A Rough Start in Establishment

Isaac Silverman

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At the conclusion of WWII, the victorious nations began to reshape the post-war world. A large part of this reformation was the replacement of empires with independently sovereign states. Israel was among numerous other British and French colonies to undergo decolonization in the late 1940s and '50s. In what ways was the decolonization of Israel similar and different in comparison to the other newly decolonized states such as India? By analyzing the recent history of the territory and the global situation transitioning from the post-war period to the Cold War at the time, it becomes apparent that the environment in which Israel was created can be attributed much blame for the current state of Israel.

Throughout the years leading from the 16th century to post-WWII, over half the world's population lived within colonial empires, all of which were on the hunt to acquire additional territory. The territories of India and Palestine were no different, both under British occupation. The British established rule in India in 1858 and began using it for its resources. They argued that both peoples there, Islamic and Hindu, were not to have sovereignty as they were not civilized, and it was their job to rule over and civilize them. Gandhi published his Hind Swaraj in 1909, arguing against that notion and turned it around on the British, claiming them to be the uncivilized ones. The British would be able to hold onto the territory until 1947 when it was decolonized. However, the British's poor job at establishing order in India led to problems then.[1]

In 1916, the control over Palestine's territory transferred from the Ottoman's to the British as a result of the Hussein-McMahon Correspondence. This deal promised Arabs all land west of Damascus in return of Arab troops' assistance in toppling the Ottoman Empire for British territorial claim. The Arabs did so, but because of the deal's vagueness, the Arabs argued that it included Palestine.[2] This, however, contradicted the 1917 Balfour Declaration, which Britain would agree to, in which they promised a Jewish "home." The League of Nations put an end to all of these arrangements when they created mandates for all of the territories of fallen empires acquired by the remaining empires. The British were supposed to leave Palestine to the group of people living there after they'd established their own government, but who would the British allot the territory to though, the Jews or Arabs? After years of revolt by the Arabs, in addition to the ease of leaving the territory in an Arab majority, and wanting to gain favor in the eyes of the surrounding Arab nations, the British issued the McDonald White Papers in 1939 to allow more Jews into the territory, therefore establishing the Jewish "home" agreed upon in

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[1] http://www.inquiriesjournal.com/articles/5/decolonization-and-the-collapse-of-the-british-empire
[2] https://www.britannica.com/topic/Husayn-McMahon-correspondence

the Balfour Declaration, and leaving the Arabs happy. Zionists were left disgruntled as it seemed their dream had failed. However, the post-WWII world would change all of this.[3]

As WWII concluded, many fingers pointed to empires as the cause of the violence. Now, with the surviving empires, Britain and France, in economic shambles unable to support their colonies, decolonization became appealing. Britain, the former hegemon (leading power) of the world, set the precedent of decolonization when they let their "crown jewel" colony, India, decolonize, and soon after, many other British colonies, as well as other empires, followed suit, including the territory of Palestine. The opposing peoples in both territories, Muslims and Hindus in India, and Arabs and Jews in Palestine, were supposedly left to duke it out to establish sovereignty on their own post WWII. The British played a large role at the beginning of both decolonization efforts. However, Palestine was picked up by the UN for Holocaust relief efforts while India's dispute was left on its own.

Despite the different paths the two territories took to establish sovereignty, their history would play a large role in the process. In India, the messy British partition left Muslim and Hindu majority borders out of sort with the notion of civility disregarded by both sides. This led to an immediate refugee crisis and violence between the factions in the region that continues onto this day with the territory of Kashmir.[4] Regarding Palestine, the British stood firmly with their reasoning behind their White Papers decision, as exemplified by their turnaround of the Jewish refugees on the SS Exodus in 1947. Public pressure from surrounding nations who witnessed the horrific treatment of the Jews, both in the Holocaust and now in displacement camps, forced the British to relieve mandate status for good now. The British no longer cared about the territory. It had just been used as a land bridge to India, which they no longer needed, so they promptly gave the Palestine problem to the UN, who formed UNSCOP (United Nations Special Committee on Palestine). UNSCOP voted in November of 1947 for a division of the land for Arab and Jewish states. However, this created masses of refugees from both sides, leading to violence and more conflict that is still not solved.[5]

The situation of violence left in India only worsened in the years following its decolonization. The first of two wars between Pakistan and India over Kashmir broke out a few months after the partition in October 1947, and it only ceased in January 1949, when the UN realized something needed to be done. They created UNCIP (United Nations Committee for India and Pakistan), which developed the Line of Control, which divided up Kashmir ⅓ to Pakistan and ⅔ to India. This arrangement left both sides still desiring the entire territory, but willing to cease

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[3] https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_Israel
[4] https://www.history.com/this-day-in-history/india-and-pakistan-win-independence
[5] https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_Israel

conflict at the moment. Further discussion between the two happened in 1963 under American and British overwatch but could not come to an agreement, so in 1964 they reached out to the UN for help. This request became unnecessary as, in April 1965, the second war between Pakistan and India erupted as a result of a border patrol clash at the Line of Control. In September 1965, the UN once again mandated a ceasefire between the two. Borders in Kashmir are left messy, but in 1966 the two agreed to go back to how they were with the Line of Control to repair trade relations. As time progressed, violence continued with often outbursts of terrorism from both sides, sometimes orchestrated by each other's governments, but they deny involvement. A peace agreement seems unlikely, as up to this day, these clashes occur.[6]

After UNSCOP's decision, Israel was now left fighting for the legitimacy of its establishment. Promptly after the declaration of the state of Israel, the Israeli War of Independence ensued, which Israel miraculously won and received a larger territory for its victory. This conflict would only be the beginning of the full-scale disputes between Israel and its neighbors. Rabbi Jonathan Sacks notes, "Though Israel has had to fight many wars, from the very beginning it sought peace… But peace is a duet not a solo. It cannot be made by one side alone. If it could, it would have been made long ago."[7] I agree with Rabbi Sacks's statement. At the time of Israel's establishment, the surrounding Arab nations did not give Israel the time to reach out for any type of peace agreement. They attacked Israel in solidarity with Palestine and never sought to create an agreement of any kind, force was their only solution. In Devarim 23:8, Bnei Yisrael is commanded from Hashem through Moshe, "You shall not abhor an Edomite, for he is your kinsman. You shall not abhor an Egyptian, for you were a stranger in his land." This fits accordingly with Rabbi Sacks's statement. Jews are to be peaceful with others and especially Edomites (Jordanians) and Egyptians whom they are commanded to be. In Devarim 20:10 we learn that Bnei Yisrael is commanded "When you approach a town to attack it, you shall offer it terms of peace." The base of our existence is peace and it is always our first approach to a hostile situation even when we are the ones instigating. The state of Israel, acting as a Jewish state, has wanted and continues to want to uphold these commandments. However, it has become difficult due to the relationship between the peoples.

Both India and Israel formed in a time of uncertainty for the world after WWII. Each of their histories included empirical dissidence in their colonial stages, and combined with the internal group oppositions, the stage was set for disaster. Both received the sovereignty they desired; however, the ways in which they were established differed. The Holocaust became a catalyst that drew global attention to Zionist efforts in Palestine, while the worldwide audience

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[6] https://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/spotlight/kashmirtheforgottenconflict/2011/06/2011615113058224115.html
[7] https://www.aish.com/sp/ph/9-Quotes-about-Israel-from-Rabbi-Jonathan-Sacks.html

disregarded the issue in India until the UN finally recognized it as a problem years later. Despite Zionists' success in receiving some of the territory due to the public pressure, Israel resulted in similar chaos as India with violence, refugees, and ongoing territorial disputes. Many issues present today in India and Israel can be traced back to this period in which Britain failed to decolonize the territories properly. Since then, solutions have only become harder to develop and implement in both territories.