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**Religious Identities in Neo-Nationalisms.
Judaism and Zionism: From a Religious to a Political Identity ***

*Identità religiose nei neo-nazionalismi.
Ebraismo e Sionismo: da identità religiosa a identità politica **

ABSTRACT: This article compellingly explores the pivotal role of Zionism, tracing its journey from the early religious motivations of Puritan Protestants to the emergence of both political and religious ideologies that catalyzed the establishment of a Jewish homeland. First manifesting during the British Mandate in Palestine, this movement gained further momentum with the formation of the State of Israel, a crucial outcome of the UN Resolution 181. Moreover, the article examines the profound consequences of the 1967 War and the ongoing occupation of Palestinian territories, highlighting the varied responses from the United Nations. It delves into the foundational narratives of Israel, revealing a transformation from an ethnic identity to an ethno-religious nationalism, and underscores the significant role of Judaism in this evolution, along with its legal ramifications. Finally, this analysis confronts the pressing social and intellectual challenges that arise from post-Zionism, addresses critiques of the movement, and discusses the emergence and radicalization of neo-Zionism, making a strong case for understanding these complex, ambiguous, and paradoxical dynamics in today's context.

ABSTRACT: Questo articolo esplora in modo approfondito il ruolo centrale del Sionismo, ripercorrendo il suo cammino dalle prime motivazioni religiose dei protestanti puritani all'emergere di ideologie sia politiche che religiose che hanno catalizzato la creazione di una patria ebraica. Manifestatosi per la prima volta durante il Mandato britannico in Palestina, questo movimento ha acquisito ulteriore slancio con la formazione dello Stato di Israele, un risultato cruciale della Risoluzione 181 delle Nazioni Unite. Inoltre, l'articolo esamina le profonde conseguenze della guerra del 1967 e l'occupazione in corso dei territori palestinesi, evidenziando le diverse risposte delle Nazioni Unite. Approfondisce le narrazioni fondamentali di Israele, rivelando la trasformazione da un'identità etnica a un nazionalismo etno-religioso, e sottolinea il ruolo significativo dell'ebraismo in questa evoluzione, insieme alle sue ramificazioni legali. Infine, quest'analisi affronta le pressanti sfide sociali e intellettuali che derivano dal post-Sionismo, affronta le critiche al movimento e discute l'emergere e la radicalizzazione del neo-Sionismo, creando una solida base per la comprensione di queste dinamiche complesse, ambigue e paradossali nel contesto odierno.

SUMMARY: 1. Earlier English Puritan proto-Zionists and the role of Evangelical Zionism - 2. From the First Aliyah to secular and religious Jewish Zionism - 3. The ambiguous role of the British Empire from 1915 to 1947, the rise of political

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Zionism, and the increasing clashes between Jews and Arabs during the Mandate in Palestine - 4. The United Nations and the consequences of the UNSCOP Report: the Resolution 181 - 5. The Occupied Territories by Israel after 1967, illegal settlements, and the UN response - 6. Religious and political foundational narratives, from ethnic identity to ethno-religious nationalism and the legal consequences in the State of Israel - 7. Intellectual and social challenges of post-Zionism - 8. The rise of religious Zionism and the radicalization of neo-Zionism.

The exceptionality of the State of Israel - born from the European Jewish immigration settled in Palestine and created by the United Nations resolution #181 in 1948, recommending the partition of Palestine - requires a socio-historical framework to comprehend this unique and controversial political process initiated by European Jews as a colonial project and its dramatic consequences¹. Let us examine the roots and early chronology of this ongoing conflict, which is marked by propaganda, manipulation of polarized narratives, hatred, and indiscriminate violence that continues to increase the number of refugees and innocent victims year after year. The Great Syria under the Ottoman Empire (1516-1917) included Palestine, *Filistin*, which was the name used since Greek, Roman, and Byzantine times referred to the coastal land between Gaza and Jaffa, although the boundaries expanded and narrowed in different periods; however, the word "Palestine" was traditionally used for the region included between the Mediterranean Sea and the Jordan River². It was a multi-religious territory with a majority of Arab population.

1 - Earlier English Puritan Proto-Zionists and the Role of Evangelical Zionism

In the 17th century, some English Puritans promoted the return of Jews to the biblical Land of Israel, the Holy Land, to fulfill a biblical eschatological prophecy recorded in Deuteronomy: 30, 1-5. This interpretation channeled an early Christian proto-Zionism³.

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In memoriam to Prof. Norton Mezvinsky (1932-2022), President of the ICMES.

¹ For an introductory basic informative presentation, see the documentary "Britain in Palestine 1917-1948" at the Balfour Project website (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hOJqLTc6RkU>).

² On the name Palestine and the Ottoman rule, see <https://ytb.gov.tr/en/news/palestine-in-ottoman-times>.

See the Ottoman Palestine Atlas; the Documents on Palestine in Ottoman Archives Project (at <https://dkp.blob.core.windows.net/dkp-dergi-flippage/2020FilistinYer.pdf>).

³ See **D.J. CULVER**, *Albion and Ariel: British Puritanism and the Birth of Political Zionism*, P. Lang, 1995; **D.M. LEWIS**, *The Origins of Christian Zionism: Lord Shaftesbury and Evangelical Support for a Jewish Homeland*, Cambridge University Press, 2009; **A.**



It was carried by Puritans to New England, enabling, among evangelicals, the conviction that the arrival of Jews to Palestine would facilitate their conversion to Christianity and the return of the Messiah, fulfilling the biblical prophecy. Soon, Evangelical Zionism also grew in the United States among intellectuals and Protestant clergy⁴. One remarkable example is the 1891 Blackstone Memorial, presented by the Christian Evangelical William E. Blackstone to the President of the United States, William H. Harrison, in favor of the restoration of Palestine to the Jews, and signed by more than 400 prominent journalists, politicians, congressmen, justices, businessmen, and clergy. Affirming,

We believe this is an appropriate time for all nations and especially the Christian nations of Europe to show kindness to Israel. A million exiles, by their terrible suffering, are piteously appealing to our sympathy, justice, and humanity. Let us now restore to them the land of which they were so cruelly despoiled by our Roman ancestors⁵.

The Israeli historian Anita Shapira considers that

“Even the idea of the Jews returning to their ancient homeland as the first step to world redemption seems to have originated among a specific group of evangelical English Protestants that flourished in England in the 1840s; they passed this notion on to Jewish circles”⁶.

2 - From the First *Aliyah* to Secular and Religious Jewish Zionism

The earlier wave of Eastern European Jewish settlers to the Ottoman Palestine region began in 1881 -known as the First *Aliyah*- because of the increasing persecution and pogroms in Imperial Russia, establishing agricultural units, *moshavim*, under religious proto-Zionist organizations like *Hovevei Zion*, although many returned to Europe after facing unbearable conditions of famine and diseases⁷.

The term Zionism was coined by the Austrian Jewish activist and journalist Natham Birnbaum in 1885⁸. In 1897, the First Zionist Congress,

CROME, *Christian Zionism and English National Identity, 1600-1850*, Palgrave Macmillan, 2018.

⁴ See **S. SPECTOR**, *Evangelicals and Israel: The Story of American Christian Zionism*, Oxford University Press, 2009.

⁵ <https://www.lifeinmessiah.org/blackstone-memorial>.

⁶ **S. SHAPIRA**, *Israel: A History*, Trans. A. BERRIS, Lebanon, NH, Brandeis University Press, 2014, p. 15.

On the international dimension, see **A.GREEN**, *Nationalism and the 'Jewish International': Religious Internationalism in Europe and the Middle East c.1840-c.1880*, in *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 50/2 (2008), pp. 535-558 (<https://doi-org.ezp-prod1.hul.harvard.edu/10.1017/S0010417508000236>).

⁷ See **D. PENSLAR**, *Zionism and Technocracy: The Engineering of Jewish Settlement in Palestine, 1870-1918*, Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1991; **J.H. SCHOEPS**, *Pioneers of Zionism: Hess, Pinsker, Rulif: Messianism, Settlement Policy, and the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict*, Berlin, De Gruyter, 2013.

⁸ See **J. OLSON**, *Natham Birnbaum and Jewish Modernity. Architect of Zionism*,



gathered in Basel, Switzerland, was chaired by the Jewish journalist and lawyer Theodor Herzl, author of the pamphlet *Der Judenstaat* and founder of the Zionist Organization, promoting Jewish immigration to Palestine to establish a national Jewish state there. Theodore Herzl belonged to a prosperous secularized and Germanized Hungarian-Jewish family. As Anita Shapira explains, "Almost overnight, this mediocre bourgeois intellectual turned into a man driven by his vocation"⁹.

Earlier Jewish Zionists were largely secular, and many Eastern European Jews identified as socialists or communists, particularly those who established the *kibbutzim* agricultural model beginning in 1920. While most were secular, some were religious, and this diversity continues today.

Religious Zionism roots from the legacy of Yitzchak Yaakov Reines member of the proto-Zionist *Hovevei Zion*, who never settled in Palestine, although he founded in 1902 in Vilna (Lithuania) the *Mizrahi* Movement¹⁰. Religious Zionism grew under the leadership of Abraham Isaac Kook, born in the Russian Empire in 1865, later he became the first Ashkenazi Rabbi during the British Mandate until he died in 1935. Many *Hovevei Zion* members joined this new organization with other proto-Zionists like the Anglo-Jewish order of the Maccabees, who opposed the persecution of Jews in Europe, facilitating the earlier Jewish colonial settlements in Palestine.

Consequently, Christian Protestantism and Jewish Zionism, secular and religious, had substantial roles in political Zionism.

3 - The Ambiguous Role of the British Empire from 1915 to 1947, the Rise of Political Zionism, and the Increasing Clashes between Jews and Arabs during the Mandate in Palestine

The British Empire played a contradictory political role in the region. On one hand, it supported political Zionism; on the other, it facilitated the creation of Arab states to maintain its colonial influence. Egypt had been under British control since 1882, with the Suez Canal opening in 1889. During World War I, the British Empire relied on the Suez Canal as the main sea route to India, which was considered the jewel of its colonial empire.

Consequently, in 1915, when the Ottomans attacked the Suez Canal, British authorities needed Arab and Jewish support. In return, the Arab Hashemite clan demanded the creation of an independent Arab nation-state, the Great Syria, including Palestine. The sons of Emir

Yiddishism, and Orthodoxy, Stanford Studies in Jewish History and Culture. Stanford University Press, 2013.

⁹ A. SHAPIRA, *Israel: A History*, cit., p. 16.

¹⁰ The Mizrahi Movement nowadays became a global religious Zionist association (at <https://mizrahi.org/>).



Hussein bin Ali of Hejaz and Grand Sharif of Mecca under the Ottoman rule, became leaders of the Arab revolt against Ottomans, backed up by the British. A few years later, the Jewish Zionists received the Balfour Declaration from the British government.

Nonetheless, in 1916, France and the UK, still with colonial imperialist mindsets, secretly agreed to divide the Ottoman Syria and Mesopotamia between them if they won WWI, signing the Sykes-Picot Agreement, to split their influence on the Ottoman Middle East and, in part, to control the access to oil fields in Persia exploited by the Anglo-Persian Oil company since 1909. Again, France and the UK promoted a new colonial wave, the protectorate model, this time in the Middle East after WWI.

In 1917, the British Government fully supported the establishment of a national home for the Jewish people in Palestine through the Balfour Declaration, as a consequence of the Protestant Zionist background in the UK, the actively successful lobbying for Israel¹¹, and the economic support during WWI by the British-Jews; although, at that time, the Jewish population in Israel was very small, less than 60,000 in 1918, not more than 10% of the total population¹². It was signed by the Arthur Balfour, British Foreign Secretary, and addressed to Lord Rothchild, leader of the British Zionist Federation, affirming,

His Majesty's Government view with favour the establishment in Palestine of a national home for the Jewish people, and will use their best endeavours to facilitate the achievement of this object, it being clearly understood that nothing shall be done which may 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 country¹³.

Let us keep in mind that it was issued after the Sykes-Picot Agreement, which means that “a national home for the Jewish people” did not recognize a Jewish nation-state but a national home under the British Protectorate of Palestine as a colonial model, later transformed in a Mandate under the League of Nations (1920-1946).

Arabs liberated Damascus from Ottoman rule in 1918, in the belief that it would be the future capital of the Kingdom of Great Syria. However, the 1919 Peace Conference of Paris divided the region into two mandatories, France ruling Syria and Lebanon, and the UK controlling most of Palestine and Mesopotamia (Transjordan and Iraq). Consequently, Great Syria became a non-viable nation-state project for the British and French interests in the region, destroying the Arab dream of Great Syria, ignoring at the same time the promises made to the Arab leaders of the revolt and the Zionist expectations after the Balfour Declaration. In 1921, Chaim Weizmann was elected President of the

¹¹ See a detailed analysis of the lobbyist for Zionism before the Balfour Declaration at **I. PAPPE**, *Lobbying for Israel. On Both Sides of the Atlantic*, One World, 2024, Kindle ed., loc.570-1187.

¹² <https://www.un.org/unispal/document/auto-insert-206581/>.

¹³ https://en.wikisource.org/wiki/Balfour_Declaration.



Zionist Organization. He was a biochemist Jew born in the Russian Empire who played an essential role in the Balfour Declaration and later became the First President of Israel in 1949 until he died in 1952.

The British Conference of Cairo in 1921 reviewed the Middle East policies related to the secret 1916 Skyes-Picot Agreement and the 1917 Balfour Declaration. After the conference, the British authorities granted the nominal leaderships of two new nation-states to the sons of Emir Hussein bin Ali, Abdullah as King of Transjordan and Faisal as King of Iraq but did not include Syria and Palestine. It was a territorial and political artificial division, ignoring peoples and tribes, creating further instability in the region. His elder son, Ali bin Hussein, was his successor in 1924, until Ibn Saud took power in 1925, from the Saud clan, abolishing the Sharifate after controlling most of the Arabian Peninsula and founding the State of Saudi Arabia in 1932, fully supported by the Wahhabi revivalist Sunni Muslim movement.

In sum, British authorities offered the same land to two peoples, first to Arabs in 1916 as a reward for fighting against the Ottomans, then, to Jews by the 1917 Balfour Declaration for their economic support in WWI. The destiny of Palestine was at the crossroads of Arab and Jewish opposed interests and political agendas, while the Indigenous people of Palestine had no voice, and the conflict was still unfolding.

Initially, Hashemites invited Jews to migrate to Palestine hoping for their help in the building process of an Arab nation-state, signing the Feisal-Weizmann Agreement, in 1919, whose authenticity, interpretation, and validity are disputed¹⁴. Perhaps, Arabs were not fully aware of the Zionist ideology and agenda and, at that time, Arabs never thought about the creation of a Jewish nation-state in Palestine because their expectations were the formation of the Kingdom of Great Syria under Arab control, although never became a reality. Consequently, the Feisal-Weizmann Agreement became inviable. As it is explained and recorded in the 1980 United Nations Document prepared under the guidance of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People,

On President Wilson's insistence during the Paris Peace Conference in 1919, a commission was appointed to evaluate the situation of the indigenous populations. The Commission recommended an American Mandate over Syria, including Palestine. In assessing the wishes of the indigenous population of Palestine regarding the Jewish immigration there, the Commission called for "serious modification of the extreme Zionist programme for Palestine of unlimited immigration of Jews." The Commission declared that this programme, aiming "[...] finally to making Palestine distinctly a Jewish State [would be] a serious injustice." Dealing with the Zionist claim "that they have a 'right' to Palestine, based on their

¹⁴ N. CAPLAN, *Faisal Ibn Husain and the Zionists: A Re-examination with Documents*, at *The International History Review*. 5/4 (1983), pp. 561-614 (Digital access, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/40105338>).

See N. CAPLAN, *Early Arab-Zionist Negotiation Attempts, 1913-1931*, Routledge, 2013.



occupation of two thousand years", the Commission remarked that this claim "can hardly be seriously considered".

The British Foreign Secretary, Lord Curzon, warned that the term "national home" really meant "a Jewish State" in which the Arabs would be second-class citizens. He declared, "I think the entire concept wrong." Balfour himself acknowledged what was being done and noted, "that so far as Palestine is concerned, the [Allied] Powers have made no statement of fact which is not admittedly wrong, and no declaration of policy [...] which they have not intended to violate"¹⁵.

Nevertheless, in 1921, Winston Churchill, as Colonial Secretary, implemented the Belfour Declaration, in part because of his evolution toward the Protestant Zionist ideology¹⁶.

In 1922, the League of Nations ratified the full control of the UK by the British Mandatory in Palestine, including the complete 1917 Balfour Declaration in the Mandate, granting a national home for Jews without damaging the civil and religious rights of existing non-Jewish Palestinians¹⁷. However, this part of the declaration became secondary and vain in the Mandate. In part, because of the strong support of the Zionist project by British Christian Zionists.

Between 1922 and 1928, prominent Arab Palestinian families disagreed on how to develop their strategies to promote a Palestinian Arab state¹⁸. The Mufti of Jerusalem Haj Amin al-Hussein increasingly radicalized his anti-Jewish sentiments promoting a violent religious Palestinian Nationalism internationally, echoing his demands in the Muslim world.

As we saw, the British policies in the region are at the core and origin of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, promising the land to two opposed nation-state political projects and facing two conflicting narratives increasingly polarized, while a massive number of Jewish settlers arrived in the following years. Consequently, Palestinian nationalist movements grew and gradually rejected the Belfour Declaration and Jewish immigration, because they were occupying their lands, and a feeling of dispossession grew among them, increasing antagonist unrest and violence.

Nonetheless, Jewish immigration from Eastern Europe augmented, and Zionist ideologies expanded among Jews under the pro-Zionist British policies, adding more tension and rivalry between Zionist

¹⁵ <https://www.un.org/unispal/document/auto-insert-206581/>.

¹⁶ More in detail at **M. MAKOVSKY**, *The Road to Zion*, International Churchill Society 2021 (<https://winstonchurchill.org/publications/finest-hour/finest-hour-191/the-road-to-zion/>).

Particularly, **M. MAKOVSKY**, *Churchill's Promised Land: Zionism and Statecraft*, Yale University Press, 2008.

¹⁷ <https://digilibRARY.un.org/record/829707?ln=en&v=pdf>.

¹⁸ On the origins and development of the Palestinian national identity, see **R. KHALIDI**, *Palestinian Identity: The Construction of Modern National Consciousness*, Columbia University Press, 1997. Updated in 2009.

For a detailed analysis, see **B. MORRIS**, *Righteous Victims: A History of the Zionist-Arab Conflict, 1881-2001*, N. York, Vintage Books, 2001, First ed. 1999.



European Jews and Palestinian Arabs; mainly after 1929, when the British Mandate recognized the Zionist Organization as the Jewish Agency in charge to organize at large-scale immigration and settlement of European Jewish population in Palestine¹⁹.

Zionism, fully supported by the British Empire in this period, consolidated a Jewish settler society in Palestine at the expense of the Indigenous population, like in North America settler colonialism did it before, ignoring the rights of the Native Americans expelled from their lands and confined in Reservations since 1758 onwards; progressively, relocating them further West after the birth of the US until the 1830 Indian Removal Act signed by President Jackson, allowing the government of the US divide land at the West of Mississippi and give some areas to Native American tribes in exchange for all the territories previously taken from them²⁰. Similar situations took place in Canada, Australia, and New Zealand. In the US, the Native Americans did not have American citizenship until the Indian Citizenship Act of 1924²¹.

By the 1920s, violent clashes increased between both Jews and Arabs, polarizing the conflict after *Hagana*, a group integrated by paramilitary Jewish Zionists, was founded to defend Jewish settlements against Arab attacks²². In August 1929, the Shaw Commission on Palestine Disturbances analyzed the situation, recommending to the British authorities to increase the protection of the rights and aspirations of the Palestinians²³.

According to the 1922 British Mandate Census, the total population of Palestine was 590,890 Muslims, 83,794 Jews, 73,024 Christians, 7,028 Druze, and less than 1,000 minority religious groups, like Sikhs, Baha'is, and Samaritans²⁴. Comparatively, ten years later, in the 1933 Census, were 759,717 Muslims, 174,610 Jews, 91,398 Christians, 148 Druzes, 350 Bahais, and 182 Samaritans, without counting nomadic Bedouins²⁵.

Progressively, the Zionist Organization acquired more land to settle the European Jewish immigrants. In 1920, the Jewish population owned about 2.1/2 % of the total area, but by 1939, they had over 5.7 % of the total Palestinian land²⁶.

¹⁹ <https://www.un.org/unispal/document/auto-insert-206581/>.

²⁰ <https://www.history.com/topics/native-american-history/indian-reservations>; <https://guides.loc.gov/indian-removal-act>; <https://www.archives.gov/milestone-documents/jacksons-message-to-congress-on-indian-removal>

²¹ <https://www.archives.gov/files/historical-docs/doc-content/images/indian-citizenship-act-1924.pdf>.

²² <https://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/the-haganah>.

²³ Access to the full Shaw Report <https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=mdp.39015066430987&seq=7>.

²⁴ *Palestine: Report and General Abstracts of the Census of 1922*. Government of Palestine, J.B. BARRON, ed. (1923) (<https://archive.org/details/PalestineCensus1922>).

²⁵ A. ZAIMAN, *Census of Palestine, 1931*, at *Journal of the Royal Statistical Society*, 96 / 4 (1933), pp. 660-662 (<https://doi.org/10.2307/2341903>).

²⁶ <https://www.un.org/unispal/document/auto-insert-206581/>.



Jews from Eastern Europe and Russia increasingly settled in Palestine when anti-Jewish sentiments grew in the Soviet Union. In 1930, Chaim Weizmann, then still President of the Zionist Organization, lobbied the UK government to allow a higher number of Jewish settlers in Palestine, mainly after the Nazis controlled Germany and antisemitic indoctrination and harassment intensified. British authorities in the UK, fearing a massive Jewish immigration, introduced a visa system in 1938, allowing a limited number of refugees to enter the UK, mostly Jews escaping from Nazi Germany and Austria (Anschluss) and Spaniards from the Civil War²⁷. The US restricted even more the number of European Jewish immigrants to America²⁸.

As a result, the Palestinian Arab revolts against the British Mandatory increased from 1936 to 1939. The uprisings were brutally repressed by the British army and Jewish militia, destroying numerous villages, burnt to the ground, and hanging numerous Arab rebels²⁹. It was a brutal colonial repression. The Mufti Haj Amin al-Hussein flew to Lebanon, increasing his radicalization, and the hegemonic Arab families in Palestine clashed among themselves, weakening the Palestine defensive movement.

The Peel Commission, appointed in 1936 and integrated by high British bureaucrats in Palestine, like Douglas Harris and Lewis Andrews, and prominent Arab Palestinians and Jewish Zionists, tried to understand the conflict of the Palestinian Arab Revolt.

The Peel Commission tried to keep the balance between the Arab and Jewish populations and realized the incompatibility of both national aspirations. Douglas Harris and Lewis Andrews developed the idea of dividing the British Mandatory of Palestine into two political territories, one Jewish, in the north of Palestine and along the coastline from Haifa to Jaffa, and the other, Arab, granting the remaining lands to Palestinians, suggesting them to join the Emirate of Transjordan, which in 1946, became a kingdom. Consequently, the Peel Commission 1937 Report recommended the partition of Palestine, keeping a narrow corridor for the British Empire between Jaffa and Jerusalem, although advised the ending of the British Mandatory³⁰. Most Palestinians rejected the partition, particularly the Mufti of Jerusalem Haj Amin al-Hussein, while the 20th Zionist Congress understood from the Balfour Declaration that

²⁷ <https://wienerholocaustlibrary.org/exhibition/a-bitter-road-britain-and-the-refugee-crisis-of-the-1930s-and-1940s-2/>.

²⁸ <https://encyclopedia.ushmm.org/content/en/article/immigration-to-the-united-states-1933-41>.

²⁹ <https://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/the-1936-arab-riots>; <https://www.palestine-studies.org/en/node/1651180>; <https://www.palquest.org/en/highlight/158/great-palestinian-rebellion-1936-1939>.

See also **M. HUGHES**, *From Law and Order to Pacification: Britain's Suppression of the 1936-1939 Arab Revolt in Palestine*, at *Journal of Palestine Studies*, 39/2 (2010), pp. 6-22; **C.W. ANDERSON**, *State of Formation from Below and the Great Revolt in Palestine*, at *Journal of Palestine Studies*, 47/1 (2017), pp. 39-55.

³⁰ Full access <https://unispal.un.org/pdfs/Cmd5479.pdf>.



the Jewish national home included all historic Palestine including Transjordan³¹.

In 1938, a new period of British-Jewish cooperation started in Palestine for economic and security reasons when the Arab Rebellion multiplied violence. In February 1939, British authorities summoned the London Conference to negotiate an agreement between Arabs and Jews in Palestine holding separate meetings with both groups without reaching any agreement and increasing frictions. The MacDonald paper or the White Book³², presented by Malcolm MacDonald, the Secretary of State for the Colonies, detailing the British government policy for the Mandate included British proposals declaring,

His Majesty's Government believe that the framers of the Mandate in which the Balfour Declaration was embodied could not have intended that Palestine should be converted into a Jewish State against the will of the Arab population of the country.

Consequently, His Majesty's Government therefore now declare unequivocally that it is not part of their policy that Palestine should become a Jewish State.

Abandoning the partition between two states proposed by the Peel Commission and proposing the one-state solution in the following terms,

The objective of His Majesty's Government is the establishment within 10 years of an independent Palestine State in such treaty relations with the United Kingdom as will provide satisfactorily for the commercial and strategic requirements of both countries in the future. The proposal for the establishment of the independent State would involve consultation with the Council of the League of Nations with a view to the termination of the Mandate.

The independent State should be one in which Arabs and Jews share government in such a way as to ensure that the essential interests of each community are safeguarded.

Regarding immigration, the White Book declared that,
it is necessary that the Jewish community in Palestine should be able to increase its numbers by immigration. This immigration cannot be so great in volume as to exceed whatever may be the economic capacity of the country at the time to absorb new arrivals. It is essential to ensure that the immigrants should not be a burden upon the people of Palestine as a whole, and that they should not deprive any section of the present population of their employment.

Planning that,

Jewish immigration during the next five years will be at a rate which, if economic absorptive capacity permits, will bring the Jewish population up to approximately one third of the total population of the country. Taking into account the expected natural increase of the Arab and Jewish

³¹<https://web.archive.org/web/20040812191547/http://www.jafi.org.il/education/100/concepts/cong20.html>.

³² Full access https://avalon.law.yale.edu/20th_century/brwh1939.asp.



populations, and the number of illegal Jewish immigrants now in the country, this would allow of the admission, as from the beginning of April this year, of some 75,000 immigrants over the next five years. These immigrants would, subject to the criterion of economic absorptive capacity, be admitted as follows: For each of the next five years a quota of 10,000 Jewish immigrants will be allowed on the understanding that a shortage one year may be added to the quotas for subsequent years, within the five year period, if economic absorptive capacity permits.

However, WWII changed the circumstances when massive numbers of displaced European Jews tried to enter Palestine, escaping from the Nazis and the war, while the British and Americans prevented their entrance into their countries. Then, Protestant and Jewish Zionists lobbied once more to take them to Palestine³³. During the years of the war, the British Mandate upheld the implementation of the White Paper even though a quarter of a million European Jews entered the British Mandatory of Palestine, legally and illegally. However, soon, fearing the Nazi invasion of Palestine, British Army sought the support of the Zionist Jews and Arab Palestinians. The Palestinians remained divided. Haj Amin al Hussein from Lebanon and his followers collaborated with the Nazis with the creation of a SS unit in the Balkans. Other Palestinian Arabs and Jews volunteered to join the British Army, even serving together in mixed units, the Palestine Regiment³⁴. In 1940, fifteen infantry battalions and supporting units of Palestinian Jews joined the British Army³⁵. In 1941, the paramilitary Jewish *Hagana* mobilized the *Palmach*, integrated for more than 2,000 men and women, mainly *sabras*, Jews born in Palestine³⁶. It was a striking force to defend Palestine from a possible occupation by the III Reich Armed Forces. In November 1942, after the Allied victory in the Second Battle of El Alamein in Egypt, British authorities ordered the dismantling of *Hagana*; however, it went underground against the British Mandatory. The Jewish Brigade Group of the British army, formally established in September 1944, included more than 5.000 volunteers from Mandatory Palestine fighting under the Zionist flag³⁷. Many of them became involved in the *Brichah*³⁸, the

³³ See I. PAPPE, *Lobbying for Israel*, cit., Chapter 6.

³⁴ <https://www.haaretz.com/israel-news/2019-05-31/ty-article/.premium/historian-12-000-palestinians-fought-for-u-k-in-wwii-alongside-jewish-volunteers/0000017f-db14-d856-a37f-ffd4017f0000>; <https://www.jta.org/archive/palestine-regiment-of-jews-arabs-to-be-formed-war-secretary-rejects-jewish-army>.

M. ABBASI, *Palestinians fighting against Nazis: The story of Palestinian volunteers in the Second World War*, at *War in History*, 26/2 (2019), pp. 227-249 (<https://doi.org/10.1177/0968344517696527>).

³⁵ <https://encyclopedia.ushmm.org/content/en/article/jewish-brigade-group>.

³⁶ <https://web.archive.org/web/20110928141558/http://www.palmach.org.il>; <https://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/the-palmach>.

³⁷ <https://encyclopedia.ushmm.org/content/en/article/jewish-brigade-group>.

See **M. BECKHAM**, *The Jewish Brigade: An Army With Two Masters, 1944-45*, Rockville Centre, NY, Sarpedon, 1998.

³⁸ See detailed documentation of the mass movement of 300,000 Jewish survivors of the Holocaust out of Eastern Europe and their eventual resettlement in Palestine in Y.



underground organization to help Jewish Holocaust survivors to enter in Palestine, violating the White Book policies on immigration. At the same time, the Jewish Resistance organized secret activities in Nazi Europe, like Ghetto uprisings and rebellions in concentration camps³⁹.

By 1945, the British Empire was victorious in WWII, but also it was exhausted and broken as a colonial empire. In Palestine, the British Mandatory remained for total of 30 years, trying to protect its colonial domains, particularly India and the sea trade.

After the war and the Holocaust, a large amount of displaced European Jews, mainly Ashkenazi, tried to enter Palestine, supported by Zionist American Evangelical and Jews, like the Jewish Agency for Palestine, founded in 1929, later renamed the Jewish Agency for Israel.

The Jewish immigration to Palestine increased drastically⁴⁰ from 10,643 in 1940 and 4,592 in 1941, under the restrictions of the White Book, to 110,000 that arrived by sea, legally and illegally, between 1939 and 1948. The total number of immigrants during the British period I Palestine was approximately 480,000, close to 90% of them from Europe⁴¹. The British opposed it and tried to prevent further clashes between Jews and Arabs⁴². The American Zionist held the Extraordinary Zionist Conference at the Biltmore Hotel of New York City on May 11, 1942 "reaffirms the stand previously adopted at Congresses of the World Zionist Organization, expressing the readiness and the desire of the Jewish people for full cooperation with their Arab neighbours" and "urges that the gates of Palestine be opened" demanding "that the Jewish Agency be vested with control of immigration into Palestine and with the necessary authority"⁴³.

The *Hagana*, underground after 1942, organized a unified Jewish Resistance Movement against the British Mandate, including some terrorist groups. The main extremist groups were *Irgun Tz'va'i Leumi* (National Military Organization) or *Etzel*- among its members was the future Israeli Prime Minister Menachem Begin - and *Lohamey Herut Israel* (Fighters for the Freedom of Israel) or *Lehi*. In February 1942, the British killed *Lehi* leader Abraham Stern in a clash with the Palestine Police. After 1944, the Jewish Resistant Movement increased violence. On November 6, 1944, *Lehi* assassinated the British Minister for the Middle East, Lord Moyne. On June 16 to 17, 1946, the Jewish Resistant Movement sabotaged at night the bridges British railways in Palestine connecting

BAUER,, *Fight and Rescue: Brichah*, Random House, 1970.

³⁹ E. FINKEL, *The Phoenix Effect of State Repression: Jewish Resistance during the Holocaust*, at *American Political Science Review*, 109/2 (2015), pp. 339-353 (<https://doi.org/10.1017/S000305541500009X>).

⁴⁰ <https://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jewish-immigration-to-palestine-1919-1941>.

⁴¹ <https://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/aliyah-bet-1939-1948>.

⁴² <https://www.nam.ac.uk/explore/conflict-Palestine>.

⁴³ <https://www.un.org/unispal/document/auto-insert-206268/>.



with neighboring counties⁴⁴. A few days later, on June 29, 1946, British authorities launched Operation Agatha⁴⁵, to stopped the violence against the Mandatory, in a swift military and police action, searching for arms in the Jewish Agency and many *kibbutzim*, arresting near 3,000 Jews. In retaliation, on July 22, 1946, *Etzel* bombed the King David Hotel, the headquarters of the British Mandate, killing 91 British, Arabs, and Jews because of the failure to evacuate the hotel after warnings phone calls⁴⁶.

In July 1946, The British Secretary of State for the Colonies presented A Statement of Information related to the Acts of Violence regarding three Jewish illegal-paramilitary organizations in Palestine, the *Hagana* and *Palmach*, the *Irgun Zvai Leumi*, and the Stern Group (*Lehi*), explaining that the last two "both are equally committed to a policy of unrestrained extremism"⁴⁷.

The Thirty-years British Mandate on Palestine and the Balfour Declaration did not succeed. The Jewish immigration grew from nearly 60,000 in 1918 to more than 600,000 by 1946, imposing tremendous pressure on the Indigenous population in Palestine, which were not responsible for the atrocities committed in Europe by the nazis. Once more, violence between Arabs and Jews in Palestine increased. After India gained independence in 1947, the United Kingdom was nearing the economic collapse of its colonial empire and became less interested in safeguarding the sea routes to India. In May of that year, the UK also abandoned its responsibility in Palestine. Earlier in the year, the United Nations had taken on the task of finding a fair solution to the Palestine issue⁴⁸.

4 - The United Nations and the Consequences of the UNSCOP Report: the Resolution 181

In July 1947, the United Nations Special Committee on Palestine (UNSCOP), previously created in May, witnessed the dramatic situation of the ship Exodus 1947, chartered by the *Hagana*, illegally transporting European displaced Jews but forced by the British navy in Haifa to return to France and then to Germany, not sending them to Cyprus.

⁴⁴ Further research at **S. ZADKA**, *Blood in Zion, How the Jewish Guerrillas drove the British out of Palestine*, London, Brassey's, 1995. For a detailed analysis of this period, see **B. MORRIS**, 1948: *A History of the First Arab-Israeli War*, Yale University Press, 2009.

Also <https://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/night-of-the-railways>.

⁴⁵ <https://web.archive.org/web/20110927054004/http://www.etzel.org.il/english/ac09.htm>.

The original Official British Report on Operation Agatha, at <https://www.paradata.org.uk/media/373>.

⁴⁶ <https://web.archive.org/web/20171228124017/http://www.etzel.org.il/english/ac10.htm>.

⁴⁷ See the original document at https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Palestine_Statement_of_Information_Relating_to_Acts_of_Violence,_cmd_6873.pdf.

⁴⁸ For a complete timeline on Palestine, <https://www.un.org/unispal/historical-timeline/>.

For a revisited analysis of the Exodus 1947 affair, see **I. PAPPE**, *The Idea of Israel. A History of Power and Knowledge*, London, New York, Verso, 2014, p. 173.



Consequently, the UNSCOP did not oppose to the creation of a Jewish State in Palestine⁴⁹.

The UNSCOP analyzed the elements of the conflict, the statistic population -in 1946 were 1,076,783 Moslems, 608,225 Jews, 145,063 Christians, 15,488 others, and a total of the Palestinian population was 1,845,559- the economic conditions, and the situation at that time, described as "living under a semi-military regime". Affirming that "Zionism, however, does not content itself with mere propaganda in favour of the fulfilment of its expansionist projects at the expense of the Arab countries. Its plan involves recourse to terrorism, both in Palestine and in other countries"⁵⁰. The Report separately analyzed Jewish and Arab communities, recommending the termination of the Mandate and a plan for the partition of Palestine, as the 1937 Peel Commission previously suggested. However, the Commission was aware of the strong opposition of the Palestinian Arabs. The UNSCOP suggested, after a period of transition, the partition and independence of two states, one Arab and the other Jewish, with an economic union between both, clear boundaries, and a special status for the city of Jerusalem⁵¹.

The Jewish and Protestant Zionists boosted their efforts, lobbying for the partition of Palestine⁵². Conversely, the Palestinian Arabs were unorganized and disunited after the loss of the legitimacy of Haj Amin al-Hussein.

Finally, the 181 Resolution of the UN on November 29, 1947, supported the creation of the State of Israel by most of the UN member states - 33 votes in favor, 13 votes against, and 10 votes abstained⁵³, recommending a detailed partition plan for Palestine with economic union, utterly similar to the UNSCOP Report. The UN Resolution was accepted by the Zionist Organization but rejected by the Arabs as unjust and illegal, and violence intensified.

On May 14, 1948, David ben Gurion -born in Poland, then part of the Russian Empire- and the political support of the US proclaimed the Independence of the State of Israel⁵⁴. At that time, Palestine had a Jewish

⁴⁹ <https://encyclopedia.ushmm.org/content/en/article/exodus-1947>.

⁵⁰ Access to the original report at <https://www.un.org/unispal/document/auto-insert-179435/>.

⁵¹ *Ibidem*.

⁵² See I. PAPPE, *Lobbying for Israel*, cit., Chapter 7.

⁵³ Access to the full Resolution at <https://documents.un.org/doc/resolution/gen/nr0/038/88/pdf/nr003888.pdf>.

⁵⁴ <https://www.gov.il/en/pages/declaration-of-establishment-state-of-israel>. This article compellingly explores the pivotal role of Zionism, tracing its journey from the early religious motivations of Puritan Protestants to the emergence of both political and religious ideologies that catalyzed the establishment of a Jewish homeland. First manifesting during the British Mandate in Palestine, this movement gained further momentum with the formation of the State of Israel, a crucial outcome of the UN Resolution 181. Moreover, the article examines the profound consequences of the 1967 War and the ongoing occupation of Palestinian territories, highlighting the varied responses from the United Nations. It delves into the foundational narratives of Israel, revealing a transformation from an ethnic identity to an ethno-religious nationalism,



population of 650,000. Immediately, the War broke out in Palestine, known as the First Arab-Israeli Conflict -or as the War of Independence for the Jewish population in the region and the Catastrophe or *Nakba* for the Palestinian Arabs- leaving more than 20,000 thousand deaths and 750,000 Palestinian refugees fleeing or expelled from their homes, more than 60% of the Arab population. Since then, two opposed and irreconcilable narratives defending each community emerged⁵⁵.

The UN mediator Folke Bernadotte tried to set a ceasefire and proposed a new partition plan. On September 17, 1948, the Zionist extremist group *Lohamey Herut Israel, Lehi*, assassinated Bernadotte.

In sum, in the achievement to help the persecuted Jewish population in Europe, the British Empire facilitated a home for them, granting *the establishment of a national home for the Jewish people in Palestine* in the 1917 Balfour Declaration, although also recognizing *that nothing shall be done which may prejudice the civil and religious rights of existing non-Jewish communities in Palestine*. We must remember that the 1917 Balfour Declaration was not an international Treaty but a formal declaration of the UK under imperial colonial policies. However, the national home for the Jewish people became the nation-state of Israel at the expense of the Palestinian Indigenous population. During the establishment of Israel in 1948 and the subsequent years, ethnic cleansing became a systematic Israeli policy as the Zionist and post-Zionist new Israeli historians have proved it out of reasonable doubt⁵⁶, although some of them, like Benny Morris, fully justified the ethnic cleansing of non-Jew Palestinians, as an act of self-defense⁵⁷.

and underscores the significant role of Judaism in this evolution, along with its legal ramifications. Finally, this analysis confronts the pressing social and intellectual challenges that arise from post-Zionism, addresses critiques of the movement, and discusses the emergence and radicalization of neo-Zionism, making a strong case for understanding these complex, ambiguous, and paradoxical dynamics in today's context.

⁵⁵ For the historical analysis between 1948-1951, see, **I. PAPPE**, *Britain and the Arab-Israeli Conflict, 1948-51*, Palgrave Macmillan, 1988; **B. MORRIS**, *The Birth of the Palestinian Refugee Problem Revisited*, Cambridge University Press, 2004, p. 68, Chapter 3, *The First Wave: the Arab Exodus December 1947 - March 1948*; **R.I. KHALIDI**, *The Palestinians and 1948: The Underlying causes of failure. The War for Palestine: Rewriting the history of 1948*, Ed. E.L ROGAN, A. SHLAIM, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2007; **G. WERMENBOL**, *A Tale of Two Narratives: The Holocaust, the Nakba, and the Israeli-Palestinian Battle of Memories*, Cambridge University Press, 2021.

⁵⁶ See previously cited analysis of both authors, providing meticulous evidence of the dispossession of Palestinians from two different points of view, Morris as a Zionist and Pappe as a post-Zionist.

B. MORRIS, *Righteous Victims: A History of the Zionist-Arab Conflict, 1881-2001*, N. York, Vintage Books, 2001, First ed. 1999; **B. MORRIS**, *The Birth of the Palestinian Refugee Problem Revisited*, Cambridge University Press, 2004; **I. PAPPE**, *The Ethnic Cleansing of Palestine*, Oneworld Publications, 2007.

⁵⁷ For current opposed narratives see the Israel-Palestine Debate among the well-known new historians and experts on this topic Norman Finkelstein, Benny Morris, and Mouin Rabbani at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1X_KdkoGxSs.



5 - The Occupied Territories by Israel after 1967, Illegal Settlements, and the UN Response

After the 1967 War, Israel occupied the Gaza Strip and the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, gradually permitting the establishment of Jewish settlements in those territories. The conflict led to an exodus of Palestinians, with estimates suggesting around half a million people were displaced. On November 22, 1967, the United Nations Security Council passed Resolution 242, which called for Israel to withdraw from the territories occupied during the war, seek a fair resolution to the refugee issue, and put an end to all claims or states of belligerency⁵⁸.

However, after the 1967 War onwards, Israel maintains the illegal territorial expansion and promotes new Jewish settlements in the Arab Palestinian territories. Hate and revenge only grow between them, without any hope for a resolution of the conflict. This never-ending conflict created continuous instability in the Middle East⁵⁹. Since then, thousands of victims, mostly Palestinians, living under increasing oppression, many of them in refugee camps or the Gaza strip under inhumane conditions, particularly after the Hamas massacre on October 7, 2023, and the Israeli retaliation on the Gaza population.

Unfortunately, sometimes victims and oppressors switch roles, as history proves. It is a supreme irony, as Robert Paxton wrote in his *Anatomy of Fascism*⁶⁰.

The Australian historian Lorenzo Veracini uses the colonial framework in Europe until the end of WWII to explain why Israel is a settler society, after analyzing several elements like segregation, mobility restriction, racialization, narrative, and discourses around resistance and repression. In his view, Israel reproduces the European society in a colonial context, which emphasizes a progressive rhetoric of original Indigenous dispossession followed by a multicultural inclusion in a distinctive colonial state of mind⁶¹. In his analysis, it seems clear that Zionism is a settler project and Israel is a settler society.

Consequently, Judaism became the instrument to create a collective political identity and a nation-state for the Jewish people, including religious and secular Jews.

Indeed, Political Zionism, secular and religious, is a settler project that was born during the last colonial European wave, in which Jewish identity plays the essential and dominant role, and a colonialist mindset remains rooted in Israel. The colonial terminology was used by the earlier Zionist Jews and in the colonial framework of the British Empire. After

⁵⁸ <https://documents.un.org/doc/resolution/gen/nr0/240/94/pdf/nr024094.pdf>.

⁵⁹ For a general overview of the conflict from the UN at <https://www.un.org/unispal/history/>.

⁶⁰ R.O. PAXTON, *Anatomy of Fascism*, cit, p. 347.

⁶¹ L. VERACINI, *Israel and Settler Society*, London, Pluto Press, 2006, Kindle ed. Loc., pp. 60, 149, 255, 282.



1967, there was and still is a continuous practice of new settlements in the Occupied Territories, all illegal according to International Law (Chapter IV of The Geneva Convention Relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War of 12 August 1949. Section 3 Occupied Territories. Particularly, Article 49)⁶².

At the same time, Israel's governments systematically ignored:

- The numerous United Nations resolutions against its policies on the Occupied Territories and the Palestinian people⁶³.
- The UN Reports on the Human Rights in those territories after 1967⁶⁴.
- The UN Special Committee to Investigate Israeli Practices in 2022 and 2024⁶⁵.
- The International Court of Justice (ICJ) Advisory Opinion (19 July 2024) on the Legal consequences arising from the policies and

⁶² https://www.un.org/en/genocideprevention/documents/atrocity-crimes/Doc.33_GC-IV-EN.pdf, p. 185.

⁶³ For a general overview, see http://www.david-morrison.org.uk/sadaka/briefings/BRIEFING-UN_Security_Council_resolutions_contravened_by_Israel.pdf; <https://press.un.org/en/2016/sc12657.doc.htm>; <https://news.un.org/en/story/2024/09/1154496>.

⁶⁴ For access to full reports since 1994 from the UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, see https://ap.ohchr.org/documents/dpage_e.aspx?m=91; <https://www.ohchr.org/en/special-procedures/sr-palestine>.

See also the analysis of the Former Special Rapporteur on Occupied Palestine for the UN Human Rights Council (2008-2014), FALK, R, *Palestine. The Legitimacy of Hope*. Charlottesville, VA: Just Word Books, 2014.

For an analysis from the International Law perspective established by the UN, see J. DUGARD, M. LYNK, R. FALK, *Protecting Human Rights in the Occupied Palestine: Working Through the United Nations*, Clarity Press Inc., 2022. In the Part 1: *Experiences of Three Special Rapporteurs*. In Part II: *Selections from Annual Reports to the Human Rights Council and General Assembly*.

See also the debate on April 13, 2023, among Richard Falk, John Dugard, and Michael Lynk on *The United Nations and Palestine: Stranded Between Promise and Performance* at Balfour Project at <https://balfourproject.org/the-united-nations-and-palestine-stranded-between-promise-and-performance-with-richard-falk-john-dugard-and-michael-lynk/>; <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-FCHpBQMTeA>.

For the latest Special Report on the situation on Human Rights in the Palestinian territories occupied since 1967 "the unfolding horrors in the occupied Palestinian territory". A/79/384: "Report of the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Palestinian territories occupied since 1967," Francesca Albanese - Genocide as colonial erasure 1 Oct 2024 (<https://www.ohchr.org/en/documents/country-reports/a79384-report-special-rapporteur-situation-human-rights-palestinian>) Declaring that, *While the wholesale destruction of Gaza continues unabated, other parts of the land have not been spared. The violence that Israel has unleashed against the Palestinians post-7 October is not happening in a vacuum, but is part of a long-term intentional, systematic, State-organized forced displacement and replacement of the Palestinians. This trajectory risks causing irreparable prejudice to the very existence of the Palestinian people in Palestine. Member States must intervene now to prevent new atrocities that will further scar human history.*

Full document at <https://documents.un.org/doc/undoc/gen/n24/279/68/pdf/n2427968.pdf>.

⁶⁵ <https://www.ohchr.org/en/statements/2022/07/end-mission-statement-un-special-committee-investigate-israeli-practices>; <https://www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2024/11/un-special-committee-finds-israels-warfare-methods-gaza-consistent-genocide>.



practices of Israel in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem⁶⁶.

- The International Criminal Court (ICC) investigation and pre-trial on the Situation in the State of Palestine (6 August 2014) and the Prosecutor's Warrants for arrest (21 November 2024)⁶⁷.

For Saul Takahashi -Professor of Human Rights and Peace Studies at Osaka Jogakuin University and Deputy Head of the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights in Palestine (from March 2009 to May 2014)-,

“There is a pressing need to hold Israel accountable, not only for its longstanding violations of international law, but specifically for its longstanding refusal to abide by its Charter obligations. In the face of this recalcitrance, the UN must move towards expelling Israel from the organization, not only because the UN exists to uphold

⁶⁶ The ICJ was inaugurated in 1946, substituting the 1945 Permanent Court of International Justice.

For the complete advisory opinion (19 July 2024) of the ICJ -as the primary judicial Court of the UN- regarding the legal consequences arising from the policies and practices of Israel in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, see <https://www.icj-cij.org/sites/default/files/case-related/186/186-20240719-adv-01-00-en.pdf>.

⁶⁷ The International Treaty of the Rome Statute (1 July 2002) rule on the ICC (<https://asp.icc-cpi.int/RomeStatute>).

The ICC is the world's first permanent International Criminal Court, although neither the US nor Israel are part of it.

The Rome Statute entered into force for The State of Palestine on 1 April 2015 (<https://www.icc-cpi.int/sites/default/files/itemsDocuments/palestine/210215-palestine-q-a-eng.pdf>).

Full access to the Pre-Trial Chamber 1 on the Situation of Palestine on 6 August 2024, at <https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/documents/countries/palestine/20240806-OPT-Amicus-ICC.pdf>

In the Pre-Trial the Prosecutor of the ICC issued three warrants for arrest, after an investigation since 13 June 2014, on 21 November 2014, in the following terms,

On 21 November 2024, ICC Pre-Trial Chamber I issued a warrant of arrest for Mr. Mohammed Diab Ibrahim Al-Masri, commonly known as 'Deif', the highest commander of the military wing of Hamas (known as the al-Qassam Brigades), for the crimes against humanity of murder; extermination; torture; and rape and other form of sexual violence; as well as the war crimes of murder, cruel treatment, torture; taking hostages; outrages upon personal dignity; and rape and other form of sexual violence, committed on the territory of the State of Israel and the State of Palestine from at least 7 October 2023.

On 21 November 2024, ICC Pre-Trial Chamber I also issued two decisions rejecting challenges by the State of Israel brought under articles 18 and 19 of the Rome Statute and issued warrants of arrest for Mr. Benjamin Netanyahu and Mr. Yoav Gallant for crimes against humanity and war crimes committed from at least 8 October 2023 until at least 20 May 2024. Mr. Benjamin Netanyahu, Prime Minister of Israel at the time of the relevant conduct, and Mr. Yoav Gallant, Minister of Defense of Israel at the time of the alleged conduct, are suspected of the war crimes of starvation as a method of warfare and of intentionally directing an attack against the civilian population; and the crimes against humanity of murder, persecution, and other inhumane acts.

Complete document at <https://www.icc-cpi.int/palestine>.

See also <https://www.icc-cpi.int/news/situation-state-palestine-icc-pre-trial-chamber-i-rejects-state-israels-challenges>.



international law, but also to maintain the UN's integrity as an organization”⁶⁸.

Unfortunately, international laws such as the Geneva Convention and the UN resolutions, reports, special committees, and international court investigations are often overlooked or ignored when they come into conflict with the strategic interests, ideological beliefs, and political agendas of hegemonic nation-states.

The State of Israel is, indeed, an exceptional and paradoxical model in the current post-colonial nation-state framework, identified by many experts as an apartheid state under a racist ideology⁶⁹. Such a statement opened a sour debate on this taboo issue at a political level, even in the US Congress, entirely under the control of narratives and propaganda in favor of Israel⁷⁰. Although it seems clear, under the current circumstances, that Israel's policies imposed a progressive ghettoization of Palestinians, mainly in Gaza⁷¹.

The situation got much worse after the violent and deadly Hamas attack, kidnappings, and massacre of civilian and military Israelis on October 7, 2023, and the subsequent Israeli disproportionate retaliation on the civil population -systematically bombing and destroying all the social infrastructure, killing and injuring thousands of civilians Palestinian, mainly children, making most of Gaza inhabitable- under the narrative of self-defense and war against Hamas. According to the sociologist Ramón Grosfoguel, the present situation in Gaza is even comparable to the Warsaw Jewish ghetto, established in 1940 by German Nazi authorities after the occupation of Poland⁷².

⁶⁸ <https://opiniojuris.org/2024/10/09/israel-must-be-expelled-from-the-united-nations/>.

⁶⁹ The Former President of the US, Jimmy Carter, demanded that Israel's official pre-1967 borders must be honored. See **J. CARTER**, *Palestine Peace not Apartheid*, Simon & Schuster, 2006.

John Dugard declared in his Report as *Special Rapporteur* on the Situation of Human Rights in the Palestinian Territories Occupied since 1967 that Israel is an apartheid state according to International Law.

See the Report at <https://digilibRARY.un.org/record/593075?ln=en&v=pdf>.

Also, a rigorous analysis under International Law **J. DUGARD, J. REYNOLDS**, *Apartheid, International Law, and the Occupied Palestinian Territory*, at *European Journal of International Law*, 24 / 3 (2013), pp. 867-913 (Digital access <https://doi.org/10.1093/ejil/cht045>); **M. MCHOVER**, *Why Israel is a Racist State* (<https://www.matzpen.org/english/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/IsraelRacism-machover-2018.pdf>); **J. OFIR**, *Yes, Israel is a Racist State* <https://mondoweiss.net/2023/07/yes-israel-is-a-racist-state/>; <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2022/02/israels-apartheid-against-palestinians-a-cruel-system-of-domination-and-a-crime-against-humanity/>.

For a legal analysis outline, see <https://www.commondreams.org/opinion/israel-is-a-racist-state>.

⁷⁰ For the US Congress rejecting Israel as a racist state <https://www.nbcnews.com/politics/congress/house-pass-resolution-backing-israel-jayapal-racist-state-rcna94897>.

⁷¹ **S. ALSAIRAFI**, *Revisiting Gaza Ghetto*, Center for Contemporary Arab Studies. Georgetown University, July 7, 2014 (at <https://ccas.georgetown.edu/2024/06/07/22640/>).

⁷² **R. GROSFOGUEL**, *Gaza: The Warsaw Ghetto of the 21st Century*, IHRC 6/1 (2024) <https://www.ihrc.org.uk/gaza-the-warsaw-ghetto-of-the-21st-century/>.



The dominant narrative among Jew and non-Jew Zionists, is emotionally engaged and rationally justified because of the implacable and merciless Nazi persecution and destruction of the European Jewish population in the Holocaust during WWII. However, it was initially challenged after 1967 by the increasing Jewish settlement, illegal according to International Law in the Occupied Territories and, later, by the Israeli new historians⁷³, some of them post-Zionists, researching how the State of Israel was built at the expense of the Palestinian Indigenous population by ethnic cleansing, when they accessed to declassified government documents from the 1948 War, challenging the foundational narrative of the State of Israel based on the false slogan “a land without a people for a people without a land”.

6 - Religious and Political Foundational Narratives, from Ethnic Identity to Ethno-Religious Nationalism and the Legal Consequences in the State of Israel

Most religious or political foundational narratives in old and new nations include recreations of the common past to reinforce national identities and, consequently, patriotic emotional bonding⁷⁴. As Shlomo Sand comparatively explains

“Since the end of the nineteenth century, influential textbooks have transformed the ancient Romans into typical Italians. In the schools of the French Third Republic, Gallic tribes who rebelled against Rome in the time of Julius Caesar were described as true Frenchmen (though of a not-quite-Latin temperament). Other historians chose

⁷³ For a detailed analysis of the new Israeli Historians, see **I. PAPPE**, *The Idea of Israel*, cit., pp. 69-294. See also, **S. SAND**, *The Invention of the Jewish People*, Trans. Y. LOTAN, London N. York, Verso, 2009; **I. PAPPE**, *The Ethnic Cleansing of Palestine*, Oneworld Publications, 2007; **B. MORRIS**, *The Birth of the Palestinian Refugee Problem Revisited*. Cambridge University Press, 2004; **B. MORRIS** *Righteous Victims: A History of the Zionist-Arab Conflict, 1881-2001*, N. York, Vintage Books, 2001, First ed. 1999.

Shlomo Sand and Ilan Papé became post-Zionist critics of the Israeli policies regarding Palestinians and the Occupied Territories (<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/oct/10/shlomo-sand-i-wish-to-cease-considering-myself-a-jew>; <https://www.middleeasteye.net/video/birth-israel-and-death-zionism>).

Benny Morris, on the contrary, is a strong defender of Zionism and its narratives, ignoring or minimizing the suffering of the Palestinian Arabs under the occupation, particularly in the Gaza War, rejecting that it is a genocide, and accepting the need for ethnic cleansing for the establishment of the Jewish State.

See the interview with Mehdi Hassan on the War on Gaza <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Amz2Sf1JMDE>.

⁷⁴ For a scholarly synthesis of nationalism and “the close affinity between the evolution of the national phenomenon and its conceptualization in the scholarly discourse,” see **E. TZIDKIYAHU**, *God Cannot Keep Silent” Strong Religious-Nationalism - Theory and Practice*, at *Questions de recherche / Research Question*, 47 (2015), pp. 9-12 (at <http://www.ceri-sciences-po.org/publica/qdr.htm>).



King Clovis's conversion to Christianity in the fifth century as the true birth of the almost eternal French nation”⁷⁵.

Mythistory facilitates the formation of identities by connecting individuals to a shared emotional and ideological national space. However, the development of these memories and narratives often involves some level of manipulation. Since the 19th century, historians have contributed to this nationalist trend by shaping the cultural legacy and education related to the national history of many nation-states. As Shlomo Sand observes in a sharp and ironic manner,

“To promote a homogeneous collective in modern times, it was necessary to provide, among other things, a long narrative suggesting a connection in time and space between the fathers and the ‘forefathers’ of all the members of the present community”. “Much the same went on in the twentieth century. After the collapse of the Ottoman Empire, the inhabitants of the new Turkey found that they were white Aryans, the descendants of the Sumerians and the Hittites. Arbitrarily mapping the boundaries of Iraq, a lazy British officer drew a dead straight line; those who had overnight become Iraqis soon learned from their authorized historians that they were the descendants of the ancient Babylonians as well as of the Arabs, descendants of Saladin’s heroic warriors”⁷⁶.

The State of Israel carries ancient and new narratives blending the Jewish identity from biblical stories and secular or religious Zionism, building a national project in the 20th century. In the words of Sand,

«For Israelis, specifically those of Jewish origin, such mythologies are farfetched, whereas their own history rests on firm and precise truths. They know for a certainty that a Jewish nation has been in existence since Moses received the tablets of the law on Mount Sinai, and that they are its direct and exclusive descendants (except for the ten tribes, who are yet to be located). They are convinced that this nation “came out” of Egypt; conquered and settled “the Land of Israel,” which had been famously promised it by the deity; created the magnificent kingdom of David and Solomon, which then split into the kingdoms of Judah and Israel».

Consequently,

«They believe that these people - their “nation,” which must be the most ancient - wandered in exile for nearly two thousand years and yet, despite this prolonged stay among the gentiles, managed to avoid integration with, or assimilation into, them»⁷⁷.

The Declaration of Independence of the State of Israel on May 14, 1948, reaffirmed this belief in the first sentence of the document in the following terms⁷⁸,

⁷⁵ S. SAND, *The Invention of the Jewish People*, cit., p. 15.

⁷⁶ S. SAND, *The Invention of the Jewish People*, cit., p. 16.

⁷⁷ S. SAND, *The Invention of the Jewish People*, cit., pp. 16-17.

⁷⁸ <https://www.gov.il/en/pages/declaration-of-establishment-state-of-israel>.



The Land of Israel, Palestine, 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.

Accordingly, the answer to the question of who is a Jew? Besides the halakhic definition that a Jew must be born to a Jewish mother, the Declaration provides an emotional and ambiguous answer: a Jew is a descendant of the nation exiled two thousand years ago from that region. The requirements are outlined in the 1950 Law of Return and 1952 Citizenship Law, although citizenship and nationality are blurring terms in Israeli law because of links to the biblical Jewish nation. At the same time, Israel's Zionist essence responds to the defense of the Jewish state as a national identity and is entitled to all Jews in the world to go to Israel and be its citizens⁷⁹. Consequently, under the Zionist narrative social pluralism and national identity only refers to them.

For Shlomo Sand,

"The Jewish nationalism that dominates Israeli society is not an open, inclusive identity that invites others to become part of it, or to coexist with it on a basis of equality and in symbiosis". "On the contrary, it explicitly and culturally segregates the majority from the minority, and repeatedly asserts that the state belongs only to the majority"⁸⁰.

As Yossi Harpaz and Ben Herzog explain⁸¹,

⁷⁹ The Israeli Law of Return passed on 5 July 1950, amended in 1954 and 1970.

See the text and amendments at <https://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/israel-s-law-of-return>.

Clause 4a was added to the Law of Return in the 1970 Amendment regarding *Rights of members of the family*.

4A. (a) *The rights of a Jew under this Law and the rights of an oleh under the Nationality Law, 5712-1952***, as well as the rights of an oleh under any other enactment, are also vested in a child and a grandchild of a Jew, the spouse of a Jew, the spouse of a child of a Jew and the spouse of a grandchild of a Jew, except for a person who has been a Jew and has voluntarily changed his religion.*

(b) *It shall be immaterial whether or not a Jew by whose right a right under subsection (a) is claimed is still alive and whether or not he has immigrated to Israel.*

(c) *The restrictions and conditions prescribed in respect of a Jew or an oleh by or under this Law or by the enactments referred to in subsection (a) shall also apply*

The Israeli Law of Citizenship 5712-1952 passed in 1952, amended in 1971 (<https://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/the-citizenship-and-entry-into-israel-law>).

Non-Jewish foreigners may naturalize, but they must renounce their previous citizenship, while Jews can keep dual citizenship. "Jewish immigrants could leave Israel immediately after arrival yet keep their Israeli citizenship for the rest of their lives": S. SAND, *The Invention of the Jewish People*, cit., p. 288.

⁸⁰ S. SAND, *The Invention of the Jewish People*, cit., p. 305.

⁸¹ Y. HARPAZ, B. HERZOG, *Report on Citizenship Law: Israel*, [Global Governance Programme], GLOBALCIT, Country Reports, 2018/02, [Global Citizenship] - <https://hdl.handle.net/1814/56024>.



“The Law of Return signifies and embodies the ethnic foundation of the State of Israel. According to Zionist principles, full Jewish existence is not possible outside Israel”. “At the same time, the law also has a clear instrumental value: it has allowed Israel to maintain a Jewish demographic majority.”

The initial secular project of Israel required a compromise with the Orthodox Rabbinate. Consequently, in 1947, Ben Gurion, representing the Jewish Agency, sent a letter to the Ultra-Orthodox World Agudat Israel organization - initially established in Poland in 1912 by the Hassidic movement of Ashkenazi Torah Judaism - outlining the position of the secular Jewish Agency regarding the religious Jewish nature of Israel, known as the *Status-Quo Agreement* (June 19, 1947), remaining as the cornerstone of the relations between Orthodox Judaism and the State of Israel, accommodating a secular state to four religious limitations related to the Sabbath, Kashrut or kosher food, religious marriage law, and religious education⁸².

Currently, the Israeli Law⁸³ recognizes that the Chief Rabbinate of Israel is organized through the Chief Rabbinate Council and has two Chief Rabbis, one Ashkenazi, and the other Sephardi, alternating the presidency because of the legacy of the two major Jewish traditions⁸⁴.

Indeed, it is a unique and paradoxical state model, using religion and Jewishness for political purposes by challenging the standards of citizenship in contemporary democratic nation-states because, on the one hand, the Jewish ethnos cannot include the Palestinian Arabs⁸⁵, and on the other, the legal status of the rabbinical courts determined that they have exclusive jurisdiction over marriage and divorce of Jews in Israel⁸⁶. Therefore, interfaith marriage is not allowed, and there is no civil marriage. However, under International Private law, if Jewish citizens celebrated civil marriages abroad, including same-sex marriages, they must be legally accepted by Israeli law, and in 2010, the Knesset passed the Civil Union Law for Citizens with No Religious Affiliation if both

⁸² *Israel in the Middle East. Documents and Readings on Society, Politics, and Social Relations Pre-1948 to the Present*, Ed. by I. RABINOVICH and J. REINHARZ, Brandeis University Press, 2008, pp. 58-59.

⁸³ CHIEF RABBINATE OF ISRAEL LAW, 5740-1980. Text of the law at <https://web.archive.org/web/20170217091701/http://www.israellawresourcecenter.org/israellaws/fulltext/chiefrabbinateisrael.htm>.

⁸⁴ Ben-Zion Meir Hai Uziel, born in Jerusalem in 1880, was the Sephardi Chief Rabbi during the British Mandate from 1939-1948 and in Israel until 1953. Abraham Isaak Kook, born in the Russian Empire, was the first Ashkenazi Rabbi during the Mandate until he died in 1935.

⁸⁵ See L. TREFREN, *The sources of economic inequality of Arab citizens in Israel vs the Jewish Israelis*, at *Israel's Divides Explained*, Ed. by R. ZEEDAN, The University of Kansas, 2021 (<https://israel.ku.edu/podcast-episodes-israels-divides-explained>).

⁸⁶ See a detailed analysis in S. SAND, *The Invention of the Jewish People*, cit., pp. 292-313.

On the Israeli Marriage system, see <https://djilp.org/the-israel-legal-system-and-its-effects-on-marriage/>.



partners are residents in Israel and registered as non-religious in the Ministry of Interior⁸⁷.

The State of Israel does not have a written constitution; instead, it has Basic Laws. The 1992 Amendment to the Israeli Basic Law of Freedom of Occupation affirms that Israel is a Jewish and democratic state⁸⁸, *The purpose of this Basic Law is to protect freedom of occupation, in order to establish in a Basic Law, the values of the State of Israel as a Jewish and democratic state.*

Are the terms "Jewish" and "democratic" fully compatible in the contemporary nation-state context? Sammy Samooha, a sociologist from the University of Haifa, has characterized the State of Israel more accurately as an "ethnic democracy." This classification helps avoid the potential contradiction between the concepts of "Jewish" and "democratic." After conducting a detailed comparative analysis, he concluded that Israel can be classified as an incomplete or low-grade democracy⁸⁹.

In Israel, the intellectual construction of Judaism as an ethnonational identity⁹⁰ facilitated the inclusion of religious and secularized Jews, most of them from the hegemonic Ashkenazi background, and enabled to build a common ground for other diverse Jewish traditions part of other ethnogeographic cultures like Sephardic Jews - Mizrahi Jews from the Middle East, culturally Arabs⁹¹ - and the Ethiopian Jews or Beta Israel, which settled in Israel in different immigration waves. Particularly, Ethiopian Jews from uncertain origins are distrusted as a proper Jewishness identity by the Israeli religious and political authorities, applying restrictive admission policies⁹². This integration process in Israel of Jews from Asian, African, Middle Eastern origins requires the assimilation into the Israeli Zionist Jewishness under the Ashkenazi hegemony, a Jewish ethnic-nationalist uniform identity exclusively grounded on *ius sanguinis*. It is drastically opposed to the converging multicultural and multiethnic tendencies in Europe,

⁸⁷ <https://maint.loc.gov/law/help/marriage/spousal-agreements-israel.php>.

⁸⁸ <https://www.refworld.org/legal/legislation/natlegbod/1992/en/67433>.

⁸⁹ See **S. SAMOOHA**, *Minority Status in an Ethnic Democracy: The Status of the Arab Minority in Israel*, at *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 13/3 (1990), pp. 389-413 (<https://doi.org/10.1080/01419870.1990.9993679>).

Also referring to Samooha, **S. SAND**, *The Invention of the Jewish People*, cit., p. 295.

⁹⁰ For an analysis of Jewish identity as an ethnicity, a nation, a culture, and even a race, exploring the relationship between secular and religious Judaism, see the collective work *Religion or Ethnicity?: The Evolution of Jewish Identities*, Ed. by Z. GITELMAN, Rutgers University Press, 2009. See from another perspective **S. SAND**, *The Invention of the Jewish People*, cit., pp. 23-63.

⁹¹ See **E.J. TENNISON**, *Inequality Facing Mizrahi Jews in Israel*, Ed. R. ZEEDAN, Rami, The University of Kansas, 2024 (<https://opentext.ku.edu/israelsdivides/chapter/chapter-4-4-inequality-facing-mizrahi-jews-in-israel/>).

⁹² See **J. BUGEE**, *Israel's Ethiopian Jews*, at *Israel's Divides Explained*, Ed. R. ZEEDAN, Rami, The University of Kansas, 2014 (<https://opentext.ku.edu/israelsdivides/chapter/chapter-4-2-israelis-ethiopian-jews/>).



particularly in the EU and US policies⁹³. In Israel, the naturalization of non-Jewish migrant workers is often rejected because the impediments build up to prevent the access of Israeli citizenship to non-Jews⁹⁴.

It is important to remember that Zionism is the fundamental and undisputed state ideology, and, as a result, non-Jewish religious minorities may not receive equal protection under the law. Religious freedom, even for the Israeli Jewish citizens, offers a limited scope - because there is no civil marriage, no civil burial in public cemeteries, and no public transportation on Saturdays and Jewish festivals⁹⁵ - imposing religious regulations upheld by the Chief Rabbinate of Israel, limiting the rights of secular Jews. Moreover, as Sand clarifies, "The Ministry of the Interior determines the "nationality" of every citizen, who may neither choose it nor change it, except by converting to Judaism and becoming officially a Jewish believer"⁹⁶.

As the 2022 US Report on International Religious Freedom in Israel, West Bank, and Gaza indicates,

"The Chief Rabbinate continued not to recognize as Jewish some Israeli citizens who self-identified as Jewish, including Reform and Conservative converts to Judaism and others who could not prove Jewish matrilineage to the satisfaction of the Chief Rabbinate. As a result, the government prohibited those individuals from accessing official Jewish marriage, divorce, and burial services in the country. Evangelical Christians and Jehovah's Witnesses, among others, were still not able to obtain official recognition as a religious group. Members of some religious minorities said the government did not provide the same services and benefits to them as to the country's majority Jewish population"⁹⁷.

The 2023 US Report explains that the

"Ministry of Religious Services (MRS) regulations concerning cemeteries left the majority of the country's population unable to exercise its right, as provided by law, to be buried in accordance with secular or non-Orthodox Jewish religious views".

Highlighting that

⁹³ See a comparative analysis of two different nationhood and opposed citizenship models, Israel and France, although with similarities, one defending the Jewish identity and the other the secular laicity model, in **J. RESNIK**, *Integration without assimilation? Ethno-nationalism in Israel and universal laïcité in France*, at *International Studies in Sociology of Education*, 20/3 (2010), pp. 201-224 (<https://doi-org.ezp-prod1.hul.harvard.edu/10.1080/13602000802011085>).

⁹⁴ **J. RESNIK**, *Integration without assimilation?*, cit. pp. 209-211.
See **Y. HARPAZ, B. HERZOG**, *Report on citizenship law: Israel* [Global Governance Programme], GLOBALCIT, Country Reports, 2018/02, [Global Citizenship] - <https://hdl.handle.net/1814/56024>.

⁹⁵ **S. SAND**, *The Invention of the Jewish People*, cit., pp. 304-305.

⁹⁶ **S. SAND**, *The Invention of the Jewish People*, cit., p. 306.

⁹⁷ <https://www.state.gov/reports/2022-report-on-international-religious-freedom/israel-west-bank-and-gaza/>.



"Local authorities continued to circumvent the ban on public transportation on the Jewish Sabbath (Shabbat) by funding privately operated bus lines. The NGO Secular Forum said "religionization" continued in the Israeli Defense Forces (IDF)"⁹⁸.

Moreover, at the political level, the situation of Occupied Territories in Palestine since 1967 and the continuous settlement policies create diffused national-state borders and produce constant violations of the Palestinian Indigenous population's rights, also a crucial problem at the international level with consequences in the United Nations and the ICJ and ICC, as we already reviewed.

The political situation in the Occupied Territories of Palestine since 1967, along with ongoing settlement policies, has resulted in blurred national-state borders and ongoing violations of the rights of the Palestinian Indigenous population. This matter extends beyond regional concerns and has significant implications at the international level in the United Nations, the International Court of Justice (ICJ), and the International Criminal Court (ICC), as discussed previously⁹⁹.

7 - Intellectual and Social Challenges of Post-Zionism

In the last decade of the 20th century, post-Zionism emerged, representing a new ideological and intellectual trial to the Zionist movement and its variant ideologies, criticizing the flaws of Israel as an ethnoreligious state, the well-established dominant and indisputable Zionist narrative, and the moral standards of the Israeli leaders regarding the Indigenous Palestinian population. It emerged as a scholar stream among Israeli revisionists and intellectuals from many disciplines, realizing that "a Jewish nation-state is no longer an adequate solution for the security of displaced Jews" and questioning "the conceptual limits of the Zionist paradigm"¹⁰⁰.

⁹⁸ <https://www.state.gov/reports/2023-report-on-international-religious-freedom/israel-west-bank-and-gaza/>.

⁹⁹ See the analysis at <https://imeu.org/article/fact-sheet-the-temple-mount-movement>.

Also, **E. TZIDKIYAHU**, *God Cannot Keep Silent*, cit., pp. 17-23.

¹⁰⁰ For a general approach to the debate, see **U. RAM**, *Zionist Historiography and the Invention of Modern Jewish Nationhood: The Case of Ben Zion Dinur*, at *History and Memory*, 7/1 (1995), pp. 91-124 (<http://www.jstor.org/stable/25618681>); **L.J. SILBERSTEIN**, *The Postzionism Debates: Knowledge and Power in Israeli Culture*, New York, Routledge, 1999.

A'sad Ghanem, Uri Ram, and Ilan Pappe among others explore the meanings, ambiguities, and prospects of post-Zionism in *The Challenge of Post-Zionism. Alternatives to Israeli Fundamentalist Politics*, Ed. by E. NIMNI, London-New York, 2003, pp. 7-8.

Also see, **U. RAM**, *From Nation -State to Nation-State. Nation, History and Identity Struggles in Jewish Israel*, at *The Challenge of Post-Zionism. Alternatives to Israeli Fundamentalist Politics*, 20-41; **U. RAM**, *Israeli Nationalism. Social conflicts and the politics of knowledge*. London-New York: Routledge, 2011; **E. KAPLAN**, *Post-Post-Zionism: A Paradigm Shift in Israel Studies?*, at *Israel Studies Review*, 28/ 1 (2013), pp. 142-55. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/43771848>; **E. KAPLAN**, *Beyond Post-Zionism*, State University of New York Press, 2015.



Uri Ram introduced the term "post-Zionism" in a sociological context¹⁰¹. It presents various perspectives - post-ideological, post-modernist, post-colonial, and post-Marxist - that advocate for equal citizenship rights for all Israelis. Additionally, it supports the defense of the State of Israel within the 1967 borders, leading to ideological controversies with liberal Zionists, neo-Zionists, and right-wing Jewish fundamentalists¹⁰². Some Israeli Zionists have criticized this new perspective by simplifying the debate with questions such as, "How bad was the Nakba compared with the Holocaust? How can anyone liken the short and limited Palestinian refugee situation to the agonies of a two-thousand-year exile?"¹⁰³.

One of the most remarkable and paradoxical aspects of early political Zionism is its ability to use Judaism, a traditional religion, to support a Western secular political project. This effort was initially driven by European-Jewish settlers from the Ashkenazi tradition, who were not particularly religious or pious. Nevertheless, they successfully designed and developed a nationalist model for Israel aimed at creating a new secular, modern Jewish society. This model was rooted in an ethnoreligious perspective that limits the concept of plural democracy due to its focus on religious identity. At the same time, these secular settlers employed narratives from the Bible - particularly the ideas of the Jewish people as the Chosen People of God, the Promised Land bestowed upon them, and the divine right to conquer Canaan, as detailed in the biblical books of Exodus and Joshua - to justify their Westernized settler model in Palestine.

In the last quarter of the 20th century, when the term "race" became questioned, ethnicity replaced it to define or self-referred people with a common ancestry and cultural or religious shared heritage. Consequently, Jewish identity became identified as ethnicity. Nevertheless, Jewishness is a complex identity¹⁰⁴ because it includes multicultural Jewish identities from all over the world with different backgrounds and several religious levels of engagement, from seculars to fundamentalists. Evaluating this mythical ethnicity is problematic. However, as historian Shlomo Sand asserts, a national consciousness, whether civil or ethnocentric, requires a literate elite to be created¹⁰⁵.

For a complete analysis of the Post-Zionist Movement and its roots, see **I. PAPPE**, *The Idea of Israel*, cit., pp. 69-246.

¹⁰¹ **U. RAM**, *Post-Zionist Studies of Israel: The First Decade*, at *Israel Studies Forum*, 20/2 (2005), pp. 22-45 (<http://www.jstor.org/stable/41805141>).

¹⁰² See among the Post-Zionist critiques, **A. EHRICH**, *The Idea of Post-Zionism and its Critique* (<https://web.archive.org/web/20050502020845/http://www.palisad.org/papers/ehrlich1.htm>).

¹⁰³ **S. SAND**, *The Invention of the Jewish People*, cit., p. 19.

¹⁰⁴ **E. GONZALEZ-LESSER**, *Jewishness as Sui Generis: Extending Theorizations beyond the Debate of 'Race, Ethnicity, or Religion'*, at *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 43/3 (2020), p. 480 (<https://doi.org/10.1080/01419870.2019.1643487>).

¹⁰⁵ For his approach to Ethnic Myth, **S. SAND**, *The Invention of the Jewish People*, cit., pp. 45-54. Additionally, Chapter 3. *The Invention of the Exile: Proselytism and Conversion*, pp. 129-189.



Some sociologists consider Jewishness a *sui generis* identity, incorporating race, ethnicity, and religion interconnected¹⁰⁶.

8 - The Rise of Religious Zionism and the Radicalization of Neo-Zionism

Ethnoreligious Judaism, as a Jewish sociological identity, became ethnonationalism in the Israeli identity framework, particularly in religious Zionism and neo-Zionism. Consequently, the concept of nationality developed by the early secular Zionism is still maintained in Israel, even reinforced by neo-Zionist trends when religious elements in the Israeli political sphere grew; although it opened a new tension between mainstream secular Zionism and religious Neo-Zionism, more segregationist and radicalized.

According to Ian Pappe, Neo-Zionism appeared a few decades ago to intellectually confront the criticism of post-Zionists with a new think tank, *Shalem*, and its new journal, *Azure: Ideas for the Jewish Nation*, oriented to the existential struggle of Israel and its survival against the Palestinians. In Pappe's view, this neo-Zionist approach reinforces an ultra-nationalist, racist, and dogmatic version of the Zionist values, overruling other values in the society, and therefore, "any attempt to challenge that interpretation of the idea of Israel is considered unpatriotic and in fact treasonous". It is indeed a powerful strategy to diminish, silence, and damage scholar reputations to prevent or discourage critical debates on Zionism, often employing repetitive and fabricated rhetoric such as accusations of 'antisemitism' or 'self-hate'.

Many pro-Zionist academics joined efforts with Israeli authorities to reinforce the state ideology,¹⁰⁷ not only at the state educational level¹⁰⁸ but also by promoting an image campaign called Brand Israel in 2013¹⁰⁹.

Progressively, criticisms toward post-Zionists increased¹¹⁰ while defending the traditional values of Zionism, recovering its dogmatic strength and, as Jamal Amal -Palestinian-Israeli professor of the Department of Political Science at the University of Tel Aviv- explains, seeking

¹⁰⁶ E. GONZALEZ-LESSER, *Jewishness as Sui Generis*, cit., pp. 488-489.

¹⁰⁷ I. PAPPE, *The Idea of Israel*, cit., p. 248.

Defending the nationalist Zionist narrative and its morality, see A. YAKOBSON, A. RUBINSTEIN, *Israel and the Family of Nations: The Jewish Nation-State and Human Rights*, London, Routledge, 2009; C. GANS, *A Just Zionism: On the Morality of the Jewish State*, New York, Oxford University Press, 2008.

¹⁰⁸ See how the textbooks might be seen to marginalize Palestinians, legitimize Israeli military action, and reinforce Jewish-Israeli territorial identity at N. PELET-ETHANAN, *Palestine in Israeli School Books*, Bloomsbury, 2013.

¹⁰⁹ On this government campaign, I. PAPPE, *The Idea of Israel*, cit., pp. 295-313.

¹¹⁰ In this sense, Y. GELBER, *The New Post-Zionist Historians*, New York, American Jewish Committee, 2008.



“to reconcile Zionism with democratic and liberal values, and conservative nationalist Zionism, which prioritizes national values and beliefs over democratic and liberal principles for either messianic or security reasons”

because all of them contribute “to the establishment of the dominant national, historical and sociological narrative in Israeli Jewish society”¹¹¹.

However, this criticism against the post-Zionists also empowered religious hard-liners, defending and participating in the settlement movement in Gaza and the West Bank, like *Gush Emunim*, an ultra-Orthodox Zionist movement with a Messianic, theocratic, and far-right ideology, founded in 1974 by students of Zvi Yehuda Kook, the first Ashkenazi Chief Rabbi under the British Mandate. This reaction against post-Zionism also empowered other religious Haredim fundamentalists -who defend the strict interpretation of the Jewish Halakha Law under a segregationist approach- and facilitated the growth of radical religious-political Haredim ultra-Orthodox parties, like the Mizrahi Sephardi Haredi *Shas* - founded in 1984 by the Talmudic scholar and Sephardi Chief Rabbi of Israel (1973-1983) Ovadia Yosef, born in Iraq in 1920, defending the revival of the Sephardic Jewry legacy opposed to European secular Jewish culture - another example is the Ashkenazi Haredi *Agudat Yisrael* - founded in Poland, in 1912, closely linked to Hassidic Judaism and often part of coalition governments in Israel - deeply diving the Israeli society between secularism and ultra-Orthodoxy¹¹².

For politologists Yacov Yadgar and Noam Hadad, the foundation of religious Zionism is the uneasy ‘synthesis’ of secular nationalism and religion¹¹³. In their view¹¹⁴, “modernist epistemology, encapsulated in the bipolarity of rational secular politics and irrational or non-rational religion,” according to the well-known narrative that explains Zionism as a project of modernization, secularization, and politicization of Judaism. In their opinion, the dominance of secular epistemology is apparent because the religious element is the key to understanding

¹¹¹ A. JAMAL, *Neo-Zionism and Palestine: The Unveiling of Settler-Colonial Practices in Mainstream Zionism*, Edinburgh University Press, *Journal of Holy Land and Palestine Studies*, 16/1 (2017), p. 48, and ft. 1 (<https://doi.org/10.3366/hlps.2017.0152>; Also, at <https://people.socsci.tau.ac.il/mu/amaljamal/files/2017/11/Amal-Jamal-Neozionism-and-Palestine.pdf>).

See also, Y. HAZONY, *The Jewish State: The Struggle for Israel’s Soul*, New York, Basic Books and the New Republic, 2000.

¹¹² See the journalist articles, “Neo-Zionism, Religion, and Citizenship” by G. BASKIN and J. FEFFER (September 26, 2007) - https://fpif.org/neo-zionism_religion_and_citizenship/; Neo-Zionism-Israels True Threat by D. SEKHMET (May 25, 2011) at https://www.huffpost.com/entry/neozionism-israels-true-t_b_749519.

¹¹³ As a simple premise, in Y. YADGAR, N. HADAD, *A post-secular interpretation of religious nationalism: the case of Religious-Zionism*, at *Journal of Political Ideologies*, 28/2 (2023), pp. 238-255 (<https://doi.org/10.1080/13569317.2021.1957297>).

¹¹⁴ Y. YADGAR, N. HADAD, *A post-secular interpretation*, cit., p. 240.



religious Zionism, which could “end up in the service of the nation-statist sovereign”¹¹⁵.

Amal Jamal analyzes how secular Zionism and Neo-Zionism follow the same expansionist ideology for new settlements in Palestine, and “Both advocate supremacist, exclusivist, and *volkish* rights for Jews with disastrous consequences for the indigenous people of Palestine”. Nonetheless, mainstream Zionists reject Neo-Zionism because they perceive “that endangers the entire Zionist project”¹¹⁶. However, for Jamal, even if “the Neo-Zionism is blunt and radical”, moreover,

“it is nationalistic, messianic, racialist and confrontational.” Also, “Neo-Zionists assert that the Jewish tradition and its values do not necessarily contradict the humanistic tradition but form one of its central sources. Loyalty to the Jewishness of the people and ‘land of Israel’ is considered a legitimate value, as manifested in one of the central principles of the humanistic tradition, namely self-determination”.

Therefore, “Neo-Zionism emerged ideologically from within mainstream Zionism and forms not only its continuation, but an externalisation of its native principles, ideas and aspirations”, because they share four central pillars, first, the source of legitimacy of the State of Israel is a settler colonialism by capturing the place from the Indigenous population without right to return, disintegrating, and segregating the native inhabitants because a biblical divine mandate rooted in the conviction of a theological superiority and the myth of exile and return; second, the territorial borders of the Jewish state, from a territorial expansionist mindset based on the religious messianic concept of ‘*geula*’ -Zionist pioneers entitled to delegitimize the native Palestinians- even secularizing the idea by developing a modern model of ethnic civil religion; third, the hegemonic identity of the Jewish society in Israel facilitated an ethno-majoritarian despotism dressed up as democracy, fearing the principle of equality among the Israeli citizens because it contradicts the rights of the Jewish people, the majority, to have privileges than the 20% of non-Jewish do not have; and four, the nature of the Israeli regime relays in an ethno-nationalist sovereignty that goes beyond the nation-state contemporary model of citizenship because its aspirations includes all Jews from all around the world¹¹⁷.

Finally, Neo-Zionism ties entirely Judaism and Zionism to a further dystopian level when the Zionist narrative identifies Antisemitism with anti-Israelism, bonding Judaism to Israelism in a complete identification of politics and religion, transforming Judaism into a theocratic instrument of political power.

From the American policy perspective, after 1967, the US government, whether Republican or Democrat, progressively became

¹¹⁵ Y. YADGAR, N. HADAD, *A post-secular interpretation*, cit., p. 241.

¹¹⁶ A. JAMAL, *Neo-Zionism and Palestine*, cit., p. 47 and p. 49.

¹¹⁷ A. JAMAL, *Neo-Zionism and Palestine*, cit., pp. 50, 51-71.



openly Zionist with close links to the powerful Israeli Lobby in the US¹¹⁸, granting full support to Israel and its policies, even vetoing up to 49 times the UN resolutions against Israel policies on Palestinians in the Occupied Territories since 1970¹¹⁹. Consequently, the US government tolerates and ignores Israel numerous International Law violations; in exchange, Israel became the guardian of the US agenda and interests in the region.

Besides, we must remember that there is extensive support of Evangelical and Jewish Zionists from the UK and the US, actively lobbying their governments¹²⁰. In American society, Zionist supremacy and Israelism as an indoctrination process, often blended with Americanism. Is a particular feature among pro-Israel Evangelicals and Jews. Christian Zionism is a significant Protestant evangelical movement in the US with prominent leaders like Pastor John Hagee -founder of the Christians United for Israel, providing a network for Christian Zionists and influencing American politics and society¹²¹ - Evangelical Pastor Jerry Farrell - founder of the Moral Majority, in 1979¹²² - and the televangelist Pat Robertson, actively advocating for Israel, all closely linked to the political Christian Right¹²³.



¹¹⁸ See **J. MEARSHEIMER, S. WALT**, *The Israel Lobby and the U.S. Foreign Policy*, Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2007.

On the AIPAC website is stated that there is more than 5 million pro-Israel Americans (<https://www.aipac.org/>).

On the AIPAC policies <https://www.aipac.org/policy>.

¹¹⁹ <https://www.middleeasteye.net/news/49-times-us-has-used-veto-power-against-un-resolutions-israel>.

¹²⁰ See **I. PAPPE**, *Lobbying for Israel*, cit., Chapters 8, 9, and 11.

¹²¹ <https://cufi.org/>.

¹²² <https://www.pewresearch.org/religion/2007/05/16/a-christian-right-without-falwell/>.

¹²³ On the relationship between Israel and Christian Zionism, see **S. SPECTOR**, *Evangelicals and Israel: The Story of American Christian Zionism*, Oxford University Press, 2009; **A. YAAKOV**, *An Unusual Relationship: Evangelical Christians and Jews*, New York University Press, 2013; **S. GOLDMAN**, *God's Country: Christian Zionism in America*, University of Pennsylvania Press, 2018; **D.G. HUMMEL**, *Covenant Brothers: Evangelicals, Jews, and U.S.-Israeli Relations*, University of Pennsylvania Press, 2019.