
IIT KHARAGPUR MODEL UNITED NATIONS CONFERENCE

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**STUDY GUIDE,
HISTORIC GENERAL ASSEMBLY**





Historic General Assembly

Agenda: The Question of Palestine

Letter from the Executive Board

Dear Delegates,

It is with great pleasure that we welcome you to the first edition of the IIT Kharagpur Model United Nations Conference. We are excited to welcome you to one of the most interesting simulations at IIT KGP MUN, the Historic General Assembly which shall be deliberating on the Palestinian question.

As you all must be aware, whilst simulating the Historic General Assembly, we shall be going back in history to 1st November, 1947, which shall also be the freeze date. We shall be assuming to be in this current time frame and only events occurring before this freeze date shall be considered. Any event, document, statement etc after the freeze date shall be deemed to have not occurred.

Chairperson:
Gufran Pathan

Vice-Chairperson:
Sahil Arora

Director:
Rudraneel
Chattopadhyay

The 1st of November, 1947 was a very important date in the history of Palestine and the events occurring thereafter were directly responsible for the current situation in Palestine and the conflict there. In this respect, a great deal of political maturity and understanding of the dynamics prevailing then is required. Furthermore, in your pursuance to reach a decision, we do not, and I reiterate, DO NOT expect delegates to follow the same course of events as had occurred back then. At the same time, we do not expect that your decisions have to be different. Pursue your foreign policies to the fullest and do what you think serves the interests of your nations and serves world peace best.

This document attempts to give you an overview of the situation during and before 1947 and the events that lead up to it. It is not an exhaustive document and we expect delegates to refer to other sources too. Several documents have been archived and much has been talked about the situation leading up to 1947 vis a vis the Palestinian question.

Should you have any doubts, feel free to shoot us a mail. We will be happy to answer any queries that you may have.

Looking forward to seeing you in Kharagpur come January.

Humbly yours,
Executive Board.

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The history of the Israeli–Palestinian conflict covers from the end of the 19th century to the present day. The Israeli-Palestinian conflict centers on conflicting, often mutually exclusive claims to the area called Palestine by the Palestinians and the Land of Israel by Israeli Jews.

Origins

There has been a dispute over the religious right to the Land of Israel, which is historically sacred to both Muslims and Jews. The latter believe that it was the 'promised land', granted to Isaac, one of the sons of Abraham, and the patriarch of the Jews. Muslims believe that the Jews changed and distorted the facts of the Bible to establish themselves as heirs to the land of Israel. According to them, as mentioned in the Koran, the Abrahamic covenant, including the title deed to Israel, was passed down to the Arabs through Ishmael, one of Abraham's other sons, from whom the Muslims claim descent.

From about 1300 BCE to the 1st century BCE, this place was ruled by the Israelites, who are considered the fore-runners of the modern Jews, till the conquering of Jerusalem by the Romans pushed them into the European Diaspora. They remained an ethnic majority in the area till the 7th century CE. Later on, the Muslims came to rule those lands after Saladin's victory in 1187 deposed the Crusader kingdom of Jerusalem, and ultimately the Ottoman Turks had control till the early 20th century. Therefore, the Muslims also have the additional right of conquest as part of their claim.

Early indications (1897-1915)

In 1897, Theodor Herzl, the founder of modern political Zionism, organized the first ever Zionist Congress, at which was announced the goal of establishing a legally assured home for the Jewish people in the Land of Israel. Convinced that the long history of oppression and persecution of Jews would not stop until Jews could live in a land of their own, these early Zionists committed themselves to a return to their ancient homeland.

After this resolution, two rabbis were sent to survey the country of Palestine – they reported that 'the bride was beautiful, but married to another man'. This was indicative of their awareness that they were potentially encroaching upon another civilization. In fact, some early Zionists feared that conflict with the Arabs would be unavoidable, while others were optimistic that the latter would be happy to see them as they were bringing with them European expertise. However, 2 years later, the Arab mayor of Jerusalem begged them to leave Palestine alone, warning that there would be an Arab uprising if they did not. It was around that time that relations between the two civilizations, which till this point had been cordial if not favourable, began to deteriorate, and swiftly at that.

McMahon-Hussein Correspondence

The McMahon–Hussein Correspondence, or the Hussein-McMahon Correspondence, was a protracted exchange of letters (July 14, 1915 to January 30, 1916)[1] during World War I, between the Sharif of Mecca, Husayn bin Ali, and Sir Henry McMahon, British High

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Commissioner in Egypt, concerning the future political status of the lands under the Ottoman Empire. The Arab side was already looking toward a large revolt (which did not eventuate) against the Ottoman Empire and the British encouraged the Arabs to revolt and thus hamper the Ottoman Empire, which had become a German ally in the War after November 1914. [2] The documents declared that the Arabs would revolt in alliance with the United Kingdom and in return the UK will recognize the Arab independence (in the Asian part of the Arab World). Later, in 1917 Sykes–Picot Agreement between France and UK was exposed where the two countries

were planning to split and occupy parts of the promised Arab country.

Sykes-Picot Agreement and the Balfour Declaration (1917-18)

The Sykes-Picot agreement is a secret understanding concluded in May 1916, during World War I, between Great Britain and France, with the assent of Russia, for the dismemberment of the Ottoman Empire. The agreement led to the division of Turkish-held Syria, Iraq, Lebanon, and Palestine into various French and British-administered areas. The agreement took its name from its negotiators, Sir Mark Sykes of Britain and Georges Picot of France.

Britain was allocated control of areas roughly comprising the coastal strip between the sea and River Jordan, today's Jordan, southern Iraq, and a small area including the ports of Haifa and Acre, to allow access to the Mediterranean. France was allocated control of south-eastern Turkey, northern Iraq, Syria and Lebanon. Russia was to get Constantinople, the Turkish Straits and the Ottoman Armenian vilayets. The agreement was leaked by the Bolsheviks in October 1917 during the Russian Revolution, which led to major embarrassment on the part of the British, primarily because it contradicted to a great extent the McMahon-Hussein Correspondence that was responsible for the deposing of the Ottomans in the first place.

Some historians have pointed out that the agreement conflicted with pledges already given by the British to the Hashimite leader Husayn ibn Ali, Sharif of Mecca, who was about to lead an Arab revolt in the Hejaz against the Ottoman rulers on the understanding that the Arabs would eventually receive a much more important share of the territory won.

The Balfour Declaration of 1917 was the first significant declaration by a world power in favour of a Jewish "national home" in what was known as Palestine.

Historians disagree as to what the then British Foreign Secretary, Arthur James Balfour, intended by his declaration. The letter has no mention of the word "state", and insists that nothing should be done "which may prejudice the civil and religious rights of existing non-Jewish communities in Palestine".

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The letter was addressed to Lord Rothschild, a leader of the Jewish community in Britain. It became an important arm of the movement to create a Jewish state in Palestine.

Faizal-Weizmann Agreement (1919)

This represented a short period of co-operation between the Arabs and the Jews; it was signed by Emir Faisal, the son of Sharif Hussein, and the then King of Syria, and Chaim Weizmann, one of the prominent Zionist leaders and later President of the World Zionist Organisation. Formed as part of the Paris Peace Conference of 1919 in the aftermath of World War I, the agreement dealt with the future of Arab-Jew relations as desired by these leaders – “Mindful of the racial kinship and ancient bonds existing between the Arabs and the Jewish people,” it said, “and realizing that the surest means of working out the consummation of their national aspirations through the closest possible collaboration in the development of the Arab states and Palestine.” Furthermore, the agreement looked to the fulfilment of the Balfour Declaration and called for all necessary measures “...to encourage and stimulate immigration of Jews into Palestine on a large scale, and as quickly as possible to settle Jewish immigrants upon the land through closer settlement and intensive cultivation of the soil.”

The agreement did not survive for long, however. The secret Sykes-Picot agreement interfered with the formation of the vast Arab state that Faisal had expected, and that made him hesitant about co-operating with the Jews. Moreover, the expulsion of Faisal from Damascus, the Syrian capital, by the French forces signalled a death knell for this pact.

As tensions rose, hostilities started breaking out. The first violent incident was at Tel Hai in March 1920, followed by the riots in Palestine later that year. During that year's celebration of the holiday of Nabi Musa ("the Prophet Moses") in Jerusalem, inflammatory speeches led to a wide outbreak of violence in Jerusalem, and by the middle of the morning of April 4, Jews had already been victims of attacks. The Arab crowds were whipped into frenzy, ransacking the Jewish Quarter, attacking pedestrians, destroying Jewish shops and homes, and raiding the Torah Chaim Yeshiva, where they ripped Torah scrolls and then set the building on fire. Later that year, disaster struck again. In May of 1921, the "Jaffa Riots" began when two rival groups - the Jewish Communist Party and the Ahdut HaAvoda - met as they were each parading, and a fistfight broke out along the road from Jaffa to Tel Aviv.

Churchill's White Paper and British Mandate (1922)

The 1922 White Paper (also called the Churchill White Paper, after Colonial Secretary Winston Churchill) was the first official manifesto from the British Government interpreting the Balfour Declaration and the Palestine Mandate. It was issued on June 3, 1922, after investigation of the Arab riots of 1920-1921. Although Churchill's name is associated with the paper, it was largely influenced by the High Commissioner for Palestine, Sir Herbert Samuel. The White Paper stated that Britain stood by the Balfour Declaration, and that the Declaration “is not susceptible of change”. The document reiterated the considerable progress that the Zionists had made in building a community with “national characteristics”, but made clear that

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the British did not support a separate nation as a Jewish National Home, only a continuation of the community within the Palestine region. This White Paper also established a new principle as a factor for determining an immigration quota of Jews to Palestine. The White Paper confirmed the right of Jewish immigration but stipulated that this should not exceed the economic absorptive capacity of the country, an arbitrary standard that gave the British wide latitude to limit the influx of Jews.

The British Mandate for Palestine was a legal commission for the administration of Palestine, the draft of which was formally confirmed by the Council of the League of Nations on 24 July 1922 and which came into effect on 26 September 1923. The stated objective was to put into effect the Balfour Declaration made 'by the Government of His Britannic Majesty, and adopted by the said Powers, in favour of the establishment in Palestine of a national home for the Jewish people, it being clearly understood that nothing should be done which might prejudice the civil and religious rights of existing non-Jewish communities in Palestine, or the rights and political status enjoyed by Jews in any other country'. However, the British were shrewd in their dealings. The area of the Mandate was originally 118,000 square kilometres (about 45,000 square miles). In 1921, Britain took the 91,000 square kilometres of the Palestine Mandate east of the Jordan River, and created Trans-Jordan (later the Arab country of Jordan) as a new Arab protectorate under Emir Abdullah. Jews were barred by law from living or owning property east of the Jordan River, even though that land was over three-fourths of the original Mandate. Basically, the area available for a Jewish homeland was reduced by over 75%.

The 1920s and 30s

In the wake of the riots of 1920 and 1921, the Jews felt that the British, who had been given the Palestinian mandate, could not be relied upon to protect their interest. Thus they formed the Haganah or 'The Defence' in the early 1920s, which was the militant wing of the Yishuv, or Jewish leadership. The situation from 1922 to 1928 was relatively peaceful. However, in late 1928 a new phase of violence began with minor disputes between Jews and Arabs about the right of Jews to pray at the [Western Wall \(Kotel\) in Jerusalem](#). These arguments led to an outbreak of Arab violence in August 1929 when Haj Amin al-Husseini, Mufti of Jerusalem, fomented Arab hatred by accusing the Jews of endangering the mosques and other sites holy to Islam. On August 22, 1929 the leaders of the Yishuv met with the British Deputy High Commissioner to alert him of their fears of a large Arab riot. The British officials assured them that the government was in control of the situation. The following day the Riots of 1929 erupted throughout the Palestine Mandate, lasting for seven days. On Friday, August 23, Arab mobs attacked Jews in Jerusalem, Motza, Hebron, Safed, Jaffa, and other parts of the country. The Old City of Jerusalem was hit particularly hard. By the next day, the Haganah was able to mount a defence and further attacks in Jerusalem were repulsed. But, the violence in Jerusalem generated rumours throughout the country, many carrying fabricated accounts of Jewish attempts to defile Muslim holy places, all to inflame the Arab residents. While attacks on Jews in Tel Aviv and Haifa were thwarted by Jewish defences, there were Jewish deaths in Hebron, where 67 Jewish men and women were slaughtered and Safed, where 18 Jews were killed, as

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well as scattered other losses, totalling 133 Jewish deaths, with more than 300 wounded.

The British Colonial Secretary, Lord Passfield, announced the formation of a Commission of Inquiry, called the Shaw Commission, which began its investigation of the riots in September 1929. A British expert, John Hope-Simpson, was engaged to study the matter, which led to the publication of the Hope-Simpson Report, and simultaneously the issuing of a new policy whitepaper by Lord Passfield - the 1930 White Paper, both of which could be said to greatly favour the Arabs. According to the report, Arab farmers were suffering from severe economic difficulties. Many were tenant farmers who owed large amounts of money and lacked the means to ensure successful agricultural endeavours. Others were simply unemployed. The report indicated that the Jewish policy of hiring only Jews was responsible for the deplorable conditions in which the Arabs found themselves. Due to these conditions, it recommended the cessation of Jewish immigration.

The Passfield White Paper was a formal statement of British policy in Palestine. The Hope-Simpson Report had recommended that such a statement be made, in the hopes of clarifying unresolved questions concerning the British Mandate for Palestine and the Balfour Declaration. The paper was issued in October 1930. Contrary to Zionist claims, the White Paper stated that the development of a Jewish National Home in Palestine was not considered central to the mandate. However, the paper claims that the British did intend to fulfil their obligations to both Arabs and Jews, and would resolve any conflicts that might surface as a result of their respective needs. The paper's tone, however, was decidedly anti-Jewish. Several Jewish institutions were severely criticized, among them the Histadrut (General Federation of Labor) and the Jewish Agency. Both the Histadrut and the Jewish Agency promoted Jewish employment of only Jewish labor. Like the Hope-Simpson Report, the Passfield White Paper found this policy damaging to the economic development of the Arab population. Jews who had purchased considerable tracts of land would be allowed to develop them, but would thereafter need to secure permission of the British authorities before acquiring additional land. Further violence against the Jews was brought about by the formation of the Black Hand, which was an Arab militant organization against both the Jews and the British. Founded by Sheikh Izz ad-Din al-Qassam, an erstwhile preacher at the Independence Mosque in Haifa, this group comprised of Arab peasants who had been recruited and trained for warfare. The Black Hand did not last long, disbanding after the death of its leader al-Qassam in a fire-fight with British police outside a cave in Jenin, in 1935. However, it did provide inspiration for another major event in this area shortly after – the Arab Revolt of 1936-39.

The Arab Revolt in Palestine (1936-39) and related events

In April 1936, riots broke out in Jaffa commencing a three-year period of violence and civil strife in Palestine that is known as the Arab Revolt. In that month, six prominent Arab leaders overcame their rivalries and joined forces to protest Zionist advances in Palestine. The Arab High Command, as the group was known, was led by the Mufti Haj Amin al-Husseini, and represented Arab interests in Palestine until 1948. They began by proclaiming an Arab general strike and a boycott of Jewish enterprises and products. They made demands on the

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British Mandate administration, principally a cease to Jewish immigration, of transfer of land to Jewish owners, and a more organized government which represented the Arab majority. The strike quickly led to a campaign of terror against Jewish people and lands. Seventeen Jews were killed the first day, with little action by the British to stop the rioters. Sparked by the Mufti's agitators, armed bands of Arab terrorists attacked Jewish villages and vehicles, as well as British Army and police forces. By August 1936, responding more to attacks on British assets than to the Jewish losses, the British began a military crack-down on the Arab terrorists. There was a temporary halt to the strike in October 1936.

In September 1939, the British greatly stepped up operations in Palestine and cracked down on the revolt with their fullest force, quelling it quite comprehensively. By the end of this conflict, thousands of Arabs, and hundreds of Jews and British people had perished. Of course, that would pale in comparison to the devastation that was to occur in World War II soon after.

World War II and the aftermath

The matters of the Arab-Israeli Conflict and the formation of a Jewish National home in Palestine were to some extent overshadowed by the ensuing chaos and depravity in Nazi dominated Europe, once the large-scale genocide of Jews began. Though the Jews were giving the British military support in World War II, the latter did not allow immigration even then, even for escaping from persecution in Europe. The aftermath of the War, led to even bigger, more pressing issues with regard to this matter. It strongly forwarded the case for a Jewish state, because of the outpour of sympathy, and the question of what to do with the survivors – the Jewish refugees from Europe who numbered about 100,000 or so, and who needed considerable rest and rehabilitation.

The Anglo-American Committee of Inquiry was established in 1945 in order to review the issue of Jewish immigration to Palestine. US President Truman repeatedly called for the British to allow the Jewish refugees into Palestine. A joint commission to study the crisis was proposed by the British in response to this. It heard testimony from witnesses in Washington, London, Europe, and the Middle East. The Zionists demanded the immediate establishment of a Jewish Commonwealth in Palestine. They echoed Truman's call for certificates of immigration to be issued to Jewish refugees from Nazi-ravaged Europe. The Zionists also argued that the regulation of Jewish immigration should be transferred from the British to the Jewish Agency. The Arabs, on the other hand, called for the establishment of an independent Arab state, and end to Jewish immigration, and a cessation of all land sales to Jews. In May 1946, the Committee of Inquiry unanimously declared its opposition to the White Paper of 1939 and proposed, among other recommendations, that the immigration to Palestine of 100,000 European Jews be authorized at once. However, the British Mandate Authority rejected the proposal, stating that such immigration was impossible while armed organizations in Palestine—both Arab and Jewish—were fighting the authority and disrupting public order.

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A Modern Rendition of an Ancient Motif

The origin of the term "Zionism" is the biblical word "Zion", often used as a synonym for Jerusalem and the Land of Israel (Eretz Yisrael). Zionism is an ideology which expresses the yearning of Jews the world over for their historical homeland - Zion, the Land of Israel.

The aspiration of returning to their homeland was first held by Jews exiled to Babylon some 2,500 years ago - a hope which subsequently became a reality. ("By the water of Babylon, there we sat down and wept when we remembered Zion." Psalms 137:1). Thus political Zionism, which coalesced in the 19th century, invented neither the concept nor the practice of return. Rather, it appropriated an ancient idea and an ongoing active movement, and adapted them to meet the needs and spirit of the times.

The core of the Zionist idea appears in Israel's Declaration of Independence (14 May 1948), which states, inter alia, that:

"The Land of Israel was the birthplace of the Jewish people. Here their spiritual, religious and political identity was shaped. Here they first attained to statehood, created cultural values of national and universal significance and gave to the world the eternal Book of Books.

After being forcibly exiled from their land, the people kept faith with it throughout their dispersion and never ceased to pray and hope for their return to it and for the restoration in it of their political freedom."

Historical Link between the Jewish People and its Land

The idea of Zionism is based on the long connection between the Jewish people and its land, a link which began almost 4,000 years ago when Abraham settled in Canaan, later known as the Land of Israel. About 1000 BCE, King David made Jerusalem the country's capital and some 40 years later, his son, King Solomon, built there the Temple to the One God, making Jerusalem the spiritual as well as the political centre of the nation. Over 400 years of independence under the Davidic dynasty ended in 586 BCE when the country was conquered by the Babylonians, who destroyed the Temple and exiled most of the people. However, before the century was over the Jews returned, rebuilt the Temple and restored Jewish life in the Land. For the next centuries, they knew varying degrees of self-rule under Persian (538-333 BCE) and Hellenistic (322-142 BCE) overlordship, independence under the Hasmonean dynasty (142-63 BCE) and then increasingly oppressive domination by the Romans beginning in 63 BCE. When the Jews were prevented from carrying out their traditional religious way of life, they launched a series of uprisings, which climaxed in the revolt of 66 CE.

After four years of fighting, Rome put down the Jewish Revolt and burned the Temple to the ground. Many thousands of Jews were killed, sold into slavery and dispersed to countries near and far. The only remnant of the entire Temple compound was the Western Wall, which became a place of pilgrimage and worship for Jews, and remains so to the present time.

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In 132 CE, another Jewish revolt, which restored Jewish sovereignty for three years, was cruelly suppressed, claiming thousands of lives. To stamp out the Jewish connection to the Land of Israel, the Romans renamed the country Palaestina.

The small Jewish community which remained in the Land gradually recovered. Institutional and communal life was reconstructed to meet the new situation without the unifying framework of the state and the Temple. Priests were replaced by rabbis, and in the absence of a central place of worship, the synagogue became the nucleus of each of the scattered communities.

Between 636 and 1096, the Jewish community in the Land diminished considerable and lost some of its organizational and religious cohesiveness, mainly due to increased social and economic discrimination under Arab centuries, reinforced from time to time by Jews returning from the Diaspora, the countries of their dispersion.

Aliya (Jewish immigration to the Land of Israel) from North Africa took place in 1191-1198 and a trickle of Jewish refugees from the Spanish Inquisition came in the late 15th century. Others, fleeing pogroms in the Ukraine, came in the mid-17th century. In the same century, a messianic movement arose under Shabbatai Zevi of Izmir with some of its adherents settling in the Land. They were followed in 1700 by hundreds of Hasidic Jews who arrived from Eastern Europe. The flow of aliya in the 18th and the first part of the 19th centuries was significant enough to make the Jews of Jerusalem the largest religious community in the city by 1844. Thus the great waves of Zionist immigration, which began in 1882 and continued throughout the 20th century, were preceded over the years by many small, sporadic influxes of Jews into the country.

Basic Concepts of Zionism

Central to Zionist thought is the concept of the Land of Israel as the historical birthplace of the Jewish people and the belief that Jewish life elsewhere is a life of exile. Moses Hess, in his book "Roma and Jerusalem" (1844) expresses this idea:

"Two periods of time shaped the development of Jewish civilization: the first, after the liberation from Egypt, and the second, the return from Babylon. The third shall come with the redemption from the third exile."

Over centuries in the Diaspora, the Jews maintained a strong and unique relationship with their historical homeland, and manifested their yearning for Zion through rituals and literature. In prayer, the Jewish worshipper is instructed to face east, towards the Land of Israel. In the morning service, Jews say "Bring us in peace from the four corners of the earth and lead us upright to our land." Worshippers repeatedly recite, "Blessed are You, O Lord, Who builds Jerusalem," and "Blessed are You O Lord, Who returns His presence to Zion." The grace after meals includes a blessing which ends with a prayer for the rebuilding of "Jerusalem, the Holy City, speedily and in our days." In the marriage ceremony, the bridegroom seeks to "elevate Jerusalem to the forefront of our joy." At a circumcision the following is recited from the

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Psalms "If I forget you, O Jerusalem, may my right hand wither." On Passover, every Jew declares, "Next year in Jerusalem." At times of mourning, the bereaved are comforted with mention of the Land of Israel: "Blessed are You, O Lord, Consoler of Zion and Builder of Jerusalem." The longing of the Jewish people to return to its Land was also expressed in prose and poetry in Hebrew and in other Jewish languages, which evolved over the centuries, Yiddish in Eastern Europe and Ladino in Spain.

Anti-Semitism as a Factor in Shaping Zionism

While Zionism expresses the historical link binding the Jewish people to the Land of Israel, modern Zionism might not have arisen as an active national movement in the 19th century without contemporary antisemitism considered in a continuum of centuries of persecution.

Time and again, the Jews of Europe were persecuted and massacred, sometimes on religious grounds, sometimes for economic reasons, sometimes on social pretexts, and sometimes for national and "racial" rationales. Jews were slaughtered by the Crusaders when the latter made their way across Europe to the Holy Land (11th-12th centuries), massacred during the Black Death for allegedly poisoning wells (14th century), burned at the stake in the Spanish Inquisition (15th century) and murdered by Chmelnicki's Cossacks in the Ukraine (17th century). Hundreds of thousands of Jews were killed by the armies of Danikin and Petlura in the Russian civil war which followed World War I. The most infamous atrocity of all, the Nazi Holocaust in which some six million Jews were systematically annihilated mainly on "racial" grounds, was perpetrated by Germans, in whose country the Jews had made their most serious attempt to achieve acceptance and social assimilation.

Over the centuries, Jews were expelled from almost every European country - Germany and France, Portugal and Spain, England and Wales - a cumulative experience which had a profound impact, especially in the 19th century when Jews had abandoned hope of fundamental change in their lives. Out of this milieu came Jewish leaders who turned to Zionism as a result of the virulent antisemitism in the societies surrounding them. Thus Moses Hess, shaken by the blood libel of Damascus (1844), became the father of Zionist socialism; Leon Pinsker, shocked by the pogroms (1881-1882) which followed the assassination of Czar Alexander II, assumed leadership in the Hibbat Zion movement; and Theodor Herzl, who as a journalist in Paris experienced the venomous antisemitic campaign of the Dreyfus case (1896), organized Zionism into a political movement.

The Zionist movement aimed to solve the "Jewish problem," the problem of a perennial minority, a people subjected to repeated pogroms and persecution, a homeless community whose alienism was underscored by discrimination wherever Jews settled. Zionism aspired to deal with this situation by effecting a return to the historical homeland of the Jews - Land of Israel.

In fact, most of the waves of Aliya in the modern age were in direct response to acts of murder and discrimination against Jews. The First Aliya followed pogroms in Russia in the

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1880s. The Second Aliya was spurred by the Kishinev pogrom and a string of massacres in the Ukraine and Belorussia at the turn of the century. The Third Aliya occurred after the slaughter of Jews in the Russian civil war. The Fourth Aliya originated in Poland in the 1920s after the Grawski legislation infringed on Jewish economic activity. The Fifth Aliya was composed of German and Austrian Jews fleeing Nazism.

After the State of Israel was established (1948), mass immigrations were still linked to discrimination and oppression - Holocaust survivors from Europe, refugees from Arab countries escaping the persecution which followed the establishment of the state, the remnants of Polish Jewry who fled the country when antisemitism reignited at the time of Gomulka and Muzcar, and the Jews of Russia and other former Soviet republic who feared a new spasm of antisemitism with the breakup of the Soviet Union. The history of the waves of Aliya provides strong proof for the Zionist argument that a Jewish state in the Land of Israel, with a Jewish majority, is the only solution to the "Jewish problem."

Rise of Political Zionism

Political Zionism, the national liberation movement of the Jewish people, emerged in the 19th century within the context of the liberal nationalism then sweeping through Europe. This era, which began with a movement in Greece to free itself from the yoke of Ottoman occupation and included national liberation movements in Ireland, Norway, Poland, Czechoslovakia, Germany, Italy and later on in the century, Turkey and India, also inspired Zionist leaders, as evidenced by many references to the national struggles of other peoples in the writings of the founders of Zionism. Liberal nationalism usually aspired to two basic goals: liberation from foreign rule, (as in the case of Poland, Greece and Ireland) and national unity in countries which had been partitioned into many political entities (Italy and Germany). Its motto was "A state for every nation, and the entire nation in one state."

Zionism synthesized the two goals, liberation and unity, by aiming to free the Jews from hostile and oppressive alien rule and to re-establish Jewish unity by gathering Jewish exiles from the four corners of the world to the Jewish homeland.

The rise of Zionism as a political movement was also a response to the failure of the Haskala, the Jewish Enlightenment, to solve the "Jewish problem." According to Zionist doctrine, the reason for this failure was that personal emancipation and equality were impossible without national emancipation and equality, since national problems require national solutions. The Zionist national solution was the establishment of a Jewish national state with a Jewish majority in the historical homeland, thus realizing the Jewish people's right to self-determination. Zionism did not consider the "normalization" of the Jewish condition contrary to universal aims and values. It advocated the right of every people on earth to its own home, and argued that only a sovereign and autonomous people could become an equal member of the family of nations.

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Zionism: A Pluralistic Movement

Although Zionism was basically a political movement aspiring to a return to the Jewish homeland with freedom, independence, statehood and security for the Jewish people, it also promoted a reassertion of Jewish culture. An important element in this reawakening was the revival of Hebrew, long restricted to liturgy and literature, as a living national language, for use in government and the military, education and science, the market and the street.

Like any other nationalism, Zionism interrelated with other ideologies, resulting in the formation of Zionist currents and subcurrents. The combination of nationalism and liberalism gave birth to liberal Zionism; the integration of socialism gave rise to socialist Zionism; the blending of Zionism with deep religious faith resulted in religious Zionism; and the influence of European nationalism inspired a rightist-nationalism which also espouse various liberal, traditional, socialist (leftist) and conservative (rightist) leanings.

Zionism and the 'Arab Problem'

Most of the founders of Zionism knew that Palestine (the Land of Israel) had an Arab population (though some spoke naively of "a land without a people for a people without a land") Still, only few regarded the Arab presence as a real obstacle to the fulfillment of Zionism. At that time in the late 19th century, Arab nationalism did not yet exist in any form, and the Arab population of Palestine was sparse and apolitical. Many Zionist leaders believed that since the local community was relatively small, friction between it and the returning Jews could be avoided; they were also convinced that the subsequent development of the country would benefit both peoples, thus earning Arab endorsement and cooperation. However, these hopes were not fulfilled.

Contrary to the declared positions and expectations of the Zionist ideologists who had aspired to achieve their aims by peaceful means and cooperation, the renewed Jewish presence in the Land met with militant Arab opposition. For some time many Zionists found it hard to understand and accept the depth and intensity of the dispute, which became in fact a clash between two peoples both regarding the country as their own - the Jews by virtue of their historical and spiritual connection, and the Arabs because of their centuries-long presence in the country.

The need to grapple with Arab violence towards the Jewish community and to find the appropriate response to the mounting dispute gave rise to three main approaches to the "Arab problem" within the Zionist movement: minimalism, maximalism and realism.

The minimalists held that the land belongs to both peoples; thus Zionism cannot be realized without the prior consent of the other nation. They sought a dialogue with local Arabs and rejected the Zionism establishment's approach based on negotiations with outside powers and the leaders of the Arab states. To secure a Jewish-Arab agreement, the minimalists were willing to renounce the establishment of a Jewish state and accept in its stead a binational state based on social and political parity of Jews and Arabs.

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At the opposite extreme were the maximalists, who believed that the national struggle between the two peoples would have to be resolved by force. They rejected the presumption of Arab national rights in the Land of Israel, noting that the Arabs had never had a state in Palestine. They saw no need to negotiate with local Arabs, and their hope was to acquire the entire country either through diplomatic contacts with outside powers or by armed force.

The realists, who comprised the largest Zionist grouping, were dividing into liberal and socialist subgroups. The realists did not believe it possible to avert altogether a conflict with the Arabs, but thought it possible to attenuate the conflict by taking moderate positions. Like the minimalists, they favored negotiations with local Arabs and supported the development of the country for the benefit of all its inhabitants. However, they were unwilling to compromise on Zionist goals - a Jewish majority in the Land of Israel through unrestricted Aliya, and the establishment of a Jewish state. In contrast to the maximalists, they sought a dialogue with Arabs in Palestine and abroad, and were willing to consider compromises.

The socialist realist (represented most prominently by David Ben-Gurion Israel's first prime minister) based their agenda on the belief that a Jewish economy could not develop without Jewish agriculture and industry, and that without an autonomous economy there would be neither a society nor a state. Adherents of this group also advocated respect of Arab rights, and, for many years they believed that the Jewish and Arab proletariat shared a common class interest against the Jewish bourgeoisie and Arab feudalism. However, most of them eventually reached the conclusion that the struggle was one of nationalities, not of classes.

During the year 1936-47, the struggle over the Land of Israel grew more intense. Arab opposition became more extreme with the increased growth and development of the Jewish community. At the same time, the Zionist movement felt it necessary to increase immigration and develop the country's economic infrastructure, in order to save as many Jews as possible from the Nazi inferno in Europe.

The unavoidable clash between the Jews and the Arabs brought the UN to recommend, on 29 November 1947 - the establishment of two states in the area west of the Jordan River - one Jewish and one Arab. The Jews accepted the resolution; the Arabs rejected it.

On May 14, 1948, in accordance with the UN resolution of November 1947, the State of Israel was established.

Further Reading - About Zionism

Zionism into the 21st Century

The establishment of the State of Israel marked the realization of the Zionist goal of attaining an internationally recognized, legally secured home for the Jewish people in its historic homeland, where Jews would be free from persecution and able to develop their own lives and identity.

Since 1948, Zionism has seen its task as continuing to encourage the "ingathering of the exiles" which at times has called for extraordinary efforts to rescue endangered (physically and spiritually) Jewish communities. It also strives to preserve the unity and continuity of the Jewish people as well as to focus on the centrality of Israel in Jewish life everywhere.

Down through the centuries, the wish for the restoration of the Jewish people in the Land of Israel has been a thread binding the Jewish people together. Jews everywhere accept Zionism as a fundamental tenet of Judaism, support the State of Israel as the basic realization of Zionism and are enriched culturally, socially and spiritually by the fact of Israel - a member of the family of nations and a vibrant, creative accomplishment of the Jewish spirit.

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4. Churchill's White Paper -
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Concerns to Ponder Upon

If there is no partition of Palestine:

- ✦ Who will constitute the future government of Palestine? What type of government will it be?
- ✦ What will be the political status of the minorities in Palestine? What about the Jews who are refugees from World War II?

If there is partition:

- ✦ How can this partition be conceived and implemented justly, particularly in the matters of division of the population and communal property?
- ✦ What is to be done with the locations that are of religious significance to both Arabs and Jews?

Given that the British failed in the execution of the Palestine Mandate, and in many instances, precipitated violence, directly or indirectly, will they be held to account? How?

Is Palestine mature enough to decide its own fate?

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