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Term Paper

Abstract: This article examines how the 1948 transference of the Israeli-Palestine dilemma to the United Nations affected the conflict for decades to come. The article first explores how actors such as Great Britain might have increased the possibility of the nations to go to war. Then the article explores the consequences of how the United Nation's actions might have exacerbated Israeli and Palestine relations. In fact, did the transference of responsibility affect Israeli-Palestine events in a significant manner? To develop this the article examines the historical events led to the transference of responsibility. Then, in conclusion, the article results in the understanding that the transference of responsibility of the dilemma did, in fact, a great effect, yet the role of Great Britain and the United Nations were more pragmatic than the article first posits.

Introduction

To consider the rapid formation of the Israeli state and its subsequent tumultuous relationship with Palestine and the wider region of Arab states, we first must understand Israel's relationship with Palestine. And to understand it, we must concede that the conflict is not embedded in theology or any other intractable debate, but in a solvable and mutual desire for land-based in deep-rooted attachments of nationalism (Tillman, 1979.) Of course, nationalism is just one variable among many in a conflict that have been examined by scholars for decades in dialogue with several layers and nuances that have been deeply explored. In conjunction with the understanding that Israel was borne out of international forces that would have vested interest in the Israel-Palestine region for decades to come, whether for larger geopolitical reasons, economic, or their own domestic motivations. Clearly, Israeli origins have been well explored, with so much deeply-seated interest regionally and internationally. In this paper, however, I would like to further explore how one event, in particular, changed the course of Israeli history. Make no mistake, I understand that history is far more contradictory and complicated than one event can really communicate. And, as I'll soon try to elaborate, there are several layers of smaller events that have culminated into an event that is worth diving deep into the mechanisms of. In this way, I'll be contending how a flashpoint in Israeli's history changed the state, as well the conditions that made it possible. Ultimately, my question goes back to Israeli statehood, and the right of Britain to transfer responsibility to the United Nations. Furthermore, to ask how the

transference of the Israeli-Palestine to the United States severely weakened relations between Israel and Palestine for decades to come and has ultimately adversely impacted Israel.

To investigate this question fully, I'll first have to prove a few premises that will guide my arguments in this essay. The first is that the United Nations was a new and decidedly weak entity, because it didn't have enough power to interrupt the sovereignty of nations, (even nations that might never be sovereign states, like Palestine) it was irresponsible for Britain to transfer the problem to the U.N. Secondly, contrary to much of the literature, Britain's withdraw from Israel-Palestine did not line up with its economic and geopolitical goals for the region. Which, then, undermined the stability of the Middle East as a whole. Finally, if Britain had not transferred responsibility to the U.N and instead invested time into the two-state solution that it had in mind then the conflicts of Israel and Palestine over land would not have spiraled into a race to the bottom between the two nations. By investigating each argument, I hope to prove my claim that the United Nation's handling of the mandate was not only an irresponsible reflection on the part of the British but likely accelerated the conflict.

Literature Review

Looking at the relevant literature on this topic, it seems that scholars fall into polarized groups when addressing the reasons behind the United Nation's failure in implementing the U.N Partition plan for Palestine in 1947. The first camp asserts that Britain had done the right thing in handing off the convoluted promises it had made to both states to the U.N. The U. N's fault lies in the naivety and bias of the U.N special committee on Palestine (UNSCOP) that was assigned to examine what claims the Arabs and the Jews held to the land. This camp argues that the committee, (by logical extension the U.N as a whole) was beguiled into believing Zionist claims of statehood. Enforced by the American and European support of Zionism in the very composition of the committee, there was never any just decisions in the 27 November partition plan. (Curtiss, 1987; Flapan, 1987; Hammond, 2010.) On the other hand, some scholars argue that the partition plan failed to be carried out (despite the U.N security council resolution 181) because Arab Palestinians rejected it. This group also asserts that the partition resolution was good for the Arabs, despite their intense resentment of it (Susser, 2018; Yusuf, 2002; Bennis, 1997).

Responsibility or Rationality?

In view of the scholarship, it is clear that many scholars on the subject have little doubt in Great Britain's logic of transferring the Israel-Palestine dilemma to the U.N. Which, as a rational actor, the British Government's decision may make sense. However, after WWII, was the decision truly a responsible one to make, as a major player in the Middle East region? Understandably, the variable of a nation-state being "irresponsible" is difficult to measure and even harder to conclude if we view states simply as a rational actor that must make the correct decisions to preserve their own power. Even so, this article is not a long investigation of how we can quantifiably define states responsible and irresponsible actions, however, it is an article that can present the history of Great Britain in the Israel-Palestine area, and to debate the adverse reactions the end of the British Mandate in Palestine.

Britain's hold on the Palestine area began 1917 with the Balfour Declaration, a promise that infamously declared, "the establishment in Palestine of a national home for the Jewish people." (Balfour, 1917) The letter from Arthur Balfour, the British foreign secretary to the leader of the British Jewry, was meant to garner support from Jewish Americans in joining the Allied forces in WWI. Meanwhile, the Sykes-Picot agreement between Britain and France promised Palestine to Britain. Even more contradictorily, in 1915 the British had started to cultivate a relationship with Sherif Hussein ibn 'Ali of Mecca. Hussein's interest in an Arab state that overthrew the Turkish Ottoman empire converged with Britain's aims of breaking up the Balkan region. In return, Hussein would be supported by the British in his newly commissioned role as Caliph. In the end, the British stayed true to the ambiguous promises of the Balfour Declaration, thereby taking control of the Palestine region, "until such time as they are able to stand alone" (League of Nations, 1972). Then exiling Hussein after he expelled the Ottomans, thereby distinguishing concrete Arab sovereign claim on the area. Furthermore, Britain was able to keep its promises to its own imperialist goals and stoke the Zionist hopes, that was only growing more ardent.

The Second World War, however, undermined the imperialist credibility and Great Britain's willingness to stay in an area where the Balfour Declaration promise had well come into fruition. So much so, that due to the immense push factors of Europe during the 1930s, 250,000 Jews

arrived in Palestine, (Nakba, 2018). As nationalist tensions rose, Great Britain struggled to de-escalate the Arab national general strike that lasted for about six months, destroying thousands of Jewish orchards and farms, as well as Jewish civilians being attacked and killed. (Gilbert, 1998) To address the situation, Britain created the Peel Commission, a royal commission of Inquiry that would investigate the unrest Palestine and then attempt to recommend solutions regarding the Mandate in Palestine. The Peel commission eventually settled on recommending that the Jew and Arab populations transfer to specifically demarcated areas. This was a first prototype for the two-state solution. The Arab response didn't accept such an offer, and eventually the British rejected the solution in October 1938. In the aftermath of the Arab revolt and the rejection of the Peel Commission, Britain issued "White Paper"—documentation officially limiting Jewish immigration to Palestine. Great Britain then also promised a Palestinians state to Arabs within ten years (Cohen, 1973). This policy of appeasement only went so far in the region on the brink of war. However, by the end of WWII, spent and depleted in global hegemony, Great Britain decided to hand-off the Israel-Palestine dilemma to the newly minted United Nations. Essentially as a reformation of the League of Nations, the U.N supported a model of the partition plan that the British had rejected after the Peel Commission. Which originally was accepted the Jewish and then rejected by the Arabs. The second round in 1947, partition plan closely followed in the original's footsteps; the Jewish Agency accepted the resolution, while Palestinian Arabs rejected on the grounds of broken liberty and trust in the UN (United Nations, 1990).

In divergence, Great Britain had learned its lesson and refused to help with the partition. This was in Britain's self-interest because the adoption of the partition plan (Resolution 181) led to a massive outburst in retaliatory violence in Palestine. This came after (on the same day the United Kingdom broke off its mandate on Palestine) the Jewish Agency proclaimed the birth of the state of Israel on the land demarcated for the partition (United Nations 1990). Soon the 1949 Arab-Israeli war broke out. Israel won, and after signing the armistice, absorbed about a third more land than it previously would have in the UN proposal. It's clear, that as soon as a sovereign nation (Great Britain) leased control over Palestine, Israel saw its chance to grasp what it wanted. While the United Nations might have military might, it didn't have the embedded institutional control to reign-in the worst nationalistic impulses. The consequence of the United Nations

weakness was that the original partition plan disregarded as Israel secured more land than it would have had originally.

Conclusions

The original claims this article made relied heavily upon the two-part premise that the United Nations and Great Britain, acting in the Israeli-Palestine dilemma were both unsubstantiated actors, just in separate measures. The article claimed that the United Nations was too weak of a power to effectively address the Israel-Palestine dilemma, especially on the grounds of the conflict being one the first the U.N had to address. However, in understanding the very basic framework of the United Nations, and how it enforces situations, the article has concluded that while the United Nations had the power of the UN security council, international pressure, an alliance, etc. to enforce the strict implementation of a resolution. The lack of tangible sovereignty and institutional history in a state is fairly restricted and therefore cannot implement long-lasting change. One might argue that the UN's fundamental lack of nationalism was a weakness in substantiating its claim to securely carry-out UN resolutions. In a conflict like the Israel-Palestine dilemma, where nationalistic ideologies are entrenched with the fabric of each group, how could they truly trust and obey an international entity that had just become an entity itself? In this sense, then the UN was weak, it had not embedded history with nations to call upon, like Great Britain. Although we might argue, that yes Great Britain had a history with the Israel-Palestine dilemma, it was still inadequate to find a solution. On contrary, Great Britain was still strategic enough to wash their hands clean of the situation when they realized they did not have the resources nor a solution that would truly satisfy either party.

In the thesis of this article, it argues that Great Britain's abandonment of Palestine was fundamentally irresponsible in light of how the dilemma spiraled out of control. Great Britain's actions, however, stem from a pragmatic view of the situation and perhaps an even more realistic view of its own weakness in attempting to resolve the conflict. Other arguments might still insist on Great Britain's irresponsibly in its role in the region. This could be substantiated of course by the reference of colonial practices—most certainly the practice of, “divide and conquer” among religious groups in Israel-Palestine. One might also still insist that Great Britain atone for its sins in the region. While many may think that is possible, part of the many reasons Great Britain

could never interject in Israel-Palestine like that is also part of the reason they had to withdraw in the first place. After WWII, and continuing into the modern age, British hegemony on the global scale has shrunk. That's not to say that global assistance cannot be used to resolve the Israel-Palestine situation, but it is an opportunity to understand that the conflict is much deeper and nuanced phenomena in global affairs than many understand. Furthermore, the premises of this article rested mostly on the haunches of critiquing the external factors in the conflict. Which, indeed, can be tantalizing factors to examine in context, as conduits for events happening the way they did. However, I do think that the desires of both parties will, no matter what institutions of global actors come to play, usurp the controls of external institutions. Therefore, in a globalized world is it realistic to think of Israel-Palestine resolving their conflict without being so affected by international interference? Not likely but analyzing how external institutions have shaped the specific course of Israeli-Palestine history may just be the key to our future.

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