pogroms.”<sup>15</sup> It was widely believed that the government tacitly supported the pogroms, and this considerably impacted the Jewish community, as Jews were accustomed to the average civilian’s anti-Semitic acts in the course of day-to-day life but not anti-Semitic attacks supported by the state.<sup>16</sup> Though the government did not prevent the attacks on Jews, it is unlikely that it actually supported them. Alexander III feared all forms of popular violence and would have been wary of the possible makings of a revolution. Furthermore, rioters significantly outnumbered the paltry police force in the Pale, rendering state protection ineffectual at the local level. The violence died down in

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<sup>14</sup>John D. Klier, “Russian Jewry on the eve of the pogroms”, in *Pogroms: Anti-Jewish Violence in Modern Russian History*, 5.

<sup>15</sup>Klier, *Pogroms: Anti-Jewish Violence in Modern Russian History*, 41.

<sup>16</sup>Anita Shapira, *Land and Power: the Zionist Resort to Force, 1881-1948* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992), 4.

1882 but resumed in 1903 in the city of Kishinev (now Chisinau in Moldova). More attacks on Jews followed; in 1905 the violence cumulated in the killing of 810 Jews over the course of two weeks and the emigration of thousands more.<sup>17</sup> The violence in Kishinev and the surrounding areas was the result of anti-Semitic publications inciting an already deeply anti-Semitic population, as well as the ineptitude of the local officials (and the inadequate strength of the police force). The pogroms of 1903-6 shocked world Jewry and were harshly criticized by the United States, most European states, and even other parts of Russia. However, the damage was done, and Jews from the Pale emigrated, mostly to the U.S., but with some going to Palestine and thus gradually realizing the aspirations of Zionism.

The rise of Zionism in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries was directly related to the increase of anti-Semitism in Europe and Russia, as well as the significance of Palestine to Jewish identity, yet these two factors had existed in earlier Jewish history, and Zionism had failed to develop. The final key to understanding the rise of Zionism is the remarkable leadership that guided the movement from thought to reality. Without the guiding hands of Theodor Herzl, Chaim Weizmann, David Ben-Gurion, and Ze'ev Jabotinsky, Zionism may very well have never left the pages of Birnbaum and Hess. The political and practical management by these men enabled Zionism to become an international movement while laying the foundations for its eventual realization.

Theodor Herzl (1860-1904), a Hungarian-born Jew, settled in Vienna where he became a journalist and playwright. Herzl had assimilated and had little interest in his

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<sup>17</sup>Laqueur, 59.

own religion until he traveled to Paris to cover the Dreyfus Affair. The blatant anti-Semitism in the trial sparked Herzl to take up the Jewish Question. Herzl, both optimistic and pragmatic, wrote *Der Judenstaat*, published in 1896, which called for an independent Jewish state. This small book captivated the attention of Jews throughout Europe and provided an answer – Zionism – to the plight of the Jews. His charismatic personality, though failing to win the support of a Great Power, aided the spread of Zionism and led to the formation of a cohesive Zionist community. On 29 August 1897, Herzl presided over the First Zionist Congress in Basel, Switzerland. Close to two hundred delegates attended the congress, more than sixty of them Russian.<sup>18</sup> The congress produced the Basel Declaration, which stated that “the aim of Zionism is to create for the Jewish people a home in Palestine.”<sup>19</sup> Herzl died in 1904, well before a Jewish state was established, but his energy began the process that culminated in accomplishing the realization of Zionism.

After the death of Herzl, the Zionist leadership vacuum was filled by a Russian Jew living in England. Chaim Weizmann (1874-1952) had become involved in Zionism at an early age and brought his activities to Britain in 1904. A gifted speaker, yet grounded in pragmatism, Weizmann was able to bridge the two differing camps of Zionism: practical and political. A chemist at the University of Manchester, Weizmann was able to penetrate the circles of British politics through his friendship with the editor of the *Manchester Guardian*, C.P. Scott. His work for the British government during the First World War also provided him with another means of building an alliance between

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<sup>18</sup>Shalom Goldman, *Zeal for Zionism: Christians, Jews, and the Idea of the Promised Land* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2009), 90.

<sup>19</sup>Walter Laqueur and Barry Rubin, eds., *The Israel-Arab Reader: A Documentary History of the Middle East Conflict* (New York: Penguin Books, 2008), 9.

Zionism and Britain, thus securing the backing of a Great Power. Weizmann's tireless campaigning for official British support of Zionism began in 1915, and two years later, produced the Balfour Declaration. The Declaration, issued on 2 November 1917, secured the backing Herzl had failed to find, as the British government pledged to facilitate the establishment of a national home for the Jews in Palestine. The document was the fruit of Weizmann's work, and "without his leadership and persistent lobbying the Zionist movement would not have received the charter on which its subsequent activities were based." According to Charles Webster, it was the "greatest act of political statesmanship of the First World War."<sup>20</sup> Weizmann's leadership did not end after the Declaration; in 1920 he was elected president of the World Zionist Organization and maintained the Zionist movement's relationship with Britain, despite such obstacles as the white papers of 1922 and 1939.<sup>21</sup> Though he became the first president of the state of Israel, this was very late in his life, and Weizmann had by then lost his position as the unquestioned leader of Zionism to the man that became the Jewish state's first prime minister.

David Ben-Gurion (1886-1973) was a committed Zionist and led the practical side of Zionism in Palestine prior to 1920. Having immigrated to Palestine in 1906 from Poland, Ben-Gurion worked his way up in the trade union, leading the on-the-ground

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<sup>20</sup>Laqueur, *A History of Zionism*, 594.

<sup>21</sup>The White Paper of June 1922 reaffirmed the Balfour Declaration in that Britain supported the creation of a 'home' for Jews in part of Palestine, but took into account the concerns of the Arab population, and limited Jewish immigration so as not to harm the employment opportunities of the Palestinians or be a "burden upon the people of Palestine as a whole." Seventeen years later, the British Government issued another White Paper. On 17 May 1939, the Palestinians scored a major victory as Britain capped Jewish immigration for five years, after which all Jewish immigration would be terminated. Furthermore, the 1939 White Paper restricted the purchase of land by Jews and, in some instances, outright prohibited it. Jews violently rejected Britain's new policy, while the Palestinians refused to accept anything but the immediate end to Jewish immigration and the establishment of an Arab state.

‘fight’ for Zionism. Like his predecessors, he was dedicated to the cause yet extremely pragmatic. Within the scope of this paper, Ben-Gurion’s major contribution was the organization of Jewish labor and politics in Palestine before and during the war. His most significant work as a leader of Zionism occurred after the movement had risen to the levels necessary to lay the foundation of a Jewish state, although his early work in Palestine was critical to the success of building the infrastructure that preceded the state.

The impact Vladimir (Ze’ev) Jabotinsky (1880-1940) had on the development and rise of Zionism is remarkable yet quite unique. Unlike the other three leaders, Jabotinsky’s influence was not as visible before the establishment of the Jewish state but has arguably had the biggest impact on the direction of Zionism in the sixty years that followed 1948. Brilliant and charismatic, Jabotinsky joined the Zionist movement as a young man in Odessa; he invested heavily in the struggles of ethnic minorities and understood better than most the need to be able to defend oneself. At the outbreak of World War I, he lobbied heavily for a Jewish military force to fight under the direction of Britain. Like Weizmann, he linked the success of Zionism to the patronage of Britain, but when his Jewish battalion was disbanded in 1921, he became a vocal critic of British policies in Palestine. He advocated forcefully for an armed Jewish force to defend the Jewish community in Palestine, and his ambitious push for the realization of Zionism alienated him from the movement’s other leaders. Thus, he sought a revised Zionism that would not defer to the governments of Europe and, as a consequence, formed the Zionist Revisionist Organization (ZRO) in 1925 as an “activist wing of general Zionism purporting to offer a militant alternative policy or mode of operations to that practiced by

the Zionist Executive headed by Chaim Weizmann.”<sup>22</sup> A decade later, Jabotinsky and his followers left the Zionist Organization and formed their own international umbrella organization, the New Zionist Organization. The Revisionists were not committed to the class struggles that their Labor counterparts supported. Rather, they promoted a strong middle class, the use of militant action to achieve an independent Jewish state, which in the case of the most extreme of Revisionists, would have borders that extended from the Nile to the Euphrates. Jabotinsky was not an extremist, but his vision of Zionism created a permanent space for right-wing extremists to exist within the movement. By creating a right wing alternative to Labor Zionism that was active internationally and locally in Palestine, he laid the groundwork for Israel’s future leaders of the political right to maintain a powerful voice in Zionist policies and eventually dominate the Israeli governments after the political defeat of Labor Zionism in 1977.

### Zionism as an Ethno-Religious National Movement

Zionism was the politicization of Jewish identity beginning in the nineteenth century, and continues to be the “glue” of Jewish nationalism to this day. Zionism separated itself from other national movements by its ethno-religious content that developed in conditions of exile. Whereas membership in Christianity or Islam does not require a specific ethnic pedigree, Judaism more or less does. The social structures of previous times dictated that the religious identity of the child was that of the father. Conversions between faiths existed, but generally one was born a member of a religious tradition based on the religious affiliation of the parents. Orthodox Judaism – and many

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<sup>22</sup>Gideon Shimon, *The Zionist Ideology* (Hanover: Brandeis University Press, 1995), 238.

Reform Jews – considers an individual a Jew if he/she adheres to the practices and traditions of Judaism *and* if his/her mother is Jewish. Matrilineal descent became a feature of Judaism during the Hasmonaean period (140-37 BCE) when Jewish leaders attempted to make “Jewishness” a stronger and more distinct identity. The rise of a clearer Jewish identity was influenced by Greek ideas of citizenship and occurred in the framework of Roman law and rights of the citizen.<sup>23</sup> Nation and citizenship were prominent features of Roman rule in Palestine, encouraging the further development of Jewish identity along the lines of religion, nation, and race/ethnicity. In the centuries following the expulsion of Jews from Jerusalem by Roman forces, the primary paradigm for the Jewish identity transitioned from “we, the people” to the “other” and the repression of the “other” by non-Jewish majorities. The Diaspora identity, which is opposed or discriminated against by the dominant majority, is a common cause for identity construction, and Jewish identity was clearly defined by these conditions in Christian society over the centuries leading up to the Enlightenment and the Industrial Revolution. As noted earlier, Jews were often the target of Christian state building projects, which contributed to a distinct “other” identity and was supported by preventing Jews access to the social and geographic mobility afforded to virtually any Christian.

As civilization transitioned into Modernity, “Jewishness” remained a prominent layer of identity despite the secularization of societies, and a new “Jewishness” developed in the form of Zionism. How can one explain the rise of a nationalist movement within a community scattered throughout different societies, speaking different languages, and lacking any numerical or military advantages? Scholars examine

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<sup>23</sup>Shaye J. D. Cohen, *The Beginnings of Jewishness: Boundaries, Varieties, Uncertainties* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999) 267-97.

the phenomena of nationalist identity through three different approaches: Primordialism, Instrumentalism, and Constructivism. In order to understand the Jewish nationalist movement of Zionism, a synthesis of all three is required.

Zionism can generally be described as movement created by individuals driven by shared interests, who imagined themselves as part of a larger community with a strong sense of a common past and culture. Primordialism explains the ethno-religious content of Zionism, as well as its fierce attachment to specific territory. Jewish identity is rooted in a primordial belief that the Jews of France, Germany, Russia, and elsewhere constitute a single community that has existed since time immemorial. They may speak different languages in separate societies, but they share common religious and cultural practices. Unlike Christianity and Islam, one does not (until comparatively recently, with the rise of Reform Judaism) convert to Judaism; one is born Jewish, which creates a very real sense of primordial ties between Jewish communities. This is especially significant given that Zionism began as a secular venture. The ethno-religious content of Jewish identity, reinforced through its opposition to Christian identity over centuries, partially enabled a secular movement to use religion as the glue for its community. The other primordial force of Zionism is the attachment to territory. Unlike national movements led by a group seeking autonomy in the local area where they formed a community, Zionism had to look elsewhere for its “homeland.” Zionism thus linked the Jewish past rooted in Palestine with the present socio-political condition of the Jews to create a “sacred” connection to the land upon which the Zionists would build their nation-state. Zionism advocated the establishment of their state in the only place where Jews had ever ruled: Palestine. This was the territory God had designated as the home for the Jewish people, and it is in this

context that the Jewish identity developed (or reinvented) its shared symbols and past.

The emotional attachment to this land is not based on resources or interests. Both of these play a role in contemporary Zionism's desire to control Jerusalem and the West Bank, but at the heart of fundamental Zionists claim to this land is the primordial tie between it and the Jewish people.

Human agency and manipulating labor were – and are – two of the most critical catalysts for the rise and perpetuation of Zionism. The instrumentalist approach to understanding nations and nationalisms places a heavy emphasis on the role of actors within state-building projects, and Zionism is an excellent case of the role of such actors. The men who directed the Zionist movement clearly understood the need to establish “facts on the ground” and they used every tool at their disposal to do so. Zionism's astonishing success is largely attributable to the visions and actions of Herzl, Weizmann, and Ben-Gurion. As mentioned earlier, Herzl transformed Zionism from a disjointed body of thought to an international movement. Weizmann inherited the Zionist leadership after the death of Herzl, and his tireless efforts to secure the support of a great power for the Zionist program made the establishment of a Jewish homeland in Palestine a reality. Until the foundation of the state, Weizmann guided the direction of political Zionism, but his on-the-ground counterpart, David Ben-Gurion, directed the implementation of practical Zionism. An immigrant to Palestine, Ben-Gurion quickly took control of the reins of Zionism and masterfully incorporated the modern tools of manipulating physical work into the construction of the Jewish state. Practical Zionism is the physical building of the Jewish community in Palestine. During the first quarter of the twentieth century, the Zionists in Palestine outperformed their Arab counterparts in the physical building of

the pre-state community by taking advantage of the modern benefits of industrialization. Industrialization provided a much more effective use of labor, but it also required the organization of labor, and organized Jewish labor laid the political foundations of the future nation. Ben-Gurion helped lead the way by developing key state-building institutions. Influenced by the socialist currents in Russia as a young man, Ben-Gurion believed that labor was the most important organ of the modern state, and his labor union in Palestine, the Histadrut, organized and directed the Jewish effort. The Histadrut evolved into the Jewish Agency, which became the government of Israel, with Ben-Gurion commanding the two all-important posts of Prime Minister and Minister of Defense. Ben-Gurion was an ardent Zionist, but unlike his Revisionist rival, he was also pragmatic and deftly handled domestic and international situations. He alone directed the Jewish war of independence, and his strategy of concentrating the bulk of his forces on the task of removing Palestinians rather than combating the token Arab armies enabled the Jewish state to govern a Jewish majority. Identity and nationalism, without question, do not exist without the effects of human agency.

Benedict Anderson argued in *Imagined Communities* that one of the major factors contributing to the development of nations and nationalisms was the rise of print capitalism. Within the Zionist context, print-capitalism spread feelings of anti-Semitism among the non-Jewish communities, while, on the other hand, enabled the idea of Zionism to evolve into a powerful movement. Herzl's *Der Judenstaat* would have been limited to a minute audience without the modern dissemination of the printed word. The World Zionist Organization skillfully used print-capitalism to propagate its program and garner support for its actions. Pro-Zionist organizations throughout Europe and the U.S.

relied on the ability to produce mass media for lobbying and propaganda campaigns that furthered the Zionist agenda. In advancing the argument of print-capitalism, Constructivists point to the critical role language plays in identity. Language creates a public sphere, which allows members to imagine themselves as part of a community. Zionist leaders understood the importance of this concept and thus created a shared (and reinvented) language, modern Hebrew, to serve as the discourse for the Zionist narrative. Zionist leaders had to construct a new national identity as a national home for a Jewish majority had not existed for nearly two thousand years. Their “imagined community” was not a predecessor of the Herodian Kingdom or the short-lived Jewish state during the Bar Kokhba revolt. Rather, it was based on the nation-state model of modern Europe. Zionists literally had to construct their national identity by creating a national movement (Zionism) and language (Hebrew), acquiring national territory (Palestine), and importing Jews to build the national community. By 14 May 1948, the historical developments outlined above produced Zionism, which in the age of modern state-building, took full advantage of all the tools available to achieve its national objective: the State of Israel.

### Zionism’s Two Paths: Labor and Revisionist

Like Israeli society today, Zionism during the mandate period was divided over policy. The various divisions advocated different means of achieving similar objectives. Labor Zionism arrived in Palestine with the second aliyah at the turn of the century while Revisionist Zionism appeared a quarter-century later. The establishment of a Jewish state was the central platform for both movements, but their methods separated the two prior to

1947. Specifically differentiating the two movements was how they utilized violence in Palestine.

The socialists and nationalists, who emigrated from Russia and Eastern Europe with their revolutionary views of society, dominated Labor Zionism. They opposed the land-owning class of Jews already in Palestine, and resented any inroads of capitalism. Labor Zionism called for working the land (which would bring a redemption of sorts) and contained an element of class conflict. In fact, it was a labor organization that would transform into the governing agency of the Jewish community that then became the state of Israel. In December 1920, the two main Labor parties formed the Histadrut to organize Jewish labor. David Ben-Gurion led the Histadrut and its armed wing known as the Haganah (the precursor of the Israeli Defense Force). A decade after its formation, he combined the two main parties into a single entity which he controlled. Mapai, under Ben-Gurion's leadership, dominated Jewish politics until 1968.<sup>24</sup> After 1930, he maneuvered himself and Mapai to wrest control of international organizations such as the Zionist Congress and the Jewish Agency. Thus, Labor Zionism became the prominent voice in Zionist affairs, but not without competition from a more militant brand.

Vladimir Jabotinsky founded Revisionist Zionism in 1925, which emerged as the chief rival to Labor Zionism. Revisionist Zionism was popular among young Jews, and youth organizations espousing its tenets existed across Europe. Jabotinsky's version of Zionism ignored class struggle and focused solely on the immediate creation of a Jewish

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<sup>24</sup>Menachem Begin's Herut Party was a factor in early Israeli politics, but Mapai controlled the government from its inception in 1948. Ben-Gurion left Mapai in 1965 for the Rafi Party after Levi Eshkol succeeded him as prime minister. However, it was not until the establishment of the Labor Party in 1968, and the Likud Party in 1973, that Mapai lost its dominant position in the political arena.

state using any means necessary. The level of division within the Zionist movement was exposed in 1933 with the murder of the leading Labor Zionist, Chaim Arlosoroff, almost certainly by militant Revisionists. Though no one was ever found guilty of his murder, the schism between the two movements of Zionism existed fifty years later when Revisionist Zionism's mantle bearer, Menachem Begin, sought to prove the innocence of Jabotinsky's movement by reopening Arlosoroff's case.

## CHAPTER IV

### PALESTINE ON THE EVE OF ZIONISM

Ethno-linguistic nationalism did not arrive in the Arab world in any meaningful or instrumental manner before the fall of the Ottoman Empire. European-style nationalism only developed after the Allied powers had carved up the provinces, and the first major nationalism, Zionism, came to Palestine with European immigrants. Before Zionist colonialism and British and French mandate governments replaced the Ottoman Empire in the Arab provinces, society was based principally on religious affiliation as well as the notion of being a “subject” of the empire. The imperial rulers were Sunni Muslim, as was the large majority of the population within the Empire’s borders.

Population registration lists based on district registers provide a fairly accurate idea of the population of Palestine during the Ottoman Empire, and the Muslim community (with no distinction between Sunnis and Shi ‘is, unlike the separation of Christian sects) maintained its dominant majority. The most effective census projects were naturally carried out under strong centralized governments, and in the case of the Ottoman Empire, this occurred during the sixteenth and nineteenth centuries, as well as the beginning of the twentieth century. Taxation and conscription drove the need to collect census data, and Istanbul did so breaking its population into three categories: Muslim, Christian, and Jewish. In *The Population of Palestine: Population History and*

*Statistics of the Late Ottoman Period and the Mandate*, the most detailed demographic study of the region and the period, Justin McCarthy offers a general idea of the total population of Palestine, which included women and children (see table below). His method of devising reasonable numbers takes into account two key factors: village registrars' propensity to manipulate population information to avoid or limit conscription (in the case of Muslims after 1826) and taxation (in the case of non-Muslims) and the difficulty in counting the women and children who resided in the sacred and private space of their home. By estimating that women roughly equaled the number of men and using a mortality schedule to calculate the number of children, McCarthy provided a glimpse into the demographics of Ottoman Palestine on the eve of Zionism.

In the nineteenth century, the Ottoman government attempted to bring the other religious communities into the Ottoman 'commonwealth' on an equal footing with Muslim subjects, restructuring the social hierarchy according to *Osmanlilik* rather than religious affiliation. In November 1839, the government announced the Hatt-i Şerif of Gulhane, which promised equal governing and taxation to all Ottoman subjects without

**Table 1. Ottoman Population of Palestine, Corrected Figures, 1850-1915.<sup>1</sup>**

DATES	TOTAL POPULATION	MUSLIMS	JEWS	CHRISTIANS
1850-1851	340,000	300,000 (88%)	13,000 (3.8%)	27,000 (7.9%)
1860-1861	369,000	325,000 (88%)	13,000 (3.5%)	31,000 (8.4%)
1880-1881	456,929	399,334 (87%)	14,731 (3.2%)	42,864 (9.3%)
1900-1901	586,581	499,110 (85%)	23,662 (4%)	63,809 (10%)
1914-1915	722,143	602,377 (83%)	38,754 (5.3%)	81,012 (11.2%)

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<sup>1</sup>Data in table taken from Justin McCarthy, *The Population of Palestine: Population Statistics of the Late Ottoman Period and the Mandate* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1990), 10.

exception.<sup>2</sup> Several decades later, the Empire's minority communities applauded the creation of a constitution and the promise of equal rights for all Ottoman subjects, and Palestine was no different. Later, the Young Turk Revolution struck a similar chord (widely recorded for posterity in many provincial capitals) among the Empire's subjects. At the core of the Young Turk Revolution was the notion of "civic Ottomanism," a centralizing project organized at the grassroots level to promote "a unified sociopolitical identity of an Ottoman people struggling over the new rights and obligations of revolutionary political membership."<sup>3</sup> These Ottomans clung to the revolutionary ideals of equality, liberty, and brotherhood while cautiously, yet optimistically, charting a new future for their country within the context of the modernized nation-state world of Europe.

At the turn of the century, Palestine did not boast the bustle and glitter of larger Ottoman cities like Istanbul, Damascus, and Beirut, but it would be a mistake to label Palestine as a backwater Ottoman province. By 1900, Jaffa had developed significant trade with Europe and, as such, was able to sustain a sizable population. It served as the gateway to Palestine for the European merchants, officials, and pilgrims and, accordingly, developed an international feel. Land-locked Nablus was also a vibrant center of commerce, serving as a trading hub between Egypt and Syria and the primary center for manufacturing in eighteenth-century Palestine, and for much of the nineteenth century as well. The surrounding countryside adapted to the growing economic and

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<sup>2</sup>Peter Sluglett, "Colonialism, the Ottomans, the Qajars and the Struggle for Independence: the Arab World, Turkey and Iran" in Youssef Choueiri, ed., *Blackwell Companion to the Middle East* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2005), 254.

<sup>3</sup>Campos, 3.

political power exerted by Nablus' merchants and thus integrated the region into the international market through the ports of Jaffa and Haifa.

Contrary to the argument that effective farming and manufacturing practices did not exist in Palestine until they were introduced by the first wave of Zionists settlers in 1882, Palestine was very much connected to the international exchange of goods, people, and ideas. Palestinians used traditional methods to produce goods for export not because they lacked the modernization of the Europeans, but because it was the most cost-effective and timely way to get their products into the global economy. Western consular reports on imports and exports through Palestine's three main ports – Jaffa, Haifa, and Acre – “showed that exports not only closely shadowed shifting European demand but also exceeded imports of European machine-manufactured goods, which meant that Palestine helped the rest of Greater Syria minimize its overall negative balance of trade with Europe.”<sup>4</sup>

Jaffa, Nablus, and Jerusalem were home to a pluralistic society where religious and ethnic identities were not sources of division or constant violence. Ottoman identity was a shared identity, based on history, territory, and imperial citizenship. When the Austro-Hungarian Empire annexed a former province of the Ottoman Empire in October 1908, just days after Bulgaria's declaration of independence, Ottomans from every corner of the empire engaged in a months-long boycott of the Hapsburgs and Hungarians. Newspapers and city mayors implored their countrymen to prevent the sale of Austrian goods in the Ottoman Empire. Demonstrators used Islamic language and symbols in rallying support for the boycott, prompting Austrian officials to accuse Ottoman

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<sup>4</sup>Beshara Doumani, *Rediscovering Palestine: Merchants and Peasants in Jabal Nablus, 1700-1900* (Berkeley: California University Press, 1995), 4.

participants of being uncivil and backward Muslim fanatics. However, it is wrong to place the empire-wide boycott in a purely Islamic context, as Christians and Jews in Palestine, Syria, and Anatolia helped organize the movement and mobilize the population.<sup>5</sup> Intellectuals, professionals, and religious leaders promoted the notion of a unified Ottoman identity and draped “Ottomanism” in sacred language. Men like Sulayman al-Bustani supported the revolution and placed constitutionalism in a framework entirely compatible with the teachings of the Qur’an, Bible, and Torah.

Telegraph and rail lines, water and sewage infrastructure, and a stronger centralization of Ottoman authority spread over Palestine in the late nineteenth century and early twentieth century, but these developments did not introduce the ‘flow of ideas’ per se. On the contrary, the cities of Palestine, and Jerusalem in particular, housed diverse populations with a wide spectrum of interpretations of civic participation, nationalism, and religious identity. They debated their interpretations in the shared space of courtyards, cafés, and lodges, formulating their first and foremost shared identity: Ottoman. The public sphere could not have existed if religious boundaries had prevented the interaction of people from different faiths, and indeed, no such boundaries separated the religious communities of Palestine. For example, the Old City of Jerusalem was not divided into distinctly religious neighborhoods. Christians and Jews lived in the predominantly Muslim neighborhood of Bab Huta, and Muslims made up a significant percentage of the Old City’s Silsila neighborhood. Tensions did exist between and within the religious communities, whether it was during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries with Christians resenting their inferior *dhimmi* status vis-à-vis their Muslim neighbors, or

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<sup>5</sup>Campos,104.

during the nineteenth century as Muslims struggled to compete in the economic sphere with European-friendly Christian and Jewish merchants in Jaffa and Haifa. The constant loss of Ottoman territory to European powers before 1900 caused distress among the Muslim population, but the majority of Christians and Jews in Palestine felt equally threatened. The Ottoman Empire was the homeland of all three religious communities, and until the conclusion of WWI, they functioned as a single society, engaging in educational, economic, social, religious, and political activities together.

#### Jewish-Arab Relations under the Ottomans

The Jews living in Palestine were concentrated in Jerusalem, Hebron, Safad, and Tiberias; most of them were either merchants and craftsmen in the cities or subsisted off of the charity generated abroad. The Jewish community in the Ottoman Empire was “preeminently an urban community,” and lived in distinctly Jewish quarters, often divided into ethnic neighborhoods (Sephardic, Ashkenazi, Romaniot, etc.).<sup>6</sup> However, the urbanization of the small numbers of Jews did not wall them off from the more numerous Christian Ottomans or the Muslim majority. Proponents of the “since time immemorial” argument only need to look thirty years before the first outbreak of Arab-Jewish violence in Palestine to find a pluralistic society that thrived on its diversity. Long before Zionism developed, Jews escaping persecution in Christian Europe took refuge in the religiously tolerant Ottoman Empire. Sephardi Jews, fleeing the violence of the Spanish Inquisition and arriving in Istanbul, were welcomed ashore by the Sultan himself. Unlike their

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<sup>6</sup>Daniel Schroeter, “Jewish quarters in the Arab-Islamic cities of the Ottoman Empire,” in Avigdor Levy, ed., *The Jews of the Ottoman Empire* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994), 289.

European coreligionists, Ottoman Jews were not excluded from professional, political, or educational occupations. They engaged in a variety of professions, which in part explains why there was no clear boundary dividing the Jewish community from the Christian and Muslim communities in Ottoman Palestine.

It is only natural that Palestine – home to Muslims, Christians, and Jews whose families emigrated from all over the world – would be a multiethnic, religiously diverse region with an international and cosmopolitan vibe. Conversations in Arabic, French, Greek, and Turkish filled the narrow streets and shops of Jerusalem, and members of all three religions served on the city’s municipal councils. The religious significance of Jerusalem did not divide its residents; instead, it provided a framework for the sharing of cultures and ideas. It was not uncommon for an Orthodox Christian boy to study in a Lutheran or Catholic school, take up German, Turkish, and English, and improve his Arabic through reciting the Qur’an.<sup>7</sup> While Zionists in Europe cultivated their nationalist movement into an international organization, Palestine on the eve of Zionism witnessed the cultivation of an Ottoman identity that superseded religious and ethnic identities. The social boundaries of urban life in Jerusalem before WWI were far less restrictive than they are today. Jews participated in the celebrations of the religious festivals of their Muslim neighbors, Christians studied the Qur’an as part of what they considered their shared heritage, and Muslims spent evenings in the homes of their Jewish and Christian neighbors enjoying lively conversations over drinking, smoking, and playing music.<sup>8</sup> Almost universally, the Jews of the Ottoman Empire got along just fine with their Arab

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<sup>7</sup>James L. Gelvin, *The Modern Middle East: A History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 103.

<sup>8</sup>*Ibid.*, 106.

neighbors, Christian and Muslim. The following two examples reveal the “Ottoman” experience the majority of Jews enjoyed living with the Arabs in Palestine.

#### Haifa, 1870-1914

The first case is drawn from the *sijill* registers from Haifa. The *shar‘ia* court records document the use of the religious courts by Muslims, Christians, and Jews, as the religious affiliation of each individual was always noted after their name. The *sijill* registers not only recorded the transactions between individuals, but they have also proven invaluable in ascertaining relationships between members of the different religious communities. Haifa was a predominantly Muslim coastal city, but it was home to a small community of Jewish merchants. From the end of the nineteenth century through the 1920s, Haifa experienced rapid growth in both its economy and its population. Successful trade brought in revenue, which attracted residents. Residents required housing, and such demand increased the value of land. In a relatively short period of time, a wealthy class of Muslim and Jewish merchants and land owners emerged. Haifa became a source of tension between the two religious communities after 1914, but until that time, Muslim and Jewish men entered into business partnerships together and generally worked for the overall good of the city’s economy.

Court cases involving Jews in Haifa from 1870-1914 are found in the *sijill* registers, where they recorded their partnerships with Muslims, and their disputes with their neighbors; the records attest to the pluralistic society that existed in the Ottoman Empire. In one case, a Jewish merchant, Abraham Ben-Aharon Cohen, formed over a dozen partnerships with Muslims in and around Haifa. Records show that Cohen bought

into a Muslim land-owning corporation, *musha'*, with villagers from Tira. The venture dealt with land and olive groves, and such partnerships were only possible if mutual trust existed between the partners. It is clear that Cohen trusted the Muslim villagers and they him, as the Jewish merchant soon bought shares in the villagers' oil press and employed local Muslims to supervise his investment.<sup>9</sup> Another Jewish resident of Haifa whose name appears repeatedly in the registers is the tradesman Abraham Udiz. Udiz bought into the ownership of a public bathhouse belonging to a prominent Muslim family, the Madis. The Madis soon sold more shares in the bathhouse to Udiz and made him a partner, neither of which negatively affected the business of the bathhouse. Their partnership proved to be a lucrative one and, two years later, included houses and warehouses. What was more important than the economic viability of the partnership between Udiz and the Madis' sons was that it laid the groundwork for the establishment of a Jewish stronghold near one of Haifa's synagogues, which was later to become the "heart of the Jewish quarter."<sup>10</sup>

Other examples of business transactions between Muslims and Jews in Haifa fill the pages of the registers. Jewish landowners negotiated agreements with Muslim *fallahin* from nearby villages where the latter cultivated the former's land for a percentage of the harvest. Jews purchased property from Muslims, both rural land outside Haifa and houses in the Muslim half of the city (the other half was inhabited mostly by Christians). By the end of the nineteenth century, Jews formed a substantial community that surrounded the synagogue mentioned above, and a Jewish quarter emerged complete with Jewish

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<sup>9</sup>Mahmud Yazbak, "Jewish-Muslim social and economic relations in Haifa (1870-1914) according to sijill registers," in Amy Singer and Amnon Cohen, eds., *Aspects of Ottoman History: Papers from CIEPO IX, Jerusalem* (Jerusalem: 1994), 120.

<sup>10</sup>*Ibid.*, 119.

markets. Furthermore, the growing Jewish community often turned to the *shar'ia* courts when disputes arose with Muslim business partners and residents. It is remarkable that the Jews of Haifa – as elsewhere in the Ottoman Empire – used the *shar'ia* courts to settle disputes *between* Jews that could be settled by the Jewish religious institutions.<sup>11</sup> Through the *sijill* registers, the day-to-day operations of Haifa during the twilight years of the Ottoman Empire come alive and reveal a society connected through relationships within and between Palestine's religious communities.

### Shlomo Yellin

The second example of Jewish engagement with society in Ottoman Palestine concerns a Jewish lawyer who was born and raised in the Old City of Jerusalem. Many memoirs from the end of the nineteenth century and the early twentieth century demonstrate how Jews saw themselves as members of an Ottoman community, as Sephardi girls taught their Muslim neighbors Judeo-Spanish, and Jewish men visited their Muslim business partners on Islamic holidays. In the case of the Jewish lawyer, we find much of the Jewish experience played out in a single person, for Shlomo Yellin was the “quintessential polyglot Levantine:”

he spoke Yiddish with his Polish father, Arabic with his Iraqi mother, Hebrew with his Zionist older brother, and Judeo-Spanish with his Sephardi Jewish neighbors; he wrote love letters in English to the schoolgirl niece he later married, and he jotted notes to himself in French. At the same time, the fez- and suit-wearing “Suleiman Effendi” was the perfect Ottoman gentleman: at the prestigious Galatasaray Imperial Lycée in Istanbul, he studied Ottoman Turkish, Arabic, and Persian language, literature, translation, and calligraphy; Ottoman and Islamic history; hygiene, math, science, philosophy, geography, and French literature. . . . Yellin graduated from the Ottoman Imperial Law Academy with certification in Islamic law, Ottoman civil and criminal law, and international

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<sup>11</sup>Ibid., 122.

commercial and maritime law. . . . [his professional affiliates] were fellow Ottomans who were as committed to and concerned about the future of the “Ottoman nation” as he was.<sup>12</sup>

Yellin, although no doubt quite unique in many ways, aptly portrays how many Ottoman Jews viewed themselves and how deeply invested they were in their Ottoman home.

### Conclusion

Palestine was not without conflict and strife. The cosmopolitan attitude of the elites of Nablus or Jaffa was part of a growing separation of society along socio-economic lines. Whereas wealthy and poor Jerusalemites previously lived in close quarters during the nineteenth century, those with the means to move out of the crowded cities into more spacious homes did so during the twentieth. Suburban communities grew substantially after 1900 and the urban space that was once shared by all was divided increasingly along class lines. The liberal lifestyles of the urban elite produced an opposition within the lower income and rural class, who were predominantly Muslim. Istanbul used the public space to promote a universal Ottoman identity within the political context of democracy and constitutionalism, but shared public space also permitted the development of opposition identities or new political movements founded on more local identities.

The purpose of examining Palestine on the eve of Zionism is not to paint a false or utopian picture, but to demonstrate that the lines that divide society today simply did not exist one hundred years ago. Christians and Jews were not without the frustrations associated with living in an empire that officially adhered to a different religion, but

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<sup>12</sup>Campos, 1.

Muslims faced challenges of their own, namely, the economic disadvantages of not sharing the religious identities of the European merchants doing business in the Ottoman Empire. Despite these divisions, the people of Palestine built political, economic, and social relations that transcended religion, ethnicity, and language. They supported each other's culture, and in doing so, they developed a common culture.<sup>13</sup> At the end of the day, they all partook of an Ottoman identity, but these relations built on their shared identity would collapse with the Ottoman Empire at the end of World War I. The new political landscape that emerged under the British Mandate in Palestine strained the intra-communal relationships that had once sustained Palestinian society, and the privileged position of Zionists in Mandatory Palestine exacerbated tensions between two competing nationalisms, which quickly turned into a violent conflict over control of the land.

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<sup>13</sup>Muslims, Christians, and Jews shared religio-cultural beliefs and traditions (superstition of the evil eye) and practices (visiting local saints' tombs). Later, these shared cultural and religious aspects became sources of tension as competing claims for exclusivity over the traditions or practices developed.

## CHAPTER V

### MAKING ZION ZIONIST

In 1919, Chaim Weizmann addressed the English Zionist Federation and put forth his Zionist interpretation of the Balfour Declaration's "Jewish National Home." He told the members of the Federation, "By a Jewish National Home I mean the creation of such conditions that as the country is developed we can pour in a considerable number of immigrants, and finally establish such a society in Palestine that Palestine shall be as Jewish as England is English, or America American."<sup>1</sup> During the end of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth, Zionism emerged from a fanciful idea into a full-blown international movement, with the sole intent to make "Zion Zionist." Members of the Diaspora community, mostly those who faced obstacles to assimilation, but also

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<sup>1</sup>Nur Masalha, *Expulsion of the Palestinians: The Concept of "Transfer" in Zionist Political Thought, 1882-1948* (Washington D.C.: Institute for Palestine Studies, 1992), 41; this type of rhetoric naturally caused tensions to rise in Britain's mandate in Palestine. The British Colonial Secretary attempted to alleviate the mounting tensions by addressing the Palestinians' concerns in the June 1922 Churchill White Paper: "Unauthorized statements have been made to the effect that the purpose in view is to create a wholly Jewish Palestine. Phrases have been used such as that Palestine is to become "as Jewish as England is English." His Majesty's Government regard any such expectation as impracticable and have no such aim in view. Nor have they at any time contemplated, as appears to be feared by the Arab Delegation, the disappearance or the subordination of the Arabic population, language, or culture in Palestine." which it then sought to address by issuing the Churchill White Paper in June 1922, which

those who did not want to assimilate,<sup>2</sup> began to look for an alternative, and they turned their attention to Palestine. Because of the quiet and rural nature of Palestine, it was easy for Zionists to present it as a land with few native inhabitants and thus with plenty of room for the Jews to establish a national home. As Israel Zangwill said, Palestine was “a land without a people for a people without a land.” Theodor Herzl, widely considered the father of Zionism, rarely acknowledged the presence of Muslim and Christian Arabs in Palestine and generally adopted the “Zangwill” approach.

However, both Zangwill and Herzl fully understood that Palestine was well populated, and that if Zionism were to succeed, the Palestinians would need to be removed. Despite coining one of Zionism’s key phrases, Zangwill constantly demonstrated his awareness of the dense Palestinian population, telling an audience in 1905 that Palestine was “already twice as thickly populated as the United States” and the Zionists “must be prepared either to drive out by the sword the [Arab] tribes in possession as our forefathers did or to grapple with the problem of a large alien population, mostly Mohammedan and accustomed for centuries to despise us.”<sup>3</sup> Zangwill even told Jabotinsky in a meeting during 1916 that the removal of Palestinians was a precondition of the Zionist enterprise which should take its place in the new world order and reject any notions of sentimental attachment to territory as far the native Arab population of Palestine was concerned. In the summer of 1895, Herzl wrote that Zionism would need to colonize the land and transfer the native population any way possible:

When we occupy the land, we shall bring immediate benefits to the state that receives us. We must expropriate gently the private property on the estates

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<sup>2</sup>A significant number of immigrants to Palestine before 1914 had first left Eastern Europe for the U.S., and immigrated to Palestine from there.

<sup>3</sup>Masalha, 10.

assigned to us. We shall try to spirit the penniless population across the border by procuring employment for it in the transit countries, while denying it any employment in our own country. The property owners will come over to our side. Both the process of expropriation and the removal of the poor must be carried out discreetly and circumspectly. Let the owners of immovable property believe that they are cheating us, selling us something far more than they are worth. But we are not going to sell them anything back.<sup>4</sup>

If there was a Jewish Question to be answered, there was also a “Hidden Question,” as Yitzhak Epstein noted in 1907. In Epstein’s eyes, the question of how the Jews would deal with the native Arab population was largely ignored; the question “has not been forgotten, but rather has remained completely hidden from the Zionists, and in its true form has found almost no mention in the literature of our movement.”<sup>5</sup> For most Zionists and their supporters, it mattered little if Zionist aims had negative implications for the existing population. However, to minimize this discussion, the dialogue ignored the Arabs and focused only on the eternal relationship between the land (Zion) and the people (Jews). This was done initially through land purchases, funded by wealthy Zionists from Europe, but it later evolved into more violent methods of altering the demographics of Palestine.

Abroad, the efforts first of Herzl and then of Weizmann transformed the concept of Zionism into an international movement and, with the Balfour Declaration in 1917, won the support of a world power. Their vision and flexible pragmatism allowed Zionism to flourish and blossom in what is today known as Israel. In Palestine, it was the social Zionists – dedicated to monopolizing Jewish control of labor and land – that built the foundations of a state (practical Zionism) alongside the political construction of Zionism

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<sup>4</sup>Ibid., 9.

<sup>5</sup>Avi Shlaim, *The Iron Wall: Israel and the Arab World* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2001), 1.

by Herzl and Weizmann. Workers' unions and labor organizations were the frontrunners of the Zionist institutions of state and were directed by very capable and charismatic men, foremost among them David Ben-Gurion. It is unlikely that Zionism would have had a similar unfolding under the uncompromising leadership of Ze'ev Jabotinsky and, after his death, Menachem Begin. The difference between Revisionist and Labor Zionism was the former was maximalist and impatient while the latter was pragmatic and insisted on a gradual and flexible approach to establishing a Jewish state.

They were identical, however, in their plans to solve the "Arab Question," the only difference was that Jabotinsky openly acknowledged that the Palestinians would naturally resist being displaced from their lands. The Zionists made every effort to separate the Yishuv – the Jewish community in Palestine, and the precursor of the state of Israel – and the Palestinians through control of "labor" and "land." Like many colonial doctrines, Zionism viewed the separation of the colonists and the natives as critical to keeping the colonial nationalism pure. Zionism did this by acquiring land (thus making ownership of it exclusively Jewish) and dictating that the labor force that worked the land be comprised of Jews only. Unlike the situation under the Zionists from the first aliyah, the Palestinians were not permitted to continue working on the lands that were transferred from Arab to Zionist ownership in the twentieth century. By separating the Yishuv and the Arabs of Palestine, Zionist leaders were able to prepare the Jewish community better for the eventual reality of forced population removal, all the while still voicing the liberal and progressive nature of Zionism as the Jewish national movement. The isolation between the settler and the native "other" is not unfamiliar in the history of colonialism:

most liberal countries also had colonies. There both organic and liberal conceptions of we, the people coexisted. On the one hand, the settlers recognized

themselves as divided into diverse interests and classes, and their political parties represented this diversity amid liberal institutions. On the other hand, this entire people had the singular quality of being “civilized” and did not include “natives,” “savages,” “orientals,” and so on. The difference was later recast as racial. The “lower races” were not a part of we, the people.<sup>6</sup>

The political mindset of the members of the second aliyah “made Israeli state building viable but, in the process, intensified the Jewish-Arab conflict in Palestine,” and this is exactly what Ben-Gurion and his comrades had in mind.<sup>7</sup> Jewish immigration to Palestine had increased during the pogrom years, as roughly 65,000 Jews left Russia for Palestine between 1850 and 1910, although far greater numbers left for the U.S. or other western destinations. The first Zionists in Palestine represented the Jewish national movement through a plantation-style colonial paradigm, for the Jews from the first aliyah owned large plots of land that were primarily dedicated to the cultivation of citrus fruits. These early Zionists allowed the Palestinians to continue to work the land purchased by Jews, but after the second aliyah began to bring a new breed of Jewish immigrants in 1904, Zionism became a pure-colony settler movement. However, many Zionists believed that Jewish control of the land was not increasing at a sufficient rate. In November 1917, the same year the Balfour Declaration was issued, Jews in Palestine made up only ten percent of the total population and owned a meager 2 percent of the land. These percentages increased dramatically over the next three decades, but by 1947, Zionist control amounted to much less than half of Palestine.

The Zionist concept of “transfer” and the ideology of “conquering labor, conquering land” evolved together and would culminate in Plan D (for the Hebrew letter

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<sup>6</sup> Mann, 70.

<sup>7</sup> Gershon Shafir, *Land, Labor and the Origins of the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict, 1882-1914* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996), ix.

*Dalet*) in 1948. Although Plan D was not implemented by the Hagana High Command until just months before Israel's declaration of independence, there is compelling evidence of an intentional, well-conceived military operation planned out over the course of several years. The Hagana's Operations Chief during the war, Yigael Yadin, attested that the plan had been envisaged at least four years before 1948: "I prepared the nucleus of Plan Dalet in 1944 when I was head of planning in the underground, and I worked on it further in the summer of 1947."<sup>8</sup> The success of Zionism leading up to – and immediately after – the establishment of the state of Israel can be attributed to the pragmatic yet determined leadership of the Yishuv, which shaped the Jewish immigrants from Europe and Russia into a cohesive community, accelerated the pace of Zionist land acquisitions, harnessed the militancy of Revisionism, and painstakingly made the preparations for the war they knew was coming, a process which dramatically altered the course of Jewish and Palestinian history.

#### Land Acquisitions and the Concept of "Transfer"

Despite the differences between Labor and Revisionist Zionism, both pursued an independent Jewish state in some or all of Palestine, and both advocated a policy of "transfer" for the native Arab inhabitants. In 1926, Colonel Frederick Kisch proclaimed that Zionists should forcefully evict Palestinians from the Maghribi Quarter of Jerusalem (located next to the western Wall of the Temple), demolish their homes, and enlarge the Jewish place of worship. Kisch's idea was also intended to demonstrate Zionist power

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<sup>8</sup>Masalha, 177.

and intimidate the Palestinians.<sup>9</sup> Yosef Weitz, director for land development for the Jewish National Fund (JNF), called for a more comprehensive “transfer”. In his diary on 20 December 1940, he wrote, “It must be clear that there is no room in the country for both peoples . . . . Not one [Palestinian] village must be left, not one [Bedouin] tribe.”<sup>10</sup> That following June, Weitz demonstrated a more militant position on the issue, writing about the transfer of Palestinians and what to do with their property once the “transfer” had been carried out: “They [the Arabs] are too many and too much rooted [in the country] . . . the only way is to cut and eradicate them from the roots. I feel that this is the truth.”<sup>11</sup>

Established in 1897, the World Zionist Organization (WZO) began purchasing land in Palestine to secure property for Zionist settlement. The Jewish National Fund (JNF) was founded in 1901 as the “land acquisition and administration arm” of the WZO and the Jewish Agency and oversaw the institutionalization of the transfer of land and people in Palestine.<sup>12</sup> This was done in accordance with the Zionist doctrine of “conquering land” and “conquering labor” by including the provision that any land purchased by the JNF was to be held in perpetual trust for Jews, and non-Jews were forbidden both from working on the land and from buying it. The policies of the JNF created tensions between the Zionist settlers of the first aliyah and those who arrived afterward and also increased the anti-Zionist sentiments among the Arab population of Palestine. Zionist land purchases affected the Palestinian *fellahin*, who were forced off

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<sup>9</sup>The British Colonel’s plan came to fruition after Israel captured the Old City in 1967 and did indeed demonstrate Zionist power and intimidate the Palestinians.

<sup>10</sup>Benny Morris, *The Birth of the Palestinian Refugee Problem Revisited* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 54.

<sup>11</sup>Masalha, 134.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, 24.

their land and banned from setting foot on it again, which placed Zionism on a path to violent confrontation with the native population. In 1907, Epstein wrote the article, “The Hidden Question,” criticizing the Zionists’ tactics for gaining exclusive control over the land. The Jewish planters of the first wave of Zionist immigration favored a co-habitation of the land with Jewish purchase and ownership of land to be the only source of tension. By not excluding Palestinian labor on the land, the “national confrontation between the two groups” was moderated.<sup>13</sup> One of the early Zionists from this group of planters urged the moderation of the recent Zionist immigrants’ nationalism and argued that Jews should be tolerant and understanding of the predicament of the Palestinian peasants:

How can Jews, who demand emancipation in Russia, rob rights and act selfishly towards other workers upon coming to Eretz Israel? If it is possible for many a people to hide fairness and justice behind cannon smoke, how and behind what shall we hide fairness and justice? We should absolutely not deceive ourselves with terrible visions. We shall never possess cannons, even if the *goyim* shall bear arms against one another for ever. Therefore, we cannot but settle in our land fairly and justly, to live and let live.<sup>14</sup>

This was not to be. Not only did official Zionist policy include the separation of settler and native, it tried to import labor to replace the Palestinian farmers. The WZO encouraged a Yemeni aliyah with the intent that Yemeni Jews would learn to farm alongside the Ashkenazi Jews and work the agricultural settlements together. However, this idea was soon abandoned when the JNF received increasing complaints from the Ashkenazis and feared alienating the Jewish immigrants from Europe, evident by a letter written by the Palestine Office: “We had another opportunity to meet members of the workers’ moshav Ein Hai and we came to recognize that the *askenazim* are unhappy with the association with the Yemenites, and they see no benefit from such partnership, and

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<sup>13</sup> Shafir, 80.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, 79.

only their respect for the Board of the Workers' Federation restrains the expression of their opposition."<sup>15</sup> Such attitudes led to the disproportionate distribution of land by the Board of the Workers' Federation between Ashkenazi and Yemeni Jews (though the outbreak of WWI ended the idea of a substantial immigration of Yemeni Jews through a Yemeni aliyah). The exclusive control of the land, the prized resource of the JNF, was monopolized by the Ashkenazi Zionists at the expense both of the non-Jewish Arabs and of non-European Jews. There was no doubt that the clear colonial-settler Zionism emerging in Palestine during the beginning of the twentieth century was on course to collide with the Palestinians over the question of labor and land. As the Zionists had conquered both of these already, they began fine-tuning plans of "transfer" in preparation for the physical conflict looming on the horizon.

Zionist ideology inherently led to a policy of ethnic cleansing. It would be impossible to establish a purely Jewish State in an area where Jews were the minority without undertaking such a program. Zionist aspirations could be fulfilled only through the removal of the majority population. In a Jewish Agency executive meeting in 1938, David Ben-Gurion openly supported the idea of compulsory transfer, arguing that there was nothing immoral about it. Ben-Gurion often referred to the population transfer that occurred between Turkey and Greece after World War I to legitimize a possible transfer in Palestine.<sup>16</sup> Zionist leaders continued to formulate plans of "transfer" in the mandate years though public comments like Zangwill's were subjected to censorship, and, in the

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<sup>15</sup>Ibid., 113.

<sup>16</sup>According to Andrew Bell-Fialkoff in *Ethnic Cleansing*, the first modern agreement to transfer populations was signed in November 1913 between Bulgaria and Turkey; later, major portions of the Muslim population were transferred from Greece to Turkey in exchange for the Greek Christian population of Anatolia.

1920s, the political leaders of the WZO ordered all Zionists to avoid discussing the transfer issue in official and public discussions on the “Arab Question.” As the less evil method of population cleansing, Zionist leadership hoped to arrange a population transfer with the neighboring Arab states, but they quickly grasped that such a venture was unlikely to materialize. The Palestinians were deeply attached to their lands and were unlikely to participate in a transfer to Syria or a population exchange with the Jews of the Arab world. Transfer in Palestine would only be achieved through strong-handed policies. In *The Birth of the Palestinian Refugee Problem Revisited*, Benny Morris argued that Mapai leaders urged the Jewish community to live in peace with their Arab neighbors and did not engage in acts of violence against them or try to enforce compulsory transfer until after March 1948. Literally, this may be the case. The political leaders of Mapai were not personally involved in acts of violence, but their refusal to condemn such acts contradicts any notion that they supported living in peace with the Palestinians. One of Mapai’s leaders, David Hacoheh, recounted his participation in securing Jewish control of labor and land in Palestine:

I remember being one of the first of our comrades [of the Ahdut Ha’avodah] to go to London after the First World War . . . . There I became a socialist . . . . [in Palestine] I had to fight my friends on the issue of Jewish socialism, to defend the fact that I would not accept Arabs in my trade union, the Histadrut; to defend preaching to housewives that they not buy at Arab stores; to prevent Arab workers from getting jobs there . . . . To pour kerosene on Arab tomatoes; to attack Jewish housewives in the markets and smash the Arab eggs they had bought; to praise to the skies the Kereen Kayemet [Jewish National Fund] that sent Hankin to Beirut to buy land from absentee effendi [landlords] and to throw the fellahin [peasants] off the land – to buy dozens of dunams – from an Arab is permitted, but to sell, God forbid, one Jewish dunam to an Arab is prohibited.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>17</sup>Masalha, 25.

Hacohen's actions may not be considered violent, but there is no question he contributed to the deterioration of Jewish-Arab relations and the increasingly militant attitude of the Yishuv.

Hacohen was unquestionably an important part of the Zionist leadership and the move to de-Arabize the land, but ultimately, one man took charge of the direction of Zionism in Palestine. David Ben-Gurion played the pragmatic Zionist in the public sphere while conducting operations behind the scenes in such a way that was more akin to Revisionism than Labor Zionism. In 1941, he alluded to the reality that violent force would be needed to remove the Palestinians:

We have to examine, first, if this transfer is practical, and secondly, if it is necessary. It is Impossible to imagine general evacuation without compulsion, and brutal compulsion. There are of course sections of the non-Jewish population of the Land of Israel which will not resist transfer under adequate conditions to certain neighbouring countries, such as the Druzes, a number of Bedouin tribes in the Jordan Valley and the south, the Circassians and perhaps even the Metwalis [the Shi'ite of the Galilee]. But it would be very difficult to bring about the resettlement of other sections of the Arab populations such as the *fellahin* and also urban populations in neighbouring Arab countries by transferring them voluntary, whatever economic inducements are offered to them.<sup>18</sup>

Zionism introduced a new feature into Jewish identity during the first few decades of the twentieth century: a militant attitude befitting colonial settlers. Ethnic conflict was typically a result of colonial conflict over who should control the land, the colonists or the natives. The differing degrees of intensity of colonial economies had direct correlations to the violence the settlers levied against the natives:

1. Trade, colonists traded with the natives;
2. Plunder and tribute-taking, best exhibited by the Spanish conquistadors;
3. Settlement using a dispersed labor force, where settlers used native labor to work their small farms;

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<sup>18</sup>Ibid., 128.

4. Settlement using a concentrated labor force, usually mines or plantations (though harsh, this ironically rarely led to large-scale murderous cleansing);
5. Settlement not requiring native labor, where settler or foreign labor is used to work the land and the natives are excluded from it.<sup>19</sup>

It is this fifth degree of the colonial economy that Zionism cultivated in Palestine, the type of colonial economy most likely to perpetuate violence against the native population in the form of mass murder. However, “two lesser forms of cleansing were still possible [within the settlement not requiring native labor]. . . . [the] division of the land might occur, so that the two communities could live segregated from each other” (i.e., the formation of reservations where the settlers inhabited the majority of the land *and* all of the best land) or the native population could assimilate.<sup>20</sup> The separation of settler (Zionist) and native (Palestinian) through the exclusive Jewish control of labor and land and the rise of militant Zionism led to a combination of the first two outcomes, the division of the land and mass murder.

#### The Rise of Militant Zionism and Preparation for War

Violence between Palestinians and Zionists occurred after 1920, but in general, the two communities lived in relative peace until the Arab Revolt between 1936 and 1939. The Arab Revolt, a Palestinian grass-roots reaction to poor leadership and economic hardships, demonstrated that the Arabs were not prepared to be quietly estranged from the land and economy of Palestine. By 1936, Palestinian society had fractured into competing political and nationalist movements. The end of the Ottoman Empire had removed the one identity that had superseded religion and language, and the

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<sup>19</sup>Mann, 71-72

<sup>20</sup>Ibid., 71-72.

increasing Jewish population, compounded by the Great Depression of the 1930s, threatened the new identities formed along religious, ethnic, and linguistic boundaries. Zionism was not the only nationalist movement gaining momentum in Palestine, as the new political order of the world mandated that only the nation-state could offer security to the inhabitants of a certain territory. The Zionist leadership correctly interpreted the uprising to mean that a peaceful transfer of Palestinians was unrealistic and grasped the reality that only one nation-state could emerge in Palestine. During the Arab Revolt, the Yishuv started to carry out military attacks that escalated in number and force throughout the next decade and delivered the initial blow in the fight for the establishment a national home. However, Zionism developed a defensive militancy in the early stages of the colonial project in Palestine.

A militant nationalism had developed within the Jewish agricultural community in Palestine before the first outbursts of anti-Zionist violence occurred in the 1920s. As noted above, Jabotinsky's maximalist and uncompromising revisionist movement introduced a militant side of Zionism and the militant nationalism that ensued took a strong hold in Palestine. This was a natural development given the settler nature of Zionism and its exclusion of native Palestinian labor through the "land and labor" concept.<sup>21</sup> The need to defend the Jewish settlements without relying on Palestinian labor led to the creation of defense groups, such as the Bar-Giora group in 1907 and its "extension into Hashomer," – the "vanguard" of the conquest of labor and land – in 1909.<sup>22</sup> Hashomer (meaning "the Guard") was comprised of elite settlers, who joined the military-wing of the Yishuv after a rigorous application process and initiation during

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<sup>21</sup>Shafir, 89.

<sup>22</sup>Ibid., 136.

secret ceremonies. Both Bar-Giora and Hashomer not only guarded existing agricultural settlements, but they were also used to cultivate contested land purchased by the Jewish Colonization Association (JCA) or JNF to ensure its complete transfer into Jewish hands.<sup>23</sup> Hashomer operated somewhat independently from the Poalei Zion Party, which allowed the latter to not be embarrassed by the former's "conquest of labor and guard duty" as well as the existing interaction between members of Hashomer and "native" peoples of Palestine; Hapoel Hatzair accused Hashomer members of "going native," but as one guard remarked, "experience taught them [Hashomer members] that if courage is required in the moment of a clash, much more important is the daily contact, which alone can create an atmosphere of good relations and security in the vicinity."<sup>24</sup> In time, a number of Yishuv leaders grew to resent the relative autonomy Hashomer enjoyed, especially Ben-Gurion (who had been left out of its ranks). As Poalei Zion's right wing leader, he criticized Hashomer's independence and oversaw the disbanding of the exclusive unit and its absorption into the Hagana, the military arm of the Histadrut.

At about the same time that the Zionists came to the conclusion that it would be impossible to remove the Palestinians from Palestine without the use of force, they began to build up the Haganah. Ben-Gurion used the Arab revolt of 1936-39 as a pretext to expand the Yishuv's military force and increase its weapons, both in quantity and quality. By 1937, British officials estimated that the Zionist stockpiles of weapons were ample enough to equip an army of 10,000. The Yishuv successfully smuggled weapons into Palestine, giving it a superior advantage over the Palestinians who owned antiquated firearms at best. The bottom-up violence of the Arab Revolt caused the Hagana to

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<sup>23</sup>Ibid., 138-39.

<sup>24</sup>Ibid., 141.

abandon its purely defensive nature and begin a policy of retaliatory attacks. The Arab Revolt, a culmination of Palestinian frustration, failed to bring about any significant changes in British policy or bring about greater Palestinian autonomy. Instead, the uprising spurred the Yishuv into a military action that, once unleashed, was impossible to stop. Not only did the Yishuv possess significant arms by 1937, it also supported a second military wing that laid the foundations for the terror tactics used in 1947-49 to expel the Palestinians. Like Labor Zionism and the Hagana, the Revisionists created an armed wing of their own known as the National Military Organization:

The ideological legacy of Jabotinsky-led Revisionism found expression in two offshoots. The first was the Irgun Tzvai Leumi (IZL, or the Irgun), an underground military organization formed in 1935 and commanded in the 1940s by Menachem Begin. The second was the [LEHI] (Lohamei Herut Yisra'el, also known as the Stern Gang after its founder, [Abraham] Stern), which broke away from the IZL in June 1940; the organization was later commanded by Yitzhak Shamir.<sup>25</sup>

Unlike the Hagana, however, the Irgun and LEHI were not established as purely defensive units, since they launched terrorist attacks against the British and the Palestinians. In the year of its foundation, the Irgun killed seventy-seven Palestinians in a three-week span by planting bombs in Arab marketplaces. As the terror campaigns of the Irgun were the manifestation of Revisionism's militant indeterminism, Jabotinsky supported these actions which "involved such actions as placing bomb-loaded vegetable barrows in crowded Arab markets in Haifa and Jerusalem and firing indiscriminately on Arab civilian houses."<sup>26</sup> The Irgun and LEHI also initiated campaigns against the British after 1944, including kidnappings, bombings, and political assassinations.

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<sup>25</sup> Masalha, 29-30.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid., 30.

During the Arab Revolt, Zionist attacks had a definite impact on the psyche of the Palestinians, but these attacks failed to match the depths of force and destruction of the British military operations against the rioting Arabs. In order to quell the uprising, Britain sent 20,000 troops to Palestine. British officials hanged rebels and implemented a policy of collective punishments. British troops dynamited the homes of Palestinians suspected of belonging to, or aiding, Palestinian guerillas. Later, the Zionists continued this policy of collective punishment and house demolitions, a policy that still exists today. Britain's harsh repression effectively ended the uprising in 1939. However, Britain investigated the reasons for the rebellion, which produced the 1939 White Paper. The document limited Jewish immigration to Palestine and restricted land transfers to Jews. The Zionist leadership rejected the document, as did the Arabs, and vowed to fight against it and its British authors.

In the wake of the 1939 White Paper and the outbreak of World War II the Yishuv increased its use of violence. The Irgun immediately shifted its terrorist attacks from Palestinian targets to British ones. In 1940, Abraham Stern broke away from the Irgun and established the Freedom Fighters of Israel (LEHI). LEHI focused solely on anti-British actions and robbed Jewish banks at the cost of Jewish lives to fund its operations. Stern's anti-British sentiments ran so deep that he preferred to align the LEHI with Nazi Germany during the war, a stance that led to his death in a British raid in early 1942. The Hagana also began running covert operations. In November 1940, it planted a bomb on the *SS Patria* to disable the ship, which was scheduled to deport the 1700 Jewish refugees onboard. The Hagana believed that if the ship was unable to leave the port, Britain would

allow the refugees to remain in Palestine. The bomb sank, rather than disabled, the ship, and 200 people died. The Zionists quickly blamed Britain for the tragedy.

In April 1942, a new immigrant took over control of the Irgun. Menachem Begin (who became the first Revisionist prime minister in 1977) coordinated efforts with the LEHI against the British. In order to hasten the end of the British mandate, Begin directed the Irgun to attack civilian institutions. The LEHI continued to attack any British target, military or civilian; in November 1944, LEHI members in Cairo assassinated Lord Moyne, the British colonial secretary and head of the Middle East Office in Cairo. Fearful of British retaliation, Ben-Gurion ordered the Hagana to launch operation “The Season” which stifled the activities of the Irgun and LEHI. Ben-Gurion and Labor Zionism, still competing with Revisionist Zionism, had recently gained control of the international Zionist movement and were not about to lose control of Zionism in Palestine. The Hagana succeeded in restricting the activities of Irgun and LEHI until the end of World War II.

In 1945, terrorism returned to Palestine, and Ben-Gurion took steps to bring the Irgun and LEHI under his direction by authorizing their actions beforehand whenever possible. Late in 1945 and in 1946 Zionist forces attacked British railway and military installations. The militant groups also began abducting British officers in response to the capture, imprisonment, and occasional execution of militant Zionists (a tactic taken up by Hamas in 2006). In June 1946, the British raided the headquarters of the Jewish Agency but recovered little information about the underground terrorist operations of the Yishuv. Outraged by the raid, Menachem Begin drew up plans to bomb the King David Hotel which housed the offices of the British administration. Ben-Gurion initially gave the

green light for the operation, but after repeated appeals from Chaim Weizmann (who had always advocated working with Britain rather than against it), he dropped his support for the attack. Begin ignored the political leadership and carried out the attack during the busiest time of day. On 22 July 1946, an explosion ripped through the King David Hotel, killing ninety-one people – Jewish and Arab civilians as well as British.

Historian Charles D. Smith summed up Begin's attack as well as his tactics by writing, "the logic of Zionist terrorism was bearing fruit, bringing home to the British public at large the cost of maintaining a hold on Palestine."<sup>27</sup> In December, another bombing killed several civilians and injured numerous others. The cost of ruling Palestine was becoming too great for Britain, which had been economically and physically exhausted by the experience of the Second World War, and in February 1947, it turned over the issue to the United Nations. The United Nations Special Committee on Palestine (UNSCOP) called for an end to the British Mandate, and in September, Britain declared it would unilaterally terminate the mandate in May 1948. Two months after this declaration, the U.N. voted to partition Palestine, a victory for Zionism. With the imminent departure of Britain, Zionists turned their attention to the removal of the only obstacle still standing in the way of a purely Jewish state: the Palestinians.

The events before the violence that broke out at the end of 1947 highlight the violent colonialism of the Zionist national movement in Palestine. Labor Zionism desired a Jewish state over as much of Palestine as possible while the Revisionists demanded a much larger area. Labor Zionism appeared to be trying to achieve its objectives through

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<sup>27</sup>Charles D. Smith, *Palestine and the Arab-Israeli Conflict: A History with Documents* 7<sup>th</sup> ed. (Boston: Bedford/St. Martin's, 2010), 187.

nonviolent means before resorting to more militant measures, but the writings of Labor's leaders clearly lead to the conclusion that they knew that violent confrontation was inevitable. Jabotinsky's movement preferred to take the shortest path to Jewish independence, which entailed the immediate use of force against both the British and the Palestinians. In their eyes, the land of Judea and Samaria also belonged to the Jewish people, and only forceful expulsion would bring about the ultimate goal of a Jewish majority in all of Palestine. Revisionism has polarized Israeli politics and society since the 1940s, if not the 1920s, but given the current political makeup of Israel in 2011, one may conclude that the division between Labor and Revisionist Zionism no longer exists. Furthermore, the fact that the Jewish community in Palestine stood united in its quest to establish a Jewish state over as much of Palestine as possible between 1947 and 1949 at the expense of the Palestinian majority using any method necessary is cause enough to make one question the precise nature of the division, if it ever existed at all.

### The Hidden War Begins

On 29 November 1947, the U.N. adopted Resolution 181, partitioning Palestine into Jewish and Arab states. Violence was unavoidable as neither the Jews nor the Palestinians agreed to the new borders. The large numbers of Palestinians residing inside the U.N.-designated Jewish area also inevitably led to the ethnic cleansing of the Palestinians. From the beginning of the war for Palestine, Jewish forces held the advantage in every aspect. Contrary to the 'David versus Goliath' myth that has pervaded much of Israeli historiography, the Jews had a larger military force armed with far superior weapons. Just as importantly, the Jewish community was extremely well

organized, in contrast to the Palestinians whose political leadership had not survived the collapse of the Arab Revolt. In the international arena, Zionists garnered significant support for their cause (especially within the United States) and continued to raise considerable funds for weapons and state building. The Palestinians lacked modern weapons, were poorly organized on the domestic front, and were abandoned regionally and internationally. General John Glubb, head of Jordan's Arab Legion, called the wider Arab-Israeli War in 1948 a "phony war" because of the Arab countries' generally half-hearted commitment to rescuing the Palestinians. With an insignificant invading force, the Jewish community faced little opposition as it launched the "real war," the fight to rid Palestine of the Palestinians.

Israeli historians investigating the war in the 1980s, 1990s, and into the twenty-first century have found evidence of extreme cases of violence perpetrated by Jewish forces. Plan Dalet was discovered to be a comprehensive plan of "transfer." There is evidence of twenty-four massacres of Palestinians by pre-state Zionist soldiers and Israeli forces (following Israel's declaration of independence on 14 May 1948). In addition to executions, beatings, and bombings, there were a dozen confirmed cases of rape by Israeli soldiers. In addition, most Palestinian 'men' – males between the ages of ten and fifty – were placed in prison and labor camps after capture by Jewish troops. The top two Israeli scholars on the topic have utilized the same sources but have reached different conclusions. Benny Morris, author of the *The Birth*, interpreted the events of 1947-49 to be the byproduct of war rather than of a top-down policy of ethnic cleansing. However, the violence the Jewish community used against the Palestinians was not merely a product of a war for survival but the result of ridding the land of an ethnic group that

stood in the way of Zionist aspirations. This was the conclusion reached by Ilan Pappé in *The Ethnic Cleansing of Palestine*, which shows unambiguously that the tragedy of Palestine was the result of a well-conceived plan to cleanse Palestine of its non-Jewish inhabitants.

The Zionist leaders indeed wanted to move or expel the Palestinians from the territory they desired for themselves, but they were also pragmatic and knew that a certain atmosphere was needed in order to do so. During the Arab Revolt, Jews took advantage of the opportunity to expel Palestinians alongside the British. One British officer in particular, Orde Charles Wingate, was eager to aid Jewish participation in enforcing punitive measures specifically in the destruction of Palestinian homes. This experience alongside the British gave the Hagana an added advantage in the civil war that broke out in November 1947. As historian Rashid Khalidi has noted, Zionists gained valuable experience from British tutelage, while simultaneously guiding the direction of Palestine. Between 1939 and 1949, the central actors in Palestine were not the Palestinians, who lacked recognition abroad and suffered from the inability to organize domestically.<sup>28</sup> As the Palestinians remained largely inactive in the decade following the Arab Revolt, the Jewish Agency began mapping out Palestinian villages and demographics as well as important roads and water sources. In 1946, Plan C (Hebrew letter *gimel*) was created as a retaliatory operation aimed at killing the Palestinian political leadership and attacking Palestinian villages, transportation, water wells, and civilian institutions.<sup>29</sup> The following year, the Jewish Agency produced a map of what the

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<sup>28</sup>Rashid Khalidi, *The Iron Cage: The Story of the Palestinian Struggle for Statehood* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2007), 125.

<sup>29</sup>Pappé, 28.

Zionists wanted Israel to look like, a map which was almost an exact match of the pre-1967 borders of Israel. It was clear that Zionist leaders planned on extending the borders of Israel beyond what the U.N. had designated and on establishing a clear Jewish majority within those borders.

The U.N.'s announcement of partition led to bloody skirmishes in November 1947 between Jews and Palestinians. Palestinian attacks were localized and posed no serious threat to the destruction of the Jewish presence in Palestine. The military actions of the Hagana, Irgun, and LEHI, on the other hand, severely threatened the foundations of Palestinian society. In December, Jewish forces began attacking Palestinian villages and cities, sowing fear in the Arab communities of Palestine. On 18 December, Yigal Allon, commander of the Palmach, assaulted the Palestinian village of Khisas in the middle of the night, blowing up random houses. The attack killed fifteen people, including five children. In the same month, Jewish forces in and around Haifa began attacking the Palestinians there. Positioned on the mountain slopes above Haifa, the Jews sniped at Palestinians and rolled steel balls down into Palestinian neighborhoods. They terrorized Palestinian businesses through numerous car bombings. In the Arab neighborhood of Wadi Rushmiyya, the Hagana began its cleansing campaign by expelling the Palestinians and blowing up their homes.

At the end of December, Ben-Gurion met with his closest advisors in what was dubbed "the Long Seminar." During the three-day meeting, Yosef Weitz urged the Zionist leaders to make "transfer" the cornerstone of Zionist policy. It was agreed that every unauthorized initiative should be incorporated into official policy through retroactive approval. Eliahu Sasson, the only attendee of the Long Seminar to oppose a

campaign of comprehensive transfer, summed up the theme of the meeting, quoting Yigal Allon,

There is a need now for strong and brutal action. We need to be accurate about timing, place and those we hit. If we accuse a family – we need to harm them without mercy, women and children included. . . . During the operation there is no need to distinguish between guilty and not guilty.<sup>30</sup>

Allon's words concluded 1947, demonstrating that the Zionist leadership had a clear plan to realize Zionist aspirations.

Violence against Palestinians increased throughout 1948. In January, the Irgun increased its terrorist bombings, killing twenty-six in an attack on the Sarraya house in Jaffa which was the seat of the local national committee. Begin's organization also bombed a hotel in western Jerusalem, killing a number of civilians. The hotel bombing fatalities included the Spanish consul, which caused the British High Commissioner to demand Zionist condemnation of the Irgun attack: David Ben-Gurion refused to do so. The following month, under the watchful eye of Ben-Gurion, Jewish forces purchased, and then developed, flamethrowers. These new weapons were used to set fire to the houses and fields of Palestinians. Zionist attacks on Palestinians, aided with the advanced weapons, were becoming more efficient. On 15 February, it only took Jewish soldiers a few hours to destroy the village of Qisarya and expel all the inhabitants. Benny Morris argued that the operations directed by Yosef Weitz in February and March were not part of a central policy dictated by the political leadership, but were unauthorized initiatives taken by individuals. As Ilan Pappé has subsequently pointed out, this was impossible because the centralized Hagana command, headed by Ben-Gurion, authorized all actions of expulsion, even if it was retroactive.

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<sup>30</sup>Ibid., 69.

Plan C evolved into Plan D (*dalet*), and in early March 1948, Plan D called for expulsion missions to be carried out through the destruction of villages. Officers were instructed to destroy “villages (by setting fire to them, by blowing them up, and by planting mines in their debris) and especially of those population centers which are difficult to control continuously. . . . In case of resistance [by the villagers], the armed forces must be wiped out and the population expelled outside the borders of the state.”<sup>31</sup> By April, the sporadic attacks on Palestinian villages had turned into a comprehensive operation of ethnic cleansing as Hagana troop levels exceeded 50,000. The flight of Palestinians from their homes was further aided by a combined Irgun-LEHI attack on the village of Deir Yasin. On 9 April 1948, members of the Irgun and LEHI surrounded Deir Yasin and attacked the village. The brutality of the attack, which involved the raping and killing of women, was the manifestation of Plan D. The Red Cross estimated that 254 Palestinians died in the massacre, but a more detailed survey put the figure closer to 100. 45 women and 30 children were among those killed by the Jewish militants.<sup>32</sup> Such atrocities were publicized as part of an effort to demoralize the Palestinians and hasten the cleansing operations; “as Lenin once put it, the purpose of terrorism is to terrorize.”<sup>33</sup> The massacre at Deir Yasin severely impacted the psyche of the Palestinians, and from mid-April on, the threat of a repeat of Deir Yasin caused thousands of Palestinians to abandon their homes before actually coming under attack.

The same day as the massacre at Deir Yasin, the first Palestinian urban center fell. The Hagana attacked the ancient city of Tiberias, and after a week of bombardment, the

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<sup>31</sup>Ibid., 39.

<sup>32</sup>Khalidi, 133.

<sup>33</sup>Gelvin, 213.

residents surrendered the city and were promptly expelled from it.<sup>34</sup> The larger city of Haifa, Palestine's economic center, fell shortly after. Mordechai Maklef commanded the Carmeli Brigade and ordered his men to "kill any Arab you encounter; torch all inflammable objects and force doors open with explosives."<sup>35</sup> Jewish loudspeakers directed the Palestinians of Haifa to move to the market near the port's gate to avoid harm. However, once the Palestinians had gathered at the old Ottoman market, the Hagana launched mortar rounds into the crowd. The residents of Haifa panicked, and the crowd fled to the sea, trampling each other in an attempt to escape the bombardment. Nearby Acre was next, and on 6 May, Jewish forces attacked the ancient Crusader city. Initially, the Palestinians made a valiant stand, but they eventually succumbed due to constant shelling and the outbreak of typhoid. Acre's water source was located ten kilometers north at the Kabri springs, and Red Cross officials reported that the water had been injected with typhoid, most likely by the Hagana.

Jewish cleansing operations in Palestine were succeeding, but to assure their continued progress, Ben-Gurion sent a letter out to the heads of the Hagana on 11 May. He reaffirmed that "the cleansing of Palestine remained the prime objective of Plan Dalet."<sup>36</sup> Ben-Gurion wrote this on the eve of Jewish independence and the Arab invasion, which is evidence that the Jewish leadership was more concerned with removing the Palestinian population from its borders than fending off the armies of Egypt, Iraq, Transjordan, Syria, and Lebanon. Rather than reinforcing the borders with the Arab states, efforts were concentrated on cleansing densely populated areas. On 13

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<sup>34</sup>Morris, 184.

<sup>35</sup>Pappé, 95.

<sup>36</sup>Ibid., 128.

May, the Hagana attacked Jaffa and expelled 50,000 Palestinians. The Israeli myth that the Palestinians fled their homes because of the pending Arab invasion lacks any credible support. Between 30 March and 15 May, 200 villages were occupied by Jewish troops who expelled the inhabitants. Jewish violence and terrorism was solely to blame for the flight of roughly 750,000 Palestinians from their homes during the course of 1947-49.

After 14 May 1948 and the establishment of the state of Israel, ethnic cleansing campaigns continued, employing violent measures against the Palestinian populations. In scenes reminiscent of Nazi Germany, Israeli forces attacked Palestinian villages and placed the residents in barbed wire prisons. In the village of Sabbarin, the Irgun expelled the men and imprisoned the elderly, women, and children for several days with no food or shelter. Palestinian prisoners were forced to work in the prison camps and labor camps built by the Israelis. In November 1948, the Red Cross reported that the Palestinian prisoners were exploited for the benefit of the Israeli economy; some prisoners remained in these camps until 1955. Another policy implemented by Israel, which was likened to anti-Semitism policies of nineteenth-century Europe and Russia, was the forced “ghettoizing” of Palestinians. The remaining Palestinians of Haifa were forced to relocate into a single neighborhood under military administration while Jews looted their homes and businesses.

The worst atrocities occurred in what clearly amounted to massacres. The Hagana executed most of the men (again, ‘men’ meaning males between the ages of ten and fifty) in the villages of Nasr al-Din, Ayn al-Zaytun, and Tirat Haifa in an effort to intimidate nearby villages into flight. On 22 May, Jewish forces captured Tantura, expelled the women and children, and then executed all able-bodied men. In 2001, a senior officer of

the Alexandroni Brigade told the daily paper, *Maariv*, that there was no question that a massacre took place at Tantura. A Jewish resident named Mordechai Sokoler, of the nearby settlement of Zikhron Yaacov, witnessed the magnitude of the atrocity. In 1999, Sokoler still remembered exactly how many Palestinian men were killed. The Alexandroni officer ordered Sokoler to use his tractor to bury the bodies, and the farmer vividly recalled how he buried 230 Palestinians, one by one.

In the Palestinian town of Lydd, Israeli forces massacred the Palestinians who surrendered after the Arab Legion retreated. 426 men, women, and children were killed. A number of the corpses were found in the Dahamish Mosque where they apparently had tried to seek refuge.<sup>37</sup> The worst massacre of the Nakba took place in the village of Dawaymeh. On 29 October, Battalion 89 of Brigade 8 attacked the village, first with mortar rounds and machinegun fire, then in a door-to-door assault. Jewish forces admitted to burning people alive, cracking babies' skulls with sticks, raping women, and indiscriminately shooting unarmed civilians. One soldier reported that Israeli officers "had turned into base murders and this not in the heat of battle. . . . but out of a system of expulsion and destruction."<sup>38</sup> Rape, one of the most atrocious crimes committed, was verified by three different kinds of sources (international organizations, Israeli archives, and oral testimonies). Jaffa had the most known cases of rape, but the violence occurred throughout Palestine. On 29 October 2003, the newspaper *Ha'aretz* published a story on the rape of a twelve-year-old girl from the Negev. The piece was based on the testimonies of Israeli soldiers who admitted to abducting the Palestinian girl and holding her captive for several days, gang-raping her. She was then murdered. David Ben-Gurion, then Israeli

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<sup>37</sup>Ibid., 167.

<sup>38</sup>Morris, 470.

prime minister, also mentioned the incident in his personal diary.<sup>39</sup> Despite the knowledge of the crime, only the soldier who murdered the girl was punished with an appallingly inadequate prison sentence of two years.

In *A History of Modern Israel*, Colin Shindler wrote that, “the presence of an army in 1948 meant a break with Jewish history – a break with persecution and extermination. But it also meant a break with pre-state Zionism when Jews had purchased land,” and that in 1948, “Jews had conquered land instead.”<sup>40</sup> Shindler fails to connect the events in 1947-49 with the attitudes, statements, and actions of the pre-state Zionists who made it a priority to monopolize labor in the territory they “conquered.” Zangwill, Herzl, Ben-Gurion, and Jabotinsky all wrote of the moment when Zionism would have to remove the Palestinians by any means necessary. History had taught the leaders of Zionism that resistance to colonial encroachment on the part of the natives was inevitable, but they also understood that the resistance of the colonized had always provoked strong actions by the colonizers. Even ‘enlightened’ presidents of the United States, like Abraham Lincoln and Thomas Jefferson, responded disproportionately to Native American resistance to population cleansings. In many cases, natives were threatened with genocide if they did not comply with the deportation orders issued by the colonial powers. The Palestinian experience was consistent with those of other peoples facing the colonizing nationalisms of European settlers, and as with the colonial nationalisms developed by other colonizers, Israel developed a national narrative that proclaimed its arrival at the table of the modern nation-state as exceptional. Israel’s first president, Chaim Weizmann, exclaimed that the exodus of 750,000 Palestinians was a

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<sup>39</sup>Pappé, 210.

<sup>40</sup>Shindler, 4.

“miraculous clearing of the land” and the “miraculous simplification of Israel’s task.”<sup>41</sup>

However, as Nur Masalha noted, “it was, in fact, less of a miracle than it was the culmination of over a half century of effort, plans, and (in the end) brute force.”<sup>42</sup>

The United Nations defines ethnic cleansing as a state’s or a regime’s desire to impose ethnic rule on mixed areas with the use of expulsion and other violent means to “unmix” the area, a process that international treaties have classified as a crime against humanity. The Zionist leadership clearly articulated its desire to rule a land that would need “unmixing” in order to produce a homogenous state, and they did what was needed to achieve an exclusively Jewish nation over as much of Palestine as possible. In order for Zionism to achieve an ethnic majority, “transfer” or, more accurately, forced expulsion, was necessary. The destruction of property, imprisonment, bombings, assassinations, rape, and massacres were the violent means used to facilitate the expulsion of the Palestinians. Those who argue that these means were not premeditated plans but, instead, were the unintended consequences of war are clearly unable to interpret the events that unfolded in Palestine during the 1930s and 1940s:

What he [Benny Morris] . . . and other Israeli historians fail to acknowledge is the pattern of these attacks and orders; they contend that the expulsion of the Arabs and the destruction of their villages were governed by strategic military considerations rather than any premeditated design. And while it is true that military history is full of scorched earth tactics and expulsions to clear the theater or war, it is difficult – in light of the systematic nature of the “clearing out” operations and the sheer magnitude of the exodus (not to mention the careful efforts to prevent the return of refugees) – not to see a policy at work.<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>41</sup>Masalha, 175.

<sup>42</sup>Ibid., 175.

<sup>43</sup>Ibid., 180.

For Aharon Cohen, Mapam Party's director of the Arab Department, the systematic cleansing of the Palestinian population was very evident in the final days of the pre-state Zionist community. On 10 May 1948, Cohen wrote to the Party's Political Committee:

There is reason to believe that what is being done . . . is being done out of certain political objectives and not only out of military necessities, as they claim sometimes. In fact, the "transfer" of the Arabs from the boundaries of the Jewish state is being implemented . . . the evacuation/clearing out of Arab villages is not always done out of military necessity. The complete destruction of villages is not always done only because there are "no sufficient forces to maintain a garrison."<sup>44</sup>

The creation of the Palestinian refugees was without a doubt not the haphazard product of war. It was the result of a deliberate plan of ethnic cleansing. The birth of Israel came at a very tragic cost to the Palestinians, a cost that Israel refuses to acknowledge and that the Palestinians continue to pay.

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<sup>44</sup>Ibid., 181.

## CHAPTER VI

### NO LAND, NO PEACE: THE RISE OF THE REVISIONISTS

Israel's War of Independence fulfilled the aspirations of Labor Zionism, but the Jewish majority living in the sovereign Jewish state faced hostile neighboring states outside of their national borders in addition to a significant non-Jewish minority within Israel itself. Like the leaders of the Yishuv, Israel's top political echelon continued to guide the new state within the framework of Zionism and focused on the threat of a new identity: Arab Israelis. For nearly twenty years, the Zionist project in Palestine was committed to relegating Israel's Arab population – reduced to 170,000 persons by 1950 – to the margins of society while launching occasional military campaigns against Palestinian refugees in Gaza under Egyptian control and in the Jordanian-administered West Bank. The 1950 Law of Return allowed any Jew to immigrate to Israel, while the 1952 Nationality Law granted citizenship to any Jew who “returned” to Israel under the Law of Return. Under the Nationality Law, Palestinians had to provide proof of residency to obtain citizenship: “children born in Israel to parents who could not produce the required documentation were themselves considered “foreigners” requiring

naturalization.”<sup>1</sup> Furthermore, the Nationality Law demanded that any naturalized citizens swear allegiance to the State and possess some knowledge of Hebrew, though it is important to note that naturalized Jews were not required to adhere to these two provisions, only naturalized Arabs. Less than one-third of Israel’s Arabs received citizenship immediately after the war ended in 1948; the majority of Israeli Arabs were not “naturalized” until 1980 when the Knesset amended the law. Robert Blecher argues that this delay was the consequence of efforts to continue to “transfer” Arabs from their lands after the War of 1948:

Palestinians continued to be removed from villages and off their lands. In carrying out expulsions, Israeli officials drew little distinction between those who possessed Israeli identification cards and those who did not. In theory, those enumerated in the census were entitled to protections, but residents holding official documentation were also expelled. Jews, both individually and in small groups, occasionally interceded to preserve Arab communities seen as “friendly”; relations with Jewish neighbors, not legal codes, often explain why certain Palestinian villages were permitted to remain.<sup>2</sup>

Israeli Arabs existed under military rule, which was gradually lifted during the 1950s and early 1960s. In 1965, the year before the last military restrictions on Israeli Arabs were lifted, Israel’s government introduced the “Building and Construction Law.” The plan gave official recognition to a mere 123 Palestinian villages, and declared the remaining villages and communities as agricultural zones; “article 157A of the law, which forbids connecting any village without building permits to national utility networks, deprived the residents of water, health and sewerage services, electricity, education, and transportation.”<sup>3</sup> A significant number of Palestinian villages that existed before the law

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<sup>1</sup>Blecher, 735.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., 734.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., 736-737.

were thus declared illegal.<sup>4</sup> Having achieved a Jewish state in as much of Palestine as the international community permitted, Labor Zionists turned their attention to ensuring the longevity of Israel's Jewish majority.

Regarding the Palestinians outside Israel's borders, Israel operated under an attitude as "activism" or "Ben-Gurionism," which was the policy of responding to Arab attacks with disproportionate force, carried over from the 1940s. Palestinian refugees attacked Israeli communities across the Green Line for reasons ranging from revenge to starvation, and accordingly, the IDF reacted to any and all Palestinian attacks on Israel's people or property with unrestrained force. The most brutal retaliatory attacks were led by a young colonel, Ariel Sharon, and his special force, Unit 101. The special force was established in 1953, and in October of that same year, Sharon led an assault on the Palestinian village of Qibya following the murder of two Jewish children and their mother. Unit 101 dynamited the houses of Qibya and killed more than fifty of the village's residents.<sup>5</sup> Far less violent actions incurred the wrath of Ben-Gurion's

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<sup>4</sup>In 2005, over 100 Israeli-Arab villages are considered illegal and do not appear on official maps of Israel while the small Jewish communities built in these agricultural zones are officially recognized and receive full municipal services. The Jewish-bias is not only obvious, but openly championed by local and national Jewish politicians. In occupied East Jerusalem, "illegal" Palestinian homes are demolished immediately after the issuing of the demolition order, whereas Jewish buildings with demolition orders are still standing, like the notorious Beit Yehonatan (named after Jonathan Pollard, an American convicted of spying for Israel in the 1980s), home to at least eight extremist-settler families. Beit Yehonatan violates Jerusalem's municipal ordinance of a two-floor home limit in East Jerusalem by a towering five floors. The Israeli Committee Against House Demolitions reports that since 1995, all buildings in East Jerusalem which violate municipal law and are subject to demolition, over a thousand Palestinian homes have been demolished in East Jerusalem compared to zero buildings inhabited by Jewish settlers. While Jerusalem's current mayor, Nir Barkat, unconvincingly tries to portray his office as even-handed, the city's deputy mayor in 1998 bluntly described the reality, "I don't sign demolition orders of Jewish homes, only Arabs."

<sup>5</sup>Smith, 230.

“activism,” including the theft of Israeli crops or livestock. However, not all Labor Zionists shared Ben-Gurion’s militant world-view. In fact, the two post-Ben-Gurion governments were arguably the closest manifestations of original (Labor) Zionism in Palestine. The premierships of Moshe Sharett and Levi Eshkol were far more pragmatic towards Israel’s Arab neighbors and as lenient as any Israeli prime minister towards the Israeli Arabs. Both Sharett and Eshkol focused on strengthening Israel’s security through diplomacy in the international arena. However, this made them vulnerable to the attacks from the Revisionists and the more extreme Labor Zionists, including Ben-Gurion. Sharett, who deplored the activist approach of Ben-Gurion, had the characteristics and qualifications of an Israeli leader capable of achieving peace with the Arab states. However, his government was undermined by the “retired” Ben-Gurion, who returned to politics to “save” Zionism and succeeded in replacing Sharett as prime minister in November 1955. The 1950s and 1960s represented the twilight years of Labor Zionism. Zionist moderates like Sharett and Levi Eshkol (who became prime minister following Ben-Gurion’s second stint in the premiership) focused their efforts on developing Israel from within while securing lasting support for the Jewish state from abroad. At the time, however, it appeared that Revisionism was drawing its final breaths, not Zionism’s more pragmatic version. Menachem Begin led the opposition Herut but could never rally enough political support to seriously challenge the Labor Zionists’ Mapai Party. Then, in June 1967, six days radically changed the course of Zionism. Israel’s conquest of the West Bank and Gaza, as well as the Golan Heights, provided the opportunity for Revisionism to reassert its ideology in the guiding Zionist principles of the state. Baruch Kimmerling succinctly summarized the consequences of the Six-Day War, “Quite apart

from the economic interest in the territories, a new complication arose after the 1967 War – the desire of Israeli society as whole, both left and right, to annex the historic heartland of the Jewish people in the West Bank without annexing its Arab residents.”<sup>6</sup> Nur Masalha agreed with Kimmerling, concluding that, “In the wake of Israel’s 1967 conquests, the deep-rooted perception of *Eretz-Yisrael* as a whole was not only found in the traditional Zionist maximalism of the Revisionist Herut (later Likud) camp, but increasingly gained ground in all the main political parties, including the traditionally pragmatic Labour Party.”<sup>7</sup> Since then, Israel has steadily shifted to the right, and the clear distinction between Labor and Revisionism has been blurred, with the latter emerging as the dominant ideology within Zionism. The Israeli occupation of the West Bank and Gaza, the rise of right-wing political parties in Israel, the *intifada* and Israel’s response to it, and Israel’s approach to the peace process beginning in the 1990s are clear indications that the Zionist enterprise is no longer directed by Labor Zionists. The Revisionists steadily consolidated their political power during the 1970s and 1980s and established powerful roots in Israeli society. The death of the peace process coincided with the death of Labor Zionism, and whatever was left of the pragmatic movement was absorbed into the maximalism of Israel’s Revisionist nationalism. Zionism’s shift to the right went unnoticed by the one million Palestinian refugees living in the West Bank who, after fleeing the violence of the late 1940s, once again found themselves caught up in the ambitions of Zionists’ settler-colonialism.

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<sup>6</sup>Baruch Kimmerling, *Politicide: Ariel Sharon’s War Against the Palestinians* (London: Verso, 2003), 15-16.

<sup>7</sup>Nur Masalha, *Imperial Israel and the Palestinians* (London: Pluto Press, 2000), 28.

## Occupation

### 1967

The road to war in 1967 and the stunning Israeli victory that resulted in the conflict's other name, the Six-Day War, is beyond the scope of this study. The war had significant consequences for Zionism, and all but one were positive. A wave of euphoria and a sense of Zionism's invincibility swept across all levels of Israeli society and Zionists throughout the world following the cessation of hostilities on 10 June. In only six days, Israel took control of the West Bank and Gaza, asserted Jewish sovereignty over Jerusalem, and decimated the military capabilities of its Arab neighbors. The war was seen in messianic terms by Jews and non-Jews alike; the quick and decisive victory was the work of God. Regardless of whether this interpretation was perceived through Jewish or Christian theology, there was consensus that the Jews were fulfilling prophecy in the summer of 1967. The religious zeal for Israel's conquest was matched by new political support for Zionism in the United States. Israel's traditional backing by U.S. Democrats was reinforced by the Republicans' new-found respect and admiration for the Zionist project in Palestine. The crushing defeat that democratic Israel dealt the numerically superior Soviet-supported Arab foe captivated many Americans. Despite capturing the West Bank and Gaza as well as unconditional American support, Israel's six days of war produced a reality that was a greater threat to Zionism than the armies of Egypt, Jordan, and Syria. By maintaining a military presence in the Occupied Territories, Israel suddenly found itself at odds with the laws of the international community, and more importantly, the Jewish Israelis' position as a majority was severely weakened with the addition of one million Palestinians within Israeli-controlled borders. Overnight, the Palestinian

population increased four times over, reaching roughly 1.3 million compared to 2.3 million Israeli Jews.<sup>8</sup> While Begin and the Revisionists demanded the immediate annexation of the entire West Bank, Prime Minister Eshkol refrained because of what he believed were the two most important considerations facing the Jewish state: security and demography.<sup>9</sup>

However, the demographic reality did not prevent the majority of Labor Zionists from proposing ideas to reconstruct “Greater Israel” with a smaller Palestinian population and thus incorporate Judea and Samaria into the modern state of Israel. Eli’ezer Livneh (1902-75) was one example of a perennial Labor Zionist who supported the transfer of the Arabs following the 1967 War. Livneh had immigrated to Palestine in 1920 and, after working as a day laborer, rose through the ranks to become one of Labor’s leaders. On 22 June 1967, Livneh published his proposal to transfer 600,000 Palestinian refugees from the West Bank and Gaza in the daily *Ma’ariv*.<sup>10</sup> Livneh’s thoughts were echoed by Tzvi Shiloah, a Labor Zionist who had been a member of the Central Committee of the ruling Mapai Party until 1965. He also wrote an article shortly after Israel’s conquest, arguing for the expulsion of the Arabs from the West Bank and Gaza:

... hundreds of thousands of Arabs are residing in the liberated territory . . . the inclusion of this hostile population within the boundaries of the State of Israel is considered as a time-bomb in the heart of the state . . . Leaving them in these territories endangers the state and its national Jewish character . . . the only solution is to organize their emigration and settlement in Arab countries abundant in land and water such as Syria and Iraq.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>8</sup>Nur Masalha, *Imperial Israel and the Palestinians*, 69.

<sup>9</sup>Shlaim, 255.

<sup>10</sup>Nur Masalha, *Imperial Israel and the Palestinians*, 41.

<sup>11</sup>*Ibid.*, 48.

Shiloah also served as chairman of the Whole Land of Israel Movement (WLIM), a collection of maximalist Zionists from both Labor and Revisionism who viewed the conquest and settlement of the West Bank and Gaza as the inalienable right of the Jewish people and opposed Prime Minister Eshkol's idea of exchanging land for peace with the Arab states. Israeli governments have continuously explained the lack of a peace settlement in the Arab-Israeli conflict since 1967 as a consequence of having no partner to negotiate with. They point to the Khartoum Conference of August 1967 as evidence of this stance. Most of the leaders of the Arab states met in Khartoum, Sudan, in August to discuss the catastrophe of the Six-Day War, and they produced the following resolution:

the Arab heads of state have agreed to unite their political efforts at the international and diplomatic level to eliminate the effects of the aggression and to ensure the withdrawal of the aggressive Israeli forces from the Arab lands which have been occupied since the aggression of 5 June. This will be done within the framework of the main principles by which the Arab states abide, namely, no peace with Israel, no recognition of Israel, no negotiations with it, and insistence on the rights of the Palestinian people in their own country.<sup>12</sup>

The Khartoum resolution was a death-sentence to the pragmatism of the Eshkol government its is possible desire for peace, but the return of the Revisionists in the aftermath of June 1967 indicated that had the Arab leaders in Sudan said “yes” to peace with Israel and “yes” to the recognition of Israel, Zionism would have answered, “no land, no peace.”<sup>13</sup> Israelis from both the right and the left preferred to hold onto Israel's territorial conquest rather than exchange it for peace.

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<sup>12</sup>Smith, 303.

<sup>13</sup>Menachem Begin, who led the Revisionists to power in 1977, never abandoned Revisionism's claim to Jordan as part of the Zionist state, thus trading the West Bank for peace was never an option. The most telling sign of Begin's adherence to Jabotinsky's vision of a Zionist state on both banks of the Jordan was that Begin was the only Israeli Prime Minister who never met Jordan's King Hussein, on account of choice, not a lack of opportunities.

Labor Dreams and Revisionist Realities: Settling the West Bank and Gaza

Labor officials initially provided the framework for Jewish settlement of the Occupied Territories through the establishment of military outposts and archeology camps. Having decimated the militaries of Egypt, Jordan, and Syria, the “security” pretext of Israeli outposts in the Jordan Valley and other strategic locations was given little credence by the international community. The UN Security Council passed Resolution 242 on 22 November 1967:

*Expressing* its continuing concern with the grave situation in the Middle East, *Emphasizing* the inadmissibility of the acquisition of territory by war and the need to work for a just and lasting peace in which every state in the area can live in security.

*Emphasizing further* that all member states in their acceptance of the Charter of the United Nations have undertaken a commitment to act in accordance with Article 2 of the Charter,

1. *Affirms* that the fulfillment of Charter principles requires the establishment of a just and lasting peace in the Middle East which should include the application of both the following principles:

(i) Withdrawal of Israel armed forces from territories occupied in the recent conflict;

(ii) Termination of all claims or states of belligerency and respect for and acknowledgement of the sovereignty, territorial integrity and political independence of every state in the area and their right to live in peace within secure and recognized boundaries free from threats or acts of force.<sup>14</sup>

However, Israel brushed aside UN Resolution 242 and the criticisms from the international community. Not only did the Labor government oversee the construction of the military outposts, they allowed Jewish settlers to accompany the military and “archeological” installations as part of a campaign to build “facts on the ground,” and in some cases, Israel’s military outposts were populated entirely by Jewish civilians. Some scholars have argued that “it was as if the government wanted to establish settlements but

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<sup>14</sup>Walter Laqueur and Barry Rubin, *The Israel-Arab Reader*, 116.

was afraid to do so. . . . the disguised decisions and euphemisms for settlements were signs of weakness that were more self-deceptive than attempts to fool others. This weakness of the government . . . increased the self-confidence and the missionary feelings” of Revisionists pushing for complete annexation and settlement of the Occupied Territories.<sup>15</sup> As in the years before the establishment of the Jewish state, Zionists understood the threat that the Palestinian population posed to the Zionist venture. The twin policies of Jewish settlement and Arab transfer or expulsion drove the WLIM, which published a book of transfer proposals titled, *Hakol*, Hebrew for “Everything.” The Labor and Revisionist authors of *Everything* outlined their position, emphasizing the theme of “untended land,” which can only blossom under Jewish ownership; members of WLIM justified the Zionist colonization of the territories captured in June 1967 and the removal of the Palestinian population from them based on their argument that the Palestinians had no claim to the land because they had neglected it.<sup>16</sup>

By failing to contain the maximalist ideology of WLIM and other similar groups, and by approving modest settlement activity in the Occupied Territories, the Eshkol government lost the support of the leftist groups. Its vague and timid approach to Jewish colonization of the West Bank and Gaza exposed it to attacks from the right-wing opposition as well. Eshkol was caught between being a pragmatic Labor Zionist and being given the opportunity to expand Zionism into more of historic Palestine. The result was that for the next decade, the Labor governments failed to assert strong policy in the Occupied Territories and were forced to react, rather than act, to the realities created by

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<sup>15</sup>Myron J. Aronoff, “Gush Emunim: The Institutionalization of a Charismatic, Messianic, Religious-Political Revitalization Movement in Israel,” in *Religion and Politics*, Myron J. Aronoff, ed. (New Brunswick: Transaction Books, 1984), 70.

<sup>16</sup>Nur Masalha, *Imperial Israel and the Palestinians*, 34.

Revisionists. Since 1967, Israeli governments controlled by the Labor Party have had to approve settlements retroactively because its founding ideology of Labor Zionism calls for a Jewish majority in as much of Palestine as possible. Thus, it is not unlikely that Labor officials had tacitly approved such activity (similar to what transpired in 1947-49 with retroactive approval from the central decision-making body). The growing influence of Menachem Begin's Revisionist movement coincided with the perception of the increasing weakness of the Labor Party. The Yom Kippur War in October 1973 shattered the euphoria created in the wake of the 1967 War and permanently maimed the ruling Labor Party. In contrast to the aftermath of June 1967, the Yom Kippur War left Israelis stunned and lost, searching for the invincible Zionist identity they cherished. The social malaise and the political vacuum created by Labor's discrediting allowed the religious right to carve a space in what had been primarily a secular state. Some of the first Israelis to establish settlements after the Six-Day War, including Hanon Porat and Rabbi Moshe Levinger, founded a religious movement in 1974. Gush Emunim (bloc of the faithful) emerged with a religiously conservative, neo-Revisionist interpretation of Zionism, as it pursued a religious agenda through political and social means, legal and illegal. The ranks of the movement soon swelled with religious Jews who developed close bonds while studying together in the yeshivas after completing their military service, which naturally provided Gush Emunim with a religious-militant identity. The identity of the "militant Jew" settling in the Occupied Territories harkened back to Zionism's early years in Palestine and helped transform the "spontaneous, charismatic, loosely organized, extraparliamentary pressure group on the margins of the political system" into a major

political player in Israel.<sup>17</sup> Through establishing settlements in the West Bank, Gush Emunim was able to combine the imagery of the early Zionist settlers within a religiously fundamental framework. Gush Emunim leaders were able to reconcile their religious convictions with the quasi-secular principles of Zionism by claiming:

democracy is an acceptable system only as long as it remains within a “proper” (as interpreted by Gush Emunim) Zionist framework. Even if a majority of the Knesset was to rule against settlement in Judea and Samaria, by definition this would be an illegitimate act that should be opposed at all costs.<sup>18</sup>

The Labor Party failed to grasp the importance of Gush Emunim’s support until it was too late. Furthermore, the Likud capitalized on the anger of the large Mizrahi and Sephardi communities who were frustrated with the Euro-centric attitudes of Labor politicians. Unlike the secular parties of Labor Zionism, Revisionist Zionism provided the political space in which religiously conservative and non-Ashkenazi Jews could participate and in 1977, Labor Zionists were swept aside with the Revisionists rise to power.

### The Rise of the Revisionists

In 1982, Myron J. Aronoff wrote:

In the ten years of military occupation of the territories, the Labor governments established twenty-four settlements on the West Bank with 3,500 residents mostly in the sparsely populated lower Jordan Valley. Settlements established under the Likud governments in the past five years reflect the goals of Gush Emunim, that is, they are mostly in the heart of the most heavily Arab-populated areas. There are currently around a hundred settlements on the West Bank, with a population of approximately 25,000.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>17</sup>Aronoff, 63.

<sup>18</sup>Ibid., 68.

<sup>19</sup>Aronoff, 71.

Colonialisms throughout the world combined settler-nationalism with religious symbols, and Zionism was no exception before or after 1967. The ethno-religious settler nationalism *is* Zionism, and this is the key to understanding the growing popularity of the right-of-center parties in Israeli politics. The primary division in Zionism, between Labor and Revisionism, has always been reflected in Israeli politics, but the social and political climates of the 1970s were far more fertile for the politicians who supported the “revision” of Zionism that extended the borders of the Jewish state beyond what any partition-plan had offered. The rightwing opposition parties in Israel used the Yom Kippur war as an attempt to consolidate their political power, but they were not able to unseat Labor in the December 1973 elections. However, the writing was on the wall as the Labor Party under Golda Meir’s and Moshe Dayan’s leadership only received 39.6 percent of the vote (good enough for fifty-one seats) whereas the Ariel Sharon-engineered Likud Party (a political alliance between the Gahal and smaller right-wing parties) increased the number of seats in the Knesset held by rightwing politicians from twenty-nine to thirty-nine.<sup>20</sup> Meir and Dayan soon resigned from Labor and were replaced by Yitzhak Rabin. Rabin, the former chief of staff of the army, could do little to stave off Labor’s defeat in the elections scheduled for 1977. The Labor Party was discredited in the view of many Israelis, and the personal rivalry between Rabin and his Minister of Defense, Shimon Peres, contributed to the deteriorating support for Labor Zionism. In a last ditch effort, the Rabin government gave in to the annexation demands of its coalition partner, the National Religious Party, which was heavily influenced by Gush Emunim. In the last year and a half of Rabin’s premiership, his government’s

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<sup>20</sup>Smith.

approval of new settlements in the Occupied Territories increased by 45 percent. Yet unknown to Rabin at the time, the Minister of Defense, Shimon Peres, and a number of other leaders in the military had already given their private backing to the settler movement, making Rabin's acquiescence in the National Religious Party's stance on settlements and annexation meaningless. In May 1977, the disciples of Jabotinsky defeated Labor Zionism, and for the first time in its history, Zionism was led by a Revisionist.

The significance of the settler-mentality of Zionists in Israeli politics post-1967 has changed the dynamics of Zionism, essentially removing the division between Labor and Revisionism. The leaders of Likud understood this leading up to the 1977 elections and have continued to capitalize on this fact, which has resulted in a right-of-center party heading Israeli governments for twenty-eight of the last thirty-four years (1977-92, 1996-99, and 2001-11). One of Begin's first moves before assuming the premiership after the elections in May 1977 was a visit to Kadum, a settlement near Nablus, where he participated in a ceremony of placing a Torah scroll in the new synagogue.<sup>21</sup> The central plank of Likud's platform, immediate annexation of the entire West Bank and Gaza, surprisingly failed to happen after the rightwing nationalist coalition assumed power. The tenets of Zionism, territory and demography, were at odds yet again, but this time, even the Revisionists understood that ethnic cleansing on the scale of what happened in 1947-49 was not feasible. Transfer continued to be advocated, and the Likud government took a variety of steps to encourage Palestinian emigration, but the most effective means of

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<sup>21</sup>Aronoff, 70; Gush Emunim had repeatedly attempted to establish a settlement at Sebastia against the wishes of the Rabin government, but the latter finally caved in, which resulted in the establishment of the extremist settlement of Kadum

transfer were what have been described as “stationary transfer.” Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza were not forcefully expelled from their villages or the refugee camps in which they resided following the wars in 1948 and 1967, but the Israeli military confiscated rural Palestinian lands under the pretext of security. Shortly thereafter, administration and ownership of the appropriated lands were transferred to the government, which permitted Jewish settlement on “sovereign” Israeli territory. Though it did not officially annex all of the West Bank and Gaza, Begin’s government pushed a law through the Knesset which made it illegal to evacuate any settlement from the West Bank and Gaza, “which was tantamount to *de facto* annexation.”<sup>22</sup>

Palestinian resistance to the Israeli occupation took the form of guerilla campaigns mounted from outside the Occupied Territories, but within the West Bank and Gaza, the Palestinians resisted through the practice of *sumud*, steadfast perseverance. This form of resistance eliminated Israel’s “activist” approach during the Ben-Gurion years, but it failed to slow down the Likud-backed colonial machine of Jewish settlements. In *Imperial Israel and the Palestinians*, Nur Masalha wrote of how Israel dealt with *sumud*’s triumph over “transfer:”

Under the Likud administration of Menachem Begin, Yitzhak Shamir and Binyamin Netanyahu, Palestinians were subjected to a colonial policy designed to encourage emigration. Drastic demographic changes were also introduced. To fulfill its settlement/colonial goals, the Likud government rapidly increased the number of Jewish settlements in the occupied territories. In September 1977, Ariel Sharon, the new agriculture minister and head of the ministerial committee on settlement, announced a plan to settle more than one million Jews in the West Bank within twenty years.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>22</sup>Nur Masalha, *Imperial Israel and the Palestinians*, 76.

<sup>23</sup>*Ibid.*, 86.

Sharon was a ferocious champion of transfer by any means, and as will be discussed later, his government in 2002 reasserted Israel's presence and control after the semi-disengagement from the Oslo years. Sharon's time in the various ministries of the Israeli government over the decades made him the archvillain in the eyes of many Palestinians. Sharon took pride in the thuggish image he cultivated among the Palestinian population, which caused the U.S. Secretary of State, Henry Kissinger, to say to Sharon upon their first encounter, "I hear you are the most dangerous man in the Middle East."<sup>24</sup> Years later, President George W. Bush would describe Sharon as a "man of peace," but Kissinger's assessment of Sharon was much more accurate than Bush's. As Defense Minister in 1982, Ariel Sharon backed up his comment to the Palestinians that they should "not forget the lesson of 1948" by overseeing the massacre of Palestinians in the Sabra and Shatila refugee camps in September of that same year.

Not only did the Likud governments between 1977 and 1992 include men like Sharon, they were actually led by renowned terrorists. As discussed earlier, Menachem Begin headed the militant Revisionist offshoot of the Hagana during the pre-state years and was responsible for planning and organizing terrorist attacks that took the lives of a number of civilians irrespective of their religion and ethnicity. When the politically-weak Begin resigned from office in August 1983, he was succeeded by Yitzhak Shamir. Beginning in 1942, Shamir was the co-commander of LEHI, and planned a number of political assassinations on British officials. By July 1946, when Shamir was finally arrested and exiled by the British, there had been "14 assassination attempts, including seven attempts on the life of the British High Commissioner for Palestine, Sir Harold

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<sup>24</sup>Kimmerling, 75.

McMichael, and several more were planned, for example, against Ernest Bevin, the British Foreign Secretary.”<sup>25</sup> British military intelligence records have revealed that LEHI also discussed the assassination of Winston Churchill in 1946, when Churchill was still the British Prime Minister.<sup>26</sup> The only successful assassination under Shamir’s command was the murder of Lord Moyne in 1944. During the end of the 1960s, it would have been preposterous to have suggested that the heads of Zionism’s two terrorist organizations from the 1940s would become the prime ministers of Israel, but such was the reality in Palestine by 1985. Jabotinsky could not have scripted the rise of the Revisionists better himself. The forceful combination of the rise of the rightwing settler groups, epitomized by Gush Emunim, and the successful bid for power by the Revisionist camp led to harsh Israeli policies in the West Bank and Gaza – policies that represented extreme colonialism. The presence of Jewish settlements adhering to the violent ideology of the Kach movement, the continued loss of Palestinian land to make room for these settlements, and the increasingly restrictive nature of the Israeli occupation of the West Bank and Gaza reached the tipping point in December 1987, when the Palestinians abandoned their strategy of *sumud* in favor of *intifada*. The Palestinian uprising was an extraordinary grass-roots movement that changed the face of the Palestinians throughout the world, but by 1987, there were no true Labor Zionists in the Israeli government to react pragmatically. The *intifada* was met with the same uncompromising, militant attitude Jabotinsky articulated fifty years earlier when the Palestinians launched the first popular uprising against the colonial-nationalism of the Zionists.

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<sup>25</sup>Nur Masalha, *Imperial Israel and the Palestinians*, 58.

<sup>26</sup>*Ha'aretz* (Jerusalem), 4 April 2011.

### The Intifada

To the outside world looking in, the Palestinian national movement appeared to be drawing its final breaths by the 1980s. Israel had forcefully expelled the Palestine Liberation Organization from Lebanon where it had relocated following its ousting from Jordan in 1971. Based in Tunis after 1982, the PLO, under the leadership of its chairman, Yassir Arafat, grew increasingly out of touch with the Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza. The PLO leadership, the “sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people,” could boast of assassination and terrorist campaigns against Israeli targets, but it had failed to end the Israeli occupation and lead its people closer to self-determination. The Palestinians in the occupied territories were not only neglected by their leadership in exile, but they were also neglected by the Arab states and the world in general. Many observers believed the Palestinians had accepted the de-facto rule of Israel in the West Bank and Gaza. 9 December 1987 proved such observers wrong, as Palestinian society erupted into a massive popular uprising. The intifada breathed new life into the Palestinian movement, forcing the world to take notice of the inhumane conditions of life under Israeli occupation. The rebellion also sent a strong message to the declining PLO through the indirect challenge the local leadership posed to Tunis. Fearful of being completely sidelined, Arafat and his cohorts scrambled to bring the movement under their control. The intifada not only gave new life to the Palestinian struggle, but it also forced the PLO leadership to work more closely with the people in the occupied territories, which moderated the exiled group while providing it with the opportunity to reclaim its undisputed role as the voice of the Palestinians.

The intifada was a demonstration of courage and endurance, as the Palestinians fought against a superior enemy into the dawn of the 1990s. From the end of 1987 until 1990, Palestinians changed the dynamics of the Arab-Israeli conflict and won the sympathy, if not the support, of much of the international community. Iraq's invasion of Kuwait in August 1990 coincided with the end of the intifada, though elements of it continued on for a few more years. How did the intifada, an unprecedented event that changed the dynamics of the Palestinian factor in the Arab-Israeli conflict, not end the occupation? The primary answer lies in the aforementioned content of Zionism as a national movement, but the post-intifada leadership of the Palestinians also played a role. Arafat and the PLO have been charged with undermining the intifada through repressing the movement's local leadership. This was not entirely the case, however, and they alone did not let the opportunity for peace slip away. Arafat's actions during 1988 may have been those of an aging politician desperately clinging to power, but the decisions made by the PLO were in line with the demands of the Palestinians and represent a significant shift in the wider Palestinian national movement. Israel's leaders, governing an increasingly divided society, opted to continue its hard-line policies, dealing a serious blow to the peace process as well as Arafat and the PLO.

The Palestinian uprising in Gaza and the West Bank was a reaction to the conditions of the occupation and the impasse in resolving the Arab-Israeli conflict. The intifada – Arabic for the “shaking off” of a condition – erupted on 9 December 1987, transitioning from a spontaneous movement to a unified rebellion that thrust the Palestinian issue into the international spotlight. The uprising impacted the conflict by challenging both Israel's presence in the occupied territories and the stagnant PLO

leadership in exile. Local leadership directed the movement in its early stages, and its decision to conduct a generally nonviolent campaign exposed the brutal policies of Israel to international scrutiny. Images of adolescent Palestinians armed with rocks sharply contrasted with the scenes of Israeli soldiers indiscriminately firing live rounds and tear gas. Israel used an “iron fist” policy to quell the rebellion, but the curfews, shootings, beatings, and house demolitions failed to restore calm to the West Bank and Gaza. For the Palestinians, violence took a back seat to political mobilization, and they fought back against the Israeli occupation with demonstrations, boycotts, general strikes, and throwing stones. The intifada and Israel’s response to it was not unlike popular uprisings against colonial rulers in past cases of settler-native struggles for civic rights and control over land. Yet the speed and size at which the intifada grew shocked the world and left many wondering how such a massive rebellion could have erupted overnight. Ultimately, the intifada was a grass-roots response to the military and diplomatic failure of the PLO in ending two decades of Israel’s colonizing occupation and the absence of legitimate Palestinian self-determination.

### Roots of the Uprising

Conditions within the West Bank and Gaza changed relatively little in the immediate aftermath of the 1967 War. The Arabs in the Occupied Territories continued about their daily duties as Israeli authority replaced Jordanian and Egyptian rule. It would be a mistake to interpret the transition to a different form of occupation as smooth, but during the first decade of Israel’s rule, Palestinian society was not very significantly altered. Palestinians across the board opposed Israel’s presence, but only in Gaza were

there any cases of rebellions, which occurred at the end of the 1960s. With its majority-population of impoverished refugees from the 1947-49 violence, Gaza was a natural bed for unrest. Resistance against occupation effectively networked underground (a product of the experiences under Egyptian rule), but when the rebellion broke out, Ariel Sharon quickly suppressed the insurrection through collective punishment. Still licking their wounds from 1967, Egypt and Jordan were unwilling to come to the aid of the Palestinians in Gaza. Sharon's suppression caused relative quiet in the Occupied Territories for the next ten years as the Palestinians passively looked to the PLO leadership in Lebanon for liberation. The quiet may have continued, but the general elections in Israel in the spring of 1977, which brought Menachem Begin and his Likud coalition to power, intensified the occupation and the dismal conditions of the Palestinians.

Begin immediately called for an increase in Israeli settlements in the occupied territories, and Zionism's colonial-like policies followed, which put new pressures on Palestinian society and economy; as a result of the further opening of the Occupied Territories by the Likud government, the "Israeli labor market was flooded by cheap labor, the Palestinian market was opened up for the internal-export of Israeli products, and Palestinian lands became the target of Jewish colonization."<sup>27</sup> Israel's military administration confiscated Palestinian land for the new settlements and imposed restrictions on Arab water use so that greater quantities could be allocated for the settlers. Whereas the settlements under the Labor government were remote and unobtrusive, the Gush Emunim-inspired settlements directly threatened the Palestinians after 1977. In the

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<sup>27</sup>Kimmerling, 14.

second decade of the occupation, the average number of Israelis settled in the occupied territories increased by eight hundred percent compared to the decade before Likud came to power.<sup>28</sup> Israel taxed the Palestinians to help fund the costs associated with the settlements and pursued other double-standard policies. The Israeli occupation of the West Bank and Gaza under the Likud government was colonialism *par excellence*.

The economic hardships imposed on the Palestinians, especially those living in Gaza, had major consequences on Palestinian society. The traditional land-owning elite of Gaza, who employed many of the refugees in their citrus groves, lost their social standing as Israeli taxes and restrictions on exports crippled their economy. The decline in the power of the landed elite coincided with the rise to prominence of a group of committed urban professionals in both Gaza and the West Bank. This new group took over local leadership in the forms of unions, organizations, and village leagues. In 1981-82, they led protests against the policies of the military government and increased settlement activity. As in the late 1960s, Ariel Sharon's forces crushed the uprising with an "iron fist" policy. The brutality of the Israeli military created the false assumption among Israeli authorities that the Palestinians were "too traumatized to risk another revolt."<sup>29</sup> Such observers were wrong, and tensions in the Occupied Territories continued to mount over the next five years.

Israel's elections in the summer of 1984 produced a Labor-Likud unity government with Shimon Peres holding the premiership, but Labor's inclusion did not change Israeli policies in the Occupied Territories begun under the Likud. The new

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<sup>28</sup>Smith, 399.

<sup>29</sup>Ann M. Lesch, "Prelude to the Uprising in the Gaza Strip," *Journal of Palestine Studies* 20, no. 1 (autumn, 1990): 2.

government's defense minister, Yitzhak Rabin, continued the "iron fist" approach of Sharon in the West Bank and Gaza. The humiliating experiences of the occupation, the consequences of the settlements, and the changing demographics of the West Bank and Gaza created a juncture that was bound to produce a massive uprising. Israel's success in ousting the PLO from Lebanon in 1982 shocked the Palestinians, but it also led to a strengthening of local organizational structures as Palestinians increasingly participated in grass-roots organizations during the 1980s. These groups, consisting of youth organizations, labor unions, village leagues, women's groups, and professional associations, provided the framework for the unified leadership that emerged after the intifada broke out.<sup>30</sup>

As mentioned above, demographics contributed to the growing frustrations of the Palestinians. By the mid-1980s, more than 50 percent of Palestinians were under the age of twenty-one. In Gaza, half of the population was less than fifteen, having been born into the occupation. Palestinian youth rejected the passive nature of their parents' generation, deeply resenting the daily humiliations they experienced at the hands of Israeli soldiers, armed settlers, and the worsening situation of their society. Their frustrations resulted in sporadic acts of violence and protests directed against Israel. Palestinian university students, from Birzeit to Islamic U, defied Israel's ban on political organizing and illegally participated in student governments and published political writings. Two students from Gaza were shot and killed by Israeli soldiers on Birzeit campus in December 1986, precipitating reprisals on both sides. In the fall of 1987, Israel imposed a three-day closure on all of Gaza after the assassination of the Israeli commander of the

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<sup>30</sup>Gail Pressberg, "The Uprising: Causes and Consequences," *Journal of Palestine Studies* 17, no. 3 (spring, 1988): 43.

military police. Two days before the tensions erupted into the intifada, Shimon Peres (who had assumed the office of the foreign ministry in October 1986 when Yitzhak Shamir succeeded him as prime minister of the unity government) proposed an Israeli withdrawal from Gaza to defuse the situation there.<sup>31</sup> Peres grasped the seething unrest and argued that Israel's security was not enhanced by a military, civil, or settler presence in the strip, but Prime Minister Shamir and the hawkish Likud rejected the proposal.

The social changes that developed in the Occupied Territories, especially in Gaza, were coupled with economic decline and stagnation, and they were exacerbated by accelerating land expropriations and settlement construction as well as Israel's withdrawal from the Sinai. The tensions arising from these conditions in the West Bank and Gaza were ready to explode into a full-scale rebellion. The spark came on December 8 when an Israeli military tank transport vehicle smashed into a queue of Palestinian cars and vans in Gaza. Four Palestinian workers from the Jabaliya refugee camp were killed on impact, and scores of others were wounded. With a population three times as densely populated as Manhattan in 1987, it is not at all surprising that Jabaliya was tinderbox that ignited a mass uprising. Funerals were held that evening for the deceased, and rumors quickly spread that the driver of the Israeli military vehicle was a relative of an Israeli who had been stabbed to death the day before. Whether the accident was unintentional or an act of revenge is irrelevant. The situation in the occupied territories had reached a breaking point, and the Palestinians realized that they could no longer rely on the leadership of the PLO or other Arab regimes to end the occupation. The new generation

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<sup>31</sup>This moment may signal Peres' transition from a hawkish Labor Zionist to a more organic Labor Zionist in the mold of Moshe Sharett and Levi Eshkol.

of Palestinians did not have the same attachment to the PLO that their parents did, and on 9 December 1987, they took matters into their own hands.

#### Redefining the Roles: The Intifada, The PLO, and Israel, 1987-1989

The intifada officially began on December 9, as the funeral marches the night before developed into larger protests. The uprising consisted of protests and demonstrations by Palestinian youth during the first few days, spreading throughout Gaza and into the West Bank. Israel reacted to the unrest with brute force. Defense Minister Yitzhak Rabin ordered IDF troops to use live ammunition to subdue the young, rock-throwing, flag-waving Palestinians. This decision accompanied the use of collective punishment, effectively drawing all Palestinians into a revolt initially composed of the teenage and impoverished elements of society. On December 12, Palestinians in the West Bank called for total commercial strikes in East Jerusalem, Ramallah, and Nablus in support of the protests in Gaza. Three days later, Ariel Sharon, then Minister of Industry and Trade, moved into an apartment in the Muslim quarter of the Old City of Jerusalem. Sharon was never one to shy away from taking provocative action, and his action of the colonial master was correctly perceived to be an intentional move, one which represented the Likud's Revisionist view that the Occupied Territories belonged to Israel. From mid-December on, the West Bank Palestinians became as invested in the intifada as their brethren in Gaza, and the uprising became a unified effort.

In *The Dark Side of Democracy: Explaining Ethnic Cleansing*, UCLA Professor Michael Mann presents the consequences of colonial conflict, of which was seen in the intifada:

this global swathe of religious-ethnic conflict is largely explicable in terms of a religious version of my first thesis: a claim that the modern state should essentially represent we, the holy people, and not the people of other or lesser faiths. As in my earlier case studies, the politicization of religion into rival claims to sovereignty over the same territory increases the danger of mass violence – making military power relations also crucial. My thesis 4a states that murderous ethnic conflict usually requires the weaker group to become emboldened to resist and fight, rather than to submit to discrimination and coercive assimilation.<sup>32</sup>

Israeli forces did not engage in the murderous ethnic cleansing predicted by Mann, but they showed no restraint when it came to the indiscriminate killing of Palestinian protesters. IDF soldiers in the Occupied Territories continued to shoot at demonstrators with live rounds, tear gas, and rubber-coated bullets. As Palestinian casualties mounted, the chorus of protest grew outside Israel's borders. Egypt had immediately condemned the use of live rounds, but the criticisms spread to across Europe as well. Even within Israel, opposition emerged to the military's handling of the Palestinians' revolt. Arab and Jewish students from Hebrew University staged a demonstration outside Prime Minister Shamir's residence on December 16. Israeli police used tear gas to break up the demonstration but refrained from employing the same tactics used on the Palestinians. Israeli students were not the only group in Israel to protest their government's heavy-handed tactics, as thousands of Israeli Arabs joined a general strike in solidarity with the Palestinians in the Occupied Territories. Nearly two weeks after it began, the intifada had only gained momentum despite Israel's efforts to crush it. Even Israel's staunch ally, the United States, finally protested against Israel's actions by criticizing the "harsh security measures and excessive use of live ammunition," and further protested by allowing the U.N. Security Council to pass a resolution strongly condemning Israel's actions in the

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<sup>32</sup>Mann, 521.

West Bank and Gaza.<sup>33</sup> By Christmas, over 1,000 Palestinians had been killed, injured, or arrested by the Israeli military. The popular uprising showed no signs of losing steam and continued well into 1988, forcing a dynamic change in the way Israel, the PLO, and the world dealt with the plight of the Palestinians in the occupied territories.

The intifada began as a spontaneous movement rejecting the colonial conditions of the occupation and the apathetic attitude the international community took to Israel's continued violations of international law and human rights. Touring Gaza, the British Minister of State for Foreign Affairs, David Mellor, was shocked at the conditions of the occupation, calling what he saw in the Jabaliya camp an "affront to civilized values."<sup>34</sup> That same day, a group of Palestinians led by Hanna Siniora, the editor of *al-Fajr*, proposed the idea of renouncing violence and using civil disobedience to fight the Israeli occupation. Initially, the revolt produced acts of violence, but the Palestinians realized they could win the moral battle against Israel by confronting an army of guns and tanks with stones and non-violent marches. On January 5, Siniora, Professor Sari Nusaybah, and a group of other Palestinian professionals announced that the intifada would be a non-violent campaign and called for a boycott of Israeli products. Their calls were adopted by the Palestinians who, in directing local involvement, naturally became transformed into an organized leadership.

As the uprising fanned out across Gaza and the West Bank, the local organizations and popular committees began to coordinate the actions of the uprising but dealt primarily with the social organization and protection of their immediate community.

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<sup>33</sup>Palestine Chronology 16 November 1987-15 February 1988, *Journal of Palestine Studies* 17, no. 3 (spring 1988): 215.

<sup>34</sup>*Ibid.*, 219.

The heads of these committees and organizations, often affiliated with the various factions of the PLO, created the Unified National Command of the Uprising (UNCU, or UNC) to serve as the centralized political leadership in directing the overall effort of the intifada.<sup>35</sup> The UNC filled the leadership vacuum that existed in the Occupied Territories and served as an umbrella for the organizations and popular committees at the local level. The leadership remained a fairly clandestine operation, and its members rotated in and out of the command in order to lessen the chance of collapse. The publication of a leaflet on January 8 brought the UNC into the public eye, and from that point on, it coordinated the activities of the intifada through the production and distribution of directive communiqués.<sup>36</sup> These leaflets and the pragmatic character of the UNC made it a critical component to the sustainability of the intifada. Not only did it organize the protests and demonstrations, but it did so with an acute awareness of what the Palestinian communities could, and could not, withstand. The UNC took pragmatic and realistic steps such as limiting the strikes to three or four days for the preservation of the strength and will of the Palestinians and thus was able to mobilize the greatest possible participation of society.

Well-known Palestinians, such as Siniora and Nusaybah, as well as Faysal al-Husayni, a member of a famous family and the founder of the Arab Studies Society in Jerusalem, also emerged as a public voice for the intifada even though they did not have the unanimous support of the Palestinians and did not represent all the factions that made

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<sup>35</sup>The UNC was also referred to as the Unified National Leadership (UNL); F. Robert Hunter, *The Palestinian Uprising: A War by Other Means, Revised and Expanded* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), 64.

<sup>36</sup>See: *Speaking Stones: Communiqués from the Intifada Underground* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1994).

up the movement. They did, however, have the ability to speak publicly without suffering the same consequences as the majority of Palestinians under Israeli control. Part of this was because that they held Jerusalem-issued identification cards, separating them from the legal status of the Palestinians of the West Bank and Gaza (as was the case of Husayni), as well as their international standing (especially Nusaybah and Siniora). Their vocal criticisms often led to administrative detention and failed to weaken Israel's policy against the Palestinians. They did succeed in reaching the outside world, but their statements were only a footnote to the obvious atrocities committed by Israeli troops. On January 10, Shamir's cabinet endorsed the "iron fist" policy, allowing the military to respond more forcibly to the general strikes and protests by welding shut the doors of participating businesses, vandalizing property, and continuing to arrest Palestinians and subject them to unjust military trials. A few days after the cabinet's decision, the military declared that all the refugee camps were under strict curfew. The "iron fist" could not stop the rebellion and it gradually made outside observers more sympathetic to the Palestinian cause. A delegation of Spanish legal experts visiting Jerusalem described the situation of the Palestinians under Israeli military occupation as worse than the conditions that had existed under the Franco regime.<sup>37</sup>

On January 14, a group of moderate Palestinians (including Husayni and Nusaybah) issued the Fourteen Points. These men were not directly connected to the intifada and the UNC, but their ties to the PLO placed them in a position between Tunis and those who led the popular committees and directed the uprising. The latter initially rejected the document, fearing that the intifada needed to make more gains before Israel

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<sup>37</sup>Palestine Chronology 16 November 1987-15 February 1988, 221.

would seriously consider the points which it raised, but they accepted it after Arafat and the PLO gave their backing. Arafat naturally supported the Fourteen Points because the document reaffirmed the PLO's leadership in the second paragraph: "This uprising has come to further affirm our people's unbreakable commitment to its national aspirations. These aspirations include our people's firm national rights of self-determination and of the establishment of an independent state on our national soil under the leadership of the PLO, as our sole legitimate representative."<sup>38</sup> The document called for an international conference – including the PLO and the permanent members of the UN Security Council – to end the conflict and listed fourteen demands for Israel to comply with prior to the proposed conference. These words opened the door for the PLO to become relevant once more.

However, the fourteen points that followed the opening statements changed the relationship between the old PLO leadership in exile and the new leadership in the territories, and even more importantly, it changed the parameters of the Palestinian role within the Arab-Israeli conflict. The demands included that Israel should: abide by the Fourth Geneva Convention as it relates to people and property rights under occupation; release the intifada prisoners, especially minors; end the deportations of Palestinians; lift the siege on the refugee camps; investigate the violent actions of Israeli soldiers and settlers, and earnestly prosecute such cases where necessary; end the settlements and land confiscations; cancel taxes levied on the Palestinians; end the restrictions on political freedoms; end the restrictions on Palestinian building permits, licenses for industrial projects, and on building artesian wells. The issue of the Fourteen Points implied

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<sup>38</sup>Laqueur and Rubin, 317.

Palestinian recognition of Israel by calling for the international peace conference and limiting the demands to within the West Bank and Gaza. The Palestinians of the Occupied Territories finally conceded to the reality of Zionism's successful colonial venture within the pre-1967 borders, but they would not stand for the completion of Revisionist Zionism beyond the Green Line. Suddenly, Israel and the international community had to confront the fact that there now existed a Palestinian movement willing to abide by previous UN resolutions and eager to engage the peace process, and this movement confirmed the PLO as its representative. The document's final demand of Israel, point fourteen, addressed the relationship between the PLO in Tunis and the Palestinians in the occupied territories by calling on Israel to remove "the restrictions on political contacts between inhabitants of the Occupied Territories and the PLO in such a way as to allow for the participation of Palestinians from the Occupied Territories in the proceedings of the Palestine National Council and to ensure a direct input into the decision-making processes of the Palestinian Nation by the Palestinians under occupation."<sup>39</sup> Within the first two months, the intifada developed an organized political leadership that directed the course of action and clearly laid out the objectives of the uprising. The ball was thus in the court of Israel and the PLO, and the world waited for their play.

The emergence of the UNC represented a new player in the Palestinian-Israel conflict, and it challenged both the PLO and Israel for control and authority over the Palestinians in the occupied territories.<sup>40</sup> The exiled PLO leadership had previously

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<sup>39</sup>Ibid., 319.

<sup>40</sup>Ze'ev Schiff and Ehud Ya'ari, *Intifada: The Palestinian Uprising: Israel's Third Front* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1990), 189.

attempted to repress the growth of local leadership in the territories, but the disconnect that had developed between Tunis and Palestinians under occupation forced Arafat and his deputies to cooperate with the UNC and rely on the men and women on the ground. However, it is a mistake to identify the UNC as an alternative leadership to the PLO. The leaders of the local organizations and popular committees were activists from Fatah, the Popular Front, the Democratic Front, the Communist Party, or other factions within the Palestine Liberation Organization. Instead of seeking to replace the PLO, the leadership in the territories wanted to carve out a larger role within the Palestine National Council and contribute to the direction of their national movement. As F. Robert Hunter argued, those who composed the UNC were a part of the PLO body, both before and after December 1987, but the intifada enabled them to reorient the PLO into a changing dynamic between the leadership in exile and its members in the Occupied Territories. Arafat understood the new dynamic, and three days after the Fourteen Points were issued, he publicly stated that the UNC was a branch of the PLO, not a ‘middleman’ who carried out his orders. The chairman also denied that the leadership in the territories had challenged his position while quietly taking steps to ensure that they would not be able to pose a threat later on. Thus he gave UNC leaders, who had been arrested by Israeli forces and subsequently deported from the Occupied Territories, mid-level jobs in PLO branches removed from the intifada where they were unable to further their political career.

Arafat skillfully played the dual role of “first among equals” and power-hungry politician. In February 1988, U.S. Secretary of State George Shultz traveled to Israel to promote a peace initiative. The U.S. plan called for negotiations between Israel and a

Jordanian delegation including a small group of Palestinians based on the Camp David talks framework of land for peace. The Palestinians rejected the proposal because it ignored the conditions of the Fourteen Points and made Jordan the primary party in the negotiations with Israel. The Palestinians demanded an end to the occupation and recognition of the PLO as the negotiator for the Palestinians. The Reagan administration refused to deal with the PLO as long as it did not recognize Israel and used violence to further its agenda, and this led Shultz to propose Jordan to negotiate on behalf of the Palestinians. Largely due to the efforts of pro-Israel lobby groups, Congress maintained pressure on the administration to refrain from having contact with the PLO, in the hope of keeping Arafat's organization sidelined. Arafat attempted to capitalize on Washington's renewed involvement in the conflict and exploit the unparalleled international sympathy generated by the intifada. He cautiously put out feelers on possible concessions that would enable him to move into the role the U.S. had assigned to Jordan. Between June and August, Arafat moved to take control over the intifada by proposing various outlines of what the Palestinians in the territories would accept for a state. He simultaneously conducted a diplomatic campaign for the Palestinian cause. The intifada enabled Arafat to generate greater international support than ever before. The uprising united the political factions within the territories, which in turn reinforced the PLO in exile during 1988 and into 1989. Arafat used the cohesion to strengthen PLO ties in the Arab world, especially with Egypt and Jordan. On 31 July 1988, the context of the conflict shifted yet again when Jordan's King Hussein officially renounced Jordan's claim to the West Bank and East Jerusalem, thus removing Jordan from its direct involvement in the Palestinian-Israel conflict and forcing the Palestinians into the position the Hashemite Kingdom

previously occupied. King Hussein's decision may have been partially influenced by Arafat's diplomacy initiative, but the reality was that the intifada undermined Jordan's claim to Palestinian territory, and Hussein acquiesced in the Palestinians' aspirations.

By cultivating a better relationship with two of the West's closest Arab allies, Arafat positioned himself to develop one with the U.S. during the second half of 1988. The goals of the intifada, embodied in the Fourteen Points, presented the framework for peace from the point of view of the Palestinians in the occupied territories. They no longer demanded a secular democracy over all of historic Palestine, a direct threat to Israel's existence as a Jewish state. The people of Gaza and the West Bank were willing to settle for a Palestinian state within the borders of the occupied territories, living in peace with a Jewish neighbor. Consequently, the intifada also demonstrated that they were not committed to armed resistance as the sole means of realizing their national aspirations. In Algiers for the nineteenth meeting of the Palestine National Council, Arafat combined the implied concessions the Palestinians were willing to make with the demands by the United States and, in dramatic fashion, seized control over the intifada and consolidated his political power. On November 15, the PNC proclaimed the establishment of an independent Palestinian state with Jerusalem as its capital. The PLO was recognized as the government of an independent Palestine by a number of Arab states, Turkey, and Malaysia. Soviet recognition quickly followed, and by the mid-1990s, more countries had recognized the PNC declaration than recognized Israel.<sup>41</sup>

Despite international support, the two most critical recognitions never came, as both Israel and the U.S. rejected the declaration. Arafat petitioned for a U.S. visa to

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<sup>41</sup>Ian J. Bickerton and Carla L. Klausner, *A History of the Arab-Israeli Conflict*, 5<sup>th</sup> ed. (Upper Saddle River: Pearson Prentice Hall, 2007), 224.

address the UN General Assembly the following month, but congressional pressure forced the State Department to deny the request. France, Italy, and Sweden denounced the U.S. move while the UN secretary general, Perez de Cuellar, accused the U.S. of violating its obligations as host country. On December 2, the UN General Assembly voted 154-2 to move the session to Geneva so that Arafat could address the organization. Eleven days later, Arafat delivered an historic speech, renouncing terrorism and accepting UN resolutions 242 and 338. Almost a year to the date from the beginning of the intifada, Arafat had played all the cards the uprising dealt him in a bid to lead the Palestinians to statehood. On December 14, the Reagan administration announced it would open dialogue with the PLO. In January 1989, the European community held its first official talks with Arafat, and the PLO offices in many European countries were upgraded to a diplomatic status, including France and Austria. A number of other countries went even further, giving the offices embassy status. Arafat used the conditions created by the intifada and the Fourteen Points to reclaim his position as the sole leader of the Palestinians within the occupied territories and the Diaspora. The PLO chairman went all out by putting all the concessions the Palestinians were willing to make on the table all at once. At the beginning of 1989, it appeared his gamble had worked.

The in-depth examination of the intifada above highlights the inherent settler-colonialism of the Zionist movement in Palestine. The PLO's recognition of Israel in 1988 should have been the crowning achievement for Labor Zionism, but even what was left of Labor Zionism still bristled at the thought of giving up land conquered by Jewish settlers and soldiers. Unfortunately, much of the world did not understand how deeply Revisionism had become embedded in Israel's Zionist nationalism, and this proved to be

the major stumbling block for the Palestinian drive for self-determination. For all his wheeling and dealing, Arafat failed to understand how Israel would react to an independent Palestinian state. Far removed from the action on the ground, Arafat crucially overlooked the transparent actions and statements of Israel's government. The PLO leader succeeded in grasping the wants and needs of his people in the territories but remained extremely ignorant of Israel's response to those wants and needs. Shamir and the Likud, the standard bearers of Revisionist Zionism, were dedicated to extending the Zionist enterprise over all of historic Palestine through settlements and population cleansing. From the moment that the Fourteen Points were announced, Israel proceeded to travel down the path that contradicted every single point and effectively undermined the sacrifices made by the Palestinians. The week following the statement on the demands, the Israeli press reported that the government had begun to send psychologists to the army units out of concern for the soldiers, whose mental health would likely suffer from the consequences of carrying out Rabin's policy of "power, force, and beatings." The tear gas, bullets, and collective punishment did little to slow the uprising, forcing the military leadership to propose a new strategy. The new campaign was based on the simple idea that Palestinians with broken bones could not physically throw stones or participate in demonstrations. With the blessing of Rabin and Shamir, Israeli soldiers began severely beating Palestinians of all ages and continued their previous anti-riot tactics. Instead of easing the restrictions on the Palestinians, the intifada infuriated Israel's leaders, and they intensified the occupation.

The policy of beatings shocked the world, and news reports on the incidents brought the situation in the Occupied Territories more fully into the public sphere.

Israel's actions were condemned in the strongest of terms, and the Palestinian image changed from rebel terrorist fighters to innocent civilian victims. On 4 February, Israel ordered the closing of all the schools in the Occupied Territories, from primary through university levels. By then, nearly fifty Palestinians had died and more than 800 had been injured by Israeli soldiers and settlers. The grotesque violence was highlighted by the Israel Defense Forces' announcement on 15 February of the arrest of two Israeli soldiers charged with burying four Palestinians alive.<sup>42</sup> Western support for Israel, long hailed as the only democracy in the Middle East, quickly eroded. Israel's response to the intifada revealed the Zionist enterprise in Palestine as a colonial project at odds with the native population, and the official narrative of a country which fought for and cherished the liberties of liberal democracy began to crack. Secretary of State Shultz moved to calm the situation before further Israeli atrocities escalated the violence into a regional conflict. Regional security and U.S. interests mattered little to Israel, and Shamir rejected the American peace proposal. Israel was willing to make peace with its Arab neighbors, and Menachem Begin's peace treaty with Egypt proved as much. However, it was one thing to cede territory in the Sinai for peace with a regional power, but it was a completely different thing to abandon the land on which they fulfilled a divine promise. Using the "land for peace" basis in negotiations with the Palestinians was something the Likud and its right-wing supporters refused to do, and Shamir pledged to never withdraw the Jewish presence from any of *Eretz Yisrael*.

With international pressure mounting and PLO strength growing, Israel extended its efforts to break the intifada outside the occupied territories. In April 1988, the Shamir

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<sup>42</sup>Palestine Chronology 16 November 1987-15 February 1988, 239.

government approved the assassination of Khalil al-Wazir, widely known as Abu Jihad, at his home in Tunis. At the time, it was officially unknown whether Israel had carried out the killing, but no other suspect emerged. Al-Wazir was one of the PLO's most influential figures in the occupied territories, especially Gaza. From his time in Amman, al-Wazir had directed many of the PLO terrorist attacks against Israel, but he had also established important connections with key members in Islamic fundamentalist circles. His standing in Gaza and the West Bank allowed him to help direct the intifada from Tunis, apparently serving as the official who counseled Siniora and Nusaybah to disavow the use of firearms.<sup>43</sup> The assassination of al-Wazir served two purposes: first, it removed one of the Territories' most popular leaders; second, it was an attempt by Israel to incite the Tunis leadership to renew acts of violence, shifting the focus from the intifada to the terrorist discourse of the PLO.<sup>44</sup> Arafat exercised restraint, and Israel only further damaged its image. Israel feared that it would soon be forced to deal with the PLO, and Jordan's rescinding of its annexation of the West Bank that summer heightened this fear. Ironically, the removal of Jordan diplomatically weakened the Arab claim to the Occupied Territories. As long as Israel refused to recognize the PLO, a stance supported by the U.S., there was no Palestinian partner for peace and Israeli policies could continue.

At the end of August, Prime Minister Shamir called for more relaxed rules for Israeli soldiers in dealing with the Palestinians, complementing an increase in Israeli settler violence against Palestinians. The following month, Yitzhak Rabin declared that the use of plastic bullets by his soldiers would increase the number of wounded

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<sup>43</sup>Smith, 408.

<sup>44</sup>Pinhas Inbari, "The Murder of Khalil al-Wazir" reprinted from *Al HaMishmar*, 18 April 1988, in *Journal of Palestine Studies* 17, no. 4 (summer, 1988): 155-157.

Palestinians and finally bring about an end to the intifada.<sup>45</sup> Rabin convinced himself that the uprising would eventually run out of Palestinians, and order would be restored. Indeed, by the end of 1988, over 400 Palestinians had been killed (the IDF claimed a hundred less), nearly 20,000 men, women, and children had been wounded from the shootings, beatings, and gassings, and over 20,000 were arrested. The economic consequences were equally devastating. The strict curfews created additional hardships, such as the one during mid-November that confined 1 million Palestinians to their homes. In October, the West Bank Data Project released two reports that documented the double standard in the justice system in the territories between the Palestinians and the Israeli soldiers and settlers. The reports also put the number of Palestinians living in the occupied territories at 1.7 million, 300,000 more than Israel officially listed, and declared that the condition of the Palestinians in the late 1980s was worse than before 1967. Israelis themselves began to see the contradiction between their claim to being a just and democratic nation and the reality of the occupation. Though publicly requesting Israel to ease the restrictions in the occupied territories, the U.S. continued to provide diplomatic, economic, and military support to its Zionist ally. The *Jerusalem Post* reported on 17 December that the U.S. had agreed to sell Israel cluster bombs and anti-armor equipment; such decisions made by the Americans while the intifada raged on damaged America's standing in the Middle East, but most Americans were unconcerned with the consequences of the hypocrisy of their Middle East policies. At the end of 1988, Israel's Labor and Likud parties agreed to form a new unity government; Shamir and Rabin remained in their current posts, but Shimon Peres was forced from the foreign ministry

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<sup>45</sup>Palestine Chronology, 16 August-15 November 1988, *Journal of Palestine Studies* 18, no. 2 (winter, 1989): 237.

into the finance ministry. Over a year after the start of the intifada, the Israeli government had moved further to the right with Peres' removal from the Foreign Ministry.

A growing number of Israeli officials realized that this shift posed a danger to Israel and to U.S. hegemony in the region. The IDF chief of staff told the Knesset Foreign Affairs and Defense committees that the violent methods of the Israeli army contrasted sharply with the fact that Arafat's Fatah had not planned or carried out any terrorist attack in over two months. Likud member Ehud Olmert openly questioned the morality of the army's trigger-happy record and urged the government to use more restraint. Rabin used the tensions in the Likud (between radicals such as Ariel Sharon and more moderate politicians like Olmert) to advance Labor's standing. He proposed the idea of elections in the Occupied Territories for administrative positions, offering a degree of autonomy for the Palestinians. The elections, Rabin noted, would be subject to close Israeli supervision. Shamir adopted Rabin's idea when the U.S. requested Israel to submit its peace proposal, hoping to appease the U.S. while allowing Israel to maintain its control over the territories.

Shamir's peace plan used Rabin's proposal for elections and limited autonomy. The Israeli prime minister argued that autonomy would lead to negotiations but did not put clear paths to ending the occupation and finalizing peace in writing. The document which Shamir presented made no mention of a Palestinian state and neglected to address any of the demands made in the Fourteen Points. Whereas the PLO made unprecedented concessions in an attempt to arrive at a settlement, Israel made none. Shamir's plan coincided with a fierce media campaign to frame the Likud proposal as the "only proposal," and the effort succeeded. Israel's peace plan received praise and widespread

support in the United States. Shamir's cabinet approved the plan on 14 May 1989, and it became the official peace policy of Israel. The Palestinians and the PLO rejected the plan for falling short in every way. In the spring of 1989, Faysal Husayni addressed the Israeli plan, commenting on the deception it caused with its idea of elections:

About the elections, the Israelis are trying to shift the entire agenda from the central issue of occupation to the marginal issue of elections. And they have succeeded, at least in the West, where the word "elections" acts like magic. Everyone in the West is dazzled by "elections" and "democracy," but they should not imagine that democracy and occupation can converge. What is the purpose of elections? If they are supposed to find out who is the leadership of the Palestinian people, with or without elections everyone knows this already, including Israel. . . . But we are against the conditions Shamir has imposed and against the conditions surrounding the elections, which is occupation. . . . In any case, this whole business is just a political game, a maneuver that the government is using to divert attention from the occupation and the intifadah.<sup>46</sup>

Yitzhak Shamir and Israel regained some of the moral high ground lost to the Palestinians in the intifada by 'extending the hand of peace'. By offering token autonomy through elections, Shamir succeeded in alleviating external pressure to make genuine concessions while maintaining Israel's iron grasp on the West Bank and Gaza. The declaration of the Fourteen Points did not lead to the conditions for achieving peace and security for Palestinians and Israel. The polar responses of Arafat and Shamir tipped the scales even more in favor of Israel. By the end of the second year of the intifada, Israel had strengthened its position over the occupied territories while the PLO's failed gamble on declaring a state recognized by Israel and the U.S. severely weakened the Palestinian cause. In essence, the intifada challenged the occupation, but the occupation prevailed. Israel continued to impose abusive restrictions on the Palestinians and to expropriate more land for additional Israeli settlements. The euphoria of the intifada's first year and

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<sup>46</sup>“Interview with Faysal Husayni,” *Journal of Palestine Studies* 18, no 4 (summer, 1989): 15.

the PNC's declaration gave way to frustration, and violence reemerged as a Palestinian tool of resistance. Following renewed Palestinian attacks, the Bush administration suspended dialogue with Arafat and the PLO in June 1990. Iraq's invasion of Kuwait in August turned the world's attention from Israel and the occupied territories to the developments in the Gulf. The intifada, a movement born of frustration and sustained with courage and fortitude, ended tragically right where it had begun, in the same dismal conditions of occupation.

### The Legacy of the Intifada

The intifada not only changed the character of the Palestinians, but it also changed the character of the Arab-Israeli conflict. The uprising thrust the issue of the Palestinians themselves to the forefront of the Arab-Israeli conflict. Previously, it had been relegated to the backburner by the Arab League. It was also a major factor in Jordan's renunciation of its claim to the West Bank and East Jerusalem. Within the Palestinian movement itself, it moved the center from the PLO and the Diaspora community to the Palestinians within the Occupied Territories. This was a major shift, bringing the inhabitants of the West Bank and Gaza into a more active role (though it tragically removed the issue of the 1948 refugees from the discussion until the Camp David talks in 2000). This was accomplished by reframing the Palestinians of the Occupied Territories as the most important part of the Palestinian body, the one which confronted the occupation on a daily basis. The publicizing of the conditions of the occupation garnered the Palestinians unprecedented sympathy. The world became aware of the land confiscations (nearly 40 percent of the Occupied Territories), the disparity of laws separating the Palestinians and Israeli settlers,

the restrictions, the daily harassments, and the collective punishments that defined the Palestinian experience under Israel. The intifada also moderated the Palestinian national movement. Palestinian demands for a state were confined to the West Bank and Gaza instead of the whole of Palestine. This shift (which, again, was the product of ignoring the Palestinians who were forced out of their homes in 1947-49) moderated the PLO, allowing the advocates of a negotiated settlement to prevail over the hard-liners who called for Israel's destruction. The intifada created a unified Palestinian front which forced Israel and the United States to address the Palestinian national movement seriously; "in short, the intifada seemed to perform many of the same functions for the [Palestinians] that the 1973 war had performed for Egypt."<sup>47</sup> The eventual U.S.-recognition of the PLO was one of the most significant repercussions of the intifada. On 22 May 1989, James Baker, U.S. Secretary of State, called on Israel to "lay aside once and for all the unrealistic vision of a greater Israel" and to "reach out to Palestinians as neighbors who deserve political rights."<sup>48</sup> The intifada had reversed the Zionist narrative of David versus Goliath as an allegory for Israel and the Arabs. The striking imagery of young Palestinians with stones and slings confronting armed soldiers recast the Palestinians as the young David fighting for the land of his people and Israel as the superior and tyrannical Goliath.

As any Palestinian in the Occupied Territories will say, these victories meant little because the occupation continued. The intifada, an amazing display of human will, failed to alter the fortunes of the Palestinians. In the year that followed the declaration of

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<sup>47</sup>Paul Noble, "The PLO in Regional Politics" in *Echoes of the Intifada: Regional Repercussions of the Palestinian-Israeli Conflict*, ed. Rex Brynen (Boulder: Westview Press, 1991), 137.

<sup>48</sup>Bickerton, 225.

the Fourteen Points, the Palestinians took major steps towards a peaceful resolution to their conflict with Israel. In the end, the intifada was defeated on the battlefield by the enemy it intended to overthrow. The Palestinian uprising shocked many Israeli leaders, but their response was to increase the settlements, restrictions, and violence that had ignited the intifada in the first place.

The intifada presented Israel with an opportunity to bring peace to the region, but the policies of the hard-line government did not include compromise. Because Israeli society itself was largely unaffected by the intifada, the Shamir government did not have to contend with domestic pressure to make unwanted concessions. There was indeed a growing peace movement in Israel, but most secular Israelis went about their daily lives while the right-wing religious and secular Zionists pushed their political agenda. As the rest of the world criticized Israel's occupation, Israeli society largely remained quiet. Yitzhak Shamir faced little opposition from the only two countries that truly mattered: Israel and the United States. When the PLO gave all the ground it could to bring Israel to the negotiating table, the Israelis and Americans ultimately turned their backs. Israel's refusal to accept the Palestinians as a people with legitimate political aspirations was a direct consequence of the ideology that founded the Jewish state in 1948 and has sustained it as a colonial movement in Palestine ever since. Unable to carry out ethnic cleansing of the substantial Palestinian population, Israel's leaders have developed and supported policies of land confiscations, settlement construction, home demolitions, and deportations, all of which have amounted to a policy population cleansing through subjugation and stationary transfer.

### The Death of Peace

Eight months after the end to the Gulf Crisis in 1990-91, the states of the Middle East met in Madrid for a historic peace summit.<sup>49</sup> For the first time since the Zionist project broke ground in Palestine, there appeared to be the real possibility of settling the conflict between the Jews and the Arabs, but peace did not carry the day. Arab heads of state differed in their definitions of peace with Israel, but more importantly, the Shamir government of Israel was not willing to make any of the concessions necessary, and its participation in the Madrid conference was merely to satisfy U.S. demands. Like the Revisionists before him, Shamir refused to give up the Whole Land of Israel concept, and was determined to continue the Zionist colonization of the Occupied Territories. Shamir admitted as much in June 1992, after he lost the elections to Rabin and the Labor Party, saying that his strategy during the Madrid meetings “was to drag out talks on Palestinians self-rule for 10 years while attempting to settle hundreds of thousands of Jews in the occupied territories.”<sup>50</sup> In an earlier statement made while he was still Prime Minister, Shamir was even more candid in his approach to the negotiations, “We are going to talk and talk with the terrorists [Palestinians] about negotiation, but while we’re talking we are going to send in the scrapers and the bulldozers on the lands we’ve liberated (*sic*). What’s more is that Palestinian labour will build those roads and settlements.”<sup>51</sup>

Shamir’s handling of the Madrid talks is not a reflection of Shamir himself, but of the wider Revisionism that permeates the Israeli right. Shamir’s Likud successor,

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<sup>49</sup>At Madrid, Israel and the Arab countries engaged in direct negotiations for the first time.

<sup>50</sup>Smith, 419.

<sup>51</sup>Frederic F. Clairmont, “Greater Israel and Ethnic Cleansing,” *Economic and Political Weekly* 31:38 (1996), 2592.

Binyamin Netanyahu, continued this Revisionist policy in the fragile peace negotiations in 2010, which quickly broke down because of Netanyahu's refusal to cease settlement activity in the West Bank and East Jerusalem. In early 1992, Shamir's defiance of U.S.-led efforts to resolve the Arab-Israeli conflict resulted in the rare case of an American administration holding the Israeli government accountable. Israel's continued settlement activity in the Occupied Territories, accelerated by 180,000 new housing units in the previous year and a half, forced the administration of George Bush impose sanctions on Israel. The U.S. withheld the \$10 billion in loan guarantees to Israel, with the hope that Israel would seriously negotiate with the Arabs. Bush, like Arafat before, had little understanding of the depth of the Revisionist ideology in Likud politics, and was dumbfounded when Shamir's government responded to the sanction by approving even more settlements.

The colonial-settler attitude of the Likud and the Israeli right caused it to disregard the sensitivities of its superpower patron, truly clinging to the revisionist Zionism that Jabotinsky had founded in opposition to the submissive Zionism in need of British support during the 1920s. However, by straining relations with the U.S., Shamir damaged the credibility of the Likud and in June 1992, the Labor Party won elections for the first time since 1973. The new Labor government looked similar to the previous one in the mid-1970s, as Yitzhak Rabin returned to the premiership, and Labor's number two man, Shimon Peres, assumed a key portfolio, the Foreign Minister. The Labor government took a more serious approach to Madrid, but the conference made little progress in solving the Arab-Israeli conflict. However, it eventually gave way to the Oslo Accords, which focused exclusively on Palestinian-Israeli issues. Rabin's willingness to

engage the Palestinians in peace negotiations created an atmosphere of optimism initially, but the strong opposition from the Revisionists undermined his efforts. Far from the situation in 1967 following the Khartoum resolution, the Labor government of Israel had a partner in peace who had already recognized the Jewish state, thus relinquishing claim to territory inside the Green Line. But the strongest voices in Israel had not changed, and the Revisionists continued to desperately cling to their “no land, no peace” position. The threat of Israeli concessions posed by Rabin’s negotiations infuriated the Revisionists, who actively and passively incited the extremist elements in Israeli society. Their violent opposition to the end of the Whole Land of Israel reality culminated in the assassination of Israel’s peace-seeking prime minister in 1995. The peace process came to a grinding halt the following year with the election of Binyamin Netanyahu, an ardent Revisionist whose father had worked for Ze’ev Jabotinsky. Settlement activity continued throughout the nineties and into the new century despite international protests. Ehud Barak succeeded Netanyahu as prime minister in 1999 and restarted negotiations with the Palestinians, but the Camp David Summit in the summer of 2000 failed to make any progress. The Revisionist attitude of Israel and U.S. indifference to securing a just and lasting peace agreement effectively killed the peace process before it could begin to dislodge the Zionist colonialism in the Occupied Territories.

Rabin, whose stance against the demands of the neo-Revisionists for the total annexation and colonization of the West Bank and Gaza lasted longer than any other Labor Zionist at the time, was one of the last Israeli leaders who tried to chart a Labor course through the strong currents of Revisionism. Unlike many Zionists, Rabin never viewed the Israeli conquests in June 1967 in redemptive terms, and despite allowing

settlements to continue and planning to incorporate most of the Jewish settlements in the West Bank into the Jewish state, his pragmatic approach to the peace process was manifested “through a transfer of areas in Judea, Samaria and Gaza to the Palestinian Authority, through a freeze on settlement growth and through an end of incentives offered to Israelis to settle in the territories.”<sup>52</sup> Rabin’s longtime rival, Shimon Peres, had removed himself from the Revisionist fervor of the 1970s and early 1980s and shared Rabin’s desire for peace during the Oslo years. During Israel’s 2002 Operation Defensive Shield, Peres served as the Foreign Minister in Ariel Sharon’s Likud-led government and was dismayed at the regression of Zionism. He told Sharon, “I can’t believe that I am part of a government that has gone back to occupying the territories. No wonder the world hates us.”<sup>53</sup> Unlike Rabin, Peres lacked the strength and endurance to take on the Revisionists. Likud politicians, including Ariel Sharon and Binyamin Netanyahu, demonized Rabin publicly, labeling the Prime Minister a post-Zionist. When members of Gush Emunim and other rightwing groups burned effigies of Rabin dressed in Nazi uniforms, the leaders of the Likud and the other Revisionist parties watched in silence, refusing to draw a line between Revisionism and religious extremism. A soldier to the bone, Rabin fought back for the sake of peace.

Rabin took on the settler-movement, in effect challenging part of the practical and spiritual foundation of Zionism. Gush Emunim forcefully advocated *Halutziut*, the pioneering settlement through hard work and perseverance, the quintessential image of the early Zionist pioneers. The settlers in the West Bank and Gaza placed themselves in

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<sup>52</sup>Danny Ben-Moshe, “The Oslo Peace Process and Two Views on Judaism and Zionism,” *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies* 32, 1 (2005), 19.

<sup>53</sup>*Ibid.*, 27.

the context of *Halutziut*, but Rabin rejected such comparisons. Rabin argued that the post-1967 Zionist settlements served no purpose. The settlements, Rabin constantly reiterated while trying to drum up support for the peace process, were a financial burden on Israel and contributed absolutely nothing to the security of the state:

In one of the more contentious remarks from the period, Rabin declared, ‘settlements add nothing, absolutely nothing, to Israel’s security. They are a liability rather than an asset.’ Standing on the Golan Heights he informed the soldiers before him that they were on tank land not holy land, reminding recruits that one of the first acts of the army in 1973, when the settlements did not prevent a Syrian invasion on the Golan, was to evacuate the settlers.<sup>54</sup>

Rabin’s approach to the Oslo process represented a return to Labor Zionism as had existed before the 1930s - a Jewish state in Palestine, not over all of Palestine. Rabin never considered that his actions and policies equated post-Zionism. The Yitzhak Rabin of the 1980s had been swept up in the Whole Land of Israel Movement and the rise of Revisionism, but by his second term as Prime Minister in 1992, he had returned to the pragmatic approach of his Labor Zionist roots. Not once did Rabin view the peace process through anything but a Zionist paradigm, clearly articulated in two speeches he made to the Knesset, “I am prepared to travel to Amman, Damascus, and Beirut today or tomorrow, for there is no greater victory than the victory of peace. . . . Above all else, I want to tell you: this is the victory of Zionism, which has also won the recognition of its most sworn and bitter enemies.”<sup>55</sup> As Danny Ben-Moshe noted, Rabin was correct, for the “search for international legitimacy in Zionism goes back to the first Zionist Congress and has been a key Israeli foreign policy objective.”<sup>56</sup>

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<sup>54</sup>Ibid., 23.

<sup>55</sup>Ibid., 17.

<sup>56</sup>Ibid., 17.

The death of the peace process was hastened by the deterioration of the Israeli peace camp and the return of the Revisionists. Netanyahu became Prime Minister in 1996, and his government immediately drew up plans to “devour Arab East Jerusalem and reduce its Arab community to an insignificant minority.”<sup>57</sup> The threat of losing control over the Occupied Territories pushed the Likud and other Revisionists even further right. At the core of the conflict surrounding the peace process was the struggle for the Zionist identity. Revisionists were not prepared to give up their achievements of the 1970s and the “facts on the ground” they created through settlements and oppressive policies that targeted the Palestinians in the Occupied Territories. Like the radical zealots of other nationalist movements, Revisionists would rather die fighting the Palestinians than relinquish their territorial conquests. Tragically, it was Rabin who paid with his life in the fight for Zionism. The violent incitement by the Likud culminated in the assassination of Yitzhak Rabin on 4 November 1995 by Yigal Amir, a militant religious Revisionist influenced by the violent ideology of Gush Emunim’s founders. The tragedy shock the Israeli left to the core, but the neo-Revisionists had believed that Rabin had to be stopped at all costs and pushed their political agenda with an indifference to the assassination of a Jewish Prime Minister by a Jewish citizen. On the first anniversary of Rabin’s assassination, the recently-elected Prime Minister, Binyamin Netanyahu, “refused to declare it a national day of mourning.”<sup>58</sup>

The Israeli left that forcefully advocated peace during the early nineties withdrew into the shadows in the years following Rabin’s assassination. One reason for the collapse of the peace camp was the lack of political participation by Israeli Arabs. As roughly

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<sup>57</sup>*Observer*, June 1996.

<sup>58</sup>Smith, 451.

twenty percent of Israel's population, their vote made left-of-center coalitions possible, but during the Rabin government, the leaders of the Arab Israeli parties were never given top positions, and by the end of Ehud Barak's disappointing reign as prime minister, the Arab citizens of Israel were so jaded that they abandoned the political process. The loss of the Arab Israeli vote decimated the leftist peace camp, and neither is likely to make any impactful return in the near future. Furthermore, Labor's eventual participation in the Likud government under Ariel Sharon cost Israel's historically most powerful party its legitimacy. The end of the Labor Party's significance in Israel's political arena was demonstrated in the elections of 2009 when it finished with the fourth highest total of seats in the Knesset. Like Labor Zionism, the Labor Party's day ended with the failure to seize the opportunity to establish peace with the Palestinians, and what has continued on is a hollow shell of Labor ideology, at the service of Revisionism, which is now synonymous with Zionism itself.

## CHAPTER VII

### IN THE SHADOWS OF TERRORISM:

#### OCCUPATION AFTER 9/11

al-Qa'ida's terrorist attacks on 11 September 2001 against the United States shook the world, and the repercussions and reactions are still highly visible nearly a decade later. "The mayhem committed on September 11, 2001, and the "war against terrorism" that it triggered off, have imprinted the horror of murderous ethnic and religious strife on the consciousness of the entire world," and Zionism was given the powerful "terrorism" paradigm as a tool in its continued colonial-settler nationalism.<sup>1</sup> The Middle East in particular has suffered significantly from the backlash of the attacks. U.S.-led invasions toppled the Taliban and Saddam Hussein regimes and left both Afghanistan and Iraq in violent disarray. The 11 September attacks, combined with the earlier elections of George W. Bush and Ariel Sharon, have had the effect of providing Israel with an even broader *carte blanche* in its dealings with the Palestinians. Israel copied the Bush administration's encroachment on human and civil rights, reorienting the Palestinian-Israeli conflict in the Occupied Territories as an extension of the West's war on terror. Palestinians in the Occupied Territories suffer in much the same way as inmates at Guantanamo Bay, given that both locations are situated inside and outside of

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<sup>1</sup> Mann, 3.

national jurisdiction. Israeli law and the right to have rights extend only to the Jewish Israelis residing in the West Bank and Gaza, while the Palestinian inhabitants are excluded from such protection. This same protection exists inside Israel for the Arab Israelis, but they have no say in the future of their state, and do not enjoy the same sovereignty as their Jewish counterparts. “Israeli Jews exercise sovereignty in a territory that is not theirs, whereas over 100 unrecognized Palestinian villages are literally extra-territorial in that they do not appear on Israeli maps. . . . Palestinian citizens of Israel are commonly treated as aliens, akin to foreign nationals of an “Arab” country to which they “really” belong,” and this is a much more palatable social arrangement than that which exists between the Israeli Jews and Palestinians in the West Bank.<sup>2</sup>

The visible optimism of Barack Obama’s successful bid for the presidency has substantially evaporated since his much-hyped Cairo speech. Guantanamo has not been closed, and Israel has continued to build Jewish settlements on Palestinian land. Furthermore, like his predecessor, President Obama has raised little objection to Israel’s military operations in the West Bank and Gaza that have killed hundreds of civilians and left the Palestinian infrastructure in shambles. Israel has used the pretext of fighting against terror to justify its actions in the Occupied Territories, but the disproportionate use of force, the timing of the operations, and the atrocious conditions created for Palestinian civilians points to something more than combating terrorism. The return of the Zionist Revisionists to power following the Rabin administration (which had threatened to end the Revisionist dream of a Zionist conquest over all of historic Palestine) accelerated the mobilization of public support for extreme right-wing policies.

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<sup>2</sup>Blecher, 754.

Settlements continue to be built and expanded, and right-wing Jewish settlers are gaining footholds in the Arab neighborhoods of East Jerusalem. The deliberate and violent policy of ethnic cleansing has been replaced by the institutionalization of oppression, exclusion, and violence on the general pretext of fighting terrorism. Zionists have reworded the discourse of the Palestinian-Israel conflict as no longer a secular, nationalist struggle between Arabs and Jews, but as taking place within the context of democratic Israel's security threatened by Islamic militants. Vocal figureheads like Iran's Mahmoud Ahmadinejad fuel support for Zionism's new battlefield, especially in the U.S. The war on terror is a war primarily against Muslim terrorists, not against state terrorism (except for countries like Iraq and Iran, which opposed or continue to oppose U.S. hegemony in the Middle East and are problematic for U.S. foreign policy). Civilians across the world are not ignorant of this discrepancy (though the majority of their Israeli and American counterparts seem to be) and correctly perceive that the war on terror in reality "means the United States is currently intervening on the side of dominant states against their ethnic-religious insurgents" and that from "Palestine to Georgia, to Chechnya, to Kashmir, to the southern Philippines, to Colombia, U.S. policy favors state terrorists" and even provides substantial military aid to support the suppression of insurgents fighting for the same demands made by the Egyptian and Tunisian protesters today.<sup>3</sup>

In March 2002 and December 2008, Israel launched major military operations into the West Bank and Gaza respectively. While much of the world was quick to condemn Israel's actions, the United States argued that Israel had a right to defend itself and continued its unconditional support, which allowed Israel to achieve appalling levels

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<sup>3</sup>Mann, 526. While Libya has evoked US intervention, Bahrain, where the situation is almost equally egregious, has not.

of destruction in both areas. 2002's Operation Defensive Shield in the West Bank and Operation Cast Lead during the winter of 2008-09 in Gaza were more than defensive measures. The two operations aptly demonstrate the influence of Zionist ideology in Israel. Collective punishment and disproportionate use of force are not tools of the weak or defensive. Rather, they are methods used to achieve objectives that are equivalent to crimes against humanity and, possibly, a subtle campaign of ethnic cleansing. Operation Defensive Shield and Cast Lead reveal the dangerous path Israeli governments are traveling down in an "era when international law and universal justice are being forcefully promoted as pillars of an improved world order."<sup>4</sup> In both cases, Israel pointed to rocket attacks and suicide bombings as the reasons for assaulting Gaza and the West Bank. However, as critics predicted, Israel has consistently ignored the root causes of Palestinian violence, and the use of such violent measures have empowered, not crushed, Palestinian terrorism. It was not Palestinian terror that Israel attempted to eradicate; rather, it was the will of the Palestinian people and their demographic threat to Zionism that the Jewish State has sought to end.

### The Return of the Revisionists

The rise of the Israeli Right in politics has all but destroyed the prospects for peace between Israel and the Palestinians. The writing was on the wall in 2005 when Ariel Sharon left the Likud Party to form the centrist Kadima Party. Since the assassination of Yitzhak Rabin and the election of Binyamin Netanyahu in 1996, only once has a left-of-center party controlled the government. Even then, it lasted less than

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<sup>4</sup>Former Israeli foreign minister Shlomo Ben-Ami, "Israel after Goldstone," [www.project-syndicate.org](http://www.project-syndicate.org).

two years and was not interested in making a durable or legitimate peace with its neighbors. Israel's growing right-wing ideology has brought it increasing isolation from the international community while further exacerbating the plight of the Palestinians. It is even questionable whether a significant left-of-center party exists in Israel anymore. In 2009, it was the "centrist" Kadima Party that served as the opposition while Ehud Barak led the Labor Party into a coalition with Binyamin Netanyahu's Likud-led government. The ultra-conservative nationalist party, Yisrael Beiteinu, fared better in the elections than the Labor Party that had dominated Israeli politics for so long. Members of Yisrael Beiteinu are more vocal than many Likud politicians in advocating the removal of Palestinians from the borders of historic Palestine. Even though it is hard to imagine that ethnic cleansing is still an option for fulfilling Revisionist Zionism in Palestine, it is still openly discussed in the public sphere:

Conventional transfer – that is, violent expulsion – is still propounded vociferously. Uri Ariel, a member of the "Yisrael Beitaynu" Party in the fifteenth Knesset, verbally assaulted Palestinian Member of Knesset 'Issam Makhul during parliamentary debate in 2002: "If you continue like this," Ariel ranted, "you [Palestinians] will wind up with things much worse than the revocation of citizenship, you will wind up with mass expulsions. If you don't stop this way of yours, the Jewish majority will simply scatter you to the winds."<sup>5</sup>

There is a frightful irony in Ariel's words. Not only did the MK openly threaten Israel's minority population with ethnic cleansing, but he did so using imagery understood by every Israeli Jew –the Greek word for "scattering" or "dispersion" is "diaspora."

It would be a mistake to project this violent and ethno-centric attitude on to all Israeli Jews, and it is indeed the case that a number of Israelis do more for the civil rights of Palestinians than any Arab government. Whether it is protesting settlements in East

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<sup>5</sup>Blecher, 742.

Jerusalem, monitoring settlement activity in the West Bank, or educating Americans about the institutionalization of Zionist colonialism in Palestine, many Israelis speak out against the inhumane treatment of the Palestinians and the violent Israeli policies that exacerbate the Palestinian-Israel conflict. In January 2001, Israelis and Palestinians met at the Red Sea town of Taba. For the first time, serious attempts were made to settle the major issues. Both sides agreed that Taba was the furthest the negotiations had gone. But make no mistake: the Israelis who went to Taba are the minority, and a shrinking minority at that. The majority of Israeli Jews increasingly support Revisionist policies, as is evidenced by the increasing numbers of Revisionist Zionists in the Knesset. Like the Oslo Accords, the momentum for peace was interrupted when a new conservative government took over. The election of Ariel Sharon as prime minister the following month killed the promise of progress after Taba. Since then, Israel has failed to pursue a comprehensive peace with the Palestinians over whom it continues to rule while the window of opportunity to do so continues to shrink. Ariel Sharon refused to concede any territory held by Israel and had no regard for Palestinian aspirations. Shortly after assuming office, he updated a military plan code-named "Field of Thorns" which was in line with the long-term Zionist policy of "transfer." The objective of the mission was to expel or kill Yasir Arafat and destroy the Palestinian Authority's infrastructure. Since Oslo, the Palestinians had begun building the basic foundations of a future state, which contradicted the Revisionist vision of Jewish control over all of Palestine. In 2001, Operation Field of Thorns was changed to "Defensive Shield" and was ready for implementation. All that was needed was an excuse to begin.

In February 2002, Saudi Arabia proposed a peace initiative offering Israel full peace with the Arab countries in exchange for the return to the pre-1967 borders, establishment of a Palestinian state, and a “just solution” – rather than the implementation of U.N. Resolution 194 – for the Palestinian refugees. Sharon rejected the plan outright. He was not looking for a peaceful solution to the conflict with Palestine, but rather a reason to implement Operation Defensive Shield. His excuse came on 27 March 2002. A Palestinian suicide bomber attacked the Park Hotel in the Israeli town of Netanya during a Passover Seder. The attack killed 29 Israelis and wounded another 140. Before the Park Hotel bombing, Hamas, Islamic Jihad and the al-Aqsa Martyrs brigade had launched a number of attacks on Israeli targets within Israel and the Occupied Territories. Israel (and the U.S.) largely ignored the fact that the attacks were in response to increasingly oppressive occupation and the expansion of settlements. After 11 September, Palestinian attacks were perceived as nothing more than acts of terrorism. In the quest to uproot this terrorism, Sharon ordered the execution of Operation Defensive Shield.

### Operation Defensive Shield

On 29 March 2002, the Israeli Defense Force launched Operation Defensive Shield. Sharon declared that the campaign’s aim was to uproot the terrorist infrastructure headed by Yasir Arafat. Arafat, the Israeli prime minister told the world, was responsible for the terrorism that plagued Israel and threatened its security, and Israel had every right to defend itself. The operation lasted nearly a month and destroyed the infrastructure of the West Bank. Palestinian cities like Jenin and Nablus were turned to rubble, while Ramallah and Bethlehem suffered significant damage. All over the West Bank,

Palestinians were put under military curfew. They watched in horror as their families and communities were destroyed by the Israeli occupation. Some Palestinians resisted the invasion, but they were no match for the Merkava tanks, Apache helicopters, F-16 jets, and bulldozers Israel had deployed. The entire West Bank was victim to the military campaign, though the IDF acted more forcefully in some areas and less so in others. Ramallah, Bethlehem, and Jenin represent the scale of violence that was Operation Defensive Shield.

IDF troops immediately occupied Ramallah on 29 March. They surrounded Yasir Arafat's compound and began to bombard it. Israel imposed a twenty-four-hour curfew on the city as its soldiers captured strategic locations. Members of the IDF broke into civilian homes to take up positions there, often with a lack of respect for the inhabitants and their property. Electricity and water were periodically cut in parts of Ramallah, but the residents were unable to leave for fear of being shot by IDF snipers. The IDF raided the Palestinian Authority headquarters, vandalizing the buildings and confiscating or destroying files. Meanwhile, Arafat remained under siege in the basement of his compound. Sharon refused to back down from his ultimatum: exile or death. On 31 March, an international convoy was allowed to enter Arafat's compound. They spent two weeks with the besieged Palestinian leader, and were stunned by the inaction of the international community. Catherine Cook, the international advocacy coordinator for Defense for Children International, was shocked at the actions of the IDF. Cook, who had lived and worked in Ramallah since 1999, was stunned at the harsh occupation of the city and the conditions imposed on the residents. For Cook, the constant scenes of Palestinian suffering and humiliation at the hands of the IDF as well as the soldiers' contempt for the

Palestinians seemed to explain the animosity many felt towards Israel; “If these [Palestinian] kids grow up to hate, there is little question in my mind where they learned it.”<sup>6</sup> Ramallah remained under a round-the-clock curfew for two weeks, enforced by Israeli snipers and tanks. By 21 April, the IDF redeployed from Ramallah, except for Arafat’s compound, which remained in a state of siege.

Unlike Ramallah, the siege of Bethlehem received a great deal of international attention because of its religious significance. It seemed that the world was willing to tolerate assaults on the West Bank towns but not the place associated with the birth of Jesus. On 2 April, the IDF invaded the historic town with tanks, armored vehicles, and Apache helicopters. A handful of Palestinian gunmen tried to fend off the advancing Israeli army, but they were forced to seek refuge in the Church of the Nativity. The fact that the mostly Muslim gunmen chose the Christian church over the Mosque of ‘Umar across the plaza for shelter demonstrates the significant global opposition to Israeli attacks on Christian sites. Had the men chosen the mosque, it is very likely that the building would have been destroyed with the Palestinians inside. For five weeks, the IDF laid siege to the Church of the Nativity, imprisoning over 150 people, including priests, nuns, and lay civilians. The IDF blockade refused to allow food and water to reach the Palestinians inside. Furthermore, the six Palestinians killed inside the compound from sniper fire remained in the sanctuary until lengthy negotiations allowed the bodies to be removed. Eventually, the US and the EU brokered an agreement where the civilians were allowed to leave and the gunmen were either escorted to Gaza or exiled to Spain and Italy.

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<sup>6</sup>Muna Hamzeh and Todd May, ed., *Operation Defensive Shield: Witnesses to Israeli War Crimes* (London: Pluto Press, 2003), 37.

The siege of Bethlehem was not confined to the Church of the Nativity. When the fighting began around 6:30 AM on 2 April, the residents of Bethlehem were put under a curfew and confined to their homes. Many remained in whatever room in their home was most protected from Israeli artillery and bullets. Israel prevented ambulances from entering the Old City to evacuate the dead and wounded. Sumayya Abdeh, a 64-year-old woman, died from gunshot wounds in the arms of her son, vainly waiting for medical attention.<sup>7</sup> Many of Bethlehem's residents went without electricity and water during the siege. The twenty-four-hour curfew was occasionally lifted to allow the Palestinians to purchase food and water. Religious and political leaders outside Bethlehem pressed the US Consulate and European ministers to pressure Israel to end the invasion. Even after the standoff at the Church of the Nativity ended, Bethlehem remained under military curfew and occupation for another nine weeks.

The curfew, which extended beyond Operation Defensive Shield, crippled the economy of Bethlehem. Tourism, a vital source of income for the town, was non-existent. Shops and schools remained closed, preventing the community from earning much-needed income. In addition to the loss of revenues because of the siege, much of the infrastructure had been damaged. The Bethlehem 2000 project, which had invested over \$200 million into upgrading the city and enabling sustainable development, took a major step backward with the destruction. Homes were destroyed, churches and other institutions were damaged, and the economy lay in ruins. According to Bethlehem's mayor, Hanna Nasir, unemployment stood at 70 percent after Israel's operation. In

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<sup>7</sup>Mitri Raheb, *Bethlehem Besieged: Stories of Hope in Times of Trouble* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2004), 9.

addition, the traditional Christian middle class continued its exodus from Bethlehem, with over 1,000 people leaving the city.

Jenin suffered the worst of the atrocities committed during Operation Defensive Shield. While the world's attention was focused on the Israeli siege of Bethlehem, IDF forces surrounded the Jenin Refugee Camp. During the two-week assault, the IDF destroyed much of the camp, and its actions led to accusations that a massacre, not a counter-terrorism mission, had been carried out. The accounts by international observers and journalists, as well as the Palestinians of Jenin, were refuted by Israel as "unfounded" and "biased," but Sharon's government refused to allow a U.N. team to investigate the situation, implicitly giving further credibility to the fact that what happened in Jenin was much more than an operation against militant Palestinians. The Jenin Refugee Camp was established in 1953 for the Palestinians from the nearby villages who were expelled during 1947-49. In 2002, the camp was densely populated, with over two-thirds of the population consisting of the elderly, women, and children. It was well known that the camp was a hotbed for violent groups who attacked Israeli troops and civilians, but it must be stated that the fighters of the various Palestinian factions never viewed themselves as terrorists. Like the majority of Palestinians, they viewed themselves as resistance fighters. When Ariel Sharon ordered the invasion of what he called "a nest of cockroaches," resistance became the safest course for the Palestinians of Jenin. The survivors of the 1947-49 expulsions understood the consequences of surrender while the 1982 massacre of the refugees of Sabra and Shatila under the watchful eye of then defense minister Ariel Sharon was still vivid in the minds of the residents of Jenin.

The assault began around 2 AM on 3 April with heavy shelling. IDF troops moved into the camp and took over rooftops and mosques in order to position themselves strategically. Helicopters joined the artillery shelling of the town as Israeli soldiers continued to capture buildings. Within two days of the assault, the IDF completely closed off the camp while continuing to bombard it. Palestinian fighters attempted to defend their camp but were outmatched by the tanks, bulldozers, snipers, and Apache helicopters of the IDF. Wounded and dead Palestinians were largely prevented from being evacuated. On 9 April, IDF bulldozers began demolishing homes, often with the residents still inside. Those who evacuated the collapsing buildings were either arrested or expelled to villages outside the camp or to the city of Jenin. The invasion officially ended on 15 April, but Sharon's government refused to allow large-scale aid work to occur, causing further humanitarian crises. Witnesses told of incidents of the illegal use of human shields, the wanton destruction of homes and personal property, the prevention of medical treatment, and the killing of civilians by the IDF.

Palestinian-American journalist Ramzy Baroud edited a collection of Palestinian testimonies on the Jenin Refugee Camp assault. *Searching Jenin: Eyewitness Accounts of the Israeli Invasion 2002* gave a voice to some of the residents of Jenin, who recounted the traumatic events they experienced. Their stories have been corroborated by other witnesses, including journalists, aid workers, and IDF soldiers. An eight-year-old girl went into shock when IDF troops broke into her home and destroyed her family's meager belongings as they used the building to position snipers. Israeli troops expelled Faisal Abu Sareh from his home and then leveled it with dynamite. This was punishment for the suicide bombing committed by Abu Sareh's son in the Israeli city of Afuleh. Shelling,

dynamite, and bulldozers destroyed hundreds of homes. An Israeli army bulldozer operator gave an interview with the newspaper *Yedioth Ahronoth*. Moshe Nissim's interview contradicted Israel's stance that the IDF acted with the utmost concern for the civilians and property of Jenin. In the interview, published on 31 May 2002, Nissim told how he demolished homes with little regard for the people who lived there. His only regret, he told *Yedioth Ahronoth*, was that he had not demolished the entire camp. Nissim's account of the operation offers no reason to doubt the testimonies of the Palestinians.

Israel denied mistreating the Palestinian prisoners it held. IDF spokespeople contended that Palestinians were forced to strip to make sure they were not carrying a bomb, but that was the extent of it. However, numerous accounts tell the opposite. Many of the residents of the camp witnessed IDF soldiers forcing Palestinian men of varying ages to stand naked, blindfolded, and handcuffed, their skin burning under the strong sun. Maha Khorj saw a man in his fifties suffering this type of treatment as she was marched out of the refugee camp, and the scene has remained with her. "I still sit and cry when I look at my camp. Although living in a refugee camp is not the best life, it has been my home."<sup>8</sup> David Pratt, a journalist for *The Sunday Herald*, witnessed similar humiliating acts. An IDF soldier he interviewed denied that the Israeli military would perpetrate such acts, but Pratt happened to come across several Palestinian men naked, blindfolded, and handcuffed. Pratt believed the cuts and bruises on their faces and arms suggested that IDF soldiers had beaten them. Such humiliating and abusive treatment paled in comparison to the most inhumane acts. Snipers shot men and women as they tried to find shelter or

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<sup>8</sup>Interview with Maha Khorj in *Searching Jenin: Eyewitness Account of the Israeli Invasion 2002*, ed. Ramzy Baroud (Seattle: Cune Press, 2003), 115.

family members. Reports of execution-style killings were common. Israeli troops took men of “military age” away from their families and homes. Some were later discovered with bullet holes in their corpses. The whereabouts of others remained unknown. The husband of Hala Irmilat was shot and killed while in his house. The IDF refused to permit Hala to take the body of her husband out of the house for burial. She and her three children were imprisoned in their home with the corpse for seven days. A Palestinian nurse and her sister were shot by sniper fire from the nearby mosque. Paramedics and ambulances were unable to reach the growing number of dead and wounded during the two weeks of fighting.

Ihab Ayadi, an ambulance dispatcher for the Palestinian Red Crescent, represented the frustrations of the medical community. IDF forces constantly stopped and detained his convoy of ambulances, preventing them from evacuating the dead and wounded in the refugee camp. Ayadi was traumatized from being unable to assist the injured civilians who slowly bled to death. Dr. Khalil Sulayman, head of the Red Crescent EMS, defied the Israeli restrictions and continued to evacuate Palestinians until an Israeli tank fired on his ambulance, killing him and the injured girl he was evacuating. The International Committee of the Red Cross called the Israeli restriction of the ICRC “totally unacceptable” while US Assistant Secretary of State William Burns called it a “terrible human tragedy.” UN Special Coordinator in the Occupied Territories, Terje Roed-Larsen, inspected the refugee camp only to witness Palestinians digging up bodies buried underneath the rubble. *Ha'aretz* reported Roed-Larsen as saying that the stench of decaying corpses was appalling and amounted to a scene of a catastrophe of major

proportions. According the *Ha'aretz*, the only time bodies were evacuated by the IDF was in order to prevent them from being used in a media campaign against the operation.

After the invasion of Jenin, the international community called for an investigation into what took place. However, after several weeks of postponing a decision, the Israeli cabinet formally announced that it would not allow the UN investigation team into Jenin. Former Irgun member-turned-Israeli peace activist, Uri Avnery, asked why Israel chose to assault Jenin in the manner it did. He believed Israel refused to allow journalists, paramedics, and aid workers into the refugee camp because the IDF did not want the truth of what happened to emerge. Why else would the IDF refuse food and water to be delivered to the besieged people he argued. Avnery concluded that, at best, Sharon sent a message to the Palestinians about the consequences of opposing the IDF. At worst, it was to cause a “Deir Yassin-style mass flight.”<sup>9</sup>

The magnitude of Operation Defensive Shield clearly stood at odds with the supposed aim of uprooting terrorism. The siege and destruction of Bethlehem highlighted the disparity between means and ends. The residents of Bethlehem opposed militant Palestinians because of the disruption of tourism they caused; yet they were not spared the wrath of the Israeli war machine. Israel placed tens of thousands of Palestinian civilians under a harsh curfew. Countless civilians were wounded while over 200 were killed. The levels of destruction in the West Bank towns furthered the trauma experienced by the Palestinians. The Palestinian Economic Council for Development and Reconstruction estimated that around \$465 million in damage occurred. Ramallah

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<sup>9</sup>Ibid., 211.

suffered \$26 million in damage, Bethlehem double that figure, and Jenin stood at a staggering \$170 million.

Operation Defensive Shield failed to uproot the terrorist infrastructure in the West Bank but succeeded in destroying the civil and economic infrastructure. As Edward Said wrote in *al-Ahram Weekly* in early April, “When a renowned and respected retired politician like Zbigniew Brzezinski says explicitly on national television that Israel has been behaving like the white supremacist regime of apartheid South Africa, one can be certain that he is not alone in this view, and that an increasing number of Americans and others are slowly growing not only disenchanted but also disgusted with Israel as a hugely expensive and draining ward of the United States, costing far too much, increasing American isolation, and seriously damaging the country’s reputation with its allies and its citizens.” American disenchantment with Israel and the military campaigns against the Palestinians did not grow fast or strong enough in the aftermath of Operation Defensive Shield. In December 2008, Israel turned its attention to Gaza and launched a similar military operation with similar objectives, though the price paid by the Palestinians was much higher than that in 2002.

#### Operation Cast Lead

In a letter published on 1 April 2002, Israeli scholar Ran HaCohen commented on José Saramago’s visit to Ramallah.<sup>10</sup> HaCohen disagreed with Saramago’s analogy

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<sup>10</sup>In late March 2002, José Saramago, the Portuguese writer and winner of the Nobel Prize for Literature, visited Ramallah as part of the delegation from the International Parliament of Writers. While there, Saramago compared the issue of Palestine to that of the Holocaust, “It must be said that in Palestine, there is a crime which we can stop. We may compare it with what happened at Auschwitz.”

between Ramallah and Auschwitz. The Sharon government was not the Third Reich, argued HaCohen; Israel had not committed the level of atrocities that the Nazi regime did, therefore, the comparison could not be made. "Israel," HaCohen wrote, "is now demonstrating how the Greater Evil is Evil's best friend."<sup>11</sup> He wrote the letter in response to Israel's 2002 invasion of the West Bank. However, his argument applies even more glaringly to the military assault Israel launched in December 2008 against Gaza. As long as Israel did not methodically murder thousands of Palestinians, the Israeli public and the international community somehow tolerated its destructive actions. In "defending Israeli freedom and security," Israel tightened the siege around Gaza, destroyed its infrastructure, injured and killed thousands of civilians, and left the survivors to face what has been called a catastrophic humanitarian crisis.

The election of Barack Obama as president of the United States in November 2008 caused a great deal of unease for Israeli politicians. During the administration of George W. Bush, Israel had plotted its own course with little American objection. With Obama, there was a fear of new policy directions as the president-elect often pointed to the need for dialogue and diplomacy over military action. As in past elections, Israel used the interim period between US administrations to implement policies that would draw harsh criticism. On 27 December 2008, the IDF launched Operation Cast Lead. Publicly, the aim of the operation was to cripple the Hamas terror infrastructure. Israel claimed that no other sovereign nation would tolerate rocket fire against its civilians and that the military campaign was a defensive one. However, other factors figured into the decision

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<sup>11</sup>Rah HaCohen, "The Auschwitz Logic" in *Operation Defensive Shield: Witnesses to Israeli War Crimes*, ed. Muna Hamzeh and Todd May (London: Pluto Press, 2003), 39.

to invade Gaza. In July 2008, Ehud Olmert, the prime minister, announced that he would step down amid allegations of corruption. His party-rival, current foreign minister Tzipi Livni, won the Kadima party election but could not form a new government. National elections were then scheduled for February 2009. Polls indicated that the hawkish leader of the Likud party was the favorite to assume the post of prime minister. Strong military action in Gaza would prove to the electorate that the current government – including Livni and Labor leader, Ehud Barak – took security issues very seriously. Operation Cast Lead also served to redeem the botched assault against Lebanon in the summer of 2006, when Hizbollah fought the IDF to a stalemate. With the US nearing the end of a lame-duck presidency, Gaza presented the Olmert government a chance to prove, like the Likud-led opposition, that it was willing to restore Israel's military deterrence.

Operation Cast Lead lasted twenty-three days and employed similar tactics used in Operation Defensive Shield. Gaza, unlike the West Bank, had a much higher population density, and its residents had nowhere to go. Gaza also failed to possess sites of sufficient international significance to cause foreign governments to intervene. As in Operation Defensive Shield, Israel used aerial bombardment, heavy artillery, and ground invasion to wreak havoc on the tiny coastal strip. Independent foreign journalists were barred from entering Gaza and reporting on the war. News agencies relied on local Palestinian correspondents to relay the events as they happened. It did not take long for reports of the excessive use of force to emerge from the conflict. On only the second day of the operation, Israeli airstrikes killed more Palestinians than on any other single day in the Arab-Israeli conflict since 1967. Not to be outdone by his political rivals (Livni and Barak), Netanyahu criticized the Olmert government on 29 December for employing a

policy of restraint. Given the strength of Israel's military and its advanced weaponry, Operation Cast Lead was not an anti-terrorist campaign but an all-out war against the Palestinian people. On 3 January, the government upgraded the operation to include ground forces.

The number of Palestinian casualties grew with each day of the conflict. Israel claimed that the majority were Hamas militants and that the civilian fatalities were to be blamed on Hamas. Throughout the invasion of Gaza, Israel argued that civilian casualties were the consequence of Hamas fighters using them as human shields. Military spokespeople highlighted the IDF warnings – announcements in Arabic and the dropping of leaflets – urging civilians to evacuate areas about to fall under attack, but they neglected to acknowledge that the civilians who had been warned had nowhere to go. Similar lines of thinking existed inside the United States. On 6 January, the *Washington Post* carried an article from Frank J. Gaffney Jr., president of the Center for Security Policy. He defended Israel's military operation in Gaza as both proportionate and defensive, citing rocket attacks as the *casus belli*. Again, the analysis of the crisis in Gaza failed to examine the strip's state of siege or other factors that contributed to the launching of rockets. In the eyes of Gaffney and the Israeli government and its supporters, Israeli policies in no way deserved to elicit violent reactions from the Palestinians, Hamas in particular. Palestinian suicide bombings and rocket attacks were acts of terrorism – while the use of white phosphorus, attacks on medical centers and convoys, the shelling of schools, and indiscriminate attacks on civilians apparently were not.

On 5 January, the first reports emerged of the use of white phosphorus. Israel admitted using it in its legal capacity as a smoke screen, but critics argued the dense population of Gaza made its use illegal under international law because of the harm the phosphorus caused civilians. Hospitals treated Palestinians with severe burns from the substance while human rights groups called for an immediate halt to its use. The incidents of white phosphorus drew harsh criticism from various international leaders and terms such as “war crimes” and “crimes against humanity” began to surface. Israel dismissed the claims as anti-Semitic, vowing to take any and all measures to protect Israeli soldiers. Ironically, the majority of IDF casualties came not from Hamas gunmen but from friendly fire. On 7 January, four Israeli soldiers were killed, three of them when an Israeli tank shelled the house they were hiding in. The advanced military and communications technology possessed by the Israeli Defense Force should have prevented Israeli deaths from friendly fire, so the accidental shelling on 7 January and the overall destruction of Gaza suggested a “shoot first” mentality. The events in Gaza supported an ill-defined campaign of obliteration rather than a precise counter-terrorism operation. John Ging, the first civilian allowed to enter Gaza, reported on the carnage. The Irish aid worker called Gaza a “catastrophe in the making,” as Palestinian civilians were trapped with no safe haven. Three of his aid workers had been killed by Israeli bombardments as well. ICRC director Pierre Kraehenbuehl agreed with Ging’s assessment of a major humanitarian crisis. Even before the assault began, “key civilian facilities in Gaza, such as hospitals, water systems and sewage installations, were already

in a precarious state because of the closures and import restrictions imposed by Israel over the past 18 months.”<sup>12</sup>

The medical facilities in Gaza were overwhelmed and were running short on supplies. Israeli forces shot at ambulances – scenes reminiscent from 2002 – as they heroically tried to evacuate the injured. Harald Veen entered Gaza as part of a four-member emergency surgery team. Sent by the ICRC, the British Royal Navy surgeon was shocked at the pain and suffering he witnessed. Veen estimated that of the fifty to one hundred wounded that arrived at the hospital every day, up to thirty needed operations. The vast majority of wounds were deep penetration blast wounds. Doctors for Human Rights Israel announced that Israel clearly violated international humanitarian law during the war with attacks on medics and hospitals. The World Health Organization reported that Israeli bombs damaged more than half of Gaza’s twenty-seven hospitals and forty-four clinics. In addition to hospitals and medical clinics, Israel shelled educational facilities. Israel accused Hamas of taking refuge in the schools, claiming that the IDF had no alternative. UN schools were hit by Israeli bombs despite the UN’s efforts to provide the IDF with UN coordinates. Israeli tanks fired on the UN school in Jabaliyya, killing forty-three refugees who had sought shelter there. Navi Pillay, the UN High Commissioner for human rights, condemned the attack and reiterated that with no safe havens and a sealed border, the civilians had nowhere to go. On 15 January, Israel shelled the UN Gaza headquarters, destroying part of the compound and much of the food supplies stored there.

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<sup>12</sup>*Daily Telegraph* (London) 7 January 2009.

The following day, the IDF bombed the home of Izz al-Din Abu'l-'Aysh, a Palestinian doctor who worked part-time in Israel treating Jewish women for infertility: he lost his three daughters in the attack. The Israeli public was shocked when it heard a sobbing Abu'l-'Aysh recount the tragedy on a phone call to a television station. Ehud Barak, the defense minister, acknowledged the shelling, but put the blame on Hamas for causing Israel to fight such a war in a high-density population area. As the operation drew to an end, questions about the conduct of the “world’s most moral army” began to be asked. Yehuda Shaul, the head of “Breaking the Silence,” gathered testimonies of soldiers who all said the operation had a “shoot-first” directive.<sup>13</sup> The daily newspaper, *Ha'aretz*, quoted one IDF squad leader who said that his soldiers interpreted the vague briefings to mean that they should kill everyone in Gaza, for everyone was a terrorist. There were no clear rules of engagement for the Israeli men and women who participated in Operation Cast Lead that decimated Gaza and left around 1400 Palestinians dead.

### Sixty Years of Cleansing: What Now?

The Zionist dream of an independent Jewish state in Palestine is still being pursued sixty years after the establishment of the state of Israel. Zionists continue to direct the Jewish community in Palestine, utilizing methods similar to those of their predecessors to achieve the aspirations of Zionism. A degree of pragmatism exists among the Israeli leadership today, much as it did when Ben-Gurion led the Yishuv. Israeli governments know that they cannot expel the remaining Palestinians in the same manner

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<sup>13</sup>“Breaking the Silence” is an organization of veteran Israeli soldiers who serve in the West Bank and Gaza, and demand accountability for the actions committed by Israel’s military, by closing the gap between the realities in the Occupied Territories and what is discussed, or ignored, in Israeli society.

as they did 1947-49. In an increasingly globalized world, events are documented almost instantly, but that does not prevent Israel from pursuing the same policies the Yishuv pursued. In a different world, different tactics are needed to fulfill the Zionist objective of a Jewish majority controlling all of historic Palestine. Just as Ben-Gurion knew that he could not destroy the Palestinian city of Nazareth in the summer of 1948, Sharon understood that the IDF could not level Bethlehem in the same way that it destroyed Jenin.

The issue today for Israeli leaders dedicated to Zionism is not the expansion of Jewish territory, since, after 1967, Israel acquired all the territory it had ever desired (the extremists in the Revisionist movement who championed a Jewish state stretching from Egypt to Iraq in the early twentieth century were phased out by slightly more pragmatic extremists). Rather, the question is how to preserve a Jewish majority over the land it currently controls. On 18 June 1947, Ben-Gurion told a meeting of top Zionist leaders that the Jews needed to take every step necessary to “defend Our National Future.” Ben-Gurion used the phrase to refer to the demographic balance in Palestine that was key to Zionist aspirations. Plan D contained the removal of Palestinian population centers in areas Jewish leaders planned to incorporate into a Jewish state. Demographics were an issue of the present and the future for Ben-Gurion.

In recent Israeli discourse, “Our National Future” is more adequately termed “Israel’s Demographic Problem.” After 9/11, it evolved to a “Demographic Threat”, and that is the battle for modern-day Zionists to fight. How can Israel preserve its numerical majority over a large population with a higher birth rate? Violence and intimidation are two methods used, and Israel, like the Yishuv, relies on the use of force against

Palestinians as part of Zionist policy. In 1948, Moshe Sharett, who succeeded Ben-Gurion as prime minister, observed that “Israel must invent dangers, and to do this it must adopt the method of provocation-and-revenge.”<sup>14</sup> Ariel Sharon fully agreed with Sharett’s conclusion, as evidenced by Operation Defensive Shield and the need to create a danger in order to implement it. In addition to the provocation-and-revenge policies, Israel began building Jewish settlements and a massive wall that serves to incorporate as much land as possible while excluding as many Palestinians as possible from any future permanent boundary agreement. It is also a testament to the colonial nature of Zionist nationalism – there must be little-to-no interaction between the colonists and the colonized. The Separation Wall accomplishes this and more.

Israel’s “security” wall and settlements are some of the biggest obstacles to peace. Settlements are a product of Zionist ideology, while the wall represents the reality that Israel cannot control all of Palestine without governing the Palestinians. Settlements represented the beginning of the Zionist enterprise in Palestine, and after 1967, spread to the West Bank, Gaza, and even briefly to the Sinai. Nearly half a million Jewish settlers live in the West Bank, and their removal would prove exceptionally difficult if any Israeli government were ever willing to take on the challenge. In 2005, Ariel Sharon removed the settlers and settlements from Gaza – a fraction of the number in the West Bank – to halt international momentum in support of the Geneva Initiative, not as a trust-building measure to move the peace process forward.<sup>15</sup> Throughout the entire peace process,

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<sup>14</sup>Smith, 231.

<sup>15</sup>The Geneva Initiative was produced by Israelis and Palestinians on an unofficial level. The initiative stated that the Palestinians would drop the right of return for the nearly seven million Palestinian refugees while Israel would relinquish control of Jerusalem, allowing it to serve as the capital of Palestine.

Israeli settlement construction has continued while Palestinians are denied building permits to allow their own communities to grow. In 2002, *Peace Now* reported that 34 new settlements had been built in the West Bank. The settlements are one of the many obstacles to peace that are supported by Israel, and are gradually making a two-state solution increasingly impossible. Andrew Bell-Fialkoff, the specialist on ethnic cleansing, agrees that a two-state solution is not feasible and that the conflict between the Israelis and the Palestinians can have no peaceful solution. Even more problematic than the settlements to a peaceful solution is Jerusalem, which is sacred to both groups, neither of whom is likely to give it up (and this extends to Judea and Samaria as well, admittedly to a lesser degree). Bell-Fialkoff's solution to the competing nationalisms of the Zionists and Palestinians is to force the Palestinians to emigrate from historic Palestine.

According to Bell-Fialkoff, a Palestinian state in the West Bank borders areas of Israel where large numbers of Arab Israelis reside and if they decided, being the majority in that region, to unite their homes with the new state, Israel "would further reduce its territory and turn it into a concentration camp;" Bell-Fialkoff concludes that "it would be only a matter of time before a new war broke out" and that ultimately, "the so-called peace process is a disaster in the making, both for the Israelis and the Palestinians."<sup>16</sup> Bell-Fialkoff's Zionist sympathies are clear in his assessment of the Palestinian-Israel conflict; ethnically cleanse the Palestinians from the ghettos of the West Bank and the concentration-camp conditions of Gaza rather than prevent the fulfillment of the Zionist enterprise in Palestine.

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<sup>16</sup>Bell-Fialkoff, *Ethnic Cleansing*, 263-264.

Since 1967, Israeli governments have not dictated a policy of settlement nor enforced Israeli laws. On the contrary, successive Israeli administrations have *retroactively approved illegal settlement activity*, incorporating the renewed vigor of Zionism into state politics – similar to Ben-Gurion’s policy of bringing Irgun activity under central command. Since 1948, the division between Labor and Revisionist Zionism has been blurred, and it is questionable if such a division even exists today. Zionism continues to guide policies that are tantamount to colonial state-building and the forceful removal of the indigenous “Other” from the territory controlled by the colonial settlers. Palestinians and the international community protest the settlement activity, but Israel ignores the criticism. Responding to both criticism of settlement construction as an obstacle to peace and Palestinian demands for a halt to the expansion of settlements as a pretext for continuing peace negotiations, Binyamin Netanyahu is quick to point out that no Israeli government has prevented settlement growth and that a settlement freeze should not be a precondition for talks. Netanyahu’s comments demonstrate how deeply rooted Zionism is as a colonial movement. Netanyahu’s mentor, Menachem Begin, was a disciple of Ze’ev Jabotinsky. The continuity of Revisionist Zionism is striking, as Netanyahu’s words are essentially a paraphrase of what Jabotinsky told an audience in Prague in 1921, “I don’t know of a single example in history where a country was colonized with the courteous consent of the population.”<sup>17</sup> As far as contemporary Zionists are concerned, Palestinian concerns and demands have no place in determining Zionist policy in Palestine.

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<sup>17</sup>Neil Caplan, *Palestinian Jewry and the Arab Question, 1917-1925* (London: Routledge, 1978), 113.

If Zionism secularized and nationalized Judaism during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, then what may be called neo-Zionism in the twenty-first century has elevated the religious content of nationalism in Israeli state institutions.<sup>18</sup> Israel and the conservative elements in society have turned the ethnic cleansing issue from Hebrews and Arabs to one of Jews and Muslims, though Muslims incorporate all Palestinians. Settler movements and political parties are gaining popularity in Israel, aided by the quiet statistic that the settler population maintains a higher birthrate than the Palestinians by nearly two percent, more than twice the birthrate of Israelis within the pre-1967 borders. Avigdor Lieberman's Yisrael Beiteinu Party, a secular party that claims to follow Jabotinsky's path, uses sacred symbols and religious phrases to rally its ultra-nationalist party members, and has more than once been accused of being a fascist movement by Israeli politicians and scholars. However, its ultra-nationalist, anti-Arab rhetoric clearly has found a warm reception among the Israeli public, for it won the third most votes in the 2009 Knesset elections. Further evidence of this new move to the far-right draped in ethno-religious nationalism was the introduction of religious propaganda during Operation Cast Lead.

The Israeli army's chief rabbinate provided soldiers with religious booklets as the troops prepared to enter Gaza. The booklets drew upon the teachings of Rabbi Shlomo Aviner, who heads a fundamentalist seminary in Jerusalem. The booklet urged Israeli soldiers to deal their "mortal enemies" a lethal blow, for the Palestinians are similar to the

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<sup>18</sup>Nationalisms are often based on religion to an extent, they are not entirely secular. Nationalisms are always open to exploiting religion or bringing it into the fold. In the case of Zionism, it made a national movement based entirely on a religious identity as secular as such national-religious movement could be, but the emphasis of Zionism has changed, as its political leaders have elevated the religious character of the movement over the secular framework.

Philistines in that both peoples threatened the existence of Israel. One booklet encouraged the soldiers to ignore international laws that protect civilians, quoting Maimonides, “one must not be enticed by the folly of the Gentiles who have mercy for the cruel.” The religious dimension introduced in a fight against a religious group, Hamas, disturbed some soldiers. Brig. Gen. Meir Elran, an analyst at Tel Aviv University, noted that religious propaganda would not sit well with secular soldiers, “given that one of Israel’s chief struggles is against organizations such as Hamas, that entwine religion and violence, the presence of similar material among Israeli soldiers is disturbing.”<sup>19</sup> The daily *Maariv* ran an interview with a squad commander from the Givati Brigade who said that the propaganda from the military rabbinate had a very clear message: “We are the Jewish people, a miracle brought us to the land of Israel, God returned us to the land, and now we have to struggle so as to get rid of the gentiles who disturb us from conquering the holy land.” Israel exempts the ultra-Orthodox from mandatory military service on religious grounds, but over the last decade, the number of religious Jews joining the military has steadily increased. With a greater right-wing and religious base in the military and political system, conservative Israelis may come closer to reaching the ultimate goal of Zionism. After the outbreak of the second intifada, Benny Morris criticized David Ben-Gurion for failing to complete the ethnic cleansing because “[Israel] would be quieter and know less suffering if the matter had been resolved once and for all. If Ben-Gurion had carried out a large expulsion and cleansed the whole country . . . . It may yet turn out that this was his fatal mistake.”<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>19</sup>*Washington Post* 21 March 2009.

<sup>20</sup>Joel Beinin, “No More Tears: Benny Morris and the Road Back from Liberal Zionism” in the *Middle East Report*, spring 2004.

Despite the bleak outlook for the Palestinians and the prospect of peace, there are a few glimpses of hope. Israel's treatment of the Palestinians is no longer widely considered acceptable, neither within Israel nor outside it. Israelis such as scholar Ilan Pappé and journalist Amira Haas, seek to publish the facts of the conflict and the oppressive nature of Israel vis-à-vis the Palestinians, despite the former's self-promoting values of freedom and democracy. In November 2000, the Israeli Foreign Minister, Shlomo Ben-Ami, commented on the hypocrisy of Israel's dealings with the Palestinians, "Accusations made by a well-established society about how a people which it is oppressing is breaking rules to attain its rights do not have much credence." European nations are increasingly critical of Israeli policies in the West Bank and Gaza, and Israeli immunity within the international community appears to be weakening. The United Nations commissioned an investigation into Operation Cast Lead headed by the highly-respected Judge Richard Goldstone, who had presided over the investigations of crimes against humanity in Yugoslavia and Rwanda. Goldstone, a Jew from South Africa and a member of the board of directors of the Hebrew University, found numerous cases of crimes against humanity and war crimes committed by both the Israeli Defense Force and Hamas. He recommended that each party launch independent investigations within six months, otherwise the issue should be turned over to the International Criminal Court. The Goldstone Report is the furthest the world has gone in holding Israel accountable for its violent actions against the Palestinians.

Judge Goldstone was criticized for the report and labeled a self-hating Jew by Zionist Israelis. The United States House of Representatives passed House Resolution 867 on 3 November 2009, calling on President Obama and Secretary of State Hilary

Clinton to “oppose unequivocally any endorsement or further consideration” of the Goldstone report. Support for Israel continues to run deep in the U.S., as Christian Zionism maintains a significant voice in political affairs, second only to the Israel lobby. Until the U.S. is willing to impose consequences for Israeli violations of international law, Palestinians will continue to suffer under Israeli policies based on Zionist ideals. Ran HaCohen was of course correct in saying that one could not compare the mass execution of six million Jews to Jewish actions towards Palestinians. However, there are parallels that exist between the treatment of Jews in Nazi Germany and how Jews act against Palestinians in fulfilling the Zionist goal. Joel Beinin, a Middle East history professor at Stanford University, responded to Benny Morris’ criticism for the failure to eradicate all Palestinians from Palestine: “Palestine-Israel might also be quieter today if Hitler had completed his planned genocide of world Jewry. It does not occur to Morris that there might be a parallel between these two historical counterfactuals.”<sup>21</sup> Indeed, both the Holocaust and the Nakba share the status of being extraordinary tragedies in human history. Does the fact that the Palestinian people did not suffer the same systematic loss of life as the Jews during the Holocaust make the Nakba any less tragic? No, it does not. For as the realization of Nazi ideology was unsurpassed in the history of genocides, so too was the Nakba in terms of ethnic cleansing. As writer Salman Abu Sitta put it, the unique character of the tragedy of the Palestinians is also unsurpassed in history. “For a country to be occupied by a foreign minority, emptied almost entirely of its people, its physical and cultural landmarks obliterated, its destruction hailed as a miraculous act of God and a victory for freedom and civilised values, all done according

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<sup>21</sup>Beinin, 40.

to a premeditated plan, meticulously executed, financially and politically supported from abroad, and still maintained today, is no doubt unique.”<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>22</sup>Nur Masalha, ed., *Catastrophe Remembered: Palestine, Israel and the Internal Refugees* (London: Zed Books, 2005), 3.

## CHAPTER VIII

### CONCLUSION

Israel's Chief of Staff, Moshe Ya'alon, gave an interview with *Ha'aretz* on 30 August 2002 that captured the colonial-Revisionist ideology driving the Zionist enterprise nearly sixty years after the ethnic cleansing of Palestine:

Ya'alon: The characteristics of the threat [from the Palestinians] are invisible, like cancer. When you are attacked externally, you can see the attack, you are wounded. Cancer, on the other hand, is something internal. Therefore, I find it more disturbing because here the diagnosis is critical . . . I maintain that this is a cancer . . . My professional diagnosis is that this is a phenomenon that constitutes an existential threat.

Reporter: Does this mean that what you are doing now as Chief of Staff in the West Bank and Gaza is applying chemotherapy?

Ya'alon: There are all kinds of solutions to cancerous manifestations. Some will say it is necessary to amputate organs. But at the moment, I am applying chemotherapy. Yes.<sup>1</sup>

If Operation Defensive Shield and Operation Cast Lead were mere “chemo treatments,” it is hard to imagine Ya'alon's “amputation” solution as anything less than ethnic cleansing. The advancements in media technology have made events across the globe instantly accessible to the public and, consequently, have decreased the likelihood of governments being able to deal with minority populations through ethnic cleansing. As nationalisms lose their dominant “sacred” status in the face of increasingly important

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<sup>1</sup>Kimmerling, 165.

transnational identities – regional and strategic alliances, economic unions, and commercial organizations – the political world order based on the nation-state is evolving into something that fits the globalized nature of the contemporary age. In many ways, this has translated into greater multiculturalism, which is in opposition to ethnic cleansing and other programs of homogenization. However, multiculturalism is challenging, and the problems it creates have unleashed nationalist – often racist – sentiments in many democratic societies. Unlike France or the Netherlands, Israel is not dealing with the consequences of multiculturalism but with problems rooted in maintaining a colonialist, ethno-religious nationalism, which does not permit any social or political space for the non-Jewish “Other.”

After the failure of the second intifada and the backlash it had on the Palestinians’ national movement, the Palestinian Authority took a new approach to achieve their aims. Just like the early Zionists under Ben-Gurion’s leadership, the Palestinian Authority realized that institutionalized state building was the only viable option for securing a sovereign state of their own, and began to build the institutions that served as the foundation of the modern nation-state. Israel’s political leaders have fully grasped the severity of the Palestinian move and have done everything possible to destroy the Palestinians’ attempts to build the foundations of their future state. Operations Defensive Shield and Cast Lead decimated the infrastructure of key areas of the West Bank and Gaza, yet the continued restrictions on travel and the ever-settlements that are built on confiscated Palestinian lands are meant to undermine the institutions required for a Palestinian state. Israel’s “counter-attack” on the state-building project of the Palestinians is indicative of Revisionism. Revisionist Zionism continues the efforts to cleanse

Palestine of the Palestinians and ensure that no Palestinian state is ever established west of the Jordan River. A quick look at the historical evolution of the nationalist content of Zionism reveals a movement that has remained consistent with its founding principles dating back to an era when settling foreign land and removing native populations were not just considered the fulfillment of nationalist aspirations, but a divine right – a sacred obligation.

### The Evolution of Zionism

The content of Zionism has changed as the nationalist movement adapted to internal and external conditions over the decades since it first began. Zionism today is not what it was when Nathan Birnbaum first coined the phrase in 1885, though its basic principles remain the same. Zionism can roughly be divided into five stages: 1882-1903, 1904 -1919, 1920-1948, 1948-1966, and 1967-present. The first stage in the development of Zionism was the emergence of a national movement that was a reaction to the social and political conditions in Europe. It was first and foremost a reaction to Europe's anti-Semitism in the context of Enlightenment ideals. Zionism was a secular answer to the Jewish Question, predicated on freedom, equality, and social justice. It existed in the space created by the shared ideas and aspirations of Europe's Jews, who were influenced by the international system of nation-states and the realization that as an "other," the Jewish identity needed a state of its own. The nation-state serves as protection for weaker minority populations in contemporary modernity. The Jews of Europe began to understand this concept at the end of the nineteenth century and thus launched the Zionist initiative. Subsequently, Palestinians came to this realization as a weak *majority*, but

were reduced to a minority in Palestine after 1948 and have since struggled to join the international community as a full-fledged nation-state in order to preserve their own security.

Zionism started as an abstract idea but quickly rooted itself in the geographical reality of Palestine, managing to coexist with the native population. Until 1904, Zionism in Palestine sought exclusive control over land but not labor; as a plantation-settler colonial movement, it provided space for the existence of the Palestinian identity in Palestine. 1904 marked the arrival of the first immigrants of the second aliyah and transitioned the movement into its second stage. This period of Zionism imported the new colonial reality of Zionism to Palestine. The revolutionary socialists from Russia combined religion and land in their settler identity. They began to physically construct Zionism as an exclusively Jewish state-building project in the Ottoman province, and consequently, Zionism developed its political and practical vehicles. Secularism remained the underlying content of Zionism, fortified by the rise of socialist ideology in Jewish labor, but both labor and land took on a sacred context. Physical labor connected the people to the land and built the foundations needed for a future state. The encroachment of the physical building of the Zionist state, and its “iron wall” that excluded the Arab inhabitants, initiated resistance from the native population. The immigrants of the second aliyah, including David Ben-Gurion, took control of the practical building of the state and enforced the separation between settler and native while developing a plan of transfer. By preventing any interaction between the Jewish settlers and the Palestinian natives, the leaders of the Yishuv ensured that if the time came when the Palestinians had to be forcibly expelled from their homes, the Jewish

settlers would do so because they would see the faceless enemy rather than the human, personal side of the Palestinian Other. In contrast to the tensions created “on the ground,” the second stage of Jewish settler-nationalism existed in harmony with the political efforts abroad, and the relation between the political and practical aspects mandated the pragmatic nature of Zionism. This pragmatism allowed Zionist leaders to capitalize on the conditions and opportunities that existed within the parameters set by forces outside their control, opportunities that came at the expense of the native Palestinians.

The first stage of Zionism was nonviolent in nature, whereas the “conquest of land and labor” mantra of the second phase attracted more militant Zionists. However, its use of violence was confined to the protection of the Zionist community through Hashomer and other guard units. By 1920, this dichotomy shifted as the tensions created by the Zionist monopoly on land and labor peaked, resulting in the first anti-Zionist riots. At this point, Zionism entered its third stage, where Zionists had achieved their efforts to locate the “self” as it relates to the “other” of the Arab. Among the leading Zionists in Palestine, it was understood that conflict with the Arabs of Palestine was inevitable, and the Yishuv should begin to prepare for the battle and, more importantly, the opportunity the battle would provide to remove the Palestinians from Palestine. It was during this period that Zionism split into two competing divisions. Ze’ev Jabotinsky called for beginning the armed struggle immediately, which would take place in a revised Zionist state that included Transjordan as well. His Revisionism was rejected by the majority of Zionists who were committed to Labor Zionism, which understood the need for a pragmatic approach to Zionism under the patronage of a European power (the intersection of political and practical Zionism). On a macro-level, the schism was

insignificant because both Labor and Revisionism pursued a Jewish state in Palestine that excluded the Arab natives, who could only be removed through violent population cleansing.

Thus, in the third period of Zionism's development, it evolved from a pacifist reaction to European anti-Semitism into an activist reaction to the new "other" that impeded the fulfillment of Zionist aspirations. The Zionist labor union, Histadrut, merged labor and politics within the Jewish community, and its military wing, the Hagana, introduced violence into the national character. Revisionism also produced its militant wing in the two paramilitary terrorist organizations, the Likud and LEHI. This development was critical in the evolution of the Jewish identity, for the Jewish perception of "self" was no longer weak and defenseless. By the 1940s, Jewish identity in Palestine was that of a strong, determined, militant settler. Zionism infused activism into the Jewish identity, which had long defined itself as pacifist (and continued to do so outside the Zionist discourse). Armed with this new layer of identity, Zionism challenged the British and Arab obstacles in Palestine. The rise of Nazi Germany, culminating in the Holocaust and World War II, enabled Zionism to incorporate the identity of "victim" into its national content, which Zionist leaders have exploited and manipulated in the international sphere for political gain ever since. Zionism capitalized on the sympathies of Western Europe and the U.S. within the victim context, while simultaneously donning the cloak of "aggressor" against the Palestinians. Starting in 1947, Zionists began the forcible removal of Palestinians from the areas that fell within the proposed Jewish state. The removal of the "other" by means of ethnic cleansing became the focal point of Zionist policy in the months between December 1947 and January 1949.

1948 marks the start of the fourth period in the development of the Zionist identity, as the colonial-national movement achieved statehood in May of that year. For the next eighteen years, Zionism seemed to move closer to what had existed during the second stage, as violence against the “Other” was replaced by institutionalized marginalization. Military conquest provided new land (former Palestinian villages and farmlands) and Labor Zionism focused on importing Jews to buttress the Jewish majority against the Arab minority that remained. For this brief period, 1948-1966, Israel had more of the appearance of an apartheid state than the colonial-settler identity that had built the foundations of the state. As discussed above, 1967 returned Zionism back to its original nationalism of the settler-state. Zionism succeeded in creating a Jewish nation-state in Palestine during the fourth stage, which is when it consolidated its official narrative or nationalism.<sup>2</sup> Israel’s nationalism permitted the existence of both Labor and Revisionist interpretations, which gradually became less distinct; with the opening of the West Bank and Gaza in June 1967, the original settler spirit of Zionism consumed the two divisions and produced a Zionism that is similar to what existed during the third period describe above, but with a heavier influence from Revisionist ideology.

#### Zionism: The Colonial Ethno-Religious Nationalism of Israel

In the mid-seventeenth century, England’s colonial project in Ulster took advantage of the destruction of the Irish population caused by war and plague and violently expelled the remaining Irish Catholics so that by 1688, 80 percent of land in Ulster formerly belonging to Irish Catholics was under the control of English and

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<sup>2</sup>As in all cases of nation-states, a strong nationalism is vital to sustaining the state and ensuring its survival as envisioned by the nationalist founders.

Scottish Protestants.<sup>3</sup> The Protestant colonization of Irish-Catholic Ulster had begun in 1609 with Protestants confiscating land and establishing settlements, but it was not until the Irish Catholics began to resist Protestant settlement activity that the English initiated the brute force of colonial cleansing. 1641 marked the beginning of the rebellion that England used as the pretext to suppress the Irish Catholic population by force. The violence was followed by plagues, and the two forces “destroyed about half the total population of Ireland.”<sup>4</sup> The majority of Irish Catholics in Ulster who survived were then systematically expelled by the Protestant settlers who took possession of the land.

There are numerous examples of colonial nationalisms that have featured ethnic cleansing as one of the tools used in constructing the nation-state. The above case of seventeenth-century Ireland shares identical developments with the story of Zionism in Palestine three centuries later. In both the Irish and Palestinian experiences, settlers arrived on the foreign soil and identified themselves in opposition to the native populations based on their superior “civilized” culture and their righteous faith. Both groups of settlers acquired land, settled it, and, when the moment presented itself, used violence to remove the vast majority of the native population. It has taken Ireland over four hundred years to move past the violence and tensions created by the competing claims over territory between the native Irish Catholics and the colonial Protestants. Unless the root of the Palestinian-Israel conflict, Zionism, is understood as an ethno-religious colonial movement and the leaders of Israel shift the direction of their country’s nationalism away from its colonial past, the conflict in Palestine is likely to travel along a similar trajectory to that of Ireland’s. There is no debate that Zionism, in its Labor or

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<sup>3</sup>Bell-Fialkoff, “A Brief History of Ethnic Cleansing,” 113.

<sup>4</sup>Bell-Fialkoff, *Ethnic Cleansing*, 17.

Revisionist interpretation, was/is a colonial movement that inevitably requires the expulsion of most – if not all – of the Palestinians from Palestine. Jabotinsky openly stated exactly this in his writings from the 1920s:

Zionist colonization, even the most restricted, must either be terminated or carried out in defiance of the will of the native population. This colonization can, therefore, continue and develop only under the protection of a force independent of the local population – an iron wall which the native population cannot break through. This is, *in toto*, our policy towards the Arabs. To formulate it any other way would be a hypocrisy.<sup>5</sup>

Jabotinsky's 'iron wall' concept was shared by Zionists within the Labor and Revisionist movements. The heart of Revisionism's answer to the "Arab Question" is as central to Israeli politics today as it was in the pre-state years. Michael Mann supports Jabotinsky's assessment that Zionism is colonial-nationalism at odds with Palestinian aspirations of self-determination:

Israel is the main contemporary example of settler-conquerors. For half a century, Israelis have been cleansing the occupied territories of native Arabs, most murderously in the late 1940s, renewed again in the Jewish land-grabbing of the past few years. Israelis have mainly cleansed within their own occupied territories, devising the typical settler state: democracy for the settlers, lesser rights for the natives – what Yiftachel accurately terms an *ethnocracy*, a *demos* only for the *ethnos*.<sup>6</sup>

Since 1948, Israel has adopted measures aimed at excluding Arab Israelis from the Jewish space of Zionism. Israeli-Arabs are excluded from participating fully in the society in which they are citizens through a variety of Zionist policies including: Israeli businesses pledging not to employ Arabs; Jewish municipal and religious leaders signing petitions calling for Jews to refrain from renting or selling apartments to non-Jews; the destruction of professional Arab Israelis' offices; and Rabbis calling for the expulsion of

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<sup>5</sup>Masalha, *Imperial Israel and the Palestinians*, 56.

<sup>6</sup>Mann, 519.

Arab-Israelis from Israeli universities and schools.<sup>7</sup> After 1967, Zionism has also excluded the Arabs of the Occupied Territories from participating in civic life by imposing oppressive measures on the Palestinians tantamount to stationary transfer as well as forcefully expelling non-Jews from their lands and properties in the West Bank and Gaza.

Such policies are supported by Zionists from the Labor and Revisionist camps and attest to the narrowing gap between Zionism's two rival divisions. Further proof of the reconciliation of ideologies is evident in the developments of both. As discussed earlier, Labor Zionists joined the Revisionist-inspired Whole Land of Israel Movement in the wake of 1967 and have tacitly (if not openly) supported Jewish settlements in the Occupied Territories. On the other hand, Revisionism has moderated its territorial claims, beginning with Begin when he affixed his signature to the peace treaty with Egypt (exchanging the Sinai for an end to hostilities with Israel's most populous neighbor). The Likud Party's acceptance of the Rabin government's peace treaty with Jordan in October 1994 officially ended the Revisionist vision of a Greater Israel inclusive of the "East Bank." Revisionism today has been limited to mandatory Palestine, roughly half the territory Jabotinsky demanded for the Zionist state and a fraction of the Nile-to-Euphrates territorial claim made by Revisionism's extremists. The fundamental thrust of Israel's nationalism is shared by both sides of Zionism, "the desire for more land and less Arabs" west of the Jordan River and, with the exception of the Rabin government in the 1990s, this nationalism has unified the Zionist movement in post-1967 Israel.<sup>8</sup> In his work on the themes of migration and ethnic cleansing, Bell-Fialkoff has come to the conclusion that,

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<sup>7</sup>Blecher, 743.

<sup>8</sup>Masalha, *Imperial Israel and the Palestinians*, 217.

“discrimination and prejudice provide the thread that ties together the long history of religious and ethnic cleansing.”<sup>9</sup> Indeed the shared desire to cleanse Palestine of its non-Jewish peoples, through acts of discrimination and prejudice, have united Labor and Revisionism’s Zionists. One of the finest contributions to Bell-Fialkoff’s “tie that binds” theory in the context of Zionism is Nur Masalha’s *Expulsion of the Palestinians: The Concept of “Transfer” in Zionist Political Thought, 1882-1948*. In *Expulsion of the Palestinians*, Masalha traces the development of “transfer” from its beginnings, which emerged with European Zionism itself. Transfer, regardless of what form it took, was the shared platform and central to Zionism. A Jewish state in part or all of Palestine required the expulsion of the Palestinian inhabitants to secure a Jewish majority, and it would be incorrect to identify anything else as the underlying principle of Zionism after it became politically associated with Palestine in the late-nineteenth century. In 2001, As‘ad Ghanem wrote a concise overview of Masalha’s continued work on transfer:

Masalha’s research in *A Land Without a People* draws upon a rich trove of primary sources to present the inner-workings of the decision-making process of Israeli governments based on Zionist perceptions of control of the land and demographics. Masalha concludes that “the leaders of Israel, of whatever political and ideological stream, conceived the idea of “transferring” Palestinians out of Palestine/Israel and implemented this concept whenever circumstances permitted; and that throughout the history of the country, Israel and its decision makers have been guided by Jewish and Zionist considerations based on utilitarian criteria, while ignoring fundamental moral and ethical principles when it comes to policy related to the conflict; and that the world in general, and the Arab world in particular, has been helpless in the face of official Israeli policy since 1948 and the expulsion of most of the Palestinians from their homeland, a policy which continues today, both in the expelling of Palestinians from the West Bank, Gaza Strip, and East Jerusalem while denying them the right of return to their homeland and in Israel’s harsh policy toward its own Palestinian citizens.”<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>9</sup>Bell-Fialkoff, “A Brief History of Ethnic Cleansing,” 120.

<sup>10</sup>Ghanem, 99.

The concept of transfer dominated Zionist state-planning before 1948, and as Masalha points out, continues to be central to contemporary Zionist policy.

The major difference in Zionist discussions of transfer before 1948 and today is that the discussion is no longer restricted to the confidential pages and halls of Zionist leaders. Whereas Israel Zangwill was told to stop championing transfer in public in Britain at the turn of the twentieth century, Israeli officials in the twenty-first century openly discuss, debate, and promote the transfer of the Arabs from historic Palestine in every medium possible. In December 2000, the Herzliya Interdisciplinary Center sponsored a massive conference to produce a strategic plan for ensuring the Jewish majority of Israel, with transfer as its central theme. The first of two proposals included the unilateral demarcation of Israel's borders, which would include "empty" land while excluding Palestinian population centers. The idea of stationary transfer, i.e., the expulsion of Israeli-Arabs near the Green Line from the state of Israel without actually removing them from their homes, has wide support in Israel. In 2002, Labor Party's Ephraim Sneh, then Minister of Transportation in Sharon's Likud government, put forth a similar plan which called for the stationary transfer of Israel's "Little Triangle," an area in north-eastern Israel densely populated by Israeli-Arabs. The public reaction to Sneh's proposal demonstrated the popularity of transfer within Israeli society. Eighty-four percent of Israeli-Arabs polled rejected the plan outright, whereas nearly 60 percent of Israeli-Jews supported it. Sneh's fellow member of the Labor Party, Ehud Barak, cautiously backed the plan, admitting that it "makes demographic sense and is not inconceivable."<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>11</sup>Blecher, 740-741.

In 1998, Jennifer Jackson Preece wrote of problems ethnic cleansing posed to international law and human rights law and predicted that the causes of ethnic conflict would not subside as society marched on into the twenty-first century:

the continued significance of ethnic cleansing as a problem for international relations clearly was foreseen by Lord Curzon seventy years earlier – and, sadly, the subsequent events of the twentieth century confirmed his worst fears. For so long as state sovereignty continues to be justified on the basis of national self-determination and homogeneous nation-states remain the ideal form of political organization, the temptation to ethnically cleanse anomalous minority groups from the body politic will persist: that was the case in 1993 just as it was in 1923 and it remains so today.<sup>12</sup>

Bell-Fialkoff offered a solution to Preece's outlook on the future of ethnic cleansing. "We should not confuse cleansing and expulsion with population exchange and transfer," Bell-Fialkoff wrote, because "transfer" is a sound alternative to the more violent methods of population cleansing, even though "the suggestion of population transfer as a viable solution to some ethnic conflicts will probably come as a shock to many."<sup>13</sup> Furthermore, Bell-Fialkoff singles out the Palestinians as the ideal candidates for transfer for the sake of political and social stability. If attitudes and outlooks such as Bell-Fialkoff's become more influential, the more extreme proponents of Zionism, who have held key positions in Israel's recent governments, might interpret this as the green light to step up their efforts to cleanse even more Palestinians from their midst. There is no question that the desire to do so is there. During one of Israel's early election campaigns, Menachem Begin's Herut Party ran a televised advertisement that showed images of Israel's Declaration of Independence and the Law of Return with the word "racism"

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<sup>12</sup>Preece, 840.

<sup>13</sup>Bell-Fialkoff, *Ethnic Cleansing*, 217.

superimposed in red font. The voice-over then announced, “If this is racism, then we are racists too!”<sup>14</sup>

Little has changed since then, and contemporary Israeli society struggles with the inherent racism that is the byproduct of Zionist nationalism; certain public areas in Israel have separate queues for Jews and Arabs, and the Jerusalem municipality provides greater services to its Jewish neighborhoods than it does to the Arab ones. One of the most debilitating discrepancies facing the Palestinians is in the education sector. Israel’s Ministry of Education and the Municipality of Jerusalem are mandated to provide public education to all of Israel’s residents, including the Palestinians in Israeli-annexed East Jerusalem. Yet both offices continue to ignore the growing number of children in East Jerusalem who are denied educational opportunities because there simply are not enough classrooms to service these neighborhoods. In 2001, the Knesset passed legislation making racial discrimination illegal, but the law carries little weight. Racial profiling continued to be commonplace after 2001, and it is unlikely that the Supreme Court’s ruling on a petition filed against the Israel Airports Authority, the Shin Bet security service, and the Transportation Ministry, which stated that “one cannot profile an entire community and the that humiliation of Arab citizens during such security checks is undoubtedly wrong,” will produce any meaningful results.<sup>15</sup>

The Israel of 2011 is far from the pragmatic Labor Zionist state it was in the Rabin years during the early 1990s and under the Sharett and Eshkol governments of the 1950s and 1960s. The space opened to the religious right after the conquests of 1967 has grown, and Jewish extremism is on the rise in Israel. “The spiritual leaders of Gush

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<sup>14</sup>Blecher, 744.

<sup>15</sup>*Ha'aretz* (Jerusalem), 8 March 2011.

Emunim – such as the late Rabbi Tzvi Yehuda Kook – are by no means a group on the lunatic fringe,” notes Masalha, “most of them are influential figures within the mainstream religious population and beyond.”<sup>16</sup> One of the most extreme groups is the Kach Party, founded by Rabbi Meir Kahane in the 1970s. Kach, Hebrew for “Thus,” openly incited racism and violence, and eventually its members were not allowed to stand in Knesset elections. However, the group continued to carry out its political agenda, even after the death of Kahane in 1990. The Rabin government officially banned the party in 1994 after a Brooklyn-born follower of Kahane, Baruch Goldstein, massacred twenty-nine Palestinians in Hebron’s Cave of the Patriarchs. These extremist groups incite violence against Palestinians *and* against moderate Israeli Jews. They are the driving force behind such policies as the “price tag” attacks, a settler-initiated policy that violently targets Palestinian civilians and property. Their ultra-nationalism and subsequent indifference to Palestinian life share a number of similarities to the fascist movements of Europe in the 1930s and 1940s. In response to calling for the immediate and forceful deportation of all Palestinians living within Israel’s borders, Rabbi Meir Kahane was asked whether he would do so with “midnight deportations in cattle cars,” to which Kahane answered, “Yes.”<sup>17</sup>

During the spring of 2011, Western secular democracies watched the events unfold in the Arab world with hope and anxiety. A number of circles in Europe and the U.S. are increasingly Islamophobic and are unable to distinguish between religious extremism and the growing support in the Muslim world for Islamic-based governments.

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<sup>16</sup>Masalha, *Imperial Israel and the Palestinians*, 127.

<sup>17</sup>*Ibid.*, 148.

Conservative Americans and Europeans consider political Islam a threat to the secular democracies of the “free world,” which Michael Mann explains:

contemporary religious violence results primarily from the rise of claims to *theo-democracy* – claims to political rule by “we, the religious people.” Muslim fundamentalism centers on the notion of self-government by a religious community adhering to the prescriptions of the Qur’an and applying the shari’a, Islamic law.<sup>18</sup>

Ironically, these Islamophobic groups in the U.S. and Europe are unconcerned with the rise of political Judaism in Israel. During Israel’s Lebanon War in 1982, the Israel Defense Force brought forty American rabbis to a hilltop outside of Lebanon’s capital. While they watched the Israeli bombardment of Beirut, they agreed with their Israeli coreligionists that Operation Peace for Galilee did not violate Jewish law as it was a just war and a *milhemet mitzva*, a “commandment war or an obligatory war.”<sup>19</sup> In 2006, a poll conducted by the Center for Youth Leadership found that a quarter of Israeli youth believe that Rabbi Ovadia Yosef, the Shas Party’s spiritual leader, was the most influential person in Israel.<sup>20</sup> The 25 percent mark was enough to put the Rabbi Yosef in first place, the same rabbi who has frequently called for the annihilation of the Arabs and, as recently as 2010, publicly stated that God should strike the Palestinians from the earth. Rabbi Yosef followed it up with an even more inflammatory remark, claiming that the *goyim* – a derogatory term for non-Jews – exist for the sole purpose of serving the Jewish people. Shas, the right-wing ultraorthodox party, has been a key member in the coalition governments of the Likud and has significant influence on policy-making in Israel. The remarks of Rabbi Yosef are not the rants of a radical on the fringe of society, but the

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<sup>18</sup>Mann, 513.

<sup>19</sup>Masalha, *Imperial Israel and the Palestinians*, 108.

<sup>20</sup>*Ha’aretz* (Jerusalem), 7 November 2006.

ideological statements of the spiritual leader of one of the largest mainstream political parties.

Yet the U.S. ignores the developments of religious extremism in Israel, unable to comprehend that such developments may be symptomatic of a region, not a religion (Islam). America's tolerance of Zionist extremism can be partially explained by the fact that Zionist ideology in the U.S. predates Zionism in Palestine by roughly a century. The first U.S. presidents supported the idea of a Jewish state in Palestine due to their prophetic or progressive Zionist interpretation of Christianity. Early Christian Zionists believed that a Zionist state would cure the Jews of their imperfections or, as John Adams said, "Once restored to an independent government and no longer persecuted they would soon wear away some of the asperities and peculiarities of their character," and finally accept Christianity.<sup>21</sup> Furthermore, Israel's decisive victory in June 1967 won the support of conservative American Christians, primarily within the Republican Party, who were attracted to the messianic "totality" of Israel's conquests. The rise of the Evangelical right in American politics since 1967 has only increased the unconditional support the U.S. gives to Israel.

The Revisionists have taken advantage of this *carte blanche* and the deep political divisions within American politics. The most recent expression of this relationship came in the fall of 2010, when U.S. President Barack Obama bribed the Netanyahu government to freeze settlement construction temporarily in exchange for \$3 billion in aid, the promise to prevent a unilateral Palestinian declaration of independence, *and* to veto any UN resolution critical of Israel. The only thing more astounding than Obama's

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<sup>21</sup>Mead, 31.

“appeasement” package was that Netanyahu turned it down. This incident highlights the influence of Revisionist Zionist ideology in Israel and in the U.S. The political heir of Jabotinsky’s movement, the Likud Party, preferred to continue colonizing the West Bank and East Jerusalem rather than *suspend* settlement activity for *ninety days*, receive a \$3 billion aid package, and obtain absolute unconditional and uncritical support in the international community’s governing body. The future of the Zionist enterprise in Palestine is not clear, but continuing violent ethno-religious conflict appears inevitable. What is needed to avoid the grim outlook is the return of a pragmatic Labor Zionist who understands the Jewish peoples’ religious and cultural ties to Palestine but also understands that Jews do not exclusively possess these ties. Standing on the White House lawn for the signing of Oslo II, Yitzhak Rabin presented his revised Zionist outlook, undoubtedly (if subconsciously) shaped by the pragmatism and determination exhibited by the Palestinians during the intifada:

we are not alone here on this soil, in this land. And so we are sharing this good earth today with the Palestinian people – in order to choose life. Starting today, an agreement on paper will be translated into reality on the ground. We are not retreating. We are not leaving. We are yielding – and we are doing so for the sake of peace.<sup>22</sup>

Rabin could only make Zionism yield for so long, and until a Labor Zionist emerges from Israel who is willing to chart a new course for the Jewish people in Palestine, Revisionism will carry the day. If Ze’ev Jabotinsky were alive today, there is no question he would beam with pride at the work of his disciples, for Zionism has established and maintained a colonial-settler state over all of historic Palestine, has shut out the native inhabitants with an “iron wall” made of concrete and soldiers, and decides

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<sup>22</sup>Ben-Moshe, 20.

for itself if it will accept or reject a superpower's attempts at appeasement of the Zionist state. In 1925, Ze'ev Jabotinsky revised Zionism to be a militant, openly colonial national movement, and in 2011, that is exactly what Zionism has become.

## GLOSSARY

- Aliyah** Hebrew for “to ascend.” Term used for waves of Jewish immigration to the Land of Israel.
- Ashkenazim** European Jews or Jews who emigrated from Europe.
- Eretz Israel** Hebrew for “Land of Israel.” Reference to the biblical territory of the Jewish people; also known as Zion.
- Fatah** Arabic for “opening.” Began as a resistance movement but has since evolved into the largest secular Palestinian political party.
- Gahal** Hebrew (acronym) for “Herut-Liberal bloc.” Formed in 1965 when Menachem Begin’s Herut Party merged with the Liberal Party.
- Gush Emunim** Hebrew for “Bloc of the faithful.” Founded in 1974, became the leading force of settlement activity in the West Bank after 1967.
- Hagana** Hebrew for “defense.” Established in 1920 to defend the Jewish community, and became the Israel Defense Force (IDF) after May 1948.
- Hashomer** Hebrew for “guard.” The earliest armed group in Palestine charged with protecting the Jewish settlements.
- Herut** Hebrew for “freedom.” Founded by Menachem Begin in 1948 as the right-wing Revisionist opposition party to the mainstream Labor Zionist party, Mapai. Herut championed Zionist expansion in the West Bank and Jordan.
- Histradrut** Hebrew for “federation.” Established in 1920 as the trade union of Labor Zionism, and largely directed the affairs of the Zionist community in Palestine.
- Intifada** Arabic for “shaking off.” Term used for the major Palestinian uprisings against Israeli occupation, 1987-1993 and 2000-2002.
- Irgun** The paramilitary group of the Revisionist Zionists in Palestine until 1948, when its members joined the Israel Defense Force.

**Kach** Extreme right-wing political party, declared illegal by the Israeli Knesset but still a strong influence in the settlements.

**Kadima** Hebrew for “forward.” Established in 2005 as a centrist party by Ariel Sharon.

**Knesset** Hebrew for “assembly.” Term for the Israeli parliament.

**Labor Party** Established in 1968 as a center-left party, Labor Zionist party heir to Mapai.

**LEHI** Offshoot of the Irgun that conducted terrorist campaigns against Arab civilians and British troops, including assassinations.

**Likud** Hebrew for “consolidation.” Right-wing party formed by the merging of Israel’s Revisionist parties, and is committed to Jewish expansion in the West Bank.

**Mapai** Hebrew (acronym) for “Land of Worker’s Party.” Founded in 1930, it was the dominant Labor Zionist political party in Palestine until 1968.

**Nakba** Arabic for “catastrophe.” Term used by Palestinians for the 1948 war and the expulsion of the Palestinians from their homes.

**Sephardim** Term for Spanish Jews who immigrated to the Ottoman Empire after 1492.

**Yishuv** Hebrew for “settlement.” Name of the Jewish community in Palestine until the establishment of the state of Israel in May 1948.

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