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Abstract

This paper seeks to analyse the traditional Israel viewpoint of its establishment against that expressed by “new historians.” Since the declassification of Israeli and British military documents new evidence has brought to light an alternative Israeli history. Told by new historians, this history offers a compelling alternative to that told by Zionists showing Israel as an aggressive colonial movement intent on establishing a Jewish national home in Palestine whilst transferring its Arab inhabitants across the borders. This paper will aim to show the development of Zionism as an ideology to its establishment in the State of Israel whilst assessing new historian claims.
Introduction

Zionism is the ideology centered on the establishment of a Jewish national home in Palestine. Since the declassification of Israeli and British military documents in the mid 80s and early 90s a new wave of historian has emerged from Israel and beyond. Commonly referred to as new historians, these academics have sought to challenge the traditional viewpoint regarding the emergence of the State of Israel and explore their standing against academic examination. The traditional viewpoint when analysing Israel comes from that of Israel as a “victim” stated by Morris:

“That Zionism’s birth was an inevitable result of Gentile pressures and persecution…that the Zionists intended no ill to the Arabs of Palestine, and that Zionist settlement alongside the Arabs did not, from the Jews’ point of view, necessitate a clash or displacement…the Zionist efforts at compromise and conciliation were rejected by the Arabs; and that the Palestinians…refused to accede to the burgeoning Zionist presence and in 1947-48 attacked the Yishuv [Jewish community] with the aim of nipping the Jewish state in the bud” (Morris 1990, p4-5 [emphasis added]).

This viewpoint has been expressed through official historians, biographers and memoirs taken from leading Zionist figures, responsible for advancing the movement of Zionism from an ideology to its manifestation in the State of Israel, starting with Theodor Herzl in the late nineteenth century to David Ben-Gurion, the first prime minister of the State of Israel in 1948. New historians, using declassified evidence, reveal an alternative history, one that perceives Zionism as an aggressive colonial movement relentless in its pursuit of establishing a Jewish national home in Palestine regardless of its Arab population. In 1987 Morris laid out an alternative viewpoint of the causes of the Palestinian exodus that ran into numbers of 750,000 refugees. Morris’ work outlined in meticulous detail the systematic procedures undertaken by Israeli forces to evacuate the Arabs from territories awarded to Israel by the UN and beyond. Morris concludes however that “the Palestinian refugee problem was born of war not by design, Jewish or Arab” (Morris 1987 p286). Ilan Pappe, another leading new historian, substantiates Morris’ claims however Pappe refers to Plan Delat as their contending issue. Plan Delat was the military strategy adopted by the Jewish forces that outlined the
destruction of Arab villages in areas awarded to the State of Israel and beyond. Pappe considers Plan Delat as the “design” for the Palestinian exodus claiming Plan Delat as “a master plan for the expulsion of as many Palestinians as possible” (Pappe 1992 p94). Walid Khalidi, the renowned Palestinian writer, agrees with Pappe that Plan Dalet, taken in the context of the Zionist policy of transfer dating back to the start of the Zionist movement, was the manifestation of Zionist transfer policy before the establishment of the State of Israel (Khalidi 1959). Moreover, Khalidi challenges Israeli claims that the Palestinian exodus was due to orders issued by Arab political leaders to evacuate. Despite extensive research Khalidi failed to find any evidence to substantiate the claims made by Zionist leaders, rebutting the Zionist claim and opening it up to further interpretation (Khalidi 1959). The Zionist policy of transfer was masterfully articulated by Nur Masalha. Masalha’s painstakingly documents diary entries, meeting minutes, speeches and other private and public sources amounting to the conclusion that “the concept of transfer lies at the very heart of mainstream Zionism” (Masalah 2992 p210). Of course these new historians have their critics and no more so than Efraim Karsh who, in his 1997 book accuses new historians of distorting evidence to substantiate preconceived prejudice claims and misconceptions (Karsh 1997). The debate that has erupted amongst academics regarding the legitimacy of Zionism as an ideology based on suffering and persecution has inevitably provoked sensitivity. If Zionism is to be categorised as an aggressive colonial movement then the very existence of Israel and the collective memory of its establishment must be called into question since it has been established on a series of carefully fabricated myths. The aim of this paper is to examine the claims made by the new historians and analyse them in relation to the advancement of Zionism from an ideology born from persecution to its establishment as a reality in the State of Israel. Zionism received its first significant international recognition by way of the Balfour Declaration from Great Britain. Britain’s motive has been questioned by claims that the British awarded recognition to Zionism due to “…a sense of guilt at European treatment of the Jews” (Smith 2007 p78). Verete argues that the British desired Palestine for their own imperial interests and needed the Zionist to ensure its capture from the French since Zionist French opposition was well known at the time (Verete 1970). Gillon argues that the British wanted out of the Sykes-Picot Agreement and Zionism with its opposition to French and international control and demand for British protectorate would free Britain of the 1916 agreement, substituting it for complete British control (Gillon 1969). The Balfour Declaration managed to establish a
starting point for Zionist international legitimacy which would continue through to the United Nations Partition Plan of 1947 (The Plan). The Plan, on the recommendation of previous findings, would advocate inter alia the partition of Palestine into two states, one Jewish and one Arab. The reasons behind the findings of the United Nations (UN) have been contested. Morris and R.Khalidi agree that the lack of Arab political, social and economical institutions and cohesion cost the Arabs viability in proposition for an independent Palestine in the eyes of the UN (Morris 2008; Khalidi 2001). Further Khalidi argues with Pappe that the British, in the Balfour Declaration and the British Mandate for Palestine, ignored the rights of the Palestinian inhabitants to establish said institutions thus costing the Arabs dearly when the UN announced its findings (Khalidi 2001; Pappe 1992). Karsh contends that the Arabs have only themselves to blame since the UN findings were as a result of their lack of internal organisation, leadership and coherence (Karsh 1997). This paper will analyse both the Balfour Declaration and the UN Partition Plan amongst other key legislations and committee findings pivotal to the creation of the State of Israel. The aim of this paper is to argue that Zionism had within its philosophy the intention to transfer the inhabitants of Palestine, namely Arabs, out of its borders in order to fully realise its goal of establishing a nation home for the Jewish people. An examination of this area provides an understanding and perspective of the scenario faced by both Arab and Jew today. If the very foundations of Israel’s establishment can be delegitimised from a movement born of persecution to an aggressive colonial settlement then Israel’s very existence is established upon deceitful foundations. This would have serious repercussion for Israel within the Middle East as it would no longer be considered a “victim” but labeled an “aggressor” of the Palestinian Arab people’s right to inhabit their land in Palestine. This would add a new, detrimental perspective of Israel on the Arab-Israeli conflict.

1. Zionism and Its Foundations

The ideology behind Zionism was to secularise and nationalise Judaism in Palestine, this idea was born as a result of Jewish persecution and dispersion (Dispora) since the Roman conquest of the land of Israel during the first century. This ideology was soon manifested in the formation of the First World Zionist Congress, Theodore Herzl wrote in his diary “…at Basle I founded the Jewish State. If I were to say this today, I would be met by universal
laughter. In five years, perhaps, and certainly in fifty, everyone will see it” (Herzl in Peretz and Doron 1997, p16). The idea of a Jewish homeland had been written about by Jewish intellectuals such as Moses Hess and Leo Pinsker. Hess, inspired by the reunification of Italy in 1857, believed the unification of Jews in a national homeland would resolve the Jewish problem of integration with non-Jewish (Gentiles) including the social, political and economic exclusion Jews faced throughout the nineteenth century (Peretz and Doron 1997). Pinsker believed the Jewish community to be unable to integrate or accepted into the Gentile community and would therefore need to assimilate in their own homeland or face indefinite persecution (Peretz 1979). Herzl, having witnessed anti-Semitism first hand, believed that Jews were a unique part of society and would never be freed of anti-Semitism. Herzl presented a coherent plan with a modern ideology that incorporated the thinking of previous Jewish intellectuals to provide a program for Zionism (Smith 2007). The ideologies of Herzl’s book were advanced in Basle culminating in the stated political objective of Zionism as the creation “…for the Jewish people a home in Palestine secured by public law” (ibid p37). The philosophy of Zionism was therefore the creation of a Jewish state in Palestine allowing for a secure homeland away from persecution, pogroms and cultural isolation. Further, Zionism encouraged the political, social and cultural isolation of Jews from Gentile society. The significance of this as Davis argues, that Zionist philosophy shared fundamental beliefs with anti-Jewish racism as both shared the common view on the existential role of Jews within society (Davis 2003). Political Zionists and anti-Jewish racists believed there to be a fundamental racial incompatibility between Jewish society and Gentile society and thus Jewish society must be segregated from Gentile society (Ibid). In this case, Jewish society must be advanced in Palestine with non-assimilation as paramount for protection against further persecution and social, political and economic exclusion.

The Policy of Transfer within Zionism

Very little mention was made by Herzl about the indigenous people of Palestine and their role in Zionist ideology in his book, however in his diaries he set out clear objectives for the population of Palestine. “We must expropriate gently the private property on the state 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 employment in our country…Both
the process of expropriation and the removal of the poor must be carried out discretely and
circumspectly. Let the owners of the immoveable property believe that they are cheating us,
selling us things for more than they are worth. But we are not going to sell them anything back” (Herzl in Morris 2001 p21-22). To secure this policy the World Zionist Organisation
(WZO) created its own bank and in 1901 the Jewish National Fund was founded with the sole
intention of purchasing and developing land, to be worked and settled on by Jews only (Smith 2007).
This financial autonomy would enable the Zionist movement the first opportunity to
purchase land and secure it for the development of the Jewish community and business.
Although Herzl visited Palestine and saw for himself the Arabs of Palestine, he failed to
reclassify Palestine as “a land without a people, for a people without a land” therefore
continuing the common misconception Palestine was an empty land waiting to be inhabited
(Zangwill in Klein 2005 p240). Chaim Weizmann an influential Russian Jew who would later
become head of the WZO and the first president of Israel described the Palestinian people as
“the rocks of Judea…obstacles that had to be cleared on a difficult path.” (Weizmann in
Masaha 1992 p17). Further, in a conversation with Arthur Ruppin, a Jewish Agency
department head, Weizmann stated that “the British told us that there are there some hundred
thousands negroes and for those there is no value” (Weizmann in Masalah 1992 p.6). Israel
Zangwill, thought of by the British press as a spokesman for Zionism, stated that Zionists
“must be prepared either to drive out by the sword the 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” (Zangwill in Masalah 1992 p10). The disregard for
the Arab population from leading Zionist figures gives insight into the mindset of political
Zionism; it had concluded Palestine as the home for the Jewish state regardless of the
inhabitants and was willing to “drive out” the “penniless population” like “the rocks of
Judea” in order to secure the complete possession of the land. Moreover, Herzl’s objectives,
as outlined in his diary, was to assume possession of Palestinian lands whilst denying the
poor employment and encouraging the exodus of the indigenous people to other countries.
Furthermore, these inhospitable and unwelcoming statements about Palestinian inhabitants by
the statesmen of political Zionism formed the notion that Palestine was to be reestablished as
a national home for the Jewish population and only the Jewish population. Due to social
incompatibility exemplified in history the idea of Jews living side by side with Arabs was
inconceivable and the only solution would be the transfer, one way or another, of the
inhabitants of Palestine. The idea that the transfer of Palestinian Arabs was a hallmark of the foundations of political Zionism has been at the centre of much contention between Israel’s new historians and its traditional historians. The declassification of British and Israeli military documents relating to the controversial period of 1948 has led academics to rethink Israel’s past as traditionally portrayed. This traditional viewpoint comes from that of Israel as a “victim” and is encapsulated by Morris outlined above. The area of contention as proposed by the new historians is not necessarily organised around statements made by Herlz, Weismann or Zangwill, more the statements, letters and diary entries made by David Ben-Gurion head of the Zionist leadership, later to become the first prime minister of Israel. Israel’s new historians Morris, Pappe and Shlaim have been accused by Israeli historian Efraim Karsh of twisting certain areas of information in order to fabricate a different version of Israel’s pre 1948 history. A full analysis of such claims falls outside the scope of this work, however there is a certain statement Ben-Gurion made which I believe, when taken in the context of his other statements, is indicative of the Zionist leadership policy towards transfer. Ben-Gurion stated, in reflection of the transfer proposal made by the Peel Commission, that: “We must expel the Arabs and take their places…all our aspirations is built on the assumption – proven throughout all our activity – that there is enough room for ourselves and the Arabs in Palestine… and if we have to use force – not to dispossess the Arabs of Negev and Transjordan, but to guarantee our own right to settle in those places – then we have force at our disposal.” (Ben-Gurion in Karsh 1997 p47). This statement in its entirety, as outlined by Karsh, is an omission by Ben-Gurion that he did not wish to expel the Arab population, rather attempt to live with them, however if this would prove implausible the option of forceful expulsion was at their disposal. (Karsh 1997). Karsh attempts to rebut the claims Morris’ and other leading new historians claims by characterising Ben-Gurion as a keen advocate of Arab transfer. Karsh criticises the new historians for having culled certain sentences from the statement to make it read as such: “We must expel the Arabs and take their places… and if we have to use force – not to dispossess the Arabs of Negev and Transjordan, but to guarantee our own right to settle in those places – then we have force at our disposal.” (Ben-Gurion in Morris 1987 p25). This clearly gives a different perspective to the original statement made and serves to portray Ben-Gurion as a keen advocate of Arab transfer. It is the opinion of this author that the editing of that statement is not necessary to show Ben-Gurion as an advocate of Arab transfer. Masalha provides, inter alia a detailed
account of Zionist transfer policy. Quoting a statement by Ben-Gurion “the Arab must not and cannot be a Zionist. He could never wish the Jews to become a majority. This is the true antagonism between us and the Arabs. We both want to be the majority” (Ben-Gurion in Masalha 1992 p18). Ben-Gurion recognises the fundamental differences between Arab and Jews outlining that an Arab could never support the idea of Zionism and furthermore would always attempt to prevent its establishment. Moreover, Ben-Gurion would acknowledge the Palestinian struggle and outline their fears by stating, “…the fear is not of losing land, but of losing the homeland of the Arab people, which others want to turn into the homeland of the Jewish people. The Arab is fighting a war that cannot be ignored. He goes out on strike, he is killed, he makes great sacrifices” (Ben-Gurion in Masalha 1992 p18). This statement, in correlation with the above, subscribes Ben-Gurion to the belief that the Arab would not accept the idea of Zionism and would be willing to take many measures of actions, including war to prevent it establishment. Therefore, when Ben-Gurion made the above statement he insinuates a peaceful and cooperative coexistence. Yet it was no more than a hollow gesture as he had already acknowledged the redundance of this idea in accepting that coexistence was not a viable option, thus justifying the use of forceful expulsion against the Palestinian Arabs. Additionally, after the Peel Commission had recommended the transfer of Arabs from the areas designed for the Jewish state Ben-Gurion wrote in his diary “we have to stick to this conclusion [of transfer] in the same way we grabbed the Balfour Declaration, more than that, in the same way we grabbed Zionism itself. We have to insist upon this conclusion with our full determination, power and conviction…” (Ben-Gurion in Masalha 1992 p65 [emphasis added]) Ben-Gurion’s admission that the transfer of the Palestinian Arabs was a concept that had to be “grabbed” in the same way as Zionism leaves the author in little doubt that the notion of transfer was very much a primary thought. Furthermore, it was the Ben-Gurion led Israeli government that passed the Absentees’ Property Law of 1950 which refused the right of the Palestinian Arabs who had fled, or been expelled, to return to their properties in contravention of UN Resolution 181 - which called for the return of Palestinian refugees - and international law. The statements made by the founders of Zionism coupled with the actions of the first Israeli government established after independence, sheds light on the distorted traditional view portrayed by Israel. This conversely adds weight to the findings, with regards to the Palestinian exodus of 1948, of the new historians. The disregard of the Arab population as inhabitants of Palestine and the expression of Zionist thought that
concluded Palestine as an empty land – despite knowledge of the existence of a population – served to justify the Zionist scheme of mass immigration of Jews to Palestine and the transfer of its inhabitant population across the border.

The concept of transfer within the Zionist school of thought was not generically accepted by all areas of Jewish society. Ahad Ha’Am, criticised political Zionism for its disregard of the Palestinian inhabitants as well as the exploitations of Palestinian peasantry by Zionist settlers. Furthermore Ha’Am sought to bring to the attention of the Jewish community (Yishuv) the fact that Palestine was indeed inhabited contrary to what they may have been previously read or been told. (Smith2007). One could consider Ha’Am a revisionist thinker of his time since he questioned the established order and attempted to impart his knowledge of the true scenario Zionism was faced with rather than believe a fabricated Zionist myth. Furthermore in 1907 a controversial article was written by Yitzhaq Epstein which he strongly opposed Zionist land purchase methods and accurately predicted that such methods would only lead to future political problems (Masalah 1992). The opposition to the Zionist movement into Palestine offers an intriguing perspective on its acceptance in society as it shows that opposition existed against the forced settlement of Jews in Palestine. World War Two and the atrocities committed upon the European Jewry by the Nazi regime would however become the strongest unifying force amongst the Jewish skeptics (Peretz 1979).

### 2. International Recognition of Zionism

International recognition of Zionism was an important feature for the flourishing ideology. If Zionists could present their case to the world’s leading powers and recruit their support it would stabilise the foundations required against its critics to the eventuality of a nation Jewish home. This recognition was initially founded by way of the Balfour Declaration and manifested itself in its entirety in the establishment of the State of Israel thirty years later, British policy would vastly influence the shaping of the Middle East and the futures of both Arab and Jew.
The Balfour Declaration

In 1917 Zionism was to be awarded international recognition by British foreign secretary, Lord Balfour. The Balfour Declaration was submitted to Lord Rothschild in which the British Empire committed itself to the Zionist objectives. In this declaration the British Government advocated the establishment of a national home for the Jewish people in Palestine however the declaration also outlined the need to uphold the civil and religious rights of the indigenous people, namely the Palestinian Arabs. The significance of this declaration was substantial since it was the first time the Zionist movement had been given principle backing by one of the major world powers at the time. Furthermore the declaration would allow the Zionist movement to increase its activities in the areas of land purchases and Aliyah. However critics of the declaration such as Shlaim would argue that “considering that the Arabs constituted over 90 percent of the population, the promise not to prejudice their civil and religious rights had a distinctly hollow ring about it, since it totally ignored their political rights” (Shlaim 2000 p7). Morris argues that the British had indeed disregarded the political will of the Arab population – as was protocol by most imperial powers – however Morris claims that the Arabs of Palestine were supporting the Ottoman Empire in its war against the Allied Powers and furthermore there was “…no Palestinian Arab national movement nor any separate Palestinian Arab national consciousness…” to consult (Morris 2008 p10). Morris’ claims are difficult to refute, however, as there were some loosely organised, yet still primitive, political institutions in Beirut, Damascus and Baghdad should the British have wanted to acknowledge the will of the Palestinian Arabs (Pappe 1992). The motives behind the British policy outlined in the Balfour Declaration have been questioned and examined by academics as there was no obvious reason for affirmation for the Zionist cause. Smith argues that the declaration was not born of British self-interests or immediate war aims rather from a deep sympathy shared by many key statesmen such as Balfour himself, Lloyd George and Mark Sykes for Zionism and “…by a sense of guilt at European treatment of the Jews” (Smith 2007 p78). Furthermore, Smith argues, all this was “exploited masterfully” by Weizmann (Smith 2007 p78). Verete argues that the British desired Palestine for their own imperial interests and needed the Zionist to ensure its capture from the French since Zionist French opposition was well known at the time (Verete 1970). Verete also proposes that the British offered Palestine to the Zionist and it was the British who opened negotiations with
Weizmann (Verete 1970). Although all these arguments are well established I subscribe to the argument proposed by Gillon. Gillon suggests that the idea that the British were in some way “…moved by a sense of idealism and historic justice…” for Zionism is based on statements made by British officials after the establishment of the declaration (Gillon 1969 p131). Gillon also argues that the suggestion of the British being “…mindful of their long-term interest in the area…” was only a minor influence in the eventual shaping of the policy leading to the declaration. Gillon proposes that the British had not intimately connected the question of Zionism with Palestine but were rather more concerned of the peace and security of the Empire, which the British believed, rested on the capture of Palestine. Therefore Zionism was a by-product of British imperial control. Gillon claims that Zionism was “…an emotional and controversial sub-issue which skillfully manipulated might harness and sway public opinion outside Britain.” (Gillon 1969 p 132). Moreover, Gillon argues that the British wanted out of the Sykes-Picot Agreement – which carved up the Ottoman Empire after its predicted fall amongst the two world powers, Britain and France – and Zionism with its opposition to French and international control and demand for British protectorate would free Britain of the 1916 agreement, substituting it for complete British control. The French would have to accept a fait accompli. (Gillon 1969). In the opinion of this author the proposal put forward by Gillon is the most accomplished since his argument takes into account the role played by Weizmann in pursuing Zionist objectives however it acknowledges that the British had their own objectives which rested upon the security of the Empire. The plight of the Jew would play a significant role in two ways, as it would 1) serve to clear the conscious of the Zionist supporters and sympathisers within the British government and 2) help the British sway international and governmental opinion for British control over Palestine.

**The British Mandate for Palestine**

The British were entrusted by the League of Nations to secure the developments of the political, social and economical institutions for the inhabitants of Palestine, namely the Arab population. Having secured The Mandate for Palestine the British then incorporated the Balfour Declaration within the preamble and gave official recognition to Zionist claims and Jewish rights in Palestine. The inclusion of the Balfour Declaration within the mandate, without authorisation or consultation with the inhabitants of the land resembles characteristic
common within colonial settlements as it disregarded the opinions of the inhabitants of the land. Furthermore Great Britain was to “facilitate Jewish immigration…and encourage, in cooperation with the Jewish Agency close settlement by Jew on the land…” (Peretz and Doron 1997, p31). The significance of this mandate was profound for both Arabs and Zionists. The mandate formally recognised the Zionist movement and declared the Jewish Agency as the appropriate institution to facilitate the establishment of the Jewish national home in Palestine fueling Zionist insistence that Great Britain develop the Jewish national home with due haste (Peretz and Doron 1997). Khalidi argues that the mandate “…explicitly and by omission denied the same national recognition and institutional framework [to the Palestinian Arabs]…” (Khalidi 2001 p19). Furthermore the mandate offered to protect the “…civil and religious rights of the existing non-Jewish communities in Palestine” (Quoted in Peretz and Doron 1997 p31). The wording of the mandate is significant as it does not specifically mention the Palestinian people, in fact it refers to them as “non-Jewish communities” as if to insinuate that the Jewish community is the primary concern of the British under their obligations of the mandate. Overall the mandate enshrined inferior status to the Arab majority and denied them the rights which should flow from majority status, “…the Palestinian Arabs were not accorded the right of national self-determination and an internationally accepted status as were the Jews in Palestine…” (Khalidi 2001 p20). The significance for the Zionist movement of the British Mandate for Palestine cannot be overstated since it offered the Jewish Agency international legitimacy whilst providing a framework within which the formation of the Jewish national home could be established with the support of the greatest imperial power, Great Britain. Taken together the Balfour Declaration and The British Mandate for Palestine had distinctly recognised and incorporated Jewish rights within legal precedents. Although freedom of religious expression and the civil rights of the inhabitants of Palestine were recognised and consistently reiterated, the British failed to specify who the inhabitants were and more importantly failed to acknowledge an independent national identity for the Palestinian Arabs. Furthermore the British failed to offer, in legislature, the opportunity for the Palestinian Arab inhabitants to develop the same fundamental social, political and economic infrastructure afforded to the Jews. Prior to the mandate the Palestinian Arabs had been subjected to a history of occupation under different rule, however all had been within the scope of Islam and Arab occupation. British rule and
Jewish immigration had awoken the nationalist values of the Palestinian Arabs encouraging self determination within a sovereign national identity.

The Peel Commission

The Peel Commission had been appointed by the British government to investigate the causes of Arab-Jew violence and recommend a solution. During this period Masalha argues that the Zionist movement lobbied tirelessly to actively promote its agenda for an independent state and the transfer of Arabs from within it. Further, Masalha claims that Zionist leaders made themselves readily available to the commission and also met with British statesmen, cabinet minister, members of parliament and senior officials at the Foreign and Colonial Office (Masalha 1992). Masalha aims to exemplify how Zionist leaders were promoting the aims of the movement for partition and the transfer of the Arabs based on documents and diary entries from leading figures at the time. Exemplifying this is the conversation Moshe Shertok, later to become Israel’s first Foreign Minister, had with the American general-counsel in Jerusalem, George Wadworth. “We talked about the question of partition in connection with Transjordan. Wadsworth said that it was known to him that the [British] Government was very impressed by the proposal contained in the memorandum that we had submitted to the “Royal Commission” concerning the transfer of the Arabs from Western Eretz Yisrael [i.e.,Palestine] to Transjordan in order to evacuate the place for new Jewish settlers. They saw this proposal as a constructive plan indeed” (Masalha 1992 p56). Shertok’s acknowledgement of the Zionist lobbying to “evacuate the place for new Jewish settlers,” to the British and the Peel Commission is in itself tantamount to an admission that the Zionist leaders not only wanted to partition Palestine into two ethnically segregated states but also expel any remaining Palestinian Arabs to be replaced by Jewish settlers (Ibid p56). This directly refutes the claims made by Karsh who argues partition was a British invention, proposed by the Peel Commission in response to escalating violence and had nothing to do with Zionist lobbying (Karsh 1997).

The Peel Commission published its report on the 8th of July 1937, outlining the incompatibility of Jews and Arabs to live together, the partition of Palestine into two separate states (Smith 2007). The Zionist movement was granted a Jewish state consisting of around 20 percent of Palestine (Jewish ownership at the time was around 5.6 percent). The
commission further recommended the transfer voluntarily or under compulsion of around
300,000 Arabs residing in the allotted Jewish state to the Arab part of Palestine or out of the
country altogether (Smith 2007). Significantly, the Peel Commission introduced publically
for the first time the idea of transfer with the assistance of the British, however the process of
voluntary transfer was left disconcertingly vague. Morris argues that the proposal of transfer
had been “periodically proposed” by Zionist leaders though diaries and letters however it had
never been adopted as official policy, the Peel Commission had however, as Morris claims
opened the “floodgates” to this idea, (Morris 2008 p18). This would stimulate Zionist public
endorsements of the notion of transfers already a privately considered option. After the
recommendations made by the commission Ben-Gurion wrote in his diary about transfer
“…it could give us something that we never had before…the compulsory transfer of the
Arabs from the valleys proposed for the Jewish State… with the evacuation of the Arab
community from the valleys we achieve, for the first time in our history, a real Jewish
state…we achieve the possibility of a giant national settlement, in a large area that is all in the
hands of the state…” (Ben-Gurion in Morris 2001 p42). Furthermore in the Twentieth Zionist
Congress held in Zurich for specific consideration of the Peel Commission recommendations
Ben-Gurion stated “now a transfer for a wholly new dimension will have to be carried out…It
is important that this plan came from the Commission and not from us…the growing Jewish
power in this country will increase our possibilities to carry out a large transfer. You must
remember that this method also contains an important humane and Zionist idea” (Ben-Gurion
in Morris 2001 p43). Karsh refutes the claims made by Masalha and Morris against Ben-
Gurion on the basis that Ben-Gurion had never expressed willingness to, before the Peel
recommendations, forcefully transfer the Arab inhabitants (Karsh 1997). Karsh claims that it
was a British idea that stimulated Zionist eagerness for transfer, furthermore Karsh argues
that transfer was only discussed at three JAE meetings and that “five days in the life of a
national movement can scarcely provide proof of long-standing trends or ideologies,
especially since these meeting were called in response to a specific agenda forced upon the
Zionist movement by the British government” (Karsh 1997 p42). Karsh expresses a valid
point; it would be irresponsible to assume such controversial claims from three JAE meetings
and subsequent diary entries. However, I would argue that if one were to look at the
evidence of Zionist leaders transfer statements and the lobbing of British government
officials, whether spoken or written, collectively and retrospectively the claims of Morris and
Masalha are more upstanding. Furthermore the jubilation at which the idea of transfer was received by Ben-Gurion and his declaration of the necessity to regard the idea of transfer in the “same way we grabbed the Balfour Declaration” suggests that the thought had previously plagued his mind (Ben-Gurion in Masalha 1992 p65). Transfer aside, the Zionist movement was split with regards to the Peel Commission recommendations. Advocates of the recommendations such as Ben-Gurion, Weizmann and Shertok claimed that although only a small area of Palestine had been allocated to the Jewish national home it would not constitute a permanent border, in a conversation with the British high commissioner Weizmann stated “we shall expand in the whole country in the course of time…this is only an arrangement for the next 25 to 30 years” (Weizmann in Masalha 2009 p62). Furthermore in a letter to his son Ben-Gurion wrote “we will be able to settle in all the other parts of the country, whether through agreement and mutual understanding with our Arab neighbours or in another way” (Ben-Gurion in Shlaim 2001 p21). These statements present a new line of thinking proposed by the Zionist leaders for they have coherently proclaimed the desire to occupy all of the lands in Palestine by any means possible. Considering the ultimate goal for Zionism was the development of a Jewish national home in Palestine, without, as the Zionist leaders expressed, the Palestinian Arabs, expulsion would be a distinct reality if not a necessity. The Zionist movement, with 290 delegate votes, agreed to the recommendations of the Peel Commission.

Arab opposition was much swifter. Even though the Arabs would be granted eight percent of the land the most fertile land had been allocated to the Jewish state, furthermore 250,000 Arabs living in the Galilee would have to be transferred when they constituted ninety percent of the population (Smith 2007). Under the recommendations the Jews would be awarded an independent state, conversely the Arabs would be transferred to Transjordan under Hashemite rule and not afforded the same privilege (Ibid). An Arab congress was held in Syria condemning the Peel recommendations and calling for a united Arab front against the establishment in Palestine of the Jewish national home (Ibid). Significantly the situation had evolved into an Arab problem, not simply a Palestinian Arab problem. Opposition from throughout the Arab world had been established unifying Arab resistance to Zionist control over Palestine.
The Anglo-American Committee

The support of the Arab states was generally more crucial to Britain in the conflict with the Axis powers than the support of the Jews. In an attempt to appease Arab sentiment and assure Arab peace in the Middle East the British issued a new white paper (Smith 2007). The White Paper committed the British inter alia, to establishing an independent Palestinian state within ten years, limited Jewish migration to fifteen thousand per year with all Jewish immigration conditional to Arab approval and significantly limited the rights of Jews on land purchases (Morris 2008). This dealt a massive blow to the Zionist movement as it prevented their ability to expand within Palestine. The restrictions imposed on the Jews to land purchases and immigration into Palestine would signify Palestine as a state with an Arab majority in terms of population and land ownership, much to the dismay of the Zionist movement. The White Paper was met with universal outcry. The Palestinian leadership demanded full cessation of Jewish immigration, immediate British withdrawal and immediate independence. Rather indicatively of the Arabs, they had managed to grab defeat at the hands of victory. The White Paper served to reverse many of the discriminatory rights afforded to the Jews and not the Arabs in the Balfour Declaration and the British mandate for Palestine, essentially placing more emphasis on establishing Arab social, political and economic infrastructure. In rejecting the White Paper the Arabs replaced it with unattainable, unachievable and unrealistic demands for which the British would not and could not adhere to. The Zionist movement denounced the white paper as illegal and a complete turn of both the Balfour Declaration and the recommendations of the Peel Commission (Morris 2008). Ben-Gurion stated “there will be no cooperation between us and the White Paper Government, neither today nor after the war” (Chazan 2010 p102). The outbreak of World War Two left Zionism with a dilemma. Zionism had no choice but to fight with the British against the Axis Powers although it had deep routed fundamental struggle with the British over Palestine. Consequently Zionism embodied a dual track policy towards the British, however World War Two would shelve the concerns of both factions temporally. The tragedy suffered by the world Jewry in the Holocaust intensified Jewish nationalistic eagerness for an independent state and sought to gain international sympathy for the thousands left homeless by the devastating effects of the Nazi concentration camps. This was no clearer than in the United States (US) where the plight of European Jew and effective Zionist propaganda won the support of the American
people (Morris 2008; Masalha 1992). Although the Americans were concerned about the plight of the Jewish refugees they did not extend their concerns enough to the support of alterations in the immigration law to permit the Jewish refugees entry into the US (Smith 2007). The support shown by the US towards the Zionist movement would prove significant since the US had shown itself as a superpower, shifting the new world order away from Great Britain. This meant that US backing of Zionism would help facilitate their worldwide legitimacy and support their struggle against new British policy in Palestine. Both Democrats and Republicans included in their electoral campaigns pro-Zionist provisions, pandering to the five million wealthy, politically active Jews concentrated in key electoral states (Morris 2008). The recognition of the Jewish vote by American political parties would form the basis of a symbiotic relationship with the Zionists. Both Zionists and American politicians recognised the importance of one another and the role each one could play in facilitating the others ultimate objectives, namely the pursuit of Palestine as a national home for Jews and entry into the White House. The Truman administration would honour the pro-Zionist policies it had adopted, regularly contacting British officials asking for the lifting of the immigration restrictions to allow the entry of 100,000 displaced Jews into Palestine (Shlaim 2001). The British stood firm and would not allow the doors of Palestine to be opened once more to Jewish migration however the British, eager not to strain relations with the United States, set up the Anglo-American Committee (AAC) charged with examining political, social and economic conditions in Palestine, moreover the committee was also to examine the position of the displaced Jews within Europe. Most significantly the AAC findings recommended that the 100,000 displaced persons, most of which wished to settle in Palestine, be granted entry permits when conditions were viable for their entry (Morris 2008). The Zionist endorsed the immigration policy but rejected all the rest. Unsurprisingly the Arabs rejected everything once again requesting full independence and a cessation on all Jewish immigration (Masalha 1992). The AAC findings signified US backing for the integration of the displaced persons within Palestine, officially recognising the sensitive plight of the Jews affected in World War Two.

**United Nations Special Committee on Palestine (UNSCOP)**

In February the British requested the UN convene a special session of the General Assembly (GA) to discuss the Palestinian problem claiming “the Arabs like the Jews, refused to accept
any of the compromise proposals which HMG had put before both parties” (Bevin in Morris 2008 p37). The GA resolved to set up the UNSCP responsible for recommending a solution to the problems. Eleven representatives from various countries were requested however the GA did not request any representation from Arabs, Zionists, Great Britain or the Great Powers (Ibid). UNSCOP presented the GA with its finding and in November 1947 Resolution 181 was passed through the GA with thirty-three “yes” votes. The Resolution called for the termination of the British mandate in Palestine and the partition of Palestine into two sovereign states, one Arab, one Jewish bound by an economic union. The Jews who owned less than six percent of the total land area of Palestine and constituted no more than one third of the population were given fifty-six percent, of which included the most fertile and agricultural land, of Palestinian territory for their Jewish state (Gilbert 2009). However, the Jewish state was to consist of a population of 438,000 Arabs sharing with 499,000 Jews, this ethnically equal division is not what the Zionist leaders envisaged in their ideology of a Jewish state as the Zionist had consistently reiterated their desire to establish a Jewish majority both in terms of population and land. “In the area allocated to the Jewish state there are not more than 520,000 Jews and about 350,000 non-Jews, mostly Arabs. Such a composition does not provide for a stable basis for a Jewish state. There can be no stable and strong Jewish state so long as it has a Jewish majority of only 60 percent” (Ben-Gurion in Masalha 1992 p176). Ben-Gurion expresses the hesitancy of the Zionists in accepting a Jewish state that incorporated forty percent of non-Jews. This statement taken in context of the Zionist policy for Arab transfer provides further evidence for the claims of forced expulsion made by new historians regarding the Palestinian exodus of 1948. The Arabs were to be granted a state on forty-two percent of the land amongst a population of 818,000. The rest of the area, a small enclave around Jerusalem was to be an internationally governed with a population of 200,000 dived equally between Arabs and Jews, in order to allow equally access by both communities to the Holy sites of Jerusalem (Gilbert 2009). As the statistics show the UN Partition Resolution failed to fairly designate land with regards to the ethnic composition of Palestine. To offer fifty-six percent of the most fertile and sought after land to one third of the population who only owned six percent of the overall land in Palestine is somewhat bewildering. The importance of UNSCOPs findings and the subsequence UN resolution were significance to the establishment of Israel since UNSCOP had advanced the Zionist goal of establishing a Jewish national home in Palestine, although it did fall short in
allocating a Jewish state with a forty percent non-Jew population. An analysis of how and why UNSCOP came to these conclusions provides more context within the conflict.

The preparations made by both Zionist and Arabs differed in many ways, not solely by the difference in their pursuit of an ultimate goal but also the ultimate goal itself. For the Zionists the goal was a Jewish national home with wide borders in Palestine, separated from the Arabs. The Zionists were so committed to imprinting their visions of the Jewish state to UNSCOP that in order to remove any doubt as to what the Zionists goals were “Ben Gurion drew up a general map with borders that incorporated the whole Negev, the Dead Sea and Galilee” in a secret meeting held in Shertok’s home (Ben-Dror 2007 p272). The clearly defined Zionist goals allowed them to structure their focus efficiently and execute with precision whilst ensuring that UNSCOP were fully aware of their expectations, hoping to directly influence their final decision. Conversely the Arabs, plagued by a sense of injustice, adopted an uncompromising attitude on the basis that the presence of UNSCOP was unnecessary since all the land belonged to the Palestinian Arabs and both UNSCOP and the UN should recognise this and immediately endorse an independent Arab state in Palestine (Ben-Dror 2008). Accompanied by the Arab uncompromising attitude followed a complete boycott of UNSCOP and a commercial strike. The Arabs Higher Committee (AHC) justified their actions in the press and radio broadcasts which generally amounted to the argument that the UK and Britain had already pre-determined the fate of Palestine to the favour of the Jews (Khalidi 2001). The AHC placed an absolute ban on testimonies from the public and the press to UNSCOP with the aim of separating and isolating UNSCOP from the Arabs. Both UNSCOP and the British attempted to reason with the AHC to absolve the boycott and actively participate and promote the Palestinian Arab cause but to no avail, the AHC would fight to the bitter end (Ben-Dror 2007; Morris 2008). Furthermore divisions between the AHC and the Arab Leagues as to the true patron of Palestine served to cause a lack of political cohesion and unification against the Zionist claims to Palestine (Khalidi 2001; Ben-Dror 2007). The segregation of the AHC and the Arab Leagues would discredit the viability of the Arabs commitment to an independent state and the internal disagreements would hamper the ability of the Arabs, in complete contrast to the Zionists, to present a clear and coherent plan for implementing their overall goals for Palestine to UNSCOP. The Arabs were required to provide a unified front presenting ascertainable goals achievable within their
infrastructure for presentation to UNSCOP. Instead the Arabs orchestrated boycotts and displayed general hostility towards UNSCOP members, the final recommendations made by UNSCOP would reflect the lack of Arab unification and participation. In order to ascertain any Arab perspective on the problems in Palestine UNSCOP was forced to meet with delegates of the Arab League in Lebanon. UNSCOP deputy chairman, Peter Mohn, summed up the meeting accurately claiming “… there is nothing more extreme than meeting all the representatives of the Arab world in one group… when each one tries to show that he is more extreme than the other” (Mohn in Morris 2008 p 45). Once again the Arabs had hindered their own development by failing, once given the opportunity, to present their case for Palestine to UNSCOP. The Arab’s continued to demand all of Palestine as an independent state and would not compromise their demands, leaving UNSCOP with well documented and attainable Zionist aims to consider against relatively unknown and unattainable Arab aims.

The Zionists were cognizant of the significance of UNSCOP and the importance their role would be in determining the proposed future state of the Jewish people in Palestine. The Zionist, with representation from the Jewish Agency (JA), pursed the objectives for partition and independence with determination and vigor (Morris 2008; Ben-Dror 2008). On days where UNSCOP were to visit Jewish areas the JA planned tours showing off the developed industrial and commercial side of Zionism. This established the ability of the Zionists to develop key areas of society to UNSCOP. Furthermore the JA presented UNSCOP with agricultural settlement and the kibbutzim which were to be examples of the settlement framework outlined by the Zionists. Once again the Zionists had displayed to UNSCOP their competence in developing settlement projects and shown the establishment of a coherent plan for their anticipated Jewish state (Morris 2008; Ben-Dror 2008). UNSCOP would be left with an understanding that the Zionists had established a modern, dynamic and European culture within its society that had shown, above all, the ability to sustain itself (Morris 2008; Ben-Dror 2008; Pappe 1992). The Zionist had executed their plan with excellence. Zionists acknowledged the significance of UNSCOP, presented coherent and achievable goal’s for UNSCOP consideration and further displayed their competence in achieving said goals. In contrast, the Arabs were very cold, suspicious and uncompromising when meeting with UNSCOP members (Morris 2008; Ben-Dror2007). The AHC boycott and persistent anti-UNSCOP propaganda had instilled a counter-productive attitude amongst Arab society
amounting to the refusal to answer questions; when UNSCOP members entered classrooms the pupils were told not to interact in any way with UNSCOP (Ibid). In complete contrast to the Zionists, the Arabs displayed the inability to maintain and evolve its social and communal institutes and in its use of child labour, demonstrated social underdevelopment. One fails to see how UNSCOP could consider this anything other than evidence against the ability of Arabs viably maintain their own State. UNSCOP, concerned about the viability of an independent Arab state in Palestine, recruited the help of a UN economic expert who subsequently concluded that an Arab state resulting from partition would not be able to maintain itself sufficiently and has only managed to live thus far with the help of the British (Ben-Dror 2007). The internal factions within the Arab political sphere, against a backdrop of political and social Arab hostility, notwithstanding the underdeveloped social and industrial institutions within the Arab regions served to considerably hinder the Arab claims to an independent state in Palestine.

The brutal events of the Irgun hangings, the Exodus affair and the Superpower battle shifted UNSCOP perspective on the Palestinian issue as the Exodus affair sought to add new dimensions to UNSCOP considerations, namely the plight of the Jewish Holocaust survivors. Given the sensitivity of this issue and the horrific nature of Jewish sufferings and the callous British approach, I argue that UNSCOP would compensate the Jewish people in its final recommendations. The Exodus affair was relayed back to the full UNSCOP committee which prompted a discussion on the fate of the European Jewry and their rehabilitation in Palestine taking attention away from the Arab inhabitants (Pappe 1992; Morris 2008; Smith 2007). Pappe argues that British insensitivity during the Exodus affair and the overly brutal British conduct in Palestine towards the Jews moved “UNSCOP another step towards a pro-Zionist position” (Pappe 1992 p25). In an unprecedented speech before the GA, prior to UNSCOP being dispatched to Palestine, Russian deputy foreign minister Andrei Gromyko declared that his government would support the partition of Palestine (Morris 2008; Pappe 1992). Given the Soviets had previously been anti-British and pro-Arab this new stance surprised the GA, Gromyko spoke of the suffering of the Jewish people and their right to self determination, further he displayed concern for the Holocaust survivors and refugees announcing a pro-Zionist policy (Ibid). The significance of Soviet support for Zionism meant that Zionism had yet another superpower backing it for international legitimacy and its right to an independent
state. This sudden conversion to Zionism by the Russians has been disputed, Morris argues that the Russians were intent on causing a rift between the British and the Americans but were also moved by the plight of the Holocaust survivors and the subsequent refugees (Morris 2008). Pappe argues that the Russians may have been trying to develop a “special relationship” with the Zionists to promote their agenda in the Middle East and expel the British from Palestine (Pappe 1992 p20). Whatever the feelings of the Russians at the time, UNSCOP was aware of the American pro-Zionist policy outlined in the AAC and now aware of the Russian pro-Zionist stance. Therefore before UNSCOP had begun its finding in Palestine it was left with the burden of pro-Zionist superpower policy to consider which, I argue, would affect shape their final recommendations.

In Palestine UNSCOP found itself at the centre of a boycott from political and social factions with the Arab community, having once broken down the barriers of isolation UNSCOP would discover that the Arabs lacked political cohesion undermining their ability to administer a functioning state. Furthermore in visiting Arab communities UNSCOP was left feeling underwhelmed by the lack of hospitality, concerned by the social welfare of the Arab population and the misuse of child labour. This displayed to UNSCOP the inability of the Arabs to sustain a progressive living environment for its inhabitants further adding speculation to the Arabs ability of self-determination. Finally UNSCOP was made aware by experts that the Arabs would not be able to sustain a viable economy and would therefore suffer in economic independence (Ben-Dror 2007). Conversely, the Jews were well prepared for the visit of UNSCOP with viable, well determined goals based on well structured and maintained social, political economic institutions. This enabled the Zionists to pursue their objectives with determination and confidence. UNSCOP would recognise the ability of the Zionists to develop and maintain said institutions leaving little doubt in their minds of the Zionist competence for maintaining an independent state. Given the social, political and economic institutions developed by the Zionists UNSCOP’s decision to offer fifty-six percent of the most fertile and sought after land to one third of the population who only owned six percent of the overall land in Palestine is somewhat more conclusive. UNSCOP, in their recommendations, had acknowledge the fact that the Zionists had managed to develop key institutions far superior to that of the Arabs and had developed a unified, cohesive political agenda with the backing of the world’s most powerful countries. Conversely, in the opinion
of the author, the UNSCOP findings and Resolution 181 would serve as a punishment to the Arabs—hindered by their lack of cooperation with UNSCOP—for the infancy of key institutions as a direct result of British policy. Since the Balfour Declaration and the British Mandate for Palestine the Arabs had been isolated from establishing a coherent political institution comparative to the Zionist movement. Against a backdrop of British favouritism towards the Jews the Arabs were left underdeveloped in key areas such political, social and economic spheres. One can feel sympathy towards the plight of the Arabs since they were neglected by the British in developing key infrastructure however with a continued uncompromising attitude and refusal to participate in UNSCOP’s investigations the Arabs severely hindered their own progression.

The Zionists, through the Jewish Agency, accepted the UN partition plan. Although the Jewish home had been internationally sanctioned, fears remained about the exclusion of Jerusalem and the viability of the Jewish state within the confines of the UN borders (Shlaim 2000). The Arab UN delegate’s attitude became more hostile than before the Resolution 181, they declared any attempt to implement the resolution would lead to war.

3. A History of Violence

Arab attacks on Jewish settlements began to occur on a sporadic basis during the 1920s in response to the rise in Jewish immigration. However these attacks were somewhat isolated as the Arabs lacked political, nationalist awareness and had no genuine organisation (Morris 2008). Due to the rise of anti-Semitism in Central and Eastern Europe during this time the Jewish population in Palestine more than doubled from 175,000 to 460,000 between 1931 and 1939. These statistics would change the sporadic nature of the violent attacks on Jewish settlements as a rise in Jewish immigration would be met with an increase in Arab attacks, culminating in the Arab Revolt of 1936-1939 (Peretz and Doron 1997; Morris 2008).

The Arab Revolt consisted of two distinct phases. In April 1936 a declaration by the AHC enforced a national strike, a refusal to pay taxes, requested the complete withdrawal of British troops, a halt on all Jewish immigration and the immediate declaration of an independent Palestinian state (Morris 2008; Norris 2008). Against a backdrop of growing Arab unrest at the rise in Jewish immigration, Arab villages-based armed bands, led an urban campaign.
against the Zionist presence in Palestine. Although the revolt had popular support throughout the Arab world, it lacked in key areas such as organisation, leadership and equipment (Smith 2007). Norris writes “…a combination of political concessions, international diplomacy and the threat of martial law had succeeded in ending the initial waves of strikes and disturbances” (Norris 2008 p27). The first stage of the revolt had come at a cost of twenty-eight Britons, eighty Jews and two hundred Arabs (Shlaim 2000). Two months after the publication of the Peel Commission recommendations the second stage of the Arab revolt was to ensue, proving far bloodier than the first and would cost the Arabs both militarily and politically. With the assassination of a British district commissioner, Lewis Andrews, the British responded by outlawing the AHC and the Arab National Committee – the regional arm of the AHC. The British were therefore able to eradicate the revolt’s central command by killing, arresting or exiling the leadership (Norris 2008). This would prove detrimental to the Palestinian Arab long term cause as this lack of political leadership would, as shown in the UNSCOP situation, harm their ability to present a viable case for an independent Arab state in Palestine. Since much of the central command had been made redundant by the British, guerilla bands began to form in the Arab countryside and attacks against Jewish villages and cities resumed (Morris 2008; Norris 2008). For the British the removal of the central political command meant that the usual avenues in pursuing peace had been eradicated and therefore the British, with the assistance of the Haganah, went on the offensive (Morris 2008). British units pushed into rebel strongholds in the hills and countryside annihilating rebellion forces, destroying crops, farms and homes. In order to suppress the rebellion the British hung accomplices, jailed thousands, fenced and mined Palestine’s northern border and secured towns with reinforced police and army posts (Smith 2007; Norris 2008). The heavy handed techniques used by the British to suppress Palestinian uprisings would serve as a valuable lesson to the Zionist movement with the tactics and techniques proving an indispensable resource implemented by the IDF to contain future Palestinian rebellions. The revolt ended in a comprehensive defeat for the Palestinians. Around three to six thousand of the Palestinian political and military activists had been killed with many more thousands either driven into exile or jailed. The Palestinian political elite had been decimated, exiled or jailed but effectively renounced as political organisation (Morris 2008). Furthermore internal feuds began to develop within the Palestinian political elite, resulting in the political division in aims and goals for Palestine, once again this would be detrimentally realised by UNSCOP in
their final recommendations at the UN. The Palestinians had expelled much of their economic and military resources on a three year campaign against the British achieving very little. The effect of the revolt would have catastrophic recriminations in their case for achieving a viable independent Palestinian state. The end of the rebellion saw the British facing a war with Germany, Italy and Japan. The Palestinian issue became much less significant in the context of the British needs and interests in the forthcoming three-fronted war. True to his word Ben-Gurion and the Yishuv fought alongside the British against the Axis Powers in spite of the White Paper restrictions on Jewish immigration and land purchases. The Yishuv dedicated around twenty-six thousand of its men and woman to join the British army gaining military training (Pappe 1992). By the end of the war the British, plagued by weariness and financial pressures withdrew from India, Pakistan, Burma and Ceylon granting them independence and internal pressures within England increased to give up the Mandate for Palestine (Peretz and Doron 1997). Despite American pressure on the British to open the doors to Jewish immigration into Palestine once again, the British refused which stimulated the resumption of armed struggle against British targets by Irgun. Irgun, led by Menachem Begin, later to become prime minister of Israel, blew up government immigration and income tax offices, attacked police buildings and attempted to assassinate British politicians (Morris 2008). Disconcertingly Haganah was to join Irgun, with which it took its World War Two military training and stolen or illegally purchased arms to the fight against the British (Ibid). The unification of these two military factions signaled the Zionist intention to oust the British from Palestine. Having issued the White Paper of 1939 curbing Jewish immigration and land purchases and the refusal to house the 100,000 Jewish refugees in Palestine the British were left marked as the enemy of Zionism. The publication of the ACC report was to fuel the resumption of Jewish attacks on British targets culminating in the deadly King David Hotel Bombings. The Irgun and Haganah would coordinate an attack, bombing the British military and administrative headquarters. The explosion would be the single biggest terrorist attack against the British killing ninety one and injuring a further forty six (Morris 2008; Pappe 1992). On the back of a grueling war, strained Anglo-American relations, the Holocaust and continued terrorist attacks the British felt it could no longer offer a viable solution to the problems in Palestine and announced its withdrawal in February 1947, asking the UN to intervene, and left Palestine in May 1948. UN intervention resulted in the dispatchment and subsequent UNSCOP findings outlined above. However against the backdrop the 1948 Civil
War in Palestine the US support for Resolution 181 began to wither and a hint of US pro-Zionist policy reversal was imminent (Morris 2008). The US began to see its support for Zionism in relation to Arab resistance of partition, manifested in the violence during the Civil War. New historians argue that the Zionist, in perceiving this, decide to step up its war efforts to implement the conditions of Resolution 181, i.e. Arab transfer, in order to establish a *fait accompli* (Pappe 2006).

**The Palestinian Exodus – Miracle or Planned?**

One of the most contentious issues tackled by Israeli historians is the flight or expulsion of 750,000 Palestinian Arabs before and during the Civil War of 1948. Weizmann would refer to the Arab evacuation as “a miraculous clearing of the land: the miraculous simplification of Israel’s task” (Weizmann in Masalha 1992 p175). Israeli historians view this phenomenon as the result of Arab leaders ordering the evacuation of the Palestinian Arabs to make way for the regular Arab armies (Pappe 1992; Khalidi 2005). Khalidi in his painstakingly researched work, uses both Arab and Israeli archival material but could not find any evidence to ratify Israeli claims concluding “the Zionist offensive which caused the Arab exodus was a mixture of psychological and terrorist warfare” (Khalidi 2005 p49). Masalha further substantiates Khalidi’s claim of Zionist psychological and terrorist activity referring to Morris’ work on the IDF intelligence branch charging responsibility for the Arab exodus distributed as such “Haganah/IDF operations at least 55 percent; operations by IZL and Lehi 15 percent, the whispering campaign psychological warfare, evacuation ordered by IDF, and general fear 14 percent” (Morris in Masalha 1992 p179). Morris gives six major reasons for the exodus: “expulsion by Jewish forces…abandonment on Arab orders…fear of Jewish attack…whispering campaigns…and influence or fall of, or exodus from, neighbouring town” (Morris 1987 p xiv-xviii). Morris’ research reveals a general pattern of Palestinian flight based on his six reasons also adding the lack of Arab leadership, lack of political cohesion and a lack of confidence in their military (*Ibid* 1987). Morris, opposing official Israeli history, could not find any evidence to support the Israeli claim that the Palestinian fled on instructions from their leaders. Morris’ finding opened the debate about the Palestinian exodus whilst rendering Israeli claims obsolete. Furthermore, Morris’ argument also acknowledges the lack of Arab political infrastructure as a pivotal cause in their demise. Rather confusingly Morris chronicles in meticulous detail the systematic procedures
undertaken by Israeli forces to evacuated the Arabs from territories awarded to Israel by the UN and beyond however he famously concludes that “the Palestinian refugee problem was born of war not by design, Jewish or Arab” (Ibid p286). Morris has recognised the precision by which Israeli forces cleared the lands allotted to the Zionists by the UN and beyond, however, in the short-sighted summary above Morris attributes the Palestinian exodus to a by-product of war. Morris arrives at this conclusion as he failed to discover any generic “blanket order” issued by the JA or any Zionist organisation for that matter (Ibid p289).

Pappe explores the same avenues of contention as Morris, more often than not not arriving at the same conclusions however their main point of disagreement is Plan Delat or Plan D. Plan D was the Haganah’s master plan to secure Jewish areas allotted to the state of Israel by the UN Partition Plan and areas allotted to the Arab state in order to establish a fait accompli at the time of the declaration of independence. The introduction reads as follows: “The objective of this plan is to gain control of the areas of the Hebrew state and defend its borders. It also aims at gaining control of the areas of Jewish settlement and concentration which are located outside the borders…These operations can be carried out in the following manner: either by destroying villages (by setting fire to them, by blowing them up, and by planting mines in their rubble), and especially those population centres that are difficult to control permanently; or by mounting combing and control operations according to the following guidelines: encirclement of the villages, conducting a search inside them. In case of resistance, the armed forces must be wiped out and the population expelled outside the borders of the state.” (Khalidi 1988 p24-30). Furthermore Plan D called for the destruction of “enemy bases” which were in fact civilian villages where hostile actions had been launched against Jewish settlements and convoys (Pappe 1992 p92). The empowerment of regional commanders to destroy “enemy bases” passed responsibility to destroy civilian villages to an operational level thus removing accountability from the Zionist leaders. These “enemy bases” also included areas surrounding Jewish settlements and strategic routes, borders between the Jewish and Arab states as designed by the UN and territory awarded to the Arab state (Ibid 1992). Morris argues that since many villages had already been evacuated before the Jewish troops arrived there implementation of Plan D was not enforced therefore the responsibility for the Palestinian refugee problem is diminished (Morris 1990). Pappe rebuts Morris’ argument stating “in the final analysis, if I plan to throw someone out of my flat, the fact that he had left before I had the chance to expel him in no way alters the fact of my intention”
Pappe’s logical argument acknowledges that the intention to transfer the Arab population out of Israel’s UN prescribed borders, was prevalent within Zionist policy. Therefore regardless of who carried out the expulsion, the intention was there and responsibility must be acknowledged by the Zionists. nPappe concludes that Plan D was “a master plan for the expulsion of as many Palestinians as possible” (Ibid p94). In his latest work Morris claims that “Plan D itself was never launched, in an orchestrated fashion, by a formal leadership decision…in retrospect it is clear that the Haganah offensives in April and early May were piecemeal implementations of Plan D. But at the time, the dispersed units felt they were simply embarking on unconcerted operations geared to putting out fires in each locality and to meeting particular local challenges” (Morris 2008 p119). In conclusion Morris claims that “nowhere does the document speak of a policy or desire to expel “the Arab inhabitant” of Palestine or of any of its constituent region; nowhere is any brigade instructed to clear out “the Arabs” (Morris 2008 p121). Morris concedes that the Haganah offensives were comparable to the procedural implementations outlined in Plan D but since there is a lack of specific wording relating to the expulsion of the Arabs Plan D cannot be considered a master plan for the expulsion of the Palestinian Arabs. Even more confusingly Morris acknowledges the history of Zionist transfer discussion amongst leading Zionist figures and its prominence after the Peel Commission (Morris 2001). However Morris still maintains his original stance that the exodus of the Palestinians was a by-product of war and not a Zionist policy (Ibid). Khalidi seems equally perplexed by Morris’ conclusion writing “Morris…unequivocally and commendably confirms the deaths of the Arab evacuation orders…he mentions discussions before 1948 in the highest Zionist circles of the “transfer” of the Arab population, but he sees no like between this and Plan Dalet” (Khalidi 1988 p5). In challenging Morris further Parsons documents the IDF operation that expelled the Christian and Muslim population of the upper Galilee but not a single member in the Druze population was expelled. If, as Morris subscribes, the Palestinian exodus was the result of military necessity in “putting out fires” and more generally a by-product of war then this, Parsons argues, should effect all races within the given area (Parsons 2001). Since not a single member of the Druze population was expelled throughout the war, by implication, the Christian and certainly Arab populations were (Ibid). The question of Palestinian flight or expulsion has raged since Morris’ 1987 book, stimulating new insight as to the establishment of Israel and questioning its actions. Having looked at the evidence outlined by the new
historians and Palestinian writers, it is clear to the author that the idea of transfer within the Zionist school of thought has been a hallmark of Zionist policy, although not publicly declared until the Peel Commission it was certainly an issue addressed in private. However, if one were to look at the idea of Palestinian expulsion retrospectively one can see that Israel had a lot to gain from removing the Arabs from the areas designed for the Jewish state and further afield. The Israel-Syria Armistice Agreement brought an end to the 1948-49 war with Israel achieving an expansion to 55.5 percent of the territory of Palestine to 77 per cent this expansion of Israel saw the Palestinian population reduced from 900,000 to 150,000 (Davis 2003). The majority of the Palestinians who fled or were expelled have never been given permission by Israel to return nor has Israel ever acknowledged the right of these people to the title of their properties inside Israel. The Knesset – the Israeli legislature – passed the Absentee Property Law of 1950 appointing a custodian of absentee property for property of the Palestinian refugees including real estate, currency, financial instruments and other goods, and allows rental of such property as well as release and sale. Properties were generally sold to Israeli government organisations allowing overall control of these lands to fall within the control of the Zionist movement, who would ensure the reselling of the properties to Israeli settlers. Furthermore, of the 370 new Jewish settlements developed between 1948 and 1953, 350 of them were built on absentee property (Ibid). One third of Israeli population in 1954 settled in urban areas cleared out by Jewish troops (Ibid). Most of the Arab groves were taken over by custodians of the Absentee Property law and between 1951-52 400,000 boxes of Arab fruit was sent abroad earning Israel ten percent of the country’s foreign currency earnings from exports. The olive produce from abandoned Arab groves was Israelis third largest export. All this Arab income came at a critical time for the Jewish population as during this period the greatest immigration came to Israel resulting in the necessity for housing and other key utilities (Ibid). Israel’s expulsion of the Palestinian Arabs left them in a very healthy situation since they now commanded most the country they initially desired, consisted of the vast majority of the population and controlled some of the most lucrative businesses in the region.
Conclusion

The new historians, with their meticulous research of the events surrounding the 1948 Civil War and the Palestinian exodus, have cast a new light over the star of Israel. The traditional viewpoint of Israel as a “victim” has been overshadowed by a contentious debate calling into disrepute the very foundations of its existence. The new historians have shown the surgical precision of the Zionist movement from an ideology to its fundamental objective of statehood casting aside previously accepted Israeli history. New historians would show Zionism as an aggressive colonial movement relentless in its ambition for the development of a Jewish home in Palestine with disregard for the majority Arab population. The Civil War exemplified this. Israeli expanded its control over Palestine to 77 percent, of which it had the majority population Zionism thrived for and importantly Israel had secured international legitimacy. Moreover, on the back of diminishing international support for partition and the urgency of Zionists to establish a fait accompli, before the UN Partition Plan could be reversed, Plan D was executed. Zionism risked losing much of what it has tirelessly lobbied for throughout the twentieth century due to increased violence and Arab resistance to Resolution 181. Plan D offered the Zionists the option to finally execute a policy it had expressed throughout its history, namely the transfer of the Arab population, whilst salvaging their desires for statehood in Palestine. The Zionist achieved this salvation by forcefully expelling the majority of the Palestinian Arabs across its UN prescribed borders and capturing areas not allotted to the State of Israel, i.e. the Palestinian state. This perspective of Israel refutes traditional “victim” claims made by Zionists and supports the new historian’s claim of Zionism as an advocate of transfer and the cause of the Palestinian exodus of 1948. For Zionism however, Herzl’s objectives had been achieved within fifty years. The role of the British cannot be understated for they provided the initial platform for Zionist ambition. The Balfour Declaration and the British Mandate for Palestine put Zionist aspirations in Palestine ahead of that of the inhabitant Arab population catalysing Arab isolation and negligence within their own land for years to come. I contest that by the time UNSCOP was dispatched to Palestine it was too late for the Arabs. The Arabs full of self-righteous indignation, having for so long been ignored by the British of their rights to establish the same institutions as the Jews, refused constructive participate in any international fact finding research. Although the Arabs did not help themselves, since their lack of political and social cohesion rendered them
incapable by UNSCOP to present a viable case for Palestine, this was the overall affect of British favouritism towards the Zionists and the decimation by the British of the Arab political elite during the Arab Revolt. The cost of the establishment of the State of Israel came at a great price to the Palestinian Arabs as they ultimately made the biggest sacrifices. Palestinian Arabs lost the land of their ancestors, their homes, businesses, jobs and many paid with their lives and or the lives of family members. For those that survived the exodus the UN would attempt to seek their right to return enshrined in UN Resolution 194 however Israel would continually violate the resolution with very little consequence. At the time of writing Israeli-Palestinian peace talks have commenced after many years of cessation. Although the contentious issues are centered on events that concluded after the 1948 Civil War, the issues still encompass Arab opposition to Israeli expansion into territories allocated to the Palestinian state in Resolution 181. Furthermore factions still remain within the Arab political sphere with a lack of coherency in political strategy hindering Arab progression. If peace is to exist between the Israeli’s and the Palestinian’s today then Israel must be made accountable for the atrocities it committed upon the Palestinian Arab in 1948 and seek to compensate the Palestinians for their loss. Also, Israel must not be allowed to continually hide behind the pretense of “victim,” violating countless UN resolutions and declaring itself a constant state of emergency. Israeli policy serves no one for it consistently puts its Jewish citizens at risk of violent Arab attacks and suppresses the rights of the Palestinian Arabs. Approximately one million Palestinians live within the borders of Israel, suppressed by a system that considers them second class citizens and denies them many of the fundamental human rights afforded to them by international law, encapsulated precisely by Archbishop Desmond Tutu: “I’ve been deeply distressed in my visit to the Holy Land; it reminded me so much of what happened to us black people in South Africa” (Tutu in Guardian newspaper April 2002).

References


