The First Arab-Israeli War

Establishment of the state of Israel / Israeli independence

- United Nations (UN) taking over the mandate of Palestine and UNSCOP
- Role of the United States and Truman leading up to the UN vote on Palestine
- Impact of the UN vote on Palestine
- Immediate consequences for relations between Arabs & Jews

Significance & consequence of key conflicts between Arabs & Israelis

The First Arab-Israeli War 1948-1949

- Reasons for the conflict, resolution, effects/significance on the region, the refugee issue
- Armistice 1949
Timeline

World War One – Decline of Ottoman empire + contrary agreements
British Mandate
Arab Revolt
Peel Commission
White Paper
World War 2
Britain hands over to UN
UN votes to partition Palestine into separate Jewish + Arab states
Violence & conflict
Creation of the state of Israel
First Arab-Israeli War – War of Independence v Nakba
Palestinian refugees – expelled or fled?
...

The end of British rule

• Many Palestinian Jews supported Britain during WW2
  • Growing impatience after the war though
    • Jewish terrorism
THE PALESTINE POLICE FORCE

REWARD

A REWARD OF L. P. 2000 WILL BE PAID BY THE PALESTINE GOVERNMENT TO ANY PERSON GIVING INFORMATION WHICH LEADS DIRECTLY TO THE APPREHENSION OF THE PERSON WHOSE NAME AND PHOTOGRAPH APPEAR HEREUNDER.

HANGED BRITONS: Picture that will shock the world

Shots in Tel-Aviv: 5 Jews die
The end of British rule
• Despite Jewish acts of terror, international sympathy for Jews re: Holocaust
  • Large Jewish pop. in US = pressure on President Truman to put pressure on British re: Jewish refugees entering Palestine
  • Widespread criticism of British re: stopping Jewish immigration to Palestine
  • *The Exodus*
The end of British rule

• Brit. exhausted after war + cont. food rationing & shortages at home
• Hard to keep 100000 troops in Palestine
• Announced at end of 1947 they would hand Palestine over to UN
Partition & the birth of Israel

• UN Partition Plan
  • Nov 1947 – UN voted to divide Palestine & set up both a Jewish & an Arab state
  • Areas that were mainly Jewish were allocated to the Jewish state
  • Areas that were mainly Arab were allocated to the Arab state
  • ‘Kissing points’
Upon British request, the United Nations (UN) formed the United Nations Special Committee on Palestine (UNSCOP). The UN General Assembly passed the above plan (GA Resolution 181) on November 27, 1947. The plan was accepted by the Jews but not by Arabs and never came to fruition.
Impact / consequences of the UN vote

• On Palestine?

• On relations between Arabs & Jews
Partition & the birth of Israel

• Palestinian Arabs rejected plan
  • Jews would be given larger area
  • Did not wish to give up their land
  • Felt western powers should find a home for the Jews elsewhere
  • Arabs were not responsible for the Holocaust

• Palestinian Jews accepted plan but not all of them were happy with it
  • Many Jewish settlements were to be inc. in the Arab state
  • Holy city of Jerusalem to be controlled by international force
  • Menachem Begin, leader of Irgun, announced
    “The partition of the homeland is illegal. It will never be recognized. It will not bind the Jewish people. Jerusalem was and will for ever be our capital.”
Arab flight? – Contestability

• After publication of partition plan, fighting bet. Jews & Arab ↑
  • Bitter struggle to control roads to Jerusalem & massacres carried out by both sides
  • Soldiers from other countries entered Palestine to help the Arabs
  • Haganah organized Jewish defence forces

• By 14 May 1948, when Brit. finally withdrew, hundreds of thousands of Arab had fled from what was to be new Jewish state
  • Why? Source of contestability ever since
    • Pushed/Expelled or fled?
    • Weeks prior = bloody fighting
      • Deir Yassin
Issues surrounding the birth of Israel

• For Israelis the core reality is the realization of the dream of the rebirth of a Jewish state in Eretz Yisrael. The also believe that...
  • The Arabs have not accepted, and remain unwilling to accept, a Jewish state – or the idea of a Jewish state in the region
  • The majority of the Arab world has not given up & will not give up the use of force as a weapon to destroy Israel
  • They have been forced to, & must continue to, defend themselves by demonstrating unassailable military superiority

• For Palestinians the core issues are that...
  • During British mandate & immediately after WW2, they lost their country to Zionists
  • From the outset the intention of the Zionists was to occupy all the land west of the Jordan River
  • Since the formation of Israel, they have been fighting a war of liberation to regain their land from an expansionist state
Summary so far...

• 1917 – 1948...
  • Palestine ruled by Christian power for first time in > four centuries
  • WW1 devastating
  • British governed as if Palestine = a crown colony
  • ↑ pop., prosperity & polarization
    • Atmosphere of suspicion, fear & conflict
  • At first, Arab & Jews welcomed Brit. as liberators
    • 1918-1948 – ambitions of both groups frustrated
      • Brit. did favour Jewish over Arab aspirations
      • Arab pop. disillusioned
      • Impatience amongst many Jews – use of force against the British
      • By 1948, Jewish pop. ↑ from 60000 (1918) to 650000
  • Post-WW2, British handed over control to UN
  • UN voted to partition Israel
  • ↑ violence – Palestinian Arabs flee
  • 14 May 1948 – David Ben-Gurion proclaims state of Israel
  • 15 May 1948 – First Arab-Israeli War begins
The First Arab-Israeli War

• 15 May 1948
  • Arab army crossed frontiers of Palestine
    • 1000 Lebanese
    • 5000 Syrian
    • 5000 Iraqi
    • 10000 Egyptian troops
    • Some Saudi Arabian, Libyan & Yemeni volunteers too
  • Aim = est. a unitary Palestinian state
    • Also hoped to prevent total ruin of Palestinians & flooding of refugees into their own countries
  • Israel, USA & Soviet Union called Arab states entry into Palestine ‘illegal aggression’
The First Arab-Israeli War

• 26 May 1948 – IDF officially est. – Haganah, Palmach & Irgun absorbed

• As war progressed, IDF – more troops than Arab forces
  • July 1948 – IDF = 63000 troops, Arab armies = 40000
  • 1949 – IDF = 115000 troops, Arab armies >55000

• War fought bet. 15 May 1948 – early 1949
  • War of Independence
  • *Al-Nakba* / the Catastrophe
The First Arab-Israeli War

• End of the war
  • Series of armistices with various Arab states
    • Israel asserted its sovereignty within the ceasefire lines
    • Green Line
    • New borders of Israel = 25% more than allotted to it by UN partition plan
    • Transjordan occupied then annexed West Bank & East Jordan
    • Gaza Strip retained & administered by Egypt
  • Israeli casualties = 6000 killed (4000 soldiers / 2000 civilians)
  • Arab casualties = 10000-15000 killed
The First Arab-Israeli War

• Issues
  • Borders
  • Palestinian state
  • Occupied territories
  • Jerusalem
  • Refugees
  • Water resources
  • No peace treaties