

**Canada and the Palestine Question:
On Zionism, Empire, and the Colour Line**

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Abstract

This dissertation assesses the historical engagement of Canadian state and society with the Palestine problem. Canada's contemporary position on the pro-Israel edge of the spectrum of world politics raises questions about long-term patterns of change and continuity in Canadian politics concerning the Middle East. Liberal patriotic historical narration of Canadian foreign policy conventionally invokes what Lester B. Pearson referred to as 'the broad and active internationalism' with which Canadian officials approached the world in the years after World War II. Moderate voices within the contemporary Canadian mainstream typically counterpose this history to a narrow support for Israel that pits Canada against a majority of the world community. This dissertation argues that contemporary political opposition in Canada needs to find other historical precedents to build upon. The established liberal internationalist framing obscures the formative influence upon Canadian foreign policy of a racialized politics of empire. The development of Canadian politics within the framework of the British Empire, and the domestic structures of racial power that formally endured into the twentieth century, need to be taken into account if the historical evolution of Canadian external affairs policy on Palestine – as more generally – is to be understood. Historical and political analysis structured around the assertion of national innocence undercuts the kind of understanding of the past that can inform constructive engagement with the problems of the present. As against the pervasive theme of fair-minded Canadian innocence, this dissertation finds that the implication of both the Canadian government and Canadian civil society in the denial of Palestinian rights has deep historical roots. It is critical to look not only at the scope of internationalist tendencies within Canadian political history, but also at their exclusionist boundaries. In so doing, this study positions Canada within wider Western structures of support for Israel against Palestinian and neighbouring Arab societies.

Introduction

'Many professors in academia are fond of the term "postcolonial," and it has become fashionable to say that we are living in the postcolonial era. But since I live in the so-called Middle East I know that it is a word which speaks a partial truth in order to hide a more important truth, to hide the fact that we live in a new or neocolonial era where colonialism is transnational, led by the United States, and has taken on more sophisticated economic, military, technological and cultural forms.'¹

-Nawal El Saadawi, 'Breeding Terror, or An Uncivilized Clash of Civilizations' (2010)

'Theories of social morality are always the product of a dominant group which identifies itself with the community as a whole, and which possesses facilities denied to subordinate groups or individuals for imposing its views of life on the community. Theories of international morality are, for the same reason and in virtue of the same process, the product of dominant nations or groups of nations. For the past hundred years, and more especially since 1918, the English-speaking peoples have formed the dominant group in the world; and current theories of international morality have been designed to perpetuate their supremacy and expressed in the idiom peculiar to them.'²

-E.H. Carr, *The Twenty Years' Crisis* (1939)

* * *

Academic debates about Western politics on Palestine can never stand apart from the political struggles that frame them. Perhaps this is true of all discussion within what Edward Said dubbed 'the ideological sciences.'³ One needn't look beyond the International Relations canon for comments suggesting as much. In his classic IR study *The Twenty Years' Crisis*, E.H. Carr underscores the basic point: 'purpose precedes and conditions thought,' whether one likes it or not. In the 'political sciences,' argues Carr, unlike in the 'physical sciences,' the very line between analysis of a topic and the topic being analyzed is blurred: 'Every political judgement helps to modify the facts on which it is passed. Political thought is itself a form of political action.'⁴

This may be a universal truth. As concerns the question of Palestine, it is especially difficult to ignore. On this, at least, agreement can be found on both sides of the ideological divide. 'There is no state in the modern world whose progress has been more dependent on idealistic and moral postulates' than has Israel.⁵ So declared Abba Eban, one of the most iconic diplomats to ever represent Israel on the world stage.

¹ Nawal El Saadawi, *The Essential Nawal El Saadawi: A Reader* (London: Zed Books, 2010), 147-8.

² Edward Hallett Carr, *The Twenty Years' Crisis: An Introduction to the Study of International Relations* (New York: Perennial, 2001), 79-80.

³ Edward Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1978), 9.

⁴ Carr, *Twenty Years' Crisis*, 5.

⁵ Abba Eban, 'The Toynbee Heresy,' in *Voice of Israel* (New York: Horizon Press, 1957), 165-6.

Naturally, Eban considered Western veneration of the Israeli state to be just and proper. Others were less enthusiastic. In his path-breaking *The Question of Palestine*, Edward Said argued that liberal celebration of Zionism and Israel relied upon a studious indifference to their impact on Palestinian society. For Said, this amounted to 'one of the most frightening cultural episodes' of the twentieth century.⁶ Neither Eban nor Said doubted that liberal intellectuals had contributed to Israel's standing in Western political culture, and, in turn, to the international support it could call upon.

Political power is often shored up by the invocation of 'idealistic and moral' claims. In his analysis of the factors determining a state's position in international hierarchies of power, Antonio Gramsci flagged the significance of 'the ideological position that a certain power occupies in the world, insofar as it represents the progressive forces of history.'⁷ The point is now well established; state power and the mythologies that buttress it develop in parallel. For domestic as well as international reasons, construction of the historical record in any given society tends to reflect and enforce existing relations of power. This dynamic is an especially striking feature of the struggle over Palestine. Michael Oren, the Israeli scholar-statesman who served as the Netanyahu government's ambassador to the United States from 2009-13, had good reason to suggest that '[t]he Arab-Israeli conflict, perhaps more than any other modern dispute, has been a conflict both *in* and *of* history.'⁸ The dispute has rarely been confined to the Middle East.

This dissertation considers how Canadian society and the Canadian state have engaged with, and been implicated in, the Palestine problem. Canadian society has generally not been troubled by direct exposure to the details of the issue. A few years before the Israeli state was established, the main Middle East specialist within Canada's department of external affairs, Elizabeth MacCallum, expressed her concerns about the political climate that resulted: 'there is little knowledge on this continent of what has actually happened in the Near and Middle East in the past 50 years, and ... it is consequently easy to manipulate the record so as to encourage the view that Arab

⁶ Edward Said, *The Question of Palestine* (New York: Vintage Books, 1992), 113.

⁷ Antonio Gramsci, ed./trans. Joseph A. Buttigieg, *Prison Notebooks, Vol. 2* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996), 240.

⁸ Michael B. Oren, 'Out of the Battleground,' *Radical History Review* 45 (1989), 85.

claims in the present controversy may be dismissed as all but irrelevant.⁹ The problem persists today, if in a different form. There is no lack of material about the topic. But the challenge remains: not of shedding light on an unexplored field of research, but of pushing through a thicket of myths, taboos, and misconceptions. These do not only stem from depictions of the Palestine conflict itself. They have been nurtured by decades of association between Israel and the Western powers. In the process, Israeli and local patriotic mythologies have become entangled.

The Middle East has become one of many sites onto which a self-flattering rendering of Canadian foreign policy has been projected. The conventional wisdom is summarized by Canadian diplomat Michael Bell, who held numerous ambassadorial posts in the region. The editors of *Canada and the Middle East*, a 2007 volume bringing together the perspectives of Canadian policy-makers and academics, relay his judgement: 'Michael Bell holds the opinion that Canada's traditional approach to the Arab-Israeli issues can best be described as fair-minded.'¹⁰ Israel's Michael Oren uses precisely the same label to describe Canada's Middle East diplomacy, specifically in its 'liberal internationalist' heyday. Oren explores the theme in an article for *Diplomacy & Statecraft* under the title, 'Faith and Fair-Mindedness: Lester B. Pearson and the Suez Crisis.'¹¹ Respected Canadian academics have helped to flesh out the narrative of official Canadian fair-mindedness and moderation. The University of Calgary's David Bercuson, for example, concluded that 'Canadian policy on the Arab-Israeli conflict is generally even-handed.'¹² David Dewitt and John Kirton likewise insist upon 'the long-established balance between Israel and the Arabs in Canada's diplomatic posture.'¹³ For the most part, mainstream Canadian scholars and policy-makers shared this narrative throughout the late twentieth century.

⁹ John F. Hilliker, ed., *Documents on Canadian External Relations [henceforth DCER] Vol. 11* (Ottawa: External Affairs and International Trade Canada, 1990), 1906.

¹⁰ Michael Bell et al., 'Practitioners' Perspective on Canada-Middle East Relations,' in Heinbecker and Momani, *Canada and the Middle East*, 8.

¹¹ Michael Oren, 'Faith and Fair-Mindedness: Lester B. Pearson and the Suez Crisis,' *Diplomacy & Statecraft* 3, No. 1 (1992), 48-73.

¹² David Bercuson, *Canada and the Birth of Israel* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1985), 240.

¹³ David Dewitt and John Kirton, 'Foreign Policy Making Towards the Middle East: Parliament, the Media, and the 1982 Lebanon War,' in eds. David Taras and David H. Goldberg, *The Domestic Battleground: Canada and the Arab-Israeli Conflict* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1989), 181.

There was a curious feature of ‘Canada’s policy and practice of scrupulous impartiality,’ as another historian described it.¹⁴ It often involved aligning with Israel against majority world opinion, and against massive voting majorities at the United Nations. In the late Cold War, the *Globe and Mail* could refer with little controversy to ‘Canada’s position as Israel’s No. 2 friend at the UN,’ outdone only by the United States.¹⁵ Year after year, on vote after vote, Canada joined Israel and the US in opposing a diplomatic consensus on Palestine supported by nearly the entire Third World. This involved obvious diplomatic isolation. But in the analysis of the scholars cited above, it was altogether appropriate. The convergence of close support for Israel with even-handed balance served to vindicate both.

In the twenty-first century, the ‘impartiality’ narrative faced a withering attack – from the right. Not that there were no grounds for criticism from the left. In 2004, to take a strong academic example, Sherene Razack’s *Dark Threats & White Knights* incisively challenged the Canadian peacekeeping mythology that had grown up since the Suez Crisis. Razack’s study was structured around the 1993 scandal involving Canadian military abuse in Somalia, and did not deal with Middle East policy at any length. But her analysis applies more broadly. Razack suggested that even Canadian interventions framed around disinterested conflict resolution operate within ‘a universe structured by a civilized North and an uncivilized South.’¹⁶ ‘We still have not abandoned our sense of the world as a place where we sally forth, often as the “hero’s friend,” to help those less fortunate than ourselves,’ wrote Razack. ‘We cannot imagine that we are implicated in the crises we set out to solve.’¹⁷ For anti-racist critics like Razack, the narrative of impartial beneficence obscured Canada’s core, racialized position on the world stage. For political forces on the right, on the other hand, it got in the way of openly enforcing this position.

In the early years of the twenty-first century, right-wing political forces in Canada, emboldened by the US-led ‘war on terror,’ thus initiated a concerted challenge to

¹⁴ Zachariah Kay, *The Diplomacy of Impartiality: Canada and Israel, 1958-1968* (Waterloo: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 2010), 100.

¹⁵ Michael McDowell, ‘Friend of Israel, Canada is target of Arab states diplomatic feelers,’ *The Globe and Mail* (26 May 1983), 21.

¹⁶ Sherene Razack, *Dark Threats & White Knights: The Somalia Affair, Peacekeeping, and the New Imperialism* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2004), 165.

¹⁷ Razack, *Dark Threats*, 11.

Canada's traditional liberal mythology. In the place of a national ethos of peacekeeping beneficence, they asserted the need for aggressive Canadian involvement in wars against perceived threats to Western civilization. During the build-up to the 2003 invasion of Iraq, this agenda was most clearly advanced by opposition politicians associated with a short-lived political party of the populist right, the Canadian Alliance. Alliance politicians including Stephen Harper, Stockwell Day, and Jason Kenney called on the governing Liberals to rally the country for war alongside Canada's 'traditional and historical allies.'¹⁸ Aggressive support for Israel factored prominently in the Alliance's approach to foreign policy.

In late 2003, these politics gained a broader platform when the Alliance merged with Canada's established federal Tory party, the Progressive Conservatives. As leader of the newly united Conservative Party of Canada, Stephen Harper advocated support for Israel as a core commitment. 'I don't see Canada as neutral,' Harper explained soon after assuming the party's leadership. 'Maybe that's where the Liberals have gone, but my view is that Israel is part of the democratic family of nations.'¹⁹ Federal elections in early 2006 consigned the Liberals to the opposition benches, and a new Conservative government under Stephen Harper took power. Pro-Israel partisanship became official government policy.

The traditional Canadian approach of presenting support for Israel as good objective policy, impartial as well as righteous, became strained as the Harper government struck a position of ostentatious support for Israel against Palestinian and neighbouring Arab societies. 'Neutrality' was gradually transformed from a pretence of Canadian diplomacy into an epithet levelled against opponents. A major flashpoint for these changes was the summer of 2006, when Israeli warfare, at the outset of the season focused against the Gaza Strip, in turn expanded with a large-scale Israeli invasion of Lebanon. Partisan rivalries in Canada complicated the conventional framing. Former Liberal foreign affairs minister John Manley hastened to affirm that 'Canada has never been a neutral or pacifist country.'²⁰ The contemporary basis for the narrative of

¹⁸ Srdjan Vucetic, *The Anglosphere: A Genealogy of a Racialized Identity in International Relations* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2011), 118.

¹⁹ Robert Fife, 'Harper to crack down on anti-Semitism; Tory leader says criminal charges, not more education, the way to tackle problem,' *Ottawa Citizen* (25 June 2004).

²⁰ John Manley, 'Canada was never neutral: Stephen Harper is right that we are a friend of Israel; but friends tell friends when they are wrong,' *Ottawa Citizen* (28 July 2006).

historical impartiality eroded. A *Globe and Mail* editorial endorsed Canadian support for Israel against the forces of 'radical Islam' under the title, 'The honest broker that never was.'²¹

In the years since, the surge of official Canadian support for Israel has underscored the need for a sustained challenge to Canadian foreign policy in the Middle East. The strength of contemporary criticism will depend in part on its engagement with the historical record.

The Legacy of Past Precedents

What is true of the debate between Canada's main political parties is, too often, also the case of academic representations of Canada's political past: they are tightly bound by patriotic premises. Nathan C. Funk's contribution to *Canada and the Middle East* sums up the established terms of discussion. 'The search for national consensus on foreign policy remains elusive,' he writes, 'with advocates of a traditional, liberal internationalist position calling for a balanced or even-handed foreign policy that seeks diplomatic solutions within frameworks imbued with broad, multilateral legitimacy and proponents of a newer, more insistent approach emphasizing military preparedness and support for key allies.' In the contest to define Canada's place in the world, Funk notes that 'proponents of the liberal internationalist vision find themselves on the defensive.' Part of the dispute, he explains, is a 'competition to define past precedents,' in which the contending schools of patriotic opinion invoke different historical interpretations of Canadian foreign policy, from which their contemporary proposals are said to extend.²² It is, unfortunately, exceedingly difficult to use the record of Canadian governing circles as inspiration for a just approach to the Middle East.

Indeed, the Palestine question is among the global issues on which Canadian officials have most consistently pitted themselves against majority world opinion and diplomacy. One former Canadian prime minister, the Tory Joe Clark, has expressed

²¹ Editorial, 'The honest broker that never was,' *Globe and Mail* (28 July 2006).

²² Nathan C. Funk, 'Applying Canadian Principles to Peace and Conflict Resolution in the Middle East,' in eds. Heinbecker, Paul, and Bessma Momani, eds., *Canada and the Middle East: In Theory and Practice* (Waterloo: Wilfrid Laurier Press, 2007), 25-7.

misgivings about this habit. In assuming the office of Canadian prime minister in 1979, Clark was at the centre of a significant controversy concerning Palestine, when he pledged to effectively endorse Israeli sovereignty in Jerusalem by relocating the Canadian embassy from Tel Aviv.²³ He retreated from this position in the face of the ensuing controversy; and in the years ahead, he began to express concerns about the more general gap between Canadian and majority world diplomacy on Palestine. 'The Israel-Palestine conflict is,' he recently wrote, 'most contentious and dangerous in the immediate neighbourhood of the Middle East. However, it is also a lightning-rod issue between developed nations and the developing world, where many see Palestinians as a symbol of broader exclusion.'²⁴ Of this there can be little doubt. In the conflict over Palestine, a number of allied Western states have continually opposed a wide Third World consensus. For its part, Canada has tended to stand not only with the Western powers, but with the most rigid supporters of Israel among them.

It would not be impossible to construct a patriotic counter-narrative to Canadian support for Israel against the Palestinians. The search for 'past precedents' noted by Funk focuses on the record of the Canadian government. Some of its personnel, especially those directly observing the realities of Israeli policy, have left a fragmentary record of sympathy with the Palestinians that could be worked with. E.L.M. Burns, for example, was the first Canadian peacekeeping commander in the Middle East, sent in 1954 to head up the UN Truce Supervision Organization (UNTSO) that monitored the Arab-Israeli armistice lines after the war of 1948. Sustained exposure to the realities of the Palestine conflict made it more difficult for him to accept the Israeli narrative than it would have been from a distance. Concerning a meeting he had in the summer of 1956 with then Israeli foreign minister Golda Meir, Burns expressed common-sensical confusion as to why the Israeli government, which was constantly launching 'retaliatory' border raids, claimed to see no grounds for Palestinian hostility. He wrote: 'It seemed to me symptomatic of a certain blindness to the human reactions of others that so many Israelis professed not to understand why the Arabs who had been driven from their lands should continue to hate and try to injure those who had driven them out.'²⁵ By

²³ See George Takach, 'Clark and the Jerusalem Embassy Affair: Initiative and Constraint in Canadian Foreign Policy,' in eds. Taras and Goldberg, *Domestic Battleground*, 144-166.

²⁴ Joe Clark, *How We Lead: Canada in a Century of Change* (Toronto: Random House Canada, 2013), 80

²⁵ E.L.M. Burns, *Between Arab and Israeli* (Toronto: Clarke, Irwin & Company Ltd, 1962), 162.

Canadian standards, Burns distinguished himself with this public airing of Palestinian grievances concerning the expulsions of 1948.

A patriotic counter-narrative, building upon such fragments, could also find material from the summer of 1982, when Palestinian refugees were targeted on a massive scale in Israel's first sustained invasion of Lebanon. Canadian prime minister Pierre Elliott Trudeau maintained his country's position on the pro-Israel fringe of world diplomacy. His government's representative in Beirut, however, was sharply critical, at least for as long as he was allowed to remain in Lebanon. The *Globe and Mail* reported:

Canadian Ambassador Theodore Arcand termed the situation 'a living hell' before he was ordered out of West Beirut on Aug. 2. 'This is truly a scene from Dante's Inferno,' he said after watching a 14-hour bombardment from his fourth-story embassy window. Mr. Arcand was the last high-level Western diplomat to leave the war-torn city after opening the first floor lobby to homeless refugees. His own house had been demolished by artillery shells in late July.²⁶

Dewitt and Kirton note that the ambassador's outrage was in no way matched by prime minister Trudeau; rather, 'the executive of the Canadian government seemed to be offering Israel its tacit support.'²⁷ Still, Canadian support for Israel, however one approaches the topic, should not be considered monolithic.

Unfortunately, rather than working with these (mostly dissident) fragments, liberal historical narration of Canadian foreign policy in the Middle East tends, as Funk notes, to invoke the Canadian government's supposed internationalism in the years after World War II. Here we run across another curious feature of established Canadian mythology. Some anti-racist critics contend that Canadian politics have yet to overcome their racist heritage: 'Canadian national identity,' writes Sunera Thobani, 'remains inextricably infused with the colonial tropes of white racial supremacy and western civilizational superiority.'²⁸ Thobani's argument is compelling, but has little place in mainstream Canadian discussions. Canada's history of state-sanctioned racial discrimination, extending in force into the 1960s, is roundly acknowledged. But liberal conventional wisdom holds that the subsequent adoption of multiculturalism as official state policy moved Canada beyond realities of structural racism.

²⁶ Dan Connell, 'For the civilians, terror and despair,' *Globe and Mail* (16 August 1982).

²⁷ Dewitt and Kirton, 'Foreign Policy Making,' 180.

²⁸ Sunera Thobani, *Exalted Subjects: Studies in the Making of Race and Nation in Canada* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2007), 249.

Concerning foreign policy, on the other hand, Canadian liberalism's prized heritage is bound up with the history of pre-'multicultural' Canada. That domestic structures of racism reflected political realities which also shaped Canadian activity on the world stage, that postwar Canada's international alignments were carried over from the age of overt racial identifications – these are central points, but ones that patriotic historiography either bypasses or quietly accepts as natural features of Canadian politics. Challenging the conventional depictions, John Price has argued for the need to centre the question of racism in discussion of Canadian engagement with East Asia.²⁹ This rethinking also needs to extend to Canadian engagement with the Middle East.

Direct Canadian interests in the Middle East were to slow to develop. Canadian engagement with the region was, then, necessarily internationalist to some extent, in that it operated within terms set by allied powers. It is difficult to imagine what a purely Canadian parochialism concerning the Middle East would look like. The issue is not whether Canadian politics were bound up with interests wider than Canada's, but rather concerns the scope and character of the internationalism that resulted. The great anti-racist W.E.B. Du Bois opened the twentieth century by drawing attention to a defining issue for the coming period: 'The problem of the twentieth century,' he famously wrote, 'is the problem of the color-line, – the relation of the darker to the lighter races of men in Asia and Africa, in America and the islands of the sea.'³⁰ Throughout the century ahead, Canadian internationalism was never other than an internationalism of the West. When Canada's self-styled 'radical mandarin' Escott Reid declared in 1947 that Canada ought to economically and military rally with 'the peoples of the western world,' this was not only an internationalist but also an exclusionary vision.³¹

The racialized character of 'the West' as a political construct is discussed in a 2003 essay by Alain Badiou, focusing on 'war on terror' politics in France. Badiou wrote: 'let's recall for the sake of the younger among us that for many decades the political deployment of the term "Occidental" was confined to the extreme, racist right wing, to

²⁹ See John Price, *Orienting Canada: Race, Empire, and the Transpacific* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2011).

³⁰ W.E.B. Du Bois, *The Souls of Black Folks* (Chicago: A.C. McClurg & Co., 1903), 13.

³¹ Michael Keating, *Canada and World Order: The Multilateralist Tradition in Canadian Foreign Policy* (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 2002), 71.

the point of being a name of one of its most violent small groups.¹³² The term has a different historical resonance in France than in the English-speaking West. As Carr suggests in the quote cited at the outset of this introduction, the international predominance of Anglo-American power has been accompanied by its identification with wider world interests: it has been common to assert the essential congruence of Anglo-American, Western, and global order. Canadian politics have largely developed under this ideological cover. This does not change the realities of narrow political alignments.

On the Middle East as more generally, it is important to delineate the imperial and racial boundaries of Canada's historical commitments. Consider the following comments from Arnold Smith, in a telegram dated December 1960. Smith was serving as Canadian ambassador in Cairo, at the time of Egypt's political union with Syria within the framework of the United Arab Republic. Smith's telegram lays out his perspective on Canada's local interests. The development of a local market for Canadian manufactured goods was conceivable, he suggested, and Egyptian cotton could perhaps be of use to the Canadian textiles sector. For the time being, however, Canadian investments were extremely limited. Smith mused,

Canada's main interests in the U.A.R. are thus political, and more as a member of 'the West,' than bilateral. Quite apart from the possible danger of a sudden crisis which could lead to military hostilities on some scale, small or great, with the possibility of direct great power intervention, there is the more long-term but perhaps more serious problem of the future relations between the white nations of western Christendom and the rest of the world.¹³³

For Smith, Canadian structures of racial power at home clearly carried over into the global arena, where the Canadian government's task was to represent the interests of one of 'the white nations of western Christendom.' Smith was serving on behalf of the Progressive Conservative government of John Diefenbaker. His approach, however, was at base shared not only by Diefenbaker but also by his Liberal predecessors; and it endured well after open racial rhetoric of this kind became taboo.

The enduring association of Canadian state and society with racialized alliance politics has been noted by critics abroad. Samir Amin and Ali El Kenz, for example,

³² Alain Badiou, *Circonstances I: Kosovo, 11 septembre, Chirac/Le Pen* (Paris: Léo Scheer, 2003); among the works translated by Steve Corcoran and published as *Polemics* (London: Verso Books, 2011), 38.

³³ Janice Cavell, ed., *DCER Vol. 27* (Ottawa: Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade, 1960), 1044.

discussing the politics of empire in the Middle East as they have evolved into the twenty-first century, identify Canada as part of ‘the Anglo-Saxon bloc of peoples,’ guided by ‘a feeling of deep shared solidarity, when confronted with other cultures in the planet.’³⁴ On the right wing of contemporary Canadian politics, this is sometimes proclaimed more or less openly; amidst his pro-Israel diplomacy during the summer of 2006, prime minister Harper stressed Canada’s share in the heritage of ‘the people of the British race.’³⁵ On the liberal left of Canada’s governing spectrum, meanwhile, the influence of this heritage is scarcely less decisive.

It may be most useful to simply discard the requirements of intellectual patriotism. As Sherene Razack writes of Canadian intellectuals, ‘in the cultural story we tell about our international role, we always go to the South as innocent parties who are not implicated in the terrible histories we confront there.’³⁶ Concerning the Middle East, it would, in order to sustain this approach, be necessary to depict the twenty-first century intensification of Canadian support for Israel as an aberration, against which a traditional Canadian politics of impartiality and balance should be honoured and ultimately restored. This dissertation instead focuses on patterns of continuity. It emphasizes Canada’s long-term association with the politics of empire in the Middle East, first within the British Empire and later within the widened Western alliance centred around US power. It suggests that this association, from early on, encouraged Canadian support for Zionist proposals concerning Palestine.

The scope of research for this dissertation includes not only government policy, but also the politics of Canadian civil society. Voluntary Canadian support for the colonization of Palestine cannot be neatly disentangled from state policy or from the reigning political culture in which it was embedded. On the one hand, this approach gives to the Canadian Zionist movement its due place in the record of Canada’s engagement with the Palestine problem. On the other, it looks to intellectual representations of Canadian engagement with the Middle East as forming part of the political reality under discussion. The focus of this study is historical. Its attention is

³⁴ Samir Amin and Ali El Kenz, *Europe and the Arab World: Patterns and Prospects for the New Relationship* (London: Zed Books, 2005), 58.

³⁵ Stephen Harper, ‘Address by the Prime Minister at the Canada-UK Chamber of Commerce,’ Office of the Prime Minister of Canada, 14 July 2006. Accessed in December 2013 at <<http://pm.gc.ca/eng/news/2006/07/14/address-prime-minister-canada-uk-chamber-commerce>>.

³⁶ Razack, *Dark Threats & White Knights*, 156.

directed to the earliest alignments of Canadian with Zionist politics, and to the evolution of old colonial patterns through the age of decolonization and liberal Canadian internationalism. But this study is not, nor could it be, insulated from contemporary politics. To the contrary, it takes as its theoretical point of departure the primacy of contemporary politics in determining the relevance of historical research.

Theory and Its Implications

In 'Writing and Freedom,' the Egyptian feminist Nawal El Saadawi provides useful guidance for thinking about intellectual work and structures of power. Just as the exercise of power is today global, El Saadawi emphasizes that struggles around its legitimacy, whether in structures of family or structures of state, cut across all spheres of social life. This particular essay of El Saadawi's combines reflection upon her imprisonment by Egyptian authorities with commentary on other barriers to free thought. She describes how the politics of power and the accusations against those opposing it flow 'downwards and upwards, from the tip of the pyramid where international legitimacy resides to the bottom, to local governments, patriarchal and legislative authorities, to religious institutions, cultural institutions, the media, the press, the intellectuals, the writers and the literary critics.'³⁷ From this perspective, intellectual work fits within and generally enforces the existing social order. Against this El Saadawi advocates a politics of democratic opposition, including by means of 'simple, clear and direct writing.'³⁸ On intellectual work as on contemporary colonialism, El Saadawi's work should inform politically responsible theory.

Additional guidance in navigating the relationship between intellectual work and political power is provided by Gramsci, writing several decades earlier from an Italian prison. In one notebook entry on the topic, Gramsci works through some of the historical analysis behind his argument that 'intellectuals have the function of organizing the social hegemony of a group and that group's domination of the state.'³⁹ He relies upon an encompassing definition of intellectuals and a sweeping historical analysis of

³⁷ El Saadawi, *The Essential*, 135.

³⁸ El Saadawi, *The Essential*, 138.

³⁹ Gramsci, *Prison Notebooks*, Vol. 2, 200-201.

their function. For present purposes, the notable passage in this notebook entry concerns the question of intellectual monopolies. The example he cites is the historic authority of ‘Catholicism and ecclesiastical organization, which for many centuries absorbed most intellectual activity and exercised a monopoly of intellectual administration, including penal sanctions against those who sought to oppose or even elude the monopoly.’⁴⁰ This is also a useful reference point for thinking about intellectual authority.

It goes without saying that parallels between different systems of power are only ever partial. But the notion of a monopoly claimed by accredited intellectuals is of more than historical significance. The partial monopoly on political thought that is claimed by what Edward Said describes as ‘Social Scientese,’ with its ‘specialized style’ and its pretensions to scientific objectivity,⁴¹ is obviously different from what Gramsci describes. Still it exists, and it fits within the social hierarchy that El Saadawi identifies. To treat accredited scholarship concerning history or politics as if it stands apart from other forms of political thought is to make a theoretical choice. And it is a choice with social consequences. In the same measure that El Saadawi’s proposals for directness and clarity are democratic, the politics of specialized expertise can act as a buffer against democratic opposition.

On this point this dissertation takes its cue from some of the critical literature that was produced at the margins of US academia during the era of the Vietnam War, a context in which the political claims of expert scholars were particularly extravagant and their social function particularly prominent. It looks in particular to the early work of Howard Zinn and Noam Chomsky, focusing on the essays collected in Zinn’s *The Politics of History* and Chomsky’s *American Power and the New Mandarins*. The essays in these volumes reflect a shared analysis of the relationship between ideas and power. At the same time, the two authors suggest different theories of oppositional research. Together they set useful terms of discussion for researchers wary of falling into the academic world’s deeply worn political ruts.

Zinn and Chomsky were both writing about academic research in general and criticizing ‘US Social Scientese’ in its political heyday. In Zinn’s estimation, the pretence

⁴⁰ Gramsci, *Prison Notebooks*, Vol. 2, 203.

⁴¹ Said, *Orientalism*, 284.

of neutrality in research is a barrier to intellectual honesty. It is neither possible nor desirable to research and write about issues of human consequence with genuine neutrality. 'There is no question,' he writes, 'of a "disinterested" community of scholars, only a question about what kinds of interests the scholars will serve.'⁴² To feign disinterest and decry bias is not to truly opt out of political struggles, but to accept prevailing social norms and the prevailing social order as given. In the final count, no person can stand apart from the social struggles of their time. In one of the essays published in *The Politics of History*, Zinn introduces the phrase later adapted into the title of his autobiography: *You Can't be Neutral on a Moving Train*.⁴³

While Zinn's work centres on a critique of intellectual service to power, it is not restricted to its most obvious forms (e.g., 'the open sanctification of racism, of war, of economic inequality').⁴⁴ Also at issue is the 'professionalization, and therefore the dehumanization of the scholar' through mechanisms that position research neatly within the established order.⁴⁵ One such mechanism is the pull of 'pretentious conceptualizing in the social sciences'; where straightforward alignment with power does not define research, the politics of personal and institutional advancement still may. 'Schemes and models and systems are invented which have the air of profundity and which advance careers, but hardly anything else.'⁴⁶

Zinn's critique does not preclude the pursuit of knowledge for its own sake. Whereas Carr, in *The Twenty Years' Crisis*, writes that 'thinking for thinking's sake is as abnormal and barren as the miser's accumulation of money for its own sake,' Zinn's *The Politics of History* is less rigid.⁴⁷ Zinn writes, 'I am not directing my criticism against those few histories which are works of art, which make no claim to illuminate a social problem, but instead capture the mood, the color, the reality of an age, an incident, or an individual, conveying pleasure and the warmth of genuine emotion.'⁴⁸ In history, as perhaps in political theory, 'thinking for thinking's sake' has its place. But generally speaking, historiography and political analysis relate in one way or another to the plane

⁴² Howard Zinn, *The Politics of History* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1970), 10.

⁴³ Zinn, *Politics of History*, 35.

⁴⁴ Zinn, *Politics of History*, 45.

⁴⁵ Zinn, *Politics of History*, 23.

⁴⁶ Zinn, *Politics of History*, 8.

⁴⁷ Carr, *Twenty Years' Crisis*, 3.

⁴⁸ Zinn, *Politics of History*, 19.

of possible political action. A decisive element of any political research is its orientation towards this relationship.

Against the general pattern of intellectual alignment with power, Zinn essentially argues that academics should switch sides. He writes, 'Let the economists work out a plan for free food, instead of advising the Federal Reserve Board on interest rates. Let the political scientists work out insurgency tactics for the poor, rather than counter-insurgency tactics for the rich. Let the historians instruct or inspire us, rather than amusing us, boring us, or deceiving us.'⁴⁹ It is concerning this link between accredited intellectual work and political opposition that Chomsky takes his analysis in a slightly different direction.

In Zinn's analysis, the tendency towards 'pretentious conceptualizing in the social sciences' is identified as one way that the significance of knowledge is dissipated. In Chomsky's, it is identified as a service to power in its own right, a natural companion to the politics of centralized authority. For Chomsky, the classing of political thought as a specialized vocation is both a reflection and a guarantor of the political disempowerment of the general population. Legitimacy accrues to accredited intellectuals at the expense of unaccredited critics: 'the non-specialist does not, after all, presume to tell physicists and engineers how to build an atomic reactor.'⁵⁰ Here the argument is not for specialist research in the service of political opposition movements so much as for analysis that erodes the political claims of academic specialization in order to widen the scope of political opposition. Academics may have the time and resources for especially thorough research. But this does not set academic work on history and politics apart from popular political debates. 'There is no body of theory or significant body of relevant information, beyond the comprehension of the layman, which makes policy immune from criticism.'⁵¹ Exaggerated theoretical rigour figures into this analysis not as unnecessary but as presumptuous and politically irresponsible.

The essays in which Zinn and Chomsky develop this analysis speak above all to the United States of the Vietnam War era, where the connection between technocratic authority and state power was especially strong. But the theories of oppositional

⁴⁹ Zinn, *Politics of History*, 14.

⁵⁰ Noam Chomsky, *American Power and the New Mandarins* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1969), 317-8.

⁵¹ Chomsky, *American Power*, 335, 342.

research that they develop, explicitly and by example, remain relevant. Rejection of the pretence of academic objectivity is an agreed point of departure. Moving forward from there, Zinn's call for academic work in the service of political opposition and Chomsky's criticism of specialized social-scientific claims point to parallel paths for dissident academic research. They converge in a challenge to the ideas that envelop the exercise of power and offer it unwarranted legitimacy.

This approach is not without its own theoretical basis and lineage. Chomsky's analysis, for its part, is rooted in the anarchist tradition and its radically democratic critique of state power. He explores this heritage more explicitly in a later essay, 'Intellectuals and the State.' But the decisive element of such oppositional research is not its identification with a particular theoretical school of thought; it is its attentiveness to the political consequences of ideas. The suggestion is that oppositional research should identify and seek to undercut the political function of established academic patriotism. For all the declared objectivity of post-war US historiography, for example, Chomsky notes that at the outset of the Cold War, the president of the American Historical Association himself identified 'social control' as an important task for patriotic scholars: 'Total war,' declared Conyers Reed, 'whether it be hot or cold, enlists everyone and calls upon everyone to assume his part. The historian is no freer from this obligation than the physicist.'⁵² The critiques above suggest that the politics of patriotic scholarship operate even where they are not so bluntly conceived and articulated.

For their part, governing groups in Israel, as in the US, have been aggressively committed to promoting state power 'with the weapons of ideas.'⁵³ In Israeli strategic parlance, calculations of military strategy and intellectual representation often intermingle. Shimon Peres recalls the oft-cited position of his mentor, Israel's founding prime minister David Ben-Gurion: 'Ben-Gurion knew that every war and conflict takes place twice – once on the battlefield and then in the history books.'⁵⁴ This conception echoes through contemporary research and academic discussion. Hence Gerald Steinberg's insistence, in the aftermath of Israel's 2008-9 assault on the Gaza Strip

⁵² Noam Chomsky, 'Intellectuals and the State,' in *Towards a New Cold War: Essays on the Current Crisis and How We Got There* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1982), 71.

⁵³ Natan Sharansky with Shira W. Weiss, ed. Ron Dermer, *Defending Identity: Its Indispensable Role in Protecting Democracy* (New York: PublicAffairs, 2008), 210.

⁵⁴ See Shimon Peres interviewed by Benny Morris, 'Making History,' *Tablet Magazine* (26 July 2010), <<http://tabletmag.com/jewish-news-and-politics/40409/making-history>>.

(‘Operation Cast Lead’), that intellectual supporters of Israel should consciously approach academic debates as the terrain of an ongoing ‘narrative war.’⁵⁵ Steinberg was writing not as a marginal polemicist, but as the chair of Bar Ilan University’s political science department. The influence upon the West of pro-Zionist and pro-Israel polemicists, even in the narrowest sense, should not be ignored. However, it alone does not account for the skewed Western intellectual record with regards to the Palestine problem.

The issue is also the way in which the Zionist or Israeli cause has been attached to the projection of Western power. On the plane of power politics, as Bashir Abu-Manneh emphasizes, Western association with Israel reflects a politics of empire which extend well beyond Palestine.⁵⁶ Canada’s Lester B. Pearson was expressing a common conception when he decried Israel as an advanced allied base – ‘an outpost, if you will, of the West in the Middle East.’⁵⁷ On the plane of ideas, meanwhile, Western liberalism has both rationalized and urged on this association. Edward Said, invoking Gramsci, describes the dynamic as a ‘complete hegemonic coalescence between the liberal Western view of things and the Zionist-Israeli view.’⁵⁸ It has left an enduring imprint on Western popular and academic discussions.

The conventional pro-Israel narrative that resulted has lost much of its intellectual legitimacy since the late twentieth century. Celebratory narration of Zionist colonization as a story of swamps drained, of deserts made to bloom, and of purely defensive Israeli wars is increasingly at odds with norms of liberal academic professionalism – a change owing partly to the work of Palestinian and allied researchers, partly to the availability of archival material directly contradicting established Zionist claims.⁵⁹ Though quite real, this progress should not be exaggerated. In much Canadian scholarship and journalism, the old mythology continues to prevail. Significant sections of this dissertation are devoted to challenging

⁵⁵ Gerald M. Steinberg, ‘Taking Back the Narrative,’ *Jerusalem Post* (30 May 2009), <<http://www.jpost.com/Opinion/Op-EdContributors/Article.aspx?id=143914>>.

⁵⁶ Bashir Abu-Manneh, ‘Israel in the US Empire,’ *Monthly Review* 58, no. 10 (2007), <<http://monthlyreview.org/2007/03/01/israel-in-the-u-s-empire>>.

⁵⁷ John A. Munro and Alex I. Inglis, eds., *Mike: The Memoirs of the Right Honourable Lester B. Pearson, Vol. 2* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1973), 219.

⁵⁸ Said, *Question of Palestine*, 37.

⁵⁹ See Ilan Pappé, ‘Introduction,’ in ed. Ilan Pappé, *The Israel/Palestine Question: A Reader* (New York: Routledge, 2007).

the Canadian intellectual reliance on discredited pro-Zionist assumptions. Basic questions of fact are often at issue. Nonetheless, little is to be gained by correcting the historical record in the spirit of disinterested analysis.

Indeed, it may be appropriate to concede a point suggested by Ben-Gurion and Steinberg: the study of history and politics bears unavoidably on the issues being studied. Since a genuine opting out of this relationship is not possible, researchers should aspire, with Zinn, to ‘participate a bit in the social combat of our time.’⁶⁰ To what ends is of course another question. Put differently, Zionist mythology demands criticism not only for skewing the factual record, but also and above all for its function in blocking opposition to the international politics of perpetual warfare against Palestinians. Meaningful criticism, while addressing historical distortions of fact, ought to focus on confronting those myths that constrain contemporary political opposition.

This does have some theoretical implications for research. For example, the insistence that Zionism and Western support for it cannot be considered apart from their impact on Palestinians has consequences for methodology and sourcing. Where the established Zionist narrative has not even superficially accommodated the documentary evidence, as is often the case in the literature on Canada, available Israeli and Western documents themselves offer strong grounds for a challenge. Nonetheless, as Saleh Abdel Jawad argues, a fixation on official archival materials can reproduce the relations of power inherent in the dispossession of the Palestinians and the development of the Israeli state.⁶¹ The brute realities of expulsion and occupation, among other factors, have undercut the documentary record of Palestinian experiences. To establish a fuller picture of key historical events (notably, the war of 1948), it is necessary to turn to the literature incorporating Palestinian oral history.

Still, in the final count, a critical approach to Palestine does not require much theoretical radicalism. The denial of Palestinian rights has been egregious even by conservative standards. Significantly, to assertively demand today that Palestinians be subject only to conventional imperialism – that they be allowed a ‘quasi-state’ with security forces allied with foreign powers, with a dependent economy, but freed from

⁶⁰ Zinn, *Politics of History*, 3.

⁶¹ See Saleh Abdel Jawad, ‘La guerre de 1948: Entre archives et sources orales,’ *Revue d’études Palestiniennes* 96 (summer 2005), 59-77.

direct foreign occupation – is to align with the ‘pro-Palestinian’ section of the Western political mainstream.⁶² To insist that a liberal democratic norm such as universal adult suffrage be applied to Palestine/Israel – ‘one person, one vote’ – is to move out to the ‘anti-Israel’ margins. In debates about such a situation, different traditions of political theory are generally not what structure the discussions.

In fact, the concepts that best make sense of Western engagement with the Zionist enterprise cut across theoretical traditions. Consider analysis of Zionism as settler colonialism and of the politics of Western imperialism that have empowered it. Two of the most influential thinkers to have developed this analysis are Maxime Rodinson, an independent French Marxist, and Walid Khalidi, co-founder of the Institute for Palestine Studies. Their work informs the analysis developed in this study. While Rodinson, for his part, was writing from the left, Khalidi argues that one needn’t go further than the conservative wing of the IR canon to identify Zionism with imperialism; in Khalidi’s estimation, Israel fits ‘Hans Morgenthau’s preeminent non-Marxist definition of imperialism in modern Western international political theory.’⁶³ The landmark volumes that Khalidi has produced, including *From Haven to Conquest* and *All That Remains*, are effectively radical but theoretically conservative.

That Khalidi sought to put conservative IR to good use is not enough to rehabilitate the theories advanced in Morgenthau’s *The Politics of Nations*, which would have us free ‘the administration and safeguarding of empire’ from the stigma of imperialism (*acquiring* an empire may be imperialism, Morgenthau allows, but *maintaining* one is not).⁶⁴ But it is another reminder that a critical approach to Palestine does not require elaborate radical theory. It may not be necessary to sink to the level of Morgenthau. Dwelling on theoretical differences, however, can dissipate meaningful opposition. As Ilan Pappé has suggested, burying straightforward oppositional analysis

⁶² For a discussion of the concept of Third World ‘quasi-states,’ see David Williams, ‘Aid and Sovereignty: Quasi-states and the International Financial Institutions,’ *Review of International Studies* 26, no 4 (2000), 557-573.

⁶³ Walid Khalidi, ‘Revisiting the UNGA Partition Resolution,’ in Ilan Pappé, *The Israel/Palestine Question: A Reader* (London: Routledge, 2007), 109.

⁶⁴ Hans Morgenthau, *Politics Among Nations: The Struggle for Power and Peace* (New York: Knopf, 1948), 47.

in the language of radical theoretical nuance is sometimes more a means of academic self-protection than of relevant dissent.⁶⁵

This study focuses on challenging liberal historical myths that continue to factor into struggles over Canadian politics on Palestine. Prominent among these are the historical presumption of Canadian innocence, which casts Canada in the role of a blameless observer weighing into Middle East conflicts to lend impartial help, and the celebratory depiction of postwar liberal internationalism, which serves to deflect contemporary opposition towards a nostalgic patriotism aligned with Canada's more moderate governing elements. Its findings suggest that a meaningful challenge to Canadian politics on Palestine can only be mounted within the framework of a broader challenge to Canadian structures of political power.

Approaching Canadian Politics on Palestine

This dissertation asks why Canada, a country geographically far removed from the Middle East, has positioned itself on the pro-Israel, anti-Palestinian end of the spectrum of world politics. What factors have historically shaped Canadian engagement with the Palestine question, and in the process, to what extent have the Canadian state and Canadian society implicated themselves in the denial of Palestinian rights?

The systematic denial of Palestinian rights as an element of Zionist colonization and Israeli state policy has been wide-ranging. Its core is identified in the work of Palestinian intellectuals including Nur Masalha, Karma Nabulsi, and Jamil Hilal as the effort to suppress the presence of Palestinians. This has taken its most direct and devastating form in the Zionist politics of 'transfer,' the origins of which Masalha reviews in *Expulsion of the Palestinians: The Concept of 'Transfer' in Zionist Political Thought, 1882-1948*. Masalha shows how the Zionist leadership's fixation on settling Palestine with a Jewish majority, also explored at length by the Israeli scholar Yosef Gorny, was accompanied by explicit strategies for displacing Palestinians to clear the way for this purpose.⁶⁶ These strategies were most aggressively translated into action in 1948,

⁶⁵ Ilan Pappé, *The Idea of Israel: A History of Power and Knowledge* (London: Verso, 2014), 148.

⁶⁶ Yosef Gorny, trans. Chaya Galai, *Zionism and the Arabs, 1882-1948: A Study of Ideology* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987).

through the large-scale expulsions addressed in Chapter 2 of this dissertation. But the same fundamental priorities continue to characterize Israeli politics up the present.

The effort to suppress the presence of Palestinians is directed in the first instance at Palestinians' physical presence in Palestine, and then against their political presence in all that concerns it. In addition to sheer physical exclusion ('transfer'), it takes the form of systematic hostility to Palestinian political self-representation. At first this involved outright denial of Palestinian national existence. In the famous formulation of then Israeli prime minister Golda Meir, there is 'no such thing as Palestinians.'⁶⁷ A fall-back position, as bare Palestinian existence has become more difficult to ignore, is the denial of Palestinian rights to select their own political representatives. From this position, institutionalized hostility towards particular organizations within the Palestinian national movement has developed as a surrogate for hostility to the Palestinian people as a whole.

For decades this hostility was focused above all on the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO). Circumstances shifted as a result of the US-sponsored 'peace process' of the 1990s, which folded the PLO leadership into a dependent Palestinian Authority (PA) on parts of the West Bank and Gaza Strip. An institutionalized hostility towards Palestinian political self-expression nonetheless remained. The PA itself was constructed in such a way as to ensure that the PLO's mechanisms for democratic participation would be diminished in relation to its leadership's cooperation with Israel and with the international donors organized by the US. The politics of allied contempt for Palestinian rights to self-representation were showcased with particular violence after the PA legislative elections of 2006, in which a Hamas electoral slate won a majority. But as Nabulsi and Hilal remind us, marginalization of Palestinian popular participation was built into the very framework of the Oslo process.⁶⁸

It is precisely the politics of physical and political exclusion that have defined the colonialism facing Palestinians. It is thus an ironic twist of Zionist intellectual diplomacy that many polemicists, seeking to dissociate Israel from the stigma of colonialism, spin

⁶⁷ Janice J. Terry, 'Zionist Attitudes toward Arabs', *Journal of Palestine Studies* 6, no. 1 (1976), 72.

⁶⁸ See Karma Nabulsi, 'The State-Building Project: What Went Wrong?', in eds. Michael Keating et al., *Aid, Diplomacy and Facts on the Ground: The Case of Palestine* (London: Chatham House, 2005), 117-128; and Jamil Hilal, 'The Polarization of the Palestinian Political Field,' *Journal of Palestine Studies* 39, no. 3 (2010), 24-39.

these exclusionist politics as a redeeming element of Zionist history. Yoav Gelber, for example, insists that the Zionist fixation on Jewish demographic predominance over Palestinians is nothing less than a democratic virtue. The Zionist movement ‘strove to arrive at a demographic majority in the Land of Israel before taking political control of the country,’ recalls Gelber; with Arabs reduced to a minority, political dominance by the Jewish majority is only a matter of self-determination, serving ‘to refute the identification of Zionism with colonialism.’⁶⁹ Palestinian existence is, in this thinking, only an external dilemma for Israeli liberalism. In his contribution to *The Domestic Battleground: Canada and the Arab-Israeli Conflict*, Canada’s Irving Abella makes a similar point: ‘Israel’s democracy is at war with Arab demography’.⁷⁰ Since Israeli liberalism needs to exclude the Palestinians in order to preserve Jewish representative dominance, the war against Arab demography is not colonial but democratic. Needless to say, the argument that Zionism is, by virtue of its exclusionist ethos, exempt from charges of colonialism should not deflect analysis of what is an unmistakably colonial history, or of the role of external actors within it.

In truth, the commitment to controlling Palestinian land without Palestinians hardly removes the Zionist movement or Israel from the colonial tradition. In an important essay entitled ‘Pioneering in the Nuclear Age,’ Eqbal Ahmad noted that this colonial path has been well worn, albeit mostly by settlers operating before the onset of formal decolonization. ‘Israel obviously shares many similarities with South Africa and may in time come to resemble the apartheid state more than most liberal Zionists suspect,’ wrote Ahmad. But, he continued, there are other parallels:

the Zionist movement and state share significant similarities with the early form of colonial movements that transformed the Western Hemisphere into the ‘New World’ of the West . . . It is a pioneering colonialism, one that seeks to exclude and eliminate the native inhabitants rather than to occupy and exploit them. Although produced by the process and power of imperialism, it is a form of colonialism that offers refuge to the disinherited, to persecuted minorities and to the surpluses, marginals, and misfits created by industrialism and modernization in the metropolis. A colonialism committed to replacing the native people, it is racist and extremist by nature. Yet, a product of the Western metropolis, constituted mostly of the dispossessed, of dissidents and the persecuted, it is often liberal in ideology and humane in rhetoric. Hypocrisy, the compliment paid by vice to virtue, is the hallmark of the exclusionist settler style.⁷¹

⁶⁹ Yoav Gelber, *The New Post-Zionist Historians* (American Jewish Committee, 2008), 30.

⁷⁰ David H. Goldberg and David Taras, eds., *The Domestic Battleground: Canada and the Arab-Israeli Conflict* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1989), 244.

⁷¹ Eqbal Ahmad, eds. Carollee Bengelsoorf et al., *The Selected Writings of Eqbal Ahmad* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2006), 303.

Ahmad's analysis chimes with more recent work in the emerging field of comparative settler colonialism. Introducing one of the main texts in the field, Caroline Elkins and Susan Pedersen likewise identify 'a logic of elimination and not exploitation' as a defining characteristic of the form of settler colonialism pioneered in the Americas.⁷²

Elkins and Pedersen make an important related point. This logic does not only result in particular military campaigns or massacres against native populations; it is applied *systemically*. Under settler colonialism, in Patrick Wolfe's influential formulation, 'invasion is a structure not an event.'⁷³ The implications for analysis of Palestine are significant. The politics of exclusion do define the major atrocities against Palestinians. Since 1948, the most devastating Israeli attacks have targeted Palestinian population centres in which refugee populations offered a social basis for organized challenges to Israeli marginalization of the Palestinians. So it was with Israel's 1982 invasion of Lebanon, and so it has been in successive assaults on the Gaza Strip. But the denial of Palestinian rights cannot be reduced to the numbers of dead or wounded in the course of various Israeli military campaigns. The core problem is the cumulative process which these attacks enforce.

The international politics of the Palestine question are best considered as part of this reality. Put simply, if Israeli invasion is a structure, it is one that has been crucially buttressed by international support. The Zionist and Israeli leadership have not been hapless proxies of the Western powers; they have had their own goals, and bear the most direct responsibility for the destruction of Palestine. Nonetheless, they have operated with considerable external assistance. 'Surely,' as Jawaharlal Nehru remarked, addressing Third World delegates from across the world in 1955 Bandung, 'no one is going to say that Zionist imperialism is strong enough, powerful enough to shake the world, in spite of everybody?'⁷⁴ This dissertation positions Canada within the international support systems upon which Israel's development has relied.

In his comments at Bandung on 'the tremendous tragedy' of Palestine, Nehru emphasized that it was necessary not only to look at the politics of Zionism, but also at

⁷² Caroline Elkins and Susan Pedersen, eds., *Settler Colonialism in the Twentieth Century: Projects, Practices, Legacies* (New York: Routledge, 2005), 2.

⁷³ Elkins and Pedersen, *Settler Colonialism*, 3.

⁷⁴ G.H. Jansen, *Zionism, Israel and Asian Nationalism* (Beirut: Institute for Palestine Studies, 1971), 256.

‘the forces behind the movement.’⁷⁵ Although anti-colonial analysis of the Palestine question never gained the widespread endorsement in Western countries that it would in much of the Third World, in 1967 *Les Temps Modernes* published a nearly one-thousand page volume presenting various perspectives on the Arab-Israeli conflict.⁷⁶ Contributors to the volume ranged from Shimon Peres to Khaled Mohieddine, an original member of the Free Officers movement that overturned Egypt’s monarchy in 1952. The opening essay was contributed by Maxime Rodinson. A few years later, Rodinson’s contribution was translated into English and published under the title, *Israel: A Colonial-Settler State?* Notably, since the printing of this volume of *Les Temps Modernes* coincided with the war of June 1967, Rodinson’s analysis concerns developments *before* Israeli expansion into the newly occupied territories.

Rodinson’s work offers a good starting point for analysis of the relationship between Israeli settler colonialism and the Western powers. He argued for the fundamental validity of many Arabs’ contention that they faced in Israel ‘a powerful colony backed by the European-American nations as a whole. These nations, indeed, constituted the true mother country [*metropole*] of the Yishuv.’⁷⁷ Rodinson asserted that this relationship, initially centred on the support that Zionism received from the British Empire during and after the First World War, also encompassed the West more broadly. As Rodinson’s essay was published, US-anchored support for Israel was undergoing a massive expansion.

Around the same time, Walid Khalidi provided a more nuanced analysis of the same relationship in an extended introduction to his documentary anthology *From Haven to Conquest*. Rodinson’s suggestion that the Western powers collectively acted as metropolitan sponsor to the Zionist movement was illuminating, but somewhat schematic. In a sweeping analysis of the international politics of the Palestine problem up to 1948, Khalidi pieced apart the dynamics of this relationship in greater detail. His analysis also emphasized ‘the *colon* status’ of Zionist settlers during the period of British

⁷⁵ Jansen, *Zionism, Israel and Asian Nationalism*, 256.

⁷⁶ Apart from Rodinson’s translated essay, the only contribution to this volume cited below is that of Robert Misrahi; see Chapter 2, note 24 for full sourcing details.

⁷⁷ Maxime Rodinson, trans. David Thorstad, *Israel: A Colonial-Settler State?* (New York: Mondai Press, 1973), 75.

rule in Palestine,⁷⁸ and charted the evolution of the dynamic external support system upon which the Zionist movement relied, structured first around British and later around US power. From his analysis there emerges a picture of a metropolitan support system centred on a primary Great Power sponsor but more widely diversified. An especially interesting feature of Khalidi's analysis concerns the interplay between the support that the Zionist movement received from state leaders, guided by strictly imperial calculations, and the development of an organized base of sub-state support for Zionism in the West. The research conducted for this dissertation produces complementary conclusions.

Early Canadian engagement with Palestine cannot be understood apart from the Canadian state's emergence as a component part of the British Empire. To a considerable extent, then, Canadian politics on Palestine first developed within the wider evolution of the Zionist movement's strategic association with British power. The first chapter of this dissertation explores this history. It looks at Canada's original status within the British Empire; at the emergence of political Zionism in the age of high imperialism; and at the early connections between the two. This chapter also introduces analysis of the support that elements of Canadian civil society provided for Zionist colonization efforts in Palestine. The following chapter extends this analysis. It reviews the Canadian Zionist movement's evolution towards the end of Britain's Palestine mandate, and assesses its direct association with the transformation of Palestine in 1948 by the force of arms.

The third chapter turns back to the level of state policy. It assesses the changes in Canadian foreign policy in the aftermath of World War II, and the way in which Canadian officials approached the Palestine problem in this context. It thus deals with the onset of a self-styled liberal Canadian internationalism. It finds that, on Palestine as more generally, the Canadian leadership remained committed to narrow international alignments carried on from the age of formal imperialism. Here the alignment of Canada's main putative internationalists with Anglo-American power is emphasized.

In the fourth and final chapter of this dissertation, this theme is explored at greater length. The focus of this chapter is the prized apex of liberal Canadian

⁷⁸ Walid Khalidi, ed., *From Haven to Conquest: Readings in Zionism and the Palestine Problem Until 1948* (Washington: Institute for Palestine Studies, 1971), xxxv.

internationalism in the Middle East: the Suez Crisis of 1956-7. In Canada, this is typically regarded as the high-point of the 'golden age' of Canada's internationalist foreign policy in the Middle East. The standard liberal Canadian invocation of the tradition of 'Pearsonian internationalism' hinges on Lester B. Pearson's diplomatic performance during this period on Canada's behalf. For the moment, suffice it to note how a leading Canadian scholar at the time described its reception outside of allied quarters: 'It is one thing to bask, as Mr. Pearson has done more than once, in the abuse of *Pravda*; it is another to be called a "stooge of Zionism" by a member of the Afro-Asian group.'⁷⁹ A close analysis of the record of Canadian diplomacy on Palestine during this period clarifies the restrictive scope of the internationalism with which Canadian officials approached the world.

Given the scope of this research project, an exclusive reliance upon primary sources has not been possible. In this case it is, moreover, not necessary for originality. In order to challenge the established intellectual record of Canadian engagement with the Palestine problem, it is in the first instance necessary to reinterpret the documented details of the Canadian case in light of the accumulation of more credible scholarship on Palestine over recent decades. A synthesis of the local literature concerning Canadian engagement with Palestine with credible secondary sources produced by Israeli, Palestinian, and other international scholars can itself yield new understanding of local developments. Analysis of a wide range of secondary sources has permitted the scope of this research project while guiding engagement with primary materials.

The main source of primary documents used for this dissertation is the *Documents on Canadian External Relations* series. The first volume of this series was published by Canada's department of external affairs in 1967, marking the Canadian state's centennial. There are now twenty-nine volumes available in this series, providing extensive internal government documentation from the establishment of the department of external affairs in 1909 through to the early 1960s. Research for this project involved the compilation of all materials on Palestine that could be found in these volumes. Additional government documents are cited from a range of other sources, including

⁷⁹ James Eayrs, 'Canadian Policy and Opinion During the Suez Crisis,' *International Journal* 12, no. 2 (spring 1957), 108.

published documentary anthologies and relevant volumes of the *Foreign Relations of the United States* series.

Other materials used for this research project include biographies, memoirs, diary collections, newspaper articles, and two works of historical fiction. A fuller listing of sources is, of course, included in the attached bibliography.

1

Entangled Imperial Roots

'The Zionists were the initiators. But they were also, as they still are, the protégés of their Anglo-American sponsors and the emanations of their power, resources, and will.'¹

-Walid Khalidi, *From Haven to Conquest* (1971)

'In the days when I had responsibilities to dissuade politicians from posturing, by demonstrating against or withdrawing from the Commonwealth, I sometimes observed in speeches in various parts of the world that so far from being a ghost of Empire the Commonwealth was largely the creation of leaders of successful national liberation movements. I added that the first of these was Sir John Macdonald [the first prime minister of Canada: 1867-1873, 1878-1891].

'Although not of course the whole truth, this was a significant and a useful aspect of the truth.'²

-Arnold C. Smith, noted Canadian diplomat (1980)

* * *

Canada and Israel have a shared imperial heritage. At the broadest level, both states developed out of settler projects initiated from Europe and imposed on Indigenous populations that were displaced and subordinated in the process, often by force. More specifically, both projects developed under the jurisdiction of the British Empire. An analysis of this shared heritage is the necessary point of departure for discussion of early Canadian engagement with Palestine and the Zionist enterprise.

The politics of British North America and of the Zionist movement as they operated on the world stage, and the initial connections between them, took shape through global processes that were determining the place of settler colonies in international affairs. If, as Bashir Abu-Manneh has suggested, even critical scholarship on Palestine too often neglects the question of empire,³ research concerning the broader politics of settler colonialism can provide some guidance in addressing this problem.

¹ Walid Khalidi, ed., *From Haven to Conquest: Readings in Zionism and the Palestine Problem Until 1948* (Washington: Institute for Palestine Studies, 1971), xxi.

² Arnold C. Smith, 'Britain and Canada in the Wider World,' in ed. David Dilks, *Britain and Canada: A Colloquium Held at Leeds, October, 1979* (London: Commonwealth Foundation, 1980), 46. Cited in part in ed. Phillip Buckner, *Canada and the British Empire* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 19.

³ See Bashir Abu-Manneh, 'Israel in the US Empire,' *Monthly Review* 58, no. 10 (2007), <<http://monthlyreview.org/2007/03/01/israel-in-the-u-s-empire>>.

This chapter begins by identifying the parallel between Zionist and Canadian history, both defined by an imperial heritage downplayed in patriotic historiography. It goes on to argue that in spite of the anti-imperialism sometimes written into their histories, both the Zionist movement and the Canadian state developed in alignment with a European politics of empire that combined strategic power projection and racism. The early sections of the chapter set the broader context for these cases, addressing the historical place of settler colonialism in imperial strategy and the association of British settler colonies with metropolitan politics. The latter sections identify the specific relationship that took shape between Canadian society and Zionist colonization within the orbit of what is known as the 'Third British Empire.'

In recent years, the comparative study of settler colonialism has become a field in its own right.⁴ This dissertation is more concerned with Canadian engagement with Palestine than with similarities and differences between the Canadian and Zionist experiences; nonetheless, the comparative analysis of settler societies yields some relevant insights. It is, for example, instructive to note that the empowerment of settlers by central imperial authorities, and the privileged position afforded to them, is often retrospectively downplayed in the patriotic historiography of settler societies. The place of these societies in imperial strategy and world order is correspondingly obscured.

National mythology is typically structured around 'useful aspects of the truth,' to borrow a phrase from the Canadian diplomat Arnold Smith. And the national mythologies of states produced by colonial settlement tend to emphasize friction rather than alignment with imperial power. Tension between settlers and metropolitan authorities figures more prominently in official historiography than does accord; Indigenous populations are pushed to the margins of narratives that emphasize the pursuit of settler self-governance and political authority against metropolitan opposition.⁵ It is against this theme that genuinely anti-imperialist historical analysis needs to be pursued. The theme's place in both Canadian and Zionist political culture thus deserves attention at the outset.

⁴ For an overview, see eds. Caroline Elkins and Susan Pedersen, *Settler Colonialism in the Twentieth Century: Projects, Practices, Legacies* (New York: Routledge, 2005).

⁵ As discussed, for example, in Kenneth Good, 'Settler Colonialism: Economic Development and Class Formation,' *The Journal of Modern African Studies* 14, no. 4 (1976), 597-620.

The obvious differences between the Canadian and the Zionist experiences only suggest the breadth of this tendency. Within the British Empire, in the period considered in this chapter, the Canadian and the Zionist leaderships occupied nearly opposite poles on the spectrum of settler privilege. In Canada, politicians including the country's founding prime minister, John A. Macdonald, sought self-governance for those colonies within the British Empire that had a British majority.⁶ 'By 1867, the year of Confederation, an estimated two-thirds of British North America's population was British in origin.'⁷ The dominant layers of Canadian society expected a measure of self-governance within the Empire, and were on their way to gaining it well before Confederation. They remained full British subjects, however, with full access to the metropolitan political system. A distinct Canadian citizenship was not even available until 1947. The first half of the twentieth century saw twenty-nine Britons born in Canada take up office in the House of Commons in London. One of these, the Tory Andrew Bonar Law, became the only British prime minister to have been born outside of the British Isles.⁸ The Zionist movement, in contrast, was only formally tied to the Empire after the First World War. Britain's patronage of Zionism in the years that followed had an enormous impact. But there was no comparable ethnic or civic identification to cement it.

Zionism's imperial heritage is nonetheless central to its history. It is true that in the 1940s the Zionist movement dramatically broke with Britain, up to that point its primary Great Power sponsor. But this does not negate the movement's formative development, or its enduring orientation towards the leading Western powers. Soon before the Suez Crisis erupted in 1956, a Canadian diplomat quite supportive of Israel observed that 'Israel is looked upon by most of the anti-colonial nations of Africa and Asia as something in the nature of an imperialist stronghold.'⁹ This criticism, widespread in the formerly colonized world, punctuated Third World diplomacy on the Middle East in

⁶ Phillip Buckner, 'Introduction,' in ed. Phillip Buckner, *Canada and the End of Empire* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2005), 4.

⁷ Daiva Stasiulis and Radha Jhappan, 'The Fractious Politics of a Settler Society: Canada,' in eds. Daiva Stasiulis and Nira Yuval-Davis, *Unsettling Settler Societies: Articulations of Gender, Race, Ethnicity and Class* (London: Sage Publications, 1995), 108.

⁸ Colin M. Coates, 'Preface: From Parliament Hill to Vimy Ridge,' in ed. Colin M. Coates, *Imperial Canada, 1867-1917* (Edinburgh: University of Edinburgh Centre of Canadian Studies, 1997), iii.

⁹ Greg Donaghy, ed., *Documents on Canadian External Relations* [henceforth *DCER*] Vol. 22 (Ottawa: Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade, 2001), 78.

the postwar period. Liberal diplomats were unable to entirely ignore it. In the liberal scholarship concerning Israel's development, it is too often brushed aside.

Some of Europe's leading intellectuals did observe that the Zionist movement's interwar development rested upon imperial sponsorship. E.H. Carr emphasized that it was only after and as a result of achieving Great Power backing that the Zionist movement gained any appreciable strength.¹⁰ Hannah Arendt attributed the Zionist movement's embrace of British patronage to a strategy of 'seeking the protection of the Great Powers, trying to trade it against possible services,' an approach which, as she explained, foreclosed any 'alliance with the national revolutionary peoples of Asia and participation in their struggle against imperialism.'¹¹ The point was not lost on nationalist leaders in the Global South: leading Zionists were neither allies nor neutralists in the struggle against colonialism. As Jawaharlal Nehru observed as early as 1933, 'They have preferred to take sides with the foreign ruling power, and have thus helped it to keep back freedom from the majority of the people.'¹²

This aspect of Zionist politics is obscured in most Israeli and Western narration. It is traditionally overshadowed by a focus on the Zionist movement's eventual rupture with Britain. Notably, and in something of a paradox, propaganda downplaying the British imperial connection factored prominently in the cultivation of Israel's main alternative base of support, in the United States. In the resulting narrative, pre-state Zionist history culminates in an Israeli 'War of Independence' waged by implication more against Britain than against the Palestinians.

The most influential text in this tradition is *Exodus*, the novel written by Leon Uris and re-made into a Hollywood film of the same name. 'Scholars across the political spectrum have noted the power of *Exodus* in shaping the dominant historical narrative – and its attendant moral lessons – of the birth of Israel,' writes Amy Kaplan. 'Written during a period of global decolonization, *Exodus* contributes to the mystique of Israel's birth as an anti-colonial struggle of national liberation and disavows its origins in settler

¹⁰ Edward H. Carr, *The Twenty Years' Crisis: An Introduction to the Study of International Relations* (New York: Perennial, 2001), 139.

¹¹ Hannah Arendt, 'Zionism Reconsidered,' in eds. Jerome Kohn and Ron Feldman, *Hannah Arendt, The Jewish Writings* (New York: Schocken Books, 2007), 366, 364.

¹² G.H. Jansen, *Zionism, Israel and Asian Nationalism* (Beirut: Institute for Palestine Studies, 1971), 183.

colonialism, a denial that mirrors the origins of American exceptionalism.¹³ Roger Owen suggests that Britain's support for the Zionist project may finally be receiving focused scholarly attention,¹⁴ but the historic weight of the *Exodus* narrative is difficult to overstate.

For its part, the Canadian case is less dramatic – here it is both more difficult and less important for patriotic intellectuals to obscure the state's imperial origins. The gradual redefinition of Canada's relationship with the British Empire over the course of the twentieth century is a pale equivalent of the Zionist movement's conflict with British authorities in the years leading up to the establishment of the Israeli state. And opinion-makers in Canada have not had as pressing a need to engage with global perceptions as their counterparts in Israel, a state whose establishment was undertaken in an age of decolonization, and whose regional position still rests on massive international support. Despite this, retrospective diminishment of the imperial connection has become a feature of Canadian intellectual life as well.

This ideological oddity is pieced apart in a series of publications brought together by Phillip Buckner, including a recent companion volume to the *Oxford History of the British Empire* concerning Canada.¹⁵ Buckner discusses how the once proud imperial historiography of Canada became a forgotten inconvenience. He identifies a variety of factors, including the moral force of decolonization, the anti-imperialist sentiment that swept the world amidst the US war on Vietnam, and the avowed Canadian nationalism of most historians working on the topic. Whatever the spark, Buckner observes that late twentieth-century Canadian scholarship reflected a desire 'to gloss over the part [Canadians] played in the making of the British Empire, both in the extension of British authority over the upper half of the North American continent and in the support they gave to the extension of British authority in other parts of the globe.'¹⁶ In the process, the struggle-for-independence theme gained ground.

For present purposes, one example can suffice: Desmond Morton's *A Military History of Canada*. In this standard text, now in its fifth edition, Morton writes of

¹³ Amy Kaplan, 'Zionism as Anticolonialism: The Case of Exodus,' *American Literary History* 25, no. 4 (winter 2013), 872, 878.

¹⁴ Roger Owen, 'Britain's role revealed,' *Al-Ahram Weekly* no. 904 (July 2008), <<http://weekly.ahram.org.eg/2008/904/op2.htm>>.

¹⁵ For full citation details, see note 2, above.

¹⁶ Buckner, *Canada and the End of Empire*, 3.

Canadian participation in the First World War that '*the Great War was also Canada's war of independence even if it was fought at Britain's side against a common enemy.*'¹⁷

The assertion strains credulity. But it dovetails with Arnold Smith's diplomatic narration of Canadian history. In this narrative, the British Empire's gradual accommodation of autonomy for its 'white Dominions' is recast in terms of self-determination and national liberation.

As politically expedient as it may be, the disassociation of Zionist and Canadian from imperial history is more convenient than truthful. The chapters that follow look at Canadian engagement with the Palestine question amidst the actual establishment of the Israeli state and in the decades since. This chapter focuses on the earlier history. It explores how early Zionist and Canadian politics fit into the global projection of European power. In sum, Canada factored into early Zionist history in two ways: first, as part of the Western world to whose governments and Jewish communities the Zionist leadership looked for support; and second, as one of the white Dominions of the British Empire, reference points for the privileged incorporation of settler colonies into the imperial order.

In this setting, Canadian engagement with Zionism and the Palestine question was from the outset bound up with a racialized politics of empire. It partly reflected the ambiguous position of Jews in the prevailing Canadian racial hierarchy. It was further structured, both at the levels of government policy and of organized civil society, by the modes of settler self-governance and international representation through which Canada was finding its place in the world. The interplay between Canadian state and society on this question shows an interesting continuity: British policy on Palestine in the years after the First World War reverberated in Canadian society much like US policy has since 1967. Support for Zionism from Canada's leading international ally (then Britain, more recently the US) lined respectable opinion up behind what was referred to in Britain as 'patriotic Zionism.'¹⁸ In the most established and assimilated circles of the Canadian Jewish community, support for Zionist colonization did not raise concerns about dual loyalty. Rather, it spread with the force of official policy and

¹⁷ Quoted by John H. Thompson, 'Canada and the "Third British Empire," 1901-1939,' in ed. Buckner, *Canada and the British Empire*, 96-7. Emphasis added.

¹⁸ Stephan Wendehorst, *British Jewry, Zionism, and the Jewish State, 1936-1956* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 85.

patriotic political culture. Its respectability as near to the core of Canadian civil society as Jews could ever find themselves was rarely in question.

Canadian Zionism, then, cannot be understood as a narrow Jewish communal phenomenon. It was oriented by, and indeed formed part and parcel of, the accepted Canadian approach to immigration problems and to settlement on the imperial periphery. Alongside government policy, the activities of the Canadian Zionist movement should thus be recognized as forming an integral part of Canada's record of engagement with the Palestine question.

Empire and Settler Colonialism

The historical role of settler colonialism in the politics of imperial power projection has received insufficient academic attention. In a certain sense, this neglect may result from its very centrality to the history of the powers that came to predominate world politics. A limited parallel exists in Western thinking about air power as means of state terrorism. In *Strategic Terror: The Politics and Ethics of Aerial Bombardment*, Beau Grosscup discusses how a tendency to focus on the crimes of official enemies has often exempted one of the deadlier tools of Anglo-American warfare from critical scrutiny.¹⁹ In both areas, the intellectual force of Anglo-American hypocrisy has made itself felt.

Discussion of whether there exists a specifically Anglo-American politics of imperial hypocrisy – what de Gaulle, discussing US political culture, described as the ‘will to power, cloaking itself in idealism’ – is long-standing.²⁰ In Jean Genet's provocative phrasing, ‘What I like about the English is that they are such liars...’²¹ Srdjan Vucetic, in a study of the racial politics of the English-speaking West, recalls that the issue is addressed in a classic of Anglo-American IR scholarship, E.H. Carr's *The Twenty Years' Crisis*. Vucetic wryly observes that somehow, ‘these lines are often

¹⁹ Beau Grosscup, *Strategic Terror: The Politics and Ethics of Aerial Bombardment* (Kuala Lumpur and London: SIRD and Zed Books, 2006).

²⁰ Noam Chomsky, *American Power and the New Mandarins* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1969), 333.

²¹ Jean Genet, ‘What I like about the English is that they are such liars...,’ *The Sunday Times* (24 February 1963), 11.

skipped over.²² These lines are a good place to start. For Carr, it was an acknowledged fact that the projection of Anglo-American power has been enveloped in an especially dense fog of self-flattery. What he sought to do was explain the phenomenon.

Carr noted that a strong tradition of cultivated self-righteousness had sometimes been enough to trigger the impression ‘that the English-speaking peoples are past masters in the art of concealing their selfish national interests in the guise of the general good, and that this kind of hypocrisy is a special and characteristic peculiarity of the Anglo-Saxon mind.’²³ For Carr, essentialist theories of this kind were quite unnecessary. The truth was less mystical: ‘For the past hundred years, and more especially since 1918, the English-speaking peoples have formed the dominant group in the world ... the view that they are consummate international hypocrites may be reduced to the plain fact that the current canons of international virtue have, by a natural and inevitable process, been mainly created by them.’²⁴ From this perspective, effective hypocrisy appears as just another feature of Anglo-American power. In this case as in others, patterns of military, economic, and ideological predominance form part of an integrated whole.

This reality has impacted the Palestine problem in more ways than one. On the plane of ideas, it is reasonable to suggest that the Zionist project and Israel have evaded critical scrutiny in part by virtue of their strategic attachment to Anglo-American power, and thus their incorporation into the associated mythology. Equally significant is the fact that they have involved a form of settler colonialism long practiced by the predominant powers themselves. Similar colonial settlement was a notable feature of the British Empire; and it is of course to this history that the US, the other major power centre of the English-speaking West, traces its origins. Whatever significance one assigns to this link in the study of Zionism generally, early Canadian engagement with the Palestine question can scarcely be understood apart from it. A review of Canada’s place in the history of modern settler colonialism is therefore in order.

There is no agreement on when the Canadian state emerged as a distinct political entity. In his contribution to a Canadian studies conference at the University of

²² Srdjan Vucetic, *The Anglosphere: A Genealogy of a Racialized Identity in International Relations* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2011), 4.

²³ Carr, *Twenty Years’ Crisis*, 79.

²⁴ Carr, *Twenty Years’ Crisis*, 79-80.

Edinburgh, David Cannadine noted that Canada 'has no defining moment of independence, like 1776 for the United States, or 1947 for India: the Durham Report and Confederation are by comparison singularly unepic things.'²⁵ British North America, as it came to be called in the years after Britain issued the Durham Report of 1839, was Confederated in 1867 within the framework of the British Empire. Confederation encompassed the principal North American colonies that Britain controlled by the nineteenth century, though at first not all of them. It included what had been New France, the major British conquest in the American theatre of the Seven Years' War (1756-63); it did not yet include either Newfoundland to the east, which remained a distinct unit within the Empire until 1949, or much of the west. Although the Pacific colony of British Columbia soon joined the Confederation, British forces had yet to conquer vast Indigenous territories throughout much of what is now western Canada. Even within settler society, Anglo-Canadian hegemony was not absolute. Daiva Stasiulus and Radha Jhappan identify one of its principal limits: 'Efforts of British and Canadian elites demographically to swamp and assimilate the French-Canadian population with imported anglophones not only failed, but also fuelled a sense of national oppression among francophone Québeckers.'²⁶ The supremacy of Anglo business and political interests was nonetheless a governing principle.

The demographic and institutional basis of British North America had been partially laid in an earlier period of colonization. However, it was only well into the nineteenth century that something approximating the contemporary Canadian state took shape, and only by means of further consolidation and conquest after Confederation that its control was established from coast to coast. Canada emerged, then, as a component part of the British Empire in an age of renewed imperial expansion. Economically, its ties to Britain existed alongside the pull of a continental political economy dominated by the US. In matters of military and strategic policy, on the other hand, the Canadian government's over-riding orientation was British. London retained formal control of Canadian external affairs well into the twentieth century. It is thus useful to step back from the North American context to look at the strategic function that British settler colonies generally were understood to fulfill.

²⁵ David Cannadine, 'Imperial Canada: Old History, New Problems,' in Coates, *Imperial Canada*, 4.

²⁶ Stasiulus and Jhappan, 'Fractious Politics,' 99.

The topic is addressed by Kenneth Good in the *Journal of Modern African Studies*, in one of the rare critical studies of the role of settler colonialism in imperial strategy. Good analyzes British strategy in Africa within the context of the wider nineteenth-century scramble for empire across the globe, which Britain so thoroughly came to dominate. Britain adopted a policy of ‘systematic aggressiveness,’ writes Good, driven partly by its rivalry with France. One instrument of British strategy was the Royal Navy, another the maintenance of bases such as Simonstown. ‘A third strategic element,’ Good explains, ‘was the settler colonies, involving initially Canada, Australia, and New Zealand, and most importantly Cape Colony.’ He writes:

More than defence was again represented. In British thinking the settler states were ‘the natural, as well as the most rewarding mode of imperial expansion,’ the ‘most loyal and energetic partners,’ with the ‘supreme virtue of being self-propelling.’ This last most significant quality tended to mean, in the metropole at least, low-cost administration. Thus, the settlement of 5,000 British immigrants in South Africa was agreed to by Parliament in 1819 as an ‘economy measure’ – Britain would be relieved of surplus labourers, and the metropole’s expenditure on frontier defence would be reduced.²⁷

British officials were not the only ones to consider settler colonialism an important instrument of imperial strategy. The French minister of war spelled out a similar approach in 1843, advocating massive French settlement in Algeria ‘in order to sanction, to consolidate, and to simplify the occupation we achieve by arms.’²⁸ Still, as Good notes, it was the British Empire that most widely employed settler colonialism – both as an outlet for ‘surplus’ emigration and as a means of ‘frontier defence.’ And it was as one of the principal British settler states that Canada developed its foreign policy.

In fact Canadian ‘domestic’ policy, or the Canadian state’s consolidation of control within what are now its borders, was itself an imperial undertaking. It was not for nothing that the founding leadership of Canada’s central province called it ‘Empire Ontario,’ as Indigenous scholar Bonita Lawrence reminds us.²⁹ Buckner notes that patriotic Canadian historiography only recently came to downplay this heritage: ‘As George Brown accurately pointed out, the British Commonwealth of nations was not merely “an association of states,” it was also “an association of empires,” which in

²⁷ Good, ‘Settler Colonialism,’ 601.

²⁸ Good, ‘Settler Colonialism,’ 601.

²⁹ Bonita Lawrence, ‘Rewriting Histories of the Land: Colonization and Indigenous Resistance in Eastern Canada,’ in ed. Sherene H. Razack, *Race, Space, and the Law: Unmapping a White Settler Society* (Toronto: Between the Lines, 2002), 44.

Canada's case included even in 1953 (when Brown made the comment) a vast northern territory, inhabited largely by Indigenous peoples but run by a bureaucracy appointed and controlled from Ottawa.³⁰ Traditionally, Canadian patriots have celebrated the country's expansion at Indigenous expense as the spread of civilization. As Edmund Oliver boasted for *The Cambridge History of the British Empire*, Canadian Confederation brought settled society to areas 'where, in 1867, only buffalo and Indians roamed.'³¹ Patriotic Canadian historiography continues to sanitize this record.³²

As Bonita Lawrence emphasizes, 'the works of the experts alone, which provide powerful and detailed histories of the Canadian settler state, do not represent the full picture.'³³ A fuller picture would not only take into account 'the forcible and relentless dispossession of Indigenous peoples, the theft of their territories, and the implementation of legislation and policies designed to effect their total disappearance as peoples'; it would also place at the centre of Canada's history the long history of Indigenous resistance to these processes, from sustained military action to resourceful international diplomacy.³⁴ Lawrence insists that the established studies of Canadian history, 'which never mention racism, and which do not take as part of their purview the devastating and ongoing implications of the policies and processes that are so neutrally described,' require more than simple correction.³⁵ They need to be upended by the recognition 'that Indigenous communities should be seen as final arbiters of their own histories.'³⁶

This dissertation may not adequately respond to this challenge. But at a bare minimum, it is necessary to recognize that the Canadian national motto that emerged soon after Confederation, *A Mari Usque Ad Mare* ('from sea to sea'), was a colonial declaration. Even the limits of Canadian participation in overseas imperialism stem partly from internal conquests. Buckner argues that 'during the first three decades of

³⁰ Buckner, 'Introduction,' in *Canada and the British Empire*, 6.

³¹ Edmund H. Oliver, 'The Settlement of the Prairies, 1967-1914,' in eds. William M. Kenney et al., *The Cambridge History of the British Empire Vol. 6: Canada and Newfoundland* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1930), 546.

³² For an especially retrograde perspective, see Tom Flanagan, *First Nations? Second Thoughts* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2000).

³³ Lawrence, 'Rewriting Histories of the Land,' 46.

³⁴ Lawrence, 'Rewriting Histories of the Land,' 23-4.

³⁵ Lawrence, 'Rewriting Histories of the Land,' 24.

³⁶ Lawrence, 'Rewriting Histories of the Land,' 24.

Confederation, Canadians were unlikely to give their consent to participation in external wars since they were engaged in their own imperial war against the Indigenous peoples of western Canada.¹³⁷ Well into the twentieth century, respectable Canadian opinion did not shy away from placing this history of warfare against Indigenous and Métis communities within the framework of a global expansion of the British Empire.

To place British colonialism at the centre of Canadian history is not to suggest that settlers from the British Isles functioned as a homogeneous unit. Here as elsewhere, narrow business interests both dominated and reaped the main rewards from state policy. Looking at Canada in the age of high imperialism, Rosa Luxemburg was struck that the state had handed resources over to investors close to it 'on an even more monstrous scale than in the United States. Under the Charter of the Canadian Pacific Railway [CPR], private capital perpetrated an unprecedented act of robbing the public.'³⁸ But localized profiteering was pursued within a global British frame. To stick with Luxemburg's example, Tory nepotism with US and Anglo-Montreal business in the case of the CPR was so flagrant as to help bring down John A. Macdonald's government in 1873, faced with resentment from competing interests.³⁹ The global imperial rationale remained. The Canadian delegate to the British Colonial Conference of 1887, Sir Sandford Fleming, made a point of stressing that trans-continental Canadian infrastructure could help better connect the British Empire with its Pacific possessions.⁴⁰ 'From the Canadian perspective,' writes Buckner, 'western expansion would add more to the wealth of the Empire than expansion into Africa, and the CPR was as much an Imperial highway as any of the railroads built in India.'⁴¹

There now exists a body of anti-racist literature that sheds light on the privileged position of Canada's leadership in this era – a privilege to which the Zionist leadership would effectively aspire. The Canadian Confederation, like other imperial holdings, was a site of private accumulation and an instrument of Realpolitik. But in the presumed

³⁷ Buckner, 'The Creation of the Dominion of Canada, 1860-1901,' in ed. Buckner, *Canada and the British Empire*, 74.

³⁸ Rosa Luxemburg, trans. Agnes Schwarzschild, *The Accumulation of Capital* (New York: Routledge, 2003), 390.

³⁹ R.T. Naylor, *Canada in the European Age, 1453-1919* (Vancouver: New Star Books, 1987), 382-3.

⁴⁰ Newton W. Rowell, 'Canada and the Empire, 1884-1921,' in eds. Kenney et al., *Cambridge History of the British Empire*, 712.

⁴¹ Buckner, 'Creation of the Dominion of Canada,' 74.

racial and civilizational hierarchies of the time, settler colonies of this kind stood apart from other colonial possessions. As Stasiulis and Jhappan write, although Canada ‘shared with the so-called “dependent colonies” a peripheral position in the international political economy prior to the twentieth century, as a cultural, social and political entity, it was a chip off the metropolitan block.’⁴² A major contribution to understanding of these politics has been made by Marilyn Lake and Henry Reynolds with their study *Drawing the Global Colour Line: White Men’s Countries and the International Challenge of Racial Equality*. Lake and Reynolds’ findings go some way towards clarifying both Canada’s enduring relationship with its ‘Anglo-American betters,’⁴³ and the Zionist movement’s approach to the politics of the colour line. These are key realities around which Canadian politics on Palestine have been structured.

As Lake and Reynolds show, the global context in which Canada entered the twentieth century, and in which the political Zionist movement was launched, saw leading figures of what would become the North Atlantic alliance pair doctrines of Anglo-Saxon racial superiority with the politics of exclusionary settler colonialism. A prominent British advocate of this logic was the scholar-statesman James Bryce. Bryce, who would later serve as Britain’s ambassador to the United States, fleshed out his theories in an influential series of lectures published in 1902 as *The Relations of the Advanced and the Backward Races of Mankind*. In 1898, he explained the virtue of exclusionary settler colonialism: ‘The only British territorial expansion that really worked well, he argued, was “the establishment of the British stock as colonists in temperate regions, where they are in little or no contact with black or yellow races, and where they can establish self-governing republics, so as to be parts of the English nation enjoying complete home rule”.’⁴⁴ For Bryce, it was not enough that colonial territories be controlled militarily or economically; it was necessary that they be conquered *demographically*. These politics of racial power were at the core of what Arnold Smith would later spin as ‘national liberation’ for settler societies on the periphery.

⁴² Stasiulis and Jhappan, ‘Fractious Politics,’ 97. Cited in Sunera Thobani, *Exalted Subjects: Studies in the Making of Race and Nation in Canada* (Toronto: Toronto University Press, 2007), 286.

⁴³ *DCER Vol. 22*, 5.

⁴⁴ Marilyn Lake and Henry Reynolds, *Drawing the Global Colour Line: White Men’s Countries and the International Challenge of Racial Equality* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 111.

In the US, meanwhile, Theodore Roosevelt argued along similar lines. In 1899, he suggested that Anglo-Saxon (he preferred 'Anglo-Celtic') settler colonies were the bearers of a unique civilizing mission: 'The kind of colonizing conquest, whereby the people of the United States have extended their borders, has much in common with similar movements in Canada and Australia, all of them standing in sharp contrast to what has gone on in Spanish-American lands.'⁴⁵ Roosevelt's proud differentiation of Anglo-American from Spanish colonialism came in the context of the clash with Spain under cover of which the US conquered Cuba and the Philippines. Promoting the virtue of the English-speaking peoples was then particularly expedient. But Roosevelt was also promoting a doctrine of racial, national, and civilizational vigour that he argued was best upheld by pairing conquest-by-settlement with resolute opposition to miscegenation. In this respect, the imperialism of the English-speaking peoples did stand out.

Canada's founding leadership shared in this global doctrine. The country's first national military mobilizations, targeting Indigenous and Métis communities, were accompanied by a constantly-proclaimed commitment to segregationist settlement. It was only natural, we read in the *Cambridge History of the British Empire*, that 'the French-speaking population of the province of Quebec sympathized with the French half-breeds,' forcing John A. Macdonald's government to push past intra-settler divisions in order to execute the Métis leader Louis Riel: 'He shall die though every dog in Quebec bark in his favour,' the prime minister declared.⁴⁶ Anglo-Saxonist doctrine in Canada was quick to evolve, especially given the need to incorporate French-speaking and other non-British settlers into the national project. But it is not just a relic of the nineteenth century. John Price explains: 'What came to overlay, but not entirely to replace, Anglo-Saxonism was the notion of "whiteness," the idea that Canada was to become a "white man's country." This notion fired the popular imagination as well as government policy.'⁴⁷ Price rightly insists that this racism would have a long-term influence on Canadian foreign policy. For now, compare James Bryce's praise for the 'constant cordial co-operation' between different branches of the Anglo-Saxon race

⁴⁵ Lake and Reynolds, *Global Colour Line*, 101.

⁴⁶ W. Stewart Wallace, 'Political Parties and Railway Policy, 1867-1885,' in eds. Kenney et al., *Cambridge History of the British Empire*, 482, 499.

⁴⁷ John Price, *Orienting Canada: Race, Empire, and the Transpacific* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2011), 312.

(1898) with a young Lester B. Pearson's championing of 'close understanding and friendly cooperation between the Anglo-Saxon peoples' (1935).⁴⁸

Needless to say, in the presumed racial and civilizational hierarchy of the time, the Zionist movement's founding leadership was not so comfortably positioned as was Canada's. The organized effort that would culminate in the establishment of the Israeli state traces to the establishment of the World Zionist Organization (WZO) in 1897, under the leadership of Theodor Herzl. Herzl proposed organized Jewish emigration from Europe and Jewish national settlement overseas. In the first instance, this was a response to the grievous crisis facing Europe's Jews, as antisemitism swept across the continent. There is no diminishing the racism with which European Jews were targeted. This does not change the fact that Zionist proposals bore the imprint of Europe's wider politics of overseas expansion and settlement. Many of the European Jews who looked to Palestine knew little about it, a fact dramatized in Hannah's Arendt's description of early Zionist settlers who 'escaped to Palestine as one might wish to escape to the moon.'⁴⁹ The WZO's founding leadership, however, discussed Palestine not as the moon, but quite specifically as part of Europe's imperial periphery. In *The Jewish State*, a foundational Zionist text published just before the WZO was established, Herzl famously proclaimed that a Jewish state in Palestine should 'form part of the wall of defence for Europe in Asia, an outpost of civilization against barbarism. We should as a neutral state remain in contact with all of Europe, which would have to guarantee our existence.'⁵⁰ Much the same racism that spelled crisis for European Jews shaped Herzl's proposal to address it.

In debates over Zionist proposals, the distinction between immigrating to a country on equal footing with its people and settling it on the presumption of civilizational superiority was not in the least bit obscure. European antisemites well known for attacking Jews as 'an Asian people foreign to our continent,' as Johann Herder had put it.⁵¹ In the years after the establishment of the WZO, some European critics argued that the Zionist movement was effectively capitulating this charge,

⁴⁸ Lake and Reynolds, *Global Colour Line*, 109; Price, *Orienteering Canada*, 12.

⁴⁹ Arendt, 'Zionism Reconsidered,' 349.

⁵⁰ Theodor Herzl, 'The Jewish State,' in ed. Arthur Hertzberg, *The Zionist Idea: A Historical Analysis and Reader* (New York: Atheneum, 1982), 222.

⁵¹ Hannah Arendt, 'The Enlightenment and the Jewish Question,' in eds. Kohn and Feldman, *Jewish Writings*, 52.

proposing ‘detachment of the Jews from advanced Western culture and their decline into the backward Asiatic East.’⁵² Consider the response of Max Nordau, the one Zionist leader of the early twentieth century more prominent even than Herzl.⁵³ At the Eighth Zionist Congress of 1907, Nordau offered a direct rebuttal: ‘We will not become Asiatics, from the point of view of anthropological and cultural inferiority, any more than the Anglo-Saxons became redskins in North America, Hottentots in South Africa, or Papuans in Australia.’⁵⁴

In leading Canadian circles, Zionist reasoning struck a familiar note.

Zionism, Canadian Internationalism, and the ‘Orient’

Yitzhak Laor summarizes it well: ‘Zionism thought it would politically resolve the exile within Europe – Jews as “Orientals inside the Occident” – not just by an Exodus, by going elsewhere, but by going to the heart of the colonial hinterland of Europe, the East, not to become part of that East but in order to become representatives of the West “over there,” far away from the exile we were subjected to “here,” inside Europe.’⁵⁵ Antisemitism and colonial racism were evolving in parallel. Jews, simultaneously present in the West and attacked as foreign to it, were ambiguously positioned. Zionism was shaped by this contradiction, in Canada as elsewhere.

European antisemitism gained pace throughout the nineteenth century. The situation worsened in 1881, when the assassination of the Russian Czar Alexander II prompted a wave of state-sponsored mob violence against Jews. Jewish westward migration accelerated. And in Western Europe, the migrants were met with virulent racism. This was no matter of isolated prejudice. As Étienne Balibar has written, ‘anti-Semitism functioned on a European scale.’ Through the internal exclusion of Jews, national and racial identities across the continent

⁵² Yosef Gorny, trans. Chaya Galai, *Zionism and the Arabs, 1882-1948: A Study of Ideology* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987), 34.

⁵³ Michael Berkowitz, *Western Jewry and the Zionist Project, 1914-1933* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 26.

⁵⁴ Gorny, *Zionism and the Arabs*, 34.

⁵⁵ Yitzhak Laor, *The Myths of Liberal Zionism* (London: Verso, 2009), 6.

were defined against the *same* foil, the same 'stateless other,' and this has been a component of the very idea of Europe as the land of 'modern' nation-states or, in other words, of civilization. At the same time, the European or Euro-American nations, locked in a bitter struggle to divide up the world into colonial empires, recognized that they formed a community and shared an 'equality' through that very competition, a community and an equality to which they gave the name 'White.'

Balibar is insightful in his discussion of a paradox 'which a number of those who have studied the question have run up against: there actually is a racist "internationalism" or "supranationalism" which tends to idealize timeless or transhistorical communities such as "Indo-Europeans," "the West," "Judaean-Christian civilization."' ⁵⁶ The internationalist scope of racial identification meanwhile varied from place to place. Racial theorists of Anglo-Saxon colonialism, fixated on different racial 'others,' were not nearly as concerned with Jews as were their counterparts in France and Germany. The place of Jews in frontier racism was especially unclear.

In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the racial champions of the English-speaking peoples were split on the Jewish question. On the US east coast, strict Anglo-Saxonists like the Republican senator Henry Cabot Lodge spoke for a narrow interpretation of 'white,' convinced that loose definitions had diluted the racial character of the US by allowing in too many European immigrants of essentially alien stock. ⁵⁷ In Australia, however, like in British Columbia and California, the main perceived demographic threat was East Asian. Accordingly, politicians like the Australian eugenicist Richard Arthur sought to broaden racial definitions in order to bolster European numbers. Lake and Reynolds note that Theodore Roosevelt, himself fixated on the supposed Asian threat, 'lent his support to Arthur's campaign to widen the definition of whites to embrace Italians, Spanish and Jews.' ⁵⁸ In Canada, similarly, Jewish immigrants occupied an ambiguous position as Europeans of questionable pedigree.

Canadian Jews did not form part of the country's upper racial tier. But nor were they ever the main target of racism. The principal Canadian Jewish community was in Montreal, where a number of Jews had accompanied the initial British influx following the conquest of New France. The community was for the most part amicably associated

⁵⁶ Étienne Balibar, 'Racism and Nationalism,' in eds. Étienne Balibar and Immanuel Wallerstein, trans. Chris Turner, *Race, Nation, Class: Ambiguous Identities* (London: Verso, 1991), 62.

⁵⁷ Lake and Reynolds, *Global Colour Line*, 163, 266.

⁵⁸ Lake and Reynolds, *Global Colour Line*, 163.

with the city's English-speaking community. At first, it was also quite small. By the mid-mark of the nineteenth century, at a time when the US Jewish community numbered more than 50,000 people, less than five hundred Jews lived in the whole of British North America.⁵⁹ Official and popular racism were focused on other groups. A telling episode came when one of France's leading antisemitic philologists, Ernest Renan, developed a theory comparing Hebrew with the Indigenous North American languages of the Iroquoian and Algonquin peoples. For most Canadians, the position of Jews in relation to the society's foundational colour line was obvious. The principal of Montreal's McGill University, William Dawson, himself solicited a critical review of Renan's work from a recent Jewish immigrant to Montreal from London. The author of the review, Abraham de Sola, came from a respected British Jewish family; de Sola quickly gained prominence in his new city, and would deliver McGill's convocation speech in 1864.⁶⁰

Jewish immigration to Canada accelerated in the 1870s and continued with limited government restrictions until the First World War. Three decades after the Russian pogroms of 1881, and the worsening of the European Jewish crisis that they signalled, the Canadian Jewish population, if still relatively small, stood at more than 75,000.⁶¹ Gerald Tulchinsky, in the most authoritative study of Canadian Jewish history to date, describes the reception of these mostly East European immigrants. His description goes some way towards explaining the support that Zionism found in respectable Canadian society.

By the time this new wave of Jewish immigrants arrived, a small Jewish Canadian establishment had already developed, centred in Montreal. Its notables, like Abraham de Sola, operated comfortably in Anglophone upper society. 'De Sola's son Clarence was probably typical of this group,' writes Tulchinsky. 'He attended the balls and dances, socializing with members of the Anglo-Saxon elite.'⁶² This budding communal leadership stood apart from the community of recent immigrants. The new arrivals tended to be poorer, Yiddish-speaking Jews, viewed by the establishment as culturally foreign and as a burden on the community. By the 1870s, Montreal's

⁵⁹ Gerald Tulchinsky, *Canada's Jews: A People's Journey* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2008), 74.

⁶⁰ Tulchinsky, *Canada's Jews*, 66.

⁶¹ Louis Rosenberg, ed. Morton Weinfeld, *Canada's Jews: A Social and Economic Study of Jews in Canada in the 1930s* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1993), 4.

⁶² Tulchinsky, *Canada's Jews*, 73.

established Jewish families were up in arms that organizations like the Jewish Emigration Society in Britain were sending so many unskilled Jewish workers to Canada, in the time-honoured British tradition of offloading the surplus. De Sola travelled to London to protest in person; ‘following this visit and for the time being, anyway, the export of poor Jews from London ceased.’⁶³ The immigration to Canada of East European Jews kept up pace.

By the turn of the century, Zionism seemed to offer a way to deflect these immigrants away from the Western centres and towards the imperial frontier. In the meantime, a similar possibility seemed to exist within Canada. ‘The west still beckoned,’ writes Tulchinsky, ‘as it had in the United States a generation earlier, and the unofficial national agenda was to conquer the territory.’⁶⁴ Of course, this was neither empty territory nor a frontier that beckoned to everyone. For Canada’s founding leadership, European settlement was the necessary companion to the military repression of Indigenous and Métis society. Prime minister Macdonald explained the logic in 1870, the year of a joint deployment against the Métis by regular British forces and the Canadian militia in the newly-declared province of Manitoba: ‘these impulsive half-breeds . . . must be kept down with a strong hand until they are swamped by the influx of settlers.’⁶⁵ To accomplish this, it was necessary to enforce Anglo-Saxon settlement with a ‘polyglot mixture’ of other Europeans.⁶⁶ The wrong kind of immigrants, however, were considered as much of a demographic threat as were the Indigenous and Métis. Hence, for example, the imposition of an escalating ‘head tax’ on Chinese immigrants beginning in 1885.⁶⁷

Some Canadian antisemites tried to extend the politics of anti-Asian racism. As early as 1878, Goldwin Smith, whom Tulchinsky dubs ‘Canada’s most famous Jew-hater,’ staked out his position that Jews were ‘another element originally Eastern [which] has, in the course of these events, made us sensible of its presence in the West.’⁶⁸ But

⁶³ Tulchinsky, *Canada’s Jews*, 71.

⁶⁴ Tulchinsky, *Canada’s Jews*, 89.

⁶⁵ R.G. Trotter, ‘Expansion of the Dominion, to 1880,’ in eds. Kenney et al., *Cambridge History of the British Empire*, 472; and Stasiulus and Jhappan, ‘Fractious Politics,’ 114.

⁶⁶ Nicholas Mansergh, *Survey of British Commonwealth Affairs: Problems of External Policy, 1931-1939* (London, New York, and Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1952), 98.

⁶⁷ As detailed, for example, in Frederic W. Howay, ‘The Settlement and Progress of British Columbia, 1871-1914,’ in eds. Kenney et al., *Cambridge History of the British Empire*, 564.

⁶⁸ Tulchinsky, *Canada’s Jews*, 127.

the argument had only limited traction in Canada. European Jewish immigrants straddled the colour line. They were often not white enough for the main centres. On the frontier, though, they could be positioned within the framework of Canadian demographic priorities. Jewish communal relief organizations thus promoted a series of experiments with Jewish agricultural settlement, especially in the north-west. 'That such a substantial part of Canadian Jewish assistance took the form of western colonization efforts,' explains Tulchinsky, 'underscores the fact that Canada (or Montreal, at least) believed it could not cope with the influx in any other way.'⁶⁹

It is worth looking more closely at Canadian immigration policy, which sheds light on prevailing conceptions of racial hierarchy. The first wave of official discrimination targeted Chinese immigrants; soon after joining Confederation, the government of British Columbia demanded anti-Chinese legislation as a matter of priority. The federal government imposed it from 1885 through to the late 1940s. It took further measures in the early twentieth century to target immigrants from Japan, despite its alliance with Britain, and India, despite its central position in the Empire.⁷⁰ In 1913 William D. Scott, Superintendent of Immigration in Ottawa, explained the broader application of measure taken in 1908 to exclude Indians:

Primarily it was the large influx of Hindoos which directed the attention of the then Government to the question of Asiatic immigration . . . it was felt that with the possible exception of Russia in Asia that continent did not supply to this country a class of people who would become assimilated and form true Canadians in the best and widest meaning of the term. The regulation . . . was, therefore, intentionally drafted so that it would include not only the Hindoos but also Arabians, Turks, Syrians and Persians.⁷¹

Racial boundaries were in place, but were not always precisely drawn. Just as it was possible for other East European immigrants to slip from being considered 'true Canadians'-in-the-making to being derided as 'dirty, poor, ignorant Slavs',⁷² Jewish immigrants were on the edge.

Consider the politics of Winnipeg. The city's Jewish presence grew considerably in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, as Jewish immigrants showed their preference for urban over pioneering life. Robert Wardaugh traces the shifting attitudes

⁶⁹ Tulchinsky, *Canada's Jews*, 89.

⁷⁰ See Price, *Orienteering Canada*, 17.

⁷¹ Baha Abu-Laban, *An Olive Branch on the Family Tree: The Arabs in Canada* (Toronto: McLelland and Stewart Ltd, 1980), 86.

⁷² Oliver, 'Settlement of the Prairies,' 528.

of the city's British establishment. In the nineteenth century, respectable opinion in Winnipeg hoped for broadened European immigration as a means of shoring up Canadian demography in contested territory. 'In the years prior to the First World War,' however, 'immigration became an enemy to, rather than an ally in, the preservation of the city's Britishness. Imperial attitudes of racial superiority, or what Arthur Lower has called "Britishism," found practice in a city where the Anglo-Saxon came into contact with indigenous peoples and then a massive influx of immigrants from eastern Europe.'⁷³ In this context, antisemitism built up as part of a wider wave of hostility towards European foreigners.

As efforts to deflect Jewish immigrants towards Canada's north-western frontier faltered, Zionism seemed convenient for reasons having very little to do with Palestine. It is worth recalling that Herzl, in *The Jewish State*, put Argentina as a possible destination for Jewish emigrants on almost equal footing with Palestine.⁷⁴ For Herzl himself, emigrant colonization was the essential idea; the site was an important but secondary consideration. Herzl's flexibility in this respect was in evidence in the early offers he solicited from British officials. In 1901, British colonial secretary Joseph Chamberlain looked into promoting Zionist colonization in the Egyptian Sinai, at al-Arish; in 1903, Herzl presented the Sixth Zionist Congress with a British offer to initiate Zionist colonization in present-day Kenya (a proposal known in Zionist historiography as 'the Uganda scheme').⁷⁵ Respectable Canadians greeted British-oriented Zionist initiatives with enthusiasm. The main newspaper of the Canadian Jewish establishment, the *Jewish Times*, expressed its hopes for Zionist settlement in East Africa well after the WZO itself had dropped the idea.⁷⁶ As for Palestine, the Muslim 'Orient' was scarcely more familiar to Canadians than East Africa. However, the global framework of the British Empire had brought it, too, into Canadian consciousness as a known imperial periphery.

It was France that opened the era of Western imperial expansion into what came to be known as the Middle East, with Napoleon's 1798 invasion of Egypt. But here too,

⁷³ Robert Wardaugh, "'Gateway to Empire": Imperial Sentiment in Winnipeg, 1867-1917,' in ed. Coates, *Imperial Canada*, 210.

⁷⁴ Herzl, 'The Jewish State,' 222.

⁷⁵ Walter Laqueur, *A History of Zionism* (New York: Schocken Books, 1976), 126-8.

⁷⁶ Tulchinsky, *Canada's Jews*, 108.

Britain emerged as the dominant power. The Ottoman Empire stretched over most of the region, including the whole of Palestine, until the First World War; and in the course of the Napoleonic wars, Britain became its principal external trading partner.⁷⁷ For Britain, continued Ottoman rule safeguarded against the territorial expansion of competing powers. In loose cooperation with France, the British thus worked to expand their regional influence within the framework of Ottoman sovereignty. This effort repeatedly crept into Canadian politics, if mostly at the margins. Consider the experience of the Crimean War (1853-6), which Palestinian scholar Mahmoud Yazbak identifies as a pivotal moment in the expansion of European commercial influence in Palestine and throughout the region.⁷⁸ A British imperial regiment was recruited from Upper Canada to support the war effort.⁷⁹ Meanwhile the Canadian parliament passed a motion pledging £20,000 ‘as a contribution to the Imperial Government “to show that Canada made common cause with England and with France in the Crimean War.”’⁸⁰

Britain’s presence in the region expanded towards the end of the nineteenth century. A turning-point was the Egyptian rebellion of 1881-2. This rebellion (nothing less than a ‘revolution,’ writes Egyptian political economist Anouar Abdel-Malek) challenged both absolutist rule under the Ottoman vassal state of Khediv Tewfiq, and the European economic control of the country which the Khediv was facilitating.⁸¹ Britain intervened to crush the uprising, imposing a military occupation of Egypt that was not fully lifted until 1954. The Canadian part in such distant campaigns was limited; Canadians had their local conquests to focus on. For the British home government, it was viable to exempt ‘self-governing’ colonies like Canada from large-scale military contributions since funds and military personnel could be extracted from the ‘dependent’ colonies, and especially from India.⁸² Canada nonetheless shared in these wars of the Empire. So it was during the 1884 Siege of Khartoum, when British forces

⁷⁷ J.C. Hurewitz, ed., *The Middle East and North Africa in World Politics: A Documentary Record, 2nd Ed, Vol. 1* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1975), 265.

⁷⁸ Mahmoud Yazbak, ‘From Poverty to Revolt: Economic Factors in the Outbreak of the 1936 Rebellion in Palestine,’ *Middle Eastern Studies* 36, no. 3 (July 2000), 95.

⁷⁹ Buckner, ‘Creation of the Dominion of Canada,’ 75.

⁸⁰ Rowell, ‘Canada and the Empire,’ 718

⁸¹ See Anouar Abdel-Malek, trans. Charles Lam Markmann, *Egypt: Military Society* (New York: Random House, 1968), 7.

⁸² John Darwin, ‘A Third British Empire? The Dominion Idea in Imperial Politics,’ in eds. Judith M. Brown and William Roger Louis, *The Oxford History of the British Empire Vol. 4: The Twentieth Century* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 78.

commanded by Charles Gordon, defending imperial interests in Egypt, launched their ill-fated expedition against the Mahdist revolt in the Sudan. The Canadian contribution to the expeditionary force to assist Gordon was modest, consisting of 386 raftsmen and militia officers.⁸³ But local mobilizations were infused with knowledge of these distant exploits. Some likened Canadian repression of the North-West Rebellion of 1885 to the campaigns in Egypt and the Sudan. Addressing the House of Commons, prime minister Macdonald even derided Métis leader Louis Riel as ‘a kind of half-breed Mahdi.’⁸⁴

Gradually, Canadian Zionism was therefore enforced from two angles. On the one hand, it provided an opportunity to address unease about Jewish immigration with seemingly positive solutions. And on the other, it presented a picture of friendly settlement on a hostile frontier, especially to the extent that it could be associated with the British Empire. The influence of a shared settler ethos is difficult to pin down with precision. In any case, Canadian Zionism’s early patriotic esteem is a matter of record.

Michael Brown, one of the most committed Zionist ideologues that Canada has produced, cites the WZO official Nahum Sokolow to describe the phenomenon: ‘In Canada, unlike most other countries, early Zionism attracted not only poor immigrants, but “the most active and most respected section of Jewry” as well.’⁸⁵ The Canadian Jewish establishment received more than a little encouragement from its Anglo-Saxon brethren. Another Canadian Zionist historian, Bernard Figler, explains: ‘at succeeding [Canadian Zionist] Conventions, the highlight at Conventions was the presence of eminent and representative Christians – professors, mayors, ministers of provincial and federal cabinets and premiers of provinces, speaking for their government.’⁸⁶ In Canada, in fact, the poorer East European Jews most like those the establishment hoped would settle in Palestine – the leaders of Western Jewish communities never contemplated uprooting *themselves* – were conspicuous in their absence from positions of Zionist leadership. It was respectable opinion that counted.

⁸³ L.A. Delvoie, ‘Canada and Egypt: From Antagonism to Partnership,’ *International Journal* 52, no. 4 (1997), 657-8.

⁸⁴ Buckner, ‘Creation of the Dominion of Canada,’ 75.

⁸⁵ Michael Brown, ‘The Americanization of Canadian Zionism, 1917-1982,’ in ed. Geoffrey Wigoder, *Contemporary Jewry: Studies in Honor of Moshe Davis* (Jerusalem: Alpha Press, 1984), 129.

⁸⁶ Bernard Figler, ‘History of the Zionist Ideal in Canada,’ in ed. Eli Gottesman, *Canadian Jewish Reference Book and Directory* (Ottawa: Central Rabbinical Seminary of Canada, 1963), 91.

To a significant extent, the politics of the early Canadian Zionist movement were the politics of one man: Clarence de Sola. In 1899, de Sola positioned himself at the helm of the Federation of Zionist Societies of Canada, encompassing all of the Zionist groups that had sprung up in Canada since the WZO's establishment. He held the organization's presidency for twenty years. Through him, established structures of class and cultural power within the Jewish community were ruthlessly enforced: notables were to make decisions and new arrivals were to know their place. This was explicit. Gerald Tulchinsky records de Sola's response to one Jewish critic that challenged his authority: 'de Sola exclaimed that he would brook no opposition from one "of no influence of the community, a comparatively recently arrived emigrant" who had dared to attack "the leading Jews in Canada, and the power and authority that they represent."⁸⁷ Writing to the Central Zionist Bureau in Cologne, Germany, de Sola explained his organizational philosophy: 'the greatest fault of the Jewish people to-day is their unwillingness to submit to discipline . . . In Canada, we have had a rigid almost military discipline in our Federation.'⁸⁸

It was with de Sola's messaging that Zionism was pressed across the country. 'Largely because of de Sola,' writes Irving Abella, 'the Federation took hold of significant segments of Canadian Jewry. He had an enormous correspondence with individual Jews from Glace Bay to Victoria and travelled extensively to meet them.'⁸⁹ In the published fragments of this correspondence, we read a message strikingly similar to that which de Sola's father brought to Britain in the 1870s, when Montreal's establishment felt besieged by Britain's 'export of poor Jews.' As de Sola the younger wrote to a contact in New Brunswick: 'for an organized mass of people to flood these western countries under no direction, and with no proper training for agriculture, or other means of living, will be disastrous, and must naturally only produce misery.'⁹⁰

Most of these immigrants showed no desire to find their place on western frontiers. In the main cities, meanwhile, the prospect of further Jewish immigration was viewed with growing unease. Better to send them to Palestine.

⁸⁷ Tulchinsky, *Canada's Jews*, 171.

⁸⁸ Tulchinsky, *Canada's Jews*, 167.

⁸⁹ Irving Abella, *A Coat of Many Colours: Two Centuries of Jewish Life in Canada* (Toronto: Lester & Orpen Dennys Ltd, 1990), 151.

⁹⁰ Tulchinsky, *Canada's Jews*, 170.

A Seventh Dominion?

If Max Nordau once drew a parallel between proposed Zionist and actual Anglo-Saxon settlement, voices of the Canadian Jewish establishment like the *Jewish Times* were much more direct, their support for Zionism forming a secondary component of enthusiastic identification with the British Empire.⁹¹ The First World War and its aftermath seemed to vindicate this approach. It is important to note, however, that this outcome was not a foregone conclusion.

As bizarre as it seems in retrospect, after the experience of Nazi antisemitism and the Holocaust, the possibility of German sponsorship also figured prominently in early Zionist thinking. This had been Herzl's first preference – and whereas he faced widespread Jewish condemnation for negotiating with Czarist officials to coordinate Jewish emigration from Russia,⁹² negotiations with Germany were not so controversial. Until its overthrow in 1917, the Russian government was the world's worst purveyor of antisemitic violence. Germany seemed its principal external enemy. It remained so as Europe moved towards the Great War, while the Allies sided with the Russian Czars. The German government thus cultivated a reputation as a possible saviour of Jews from Czarist brutality. Some tried to align Zionism with this effort; in autumn 1914, the German Zionist leader Heinrich Loewe wrote that it was 'only from the German side that the Jews will find protection and freedom.'⁹³ For their part, British officials repeatedly considered the possibility that Germany might express support for Zionism as a means of asserting its stake in the Middle East.⁹⁴ Things turned out quite differently, however. Instead, developments during and after the First World War allowed Canadian Zionism to hitch itself to the victorious expansion of the British Empire.

The British hypocrisy discussed by Carr and others was rarely more glaring than in the expansion and reconstitution of the Empire through the Great War. Alfred Zimmern, a co-founder of the Royal Institute of International Affairs (Chatham House), provides a typical interwar sample: 'The British Empire survived the war because it had

⁹¹ Tulchinsky, *Canada's Jews*, 107-8.

⁹² Laquer, *History of Zionism*, 123.

⁹³ Berkowitz, *Western Jewry and the Zionist Project*, 7.

⁹⁴ Nadine Picaudou, '1914-1948: Dynamique sioniste et impérialisme occidental,' *Revue d'études Palestiniennes* 17, no. 69 (autumn 1998), 5.

in it a principle of vitality which the other empires lacked. And that principle, that seed of continuing life, is the spirit of liberty.⁹⁵ As a leading historian of the Empire explained, British power 'was no longer to be associated with scrambles for Africa or the extraction of concessions in Asia. It was inspired by a new idealism and it represented a spirit hitherto unknown in history.'⁹⁶ British officials marvelled at the diversity of 'autonomous states, dependencies, colonies, protectorates, mandated territories, feudatories, and allies which are comprehended within the orbit of our polity.'⁹⁷ This was the global orbit of what came to be described as the 'Third British Empire.'⁹⁸ It was through it that Canada formalized a distinct position in international affairs, and that the Zionist movement was imposed on Palestine as a significant political force.

This marked a new phase for British imperialism in the Middle East. On the eve of the First World War, Britain abandoned its longstanding strategy of upholding the sovereignty of the Ottoman Empire while building British influence within it. As Turkey moved to side with Germany, British officials looked to see its empire dissolved. Britain nullified Ottoman sovereignty over Egypt and declared the country a British protectorate; it took similar action in British-held Cyprus and Kuwait.⁹⁹ Palestine, on the other hand, was not only under formal Ottoman sovereignty but under actual Ottoman control. During the war, it was the subject of contradictory pledges from British officials. Sir Henry McMahon, high commissioner for Egypt, was understood to have included Palestine in promises to Sharif Husayn of Mecca for regional Arab independence in return for an Arab revolt against Ottoman authorities.¹⁰⁰ Sir Marks Sykes meanwhile signed off on an agreement with France to divide Arab territories into zones of foreign influence, with Palestine earmarked for 'international administration.'¹⁰¹ The pledges from McMahon and Sykes were made in the early phase of the war. The most significant British declaration on Palestine came later. In November 1917, in an

⁹⁵ Alfred Zimmern, *The Third British Empire* (London: Oxford University Press, 1927), 1.

⁹⁶ Nicholas Mansergh, *Survey of British Commonwealth Affairs: Problems of External Policy, 1931-1939* (London: Oxford University Press, 1952), 4.

⁹⁷ British colonial secretary Leo Amery, cited in Mansergh, *Survey of British Commonwealth Affairs*, 14.

⁹⁸ See Mrinalini Sinha, 'Whatever Happened to the Third British Empire? Empire, Nation Redux,' in ed. Andrew S. Thompson, *Writing Imperial Histories* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2013), 168-187.

⁹⁹ Hurewitz, *Documentary Record*, 7.

¹⁰⁰ Hurewitz, *Documentary Record*, 46-56.

¹⁰¹ Hurewitz, *Documentary Record*, 62 .

extraordinary coup for British Zionism, British foreign secretary Lord Arthur Balfour declared his government's support for 'the establishment in Palestine of a national home for the Jewish people.'¹⁰²

British forces were already wresting Palestine from Ottoman control when the Balfour Declaration was first published. Within a year, the British military conquered the whole of the country and put Palestine under an Occupied Enemy Territory Administration.¹⁰³ It took work for Britain to retain Palestine within its exclusive jurisdiction after the war. France had its own ambitions in Palestine, encompassed by visions of a Greater Syria and rationalized by a posture of guardianship over Christian sites in the Holy Land.¹⁰⁴ Moreover, by this point in world history, the imperial right to rule native societies by force could no longer be asserted in quite the same way as it had been in the nineteenth century.

The formal Allied rationale for holding conquered territories was spelled out in the Covenant of the League of Nations, finalized at the Paris Peace Conference of 1919. Article 22 explained that those 'advanced nations' which had won the war would stay to help govern territories 'inhabited by peoples not yet able to stand by themselves under the strenuous conditions of the modern world.'¹⁰⁵ In light of the Balfour Declaration, the Zionist movement did all it could to support Britain's bid to be the 'advanced nation' to govern Palestine through the League's mandate system. The WZO submission to the Paris Peace Conference praised Britain's record, including what it identified as 'the three consecutive acts which definitely associated Great Britain with Zionism in the minds of the Jews, viz. – the El Arish offer in 1901, the East African offer in 1903, and lastly the British Declaration in favour of a Jewish National Home in Palestine in 1917.'¹⁰⁶ Substituting Zionist for Palestinian opinion, the WZO even argued that British rule would therefore satisfy 'the popular wish of the people concerned.'¹⁰⁷ In an internal British memorandum, Balfour himself was more forthright on the question of democracy. The Great Powers were agreeing to support Zionism, wrote the foreign secretary, for

¹⁰² Hurewitz, *Documentary Record*, 106.

¹⁰³ J.V.W. Shaw, *A Survey of Palestine* (Palestine: Government Printer, 1946), 1.

¹⁰⁴ Samir Kassir and Farouk Mardam-Bey, *Itinéraires de Paris à Jérusalem: La France et le conflit Israélo-Arabe, Vol. 1* (Washington, D.C.: Institute of Palestine Studies, 1992), 19-20.

¹⁰⁵ Hurewitz, *Documentary Record*, 179.

¹⁰⁶ Hurewitz, *Documentary Record*, 140.

¹⁰⁷ Hurewitz, *Documentary Record*, 140.

reasons which were simply of 'profounder import than the desires and prejudices of the 700,00 Arabs who now inhabit that ancient land.'¹⁰⁸

To a considerable extent, Balfour still spoke for Canada. Canada's association with the Empire was, however, evolving. Canada and the other British settler states gained newfound status during the war. They made major contributions; Canada alone fielded some 400,000 troops for the British war effort.¹⁰⁹ From 'dependent' colonies, Britain extracted funds and personnel by harsher means – including the imposition of martial law in much of Indian Punjab, culminating in the massacre of hundreds of demonstrators in early 1919 at Jallianwala Bagh.¹¹⁰ Support from British settler leaderships was maintained by more cooperative means (though in Québec, conscription for the war had to be imposed by force).¹¹¹ In 1921, British prime minister David Lloyd George reflected on the efforts that had been undertaken over the preceding years to give self-governing colonies like Canada widened influence in the Empire: 'The advantage to us is that joint control means joint responsibility, and when the burden of Empire has become so vast it is well that we should have the shoulders of these young giants under the burden to help us along.' But the prime minister prefaced these words by reaffirming the basic reality: 'The instrument of the foreign policy of the Empire is the British Foreign Office.'¹¹² In fact, the settler states were coming to demand not only decision-making input but a more autonomous association with the Empire. Canadian association with the British Empire's eastward expansion would soon become a flashpoint for imperial reform.

What is important to note for our purposes is not only that early Canadian external affairs policy involved assertion of a new status for the settler states within the British Empire. It is also that the tradition of loyalist settler colonialism which Canada helped to pioneer often framed proposals for Britain to support Jewish statehood in Palestine. This was the precedent emphasized by Henry Mond, for example, the

¹⁰⁸ Hurewitz, *Documentary Record*, 189.

¹⁰⁹ Darwin, 'Darwin, 'A Third British Empire,' 67.

¹¹⁰ See Vishwa N. Datta, *Jallianwala Bagh* (Kurukshetra: Kurukshetra University Books and Stationery Shop for Lyall Book Depot, 1969).

¹¹¹ For a lively sovereigntist account of this history, see Léandre Bergeron, *Petit manuel d'histoire du Québec* (Montreal: Éditions québécoises, 1971), 178-183.

¹¹² Robert M. Dawson, *The Development of Dominion Status 1900-1936* (London: Frank Cass & Co., 1965), 46.

second Baron Melchett, when he asserted that ‘the British Empire alone is sufficiently liberal, sufficiently elastic, sufficiently broad and generous to comprise within itself a Jewish National Home.’¹¹³ Let us consider Zionist proposals and the status of settler states within the Empire in turn.

More than any other Zionist leader, it was Chaim Weizmann who articulated proposals to use Jewish settlement in order to produce ‘a great Palestine within the orbit of the British Empire,’ as he phrased it in 1921.¹¹⁴ The success of the Balfour Declaration had by this point propelled Weizmann to the presidency of the WZO. As a leading force in the British Zionist Federation, he had been promoting this vision for years. Weizmann summarized his case in 1915 in correspondence with C.P. Scott, the owner of the Manchester *Guardian* and an early supporter of Zionism. ‘If Great Britain does not wish anyone else to have Palestine,’ Weizmann reasoned, ‘it will have to watch it and stop any penetration of another power.’ Independently, the Zionist movement could be of little assistance in this effort. On other other hand, it would be difficult for Britain alone to rationalize a long-term protectorate over the country. Weizmann thus proposed ‘that the middle course could be adopted . . . viz; the Jews take over the country; the whole burden of organization falls on them, but for the next ten or fifteen years they work under a temporary British protectorate.’ In his autobiography, Weizmann presents this correspondence as ‘an anticipation of the mandate system.’¹¹⁵

In the years ahead, British officials generally disavowed the call for Jewish statehood in Palestine in favour of the more ambiguous phrase, ‘Jewish national home.’ However, some politicians openly called for full Zionist authority over the country. Notable among them was the British Labour Party’s Josiah Wedgwood. His support was not soon forgotten; in 1948 one of Israel’s naval vessels, a participant in the first Israeli bombardments of Gaza, was named the *Wedgwood*.¹¹⁶ Wedgwood’s reasoning deserves close attention. Several years into the British mandate, he wrote that since all British patriots ‘want capable and civilised friends for members of the British Union,’ it

¹¹³ Lord Melchett, *Thy Neighbour* (London: Frederick Muller Ltd., 1936), 201.

¹¹⁴ Norman A. Rose, *The Gentile Zionists: A Study in Anglo-Zionist Diplomacy, 1929-1939* (London: Frank Cass, 1973), 398.

¹¹⁵ Chaim Weizmann, *Trial and Error* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1949), 177.

¹¹⁶ Netanel Lorch, *Israel’s War of Independence, 1947-1949* (Hartford: Hartmore House, 1968), 372.

should be '[taken] for granted that the British Government, whether Conservative or Labour, has as its object in Palestine the ultimate establishment there of a Jewish Dominion within the British Empire or Union.'¹¹⁷ There was nothing like a consensus on this in British circles. All the same, Wedgood enlisted leading public figures in Britain to press for this aim through an organization called the Seventh Dominion League.¹¹⁸ It is worth examining the resonance of this term, 'Dominion.'

When 'the federal Dominion of Canada' was established by Confederation in 1867, the term was not vested with much specific meaning. By the early twentieth century, however, other British settler governments, especially those of Australia and New Zealand, had joined the Canadian government in using the term as a means of differentiating settler states from other colonial possessions. The leadership of settler colonies were extremely conscious of what Du Bois called the 'color-line.' For them, the term 'Dominion' signalled a recognition that British settlers, however distant from the metropole, were to be positioned on the privileged side of the racial divide.

The Liberal premier of Ontario, George W. Ross, stressed the point during a visit to London in 1901. Canadians were then fighting under the British flag in South Africa. Ross, though an avid imperialist, impressed upon his hosts the principle that Canadian loyalty and support could best be given to central authorities respectful of settler rights to self-governance. Canadians would 'bear their share in the burdens, in the battles, and in the struggle for imperial unity,' but they were not inferior subjects; they were 'partners in the British Empire.'¹¹⁹ In 1907, the special status of the Dominions was signalled by the convening of their leaders in an Imperial Conference in London. 'The distinctive character of their status was emphasized by excluding India from membership of the Conference,' reflected a leading British constitutional theorist; 'the Dominions were essentially self-governing territories in all internal matters and thus stood apart from India as well as from the Crown Colonies and protectorates.'¹²⁰ New Zealand's prime minister at the time, Richard Seddon, could not have identified the racial logic more clearly. He explained that the Empire 'divided broadly into two parts,

¹¹⁷ Josiah C. Wedgwood, *The Seventh Dominion* (London: Labour Pub. Co., 1928), 33.

¹¹⁸ Wendehorst, *British Jewry*, 160.

¹¹⁹ Buckner, 'Creation of the Dominion of Canada,' 73.

¹²⁰ Arthur B. Keith, *Letters and Essays on Current Imperial and International Problems, 1935-6* (London: Oxford University Press, 1936), 3.

one occupied wholly or mainly by a white ruling race, the other principally occupied by coloured races who are ruled. Australia and New Zealand are determined to keep their place in the first class.¹²¹ Or as the Canadian Anglo-Saxonist Stephen Leacock exclaimed in 1907, 'I am an imperialist because I will not be a colonial.'¹²²

South Africa's establishment as a Dominion, in the name of liberal self-governance and an internationalism of whites, broadened the category that British Zionists would invoke. This was precisely the threat that worried Indigenous opinion following the Boer war of 1899-1902. The British had won, but the question of South Africa's future political constitution took years to settle. The political rights accorded to Africans in the British Cape Colony had contrasted with the cruder white supremacy of the Boer republics. Surely, with the war over, it was time to extend the franchise. In 1903 the South Africa Native Congress sent a formal address to this effect to British colonial secretary Joseph Chamberlain, insisting that the 'antagonism to the Natives' that pervaded Boer-British negotiations needed to be overcome, and that Africans should be included 'within the political family as true citizens of the Empire.'¹²³ In 1906, the Congress added that outright denial of South African independence would be a lesser imperial offence than the handing of power to the settlers. Better to be 'taken over by the Crown and governed from Downing Street,' declared Congress, than to be subject to the 'pernicious and retrogressive' settler authority suggested by Natal and Transvaal.¹²⁴

Yet settler authority was precisely what Britain imposed with the South African Union of 1910. Rosa Luxemburg's biting commentary on the internationalism of Boer and Britain remains memorable:

One million white exploiters of both nations sealed their touching fraternal alliance within the Union with the civil and political disenfranchisement of five million coloured workers ... this noble work, culminating under the imperialist policy of the Conservatives in open oppression, was actually to be finished by the Liberal Party itself, amid frenzied applause from the 'liberal cretins of Europe' who with sentimental pride took as proof of the still continuing vigour and greatness of English liberalism the fact that Britain had granted complete self-government and freedom to a handful of whites in South Africa.¹²⁵

¹²¹ Lake and Reynolds, *Global Colour Line*, 164.

¹²² Cannadine, 'Imperial Canada,' 10.

¹²³ Lake and Reynolds, *Global Colour Line*, 224.

¹²⁴ Lake and Reynolds, *Global Colour Line*, 225.

¹²⁵ Luxemburg, *Accumulation of Capital*, 396-7.

Africans were denied the franchise and Boers admitted into the self-governing family. As Lake and Reynolds write, 'the Union was celebrated as a monument to liberal statecraft – the creation of another self-governing Dominion to join Canada, Australia and New Zealand, which were increasingly seen as a crucial supplement to Britain's strategic strength at a time of growing international tension in Europe.'¹²⁶

It is against this backdrop that Chaim Weizmann tirelessly insisted to British officials that 'the Jews alone were capable of rebuilding Palestine, and of giving it a place in the modern family of nations.'¹²⁷ Fittingly, one of Weizmann's closest allies in the Empire was Jan Smuts, a South African politician and veteran of the Boer fight for Transvaal. The British Labour Party's Wedgood, for his part, was frank in arguing that the British government should replicate the South African experience in Palestine: 'We made friends with the Boers, helped them with cash and sympathy, even danced with them to our mutual satisfaction. We welcomed them in, showed them an Englishman's best side, and now they are usefully within, and nobody doubts but that we did right.'¹²⁸ Why not similarly put Palestine's natives in their place?

From early on, the assimilation of Weizmann's proposals into British strategic thinking placed them on this well worn settler path. The military correspondent for C.P. Scott's Manchester *Guardian*, for example, Herbert Sidebotham, was already writing along these lines in the period leading up to the Balfour Declaration. In 1917 Sidebotham argued that for the sake of India and for the sake of Egypt, for the contingencies of war and for the long-term interests of Empire, it was necessary to extend Britain's presence on the eastern shores of the Mediterranean. He stressed the split between the Dominions, 'inhabited by people at the same stage of political development as ourselves,' and 'those parts of the Empire like India which are governed and do not govern themselves.' In a racially sanitized echo of James Bryce, Sidebotham insisted that only the former were truly effective. But Britain's options were limited; 'if Palestine became part of the British Empire it would never be colonized in any real sense by the sort of Englishmen who have made Canada and Australia.' And so his analysis boiled down to its essential message: 'The only possible colonists of

¹²⁶ Lake and Reynolds, *Global Colour Line*, 227.

¹²⁷ Weizmann, *Trial and Error*, 178-179.

¹²⁸ Wedgood, *Seventh Dominion*, 2.

Palestine are the Jews. Only they can build up in the Mediterranean a new Dominion associated with this country from the outset in Imperial work, at once a protection against the alien East and a mediator between it and us¹²⁹

For Sidebotham, much was to be gained by predicating British policy in the Middle East on an 'ideal so grand in its scope and so wide in its appeal' as the channelling of Jews into Palestine, with all the liberal and biblical resonance of the project. But in Sidebotham's writing, Kenneth Good's analysis of the place accorded to self-propelling settlement colonies in British thinking also bears itself out: 'Having found it necessary to interest ourselves in Judæa for the sake of Egypt, we are compelled, in order to raise a vigorous self-supporting colony capable of rendering real help to Britain in the Eastern Mediterranean, to go beyond the bare idea of Egyptian defence.' Only by establishing a Jewish state on a sizeable territory in the Arab east could Britain give rise to 'a modern State such as could ultimately, after a period of pupillage, form a self-sufficing State as a British Dominion, and not only become responsible for its own government and its own local defence but even, like other Dominions, tender voluntary help to the Empire in its trials.'¹³⁰

This line of thinking was persistent, and by the nature of things had its advocates in Canada. From 1935-1940, for example, a prominent British supporter of Zionism – John Buchan, the first Baron Tweedsmuir – served as Canadian governor general. In this capacity, he was nothing less than Canada's resident head of state. In 1937 Tweedsmuir received a letter from his friend Lord Melchett. Melchett was pushing for Britain to break Arab resistance and establish full Zionist authority over Palestine. He had recently written a book emphasizing the strategic importance of the region, and arguing that a Jewish Palestine could be a sturdier base of Empire than Egypt, which was 'populated by only a handful of British among millions of Egyptians, who from time to time demonstrate their hostility to British occupation.'¹³¹ Palestine, in contrast, could be garrisoned by Jewish settlers whose reliance on external support would guarantee a fighting loyalty: 'If the Empire could rally an army of 500,000 Europeans at this point, whose very existence and that of their homes and families depended upon the

¹²⁹ Khalidi, *Haven to Conquest*, 141.

¹³⁰ Khalidi, *Haven to Conquest*, 134, 141.

¹³¹ Melchett, *Neighbour*, 199.

preservation of the Empire, what a change in the balance of power!’¹³² In his letter to the Canadian governor general, Melchett wrote that ‘the Jewish state is destined to play the role of Ulster in the Eastern Mediterranean’ and asked Tweedsmuir to prepare to exercise pro-Zionist influence from Canada. Responding from Ottawa, Tweedsmuir greeted the letter as a ‘ray of light.’ He responded that ‘if you and Weizmann think the scheme practicable it certainly has my assent.’¹³³

In the end, it was not within the framework of British imperial rule over Palestine but as its successor that the Israeli state was established. Without Britain’s interwar support, however, it would not have been possible. Canadian association with these developments should not be exaggerated. Canada did not end up being quite the partner in the Empire’s policing of its new Eastern possessions that the Lloyd George government initially hoped for. All the same, imperial patriotism provided a powerful framework for the continued development of Canadian Zionism.

Between Imperial Multilateralism and Autonomy

It was under the Liberal government of Sir Wilfrid Laurier that Canadian overseas contributions to the British Empire first expanded, with some eight thousand Canadian troops deploying to South Africa at the turn of the century. At the time, British colonial secretary Joseph Chamberlain sought to encourage the further involvement of settler states in overseas interventions by offering increased decision-making influence. ‘If you are prepared at any time to take any share, any proportionate share, in the Burdens of Empire,’ Chamberlain explained to Laurier and other settler state leaders convening in 1902 London, ‘we are prepared to meet you with any proposal for giving you a corresponding voice in the policy of the Empire.’¹³⁴ Through the Imperial Conferences of 1907 and 1911, the Laurier government remained suspicious of centralizing moves that could undercut Canadian self-governance. By comparison, the Conservative governments that held Canadian federal office over the subsequent decade were more open to global imperial multilateralism.

¹³² Melchett, *Neighbour*, 221.

¹³³ Rose, *Gentile Zionists*, 88.

¹³⁴ Dawson, *Dominion Status*, 9.

This tendency found its fullest expression during the First World War. From 1912 through 1914, representatives of Canada's Conservative government under Sir Robert Borden had travelled to London to take part in the meetings of a Committee of Imperial Defence under the direction of the office of the British prime minister.¹³⁵ The war raised the stakes. In 1915, the British government pledged to discuss the terms of the postwar settlement with the Dominions, and prime minister Borden attended a meeting of the British Cabinet.¹³⁶ It seemed that a more formalized mechanism for Dominion representation was called for. On taking office in 1916, the Lloyd George government took this into account as it reorganized the British government to conduct the war. The Dominion prime ministers (and an Indian representative *selected by Britain*) were invited to take part in what became the Imperial War Cabinet. This was an unprecedented mechanism of Empire multilateralism. As Borden emphasized, it was a 'a cabinet of Governments rather than of Ministers.'¹³⁷

The main constitutional recognition of these developments came in the form of the much-celebrated Resolution 9, passed by the Imperial War Conference of 1917. A joint effort of the Canadian and the South African delegates, namely of Sir Robert Borden and Jan Smuts, the resolution established 'full recognition of the Dominions as autonomous nations of an Imperial Commonwealth.'¹³⁸ Thereafter, the Dominions had constitutional grounds to press for some combination of influence in the running of the Empire and autonomous partnership with it. This was the first of a series of landmarks in the reconstitution of the Dominions as distinct political actors on the world stage. It was followed by the Balfour Report of 1926, recognizing fuller control by the Dominions of their external affairs, and finally the Statute of Westminster of 1931, affirming the free association of 'self-governing Dominions' within the British Empire.¹³⁹ Of course, these phrases were elastic. In Canada, debates about the meaning of autonomous

¹³⁵ Dawson, *Dominion Status*, 12.

¹³⁶ Dawson, *Dominion Status*, 19.

¹³⁷ Dawson, *Dominion Status*, 24.

¹³⁸ Dawson, *Dominion Status*, 25.

¹³⁹ The latter is reproduced in full in ed. Nicolas Mansergh, *Documents and Speeches on British Commonwealth Affairs, 1931-1952, Vol. 1* (London: Oxford University Press, 1953); see also Thompson, 'Canada and the "Third British Empire,"' 99.

partnership with the Empire were arguably not put to rest until the British House of Commons passed the Canada Act in 1982, patriating the Canadian constitution.¹⁴⁰

In the early period of these changes, Canadian external affairs policy evolved within the framework of the Empire's new multilateral mechanisms. Notable among them was the Imperial War Cabinet during the war and, in its aftermath, the British Empire Delegation to the Paris Peace Conference. In these forums, Canadian representatives had opportunities to weigh in on the fate of Palestine. The Borden government 'was generally considered firm in support of Zionism, which did no harm when the Balfour Declaration was under consideration.'¹⁴¹ But it is highly doubtful that this had any international influence. The Canadian leadership had its priorities. Paramount among them was the promotion of close British cooperation with the United States; at a 1918 meeting of the Imperial War Cabinet, for example, Borden urged that the US 'be invited to undertake world-wide responsibilities in respect of underdeveloped territories and backward races.'¹⁴² Eventually, US estrangement from the League of Nations enforced the Canadian government's impulse to limit its overseas commitments. At first, though, there was little in the British Empire's eastward expansion that concerned the Canadian government. Borden represented the Empire in some of the preliminary negotiations leading to the Treaty of Sèvres, which divided the former Ottoman Empire and parts of Turkey into zones of Allied influence.¹⁴³ But generally speaking, the Middle East was not an area of Canadian involvement.

Within Canada, on the other hand, the expansion of the Empire brought new momentum behind proposals to support Zionist efforts in Palestine. In a recent study of Jewish politics in Britain, Stephan Wendehorst finds that one effect of the Balfour Declaration was to rally patriotic opinion behind 'imperial-cum-Zionist objectives.'¹⁴⁴ British policy had a parallel impact in Canada. When the Canadian Zionist Federation met in 1917, it received a message of encouragement from Borden, while de Sola duly

¹⁴⁰ See Gordon T. Stewart, "'An Objective of US Foreign Policy since the Founding of the Republic": The United States and the End of Empire in Canada,' in Buckner, *Canada and the End of Empire*, 94-5.

¹⁴¹ Brown, 'Canadian Zionism,' 134.

¹⁴² See Walter A. Riddell, *Documents on Canadian Foreign Policy, 1917-1939* (Toronto, Oxford University Press, 1962), 13

¹⁴³ Dawson, *Dominion Status*, 55

¹⁴⁴ Stephan Wendehorst, *British Jewry, Zionism, and the Jewish State, 1936-1956* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 331.

‘glorified the fact of the entry of the British into the precincts of the Holy Land and gradually redeeming it from the hands of the Turks.’¹⁴⁵ In the years ahead, the patriotic credentials of Canadian Zionists were confirmed as never before. ‘Even the country’s business and intellectual elite showed interest in the movement,’ writes Michael Brown. ‘In 1919 a lecturer speaking in Toronto under the auspices of the Royal Society of Canada urged that Jews populate Palestine speedily, so that the more numerous Arabs would not gain permanent control.’¹⁴⁶ Throughout the interwar period, Canadian prime ministers repeatedly lent Zionist proposals their symbolic support.

Pro-Zionist gestures from Canadian governments helped set the tone for Canadian civil society. They were not, however, accompanied by much diplomatic action. Borden’s first successor as prime minister, his former solicitor general Arthur Meighen, briefly continued along the path of imperial multilateralism charted during the war years. In 1921 Meighen met in London with other prime ministers of the rebaptized Imperial Commonwealth, and suggested a balance of decision-making that would afford to Dominions primary authority in matters of local concern (for example, Canadian authority over Canada-US relations) and steady updates about imperial affairs elsewhere (for example, in Palestine, which Meighen specifically mentioned).¹⁴⁷ In this context, Meighen did make representations to the Lloyd George government to facilitate increased Jewish immigration to Palestine.¹⁴⁸ However, the vision of global imperial partnership that emerged from the prime ministers conference of 1921 was soon circumscribed.

Notwithstanding relative Canadian indifference to the Middle East – or, perhaps, owing to it – it was in regards to British expansion into former Ottoman territory that the Canadian government first asserted its autonomy in external affairs. In the immediate postwar period, the European Allies pushed forward with demands to control not only territories of the former Ottoman Empire, but also much of Turkey itself. The Sultan signed off an Allied terms. But the extent of this capitulation provoked a backlash from Turkish republicans. By autumn 1922, the British government had yet to ratify the Treaty

¹⁴⁵ Brown, ‘Canadian Zionism,’ 147; Leon Goldman, ‘History of Zionism in Canada,’ in ed. Arthur Daniel Hart, *The Jew in Canada* (Toronto & Montreal: Jewish Publications Limited, 1926), 302.

¹⁴⁶ Brown, ‘Canadian Zionism,’ 134.

¹⁴⁷ Dawson, *Dominion Status*, 209.

¹⁴⁸ Figler, ‘History of the Zionist Ideal in Canada,’ 91.

of Sèvres and was contemplating renewed intervention. In this context, Lloyd George publicly called on the Dominions to send troops in order to enforce Turkish capitulation.¹⁴⁹ This was the episode known as the ‘Chanak Crisis,’ a celebrated turning-point in Canadian external affairs.

It was the Liberal prime minister William Lyon Mackenzie King who received Lloyd George’s appeal – not first by official channels, it is said, but when he read coverage of it in the press.¹⁵⁰ Recent elections had consigned Meighen’s Conservatives to the opposition benches. Strictly speaking, King did not refuse. But in what amounted to a refusal, he protested Britain’s lack of prior consultation and sent a cable to Lloyd George insisting that ‘public opinion in Canada would demand the authorization of Parliament as the necessary preliminary to the dispatching of a contingent to participate in the conflict in the Near East.’¹⁵¹ Meighen’s Conservatives protested King’s decision as disloyal. It nonetheless became an enduring precedent for the primacy of Canadian parliament in determining the scope of Dominion participation in Empire affairs.

Writing several years later from an Italian prison, Antonio Gramsci summarized the upshot of these developments: ‘The Dominions participate in world politics and are world powers through the Empire; but England’s European and global foreign policy is so complicated that the Dominions are reluctant to be dragged into issues which are of no direct interest to them.’¹⁵² In *Dominion Autonomy in Practice*, published in 1929, the British constitutional theorist Arthur Keith insisted that these developments not be overstated: ‘the British Government still can make treaties which confer benefits on the Dominions without their participation, and again when, as in the treaty with Iraq in 1927, it concedes recognition in the name of the King Emperor, that recognition would bind the Dominions though not expressly applied to them.’¹⁵³ Canada’s international status was changing. All the same, it remained very much part of the British Empire.

Through all of this, the Canadian government continued to offer symbolic support for Zionism. King, like Borden and Meighen before him, addressed Canadian Zionist

¹⁴⁹ Dawson, *Dominion Status*, 56.

¹⁵⁰ Dawson, *Dominion Status*, 57.

¹⁵¹ Dawson, *Dominion Status*, 58.

¹⁵² Antonio Gramsci, ed./trans. Joseph A. Buttigieg, *Prison Notebooks Vol. 1* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2011), 292.

¹⁵³ Keith, *Letters and Essays*, 63.

gatherings with encouraging words.¹⁵⁴ And Canada's patriotic Zionist tradition continued to develop, uninterrupted. The association of the British Empire with Zionism was now undeniable. And prominent Canadians were more concerned than ever with excluding Jewish immigrants. Zionism thus benefited from the familiar confluence of factors.

The enduring exclusionist element of Canadian support for Zionism was suggested in a speech delivered by Meighen in 1924 as head of the Conservative opposition. Praising Britain's 'reconquest of Palestine and the rededication of that country to the Jewish people,' Meighen added: 'I do hope the Jews in Canada take a proper pride in this great event and that the sons of generations to come may go back to the land of their destiny.'¹⁵⁵ This was a recurring interwar theme. A minor but telling anecdote comes from the history of Queen's University in Kingston, Ontario, a school reputed as something of an Anglo-Saxon preserve. In the early 1930s, a group of Jewish students who had taken to gathering in an undergraduate lounge returned one day to find a sign posted, spelling out Meighen's subtext: 'We gave you Palestine; now give us back this lounge.'¹⁵⁶

Though such suggestions always troubled Jewish audiences, Zionism encountered scarce opposition from the Canadian Jewish establishment. This is a remarkable fact. Michael Berkowitz has examined how Zionist politics took a similar form throughout the West: the Zionist movement sought to enlist the financial and political support of respectable Jewish organizations based on an understanding that the actual settlers would come mostly from Central and Eastern Europe. Zionist and local patriotic politics were fused to the greatest extent possible. Berkowitz is right to analyze 'Zionism in the Western nations as a distinct entity, as part of an interwoven whole.'¹⁵⁷ Its reception nonetheless varied. At the core of the main Allied empires, support was quite uneven. In interwar France, Zionism was rejected by the most prestigious Jewish organizations; in both the US and Britain itself, major sections of the Jewish establishment were vocally anti-Zionist until the 1940s. On the grassroots and labour left, Canada had as strong a Jewish anti-Zionist camp as these other countries.

¹⁵⁴ Tulchinsky, *Canada's Jews*, 330.

¹⁵⁵ Brown, 'Americanization of Canadian Zionism,' 153. Emphasis added.

¹⁵⁶ Tulchinsky, *Canada's Jews*, 318.

¹⁵⁷ Berkowitz, *Western Jewry and the Zionist Project*, 1.

Its Jewish establishment, on the other hand, was extremely Zionist by comparative standards.

In 1927, the World Zionist Organization's Shmaryahu Levin remarked on the results in a letter to an important Zionist official, Menachem Ussishkin: 'There are two small countries . . . which stand in our front ranks: Canada and South Africa. Would that God had been more merciful, and . . . scattered us in more countries like these two.'¹⁵⁸ Indeed, it was with unusual uniformity that Zionism took hold of the organized Jewish establishment in Canada, as in South Africa. The pro-Zionist climate in Canada and South Africa to some extent contrasts with the situation in the leading Western states. In these settler states in the orbit of the British Empire, Zionism thrived. A sharper contrast still is with those parts of the Empire on the other side of the colour line.

Consider the central component of the British Empire that, in Sidebotham's formulation, was *governed* rather than *governing itself*: India. The Indian political leadership opposed Zionism's friendship to Empire in almost the same measure that it was praised in the Dominions. Even with British selection of Indian representatives to imperial forums in the interwar years, this dissent came through. At the Imperial Conference of 1937, for example, South African efforts to encourage British support for Zionism were denounced by Zafrullah Khan, the future prime minister of Pakistan.¹⁵⁹ Meanwhile, spokespeople for the Indian National Congress including Nehru and Gandhi voiced their own anti-Zionism. On the eve of World War II, Congress amplified this message. It not only passed resolutions condemning Nazi antisemitism and offering refuge in India to Jewish refugees. It matched these resolutions with criticism of the Zionist movement and of its leaders' fundamental choice: Congress declared that they 'had relied on British armed forces to advance their special privileges in Palestine and thus aligned themselves on the side of British Imperialism.'¹⁶⁰

For the interwar leadership of Canada, Tory and Liberal alike, it was the opposite. As immigrants to Canada, Jews were now rejected. As settlers in Palestine, they were less of a bother, and might even be put to good use. In a volume of the *Survey of Commonwealth Affairs* published in 1937, William K. Hancock summarized

¹⁵⁸ Brown, 'Americanization of Canadian Zionism,' 131.

¹⁵⁹ Arthur B. Keith, *Dominion Autonomy in Practice* (London: Oxford University Press, 1928), 723.

¹⁶⁰ Jansen, *Zionism, Israel and Asian Nationalism*, 182.

the vision for Zionist statehood in the British Empire being promoted by the likes of Lord Melchett: 'It will, in short, be an Ulster in the Near East; it will be an imperial mission like that of the European settlers in Kenya; it will be like "that body of English loyalty" placed after the American revolution in Canada.'¹⁶¹ The Canadian government came to distance itself from direct involvement in the Empire's eastern expanses. But token support for Zionist efforts to realize this vision came easily enough.

Confronting Palestinian Society

It was the prevailing colonial attitude towards societies on the imperial periphery – in short, racism – that made it possible to treat Palestine and the Palestinian Arabs as part of a wider expanse of 'underdeveloped territories and backward races,' to borrow Borden's phrasing. But the relationship between the exercise of power and its ideological rationale is complex. We are well rid of that brand of economistic Marxism which reduced questions of racism, like questions of gender, state authority, and most every aspect of political culture, to issues of superstructure merely reflecting an authentic base of private accumulation and class relations. As Edward Said has emphasized, ideas and political culture have influence in their own right.¹⁶² In a critical review of Said's writings, Aijaz Ahmad argues that, on the other hand, a focus on the cultural aspect of imperialism can go too far. Historical thinking can be limited by a fixation on discourse; thinking about contemporary political action can be all the more severely skewed.¹⁶³ In any event, racism and the forms of socio-economic oppression that it rationalizes cannot accurately be discussed in terms of one-way causation. The nature of ideological hostility against particular peoples and the modes of socio-economic oppression with which those peoples are targeted should be considered alongside one another.

Within the British sphere, the most prominent strain of anti-Arab hostility in the first half of the twentieth century targeted not Palestinians but Egyptians. One of the

¹⁶¹ William K. Hancock, *Survey of British Commonwealth Affairs, Vol. 1: Problems of Nationality, 1918-1936* (London: Oxford University Press, 1937), 482.

¹⁶² See Edward Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1978).

¹⁶³ Aijaz Ahmad, 'Orientalism and After: Ambivalence and Cosmopolitan Location in the Work of Edward Said,' *Economic and Political Weekly* 27, no. 30 (July 1992), 98-116.

sharpest domestic critics of British policy in the postwar Middle East would be Erskine B. Childers, who reviewed the situation in a book published in 1962, *The Road to Suez: A Study of Western-Arab Relations*. Childers noted that while the legacy of early conflicts between Western Christendom and the Muslim Orient lent a peculiar resonance to modern colonial attitudes towards the region as a whole, hostility towards Egyptians stood out. Concerning Arab societies to the east, there had developed a certain romanticization of desert peoples under British tutelage, built up in large part around the celebrated exploits of T.E. Lawrence. But even British hypocrisy could not cast the military occupation of Egypt as ‘a labour of love or liberal colonial altruism. The basic, power-political expedience of British policy in Egypt itself set up psychological stresses.’¹⁶⁴

Egyptians, unlike Palestinians, had an established place in the imperial order. Since 1882, Britain had imposed Lord Cromer’s judgement that ‘Egypt is by nature an agricultural country’ as a fact.¹⁶⁵ Anouar Abdel-Malek details the measures taken by Britain to reverse early Egyptian industrial development and to impose export-oriented agriculture for British industry. This was the basis, he explains, for a social order whose miserable outcome ‘for city and country was countered by the enrichment of the large landed proprietors, who had finally found a regular customer in the occupying power. It was able to guarantee them incessantly growing wealth, since Egypt had become from end to end a gigantic cotton plantation for the factories of Lanchashire.’¹⁶⁶ From the late nineteenth century through World War II, Britain propped up Egypt’s landholding class while repeatedly suppressing popular rebellions. In British opinion, there meanwhile set in what Childers describes as a ‘profound Egyptophobia’: ‘In mass British opinion,’ wrote Childers, ‘there is probably no other epithet for a foreign, non-white people that carries such antipathy and distrust as the word “gyppo.”’¹⁶⁷

Concerning Palestine, in contrast, few commentators joined Childers in noting that the settler-colonial aspect of British policy was a Western imperial affront ‘unique in all of Asia.’¹⁶⁸ And while an official like Balfour might quietly deride the rights of ‘the

¹⁶⁴ Erskine Childers, *The Road to Suez: A Study of Western-Arab Relations* (London: MacGibbon & Kee, 1962), 61, 57.

¹⁶⁵ Abdel-Malek, *Egypt*, 8.

¹⁶⁶ Abdel-Malek, *Egypt*, 8.

¹⁶⁷ Childers, *Road to Suez*, 57.

¹⁶⁸ Childers, *Road to Suez*, 31.

700,000 Arabs who now inhabit that ancient land,' the Indigenous population was more frequently written out of the picture. The ideological assault on Palestinians that paralleled Zionist colonization was marked not by loudly declared hostility so much as by minimization of the native presence. Palestine was imagined, in the famous Zionist slogan, as 'a land without a people for a people without a land.' The precursor to vilification of the Palestinians was the suggestion that they did not exist. In this discourse, aspiration poses as description. The late Naseer Aruri put it plainly, writing in the aftermath of Israel's 1982 invasion of Lebanon: 'The absurd and indefensible allegation that there were virtually no Arabs in Palestine prior to the Zionist influx seems intended to provide a veneer of legitimacy for Israel's increasingly violent efforts to make the myth that there is "no such thing as a Palestinian" a chilling reality.'¹⁶⁹

Unfortunately, this theme remains largely uncorrected in the record of Canadian politics. The reality of the Palestinian Arab presence is not a matter of any serious dispute. It is significant that the British Zionist who coined the slogan 'a land without a people for a people without a land,' Israel Zangwill, was also a blunt advocate of removing the Indigenous presence that his slogan obscured. In a talk delivered in 1905 Manchester, for example, Zangwill argued that the Zionist movement 'must be prepared either to drive out by the sword the tribes in possession as our forefathers did or to grapple with the problem of a large alien population, mostly Mohammedan and accustomed for centuries to despise us.'¹⁷⁰ However, since the objective was coercive exclusion rather than inclusive exploitation, it was often more expedient to deal with the Indigenous presence by denial than by disparagement.

From the early years of the twentieth century, these were the politics in which Canadian Zionism was implicated. For British officials in Egypt, large landholders were allies and dutiful agricultural labourers assets. For Zionist officials in Palestine, the very presence of Arab workers in Jewish enterprises was considered, in the words of Menachem Ussishkin, a 'painful leprosy.'¹⁷¹ Ussishkin was the pre-eminent leader of the

¹⁶⁹ Preface to Livia Rokach, *Israel's Sacred Terrorism: A Study Based on Moshe Sharett's Personal Diary and Other Documents* (Belmont: Association of Arab-American University Graduates, Inc., 1986), xx.

¹⁷⁰ Nur Masalha, *Expulsion of the Palestinians* (Washington, D.C.: Institute for Palestine Studies, 1992), 10.

¹⁷¹ David Hirst, *The Gun and the Olive Branch: The Roots of Violence in the Middle East* (Boston: Faber and Faber, 1984), 26.

Jewish National Fund (JNF), the WZO's main instrument of land acquisition.¹⁷² His perspective on land acquisition indicates the place of Canadian and other overseas Zionists in the movement's early colonization efforts.

In 1904 Ussishkin considered the options open to the Zionist movement:

In order to establish autonomous Jewish community life – or, to be more precise, a Jewish state, in Eretz Israel, it is necessary, first of all, that all, or at least most, of Eretz Israel's lands will be the property of the Jewish people. ... But, as the ways of the world go, how does one acquire landed property? By one of the following three methods: by force – that is, by conquest in war, or in other words, by robbing land of its owner; by forceful acquisition, that is, by expropriation via governmental authority; and by purchase with the owner's consent.¹⁷³

Making a virtue of necessity, Ussishkin dismissed the first method as 'totally ungodly' – adding significantly, 'We are too weak for it' – and the second as unrealistic. He concluded that 'the only method to acquire Eretz Israel, at any time and under whatever political conditions, is but purchase with money.'¹⁷⁴ Here virtue would not outlive necessity. The Zionist movement ended up setting purchase aside just as soon as it had the coercive capacity to pursue the first two methods that Ussishkin listed. Meanwhile, purchase could have a similar effect. Once the Zionist movement gained land titles, it could enlist state authorities to evict Arab inhabitants in the name of private property. Controversy over these politics of incremental displacement emerged as early as 1910, when Palestinian tenant cultivators in the Lower Galilee were arrested and jailed by the Ottomans for defying an eviction order.¹⁷⁵

Providing funds for such purchases was the task to which the Canadian Zionist movement applied itself. In 1910, Clarence de Sola proposed that the Canadian Zionist movement raise \$10,000 over the following two years to contribute to land purchase, and saw to it that this was accomplished. In the early years of the Zionist movement this was enough to win the praise of Otto Warburg, the German Zionist leader who preceded Chaim Weizmann as president of the WZO. In 1912 Warburg 'praised the Canadian organization as being the leading Zionist Federation in per capita

¹⁷² For details, see Walter Lehn, in association with Uri Davis, *The Jewish National Fund* (London: Kegan Paul International, 1988).

¹⁷³ Gershon Shafir, *Land, Labour and the Origins of the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict, 1882-1914* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 42.

¹⁷⁴ Shafir, *Land, Labour and the Origins of the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict*, 42.

¹⁷⁵ Hirst, *Gun and the Olive Branch*, 22.

contributions and added that other countries were beginning to emulate Canada in her Land Fund scheme.¹⁷⁶

Even before Palestine came under British control, the changing structure of land ownership offered the Zionist movement opportunities. During the second half of the nineteenth century, the Ottoman Empire, challenged by the Western powers, had introduced new forms of land ownership and worked to shift the burden of public debt onto the population. The impact on Palestine is discussed in detail by Mahmoud Yazbak.¹⁷⁷ The more than two-thirds of Palestine's population who worked as peasant farmers or *fellahin* were reoriented from production for subsistence to production for the market, and increasingly came to rely on loans. Anticipated agricultural yields or land titles were often put up as collateral. In the process, many Palestinians did lose legal title to their lands. As Yazbak writes: 'It is important to note, however, that this did not entail the dispossession of the fellahin from their land. On the contrary: for the new landowners the fellahin formed the only agricultural labour force available and keeping them on the land guaranteed uninterrupted production.'¹⁷⁸ Indeed, since interaction with Ottoman authorities was associated with the threat of military conscription as well as taxation, it was common for Palestinian cultivators to voluntarily 'register their land in the name of a local notable or an influential trader who in return for part of their yield took care of the tax.'¹⁷⁹

Zionist organizations in Palestine, buoyed by overseas fundraising, pursued land ownership of an entirely different sort. Where institutions like the JNF gained legal ownership, the fellahin, reduced to status as tenant cultivators, would be issued with eviction orders. They were then even denied waged agricultural labour, which it was Zionist policy to reserve exclusively for Jews in keeping with the doctrine of 'the conquest of labour.' The impact of exclusionist Zionist settlement was thus immediately felt. Yazbak writes that this incremental displacement eventually helped trigger the Palestinian Arab rebellion of 1936-9. Hannah Arendt, writing for the *Menorah Journal* in 1944, also insisted that it was the Zionist struggle against Palestinian labour that 'more

¹⁷⁶ Figler, 'History of the Zionist Ideal in Canada,' 89.

¹⁷⁷ Mahmoud Yazbak, 'From Poverty to Revolt: Economic Factors in the Outbreak of the 1936 Rebellion in Palestine,' *Middle Eastern Studies* 36, no. 3 (July 2000), 93-113.

¹⁷⁸ Yazbak, 'Poverty to Revolt,' 95.

¹⁷⁹ Yazbak, 'Poverty to Revolt,' 95.

than anything else, up to 1936, poisoned the Palestine atmosphere.¹⁸⁰ In all of the literature, these Zionist land policies are identified with the role of ‘national capital,’ that is to say of WZO funds channeled from overseas. Unfortunately, the record of Canadian fundraising for these processes remains buried in old myths. The impact on Palestinians is brushed aside by an effective denial that there was any Indigenous Palestinian presence to begin with.

Consider the most significant project undertaken by Canadian Zionism during the interwar period: fundraising for purchase by the Jewish National Fund of a large tract of land on the central Palestinian coast. This case is discussed in almost every detailed history of Canadian Zionism. The most obvious sources on Canadian interwar Zionism suggest the controversy that resulted.

Take, for example, the biography of Archie Freiman. In 1919, the Canadian Zionist Federation was reconstituted as the Zionist Organization of Canada (ZOC), and Freiman, an Ottawa department store owner, succeeded de Sola as its president; Freiman held the ZOC presidency throughout the interwar period. His official biography was written by the Zionist historian Bernard Figler and published in 1962. The text cites Freiman’s presidential address to the ZOC conference of 1930.

No less an imperial patriot than de Sola, Freiman stressed to delegates that support for colonization efforts in Palestine was a British duty that could fulfill Jewish needs while ‘at the same time fostering the interests of our Empire.’¹⁸¹ On the main Canadian Zionist fundraising campaign of the era, he had this to say: ‘It is now evident that the acquisition of Emek Hasharon is of even greater import than we ourselves realized at the time we launched our campaign at Mr. Ussishkin’s urgent request. Judging by the evidence placed before the English Parliamentary Commission, the Arabs are stressing our purchase. They continually point out that the Jews are acquiring the best land in Palestine, and in every case cite the Emek Hasharon as a typical example.’¹⁸² Figler provides readers with some more details. The territory in question ‘was better known in Biblical days as Emek Hephher and the Plain of Sharon,’ he recalls, but is ‘known now by the Arab name of Wadi Hawareth.’¹⁸³

¹⁸⁰ Arendt, *The Jewish Writings*, 365.

¹⁸¹ Figler, *Lillian and Archie Freiman*, 238.

¹⁸² Figler, *Lillian and Archie Freiman*, 237

¹⁸³ Figler, *Lillian and Archie Freiman*, 228.

This is not an obscure case. As Freiman suggested, it was addressed in the Hope Simpson Report, a study commissioned by the British government and published in 1930.¹⁸⁴ The Palestinian scholar Walid Khalidi has discussed the facts, as has the Israeli sociologist Baruch Kimmerling.¹⁸⁵ The case was given detailed treatment in an article published in 1988 by the *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, and in another article published the following year in the *American Ethnologist*.¹⁸⁶ The continued refusal of Canadian scholars to acknowledge the place of Palestinians in this history is nothing short of anachronistic.

Wadi al-Hawarith was home to a Bedouin community of more than a thousand people. By the time the British took over Palestine, it was, like many Palestinian lands, owned by absentee landlords. Raya Adler (Cohen) explains that the land was first registered with Ottoman authorities in the name of a Lebanese Maronite living in Jaffa, Anton Bishara Tayan, who mortgaged the lands to an investor in Marseille, who in turn passed the title on to a third party. When Tayan's heirs were forced by the courts to recognize his debts in 1926, the JNF leadership seized on the opportunity. Adler (Cohen) details the combination of lobbying and bribery employed by JNF representatives to ensure the land was put up to public auction.¹⁸⁷ The JNF's Yosef Weitz explains where the organization found funds for the purchase: 'the President of the Jewish National Fund, M. Ussishkin, packed his bags and sailed off to Canada to arouse the dispersed Jews and encourage them to contribute to the redemption of this valley.'¹⁸⁸ During a two-week visit to Ottawa in 1927, Ussishkin met with Freiman and secured the support of the ZOC leadership to raise a million Canadian dollars for this purchase.¹⁸⁹

¹⁸⁴ Sir John Hope Simpson, *Report on Immigration, Land Settlement and Development* (London: His Majesty's Stationery Office, 1930), 74.

¹⁸⁵ Walid Khalidi, *All that Remains: The Palestinian Villages Occupied and Depopulated by Israel in 1948* (Washington: Institute for Palestine Studies, 1992), 564; Baruch Kimmerling, *Zionism and Territory: The Socio-Territorial Dimensions of Zionist Politics* (Berkeley, Institute of International Studies, 1983), 113.

¹⁸⁶ Raya Adler (Cohen), 'The Tenants of Wadi Hawarith: Another View of the Land Question in Palestine,' *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 20, no. 2 (1988), 197-220; Scott Atran, 'The Surrogate Colonization of Palestine, 1917-1939,' *American Ethnologist* 16, no. 1 (1989), 719-743.

¹⁸⁷ Adler (Cohen), 'Tenants of Wadi Hawarith,' 200.

¹⁸⁸ Baruch Kimmerling, *Zionism and Territory: The Socio-Territorial Dimensions of Zionist Politics* (Berkeley: Institute of International Studies, 1983), 70.

¹⁸⁹ Figler, *Lillian and Archie Freiman*, 228.

The community of Wadi al-Hawarith was not easily dislodged. As Walid Khalidi explains, community members insisted ‘that the land belonged to them by virtue of their having lived on it for 350 years. For them, ownership of the land was an abstraction that at most signified the landlords’ right to a share of the crop.’¹⁹⁰ The community met the first effort by British authorities to evict them, in 1929, with a resistance of sticks and stones. Some British officials, unable to deny the Indigenous presence, dismissed it by means of racial disparagement: ‘this pocket of primitive Semi-negroid Beduin,’ wrote the assistant district commissioner in Nablus, ‘is a nuisance and only serves to impede the proper development of a very valuable area.’¹⁹¹ The community organized and resisted for years. In 1933, the struggle peaked. On the anniversary of the Balfour Declaration, the tenants marched to join demonstrations in Tulkarem. Their feeder march was blocked and then dispersed through coordinated action by British police units and low-flying RAF planes. In Nablus, a general strike was called in solidarity with the tenants’ struggle. In this context, a local anti-eviction struggle was transformed ‘into an event of national importance that resonated beyond the borders of Palestine.’¹⁹²

It took a decade, spanning the worst years of the Great Depression, for Canadian Zionists to pay off Freiman’s pledge to finance this displacement. It is not surprising that the ZOC president’s official biographer stresses all the good that came from it. Figler contends that before its redemption by the JNF, Wadi al-Hawarith was nothing but ‘a desolate sand-dune’; Canadian donors helped to transform this empty territory into ‘Emek Hasharon, a landscape of unusual loveliness, with the blue sea beyond. Its white sand-dunes became dotted with homesteads filled with human life and human labours.’¹⁹³ As to why its Arab inhabitants were incapable of ‘human life and human labours,’ Figler addresses this not by racial disparagement but by denial of the native presence – little wonder from an author that seems to credit JNF ownership for the land’s proximity to the Mediterranean. What is more troubling is that contemporary Canadian scholars continue to follow Figler’s example.

Neither the struggle of the tenants of Wadi al-Hawarith, nor even the bare fact of their displacement, is addressed in any of the Canadian scholarship to date. The most

¹⁹⁰ Khalidi, *All That Remains*, 564.

¹⁹¹ Atran, ‘Surrogate colonization,’ 734.

¹⁹² Adler (Cohen), ‘The tenants of Wadi Hawarith,’ 215.

¹⁹³ Figler, *Lillian and Archie Freiman*, 233.

detailed studies of Canadian Jewish politics during this period have been produced by Gerald Tulchinsky, who is also the most politically progressive of the main scholars of Canadian Jewish politics. Published in 2008, his latest collection, *Canada's Jews: A People's History*, provides a troubling echo of Israel Zangwill. Tulchinsky contends that Wadi al-Hawarith was nothing but 'a large tract of uninhabited sand and swamp' before Zionist settlers and their Canadian sponsors came around.¹⁹⁴ In Canadian intellectual treatment of Zionism and Palestine, this is, alas, typical.

It was Canadian Zionists who anchored fundraising for this purchase. But, as ever, they operated with government blessings. Just after the anti-eviction struggle in Wadi al-Hawarith peaked, Archie Freiman was joined in a nationwide radio broadcast by the leading figurehead of Depression-era austerity politics in Canada, Conservative prime minister Richard Bennett. Bennett joined in calling on Canadians to give funds to the ZOC's umbrella fundraising campaign, the United Palestine Appeal (UPA). Invoking 'the promises of God, speaking through His prophets,' he lent the weight of the prime minister's office to the appeal: 'Scriptural prophecy is being fulfilled,' said Bennett. 'The restoration of Zion has begun.'¹⁹⁵ A gesture of long-distance friendship to the Jews from a prime minister who excluded them as immigrants to Canada, and who is on record as having associated with the self-proclaimed 'Canadian führer,' Adrien Arcand.¹⁹⁶

In retrospect, it is not difficult to understand how prevailing ideas about empire, colonial settlement, and civilizational hierarchy once made Zionist proposals seem convenient and attractive. The history cannot be changed. The same cannot be said of the liberal intellectual refusal to address its legacy. Changing this is a challenge that falls not only on the Jewish community, but on Canadian society as a whole.

Conclusion

The idea that Zionist settlement in Palestine could produce, in Herzl's words, 'an outpost of civilization against barbarism' suggested the association of European Jewish settlement in Palestine with a transnational Western identity in which the predominant

¹⁹⁴ Tulchinsky, *Canada's Jews*, 346.

¹⁹⁵ Figler, 'History of the Zionist Ideal in Canada,' 91.

¹⁹⁶ Jean-François Nadeau, *Adrien Arcand, führer canadien* (Montreal: Lux Éditeur, 2010), 91-93.

elements of Canadian society shared. For its part, the Canadian leadership built up its power power and privileges in relation to a racialized division between advanced 'Western' and supposed lesser peoples; local structures of racial power initially centred on the assertion of Anglo-Saxon superiority, then broadened to make development of a 'white Canada' viable. Early Canadian Zionism was shaped in part by the ambiguous position of Jews within this ethno-cultural hierarchy: the perceived utility of Zionism as a means of deflecting Jewish immigrants away from Canadian urban centres combined with the general identification of European Jews as superior in their civilization to Arab as to local Indigenous peoples. The case for Canadian Zionism was enforced as respectable Canadian society came to oppose Jewish immigration from Europe. It became all the more attractive as Palestine was brought into the sphere of the British Empire and the international Zionist leadership aligned itself with imperial authorities.

Well into the period of British rule in Palestine, after all, the Canadian state's approach to the Middle East was defined by its status as a British Dominion. On the one hand, patriotic British argumentation in favour of Zionist aspirations in Palestine repeatedly came to invoke the settler tradition that Canada had helped to pioneer. On the other, the Canadian government's approach to Palestine, as to external affairs more generally, involved both practical and juridical association with the Zionist movement's principal Great Power sponsor. At the level of state leadership, Canadian policy involvement in the region was, nonetheless, limited, especially once the King government took it upon itself to more fully assert Dominion autonomy in global Empire affairs. Still, although Canadian imperial identification with British power in the Middle East was often little more than vicarious, it reverberated in Canadian civil society, facilitating organized support for Zionist efforts in Palestine. This support cannot fairly be separated from its impact on Palestinian society. It is necessary to give the documented effects upon Palestine the place in Canadian history that they have, to date, too often been denied.

2

Canadian Zionism and the War of 1948

'Have you not heard that the Zionists of America and Canada, precisely now, have adopted a political Zionist program demanding "the establishment of Palestine as a Jewish Commonwealth"? Apparently the program that I am proposing is not so alien to the minds and hopes of American Zionists. I authored the formula accepted in America and Canada.'¹

-David Ben-Gurion, speaking with the
Jewish Agency Executive (1941)

'A kilometer south of the observation post, several Arabs openly were leading their camels across the durra field. "Thrice I warned them. Will they never learn?" Zvi lifted the rifle, his eyes steely. As the shots rang out into the stillness, the Arabs hastily deserted their camels and disappeared beyond the vivid crimson red of poppies. "I don't get it," Joe said. "Don't they know the truce is over? That they're in Israel territory now?"'²

-Lester Gorn, *The Anglo-Saxons: A Novel of Israel's War of Independence* (1958)

* * *

More directly than anything else, it was the Canadian Zionist movement's support for the war effort that established the Israeli state that connected Canadian civil society with the erasure of Palestine from the political map. Given the singular significance of 1948, this deserves special attention.

Palestinians refer to the events of 1948 as the Catastrophe, the *Nakba*. In the introduction to their co-edited volume *Nakba: Palestine, 1948, and the Claims of Memory*, Lila Abu-Lughod and Ahmad Sa'di argue that this trauma remains 'the focal point for what might be called Palestinian time. The Nakba is the point of reference for other events, past and future. The Balfour Declaration of 1917 gains its significance from being followed by the Nakba. Landmark events in Palestinian history such as Black September (Jordan, 1970), the massacre at Sabra and Shatila (Lebanon, 1982), Land Day (Israel, 1976) and the first and second intifadas (1987-1993; 2000-present)

¹ Allon Gal, *David Ben-Gurion and the American Alignment for a Jewish State* (Jerusalem: The Magnes Press, 1991), 193.

² Lester Gorn, *The Anglo-Saxons: A Novel of Israel's War of Independence* (New York: Sagamore Press, 1958), 337.

would not have occurred if they had not been preceded by the Nakba, to which they refer back.³

In Israeli discourse, 1948 occupies a parallel position, including in defining contemporary policy towards the Palestinians. Amidst the Israeli campaign against the Palestinian uprising in late 2000, for example, *Ha'aretz* commentator Amir Oren reported that Moshe Ya'alon, then deputy chief of staff of the Israel Defence Forces (IDF), 'told his colleagues that this operation was Israel's most critical campaign against the Palestinians, including Israel's Arab population, since the 1948 war – for him, in fact, it is the second half of 1948.'⁴ A few years later, then Israeli prime minister Ariel Sharon extended this theme to a discussion of international politics. Sharon was addressing the Knesset after a spring 2004 visit to Washington in which the George W. Bush administration had declared its support for Israel to retain major Jewish settlements in the occupied West Bank. With a visible satisfaction, or so the Israeli press reported, Sharon boasted that the Palestinians were experiencing this diplomacy as 'the heaviest blow inflicted on them since the War of Independence.'⁵

In considering Canada's engagement with the Palestine question, 1948 carries a corresponding significance. It came during a period of transition for Canadian Zionism. The movement had taken shape within the orbit of British power. And rhetorically, it retained a patriotic Zionism identified with the British Empire. Organizationally, however, it was increasingly continental in orientation, closely coordinating with US Zionist organizations and effectively aligning with US power. Canadian Zionism's increasingly American orientation reflected a number of simultaneous shifts: in the international Zionist leadership, in Canadian society, and indeed in the global balance of power. The early sections of this chapter explore these shifting alignments. What demands the closest attention, however, is the direct support that Canadians provided as the Zionist movement in Palestine moved to take state power.

In 1948, as the central Zionist organizations were transformed into institutions of the new Israeli state, they continued to benefit from overseas support – and this

³ Lila Abu-Lughod and Ahmad H. Sa'di, eds., *Nakba: Palestine, 1948, and the Claims of Memory* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2007), 5.

⁴ Tanya Reinhart, *Israel/Palestine: How to End the War of 1948* (New York: Seven Stories Press, 2002), 107.

⁵ Michele K. Esposito, 'Quarterly Update on Conflict and Diplomacy,' *Journal of Palestine Studies* 33, no. 4 (summer 2004), 146.

includes the militias that formed the foundation of the Israel Defence Forces. The Canadian Zionist movement not only helped to supply these militias with funding and weaponry. It also recruited, dispatched, and funded Canadian military veterans who agreed to travel to Palestine to join the fight directly. The IDF designated such Western volunteers *Mahal*, from the Hebrew *Mitnadvay Hutz La'aretz*, 'volunteers from abroad'. Approximately three hundred Canadians were among an estimated total of 3,500 Mahal recruits who fought for the IDF in 1948.⁶ Their numbers were hardly decisive; by the end of 1948, Israel had nearly 100,000 troops in total.⁷ Their presence was, however, much more than symbolic. In the words of Israel's founding prime minister David Ben-Gurion, 'Mahal's special contribution was qualitative.'⁸ Though some of these recruits fought as infantrymen, Ben-Gurion prioritized the recruitment of World War II veterans with more specialized skills. Mahal recruits were disproportionately involved in deploying heavy weaponry, as part of artillery units, the armoured corps, the navy, and the air force.

The Zionist movements of the English-speaking West thus made a defining contribution to various branches of the Israeli armed forces. Israeli military historian Netanel Lorch describes the impact of the early arrival of recruits from Canada, Britain, and South Africa amidst the establishment of the Israeli Air Force (IAF) in the spring of 1948: 'English was soon to become the language of command,' writes Lorch, 'indeed almost the exclusive language of engineering and operational units of the force.'⁹ The Seventh (Armoured) Brigade, to take another important example, had enough recruits from the English-speaking West to prompt Palestinian historian Nafez Nazzal to describe it as 'the Anglo-Saxon Brigade'.¹⁰ During the summer and autumn of 1948, this Brigade fought under the command of Canadian Ben Dunkelman, a veteran of the Queen's Own

⁶ Yaacov Markovitzky, *Mahal: Overseas Volunteers in Israel's War of Independence* (Tel Aviv: Ministry of Education Israel Information Centre, 2007), 7.

⁷ Avi Shlaim suggests 'a peak of 96,441' Israeli troops in December 1948; 'Israel and the Arab Coalition in 1948,' in eds. Eugene L. Rogan and Avi Shlaim, *The War for Palestine: Rewriting the History of 1948* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 81. Amitzur Ilan records an Israeli 'Formal Order of Battle' in October 1948 of 88,000; see *The Origin of the Arab-Israeli Arms Race: Arms, Embargo, Military Power and Decision in the 1948 Palestine War* (New York: New York University Press, 1996), 67. This source is cited in David Tal, *War in Palestine 1948: Strategy and Diplomacy* (London: Routledge, 2004), 5.

⁸ David Ben-Gurion, *Israel: A Personal History* (New York: Funk & Wagnalls with Sabra Books, 1971), 267.

⁹ Netanel Lorch, *Israel's War of Independence, 1947-1949* (Hartford: Hartmore House, 1968), 265-266.

¹⁰ Nafez Nazzal, *The Palestinian Exodus from Galilee, 1948* (Beirut: Institute for Palestine Studies, 1978), 22.

Rifles of Canada and the son of the founder of Ontario retail giant Tip Top Tailors. Other Canadian recruits were peppered throughout the Israeli armed forces.

The Canadian literature concerning this history, as in the case of interwar fundraising for the JNF, shows a studied indifference to its impact on Palestinian society. In 1976, then Israeli prime minister Yitzhak Rabin summarized the standard rendition of Mahal combat in his foreword to Ben Dunkelman's autobiography: 'The contribution of this small band of men and women is a glorious chapter in the story of Israel's struggle for freedom.'¹¹ In fairness, Dunkelman's *Dual Allegiance* is not a historical study but a declaration of patriotic Zionism. In its first five pages, the author moves from a first-person description of a fight he had picked with a Palestinian ('Kneeling astride him, I began hitting him again and again, until his body went limp') to boyhood reminences that feature a young Dunkelman in Toronto, soon to enroll in Upper Canada College, 'waving a little Union Jack'.¹² This needs to be read alongside other sources. Two years after Dunkelman's autobiography was published, Nafez Nazzal's *The Palestinian Exodus from Galilee, 1948* provided easy English-language access to details about the emptying of Palestinian villages by units under Dunkelman's command. That Dunkelman himself did not delve into this aspect of his combat record is hardly surprising.

Unfortunately, Canadian scholarship on the topic has tended to echo Yitzhak Rabin's judgement. The main study to date is the *The Secret Army*, written by the University of Calgary's David Bercuson and published in 1983. Bercuson would have been writing during Israel's 1982 invasion of Lebanon, at a time when many in the world, including in the academic world, were expressing concern for the fate of Palestinian refugees from the Galilee. Yet he, too, ignores Palestinian claims while concluding that the story of the Mahal is a story of 'forgotten heroism'.¹³ In a 2008 article about the Mahal marking the sixtieth anniversary of Israel's establishment, Bercuson continues to write along precisely the same lines.¹⁴ Those adhering to what Avi Shlaim calls the 'heroic version' of Israel's establishment¹⁵ should at least try to meet the claims

¹¹ Yitzhak Rabin, foreword to Ben Dunkelman, *Dual Allegiance* (Toronto: Macmillan of Canada, 1976), xii.

¹² Dunkelman, *Dual Allegiance*, 1-5.

¹³ Bercuson, *The Secret Army* (Toronto: Lester & Orpen Dennys Limited, 1983), 233.

¹⁴ David Bercuson, 'They fought for the nascent Jewish state,' *Canadian Jewish News* (21 February 2008).

¹⁵ Shlaim, 'Israel and the Arab Coalition,' 79.

of its critics. As concerns the record of the Mahal, Canada's intellectual community had done little of the sort. Here the journalistic and the academic records align. The *Globe and Mail* has remembered Dunkelman as 'a Canadian and Israeli war hero,' while the *Toronto Star* has credited him with 'the liberation of northern Israel'; major Canadian media outlets discuss this history without ever acknowledging the expulsion of Palestinians by Canadian personnel.¹⁶ The presumption of Canadian innocence in the problems of the Global South, as identified by Sherene Razack, holds in this case despite all evidence to the contrary.

Even in a country durably aligned with Israel, this constitutes a kind of political and scholarly anachronism. There was a time when the Palestinian assertion that Zionist militias had carried out widespread expulsions throughout the country was vehemently denied by liberal scholars in Israel and the West. In recent decades, however, the accumulation of incontrovertible evidence and widely publicized research has shifted the terms of discussion.

Even the major Zionist polemicists have had to adjust. For example, we can now read Anita Shapira, one of the world's leading intellectual partisans of Zionism, arguing that the basic facts were never really in doubt. 'The question of expulsion has never been a secret,' Shapira insists in a well-known piece first published in 2000.¹⁷ Shapira writes that frank internal Israeli discussions about the expulsions date back to the immediate aftermath of the 1948 war. She concedes that eventually, as Israeli discussions 'gravitated from the sparring ring of internal debate to the arena of international politics,' diplomacy required a blurring of the facts; 'the expulsion, an acknowledged fact of war in the early 1950s, became almost a state secret – albeit, shared by many.'¹⁸ From Shapira's perspective, this record of internal Israeli discussions demonstrates the layered moral complexity of Israeli liberalism. One can draw other conclusions. So far, in the fields of Canadian history and Jewish political studies, we have not even reached the level of these discussions; the reigning approach remains denial by omission. Whatever conclusions one draws,

¹⁶ Elizabeth Nickson, 'Poor little rich boy grows up,' *Globe and Mail* (25 September 1999); Alan Barnes, 'Cloverdale builder Ben Dunkelman honored by Israel,' *Toronto Star* (12 June 1997); see also Mitch Potter, 'The man who saved Nazareth,' *Toronto Star* (19 December 2015).

¹⁷ Anita Shapira, 'Hirbet Hizah: Between Remembrance and Forgetting,' *Jewish Social Studies* 7, no. 1 (autumn 2000), 117.

¹⁸ Shapira, 'Hirbet Hizah,' 96.

acknowledgment of Canadian Zionism's direct association with the expulsion of Palestinians is a first and necessary step.

This may be an embarrassing truth. To date, it has been possible for Canadian intellectuals to celebrate the record of Mahal recruits in liberal or progressive terms. Consider the second instalment of Gerald Tulchinsky's standard history of Canadian Jewish politics, *Branching Out: The Transformation of the Canadian Jewish Community*. It opens with the following dedication:

This book offers a tribute to the Canadians who took up arms against the Fascists, in the Mackenzie-Papineau Battalion and other units of the International Brigades in Spain 1936-38, in the Allied armies throughout the world 1939-1945, and in the forces defending Israel 1947-48.

The Mahal recruits were simply 'defending Israel' from 'the Fascists,' unnamed and without any further elaboration. Zionist recruitment for the 1948 war is then accurately discussed in the book, but without any mention of Palestinian existence.¹⁹ This account is reproduced in a more recent volume bringing together Tulchinsky's main studies.²⁰ Tulchinsky remains perhaps the most able and progressive historian of Canadian Jewish politics. His work suggests how, for Canadian progressives, Palestine has been considered an acceptable blind spot. Especially given the significance of Palestine in contemporary world politics, this is a legacy that needs to be reconsidered.

There is a wealth of material to ground a fresh approach to this topic. The studies adhering to conventional Zionist political narration remain useful for tracing the record of early Israeli units. Alongside the standard military histories of the 1948 war, there have been focused studies of the early Israeli air force and armoured corps²¹ and personalized accounts by combatants like Dunkelman – development of Israeli air power, for example, is treated at length in autobiographical works written by Chaim Weizmann's son, Ezer, and by Mahal recruits from the United States, South Africa, and France.²² For its part, Bercuson's *The Secret Army* supplements the Israeli military

¹⁹ Gerald Tulchinsky, *Branching Out: The Transformation of the Canadian Jewish Community* (Toronto: Stoddart Publishing Co. Limited, 1998), 254-6.

²⁰ Gerald Tulchinsky, *Canada's Jews: A People's Journey* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2008), 363-4.

²¹ See, for example, Brian Cull and Shlomo Aloni, with David Nicolle, *Spitfires over Israel: The First Authoritative Account of Air Conflict During the Israeli War of Independence, 1948-1949* (Boston, MA: Grub Street, 1994); Bill Norton, *Air War on the Edge: A History of the Israel Air Force and its Aircraft Since 1947* (Leicestershire, UK: Midland Publishing, 2002); and David Eshel, *Chariots of the Desert: The Story of the Israeli Armored Corps* (London: Brassey's Defense Publishers, 1989).

²² Ezer Weizman, *On Eagles' Wings: The Personal Story of the Leading Commander of the Israeli Air Force* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1976); Harold Livingston, *No Trophy, No Sword: An American*

narrative, as established by memoirists and IDF figures like Netanel Lorch and Yigal Allon, with the results of interviews with Canadian and other Mahal recruits. The basic character of Mahal involvement is by now well established; what is necessary is to overlay this record with the details of expulsion of the Palestinians by the units for which these recruits fought. This aspect of Zionist and Israeli operations has also been well documented. The recorded testimony of Palestinian refugees can be checked against official Israeli materials; Israel declassified a range of documents concerning the 1948 war in 1978, and made additional files available to researchers beginning in 1998. Researchers can draw upon a range of studies based on these sources.²³

Overlaid upon one another, these two sets of literature – the one detailing the history of early IDF units, the other the dislocation of Palestinian society – form a lens through which the record of Canadian recruits appears in an altogether different light. This chapter reviews the record through this perspective. First, however, it is worth looking at how Canada's patriotic Zionist tradition fed into a colonization process in Palestine that was completed at the expense of Britain's regional standing.

Volunteer in the Israeli Air Force During the 1948 War of Independence (Chicago: Edition Q, Inc., 1994); Boris Senior, *New Heavens: My Life as a Fighter Pilot and a Founder of the Israeli Air Force* (Washington: Potomac Books, 2005); Benjamin Kagan, *Combat secret pour Israël* (Paris: Hachette, 1963).

²³ An early landmark of Palestinian scholarship based on the testimony of refugees was 'Arif al-'Arif's six-volume *The Nakba: The Catastrophe of Jerusalem and the Lost Paradise, 1947-1951*, widely cited in the literature and internationally available, though only in Arabic (*Al-Nakba: Nakbat Bayt al-Maqdis Wal-Firdaws al-Mafqud, 1947-1952*). As Saleh Abdel Jawad writes, whereas al-'Arif interviewed refugees in the West Bank and detailed developments in the centre of the country, Nafez Nazzal's English-language study of 1978 concerned the north, and was based on interviews conducted in Lebanon; see Saleh Abdel Jawad, 'La guerre de 1948, Entre archives et sources orales,' *Revue d'études Palestiniennes* 96 (2005), 75. As concerns the declassified Israeli archives, the Israeli historian Benny Morris has provided the most detailed reviews of the material they contain, notably in *The Birth of the Palestinian Refugee Problem, 1947-1949* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987); 'Operation Hiram Revisited,' *Journal of Palestine Studies* 28, no. 2 (Winter 1999), 68-76; and *The Birth of the Palestinian Refugee Problem Revisited* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004). Israeli historian Ilan Pappé has shed new light on key Israeli documents, while supplementing them with Palestinian oral history, in his *The Ethnic Cleansing of Palestine* (Oxford: Oneworld Publications, 2006). Another invaluable source synthesizing the available information up to the date of its publication is Walid Khalidi's encyclopedic, 636-page *All That Remains: The Palestinian Villages Occupied and Depopulated by Israel in 1948* (Washington: Institute for Palestine Studies, 1992).

The Scope and Limits of British Sponsorship

It has been suggested that Israel was established in 1948 through nothing less than ‘an anti-British war of liberation.’²⁴ This phrasing comes from the work of the influential French Zionist Robert Misrahi; the logic is much more widespread. It was powerfully built up from the US through the story of *Exodus*, the Leon Uris novel first published in 1958 and then produced by Hollywood as a blockbuster film. This work of historical fiction had an enormous international impact. Israel’s Yossi Beilin is among many who have expressed amazement at the resonance of ‘this superficial and naïve film,’ and at how the ‘*Exodus* image of Israel persists in the eyes of so many.’²⁵ In this version of Israel’s establishment, the pre-state Zionist settlement in Palestine, the *Yishuv*, is cast in the role of a subjugated colony struggling for independence against foreign rule. ‘This narrative,’ notes Amy Kaplan, ‘made Jewish resistance the prototype of modern anticolonial rebellion, even as it erased the history of Zionist settlement under the aegis of the British Empire.’²⁶

It is against this backdrop that Michael Brown, one of Canada’s most prominent Zionist intellectuals, analyzes Canadian Zionism as part of a global range of ‘revolutionary movements.’ 1948 thus factors into Brown’s analysis as the moment when ‘the revolution [was] won.’²⁷ This analysis has the effect of undermining the credibility of Palestinian and other regional struggles against colonialism; Arab opposition to Zionism can be presented either as an imperial ploy, as reactionary ignorance, or as antisemitic malice. At the same time, it skews understanding of the place of Zionism in Western imperial politics. How is it in Canada, for example, that a movement owing so much of its momentum to official encouragement was in turn transformed into a ‘revolutionary’ struggle? Critical analysis of this history needs to take

²⁴ See Robert Misrahi, ‘La coexistence ou la guerre,’ in *Les Temps Modernes* no. 253 (1967), 545; and Samir Kassir and Farouk Mardam-Bey, *Itinéraires de Paris à Jérusalem – II: 1958-1991* (Washington: Institute for Palestine Studies, 1992), 129.

²⁵ Yossi Beilin, *His Brother’s Keeper: Israel and Diaspora Jewry in the Twenty-first Century* (New York: Schocken Books, 2000), 132.

²⁶ Amy Kaplan, ‘Zionism as Anticolonialism: The Case of Exodus,’ *American Literary History* 25, no. 4 (winter 2013), 879.

²⁷ Michael Brown, ‘The Americanization of Canadian Zionism,’ in ed. Geoffrey Wigoder, *Contemporary Jewry: Studies in Honour of Moshe Davis* (Jerusalem: The Hebrew University of Jerusalem Institute of Contemporary Jewry, 1984), 157.

the political Zionist movement's revolutionary pretensions not with a grain, but with a bucket full of salt.

In his study *Decolonization in Britain and France: The Domestic Consequences of International Relations*, Miles Kahler discusses how the power imbalance characteristic of settler-native conflicts, though felt above all on the periphery, is enforced in the metropole. Kahler explains that the main settler colonies associated with Britain and France, in Kenya and Algeria, respectively, were able to oppose decolonization by political action near the centre of imperial power: 'Disparity of access to metropolitan society set them apart from their Arab or African adversaries and ensured that the pace of disengagement was slowed.'²⁸ In his 1937 volume of the *Survey of Commonwealth Affairs*, Hancock notes that a similar dynamic affected the Palestine problem. Whereas the Zionist movement was positioned to press its case in the metropole, Palestinian protests got no similar hearing: 'The Arabs were far away, too far away, too poor, and too unskilled to appeal persistently and effectively to the democracy of Great Britain.'²⁹ This allowed Zionists to press claims not only to civilizational superiority over the Arabs, but also and at the same time to indigenous status. 'They proclaim,' observed Hancock, 'both that they are Europeans in their civilization, and that they are natives of Palestine returning to their own home.'³⁰ The versatility of political Zionism's case in the West – as an agent of progress, as an ally to Empire, or as a native struggle for freedom, depending on circumstances and audience – permitted the mobilization of especially diverse forms of metropolitan support.

The narrative of Zionism as anti-colonialism does more than obscure understanding of Palestinian history. It also distorts the character and status of Zionist politics, both in Palestine and in the West. It is a truism, but one too often ignored in the study of Palestine, that conflict between settlers and metropolitan authorities does not negate the realities of settler-native conflict. In Kenya, to take one of many examples, British settlers aiming to reconstitute the country as another white Dominion in the 1920s went so far as to kidnap the British governor, protesting what seemed to them

²⁸ Miles Kahler, *Decolonization in Britain and France: The Domestic Consequences of International Relations* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984), 9.

²⁹ William K. Hancock, *Survey of British Commonwealth Affairs, Vol. 1: Problems of Nationality, 1918-1936* (London: Oxford University Press, 1937), 463.

³⁰ Hancock, *Survey*, 440.

insufficient support for settler claims.³¹ Such 'resistance' does not remove settler politics from the history of imperialism.

In order to consider the history of Canadian Zionism towards the end of the British mandate, some further details are thus in order concerning how the main Zionist currents approached the question of empire. The doctrine of Zionist alignment with British power was most fully embodied in the leadership of Chaim Weizmann, the president of the WZO for most of the period of British rule in Palestine. This orientation was, however, by no means limited to Weizmann's faction. Yosef Gorny has supplied some of the most detailed analysis of Zionist debates in the decades leading up to 1948. He finds that 'there was consensus,' at least for the first twenty years of British rule in Palestine, 'on the vital importance of ties between Zionism and Great Britain.'³²

Eventually, it was the Revisionist wing of the Zionist movement that most publicly clashed with the British – the 1944 assassination of Lord Moyne, British minister of state in the Middle East, was its doing, as was the 1946 bombing of Palestine's King David Hotel.³³ Although Revisionism made only modest headway in Canada,³⁴ it should be emphasized just how odd it is that its right-wing militancy has ever been framed as anti-colonial. The founding icon of Revisionist Zionism, Ze'ev (Vladimir) Jabotinsky, did not mince words. His exaltation of Western power extended to the point of internalized antisemitism. 'We Jews have nothing in common with what is denoted "the East" and thank God for that,' he wrote in 1926, the year of his first visit to Canada. 'To the extent that our uneducated masses have traditions and spiritual prejudices which are reminiscent of the East, they must be weaned away from them.'³⁵ As for the idea of realizing Jewish statehood within the framework of the British Empire, no Zionist leader greeted the idea with greater enthusiasm than Jabotinsky. He did all he could to echo calls from Britain for the reconstitution of Palestine as a Jewish Dominion. In 1928

³¹ Kenneth Good, 'Settler Colonialism: Economic Development and Class Formation,' *The Journal of Modern African Studies* 14, no. 4 (1976), 611; and Bethwell A. Ogot, 'The Settler Dream for a White Dominion,' in eds. Ogot and W.R. Ochieng, *Kenya: The Making of a Nation* (Maseno: Maseno University Institute of Research and Postgraduate Studies, 2000), 49-69.

³² Yosef Gorny, trans. Chaya Galai, *Zionism and the Arabs, 1882-1948: A Study of Ideology* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987), 176.

³³ Benjamin Grob-Fitzgibbon, *Imperial Endgame: Britain's Dirty Wars and the End of Empire* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), 54.

³⁴ Tulchinsky, *Canada's Jews*, 348.

³⁵ Gorny, *Zionism*, 160.

Jabotinsky exclaimed that ‘the invisible tie binding Britain and the Dominions is the most remarkable achievement in the world’s political history,’ and pledged to put Revisionist militancy in service of the Empire: ‘Had we today even a 99 per cent [Jewish] majority in Palestine, I, the extremist, would still fight every idea of independence and would insist on keeping within the British Empire.’³⁶

Even for Zionists closely aligned with British power, it was possible to express loyalist opposition with an imperial framework. In Britain, writes Stephan Wendehorst, the Balfour Declaration was responsible not only ‘for bestowing imperial legitimacy on British Zionism,’ but also ‘for justifying the intervention of British Zionists in British politics against the policies of the British government’ whenever British support for Zionism seemed to wane.³⁷ Likewise in Canada. Consider how the Canadian Zionist movement’s main publication, *The Canadian Zionist*, editorialized against perceived British moves to circumscribe Zionist claims in 1934: ‘British Jewry, who have given ample proof of their loyalty and devotion to the cause of Empire, whether in the mother country or in the Dominions, have now the right to appeal to the conscience and good sense of those responsible for British policy in Palestine and to ask the Government not to make their task more difficult by putting an unbearable strain on their faith in the integrity of the leaders of the Empire, of which they form an essential part.’³⁸ A similar approach extended across Zionist factions. Even as Revisionists in Palestine clashed with British authorities in the 1940s, the British branch of Revisionist Zionism continued to invoke the old imperial proposals: Revisionists in Britain pressed for Jewish statehood through a formation called the ‘Jewish Dominion of Palestine League.’³⁹

The most significant challenge to Weizmann’s leadership did not come from the Revisionist right, however, but rather from Labour Zionism – and more specifically, from the leadership of David Ben-Gurion. Here too, the Zionist record is buried in layers of mythology. Where it has seemed expedient, Ben-Gurion has been presented as a progressive leader of a fighting workers’ movement. Notably, his authorized biography first appeared in postwar France with a title borrowed from Isaac Deutscher’s biography

³⁶ N.A. Rose, *The Gentile Zionists: A Study in Anglo-Zionist Diplomacy, 1929-1930* (London: Frank Cass, 1973), 77.

³⁷ Stephan Wendehorst, *British Jewry, Zionism, and the Jewish State, 1936-1956* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 360.

³⁸ Michael Brown, ‘Americanization of Canadian Zionism,’ 148.

³⁹ Wendehorst, *British Jewry*, 160.

of Trotsky, *The Prophet Armed*.⁴⁰ Ben-Gurion's biographer, Michael Bar Zohar, notes with cool understatement how his 'socialist ideas became increasingly elastic in order to serve the nationalist movement.'⁴¹ For Ben-Gurion, national segregation was the priority for Zionist labour; and just as labour organization was an instrument of national power, friendship to empire was to be recognized for its value. At the opening session of the Conference for Labour Palestine in 1930, Ben-Gurion declared simply that 'if someone were to come and say to us: just lift a finger and England will leave Palestine and the League of Nations will give up supervising it and the fate of Palestine will be left to the population now residing there and they will do as they choose, I would not lift that finger.'⁴² In short, a commitment to strategic cooperation with Britain extended across the main Zionist factions.

The Canadian Zionist leadership was not especially active in intra-Zionist struggles. To the greatest extent possible, however, it adhered to Chaim Weizmann's line. It had been Weizmann who consecrated Zionism's place in the British Empire, and who controlled the fundraising instruments which channeled most Canadian Zionist funds, notably the Keren Hayesod (the Foundation Fund). Weizmann and his close colleagues tended to direct interwar Canadian Zionism from a distance. Zionist leaders since Herzl had spoken of what was called 'the conquest of the communities' – the task, as Michael Berkowitz summarizes it, 'of Zionists wresting control of Jewish organizations to enlist them in the cause.'⁴³ The JNF's Menachem Ussishkin drew on this rhetoric to describe a visit to Palestine by Archie Freiman, the interwar president of the Zionist Organization of Canada. Ussishkin tried his hand at wit: 'He came, he saw and was conquered.'⁴⁴ Freiman, of course, had long since been committed to Zionism. Nonetheless, this visit may have solidified his alignment with the political party lead by

⁴⁰ See Isaac Deutscher, *The Prophet Armed: Trotsky, 1979-1921* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1954); and Michael Bar Zohar, *Ben Gourion, le prophète armé* (Paris: Fayard, 1966).

⁴¹ Michael Bar Zohar, trans. Len Ortzen, *Ben-Gurion: The Armed Prophet* (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1967), 19.

⁴² Gorny, *Zionism and the Arabs*, 217.

⁴³ Michael Berkowitz, *Western Jewry and the Zionist Project, 1914-1933* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 91.

⁴⁴ Bernard Figler, *Lillian and Archie Freiman: Biographies* (Montreal: Northern Print and Lithographing Co., 1962), 242.

Weizmann and Ussishkin, the General Zionists. Freiman became a committed General Zionist and remained so throughout his tenure as the ZOC's president.⁴⁵

Not until 1946 was Chaim Weizmann formally unseated from the presidency of the World Zionist Organization. Over the preceding decade, though, the centre of power within the Zionist movement steadily shifted towards Ben-Gurion. This organizational rivalry took shape within a WZO that had gained new status thanks to Britain. Article 4 of the British mandate provided for recognition of '[a]n appropriate Jewish agency' to represent Zionist interests in Palestine. This provision went on to name the beneficiary: 'The Zionist Organization, so long as its organization and constitution are in the opinion of the Mandatory appropriate, shall be recognized as such agency.'⁴⁶ In principle, this status was conferred upon the WZO as a whole. More specifically, it came to refer to the status of the WZO within Palestine. In the early years of British rule, the main instrument of Zionist leadership in Palestine was the Palestine Zionist Executive. In 1935, this body enforced its position and reconstituted itself as the Executive of the Jewish Agency for Palestine.⁴⁷ Weizmann retained the WZO presidency; but beginning in 1935, Ben-Gurion chaired the Jewish Agency Executive. Hannah Arendt writes that when Ben-Gurion assumed this new leadership role, he was still being 'violently denounced' by many Palestine-based Labour Zionists for his 'Revisionist leanings.'⁴⁸ Nonetheless, he quickly became the most important Zionist official in the country.

Rivalry between Weizmann and Ben-Gurion began to build up during the Palestinian Arab rebellion of 1936-1939. Britain responded to Palestinian resistance aggressively. It outlawed the leading Palestinian political organizations, including the Arab Higher Committee and the National Committee, and its troops moved to crush Palestinian organizational capacities.⁴⁹ In Palestine as elsewhere in the Empire, British policy rested on force. Edmund Burke once wrote, 'you may call your Constitution what you will, in effect it will consist of three parts, (orders, if you please), cavalry infantry,

⁴⁵ Figler, *Lillian and Archie Freiman*, 258 .

⁴⁶ Daniel Elazar and Alysa Dortort, *Understanding the Jewish Agency: A Handbook* (Jerusalem: Jerusalem Centre for Public Affairs, 1985), 35-6.

⁴⁷ Scott Atran, 'The surrogate colonization of Palestine, 1917-1939,' *American Ethnologist* 16, no. 1 (1989), 731.

⁴⁸ Hannah Arendt, 'Zionism Reconsidered,' in eds. Jerome Kohn and Ron Feldman, *Hannah Arendt, The Jewish Writings* (New York: Schocken Books, 2007), 351.

⁴⁹ Amikam Nachmani, *Great Power Discord in Palestine: The Anglo-American Committee of Inquiry into the Problems of European Jewry and Palestine, 1945-1946* (London: Frank Cass, 1987), 89.

and artillery.⁵⁰ Hancock's *Survey of Commonwealth Affairs* picks up on this theme: 'In the summer of 1936, 23,000 British soldiers were administering the medicine of the constitution . . . to the struggling Arab majority of Palestine.'⁵¹ In Canada, left-wing Jewish organizations anchored in the Montreal textiles sector protested in 1937 the 'poison of chauvinist propaganda' that spread during this conflict, and called for a commitment to Arab-Jewish cooperation as the necessary antidote.⁵² Canada's mainstream Zionist leadership, meanwhile, took its cues from the WZO.

At the outset of the rebellion, Ben-Gurion remained scarcely less committed than Weizmann to alignment with British power. Under Ben-Gurion's leadership, the Jewish Agency was even able to field units of its underground militia, the Haganah, to strike at Palestinian targets alongside British troops. Though formally illegal, Haganah forces were armed, organized, and trained under the command of a British commander extremely supportive of Zionism, major-general Charles Orde Wingate. They were attached as Supernumerary Police units to Wingate's Special Night Squads, and learned aggressive British counter-insurgency tactics. Ben-Gurion was enthusiastic about what he described as 'a practical step towards the establishment of a Jewish military force within the framework of the British Army.'⁵³ By the end of the rebellion, however, Ben-Gurion was preparing his own challenge to British authorities.

On the one hand, Britain's latest campaign in Palestine had further tipped the balance of power against the Palestinian Arabs and in favour of the Yishuv. On the other, British officials were moving to back away from support for Zionist aspirations. Britain was concerned with its wider regional interests. From Egypt through to the Persian Gulf, the sway of the British Empire in the Arab world was contentious enough without the imposition of outright settler rule on Palestine. During the First World War, British planners had leveraged Arab desires for independence to their advantage against the Ottoman Empire; with another European war looming, British authorities were loathe to drive their new subjects into the enemy camp. The British reversal on Palestine was laid out a White Paper published in May 1939, repudiating proposals for

⁵⁰ Edmund Burke, *The Writings and Speeches of Edmund Burke, Vol. 6* (Cosimo: New York, 2008), 380.

⁵¹ Hancock, *Survey*, 485.

⁵² Tulchinsky, *Canada's Jews*, 268.

⁵³ Walid Khalidi, *From Haven to Conquest: Readings in Zionism and the Palestine Problem Until 1948* (Washington, Institute for Palestine Studies, 1987), 374.

Jewish statehood. The document argued that, since the Yishuv had been built up under British rule to the point where nearly a third of Palestine's population was Jewish, Britain's commitment to establishing a Jewish national home in Palestine had been fulfilled; it insisted that the architects of the mandate 'could not have intended that Palestine should be converted into a Jewish State against the will of the Arab population of the country.'⁵⁴ The White Paper went on to call for a transition to self-government in Palestine on the basis of existing demographics.

In June 1939, the ZOC joined with smaller Zionist factions in Canada to issue a joint protest letter against the White Paper.⁵⁵ Internationally, while Weizmann acted in Britain to restore official support, Ben-Gurion put his weight behind public campaigning in the United States. Ben-Gurion explained his logic in a discussion in early 1939 with the Zionist Organization of America (ZOA): 'This is the only country in the world on which England is very dependent, in case of war'; mobilization of Jewish and wider American opinion was therefore the best available means for the Zionist movement to bring pressure to bear on Britain.⁵⁶ Over the coming period, Ben-Gurion became the driving force behind what Walid Khalidi describes as 'the transfer by the Zionists of their main metropolitan base from London to Washington.'⁵⁷

Ben-Gurion's international strategy was in the first instance focused on winning American Zionist organizations over to the cause of Jewish statehood. Even in Zionist circles, the notion that the Jewish national home in Palestine should take the form of a Jewish *state* had over the preceding years come to be considered a Revisionist program, illiberal and somewhat extreme.⁵⁸ Against the backdrop of World War II, Ben-Gurion worked to change the terms of discussion. His efforts culminated in a landmark 1942 conference held at New York's Biltmore Hotel. There, US and world Zionist leaders came together to issue a declaration demanding 'that Palestine be established as a Jewish Commonwealth' following the war.⁵⁹ To British officials, the meaning was clear. Ben-Gurion was pushing for full Zionist authority over Palestine and breaking the

⁵⁴ J.C. Hurewitz, *The Middle East and North Africa in World Politics: A Documentary Record, 2nd Ed, Vol. 1* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1975), 533.

⁵⁵ Brown, 'Americanization of Canadian Zionism,' 148.

⁵⁶ Gal, *David Ben-Gurion*, 41.

⁵⁷ Khalidi, *From Haven to Conquest*, xlviii.

⁵⁸ Gal, *David Ben-Gurion*, 154.

⁵⁹ Gal, *David Ben-Gurion*, 201.

movement out of the confines of the British Empire. A memorandum from the British Colonial Office observed that 'the Zionist aim is nothing less than the forcible seizure of Palestine after the war, relying on American influence to keep us quiet.'⁶⁰

In terms of international Zionist leadership, this process saw Weizmann, with his enduring British fixations, lose ground to Ben-Gurion. In Canada as in the US, the main WZO affiliates were drawn into an effort that challenged Britain's position. Michael Brown explains that this made it more difficult than before for Canadian supporters of the movement 'to blend Zionism and British-Empire nationalism.'⁶¹ It is not that Canadian Zionists made a point of breaking with Weizmann's leadership. To the contrary, as late as September 1947, well after Weizmann's influence had collapsed, Canada's umbrella Zionist coalition publicly declared that 'Canadian Zionists have always supported his leadership and we shall continue to press for his return to the presidency of the World Zionist Organization.'⁶² Nonetheless, Canadian Zionists were part of a movement whose centre of gravity was moving elsewhere.

The dissident initiative required of Canadian Zionists in this context should not, however, be exaggerated. Ben-Gurion challenged British policy with a measure of declared respect. The leadership of the Zionist Organization of America, like the Zionist Organization of Canada, had for years been aligned with Weizmann and his General Zionists. This alone ensured the local stature of the British orientation. Moreover, at few moments in history was Britain's standing in American opinion more sensitive than in this early phase of World War II. Until the end of 1941, US support for the British fight with Nazi Germany was tempered by official US neutrality. The Soviet Union, too, was removed from the war until the summer of that year. Allon Gal writes that by 1940 Ben-Gurion had completed his 'shift from an English-oriented to an Anglo-American policy (with the accent on "American").'⁶³ Britain's standing in the US was precisely the pressure point that Ben-Gurion was targeting. All the same, any impression that this would undercut wartime support for Britain was likely to prompt a Jewish public backlash. Zionist campaigning in these circumstances required considerable tact.

⁶⁰ Gal, *David Ben-Gurion*, 202.

⁶¹ Brown, 'Americanization of Canadian Zionism,' 147-8.

⁶² Norman Hillmer and Donald Page, eds., *DCER Vol. 13* (Ottawa: External Affairs and International Trade Canada, 1993), 931.

⁶³ Gal, *David Ben-Gurion*, 169.

In Canada, the adaptation of Ben-Gurion's efforts to the local context was eased by the fact that one of his closest allies had local roots. Bernard Joseph (later Dov Yosef) was born in Montreal and attended university at McGill and Laval before settling in Palestine soon after the British occupation of the country. He would go on to hold a range of significant posts in the Yishuv, including as a member of a Population Transfer Committee established by the Jewish Agency in 1937 and as Israeli military governor in Jerusalem in 1948.⁶⁴ He was also a prominent participant in the Yishuv's American campaign. It was during the winter of 1940-1 that Ben-Gurion's efforts began to yield results. Ben-Gurion himself spent much of that winter in the US and returned to Palestine only after arranging for his replacement by the former Montrealer. 'I would not have left the United States confident that the decisions and promises would be carried out,' Ben-Gurion explained to the Jewish Agency Executive in February 1941, 'had it not been for Dr. Joseph's arrival.'⁶⁵ The most important resolutions over which Joseph presided were those passed in New York at the January 1941 convention of the United Palestine Appeal. This convention was 'a turning point in the history of American Zionism,' producing the first-ever UPA call for Jewish statehood.⁶⁶

Before traveling to New York for the UPA convention, Joseph returned to Montreal to participate in the twenty-sixth conference of the Zionist Organization of Canada. There he saw to it that the ZOC made its own contribution to the sequence of pro-statehood declarations reshaping North American Zionism. 'The Canadian convention's resolutions partly mirrored the spirit of Dov Joseph's remarks,' writes Gal. 'They included an unequivocal demand for the nullification of the White Paper and a call for the establishment of a Jewish army. The demand for political independence, however, was British oriented as it called for "the establishment of Palestine as a Jewish Commonwealth within the British Commonwealth of Nations in order that it shall be able speedily to absorb the masses of Jewry from Europe and from all countries where Jews are in distress."⁶⁷ In its substance, this was a Canadian contribution to the Zionist rupture with Britain. In its form, this aspect of the new policy was carefully

⁶⁴ Nur Masalha, *Expulsion of the Palestinians* (Washington, D.C.: Institute for Palestine Studies, 1992), 93.

⁶⁵ Gal, *David Ben-Gurion*, 178.

⁶⁶ Gal, *David Ben-Gurion*, 185.

⁶⁷ Gal, *David Ben-Gurion*, 180.

softened. Canadian Zionists continued to invoke the British connection. Throughout World War II, writes Michael Brown, the country's leading Zionists 'seized every opportunity to stress to others the value to Britain and the Allies of the bases in Palestine and the loyal Jewish settlers there.'⁶⁸

Over the coming period, the US came to occupy the position in Canadian Zionist thinking that Britain had previously. The Canadian Zionist association with a movement that eventually sought to eject the British from Palestine was at times uncomfortable, especially in the context of direct Zionist attacks on British installations (most notably, the bombing of the King David Hotel in 1946). But in a wider perspective, the Canadian shift from a British to a more continental orientation generalized. 'At the same time that the ties to Britain of Canada's Zionists were being strained,' observes Brown, 'those of other Anglo-Canadians were also slackening.'⁶⁹ The Canadian state's evolving position between the two great powers centres of the English-speaking West, London and Washington, is explored in greater depth in Chapter 3. For now, suffice it to note that both the Zionist and the Canadian leadership were durably Anglo-American in their international orientation. They did not place 'the accent on "American"' at precisely the same time, much less in the same way. But while the parallel between their shifting global alignments is inexact, it is also unmistakable. And it goes a considerable way towards explaining the long-term respectability of support for Zionism within Canadian civil society.

Canada's Place in Zionist Military Preparations

Sam Zacks, a Toronto stockbroker whose name today marks a prestigious chair in Jewish history at the University of Toronto, was president of the Zionist Organization of Canada as Ben-Gurion moved to translate North American declarations in support of Jewish statehood into tangible military assistance. If external support for Zionist military capacities was no longer to come from Britain, it would have to come from elsewhere. Ben-Gurion explained as much in discussions within his own faction at the outset of his

⁶⁸ Brown, 'Americanization of Canadian Zionism,' 147.

⁶⁹ Brown, 'Americanization of Canadian Zionism,' 149.

American campaign: 'Certainly we cannot win new positions without a great deal of outside help; and right now there is no outside other than America. The vast amount of help needed to set up an army, redeem the land, settle, and maintain our position can only come from North America. In constituting a Jewish army, too, America will have to play a major role.'⁷⁰ By 'North America' Ben-Gurion meant above all the US; but Canadian Zionists were indeed drawn into a continental system.

North American support for the Zionist war effort was divided between public, tax-deductible fundraising and a parallel system for more controversial forms of military assistance. Public fundraising in Canada as in the US was conducted through the United Palestine Appeal. In the decade from 1940 to 1950, Canadian Zionists raised more than eighteen million dollars for the Yishuv.⁷¹ The major portion of these funds was channelled through the Keren Hayesod to the Jewish Agency, which in turn was able to pour resources into military preparations. In 1948, for example, the Jewish Agency programs grouped under the heading 'National Organization and Security' amounted to twenty-eight million dollars.⁷² In order to initiate a system for more clandestine military assistance, Ben-Gurion enlisted his allies in the American Zionist movement. As US executive director of the UPA, Henry Montor had worked closely with Ben-Gurion. In 1945 he was tasked with bringing together a group of Zionist notables who could act with discretion. The classic if wholly laudatory work on this moment in Zionist history is Leonard Slater's *The Pledge*.

The group assembled by Montor first met with Ben-Gurion in July 1945 at a New York residence of a wealthy US supporter named Rudolph Sonneborn. Canada would be integrated into this effort no less than the different regions of the US, and Sam Zacks was there to represent the Canadian movement.⁷³ 'On that memorable day,' Sonneborn later wrote, 'we were asked to form ourselves into an ... American arm of the Haganah.'⁷⁴ This section of North American Zionist leadership, thereafter referred to as

⁷⁰ Gal, *David Ben-Gurion*, 69.

⁷¹ David Taras, 'From Passivity to Politics: Canada's Jewish Community and Political Support for Israel,' in eds. David H. Goldberg and David Taras, *The Domestic Battleground: Canada and the Arab-Israeli Conflict* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1989), 45.

⁷² Ernest Stock, *Partners and Pursestrings: A History of the United Israel Appeal* (Lanham: University Press of America with the Jerusalem Centre for Public Affairs, 1987), 127.

⁷³ Leonard Slater, *The Pledge* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1970), 57.

⁷⁴ Slater, *Pledge*, 18.

the 'Sonneborn Institute,' was the nucleus of a large-scale military procurement and recruitment operation. Ben-Gurion dispatched Yishuv representatives to guide the effort. The Haganah established its North American headquarters in New York. From there it coordinated efforts across the US and Canada, while encouraging the development of a Canadian Haganah steering committee, comprising representatives of the Zionist leadership in Montreal and Toronto.⁷⁵

The Canadian Zionist movement was in this way drawn into military preparations for a campaign that involved the widespread expulsion of Palestinians. The practical relationship between developing Zionist military capacities and translating the aim of 'transferring' Palestinians into a reality is relatively straightforward. To what extent the Canadian Zionist leadership was aware of this is an open question. On the one hand, Michael Berkowitz notes that Zionism's interwar propaganda in the West had 'tended to stress the evidence of Arab-Jewish cooperation, rather than using Arabs as an enemy to unify the fragmented movement'.⁷⁶ Organizing for war against Palestinian Arabs was not the public rallying cry. Moreover, by World War II the horrors of Nazi antisemitism gave calls for Jewish self-defence immense moral force – one can lament how this was warped in its application to the realities of Palestine, but many Jews and others were rallied by it without knowing much about local conditions. On the other hand, prominent Canadian Zionists had contact with well-informed leaders like Dov Joseph; and the published record shows that at least some Western Zionist leaders were attuned to the prospect of expulsions. This was certainly the case in Britain, where as early as November 1942 a leading Zionist figure, Harry Sacher, explained that he 'was prepared to proceed on the basis of compulsory transfer of – say – half a million people.'⁷⁷ Further research into Canadian knowledge and opinion on this would be required to credibly address the question of intent.

In any event, the military organizations in Palestine that Canadians organized to enforce would apply the politics of transfer systematically and with devastating effect. In this as in most sensitive areas of Zionist policy, control was centralized under Ben-Gurion. In 1946 Ben-Gurion assumed personal control of the Yishuv's defence portfolio

⁷⁵ Bercuson, *Secret Army*, 61.

⁷⁶ Michael Berkowitz, *Western Jewry and the Zionist Project, 1914-1933* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 105.

⁷⁷ Wendehorst, *British Jewry*, 211.

and developed a well-organized military hierarchy under his command.⁷⁸ By late 1947 the essential structure of the Zionist armed forces was in place. The principal Haganah combat force, the Field Corps, was initially organized into six brigades: the Golani, Carmeli, Alexandroni, Kiryati, Giv'ati, and Etzioni. The Palmach, a force associated specifically with Labour Zionism, retained distinct headquarters while operating under overall Haganah command. The Revisionist militias, the Etzel (Irgun) and Lehi (Stern Gang), operated autonomously but in recurring coordination with the Haganah. In November 1947, the Haganah also established an 'Air Service,' formally constituted as the Israeli Air Force in May 1948; and soon after a Seventh, Eighth, and Ninth Brigade were subsequently to the Field Corps. It was in some of these latter units that Canadians factored most prominently. In June 1948 all Zionist armed forces would be brought under unified command with the establishment of the IDF.

It bears emphasis that by 1948, less than seven per cent of the land in Palestine was under Jewish ownership.⁷⁹ The most important sections of the Zionist leadership were by this point looking to the force of arms as a means of land acquisition more rapid and thorough than purchase. At a February 1948 meeting of the Mapai party council, Ben-Gurion spelled out the new approach: 'The war will give us the land. The concepts of "ours" and "not ours" are peace concepts only, and in war they lose their whole meaning.'⁸⁰ Notably, JNF funds were themselves channeled into military expenditures in the Negev. In 1949 Yosef Weitz wrote that the '£1,500,000' which the JNF itself put into the military budget for the south 'will be found to have been one of its soundest and most productive investments.'⁸¹

The Revisionists launched their own international support network.⁸² The funds, weaponry, and recruits provided by the larger Western Zionist organizations went towards the forces directly under Ben-Gurion's command. Perhaps the most detailed study of the Haganah's Western Zionist support system, and certainly the most detailed

⁷⁸ Tal, *War in Palestine*, 24.

⁷⁹ Walid Khalidi, 'Revisiting the UNGA Partition Resolution,' in ed. Ilan Pappé, *The Israel/Palestine Question: A Reader* (London: Routledge, 2007), 102-3.

⁸⁰ Masalha, *Expulsion of the Palestinians*, 180.

⁸¹ Walter Lehn, in association with Uri Davis, *The Jewish National Fund* (London: Kegan Paul International, 1988), 82.

⁸² See J. Bowyer Bell, *Terror out of Zion: Irgun Zvai Leumi, LEHI, and the Palestine Underground, 1929-1949* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1977).

study of Canada's part in it, is David Bercuson's *The Secret Army*. Bercuson writes that he began the study intending to focus solely on the role of Canadian recruits in 1948 Palestine, but broadened his research to include all Mahal recruits since Canadian Zionism was embedded in a broader Western Zionist effort. On the Canadian details, Bercuson's work is valuable. His political approach, however, greatly decreases his study's contribution to understanding of this history.

Since all history, as Croce insisted, is contemporary history, it is worth considering the message of Bercuson's study in the context in which it was written. Bercuson's book was framed as a polemic honouring Zionist self-reliance at a time when the 1982 invasion of Lebanon and the extent of Reagan administration support for Israel were making Western support for Israel the object of controversy. In June 1982, US secretary of state Alexander Haig inadvertently suggested the extent of US support for Israel. This was the first day of Israel's campaign in Lebanon. 'We not only lost an aircraft and a helicopter yesterday,' Haig explained, 'there is a claim that a second aircraft has been shot down.'⁸³ These were Israeli aircraft; but for the leading spokesperson for US foreign policy, they merited the first person. And for good reason: at this time the US was both supplying and urging on the Israeli military, Haig having personally given a 'green light' for the invasion.⁸⁴ No other state in the world was receiving economic and military support from a Western (or any other) power on the scale that Israel was receiving US aid. It is against this backdrop that Bercuson, in *The Secret Army*, provides this odd commentary: 'the democratic and self-governing nations of western Europe and North America have progressively abandoned Israel in their pursuit of Arab markets and to slake their thirst for Arab oil.'⁸⁵ That criticism of Israel was getting any hearing in the West was too much for Bercuson. Justice demanded sharp and unwavering Western alignment with Israel. Thus Bercuson wrote in praise of Zionist self-reliance as well as of its product, the State of Israel, 'a beacon to people around the world who care about the survival of democratic institutions in an increasingly hostile environment.'⁸⁶ Similar polemics define the study's historical narration.

⁸³ Naseer Aruri, *Dishonest Broker: The US Role in Israel and Palestine* (Cambridge, MA: South End Press, 2003), 42.

⁸⁴ William B. Quandt, *Peace Process: American Diplomacy and the Arab-Israeli Conflict Since 1967* (Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution with the University of California Press, 2005), 250.

⁸⁵ Bercuson, *Secret Army*, 232.

⁸⁶ Bercuson, *Secret Army*, 232.

Consider the title of the book's opening chapter: 'We Shall Drink Jewish Blood.' The quotation marks are part of the chapter title; someone, we are lead to believe, is being cited. Not an individual, we learn in the text, but a group. Bercuson attributes the phrase to a Palestinian crowd rampaging against Jews in the aftermath of the First World War. The reader is thereby introduced to the Palestinian Arab presence that Bercuson's 'heroic' recruits will reduce by the force of arms. Bercuson segues from this anecdote to an insistence that independent Zionist force was indispensable for 'the re-creation of a Jewish homeland in Palestine two thousand years after the last Jewish state had been destroyed by the Roman Empire. It was clear almost from the start that this re-creation would be done against the wishes of the vast majority of the inhabitants of Palestine – the Arabs.'⁸⁷

In this way, readers are introduced to the relevant actors in Palestine. The British could not be relied upon to protect the Jews while the Palestinians, for their part, screamed 'we shall drink Jewish blood.' If this allegation were inverted and levelled against Jews, only bulletproof sourcing could save an author from being charged with 'blood libel' – and on reasonable grounds. In using this inflammatory anecdote to introduce readers to Palestinians, one would hope that Bercuson would at least show concern for demonstrating its factual basis. But the sole source he cites for this account is Yigal Allon's *Shield of David: The Story of Israel's Armed Forces*. Allon was a founding leader of the Palmach and a leading IDF commander during the 1948 war. There is every reason to read and consider his account of his combat record. Allon's self-serving anecdote about enemy drepavity is, however, not backed up by a single citation; readers of the *Shield of David* are asked to accept the accuracy of this Israeli military commander's history on faith.⁸⁸ Bercuson, by reproducing this anecdote wholesale, presented as fact and prominently positioned in his study, reveals more about his own polemical project than about the historical details in question.

For all of these shortcomings, however, Bercuson's study is a valuable source. His interviews with Canadian Zionist activists and veterans allow him to sketch a detailed picture of their support for the Haganah. It is worth looking past his spirited polemics for these details. The US military supply organization operated by the

⁸⁷ Bercuson, *Secret Army*, 2.

⁸⁸ Yigal Allon, *Shield of David: The Story of Israel's Armed Forces* (New York: Random House, 1970), 67.

Haganah is discussed in a range of sources, and centred on an organization called Materials for Palestine.⁸⁹ Bercuson explains that a separate set of companies was established in Canada, operating under the public coalition headed by Sam Zacks. The Canadian Zionist movement did seek to hide its military procurement and recruitment activities from government scrutiny. But encounters with the law were not particularly damaging. Bercuson notes that although Canadian authorities discovered weapons being prepared for shipment, no charges for illegal arms export were ever laid.⁹⁰ The Zionist movement could from time to time even rely on cooperative officials.

At least one Canadian official, Alex Skelton, was directly involved in the arms smuggling. Ben-Gurion himself had for years been fixated on the importance of developing Haganah air power.⁹¹ Canadian supporters of the Haganah were satisfied when they managed to acquire some local war-surplus aircraft, but were at a loss concerning how to bypass Canadian and British restrictions on the export of weaponry to Palestine. Bercuson describes the scene at an Ottawa meeting in which Skelton, assistant deputy minister in the Canadian department of trade and commerce, brainstormed smuggling options with the Zionist Organization of Canada's Moe Appel.

In the midst of his doodling, Skelton suddenly exclaimed: 'I've got it, goddamnit.' He looked up: 'Do you guys have a spring fair in Tel Aviv?' 'No,' Appel said, 'but we can create one.' Skelton seemed satisfied. 'You draw a plan. We'll dismantle the goddamn things, put them in crates, and send them to the Tel Aviv Spring Fair.' Not long after, several large crates painted red, white, and blue and addressed to the Tel Aviv Spring Fair left Canada. In Israel the contents of the crates were put back together, equipped with bomb racks, and pressed into service as dive bombers.⁹²

By mid-1948 Canadian Zionists had established a steady supply line to the Yishuv. Bercuson writes that the materials being sent ranged from food and clothing to 'machine guns, flame throwers, and thousands of Mark 19 radio sets that had been built in Canada for Canadian and Allied use during the war.' Legal and illegal goods were interspersed for shipment: 'Only the military goods were mislabelled. "Technical equipment", "wire", "ingots", and so on were stencilled on crates containing radios, radar, and other military goods. Flame throwers became "insecticide sprayers".'⁹³ While

⁸⁹ See, for example, Uri Milstein, trans. Alan Sacks, *History of the War of Independence, Vol. 3* (Lanham: University Press of America, 1996), 175-6.

⁹⁰ Bercuson, *Secret Army*, 44.

⁹¹ See, for example, Gal, *David Ben-Gurion*, 133.

⁹² Bercuson, *Secret Army*, 48.

⁹³ Bercuson, *Secret Army*, 48.

some equipment was sent in small quantities, 'Canadian radio sets and other radio equipment became the backbone of Israel's military communications network.'⁹⁴

Beyond supplies, the Haganah looked to the West for experienced military recruits. The issue was not numbers so much as training and specialization. In December 1947 Ben-Gurion issued a mobilization order to the Yishuv and locally imposed conscription.⁹⁵ The dispatching of large numbers of recruits from the West was neither practical nor necessary. At the level of command and military specialization, though, Ben-Gurion remained committed to Western tutelage. Towards the end of 1947, Moshe Shertok (later Sharett), then head of the WZO's political department and soon to become Israel's first foreign minister, was dispatched to ask the US government for assistance. Shertok approached assistant US secretary of state General John Hilldring, requesting that the US officially supply the Zionist movement with weaponry as well as sending 'two or three competent American officers who would be prepared to proceed to Palestine and advise on defence arrangements.'⁹⁶ Hilldring offered more limited support. He put Shertok in contact with former US army Colonel David Marcus, who had served under Hilldring's command in Europe. Marcus agreed to travel to Palestine to work with the Haganah. He became the first officer in the Haganah to attain the rank of General. In May 1948, Marcus briefly assumed command of the Jerusalem front before falling to friendly fire.⁹⁷

Soon Haganah recruitment in the West became widespread and structured. From Canada, it was the chair of the local Haganah steering committee,⁹⁸ Ben Dunkelman, who would go on to become the highest-ranking officer. His father David Dunkelman had founded a significant textiles company, Tip Top Tailors, and buoyed by the family's wealth, both David and his wife Rose were leading figures in Ontario Zionism. Ben Dunkelman had briefly settled in Palestine in the early 1930s before returning to Canada and then enlisting to fight in World War II. In the course of the war, he received intensive officer's combat training in Britain for the use of artillery. His family name and his combat record in Europe guaranteed him a certain prominence. In

⁹⁴ Bercuson, *Secret Army*, 48.

⁹⁵ Tal, *War in Palestine*, 31.

⁹⁶ Bercuson, *Secret Army*, 52.

⁹⁷ Craig Weiss and Jeffrey Weiss, *I Am My Brother's Keeper: American Volunteers in Israel's War of Independence, 1947-1949* (Atglen: Schiffer Publishing, 1998), 132.

⁹⁸ Dunkelman, *Dual Allegiance*, 155.

December 1944, the *Toronto Daily Star* referred to him as 'Mr. Mortar of the Canadian Army'.⁹⁹ He was well placed to anchor recruitment for the Haganah. He wrote that he was first approached to contribute to the Zionist war effort by Lady Lorna Wingate, the widow of 'the legendary Major-General.'¹⁰⁰

Dunkelman initially understood his task to be the recruitment of one thousand Canadian veterans, but his final instructions were scaled down to a more realistic three hundred. This recruitment was not exactly illegal in Canada. Nor, on the other hand, could it be conducted publicly. Bercuson details the 'off-the-books' fundraising that was undertaken to send, equip, and pay these recruits, in a quiet effort supplementing the legal work of the United Palestine Appeal. Canadian fundraising for the country's Mahal recruits brought in \$300,000 from Montreal, \$100,000 from Toronto, and \$175,000 from smaller Canadian cities.¹⁰¹

The fact that the record of Canadian recruitment for the Haganah has not been the subject of much critical commentary should not be taken to suggest that it was scrupulously secretive. One of the recruits was Canada's most celebrated fighter pilot, George F. Beurling, and his recruitment was openly reported by the press. A newspaper article cited a Haganah source as indicating that Beurling was to be paid two hundred dollars per month.¹⁰² The Canadian government became well aware that, in the words of external affairs minister Louis Saint-Laurent, 'Canadian citizens in considerable numbers are, in fact, leaving Canada to join the Jewish forces.'¹⁰³ The Canadian recruits began arriving in Palestine in April, and came in greater numbers over the summer.

Weaponry came in parallel by way of Zatec, Czechoslovakia, where a largely American group of volunteers operated a Haganah supply hub under the supervision of Czech authorities, an interesting episode in the early Cold War.¹⁰⁴ The first major shipment arrived on the night of April 4. As the shipment arrived, an assault force three

⁹⁹ Bercuson, *Secret Army*, 60.

¹⁰⁰ Dunkelman, *Dual Allegiance*, 152.

¹⁰¹ Bercuson, *Secret Army*, 63.

¹⁰² Bercuson, *Secret Army*, 74-5.

¹⁰³ Hector Mackenzie, ed., *DCER Vol. 14* (Ottawa: Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade, 1994), 310.

¹⁰⁴ Cull and Aloni, *Spitfires*, 150.

times larger than any used in previous Haganah operations was assembled.¹⁰⁵ The following day, the Haganah command initiated Operation Nachshon.

This inaugurated a new wave of Haganah offensives, amidst which the first Canadian recruits began arriving in Palestine.

'The Question of Expulsion'

Canadian historians like Bercuson do not bother to engage with Palestinian political or academic claims. Concerning the Galilee, for example, Nafez Nazzal's 1978 study asserted a direct connection between declared Zionist aims of transfer and the operations detailed by the testimony of Palestinian refugees. He concluded that the mass displacement of Palestinians was a result of 'conscious and wilful Zionist policy.'¹⁰⁶ 'In practice,' Nazzal wrote, 'this involved an organized campaign of exemplary terror; the spreading of rumours and psychological warfare; lethal attacks on the civilian population of Galilee, sieges of the larger towns, and the physical expulsion of large numbers of people after the military occupation of their towns and villages.'¹⁰⁷ These conclusions bear directly on the record of Mahal recruits. The Seventh Brigade, which Nazzal identifies as the 'Anglo-Saxon Brigade,' had an especially large concentration of English-speaking recruits from the West, and was one of the principal units involved in the expulsions described by Nazzal. Bercuson, for his part, all but skips over the record of atrocities in his otherwise detailed account of how 'Seventh Brigade successes literally filled out the map of north-central Israel.'¹⁰⁸ There are various angles from which to reconsider this record.

A more sophisticated Zionist approach than blanket denial is provided by Anita Shapira in the article 'Hirbet Hizah: Between Remembrance and Forgetting.' Shapira uses a classic work of Israeli fiction, written by S. Yizhar, first published in Hebrew in 1949, and now translated into English as *Khirbet Khizeh*, to downplay the novelty of

¹⁰⁵ Gunther E. Rothenberg, *The Anatomy of the Israeli Army* (London: BT Batsford), 48.

¹⁰⁶ Nazzal, *Palestinian Exodus from Galilee*, 105

¹⁰⁷ Nazzal, *Palestinian Exodus from Galilee*, 105.

¹⁰⁸ Bercuson, *Secret Army*, 231.

scholarship concerning the expulsion of Palestinians.¹⁰⁹ For Shapira, it is impossible to avoid the fact that the expulsion of Palestinians was widespread. It is accordingly important to avoid a rigid approach to denial that would imply that 'if it is acknowledged that the Arabs were evicted during the War of Independence, this means that Zionism as a whole, from its very inception, is illegitimate.'¹¹⁰ Shapira does not entirely abandon discredited denials. In favourably citing Moshe Carmel, for example, under whose overall command the Seventh Brigade and other units in the Upper Galilee operated, she asserts that 'the northern area under his command did not pursue a policy of expelling Arabs'.¹¹¹ In fact, in 1998 the Israeli government declassified a specific order from Carmel to Dunkelman and other Brigade commanders to expel the Palestinian population of conquered areas, orders whose execution is well documented.¹¹² At the same time, Shapira provides an erudite review of the Hebrew-language literature to demonstrate that Israeli discussion of the expulsions began almost immediately. Contemporary controversy over 1948, she suggests, is therefore neither new nor ground-breaking: 'a society, like Israel's, that has included "The Story of Hirbet Hizah" in its high school syllabi for several decades cannot be accused of trying to jettison and submerge the traumas of 1948 – at least, not on the level of conscious recognition.'¹¹³

The kernel of truth in Shapira's argumentation – that S. Yizhar's story did indeed engage with the 'question of expulsion' well before Israeli scholarship did, and that it remains a useful historical document – is buried in a good deal of dubious polemic. This, for example, is how she explains the story's treatment of themes that Zionist academics would not touch for decades: 'the archives were still sealed, and aside from general statements by eyewitnesses, members of the generation of 1948, it is doubtful whether historians could have contributed anything substantial. In this sense, imaginative literature had one up on professional historians.'¹¹⁴ This is an interesting argument. It uses a fixation on Israel's official archives, the declassified evidence from

¹⁰⁹ See S. Yizhar, trans. Nicholas de Lange and Yaacob Dweck, *Khirbet Khizeh* (Jerusalem: Ibbis Editions, 2008).

¹¹⁰ Shapira, 'Hirbet Hizah,' 39.

¹¹¹ Shapira, 'Hirbet Hizah,' 43.

¹¹² See Benny Morris, 'Operation Hiram Revisited,' *Journal of Palestine Studies* 28, no. 2 (Winter 1999), 68-76.

¹¹³ Nazzari, *Palestinian Exodus from Galilee*, 55.

¹¹⁴ Shapira, 'Hirbet Hizah,' 47.

which Shapira now ignores or denies, as a means of brushing aside the earlier efforts of Palestinians and other researchers working with available sources. Still the kernel remains. One need not accept Shapira's baggage in order to agree that Zionist works of historical fiction can be useful reference points in the study of 1948 Palestine.

For its part, S. Yizhar's *Khirbet Khizeh* explores the destruction of a fictionalized Palestinian village through the eyes of a conflicted participant in the operation. Through its narrator, the story provides commentary on expulsions more frank than anything that could be found for many years in the Israeli non-fiction record.

Why hadn't I realized it from the outset? Our very own Khirbet Khizeh. Questions of housing, and problems of absorption. And hooray, we'd house and absorb – and how! We'd open a cooperative store, establish a school, maybe even a synagogue. There would be political parties here. They'd debate all sorts of things. They would plow fields, and sow, and reap, and do great things. Long live Hebrew Khizeh! Who, then, would ever imagine that once there had been some Khirbet Khizeh that we emptied out and took for ourselves. We came, we shot, we burned; we blew up, expelled, drove off, and sent into exile.

What in God's name were we doing in this place!¹¹⁵

The misgivings of participants in the expulsion of Palestinians were less studiously repressed in the realm of historical fiction than in professional scholarship, in Israel or in the West. This also applies to the record of Mahal recruits.

Lester Gorn was no S. Yizhar. A US recruit to the Haganah, Gorn, like Yizhar, was attached to the Haganah's Giv'ati Brigade. Unlike Yizhar, he was neither a political nor a literary giant. His book concerning the Mahal experience, *The Anglo-Saxons: A Novel of Israel's War of Independence*, is nonetheless an interesting text. The title itself provides another reminder that while many of the recruits from countries like Canada identified as Jews in the West, in the Middle East, they were as often identified as Western recruits. A text like this is not especially useful as a stand-alone source. The actual details of Canadian participation in the expulsion of Palestinians are more credibly established by reviewing two kinds of non-fiction literature alongside one another: the laudatory Zionist accounts of where and in which units Canadians fought; and the studies of expulsions in these areas and by these units, produced by researchers interviewing Palestinian refugees and working in the Israeli archives. But for all its limitations, *The Anglo-Saxons* provides some telling commentary.

¹¹⁵ Yizhar, *Khirbet Khizeh*, 108.

Gorn tends to use fictional names for people while retaining original names for places. His writing frequently lines up with the historical record. The foreign recruits that the narrator describes are thus mostly interspersed throughout different Zionist units, with one predominantly 'Anglo-Saxon' unit, 'the best-clothed, best-equipped unit in Israel,' fighting under the command of a recruit from Canada.¹¹⁶ The unit approximating this description was of course the Seventh Brigade, under Dunkelman's command through the summer and autumn of 1948. The Seventh Brigade operated in the north during this period, expelling Palestinians into Lebanon ('Anglo-Saxon knowhow was needed most on the northern front,' asserts one of Gorn's characters)¹¹⁷; Gorn's Giv'ati Brigade was active further south – where engagement with the Egyptian army spurs no end of commentary in the novel about 'the gyppos.' But Gorn's recurring focus on this external enemy does not entirely bury the place of the Palestinians. For example, the narrator accurately cites by name a Palestinian village in the Gaza district that the Giv'ati Brigade occupied and destroyed: 'The inhabitants of Hatta had fled Jewish guns and the terrifying rumour of a Jewish atom bomb.'¹¹⁸ And aside from Gorn's nuclear flourish, the fate of Hatta is not depicted as in the least bit exceptional. For a North American author the following parallel naturally emerges: 'The Indians of pioneer America and the Arabs of pioneering Israel: a native people being driven from their country by a tide of men and guns and determination and what Aaron used to call the dynamics of history.'¹¹⁹ Gorn even presents readers with persistent arguments from veteran Haganah soldiers that Arab civilians are to be treated as enemy targets.¹²⁰

Gorn's historical fiction about the Mahal allows for contradictory commentary voiced by different characters and in this way incorporates more critical reflection about the expulsions than the non-fiction record produced by the likes of Dunkelman and Bercuson. Bercuson's account of the Canadian and broader Mahal record is in a certain sense the most detailed study on record. But he sets the stage for the arrival of these recruits in the spring of 1948 with recourse to the orthodox Zionist narrative: Palestinian villages were occupied in a defensive manoeuvre against impending Arab attack, with

¹¹⁶ Gorn, *Anglo-Saxons*, 169.

¹¹⁷ Gorn, *Anglo-Saxons*, 215.

¹¹⁸ Gorn, *Anglo-Saxons*, 234.

¹¹⁹ Gorn, *Anglo-Saxons*, 373.

¹²⁰ As in an exchange sampled at the outset of this chapter; see note 2, above.

Jewish pleas for Arab civilians to stay overshadowing Haganah expulsions.¹²¹ It remains to combine the celebratory accounts of Mahal combat with the reality of expulsions in 1948 Palestine.

This reality is explored in detail in Israeli dissident Ilan Pappé's *The Ethnic Cleansing of Palestine*, as in the work of a wide range of Palestinian scholars from Walid Khalidi to Rosemary Sayigh. Outright denial of the mass expulsion of Palestinians by Zionist forces is not a credible position by any honest intellectual standard. Denial can only be sheltered by an 'edifice of deceit,' as one researcher observed, that has stood not on any grounded controversy over the historical record but through a concerted effort 'to prop it up,' undertaken by propagandists operating 'with all the perversity of flat-earthers but none of their innocent eccentricity.'¹²² There are, however, some plausible disputes over research methodology.

For some historians, an encompassing focus on official documents is the only basis for credible research. Israeli historian Benny Morris has produced the best-known work in this tradition – work that deserves attention despite the author's expression of extreme hostility towards the Palestinians since 2004 (e.g., 'Something like a cage needs to be built for them').¹²³ National hostility of the sort that Morris has expressed rarely leaves a person's research unaffected. And over the past decade Morris has moved to align his scholarship with a more aggressive intellectual patriotism. His studies beginning with *The Birth of the Palestinian Refugee Problem, 1947-1949* nonetheless remain the main academic reference point for research about the expulsions fixated on declassified documentation. They reveal much about both the official documentary record and the limits of exclusive reliance upon it.

The year that Nazzari published his *The Palestinian Exodus from Galilee, 1948*, Israel began declassifying documents concerning the 1948 war (pursuant to the thirty-year rule), permitting access to researchers and providing the basis for Morris's later work on the topic. Morris challenged Israel's established diplomatic mythology. But he was loathe to look beyond the declassified archives. Consider the implications for the

¹²¹ Bercuson, *Secret Army*, 75-6.

¹²² David Hirst, *The Gun and the Olive Branch: The Roots of Violence in the Middle East* (Boston: Faber and Faber, 1984), 138.

¹²³ See Jonathan Cook, *Blood and Religion: The Unmasking of the Jewish and Democratic State* (London: Pluto Press, 2006), 107-108.

study of Operation Hiram, during which Dunkelman's Seventh Brigade and other units under Moshe Carmel's command pushed tens of thousands of Palestinians into Lebanon. Contradicting Nazzal, Morris claimed in the 1987 edition of *Birth* that expulsions were not ordered from above. Official Israeli sources available to that date suggested that the process was 'haphazard.' Accordingly, so did Morris. In 1998, Israel declassified Moshe Carmel's expulsion order, sent to all units operating on the northern front. And so in Morris corrected himself – on the order for these expulsions. But significantly, he suggested that archival conditions were still not ripe for judgement of the record of atrocities in 1948 Palestine as a whole: 'adequate treatment of that subject will have to wait until IDFA [the Israel Defence Forces Archives] declassify all the relevant documents (at present, IDFA keeps classified almost all documents relating to IDF expulsions or massacres of Arab civilians or prisoners of war, from 1948 on).'¹²⁴

For Palestinians, awaiting the pace of Israeli declassification to address questions of history that are inseparable from contemporary political struggle has never been an option. Moreover, researchers like Nazzal and Sayigh have led by example in showing the possible strength of research based on Palestinian oral sources.¹²⁵ Saleh Abdel Jawad argues that incorporation of oral history is an essential matter of political and intellectual principle. These questions of methodology concern both what Palestinian experiences are represented in print and the analysis of Zionist policy itself. In 2004 Morris, even as he turned towards harsh public rhetoric against the Palestinians, went some way towards incorporating critiques of his earlier work, giving more attention to the politics of transfer in an updated volume of *Birth*. Ilan Pappé, rupturing with Israeli political and academic norms, combines Palestinian oral with archival history. Pappé also joins Nazzal, Walid Khalidi, and Nur Masalha in describing the expulsions of 1948 as the outcome of the Zionist leadership's objective of cleansing Palestine of Palestinians in order to pave the way for a Jewish state.

However one balances sources, the availability of declassified Haganah documents explicitly calling for the expulsion of Palestinians is now a compelling fact. The Haganah plans for how Zionist units would conduct themselves once British forces

¹²⁴ Benny Morris, 'Operation Hiram,' 75.

¹²⁵ See, for example, Nazzal, *Palestinian Exodus from Galilee*; and Rosemary Sayigh, 'Women's Nakba Stories: Between Being and Knowing,' in eds. Abu-Lughod and Sa'di, *Nakba*, 135-161.

relinquished control of Palestine are especially notable. The first Haganah plan for this eventuality (Plan Avnir) dates to 1937.¹²⁶ The operative plan as Canadian recruits arrived was Plan Dalet (Plan D), finalized in March 1948 and put into practice beginning in April. Military rule was to be imposed on Palestinian communities within territory occupied for the Jewish state. 'In the event of resistance,' the document states, 'the armed force must be destroyed and the population must be expelled outside the borders of the state.' The text of Plan Dalet also explicitly outlines means of giving such expulsion the air of permanence, including '[d]estruction of villages (setting fire to, blowing up, and planting mines in the debris), especially those population centres which are difficult to control continuously.'¹²⁷ In the early months of 1948, British forces in Palestine gradually relinquished their authority in preparation for the announced end of the mandate on 15 May. In April, as the Haganah put Plan Dalet into effect, expulsion of the Palestinians became systematic across the country. This set the context in which Canadian recruits began to arrive.

Early Canadian Participation in Transfer Operations

The diplomatic cover for the Zionist movement's seizure of Palestinian territory was in part provided by a United Nations resolution passed in November 1947, recommending the partition of Palestine into a Jewish and an Arab state. The UN partition plan and the Canadian government's role in its adoption are discussed in Chapter 3. The political effect of this resolution was to bestow a semblance of international legitimacy upon Zionist war aims. In practice Ben-Gurion's leadership exploited the circumstances to undertake a policy more extreme than any of the international partition schemes approved by friendly states.

Two striking differences between Ben-Gurion's war aims and the partition recommendations concern control of Jerusalem and the place of Palestinians in Zionist-held territory. In none of the partition plans discussed in 1946-7 was Jerusalem slated

¹²⁶ Walid Khalidi, 'Revisiting the UNGA Partition Resolution,' in ed. Ilan Pappé, *The Israel/Palestine Question: A Reader* (London: Routledge, 2007), 102; and Tauber, *Personal Policy Making*, 99.

¹²⁷ Walid Khalidi, 'Plan Dalet: Master Plan for the Conquest of Palestine,' *Journal of Palestine Studies* 18, no. 1 (autumn 1988), 29.

for inclusion in the Jewish state.¹²⁸ The UN partition plan of November 1947, for example, Resolution 181, recommended that Jerusalem be governed separately from the proposed Jewish and Arab states, under a form of international administration. On the second issue, population transfer was surely not authorized. It was generally understood that the Zionist leadership would wish to build up Jewish demographic predominance in areas under its control. But the idea, however skewed, was that this would be accomplished by Zionist authority over immigration policy, not by the expulsion of the Palestinian population.

In the actual implementation of Plan Dalet, the Zionist leadership's commitment to incorporating as much of Jerusalem as possible into the Jewish state immediately converged with the policy of transfer. The elements came together in the first offensive launched under the plan, Operation Nachshon. The aim of the attack was to connect the Yishuv's coastal strongholds with the Jewish sector of Jerusalem, which, incidentally, was then governed on behalf of the Jewish Agency by Montreal's Dov Joseph. Widespread ethnic cleansing defined the effort.

One of the most valuable records of the 1948 catastrophe is a large and meticulous volume entitled *All That Remains: The Palestinian Villages Occupied and Depopulated by Israel in 1948*. A collective research project anchored by Walid Khalidi, *All That Remains* reviews the record of destruction from district to district, from village to village. The district map for Jerusalem shows the implications of the Zionist push to clear the path from the Yishuv's main centres on the central Palestinian coast through to Jerusalem. Thirty-eight Palestinian villages towards the west of the Jerusalem district would be emptied by the Zionist advance.¹²⁹ Yigal Allon suggests that the Zionist leadership was seeking only to loosen 'the Arab noose choking the city.'¹³⁰ On 5 April, aiming at a Palestinian presence which Allon likened to suffocation, the Haganah launched Operation Nachshon.

In mid-March, the first recruits to have left Canada had met at one of the Haganah's main bases in Europe, Grand Arénas, just north of Marseilles, before continuing on to Palestine. Most of them had come by sea to Le Havre. Dunkelman flew

¹²⁸ For maps of the Jewish Agency proposal endorsed by US president Harry Truman in 1946 and by the UN General Assembly in 1947, see Khalidi, *From Haven to Conquest*, 613 & 707, respectively.

¹²⁹ Khalidi, *All That Remains*, 264.

¹³⁰ Allon, *Shield of David*, 196.

from Toronto. After a brief meeting the Canadians again parted ways, the greater number of them remaining in France for Hebrew lessons and Zionist political education, while Dunkelman travelled to Haifa with false British identification.¹³¹ The reception of these early recruits suggests the two main ways in which Mahal personnel were incorporated into Zionist operations: many, like Dunkelman, were posted as individuals to units where it seemed their experience would be useful; and others, like the rest of the Canadians at Grand Arénas, remained grouped together in clusters.

Dunkelman arrived in Palestine in early April. From the organizational periphery of units carrying out Operation Nachshon, he observed their use of artillery. He was a critical admirer of the mortars that the Haganah had developed. One element of the Haganah's arsenal that made an impression on Dunkelman was the 'Davidka,' an artillery piece that lobbed inaccurate, notoriously loud 40-kilo shells full of shrapnel. 'The Davidka was one of the wonders of the 1948 war,' writes Dunkelman. 'Although its range was short and it did not always cause any real damage, it made an enormously loud explosion, and its psychological effect on the Arabs was incalculable.'¹³² He hoped to put his own artillery expertise to use. After a period of service with the Palmach's Harel Brigade, Dunkelman approached Ben-Gurion with a proposal to introduce new equipment and techniques through a specialized artillery unit. In his autobiography he insists that Ben-Gurion gave him 'full and complete authority over all phases of the operation: production, distribution, and training of crews.'¹³³ Ben-Gurion confirms that he authorized Dunkelman 'to deal with the production of 6-inch mortars.'¹³⁴

Dunkelman also claims to have made a mark in his work with the Harel Brigade, helping to plan an attack on the village of Bayt Mahsir. The effort to capture Bayt Mahsir was part of the campaign, initiated with Operation Nachshon, to establish a 'Jerusalem corridor' cleared of Palestinian villages and Arab irregulars. Located in the hills south of the main road to Jerusalem, the village was home to approximately two thousand people. In the second week of May the Harel Brigade set out to remove this perceived threat to control of the road. Dunkelman writes that he proposed an overnight assault to be launched in the early hours of 11 May. 'Before first light,' he writes, 'the Davidka

¹³¹ Bercuson, *Secret Army*, 77-8.

¹³² Dunkelman, *Dual Allegiance*, 195.

¹³³ Dunkelman, *Dual Allegiance*, 224-25.

¹³⁴ Ben-Gurion, *Israel*, 116.

opened up on the village, making the usual ear-splitting bang, and the assault force went in. The Davidka had done its morale-shattering work well; our troops met practically no opposition.¹³⁵ Pappé cites the Harel Brigade report to the Haganah's chief of operations, sent hours after Bayt Mahsir was taken: 'we are currently blowing up the houses. We have already blown up 60-70 houses.'¹³⁶ The entire village was soon destroyed.

The other Canadians that Dunkelman had met with in France were grouped together under the leadership of Lionel Druker, a Canadian recruit from Halifax. The dispersal of recruits tends to subsume their record within the broader record of the Zionist militias. Where clusters of recruits stayed together, it is easier to trace their involvement. More significant cases arise in the summer and autumn of 1948, when the clusters of Mahal recruits grew. But these early cases also deserve attention. The Canadians grouped around Druker were on 3 May posted to the Giv'ati Brigade, where they soon constituted approximately half a company in the 52nd Battalion.¹³⁷ The day after the Canadian recruits arrived, their Brigade launched an attack on the village of 'Aqir, an attack which according to the *New York Times* resulted in the flight of three thousand Palestinians.¹³⁸

The Giv'ati Brigade occupies a prominent place in the Haganah's turn towards systematic ethnic cleansing. This was the brigade that anchored Operation Nachshon. It was also the brigade to which the Israeli writer S. Yizhar was attached as an intelligence officer. Here it is instructive to sample from Yizhar's literary work. Consider the following passage from his 1992 novel *Mikdamot* (Preliminaries). Yizhar grew up in Palestine, and this novel projects knowledge of what would happen in 1948 onto recollections of the past. In so doing it ascribes to a Jewish child in mandatory Palestine the premonition that Palestinian communities would be cleansed from their lands – that, in the narrator's words, 'these Arabs will not remain, the men and the women, and that Zarnuga will not remain and Qubeibeh will not remain and Yibne will not remain, they will all go away and start to live in Gaza, woe for them ...'.¹³⁹ In these lines the

¹³⁵ Dunkelman, *Dual Allegiance*, 213-14.

¹³⁶ Ilan Pappé, *The Ethnic Cleansing of Palestine* (Oxford: Oneworld Publications, 2006), 140.

¹³⁷ Bercuson, *Secret Army*, 101.

¹³⁸ As cited in Khalidi, *All That Remains*, 360.

¹³⁹ S. Yizhar, trans. N.R.M. De Lange, *Preliminaries* (New Milford: Toby Press, 2007), 295.

expulsions of 1948 are represented more specifically than in the case of Yizhar's fictionalized village of Khirbet Hizah. All three villages he cites were Palestinian communities destroyed by the Giv'ati Brigade in May and June of 1948. Yizhar's words have a clear contemporary resonance; it was for good reason that Gabriel Piterberg read these lines in a March 2009 symposium reflecting on the previous winter's Israeli assault on the Gaza Strip.¹⁴⁰ It was this destruction to which Lionel Druker's 'Canadian platoon' contributed.

On 9 May the Giv'ati Brigade launched the offensive that would destroy Zarnuqa, al-Qubayba, and Yibna (Operation Barak).¹⁴¹ Morris writes that the Brigade's commander, Shim'on Avidan, 'wanted only empty villages,' and ethnic cleansing by the forces under his command is well established.¹⁴² Eqbal Ahmad once remarked that those colonial advances that go smoothly often receive the least attention. Colonial campaigns are impossible to forget, suggests Ahmad, 'only when resistance has a semblance of costing, of exacting a price. When a Custer is killed or a Gordon is besieged. That's when you know there were Indians fighting, Arabs fighting and dying.'¹⁴³ In the Canadian intellectual record this dynamic is surely at work. Thus we know from Bercuson that Canadian recruits in the 52nd Battalion helped spearhead the occupation and depopulation of the village of Bashshit. We have a very detailed account of this, since there they are said to have come under heavy fire; one of the Canadian recruits lost a leg to wounds suffered in the course of this attack.¹⁴⁴ The conduct of these recruits in less costly Giv'ati Brigade conquests is not so well represented in print.

Further research into international participation in expulsions and other atrocities in 1948 Palestine is required, and not to satisfy the requirements of disinterested curiosity or morbid accuracy. The legacy of 1948 and its political distortion are not only historical problems. They bear directly on the present. As Lila Abu-Lughod and Ahmad

¹⁴⁰ Irene Gendzier, Gabriel Piterberg, and Karma Nabulsi, 'US Foreign Policy and Gaza,' 30 March 2009 (Cambridge: MIT/Harvard Gaza Symposium), <<http://video.mit.edu/watch/mitharvard-gaza-symposium-panel-1-4077>>.

¹⁴¹ Khalidi, *All That Remains*, 408, 421-25.

¹⁴² As cited in Khalidi, *All That Remains*, 408.

¹⁴³ Eqbal Ahmad, eds. Carollee Bengelsoorf et al., *The Selected Writings of Eqbal Ahmad* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2006), 260.

¹⁴⁴ Bercuson, *Secret Army*, 102-6.

Sa'di argue, 'the Nakba is not over yet; after almost sixty years neither the Palestinians nor Israelis have yet achieved a state of normality; the violence and uprooting of Palestinians continues.'¹⁴⁵ The intellectual justification of past atrocities – in the Canadian case, through disciplined omission – worsens their reverberation into the present. Abu-Lughod and Sa'di suggest that historical distortion undercuts the basis for contemporary political sympathy. 'How many people in the West know why Palestinians feel such different emotions from Israelis on their "Independence Day" on 15 May? Why they continue to struggle, sometimes violently?'¹⁴⁶

The date of 15 May 1948 is heavy with symbolism. On this date the British mandate over Palestine formally ended and, with Zionist militias moving to seize much of the country, neighbouring Arab states deployed expeditionary forces into Palestine. This was the beginning of what is conventionally understood as the Arab-Israeli war of 1948. It lasted from the end of the mandate through to 1949, when Israel and the Arab states signed the series of armistice agreements that delineated Israel's *de facto* borders until 1967. The symbolic significance of 15 May is undeniable. But focus on the ensuing conflict between state forces has often been used to bury the history of the war against the Palestinians. Therefore, as the Palestinian scholar Sadrine Mansour-Mérien insists, it is important to stress that this date marked the beginning of *inter-state warfare* – not of the expulsions. These two realities existed in parallel. Mansour-Mérien emphasizes this by means of an especially broad periodization of the Nakba proper. She argues that the 1948 wave of transfer formed part of a phase of Zionist operations that should be dated from the immediate aftermath of the UN partition vote, in December 1947, up to the Qibya massacre of October 1953.¹⁴⁷ Without framing the time-line quite so broadly, Pappé argues along similar lines: 'There had been ethnic cleansing on the day before 15 May 1948, and the same ethnic cleansing operations took place the day after. Israel had enough troops both to handle the Arab armies and to continue cleansing the land.'¹⁴⁸

¹⁴⁵ Abu-Lughod and Sa'di, *Nakba*, 10.

¹⁴⁶ Abu-Lughod and Sa'di, *Nakba*, 9.

¹⁴⁷ Sandrine Mansour-Mérien, *L'Histoire occultée des Palestiniens, 1947-1953* (Toulouse: Éditions Privat, 2013), 528.

¹⁴⁸ Pappé, *Ethnic Cleansing*, 131.

On 11 June 1948, after less than a month of regular military engagements that did little to slow the dispossession of the Palestinians, the first truce between Israel and the Arab states went into effect. It lasted until 8 July. Despite an official arms embargo, Israel's military procurement networks poured weaponry and recruits into Palestine throughout the truce. The units of the newly-established IDF were considerably enforced. Aerial units were equipped with advanced fighter planes and heavy bombers, and joined by a further influx of experienced air crew from the English-speaking West. Bercuson's conclusion is corroborated by most military histories of air power in 1948 Palestine: 'The volunteers did not aid the Israeli Air Force; they *were* the Israeli Air Force.'¹⁴⁹ The IDF's armoured corps, too, was expanded. A new unit was established, the Eighth (Armoured) Brigade, and the Seventh Brigade was enforced with heavier equipment. In these units increasingly large clusters of Canadian recruits were grouped together. Their role in subsequent cleansing operations is an important chapter in Canadian Zionist history.

Identifying Canadian Responsibility for Atrocities

The Israeli Air Force was not entirely staffed by Mahal recruits. These did, however, predominate. Among the aircrew that served in the IAF of 1948, more than two thirds were Mahalniks.¹⁵⁰ Lon Nordeen summarizes a consensus in the literature: 'Volunteers from the United States, Canada, South Africa, Great Britain and other countries ... formed the backbone of the air force during the War of Independence.'¹⁵¹ The celebratory record of Mahal combat is full of anecdotes of Canadian participation in aerial operations throughout Palestine and beyond.

Months before the end of the British mandate, the IAF, known until late May 1948 as the *Sherut Avir* ('air service'), was already flying missions in coordination with Haganah ground forces. Zionist military historiography makes much of the improvised nature of *Sherut Avir* equipment. In a book on Israeli air power whose title, *Israel's Best Defence*, pays homage to the politics of force, the IAF veteran and rightist Israeli

¹⁴⁹ Bercuson, *Secret Army*, 230.

¹⁵⁰ Norton, *Air War on the Edge*, 12-13.

¹⁵¹ Nordeen, *Fighters over Israel*, 14.

politician Eliezer Cohen stresses the ingenuity of the Sherut Avir's early hand-thrown explosives. Its first locally-made bomb, 'Model 1,' was deployed beginning in March. 'An elongated cast-iron box filled with a mixture of explosives, screws, and pieces of metal, this type of device had a tail strengthened by two poles to assure a vertical fall.'¹⁵² World War II had set standards that such equipment did not meet. But in a less partisan history of air power in Palestine than Cohen's, Brian Cull and Shlomo Aloni point out the obvious: until 15 May Arab Palestine was without any air defences. Under-armed Palestinian militias faced constant attacks from the Sherut Avir with no prospect of air support unless the Arab states intervened. 'They also saw RAF aircraft sharing the same skies with their enemies, further fuelling a Palestinian belief that the British were acting in collusion with the Zionist settlers.'¹⁵³

When the Arab states intervened after 15 May, Israeli forces briefly lost their aerial advantage. The Royal Egyptian Air Force brought down a number of the Sherut Avir's improvised bombers, and Israeli bombers were for a time forced to operate only at night.¹⁵⁴ Egypt even deployed improvised bombers of its own. On 18 May an Egyptian bomber struck the central bus station in Tel Aviv, killing an estimated forty-two people.¹⁵⁵ But the influx of weaponry and personnel soon restored Israeli aerial superiority. By the end of May, the IAF was in a position to bomb not only Palestinian population centres (e.g. Isdud, Lydda, Ramla, and Ramallah) and Arab state forces in Palestine, but also the Jordanian capital of Amman; on the eve of the first truce, 10-11 June, IAF bombers dropped two tons of explosives on Damascus.¹⁵⁶ The IAF naturally became active in regular military engagements. But it also participated in the parallel process of ethnic cleansing. Abdel Jawad finds that beginning in July, the IAF was one of Israel's 'deadliest' means of population transfer.¹⁵⁷

It is difficult to establish verifiable links between Palestinian casualties and particular operations involving Canadian aircrew. In his *Age of Extremes*, Eric Hobsbawm remarks upon the twentieth-century onset of a 'new impersonality of

¹⁵² Eliezer Cohen, trans. Jonathan Cordis, *Israel's Best Defence: The First Full Story of the Israeli Air Force* (New York: Orion Books, 1993), 16.

¹⁵³ Cull and Aloni, *Spitfires*, 100.

¹⁵⁴ Cull and Aloni, *Spitfires*, 148.

¹⁵⁵ Lorch, *War of Independence*, 264.

¹⁵⁶ Cull and Aloni, *Spitfires*, 154, 165.

¹⁵⁷ Abdel Jawad, 'Zionist Massacres,' 66.

warfare, which turned killing and maiming into the remote consequences of pushing a button or moving a lever. Technology made its victims invisible, as people eviscerated by bayonets, or seen through the sights of firearms could not be.¹⁵⁸ The Zionist armed forces were not without their firearms nor even, as we will see, their bayonets. But the impact of aerial massacres cannot be brushed aside simply because those responsible kept some distance from those targeted. Suffice it here to highlight the connection between the IAF record and the dispossession of the Palestinians. The IAF was most active in the southwest, especially during Operation Yoav, which hammered the Gaza Strip into more or less its current dimensions.¹⁵⁹ Various Palestinian communities that were ultimately conquered (e.g. Majdal) were in large part depopulated by aerial (alongside naval) attacks.¹⁶⁰ It was partly owing to the IAF, and the 151 tons of explosives that it dropped during Operation Yoav, that the population of the Gaza Strip tripled in the face of Israeli advances.¹⁶¹ The IAF was also deployed with lesser intensity throughout the country. As we will see, this included the Galilee, where Palestinian communities had no air defences of any kind.

The other branch of the Israeli armed forces in which Mahal recruits were heavily clustered was the armoured corps. The new armoured unit established during the first truce, the Eighth Brigade, consisted of one tank battalion and one commando battalion (the 82nd and 89th, respectively). One of the 82nd Battalion's two companies was known as the 'English company,' and was staffed mostly by recruits from Canada, Britain, and South Africa.¹⁶² Then there was the Seventh Brigade, established earlier in the year and now enforced with heavier equipment. This was the unit in which Canadian recruits were most prominent. In June Ben-Gurion gave command of this unit to Dunkelmann. During the summer, it included an estimated 170 English-speaking

¹⁵⁸ Eric Hobsbawm, *Age of Extremes: The Short Twentieth Century, 1914-1991* (London: Abacus, 1995), 50.

¹⁵⁹ Strictly speaking, a further narrowing of the Strip occurred after the armistice agreements of 1949. See Salman Abu-Sitta, *The Atlas of Palestine 1917-1966* (London: Palestine Land Society, 2010), 98.

¹⁶⁰ Benny Morris, *The Birth of the Palestinian Refugee Problem Revisited* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 472; Pappé, *Ethnic Cleansing of Palestine*, 194. Intensive bombing of the area is chronicled in nearly all historical accounts which address the use of air power in 1948 Palestine.

¹⁶¹ Concerning population increase, 'tripling' is the calculation of Sara Roy, *The Gaza Strip: The Political Economy of De-development* (Washington: Institute for Palestine Studies, 1995), 15. Morris, *Birth Revisited*, suggests (472-473) an increase of 100,000 to 230,000.

¹⁶² Eshel, *Chariots of the Desert*, 13-14, 17; and Bercuson, *Secret Army*, 165.

Mahal personnel, a number that grew to approximately 300 in the fall.¹⁶³ These were most concentrated in the brigade's 72nd Battalion. Command of its 79th Battalion, meanwhile, was in the hands of the Canadian veteran Joe Weiner.¹⁶⁴ The Seventh is the unit which Nafez Nazzal refers to as the 'Anglo-Saxon Brigade.' It occupies a prominent place in Israeli military history. IDF officer turned military historian David Eshel remarks that it 'was to become the IDF's foremost armoured formation in later wars.'¹⁶⁵

A week and a half after the collapse of the first truce, a second truce between Israel and the Arab states went into effect. As already emphasized, ethnic cleansing continued during the truces. But the fiercest cleansing operations were undertaken in conjunction with open warfare, as the IDF brought additional territory under Israeli control. Thus the first major offensives involving the Eighth Brigade and the reinforced Seventh were carried out in the period between the first and the second truce. This phase of the war, from 9-18 July, is known in Israeli historiography as 'the Ten Days.' It witnessed rapid Israeli advances extending well beyond the boundaries of the Jewish state recommended by the UN partition resolution. The Eighth Brigade was deployed in the centre of the country, in what the IDF called Operation Dani. The Seventh was deployed in the north, in Operation Dekel.

Operation Dani hammered the emerging boundary of the West Bank inland from the coast, targeting the Palestinian towns of Lydda and Ramla, and many villages in their vicinity, with expulsion to the east. The Eighth Brigade was attached to a large composite force assembled for the operation under the command of Yigal Allon. It formed part of the northern arm of a pincer movement aimed at encircling Lydda and Ramla, severing them from the West Bank and bringing their territory under Israeli control. The 82nd Tank Battalion, with its 'English company,' was supposed to lead the way. As it happened, Moshe Dayan's 89th Commando Battalion made quicker progress. On 11 July the 89th punched through Lydda's defences to carry out one of the most infamous raids of the 1948 war.¹⁶⁶ By 12 July both Lydda and Ramla were under IDF control. The inhabitants of both towns were expelled eastward, and columns of tens of

¹⁶³ Markovitzky, *Mahal*, 31.

¹⁶⁴ Bercuson, *Secret Army*, 183; Dunkelman, *Dual Allegiance*, 261.

¹⁶⁵ Eshel, *Chariots of the Desert*, 19.

¹⁶⁶ Lorch, *War of Independence*, 335-348.

thousands of refugees made their way into the West Bank. The historian 'Arif al-'Arif estimates that 350 died from heat and thirst during the forced march.¹⁶⁷ The worst atrocities of this campaign were carried out by the 89th Battalion. But the 82nd played a role, including in the occupation of the villages of Dayr Tarif and Barfiliya, and in the destruction of al-Tira and 'Inabba.¹⁶⁸ It was then instructed by Yitzhak Rabin to block the return of any villagers from the West Bank, including by means of live fire.¹⁶⁹

Dunkelman's Seventh Brigade, meanwhile, operated in the north, on the front commanded by Moshe Carmel. It is an irony of 1948 historiography that Dunkelman is identified less with the ethnic cleansing of Palestinian villages and more with his hesitation in destroying one Palestinian centre in particular, Nazareth. Through to the end of his participation in the 1948 war, Dunkelman was uncomfortable with the expulsion of Christians.¹⁷⁰ Even Jabotinsky had made distinctions. 'The Islamic soul must be broomed out of Eretz-Yisrael,' the founding Revisionist leader had declared.¹⁷¹ What of the Palestinian Christians? During Operation Dekel, Dunkelman had to grapple with the Palestinian Christian question in one of its more dramatic settings. His Seventh Brigade was the main force tasked with capturing Nazareth. On 16 July Nazareth fell, and Dunkelman became the town's military governor. But for this Canadian brigade commander, Nazareth was not only a Palestinian town; it was also 'one of the most sanctified shrines of the Christian world.'¹⁷² A tense exchange resulted. Dunkelman was issued an order 'to uproot all the inhabitants at Nazareth' – there is some dispute as to whether this came from Moshe Carmel, commander of the northern front, or Haim Laskov, officer commanding for Operation Dekel.¹⁷³ In any case, Dunkelman hesitated, fearing 'severe international repercussions.'¹⁷⁴ Laskov appealed to the IDF general staff for a ruling: 'Tell me immediately, urgently, whether to expel the inhabitants from the city

¹⁶⁷ Spiro Munayyer, with an introduction by Walid Khalidi, 'The Fall of Lydda,' *Journal of Palestine Studies* 27, no. 4 (summer 1998), 82.

¹⁶⁸ Khalidi, *All that Remains*, 356, 361, 379.

¹⁶⁹ Morris, *Birth Revisited*, 442, 459 (n. 176).

¹⁷⁰ See Morris, *Birth Revisited*, 477.

¹⁷¹ Masalha, *Expulsion of the Palestinians*, 29.

¹⁷² Dunkelman, *Dual Allegiance*, 266.

¹⁷³ Morris, *Birth Revisited*, 419.

¹⁷⁴ Dunkelman, *Dual Allegiance*, 266.

of Nazareth. In my view all, save for clerics, should be expelled.¹⁷⁵ Ben-Gurion decided against expulsion.

This is an interesting counterpoint to the practice of expulsion. But it should not overshadow the broader record established by Dunkelman and his Anglo-Saxon Brigade. This was not an especially moderate unit. To the contrary, Palestinian oral history and declassified Israeli archives align in attributing to this unit some of the worst atrocities of the 1948 war. The most large-scale Seventh Brigade killings came in late October. But even sticking for the moment to the Ten Days, the sparing of Nazareth was not representative of Operation Dekel as a whole. Consider the case of Kuwaykat. A village of more than one thousand people, Kuwaykat was occupied in an overnight assault on 9-10 July by Seventh Brigade units supported by the Carmeli Brigade's 21st Battalion. Nazzal records Hassan Ahmad `Abdullatif's recollections of this operation:

We were awakened by the loudest noise we had ever heard, shells exploding and artillery fire... the whole village was in panic... women were screaming, children were crying... Most of the villagers began to flee with their pajamas on... When [the wife of Qassim Ahmad Sa'id] realized that her son was missing, she screamed louder and begged her husband to return to the house and bring the child. Between five and ten elderly people remained in the village with less than 30 armed men.¹⁷⁶

The *Toronto Daily Star's* 'Mr. Mortar of the Canadian Army' missed few opportunities to apply his expertise. 'I don't know whether the artillery softening up of the village caused casualties,' a company commander from the 21st Battalion later reflected, 'but the psychological effect was achieved and the village's non-combatants fled before we began the assault.'¹⁷⁷

It was also during Operation Dekel that Seventh Brigade units occupied Saffuriyya. By the time this village of four thousand people was attacked, it was sheltering an additional twenty-five hundred refugees from earlier Seventh Brigade conquests (mostly from Shafa `Amr).¹⁷⁸ Still its defenders were unprepared for the combination of artillery strikes, aerial bombardment, and heavy ground forces which they encountered. Here as throughout the Galilee, village militias received little assistance from the Arab states. They faced the IDF supported only by the all-volunteer Arab Liberation Army (ALA). Still this was a chapter not only of ethnic cleansing but also

¹⁷⁵ Morris, *Birth Revisited*, 419.

¹⁷⁶ Nazzal, *Palestinian Exodus from Galilee*, 1948, 72–73.

¹⁷⁷ Khalidi, *All that Remains*, 22.

¹⁷⁸ Nazzal, *Palestinian Exodus from Galilee*, 1948, 75.

of determined Palestinian resistance. Villages like Saffuriyya stood up against difficult odds. Although Dunkelman's forces eventually overran the village, Morris writes that the community 'put up strong resistance to the IDF advance.'¹⁷⁹ Nazzal also emphasizes the determination of Palestinians in Saffuriyya to resist. In the end, however, the military imbalance was too severe. Nazzal quotes Salih Muhammad Nassir, a quartermaster for the village militia: 'We expected a war but not an air and tank war.'¹⁸⁰ The village fell to Seventh Brigade units on 16 July. Israeli authorities made sure to block any villagers from returning to Saffuriyya once it was under Israeli control, a decision that Morris attributes in part to the fact that the villagers were all Muslim, and in part to the fact that 'neighbouring settlements coveted Saffuriya lands'.¹⁸¹

Discussions of Operation Dekel sometimes give the impression that Dunkelman was a relatively moderate commander; that the Seventh Brigade was only brought along with the politics of expulsion by commanders further up the IDF hierarchy. It is unclear exactly how much leeway Brigade commanders had in determining the fate of Palestinian communities. If anything, however, the Seventh Brigade distinguished itself not in its moderation but in its brutality. Pappé writes that in 'the Palestinian oral histories that have now come to the fore, few brigade names appear. However, Brigade Seven is mentioned again and again, together with such adjectives as "terrorist" and "barbarous."¹⁸² While Pappé writes this in connection with Operation Dekel, the worst of the brigade's atrocities were to come in October, with Operation Hiram.

Seventh Brigade participation in Operation Hiram should be a central reference point for the record of Mahal recruits. The cluster of Canadian and other English-speaking personnel in the Seventh Brigade had grown since the summer. Nowhere else in the Israeli armed forces, with the exception of the IAF, was what Lester Gorn refers to as 'Anglo-Saxon knowhow' ever more concentrated.¹⁸³ This episode of the 1948 war can provide a final illustration of the Canadian Zionist contribution to the Nakba.

By early autumn most of northern Palestine was under Israeli control. There remained a significant pocket of resistance, however, in the Upper Galilee. Subduing

¹⁷⁹ Morris, *Birth Revisited*, 418.

¹⁸⁰ Nazzal, *Palestinian Exodus from Galilee*, 75.

¹⁸¹ Morris, *Birth Revisited*, 519.

¹⁸² Pappé, *Ethnic Cleansing of Palestine*, 158.

¹⁸³ Gorn, *Anglo-Saxons*, 215.

this resistance and incorporating the territory into Israel was the objective of Operation Hiram. The operation was focused on capturing the village of Sa`sa`, located at a strategic junction of Galilee roadways. 'If you control these crossroads,' Haganah planner Yohanan Ratner had earlier advised Dunkelman, 'you control the whole of Galilee!'¹⁸⁴ Units from four brigades were put at Moshe Carmel's disposal to launch the attack. On 22 October the IAF began a week of heavy bombardment of villages in the area. Then, on 28-9 October, the ground offensive was launched.

The pattern of massacres in the days that followed is so severe that Benny Morris, even in the absence of specific documentation, has questioned whether there might not have been a 'central order to commit the atrocities.'¹⁸⁵ Since the publication in Nazzari's *The Palestinian Exodus From Galilee*, anyone denying that massacres were committed during this campaign has stood on extremely shaky ground. The question of central orders can be debated. The fact that massacres and other abuses took place is now beyond any reasonable dispute. The responsibility for many of these massacres falls on the Seventh Brigade and its command.

The three battalions under Dunkelman's command, the 71st, 72nd, and 79th, all participated in the operation. In the opening offensive of 28-9 October they moved together, pushing northwest from Safad and rapidly occupying the villages of Qaddita, Mirun, Safsaf, and Jish. Here as in Operation Dani, the IDF sought to conquer additional territory by means of a pincer movement. The Seventh Brigade offensive from Safad was its northeastern edge, aimed at conquering Sa`sa` and enclosing the major part of the resisting 'pocket' to its south.¹⁸⁶ After its conquests from Qaddita through Jish, the Seventh Brigade's units split. The 72nd and 79th battalions moved west to occupy Sa`sa` itself; the 71st shot northeast and occupied al-Ras al-Ahmar, Rihaniya, `Alma, and Dayshum.¹⁸⁷ After taking Sa`sa`, the 72nd and 79th also moved north, occupying a series of villages along the border with Lebanon and making cross-border incursions as far into Lebanon as the Litani River. Dunkelman claims that far

¹⁸⁴ Dunkelman, *Dual Allegiance*, 237.

¹⁸⁵ Morris, 'Operation Hiram,' 74-5.

¹⁸⁶ Edgar O'Ballance, *The Arab-Israeli War, 1948* (London: Faber and Faber, 1956), 186-87; Morris, *Birth Revisited*, 473.

¹⁸⁷ Morris, *Birth Revisited*, 473-74; Khalidi, *All that Remains*, 497.

from worrying about the borders to the north, he urged Ben-Gurion to organize an assault on Damascus.¹⁸⁸

Nazzal has recorded Palestinian accounts of these operations. This is how a woman from Safsaf, Umm Shahadah al-Salih, described the aftermath of the 29-30 October attack that brought her village under Seventh Brigade control. The villagers were ordered to assemble in file around two houses to the north of the village.

As we lined up, a few Jewish soldiers ordered four girls to accompany them to carry water for the soldiers. Instead, they took them to our empty houses and raped them. About 70 of our men were blindfolded and shot to death, one after the other, in front of us. The soldiers took their bodies and threw them on the cement covering of the village's spring and dumped sand on them.¹⁸⁹

Morris cites corroborating details from an 11 November committee meeting held by the Israeli political party Mapam. In declassified notes covering the discussion of Safsaf, one participant 'speaks of "52 adult males" tied together and dropped into a well and of three cases of rape, including of a 14-year-old girl.'¹⁹⁰

Other Israeli records of Seventh Brigade operations during these days paint a similar picture. The IDF intelligence officer for the northern front writes of '150-200' Palestinians killed in the capture of Jish, 'including a number of civilians.'¹⁹¹ Another IDF report indicates another '150-200' Palestinians from Jish captured, before a mysterious correction indicates that only a few prisoners remain.¹⁹² Seventh Brigade forces are held, by no less than a former head of the Haganah national staff, to have committed 'mass murder' at Sa'sa'.¹⁹³ And on it continues.

From Palestinian accounts there emerge the most horrifying details. One survivor of the occupation of Safsaf recounts witnessing the stabbing of a pregnant woman with a bayonet. The surviving witness lived out his life in the Ayn Al-Hilweh refugee camp in Lebanon. The recollection was kept alive by his nephew and cited in Pappé's *The Ethnic Cleansing of Palestine*.¹⁹⁴ Dunkelman's account of these operations does of course not address killings or abuses of this kind. But he does describe his troops' attachment to bayonets. In the summer of 1948, he proudly recalls, an English-

¹⁸⁸ Dunkelman, *Dual Allegiance*, 313-4.

¹⁸⁹ Nazzal, *Palestinian Exodus from Galilee*, 95.

¹⁹⁰ Morris, *Birth Revisited*, 500.

¹⁹¹ Morris, *Birth Revisited*, 474.

¹⁹² Morris, *Birth Revisited*, 500-1.

¹⁹³ Khalidi, *All that Remains*, 497.

¹⁹⁴ Pappé, *Ethnic Cleansing of Palestine*, 184.

speaking company commander of the 72nd Battalion carried out ‘the first bayonet charge ever mounted by the Israeli Army.’ Facing an Arab position in the central Galilee, the company commander ‘ordered his men to fix bayonets; then, yelling like banshees, they rushed the Arabs positions. When the astonished Arabs saw what was coming up the hill at them, they kicked off their boots and fled in terror.’¹⁹⁵

Benny Morris suggests that the terror that Seventh Brigade units inspired facilitated the task of population transfer. ‘What happened at Safsaf and Jish no doubt reached the villagers of Ras al Ahmar, `Alma, Deishum and al Malikiya hours before the Seventh Brigade’s columns. These villages, apart from `Alma, seem to have been completely or largely empty when the IDF arrived.’¹⁹⁶ It was operations of this kind that drove the population of northern Palestine into Lebanon. Operation Hiram alone pushed an estimated 50,000 Palestinians out of the country.¹⁹⁷ It is worth circling back to review in this light the expressions of pride in this record. This was the process by which, to repeat Bercuson’s words, ‘Seventh Brigade successes literally filled out the map of north-central Israel,’ in what the *Toronto Star* dubbed ‘the liberation of northern Israel.’

The refusal of Canadian intellectuals to address this history suggests more than a gap in the literature. It was half a century after these atrocities took place that Canadian Mahal recruits still figured into a liberal Canadian study as those ‘who took up arms against the Fascists’; that Dunkelmann was memorialized by the country’s most prestigious national daily as ‘a Canadian and Israeli war hero.’ This is a problem of politics, not of sourcing, methodology, or reasoned disagreements over fact.

Abu-Lughod and Sa’di argue that ‘Palestinian memory is, by dint of its preservation and social production under the conditions of its silencing by the thundering story of Zionism, dissident memory, counter-memory.’¹⁹⁸ In the Canadian context and across much of the West, on the other hand, most of what we hear is echoes from the stronger side. This does worse than adding insult to injury. The historiography of the victors undercuts any basis for respectful engagement with the Palestinian experience; resiliency in trauma and celebration in culpability cannot find reasonable common ground. Worse still, it tends to provide political cover for Israel as it

¹⁹⁵ Dunkelmann, *Dual Allegiance*, 272.

¹⁹⁶ Morris, *Birth Revisited*, 482.

¹⁹⁷ Morris, *Birth Revisited*, 473.

¹⁹⁸ Abu-Lughod and Sa’di, *Nakba*, 6.

pursues 'the second half of 1948.' International facilitation of Israeli warfare is by no means a thing of the past. It is necessary, then, to challenge the historical and the contemporary realities of colonization in much the same spirit.

Conclusion

The participation of Canadians in the Zionist war effort and in the expulsions that marked it may not have been the defining historical episode of the period, either in Canada or in Palestine. And its relatively limited scope goes some way towards explaining the striking weakness of the Canadian literature on the topic. However, this was not an insignificant episode, and its symbolic significance is wrapped up with the extraordinary importance of 1948 in all that concerns the Palestine question. A conventional Zionist mythology that is now discredited internationally, and even in Israel, continues to prevail in treatment of this aspect of Canadian history. In the interests both of historical accuracy and of contemporary political integrity, it is crucial that this this anachronism be seriously addressed.

The Canadian Zionist contribution to the 1948 war is not a story of dissident heroism. Once empowerment of the Zionist leadership by British authorities reached its limits, a conflict, eminently familiar to the history of settler colonialism, developed between the aims of settler leaders fixated on Palestine and their former imperial sponsors, whose wider strategic interests dictated relative moderation. Neither the build-up of this tension nor the eventual conflict between the new state of Israel and neighbouring government forces should obscure the core reality of the 1948 war: the effective disenfranchisement and wholesale dislocation of a majority of the native population in territory claimed by the new state. Canadian recruits to what became the IDF were not only associated with this in general terms, but were specifically implicated in the expulsions and other human rights abuses by means of which the political and demographic transformation of Palestine was effected. There is no factual basis for denying at least some measure of Canadian culpability in atrocities committed against the Palestinian population. The barriers to a reckoning with this history are not factual disputes but political taboos; they quite simply need to be dismantled.

3

The Bounds of Postwar Internationalism

'Thus, at the dawn of decolonization, we were returned to the earliest, most intense form of colonial menace – the exclusivist settler colonialism that had dealt genocidal blows to the great civilizations and peoples of the Americas . . . The tragedy occurred as a counterpoint to contemporary history, a reminder that all was not well with the era of decolonization.'¹

-Eqbal Ahmad, 'Pioneering in the Nuclear Age' (1984)

'The most dangerous element in the present situation is the breakdown in communications between the Governments of the United States and the United Kingdom on the subject of Palestine.'²

-Louis St.-Laurent, then Canadian minister of external affairs (February 1948)

* * *

In November 1950, Robert Bryce, Canada's deputy minister of finance, expressed misgivings about Canadian support for the United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA), the organization tasked with providing for the Palestinian refugees displaced during the 1948 war and excluded from the new state of Israel. Bryce, estimating the number of Palestinian refugees under UNRWA's mandate at 900,000, questioned the strategic logic for Canada of a relief effort that seemed poised to be 'slow and costly business.'³ Bryce wrote, 'While I recognize the strategic position of the Middle East, and that it would be a severe blow for the West if the area fell to the Communists, I suggest that many countries, particularly the US, UK, and possibly France, have deeper and more remunerative interests there than Canada.'⁴ The implication was that inasmuch as the Palestinian refugee crisis required Western attention, it should be addressed by the leading powers – those whose commercial investments in the region warranted close involvement.

In the Canadian record, Bryce's memorandum is accompanied by an unsigned note in the margin, written in by way of rebuttal: 'We took a leading role in creating the

¹ Eqbal Ahmad, in eds. Carollee Bengelsoorf et al., *The Selected Writings of Eqbal Ahmad* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2006), 301.

² Hector Mackenzie, ed., *Documents on Canadian External Relations* [henceforth *DCER*] Vol. 14 (Ottawa: Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade, 1994), 256.

³ Greg Donaghy, ed., *DCER Vol. 16* (Ottawa: Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade, 1996), 581.

⁴ *DCER Vol. 16*, 582.

problem.⁵ This was a pointed reference not to the role of the Canadian Zionist movement, but to the Canadian government's own support for the partition of Palestine.

Bryce's suggestion that such a direct connection should be maintained between Canadian foreign policy and profits for the Canadian private sector was made out of turn. In the first instance, the finance ministry was not charged with making political decisions of this kind. Moreover, officials at Canadian external affairs had come to accept that their government was taking on widened global responsibilities, both as a Western ally and as a member of the UN. A response from the UN division at Canadian external affairs was quick in coming: 'It is unthinkable that we should turn our back on an effort which United Nations representatives on the spot have told us is necessary in order to rectify the dislocations caused by the establishment of a Jewish state in Palestine.'⁶ As it happened, Canadian funding for UNRWA continued uninterrupted until its cancellation in 2010.

Canada was by no means alone in supporting, in turn, the partition of Palestine and then the relief effort to address the dislocations that it triggered. Pairing support for Israel with development assistance for the Palestinian refugees produced obvious contradictions. Some officials at external affairs observed as much. In 1953, for example, Charles Ritchie noted to his colleagues that Arab mistrust of Western relief efforts was not without grounds. 'The United Nations,' he explained, 'has been paying through UNRWA the cost of keeping the Arab refugees out of Israel while Jewish communities in the Western world, and particularly the United States, have been bearing the cost of replacing the former Arab population with Jewish immigrants from abroad.'⁷ In Canada as in the US, fundraising for Israeli settlement programs was even designated as charitable and tax-exempt.⁸ This would be an enduring contradiction in Canadian engagement with the Middle East. For postwar Canada, however, Arab opinion was rarely a serious concern.

The 1940s did witness a transformation of Canada's approach to external affairs. During the interwar years, the influence of US power as an immediate reference point

⁵ *DCER Vol. 16*, 582.

⁶ *DCER Vol. 16*, 588.

⁷ Donald Barry, ed., *DCER Vol. 19* (Ottawa: External Affairs and International Trade Canada, 1991), 510.

⁸ Daniel J. Elazar and Alysa M. Dortort, *Understanding the Jewish Agency: A Handbook* (Jerusalem: Jerusalem Centre for Public Affairs, 1985), 66.

for Canadian officials contributed to limiting Canada's overseas commitments; pursuing Canadian autonomy within the British Empire and avoiding possible tension with the US both seemed to dictate caution about distant entanglements. During World War II, the Allied balance of power swung further towards the US, and Canada's external orientation shifted accordingly. However, as the US assumed an unprecedented global role, North American continental arrangements now encouraged more global Canadian involvement. The new approach was promoted by a rising layer of Liberal leadership, headed up by Lester B. Pearson and Louis St.-Laurent. Mackenzie King, prime minister until his retirement in 1948, viewed this self-styled internationalism with concern. 'The truth,' King reflected in his diary in 1948, 'is our country has no business trying to play a world role in the affairs of nations, the very location of some of which our people know little or nothing about.'⁹ Officials like Pearson and St.-Laurent were meanwhile moving to involve Canada's department of external affairs in conflicts from Korea to Palestine. Notwithstanding King's concerns, Canada was entering a new stage of global involvement.

This chapter emphasizes the element of continuity amidst these changes. Canadian external affairs policy underwent a major transition during the 1940s. But this did not involve anything like a clean break from Canada's imperial past. It had been during the peak years of the Third British Empire that Gramsci highlighted one of the constraints on British primacy in the Anglosphere, namely 'the power of the United States which is also Anglo-Saxon and exerts influence on some dominions.'¹⁰ For Canada, the only Dominion in the western hemisphere, an immediate neighbour to the rising superpower, this influence was especially compelling. Nicholas Mansergh writes that between the world wars, the Canadian fixation on relations with the US had sometimes irritated the British government. After World War II, it was less controversial in Britain, and 'Canada's insistence that Anglo-American co-operation should be the supreme objective of the Commonwealth was warmly endorsed by many who were most critical of her pre-war insistence on it.'¹¹ This insistence had long been a core

⁹ J.W. Pickersgill and D.F. Forster, eds., *The Mackenzie King Record, Vol. 4, 1947-1948* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1970), 140.

¹⁰ Antonio Gramsci, ed./trans. Joseph A. Buttigieg, *Prison Notebooks Vol. 1* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996), 291.

¹¹ Nicholas Mansergh, *Survey of British Commonwealth Affairs: Problems of External Policy, 1931-1939* (London, New York, and Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1952), 105.

Canadian priority in external affairs. It remained so throughout the classic era of liberal Canadian internationalism.

From Britain, the IR scholar Timothy Dunne has recently argued that there exists a 'fundamental incompatibility between Atlanticism and internationalism.'¹² The point bears directly on postwar Canadian foreign policy. In short, it is necessary to look past the pretensions of an 'internationalist' foreign policy so stably aligned with Anglo-American power. It is true that after World War II, the Canadian government operated in wider multilateral forums than it had in earlier decades. The Imperial War Cabinet had been a narrower body than the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) was; the League of Nations, to which Canada was in any event only weakly committed, was never nearly as inclusive as the UN would become. On the other hand, one should not exaggerate the scope of Canada's postwar internationalism. The Canadian leadership retained an overriding commitment to, as a leading Canadian civil servant later described it, 'the Western alliance of which the Anglo-American partnership was the essence.'¹³ Throughout the postwar period, Canada's internationalists demonstratively lined themselves up on the privileged side of the colour line.

In the early phase of World War II, King described his government's increasing attachment to the US as part and parcel of a global deepening of Anglo-American friendship. A new international reality was expected to rise from the war. 'In the furtherance of this new world order,' King declared, 'Canada, in liaison between the British Commonwealth and the United States, is fulfilling a manifest destiny.'¹⁴ There were questions of external affairs on which King and his internationalist successors disagreed. Durable Canadian alignment with Anglo-American power was not one of them.

It was against this backdrop that Canadian diplomats approached the Middle East. There was much in the Palestine problem to trouble genuine internationalists. The spectre of sectarian statehood, the contradiction between Asian diplomacy and Euro-American diplomacy towards Asia; any number of elements of the situation could have

¹² Cited in Srdjan Vucetic, *The Anglosphere: A Genealogy of a Racialized Identity in International Relations* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2011), 117.

¹³ Greg Donaghy, ed., *DCER Vol. 22* (Ottawa: Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade, 2001), 280.

¹⁴ Nicolas Mansergh, ed., *Documents and Speeches on British Commonwealth Affairs, 1931-1952, Vol. 1* (London: Oxford University Press, 1953), 548.

taken an internationalist observer aback. The focus of Canada's liberal internationalists was elsewhere. This chapter explores Canada's early postwar diplomacy on Palestine and the priorities that drove it. The chapter begins by reviewing the Canadian government's enduring orientation towards the Great Powers of the English-speaking West. It then turns to discuss Canada's diplomatic contribution to the establishment of Israel over most of the former Palestine mandate.

The Internationalism of an American Dominion

Postwar Canada's international position, amidst the global trend towards decolonization, largely corresponded with its privileges in the era of formal colonialism. Before turning back to Canada, however, a moment's attention is due to the postwar argumentation of the old Zionist leadership. The relationship of Jews organized by the Zionist project to the world's racial dividing lines was never so clearcut as was the white Dominions'. The case for supporting Zionism, however, was still put in familiar terms.

Chaim Weizmann's autobiography, for example, published in 1949, invokes the same logic that in 1917 prompted the *Guardian's* Sidebotham to place Jewish settlers above those colonial societies 'which are governed and do not govern themselves.' With no apparent misgivings, Weizmann recalls his presentation of Zionist claims to the Belgian politician Pierre Orts, who as a colonial administrator in the Congo helped preside over one of the most devastating racial regimes of the twentieth century.

Weizmann writes:

this experience had taught him that there is a world of difference between the black Congo and white Palestine, and he understood the incongruity of British attempts to apply the methods of the first to the problems of the second – attempts which, among a sensitive and sophisticated population, often turned the machinery of administration into a sort of Procrustean bed.

The depiction of a 'white Palestine' populated by 'a sensitive and sophisticated population' and rightly classed among 'the modern family of nations' – it is with this message that Weizmann addressed his English-language readers.¹⁵ Once again, rather than opposition to a racist division supposing superior and lesser peoples, we see a Zionist appeal to the West to shift the dividing line in a more inclusive direction.

¹⁵ Chaim Weizmann, *Trial and Error* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1949), 376.

Canada, meanwhile, was emerging from World War II very much a 'white man's country.' In 1947, prime minister King expressed his defence of racial discrimination in immigration policy in these terms: 'a country should surely have the right to determine what strains of blood it wishes to have in its population and how its people coming from outside have to be selected.'¹⁶ Though overt racial rhetoric was becoming taboo, the political alignments that it suggested remained a force in Canadian external affairs. The continued promotion of what King referred to as the 'gospel of unity between English-speaking nations' was more than a relic from Canada's Anglo-Saxonist past.¹⁷ As Srdjan Vucetic writes, the 'processes that created the Anglosphere in the middle years of the twentieth century were no less racialized than those of the previous century.'¹⁸

The wartime struggle against the Nazis, conducted in the name of liberalism, helped to discredit pseudo-scientific notions of race, and made it more difficult to deflect popular challenges to policies based on the old biological racism. Alternative rationales for such policies nonetheless took shape. As Balibar writes, it was from the Anglo-Saxon countries that a politics of 'racism without races' was quickest to develop.¹⁹ John Hunt discusses the place of development theory in particular as an heir to conventional racism: 'It was instead now the attributes of modernity and tradition that fixed a people's or nation's place on the hierarchy.' Conveniently, notes Hunt, the revision of the criteria of racial hierarchy did not upend the hierarchy itself: 'Americans could still remain secure in the superiority of their own kind. Anglo-Americans were still on top, followed by the various European peoples. Then came the "Third World."²⁰ Within the British Empire, the Canadian leadership's claim to a share in metropolitan superiority found a receptive audience in the home country. To a considerable extent, this would carry over into the era of US hegemony.

¹⁶ J.W. Pickersgill and D.F. Forster, eds., *The Mackenzie King Record, Vol. 4, 1947-1948* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1970), 33.

¹⁷ J.W. Pickersgill and D.F. Forster, eds., *The Mackenzie King Record, Vol. 3, 1945-1946* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1970), 244.

¹⁸ Vucetic, *Anglosphere*, 71

¹⁹ Étienne Balibar, 'Racism and Nationalism,' in eds. Étienne Balibar and Immanuel Wallerstein, trans. Chris Turner, *Race, Nation, Class: Ambiguous Identities* (London: Verso, 1991), 21.

²⁰ Michael H. Hunt, *Ideology and US Foreign Policy* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1987), 161-2. Source cited in John Price, *Orienting Canada: Race, Empire, and the Transpacific* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2011), 314.

The Canadian state's effective reorientation from London to Washington found increased institutional expression during World War II. Prime minister King's comments concerning Canadian 'manifest destiny,' cited above, were made in November 1940, when he presented the Canadian House of Commons with the Ogdensburg Agreement. The agreement established a new bilateral mechanism, the Canada-US Permanent Joint Board on Defence, and marked a new phase in the development of strategic ties with the US. King's speech to the House of Commons expressed appreciation for the US president's pledge two years before, when he declared that Canada, as 'part of the sisterhood of the British Empire,' could count on US assistance if ever 'domination of Canadian soil is threatened by any other empire.' King went on to express his hope that Canada's link with the US had been contributing to widened Anglo-American cooperation: 'Any part which our country may have had in bringing about a harmony of sentiment between the British Empire and the United States may well be a legitimate source of pride to all Canadians.'²¹ Early the next year, Canada stepped further into a continental security arrangement through the Hyde Park Agreement, which committed both countries to 'the coordination and rational integration of the war industries of Canada and the United States.'²²

Emerging from the war, Canada retained many formal links with Britain; in its local defence arrangements, however, and in many areas of its political economy, its integration into a continental power system had become an established fact. In 1946 the US ambassador to Canada, Ray Atherton, conveyed his impression of how Canadian officials were balancing these shifts. 'In matters of defence as in other fields,' Atherton wrote to his superiors, 'the Canadian Government hopes desperately that it will not have to choose between the United States and the British Commonwealth.' But despite Canadian hopes that Britain could be associated with US-Canadian strategic ties, the ambassador concluded that 'there is no present tendency to make that a *sine qua non* to integration with the United States.'²³ Little, in this setting, was more

²¹ Mansergh, ed., *Documents and Speeches on British Commonwealth Affairs, 1931-1952, Vol. 1*, 547-8.

²² David R. Murray, ed., *DCER Vol. 8* (Ottawa: External Affairs and International Trade Canada, 1976), 280-1.

²³ S. Everett Gleason et al., eds., *Foreign Relations of the United States [henceforth FRUS] 1946, Vol. 5* (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1969), 54.

important to Canadian officials than the internally harmonious development of the Anglo-American alliance.

King was thus enthusiastic when Winston Churchill, in his judgement ‘the greatest man of our times,’²⁴ delivered his famous March 1946 speech in Fulton, Missouri. It was in this speech that Churchill rallied Cold War support for ‘a special relationship between the British Commonwealth and Empire and the United States of America.’ King had spoken to Churchill in the lead-up to the speech, offering his support and relaying his notes from Ogdensburg.²⁵ In Fulton, Churchill duly cited the North American pact as something on which the Anglo-American relationship should build. ‘The United States,’ Churchill emphasized, ‘has already a Permanent Defence Agreement with the Dominion of Canada, which is so devotedly attached to the British Commonwealth and Empire.’²⁶ Whatever Churchill’s strategic motives, his praise for ‘the fraternal association of the English-speaking peoples’ fit with core Canadian government aspirations.

Judging from his diary entries, King did not part lightly with the era of supposed British primacy. When British foreign secretary Ernest Bevin, meeting with King in 1947, described the US as ‘the ruling country of the world,’ King claims to have been taken aback; ‘it sounded painfully to my ears to hear the Foreign Minister in London tell me that he had to admit that Britain had to take second place to the United States.’²⁷ At the same time, the Canadian prime minister had for decades worked to see Canada’s status as an autonomous Dominion recognized. He thus approached external affairs sensitive to signs that Britain might try to buoy its position at Dominion expense.

The issue arose as Canada partnered with the US and Britain to develop military interoperability. Canadian officials had repeatedly expressed their interest in standardizing military training and equipment with the two allies. In October 1946 King met with US president Harry Truman and both were agreed that this should be carried out. British Field Marshal Bernard Montgomery, then chief of the Imperial General Staff, was anchoring the negotiations from the British side. In principle, Canadian officials

²⁴ Pickersgill and Forster, *Mackenzie King Record*, Vol. 4, 118.

²⁵ Pickersgill and Forster, *Mackenzie King Record*, Vol. 3, 182.

²⁶ Winston Churchill, ‘The Sinews of Peace,’ speech delivered at Westminster College, Fulton, Missouri, 5 March 1946. Accessed at <www.nato.int/docu/speech/1946/s460305a_e.htm>.

²⁷ Pickersgill and Forster, *Mackenzie King Record*, Vol. 4, 114.

were roundly enthusiastic about the effort. King was nonetheless troubled that some British officials seemed to be claiming authority for Canada in order to mitigate the power asymmetry with the US. In November, the US State Department's James Parsons reported 'the resentment of Canadian military authorities faced with a peremptory request from Field Marshal Montgomery to rubber stamp his alleged agreement with General Eisenhower on standardization of arms.'²⁸ The same week this memorandum was written, King, resenting British gestures towards imperial centralization, fulminated that he could not tolerate London making 'a demand on this country as if it were some Colonial possession of inferior races.'²⁹ For King, it was a basic matter of principle that Great Power allies could not claim Canadian support without the Canadian government being afforded a seat at the table. Faced with these misgivings, US and British officials assured the Canadians they would formally be dealt with on an equal basis.

The power asymmetry between *Britain* and the US aside, the Canadian government's participation in various three-power negotiations in the aftermath of the war found Canada conspicuous in its relative insignificance. It was, however, given a privileged seat. Alongside the military standardization programs that later expanded through NATO, the Canadian government also operated as third partner to the early negotiations leading to establishment of the Bretton Woods system and its lasting instruments, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (IBRD, or World Bank).³⁰ Thomas Keating writes that during the war, the challenge for the Canadian government had been to advocate for a Canadian seat at the Anglo-American table without suggesting that this privilege had to generalize: 'It was necessary to press Canadian claims in such a way that other governments in support of the allied cause would not all press for similar access.'³¹ In different policy areas, this would become an enduring theme: the Canadian search for an internationalism widened beyond the Great Powers, but with a more varied hierarchy of states still in place.

²⁸ Gleason et al., *FRUS 1946, Vol. 5*, 64.

²⁹ Pickersgill and Forster, *Mackenzie King Record, Vol. 3*, 364.

³⁰ Michael Keating, *Canada and World Order: The Multilateralist Tradition in Canadian Foreign Policy* (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 2002), 43.

³¹ Keating, *Canada and World Order*, 22.

Australia's Sir Percy Spender would be more blunt than the Canadian internationalists. In demanding suitable postwar treatment for his white Dominion, he assumed a globalized division between metropole and colony and declared, 'we in this country are a metropolitan power in the Pacific.'³² The more popular Canadian self-description was 'middle power.' It was advanced in a 1944 publication entitled *A Greater Canada Among Nations*, in which author Lionel Gelber argued that Canada had gained 'new stature' through the war and, though not a major power, could not be considered a minor power: 'She stands in between as a Britannic Power of medium rank. Henceforth in world politics, Canada must figure as a Middle Power.'³³ The Canadian diplomats, like Pearson, most associated with the notion of 'middle power' diplomacy invested high hopes in the UN. For his part, Pearson argued that Churchill's calls for an alliance of the English-speaking peoples were too narrow, and that US and British leadership could and should be more broadly exercised through the UN machinery.³⁴ But in the UN or outside of it, it was as a close ally to both the US and Britain that Canada sought to find its place in the postwar international system. The assertion of a special Canadian association with Anglo-American power was enforced by the Canadian insistence that there existed a crucial 'North Atlantic triangle' between the three states.

In a speech delivered in January 1948, Pearson explained the most common official Canadian concern that therefore arose with regards to the Palestine problem. The explanation was embedded in a broader discussion of Canadian foreign policy. Pearson explained why postwar Canada, allied with the West in confrontation with a 'victoriously powerful Slav empire,' was able to look to the UN in a way that interwar Canada had never looked to the League of Nations. A major Canadian problem with the League, noted Pearson, was the distance that the US kept from it: 'It will be remembered that the one great nightmare of prewar Canadian governments was a clash, or even a divergence, of policy between the two governments – American and British – with both of which Canada wished to keep in step.' The UN, in contrast, had

³² David Lowe, 'Percy Spender, Minister and Ambassador,' in eds. Joan Beaumont et al., *Ministers, Mandarins and Diplomats: Australian Foreign Policy Making, 1941-1969* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 2003), 70; and Vucetic, *Anglosphere*, 58.

³³ Victor Levant, *Quiet Complicity: Canadian Involvement in the Vietnam War* (Toronto: Between the Lines, 1986), 14.

³⁴ John A. Munroe and Alex I. Inglis, eds., *Mike: The Memoirs of the Right Honourable Lester B. Pearson, Vol. 2* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1973), 39.

developed as an arena 'in which British and American policies now usually march side by side.' This allowed for Canada to take on a more assertive international role in lockstep with its key allies. Pearson cited Palestine in this context as the problematic exception to the rule, a reminder of the contingent circumstances of Canada's improved position: 'we stop playing the triangle in the international symphony when the British and American instruments are out of harmony.'³⁵

It was alignment with Anglo-American power that afforded to postwar Canada its position in international affairs, and it was with a fixation on allied power centres that Canadian planners approached seemingly far-off issues like the Palestine problem. It is important to emphasize, however, that these were a Canadian politics of partnership with empire, not of hapless subjection to it. An official sense of community with allies of like kind was paired with deliberate distance from others. The element of racism in Canadian external affairs can, in other words, not be written off as derivative of alignment with other and more politically aggressive partners. An early controversy in the Canada-US Permanent Joint Board on Defence is, in this connection, instructive.

The controversy concerned the deployment on Canadian territory of black US military personnel. It came up in 1949, months after St.-Laurent replaced King as prime minister and appointed Pearson to his own former position as secretary of state for external affairs. This was a government of the internationalists. But when it was informed by US representatives to the PJBD that the US Air Force wished to use 'some of its coloured engineer troops' in scheduled USAF work in Canada, it perceived a problem.³⁶ For Canadian officials the proposal raised concerns of racial hygiene. Herbert Moran, Pearson's under-secretary of state, conveyed the message that the USAF 'had made a serious effort to find white troops for this work but had been unsuccessful as the great majority of its engineer troops are coloured and its small number of white engineer troops is already committed.'³⁷ For years Canadian officials deliberated over how this issue could be approached in a way that upheld both alliance with the US and the politics of 'white Canada.' They were confident that the Pentagon

³⁵ Lester B. Pearson, *Words and Occasions: An Anthology of Speeches and Articles* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1970), 70-1; also cited in Eliezer Tauber, *Personal Policy Making: Canada's Role in the Adoption of the Palestine Partition Resolution* (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 2002), 66.

³⁶ Hector Mackenzie, ed., *DCER Vol. 15* (Ottawa: Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade, 1995), 1606.

³⁷ *DCER Vol. 15*, 1606.

understood that 'prior approval would be required for postings in Canada of *units* of negro troops'; but they were troubled that 'as a result of the US Government's non-segregation policy, varying numbers of negro personnel are nowadays being included in all normal USAF units.'³⁸

In 1952 the St.-Laurent government finalized a solution based on quiet but rigorous racism. Cabinet extracts for 28 November provide the following summary of the discussion item, 'Admission of United States Troops Including Negro Personnel':

The Cabinet noted with approval the remarks of the Minister of National Defence on the admission for the manning of radar stations of US military units, which were predominantly white but which included integrated negro personnel, and the proposal that the United States authorities be asked informally to see that the proportion of negroes did not exceed ten percent.³⁹

Lester B. Pearson celebrates what he refers to as 'the broad and active internationalism of our foreign policy in those years,' and in this he is joined by most of Canada's liberal intellectual community.⁴⁰ The inclusive breadth of this internationalism, on Palestine as more generally, ought not to be exaggerated.

Canada and the Palestine Partition Plan

The writings of Elizabeth MacCallum form an interesting presence in the Canadian documentary record of the 1940s. MacCallum was, in the words of David Bercuson, the Canadian government's 'only bona-fide expert on the Middle East' – and in this she felt her isolation.⁴¹ In MacCallum's writings, King's expressed concern over Canadian policy involvement in countries 'the very location of some of which our people know little or nothing about' finds more detailed expression. 'It is true,' writes MacCallum in one memorandum, 'that there is little knowledge on this continent of what has actually happened in the Near and Middle East in the past 50 years, and that it is consequently easy to manipulate the record so as to encourage the view that Arab

³⁸ *DCER Vol. 16*, 1507.

³⁹ Donald Barry, ed., *DCER Vol. 18* (Ottawa: Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade, 1990), 1126.

⁴⁰ John A. Munro and Alex I. Inglis, *Mike: The Memoirs of the Right Honourable Lester B. Pearson, Vol. II* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1973), 32.

⁴¹ David Bercuson, *Canada and the Birth of Israel* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1985), 23.

claims in the present controversy may be dismissed as all but irrelevant.¹⁴² The North American policy proposals that emerged from this ignorance seemed to MacCallum wrong-headed. MacCallum was writing as a civil servant in the department of external affairs, not as a public critic. But in internal government discussions, she put criticism of Zionist claims on the record.

‘A fundamental element in the Arab position,’ she wrote in a 1944 memorandum concerning postwar policy in the Middle East, ‘is the belief that Asia is not the property of westerners, to be parcelled out among European interests as was done at the close of the last war.’¹⁴³ Arab opposition to Zionism was, for MacCallum, a reasonable expression of this position. Suggestions that the European Jewish refugee crisis gave humanitarian weight to Zionist claims seemed to open the West to charges of hypocrisy. To displace the consequences of Euro-American antisemitism and immigration restrictions onto Palestine would naturally trigger resentment; ‘it was not the Arabs who had been responsible for the existence of a Jewish problem in Europe.’¹⁴⁴ From various angles, the idea that a Zionist Palestine policy could offer a responsible answer to the Jewish question seemed to her suspect.

The inclination to support Zionism as a means of deflecting Jewish immigration away from the West itself struck MacCallum as particularly distasteful. Prominent Canadians, she recalled, had proven ‘remarkably responsive’ to the old argument that Zionism should be supported as an alternative to Jewish immigration to Western countries. MacCallum emphasized that the crisis produced by Nazi atrocities only made this more offensive to Jews. Here she suggested that officials look beyond the Jewish communal organizations that had fallen under Zionist influence: ‘Non-Zionist Jews, who though unorganized in Canada still form a large part of the Jewish population of this country, consider such an approach to be treacherous both toward European Jews and themselves – an extreme example of the lengths to which Zionist leaders are willing to go to establish quickly the desired numerical majority in Palestine.’¹⁴⁵ Thanks to

¹⁴² John F. Hilliker, ed., *DCER Vol. 11* (Ottawa: External Affairs and International Trade Canada, 1990), 1906.

¹⁴³ *DCER Vol. 11*, 1909.

¹⁴⁴ *DCER Vol. 11*, 1909.

¹⁴⁵ *DCER Vol. 11*, 1905.

MacCallum, such critiques made their way into some internal government discussions. But concerns such as these only came up rarely.

For the major figures of Canadian policy-making, a more serious consideration was the divergence between Britain and the US. Historically, the US leadership had acknowledged and supported Britain's position as the paramount power in the Middle East. As early as 1910, Theodore Roosevelt expressed this posture in his own terms. The US had a shared interest in the 'spread of civilization over the world's waste spaces,' he declared during a visit to London, and so supported Britain in 'the task of subduing the savagery of wild man and wild nature.' For Roosevelt, British imperialism in the Middle East, as throughout the colonial world, was fighting a fight in which the US and all advanced peoples had a stake: 'In Egypt, you are not only the guardians of your own interests; you are also the guardians of the interests of civilization.'⁴⁶ Roosevelt was especially outspoken. But US support for British imperialism was more than rhetorical. US involvement on behalf of the Allies in the First World War helped enforce British advances; and by World War II, while it was Britain that maintained the main military facilities in the Middle East, US economic and strategic support had become a central pillar of the British position. The US emerged from World War II effectively partnered with British power. Despite some rivalry between the allies, as William Roger Louis writes, the US was 'underwriting the British Empire in the Middle East.'⁴⁷

In key states around Palestine, Britain pursued a policy not unlike US imperialism in Latin America. The British imperial presence was to be ratified by bilateral treaties and made compatible with formalities of political independence for the Arab states. French efforts in the same direction were quickly blocked by Anglo-American agreement. In pursuit of privileged treaty rights for France with Lebanon and Syria, de Gaulle went so far as to order bombardment of Syrian parliament in Damascus; the attack, as Kassir and Mardam-Bey observe, only hastened the French exit. In 1946, all French troops were evacuated from the Levant.⁴⁸ Britain, on the other hand, dug in, and generally enjoyed US support in doing so. The transition went

⁴⁶ Theodore Roosevelt, with Lawrence F. Abbott, ed., *African and European Addresses* (New York: G. Putnam's Sons 1910), 157.

⁴⁷ Quoted in Simon C. Smith, *Ending Empire in the Middle East: Britain, the United States and Postwar Decolonization, 1945-1973* (London: Routledge, 2012), 7.

⁴⁸ Samir Kassir and Farouk Mardam-Bey, *Itinéraires de Paris à Jérusalem: La France et le conflit israélo-arabe, Vol. 1* (Washington, D.C.: Institute of Palestine Studies, 1992), 75-6.

especially smoothly in Transjordan, whose King Abdullah, his rule subsidized by Britain, guaranteed Britain military basing rights as part of the 1946 treaty formalizing Transjordanian 'independence.'⁴⁹ Where local governments were not so pliable, as in Egypt, Britain maintained its troop presence as it pursued treaty negotiations. General Allenby had for his part been optimistic about the Egyptian basis for neocolonialism, remarking, 'The English can evacuate Egypt with an easy mind: in effect they have created a class of large landowners on whom Great Britain can rely to assure her policy in Egypt.'⁵⁰ This was precisely the approach to which the US leadership was traditionally disposed. And for the most part, it was supportive of Britain's regional position.

Palestine was an exception. Here too Britain, strategically dependent upon the US and facing a Zionist bid for statehood, hoped for some kind of Anglo-American agreement. British planners were not disposed to extend support for the Zionist movement any further. The class and ultimately the colonial character of British policy in the Middle East were grounds enough for Arab regional opposition. As prime minister Clement Attlee observed in 1947, 'we shall constantly appear to be supporting vested interests and reaction against reform and revolution in the interests of the poor.'⁵¹ For Britain in the Middle East as for the US in Latin America, this perception was difficult to shake. The additional provocation of support for Zionism seemed to bring prohibitive strategic costs for little reward.

On the other hand, confrontation with a Zionist movement so strongly supported in the US involved costs of another kind. In 1945 the Attlee government joined the US in establishing an Anglo-American Committee on Palestine, hoping to develop a joint approach. In so doing, suggests Benjamin Grob-Fitzgibbon, it 'abdicated its sole responsibility for the future of the Palestine mandate.'⁵² With US support for Zionism building in parallel to the Zionist challenge to authorities in Palestine, Britain found itself in an untenable position. In October 1946 came what Walid Khalidi describes as 'the most important event in Zionist history since the Balfour Declaration in 1917': US

⁴⁹ Ritchie Ovendale, *The English-Speaking Alliance: Britain, the United States, the Dominions and the Cold War, 1945-1951* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1985), 98.

⁵⁰ Anouar Abdel-Malek, trans. Charles Lam Markmann, *Egypt: Military Society* (New York: Random House, 1968), 68.

⁵¹ Mark Curtis, *Great Deception*, 19.

⁵² Benjamin Grob-Fitzgibbon, *Endgame: Britain's Dirty Wars and the End of Empire* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), 31.

president Harry Truman publicly endorsed a Zionist proposal for the establishment of a Jewish state over most of the Palestine mandate.⁵³ The British government moved to cut its losses. In early 1947, it turned the Palestine question over to the United Nations.

The United Nations was not so patently imperial an organization as the League of Nations had been. But nor was it removed from the politics of empire. From the founding UN conference in spring 1945, I.F. Stone had written that 'action is proceeding on two planes. On one, the formal and public plane, a final draft is being prepared for a world security organization. On the other, the informal and private plane, quite a different tendency is at work.' The informal tendency, wrote Stone, was defined by a US effort to develop through the UN a new wartime alliance directed against the Soviet Union.⁵⁴ In the years ahead Stone's analysis was vindicated. Another striking aspect of politics in this world organization was the relatively marginal position allocated to humanity's Third World majority. Of fifty delegations to the UN's founding conference, only twelve were Afro-Asian.⁵⁵ The informal imperial character of UN politics were apparent even before the US waged war in Korea under a UN umbrella.

From Canada, King himself came to view the UN with suspicion. As the Canadian prime minister lost control of Canadian foreign policy to the rising leaders at external affairs, he worried that UN activities were attaching Canada too closely to US global power: 'the State Department was simply using the United Nations as an arm of that office to further its own policies,' he observed. King singled Pearson out for criticism as 'much too immature. Much too ready to be influenced by American opinion.'⁵⁶ For King, it was a marker of Dominion autonomy to avoid far-flung interventions dominated by other powers. The internationalists at external affairs were more open to pursuing Canadian 'middle power' diplomacy on the world stage.

Palestine was an early focal point for Canada's self-styled internationalism. The first UN deliberations on the Palestine question came in April 1947, when the UN General Assembly convened in special session to discuss the issue referred to it by Britain. Pearson headed the Canadian delegation, and was on the first day of UN

⁵³ Walid Khalidi, ed., *From Haven to Conquest: Readings in Zionism and the Palestine Problem Until 1948* (Washington: Institute for Palestine Studies, 1971), 1xiv.

⁵⁴ I.F. Stone, *The War Years, 1939-1945* (Boston: Little, Brown & Company, 1989), 96.

⁵⁵ Jansen, *Zionism, Israel and Asian Nationalism*, 196.

⁵⁶ Pickersgill and Forster, *Mackenzie King Record, Vol. 4*, 146.

discussions elected to chair the First Committee on Palestine. This committee was tasked with developing the terms of reference for a UN investigations committee charged with developing proposals for the future governance of Palestine. Out of this process there emerged on 15 May 1947 the United Nations Special Committee on Palestine (UNSCOP). All of the US State Department proposals concerning the composition of this committee had, since the early April preparations for the special session, included Canadian participation. At persistent US urging, the Canadian government agreed to appoint a member.⁵⁷ So it was that a Canadian appointee found himself among UNSCOP's eleven members, exercising an influence over the politics of Palestine in no way matched by experience. 'It would seem,' writes Ilan Pappé, 'that most members were chosen in order to serve the interests of one or another of the superpowers. Their ignorance about the situation in Palestine, or for that matter the Middle East in general, became glaringly evident when the committee presented its final conclusions, in which, for example, they suggested the establishment of a Jewish state where half the population would be Arab.'⁵⁸

The Canadian member of UNSCOP was supreme court justice Ivan Rand. Rand owed his prominence in Canada to his role in brokering an element of the postwar compromise between Canadian labour and capital, what is known as the 'Rand Formula.' He had no background concerning the Middle East. He had an established affinity for the US jurist and Zionist leader Louis Brandeis, but no record of his own on Palestine.⁵⁹ The Canadian government appointed Rand in an independent capacity in the hope that his recommendations would not bind Canadian foreign policy. But in an obvious sense, he operated on Canada's behalf. And in committee discussions he lent his support to proposals to establish a Jewish state. The extent of his influence can be disputed. What influence he had was in any case exercised in support of the plan including Jewish statehood. Eliezer Tauber, for his part, insists that the consequences were decisive: 'It was precisely Rand, representing a British dominion and not publicly identified as a pro-Zionist, although he definitely was, who was in a position to consolidate UNSCOP's majority in favour of partition.'⁶⁰ Elizabeth MacCallum remarked

⁵⁷ Bercuson, *Canada and the Birth of Israel*, 60-65.

⁵⁸ Ilan Pappé, *The Making of the Arab-Israeli Conflict, 1947-1951* (London: I.B. Tauris, 1994), 18.

⁵⁹ Bercuson, *Canada and the Birth of Israel*, 77.

⁶⁰ Tauber, *Personal Policy Making*, 115.

that 'Rand began with a Zionist bias.'⁶¹ He ended by helping to hand the Zionist movement a major diplomatic victory.

It is instructive to step back and consider the composition of UNSCOP. Like the UN at large, it reflected the relative disempowerment of the Afro-Asian world. In a tenth-anniversary celebration of Israel's establishment, Rand expressed his feeling that the Jews were uniquely positioned to develop in Palestine 'an anchorage of all the best qualities of our Western civilization.'⁶² Fortunate, then, that UNSCOP's deliberations had seen the West so well represented. G.H. Jansen reflects on the make-up of the committee:

Its membership was actually supposed to be representative of the world: Sweden and the Netherlands represented western Europe; Czechoslovakia and Yugoslavia eastern Europe; the British Commonwealth had two representatives, Canada and Australia; and Latin America three, Peru, Uruguay and Guatemala. To give 18% representation to the continent directly affected was evidently considered fair – in 1947. This would hardly be the case now.⁶³

The '18%,' namely India and Iran, were joined by Yugoslavia in endorsing a minority report opposing partition and calling for the establishment of Palestine as a federal state. It was, however, the UNSCOP majority's recommendation for the partition of Palestine that was to be the focus of UN diplomacy through the autumn of 1947.

When in September the General Assembly met to address UNSCOP's recommendations, the continental divide once again made itself felt. Meeting in Lake Success, New York, the Assembly established an ad hoc committee to discuss the Palestine question. David Horowitz, the main Zionist diplomat involved in the proceedings, reviews the delegations' approach to partition. 'The Asiatic bloc was solidly and unitedly negative,' writes Horowitz.⁶⁴ Horowitz identifies Canada, on the other hand, as a noteworthy supporter: 'It may be said that Canada, more than any other country, played a decisive part in all stages of the UNO discussions on Palestine. The activities at Lake Success of Lester Pearson and his fellow delegates were a fitting climax to Justice Rand's beneficent work on UNSCOP.'⁶⁵ For example, the Canadian delegation joined in voting down a call from Arab delegations for an International Court of Justice (ICJ) ruling on whether the UN had the authority to partition a country against

⁶¹ Tauber, *Personal Policy Making*, 70.

⁶² Tauber, *Personal Policy Making*, 72.

⁶³ G.H. Jansen, *Zionism, Israel and Asian Nationalism* (Beirut: Institute for Palestine Studies, 1971), 197.

⁶⁴ David Horowitz, trans. Julian Meltzer, *State in the Making* (New York: Alfred Knopf, 1952), 258.

⁶⁵ Horowitz, *State in the Making*, 280-1.

the wishes of a majority of its population.⁶⁶ It was also closely involved in committee work concerning how to schedule and manage the transition from British rule. On 28 November 1947 the UN passed a modified version of UNSCOP's partition proposal, Resolution 181, with the necessary two-thirds majority. Pearson reflects in his memoirs: 'Canada voted "for," along with Australia, New Zealand, South Africa, Belgium, Brazil, France, the Netherlands, Norway, Sweden, the USSR, the USA, and others. We were in strong company.'⁶⁷

This UN diplomacy on Palestine did not feature classic Cold War conflict. Instead, this was one of the many episodes of postwar 'bipolarity' in which the interests of a people on the system's periphery were sacrificed with the agreement of both superpowers. For all the Arab misgivings identified by MacCallum, a parcelling out of Palestine by foreign interests was precisely what was taking place. Resolution 181 called for the establishment of a Jewish state on 55.5% of mandatory Palestine, including most of its best lands. At the time, less than a third of Palestine's population was Jewish, and despite the JNF's best efforts, less than seven per cent of its territory was under Jewish ownership.⁶⁸ It bears emphasizing that this plan did not formally authorize anything like the establishment of the Israeli state. The partition plan excluded Jerusalem from both the proposed Jewish and the proposed Arab states, calling for separate international administration of the Holy City. Moreover, no UN decision could be expected to authorize the wave of population transfer that would soon sweep the country. The resolution's practical political effect was nonetheless to provide international cover for what was to come.

It was by this point a public fact, as Hannah Arendt observed, that 'under the leadership of Ben-Gurion, whose Revisionist leanings were still violently denounced by Palestine labour in 1935, the Zionist Organization has adopted the Revisionist Jewish state program.'⁶⁹ The exclusivist substance of this program, leading inexorably to population transfer and territorial expansion, was not spelled out in Resolution 181. But

⁶⁶ Walid Khalidi, 'Revisiting the UNGA Partition Resolution,' in ed. Ilan Pappé, *The Israel/Palestine Question: A Reader* (London: Routledge, 2007), 102; and Tauber, *Personal Policy Making*, 54.

⁶⁷ Munro and Inglis, *Memoirs of the Right Honourable*, 214.

⁶⁸ Khalidi, 'Revisiting the UNGA Partition Resolution,' 102-103.

⁶⁹ Hannah Arendt, in eds. Jerome Kohn and Ron Feldman, *The Jewish Writings* (New York: Schocken Books, 2007), 351.

the General Assembly vote for 'Jewish statehood' had the effect of legitimizing this program in its entirety. Thus, as forces under Ben-Gurion's command prepared to militarily seize Palestine, they 'also wrapped themselves in the sanctimonious garb of moral superiority as adherents, in a posture of self-defence, to the impartial will of the international community.'⁷⁰ Effective Zionist diplomacy translated Arab rejection of the partition plan into alleged culpability for all that followed. This appearance could hardly have been more distorted. In Canada this was at least perceived by Elizabeth MacCallum who, after the experience of autumn 1947, concluded that her government could only have supported partition 'because we didn't give two hoots for democracy.'⁷¹

Democracy for Arabs was not much of a Canadian concern. But the Canadian delegation's pro-partition diplomacy was controversial for other reasons. Whereas the US had exerted great influence in favour of partition, Britain had met the UNSCOP majority's recommendation with scepticism. Foreign secretary Bevin remarked that Britain would not take on 'the responsibility for enforcing a plan which no minister was prepared to defend as either equitable or workable and which was certain to be rejected by the Arabs.'⁷² The British government thus limited its role in the UN diplomacy of autumn 1947 and indicated that it would not be responsible for imposing a settlement against the wishes of any party to the Palestine conflict. Britain did not apply formal pressure on the Canadian government. But some British officials complained that the Canadian delegation's pro-partition diplomacy showed 'disloyalty,' and at one point the controversy was almost picked up by the US press. A coordinated response from Canadian officials and the British press office contained the story with the necessary denials.⁷³ But British concerns reverberated in Canadian government discussions. They especially moved King, who held the post of prime minister until November 1948. In late 1947, King visited Britain for the royal wedding and had the occasion to discuss the Palestine question with Bevin. He thereafter sought to limit Canadian involvement with the Palestine question to the extent that he could.

⁷⁰ Khalidi, 'Revisiting the UNGA Partition Resolution,' 110.

⁷¹ Tauber, *Personal Policy Making*, 94.

⁷² Pappé, *Making of the Arab-Israeli Conflict*, 35.

⁷³ Norman Hillmer and Donald Page, eds., *DCER Vol. 13* (Ottawa: External Affairs and International Trade Canada, 1993), 949

In this context, the officials who had anchored Canadian Palestine diplomacy at the UN elaborated their rationale for the record.

Ideology and Strategy in Canadian Diplomacy

In a memorandum dated 27 December 1947, the external affairs officials most closely involved with Canadian support for partition reviewed their approach to UN diplomacy on Palestine. Pearson circulated the document within the government along with a note addressing British accusations of Canadian disloyalty. There were those, wrote Pearson, who attributed the Canadian delegation's activities to ideological support for Zionism, suggesting that the delegation was 'acting from purely altruistic motives in a matter which did not directly concern Canada.' Pearson, then under-secretary of state at external affairs under St.-Laurent, wrote that rebuttals were developed in the attached document: 'The memorandum was prepared for the purpose of indicating that the delegation acted on the basis of practical and realistic considerations in the Palestine discussions.'⁷⁴

The memorandum suggested that proposals for Jewish statehood by way of partition were simply more 'practicable' than any alternative. The Arab proposal for 'an independent unitary state under the control of an elected government, in which Arabs and Jews would serve together in the proportions which the electorate desired,' was 'completely unacceptable to the Jewish Agency' – it was therefore not a serious basis for discussion.⁷⁵ The authors cited Jewish Agency representatives to the effect that partition, which they publicly accepted, 'represented a "serious attenuation" of their original demand for an undivided Palestine under Jewish control, in which responsibility for immigration and economic development would be transferred without delay to the Jewish Agency.'⁷⁶ Zionist diplomacy was cooperative whereas Arab diplomacy was not. Moreover, had the Zionist leadership not succeeded in its diplomacy, it 'would have

⁷⁴ *DCER Vol. 13*, 948.

⁷⁵ *DCER Vol. 13*, 946.

⁷⁶ *DCER Vol. 13*, 942.

discredited the Jewish Agency and played into the hands of Jewish extremists who were said to be prepared to seize the whole of Palestine by force.⁷⁷

Against the British accusation of disloyalty, the authors insisted that the Canadian delegation had in fact tried to coordinate policy despite British 'detachment' from the UN proceedings. Canadian representatives kept British interests in mind and, 'whenever the United Kingdom views could be ascertained, endeavoured to have them taken into account in the preparation of plans.'⁷⁸ But in the final count Britain was itself not being cooperative. 'The over-riding consideration in the minds of the United Kingdom authorities appeared to be the strategic importance to the United Kingdom of good relations with the Arabs, and for this reason they seemed to hope that the United Nations would fail to reach any agreement whatever on the Palestine question.'⁷⁹ The alternative to a constructive UN resolution seemed to be a chaotic civil war in Palestine. This 'would place an even more severe strain on United States-United Kingdom relations.'⁸⁰ The Canadian delegation had thus worked to avert an international crisis, cooperate with key allies, and defend Canadian interests.

The memorandum also expressed a broader vision of the Western interest in Zionist statehood. The authors wrote:

The plan of partition gave to the Western powers the opportunity to establish an independent, progressive Jewish state in the Eastern Mediterranean with close economic and cultural ties with the West generally and in particular with the United States. The USSR was willing now to cooperate in the establishment of this state, the existence of which might be of very great consequence to the Western powers in the future political development of the Middle East.⁸¹

The document's argumentation echoed the rationale for pro-partition diplomacy already voiced that autumn by the external affairs department's Gerry Riddell. It was inserted almost verbatim into the annual volume of *Canada at the United Nations*.⁸²

The most detailed studies that have been published about Canadian support for the partition of Palestine are Bercuson's *Canada and the Birth of Israel* and Tauber's *Personal Policy Making*. Both studies review the disagreement between prime minister King and the external affairs diplomats grouped around Pearson. King wanted to defer

⁷⁷ DCER Vol. 13, 946-7.

⁷⁸ DCER Vol. 13, 946.

⁷⁹ DCER Vol. 13, 944.

⁸⁰ DCER Vol. 13, 947.

⁸¹ DCER Vol. 13, 947.

⁸² Tauber, *Personal Policy Making*, 67.

to Britain's judgement, and worried about domestic Tory reaction if the government did not slow its realignment with the US. In February 1948 he wrote concerning the Palestine debate that if, 'in addition to it being alleged that we were being dominated by the United States on economic matters, we were being dominated as well on military matters, we would have a hard battle to face in our country.'⁸³ Had US and British policy been aligned there would not have been a problem. But the Truman administration's diplomatic support for Zionist gains ran against the Attlee government's efforts to develop Arab protectorates around Palestine. In this Anglo-American dispute, Pearson, appointed secretary of state for external affairs in September 1948, effectively moved to align Canada with the US.

Bercuson reproduces the strategic arguments of those close to Pearson. He details Canada's UN diplomacy at the General Assembly in 1947 and then at the Security Council, on which Canada served a two-year term beginning in January 1948. Canadian officials perceived the situation in Palestine in light of broader government priorities. In March 1948 King accepted a proposal from the Attlee government to participate in new military alliance discussions under 'the active leadership of the United Kingdom and the United States' – negotiations that would lead to the establishment of NATO.⁸⁴ The design of postwar world order remained the paramount consideration for Canadian officials. Palestine figured into this process as an irritant in Anglo-American relations. Bercuson argues that in this setting, support for Israel became Canada's best option for promoting Anglo-American understanding on the Middle East. Bercuson describes King's echo of British misgivings about Israeli advances as unhelpful: 'the slavish acquiescence which King insisted upon in the Palestine matter was not necessary, and it is even possible that Canada might have helped the British face reality in Palestine somewhat sooner than they did if Ottawa had not given Whitehall a blank cheque.'⁸⁵ Pearson's logic was more constructive. 'Since there was no chance at all that the United States would be won over to Britain, it was clear that the British would have to be dragged over to the United States and that Canada had a definite national

⁸³ Pickersgill and Forster, *Mackenzie King Record*, Vol. 4, 163.

⁸⁴ *Munro and Inglis, Memoirs of the Right Honourable*, 42.

⁸⁵ Bercuson, *Canada and the Birth of Israel*, 186.

interest in helping to do the dragging.⁸⁶ Canadian support for Israel, Bercuson concludes, reflected an 'even-handed' defence of Canadian interests.⁸⁷

Tauber takes issue with Bercuson's analysis. He considers Pearson's strategic rationale a subterfuge for ideological support for Zionism. Tauber was writing from within Israel's patriotic consensus, his study funded in part by the Canadian embassy in Tel Aviv and the Israel Association for Canadian Studies.⁸⁸ He shares Bercuson's deference to the orthodox Zionist historiography of 1948. To attribute Zionist ideological motives to someone is not, for Tauber, to criticize their approach to Palestine, but rather to credit them with a focus on 'the moral aspects, truth and justice, and a humanitarian attitude.'⁸⁹ But in Tauber's reading, Canadian support for partition was not a strategic choice. It was a moral choice; one made to great effect by Rand, and then by diplomats like Riddell and Pearson, compelled by principle to work for a 'just cause' against the preferences of their prime minister.⁹⁰

It is often difficult to disentangle ideology from strategy. The politics of state power and of capital accumulation can be reduced to a systemic logic. But while these politics may dictate the conduct of a given power, they are at a minimum enveloped in less cynical mythology. As Eqbal Ahmad writes, 'The British carried the white man's burden; the French had their *mission civilisatrice*; and America stood watch over the world's freedom. Each, in its mission, was threatened by the forces of evil – the yellow, the black, and the red perils.' In all cases, 'modern imperialism has needed myths to legitimize itself.'⁹¹ The ideas that legitimize the exercise of power are not, however, without a certain force of their own. It is relevant to consider how E.H. Carr addresses the relationship between principles and power in his main work on International Relations. Carr cites the US theologian Reinhold Niebuhr, for whom politics must always balance 'the ethical and coercive factors of human life.'⁹² The politics of Palestine provide a reminder that 'ethical' or principled thinking need not be benign.

⁸⁶ Bercuson, *Canada and the Birth of Israel*, 217.

⁸⁷ Bercuson, *Canada and the Birth of Israel*, 240.

⁸⁸ Tauber, *Personal Policy Making*, v.

⁸⁹ Tauber, *Personal Policy Making*, 70.

⁹⁰ Tauber, *Personal Policy Making*, 84.

⁹¹ Ahmad, *The Selected Writings*, 211.

⁹² Edward Hallett Carr, *The Twenty Years' Crisis: An Introduction to the Study of International Relations* (New York: Perennial, 2001), 100.

Considerations of principle can lead to fiercer oppression than strategic coercion would warrant. The history of racism is full of cases in which the culture and ideology of inter-group hostility not only justified state oppression, but in some measure prompted it. In few imperial episodes are either the ideological or the strategic element entirely absent. Western support for the transformation of Palestine into an Israel fashioned as 'Western outpost' has always blurred these elements. This has been true in the secondary as in the leading Western powers.

For Pearson as for Bercuson, the strategic case was heavily influenced by the realities of US politics. Within the US itself, the case for Jewish-state-as-Western-outpost was embraced more by public ideologues than by imperial planners. These were years in which the US intellectual community rallied to the cause of US empire. Just as the president of the American Historical Association explained that the US needed to mobilize for a 'total war' that would 'enlist everyone,' the historian no less than the physicist, the Sunday editor of the *New York Times* explained that the role of the press was 'to gain for American policies the support of public opinion at home and abroad.'⁹³ On Palestine, such patriotic intellectuals tended to support Zionism. In November 1947 Reinhold Niebuhr himself signed a public letter declaring that in the whole of the Middle East there were only 'two islands of Western civilization, Jewish Palestine and Christian Lebanon,' on which the US could reasonably base its policies.⁹⁴ In May 1948 the journalist Walter Lippmann, a leading pioneer of US Cold War politics, wrote that by supporting Israel the US could gain a 'foothold' in the Eastern Mediterranean.⁹⁵ In 1947-8 many of the most prominent intellectual champions of US power endorsed Zionist aims.

The actual centres of US strategic decision-making, in contrast, did not. The US Joint Chiefs of Staff opposed partition as an unnecessary provocation of the Arab world.⁹⁶ Opposition from within the US State Department was even more insistent. George Kennan, director of the department's policy planning staff, insisted that there was no US interest in Palestine that could justify disrupting 'understanding and

⁹³ Bruce J. Evensen, *Truman, Palestine, and the Press: Shaping Conventional Wisdom at the Beginning of the Cold War* (New York: Greenwood Press, 1992), 129.

⁹⁴ Edward Said, *The Question of Palestine* (New York: Vintage, 1992), 30.

⁹⁵ Evensen, *Truman, Palestine, and the Press*, 163.

⁹⁶ Owendale, *English-Speaking Alliance*, 110.

cooperation and between ourselves and the British . . . on Middle East matters. . . . The British position there is in large part our position.⁹⁷ These objections were overcome by the Truman administration and Congress. Domestic factors were surely at work. It is also interesting to see just how directly Truman invoked the logic of the colour line in defending his position. Bruce J. Evensen cites Truman's critique of State Department politics on Palestine as follows: 'They were an anti-Semitic bunch over there, they put the Jews in the same category as Chinamen and Negroes.'⁹⁸

US discussions reflected the position of the US as the predominant Western power. Direct regional considerations, about a Jewish state as an 'island of Western civilization' or a 'foothold' for US power, were appropriate. In secondary states like Canada, it was the politics of more powerful allies that framed strategic discussions. This has repeatedly been the case since the 1940s. The fact of US support for Israel provides leverage to pro-Zionist opinion elsewhere in the West. Wendehorst notes that the Revisionist wing of the British Zionist movement itself latched onto this fact as early as 1946. British Revisionism was organized at the time through the Jewish Dominion of Palestine League, continuing to argue that Britain should establish a Jewish state governed by the 1931 Statute of Westminster, a self-governing Dominion like Canada and Australia. Among the benefits of creating a Jewish Dominion, the League argued, would be 'denying to the circles purposely interested in British-American estrangement one of their most potent instruments of propaganda.'⁹⁹ In Canada, the Zionist movement deployed a parallel argument. Bercuson's study both echoes this argumentation and provides a record of how it developed.

Bercuson's *Canada and the Birth of Israel* remains the most detailed study of Canadian politics on Palestine during the 1940s. But to responsibly engage with it, as with his *The Secret Army*, it is necessary to devote some critical attention to its polemical framing. We will return shortly to his research concerning the Canadian strategic case for supporting Israel. First, once again, the imprint upon Bercuson's research of his own politics on Palestine needs to be noted.

⁹⁷ Nathan A. Pelcovits, *The Long Armistice: UN Peacekeeping and the Arab-Israeli Conflict, 1948-1960* (Oxford: Westview Press, 1992), 24.

⁹⁸ Evensen, *Truman, Palestine, and the Press*, 115.

⁹⁹ Stephan Wendehorst, *British Jewry, Zionism, and the Jewish State, 1936-1956* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 161.

Bercuson opens the study with a bold claim to academic neutrality. From a posture of professional scholarship he dismisses those histories that are written without 'due regard for historical fact.'¹⁰⁰ Bercuson has academic stature, and the book has a reputable academic publisher. Of course none of this prevents him from sliding into propagandist historiography. *Canada and the Birth of Israel* conveys important details, but it also puts forward a formulaic defence of the Zionist politics of force, presented with a disregard for basic standards of proof.

The Zionist politics of force are presented to readers vividly. They come through with particular clarity in an exchange that Bercuson cites between Elizabeth MacCallum and the Zionist diplomat Michael Comay, the first head of the Israeli foreign ministry's British Commonwealth division. Bercuson sets the scene for this June 1948 encounter. He then relays the content. MacCallum asks Comay whether it might not have been better if 'the Zionist movement had addressed itself in the past to making the Arabs their allies, rather than persuading the rest of the world to support the Jews.' 'No,' Comay responds, elaborating classic political Zionist doctrine: 'the only way we can succeed is to ram our state down the throats of the Arabs. Then they'll accept it.'¹⁰¹

Comay's doctrine seems harsh. But by this point in the study, readers have been informed that Comay in fact understands the Arabs well. Comay's position, we find, is corroborated almost word for word by the Arab leadership. To establish this point, Bercuson reconstructs another exchange, this one between the Israeli diplomat Abba Eban and Abd al-Rahman Azzam, secretary-general of the Arab League. The diplomatic backdrop is the autumn 1947 diplomacy concerning UNSCOP's partition proposal. Bercuson attributes to Eban an innocent inquiry: 'Why not have negotiations before and instead of the war'? And to the Arab League's secretary-general a thorough vindication of the Zionist politics of force:

Get one thing into your heads. You will not get anything by compromise or peaceful means. You may perhaps get something, if at all, by force of arms . . . If you win, you will get your state. If you get your state . . . you have a chance that the Arabs will one day have to accept it . . . But do not consider for a single moment that you will ever have a chance of our accepting you in advance.¹⁰²

¹⁰⁰ Bercuson, *Canada and the Birth of Israel*, viii.

¹⁰¹ Bercuson, *Canada and the Birth of Israel*, 195.

¹⁰² Bercuson, *Canada and the Birth of Israel*, 106-107.

This exchange is presented as fact. Beyond the utter implausibility of the dialogue, readers who do not check Bercuson's sourcing are given no hint that it is nothing more than an uncorroborated account written by Eban.¹⁰³

Notwithstanding his tendency towards propagandist historiography, Bercuson traces the development of strategic arguments for Canadian support for partition in useful detail. By autumn 1946 the Zionist movement's appeals to Canadian officials were focused on the politics of Anglo-American relations. Bercuson attributes this approach to the Canadian scholar Lionel Gelber, who earlier that year began working with the Jewish Agency in New York. Gelber was aware of two critical points concerning Canadian policy. First, that Pearson was the rising force in Canadian external affairs. And second, that he and his colleagues were fixated on the developing Anglo-American alliance. Gelber thus developed an argument based on the assertion, as Bercuson summarizes it, that 'Canada was tailor made to play "honest broker" over Palestine, not between Arab and Jew, but between the United States and the United Kingdom.'¹⁰⁴ The logic was that by supporting partition Canada could encourage British alignment with the US. The first appeal to Pearson on this basis was made by Zionist Organization of Canada president Sam Zacks, meeting with Pearson in late October 1946. Recall the context. In early October Truman had publicly declared his support for partition. This could hardly have escaped the attention of Pearson, who for two years ending in September 1946 served as Canadian ambassador to Washington. Zacks emphasized the Anglo-American tension on which Pearson was already focused. Pearson, in turn, explained that he would adhere to any Anglo-American understanding on Palestine and also that he himself already felt that 'partition in Palestine was the just and only solution to the Jewish problem.'¹⁰⁵

One can debate at length the relative weight of Pearson's perceptions of Anglo-American relations and his acceptance of Zionism as an appropriate policy facing the Middle East and the European Jewish refugee crisis. Pearson, as Bercuson notes, 'was also no maverick when it came to Canadian refusal to admit Jewish refugees to Canada.'¹⁰⁶ In any case, the agreed fact is that Pearson's ascendancy in Canadian

¹⁰³ Bercuson, *Canada and the Birth of Israel*, 253.

¹⁰⁴ Bercuson, *Canada and the Birth of Israel*, 51.

¹⁰⁵ Bercuson, *Canada and the Birth of Israel*, 51.

¹⁰⁶ Bercuson, *Canada and the Birth of Israel*, 62.

external affairs and Canadian support for partition were closely tied to one another. Thus an early chapter in Canadian internationalism was support for the admission of 'Jewish Palestine,' in Chaim Weizmann's phrasing, to 'the modern family of nations.'

Some Canadian officials continued to view Israeli policy with misgivings. Bercuson recounts how Escott Reid, one of Pearson's closest aides, expressed some of these in February 1949 to Eliahu Epstein, Israeli ambassador to the US. Epstein was visiting Ottawa to cultivate Canadian-Israeli relations and lay the basis for Israel's application for membership in the UN. Reid took the occasion to argue that Canadian policy depended on how Israel conducted itself. In December 1948 Israeli operations in the Palestinian southwest had expanded to the point of invading Egyptian territory; Israeli forces seemed intent on preventing hundreds of thousands of displaced Palestinians from returning to their country; and the Israeli government showed no sign of allowing international administration of Jerusalem. Reid expressed concern on these three points. Epstein reacted sharply, writes Bercuson, surprised 'to find such an attitude in the department of a Government considered friendly to Israel.' Reid responded that he had only meant to convey concerns 'in a friendly way.' Later the same day, Pearson met with Epstein and distanced his government from these criticisms. Neither population transfer nor territorial expansion would prevent official Canadian-Israeli friendship. Hence, in May 1949, the Canadian government of Pearson and St.-Laurent co-sponsored the resolution admitting Israel to the UN.¹⁰⁷

Conclusion

The Canadian government lent its support to the partition of Palestine amidst a significant shift in Canadian foreign policy. As against its interwar status as a relatively isolationist Dominion of the British Empire, the Canadian state was becoming an early postwar partner in a reshaped Western alliance, globally centred on US power. Rhetorical shifts aside, the Canadian leadership was meanwhile bringing the privileged position it had come to occupy in the era of more formal colonialism into the postwar world. The 'internationalism' it pursued in this context was real enough, but was also

¹⁰⁷ Bercuson, *Canada and the Birth of Israel*, 226-228.

sharply restricted. London no longer dictated Canadian conduct in external affairs; King's relative isolationism also gave way to a more assertive Canadian diplomacy in international forums like the UN. Throughout this process, however, the Canadian government's global approach remained anchored in Western alliance politics, and aligned above all with the exercise of Anglo-American power.

In Canada as in the US, the influence of reigning political culture enforced a certain identification with Zionism as against Arab claims. Wartime catastrophe for the Jews of Europe tended to give additional moral weight to Zionist claims while Arab argumentation, despite the onset of formal decolonization, rarely resonated. However if, in the US, the ideological case for Zionism balanced with the direct strategic calculations in the purview of a leading superpower, in Canada, strategic calculations were more derivative. In purely strategic terms, the argumentation in favour of Israel-as-Western-outpost suggested in the external affairs memorandum of 27 December 1947 was less significant than the wider question of Anglo-American relations, in which Canada had a more direct stake. Across the world, early postwar diplomacy concerning Palestine showcased the increased global significance of US power. The impact on Canada was decisive. Although Britain remained the paramount Western power in the Middle East, the disconnect between its regional preeminence and its growing reliance upon the US was gradually becoming apparent. At their base, Canadian internationalist politics were remarkably parochial. The politics of London and Washington still formed the most important points of reference. The Canadian government thus approached the Middle East with an internationalism attuned above all to the dynamics of the Anglo-American alliance. So it would remain for some time to come.

4

Suez and the Adjustment to US Primacy

'The Korean parallel will be in many minds. In that case the USA were able to gird themselves effectively with the collective armour of the UN. There will be many who are not convinced that in the present case the UK and France could not have achieved similar salutary results (and with USA support) in their efforts to bring about a cease fire, separate the fighting elements and introduce minimum stability in the Middle East.'¹

-Arnold Heeney, then Canadian ambassador in Washington
(31 October 1956)

'I go on repeating to myself: nowadays admit that you are the loser! They showed much more daring and dynamism . . . they played with fire, and they won.'²

-Moshe Sharett, former Israeli prime minister (4 April 1957)

* * *

The Suez Crisis of 1956 marked the high point of Anglo-American tension in the postwar period, focusing the core concerns of Canadian foreign policy on the Middle East in an unprecedented way. The Anglo-French assault on Egypt, coordinated with Israeli occupation of the Gaza Strip and much of the Egyptian Sinai, butted up against vehement US opposition. The US, as Peter Gowan has written, was developing hub-and-spokes strategic ties with its allies based on the acknowledged pre-eminence of US power;³ it was not disposed to welcome unauthorized allied action in the Middle East.

Moreover, this particular action was perceived as a clumsy strategic blunder. A popular and diplomatic backlash through much of the Third World developed immediately. The Soviet Union gained anti-colonial prestige in the Middle East just as it was politically exposing itself by crushing the Hungarian workers' uprising. 'It was an amazing miscalculation of forces and circumstances,' recalls Lester B. Pearson, who was at the time still Canada's secretary of state for external affairs. 'It was not even a good military operation.'⁴ Pearson, with his long-professed commitment to 'the close understanding and friendly cooperation between the Anglo-Saxon peoples,' headed up a Canadian diplomatic scramble to help restore Anglo-American alignment.

¹ Greg Donaghy, ed., *Documents on Canadian External Relations* [henceforth *DCER*] Vol. 22 (Ottawa: Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade, 2001), 185.

² Livia Rokach, *Israel's Sacred Terrorism, Third Edition: A Study Based on Moshe Sharett's Personal Diary and Other Documents* (Belmont, Massachusetts: AAUG Press, 1986), 49.

³ Peter Gowan, 'The American Campaign for Global Sovereignty,' *Socialist Register* 39 (2003), 6-16.

⁴ John A. Munro and Alex I. Inglis, *Mike: The Memoirs of the Right Honourable Lester B. Pearson, Vol. 2* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1973), 241.

These events carry singular significance in Canadian diplomatic iconography. For his role in United Nations diplomacy during the Suez Crisis, Pearson was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize. And he was in turn positioned as the symbolic linchpin of Canadian liberal internationalism as it conceives of itself on the world stage. In the Canadian public arena and scholarly literature alike, the concept 'Pearsonian internationalism' is pervasive, and it continues to frame foreign policy discussions up to the present. Liberals and social democrats advocating a more progressive and internationally-minded foreign policy for Canada persistently invoke the concept in one or another form.

The contemporary terms of discussion are reviewed in Paul Heinbecker and Bessma Momani's *Canada and the Middle East: In Theory and Practice*, a volume bringing together the writings of Canadian academics and diplomats.⁵ A picture emerges of two major political currents vying for official predominance in Canada: the liberal internationalists, positioning themselves in the tradition of Pearson's Middle East diplomacy and avowedly committed to multilateralism and the rule of international law; and the neoconservatives, who view the Middle East as the terrain for a clash of civilizations in which Canada should join traditional allies on wartime footing. Within this contest, liberal internationalists look to Pearsonian diplomacy for symbolic historical leverage against the neoconservatives' nearly unconditional pro-Israel fervour.

The assertive pro-Israel push from Canadian neoconservatives in recent years has not met a real push-back from liberal internationalists so much as it has encountered scattered expressions of diplomatic unease. Here a limited parallel can be identified with the rise of the Israeli right amidst defensive objections from liberal Zionists and the Israeli political centre.⁶ In both cases, moderate sections of the political establishment object more to their rightist opponents' unapologetic intensification of established policy – alignment with Anglo-American power in the Canadian case, coercive exclusion of Palestinians in the Israeli – than to its essential core. Weak historical reference points mark the moderate intellectuals' defensive posture.

⁵ Paul Heinbecker and Bessma Momani, eds., *Canada and the Middle East: In Theory and Practice* (Waterloo: Wilfrid Laurier Press, 2007).

⁶ See Dan Freeman-Maloy, 'Kadima's Black Flags and Israel's Image Problem,' *The Palestine Chronicle* (29 November 2011), <<http://www.palestinechronicle.com/kadimas-black-flags-and-israels-image-problem>>.

Critically revisiting these reference points is one way to challenge the narrow constraints of established political discussions.

This chapter examines the prized apex of Pearsonian diplomacy. It argues that Canada's putative internationalism in the era of the Suez Crisis was determined by a politics of empire that was evolving as the centre of Western power and decision-making continued to shift from Europe to the United States. Israeli scholar-statesman Michael Oren, who served as the second Netanyahu government's ambassador to the United States, and Canadian diplomat Michael Bell, who occupied various ambassadorial posts in the Middle East, both use the same phrase to describe Pearson's diplomacy at the time: 'fair-minded.'⁷ Value judgements of this kind are by the nature of things ideologically loaded. Political principles of a different kind lead to different conclusions. In any event, whatever else it may have been, Pearsonian diplomacy was not a politics of wide internationalism or of international law.

These were years when the Palestinians themselves were effectively marginalized; removed from the political map in 1948, the Palestinians lacked viable national organization until the 1960s. But the Palestine question remained near the core of Middle East politics. The Suez Crisis featured the first Israeli occupation of the Gaza Strip, from November 1956 to March 1957. And all of the disputes concerning Israel's place in the regional order were inescapably connected to questions of borders and refugees – of how much of historic Palestine would be under Israel's control and what would become of the Palestinians pushed out of these lands. Canada's approach to the Palestine question was in this context subsumed in its broader approach to the Arab-Israeli conflict.

For Canada the decisive actors in the politics of the Middle East were, as ever, the US and Britain. In a March 1956 memorandum voicing some misgivings about the strategies of Canada's 'Anglo-American betters,' as he described the US and Britain, Canadian diplomat John Holmes re-iterated the basic article of faith: these two powers occupied a 'position of leadership' in the Middle East that deserved Canadian support; 'however much we argue against an arrogant use of that position it is nonetheless in

⁷ Michael B. Oren, 'Faith and Fair-mindedness: Lester B. Pearson and the Suez Crisis,' *Diplomacy & Statecraft* 3, no. 1 (1992), 48-73; and Heinbecker and Momani, *Canada and the Middle East*, 8.

our interests to preserve it.⁸ Canadian diplomats by their nature looked to Washington and London. But others made parallel judgements. In 1955, for example, an Israeli diplomat posted to France looked to the same power centres. He suggested that Israeli strategic cooperation with France on the Middle East needed to be put in perspective: 'the United States and Britain are the masters of this region.'⁹ Canadian officials felt invested in this state of affairs. And, more to the point, in the internal harmony of the Anglo-American alliance itself.

This chapter begins by reviewing the Anglo-American strategies and perceptions of Israel that framed official Canadian thinking. It then identifies Canada's operative integration into the US foreign policy system (notably with respect to weapons supplies), and the continued unease of its officials when faced with strategic tension between the US and Britain. Anglo-American tension remained the element of Middle East politics that most animated Canada's internationalists. This concern shaped the Canadian response to the Suez Crisis. For Canadian policy-makers, the fundamental problem with the war launched by Israeli, British, and French forces in 1956 was not the violation of basic norms of decolonization. It was that it was pursued without US authorization.

The Canadian government did not perceive Britain's Eden government as possessing either the independent power or the strategic sense necessary to anchor allied strategy in the Middle East. Amidst the Anglo-American tensions of 1956, the Canadian government thus gravitated more closely to the US than did the other 'members of the old Commonwealth' (as the white Dominions were now more commonly called). But the Canadian internationalists never quite matched the ostensible anti-colonialism of the Eisenhower administration. Once again the Canadian government tried to mediate between allied power centres. In the process, Pearson and his colleagues worked to secure for the attacking powers the most advantageous conditions possible for troop withdrawals.

The Eisenhower administration was no champion of decolonization or Western non-intervention in the Third World. It was under its direction that the US sponsored

⁸ *DCER Vol. 22, 5, 7.*

⁹ Zach Levey, *Israel and the Western Powers, 1952-1960* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1997), 58.

coups d'état in Iran and Guatemala; that the US announced that it would defend the Western sphere of influence through the aggressive nuclear doctrine of 'massive retaliation'; and that the US first supported and then moved to replace French colonialism in Vietnam.¹⁰ Alfred Grosser writes that much of the world felt 'that American anti-colonialism was merely a pretext for substituting an American for the European presence in the former colonial territories.'¹¹ This was essentially accurate. In the Middle East, however, the European powers and Israel made the US of the 1950s look moderate by comparison. Canadian officials staked out a position between supposed US moderation and the war aims of the tripartite aggressors. Tory opinion in Canada was outraged that Canada's Liberal government was not more closely aligned with the attacking powers.¹² But in Britain itself, many were more understanding. The *London Daily Telegraph*, for example, would in March 1957 praise the Canadian government's record at the UN, explaining that 'Canada tried to temper with realism the legalism into which the Assembly was forced by Afro-Asian rigidity and American timidity.'¹³

For Britain, the experience of the Suez Crisis dispelled any illusions that a successful imperial strategy could be pursued independently of the US. The Canadian government sought to soften this blow. For Israel, on the other hand, the experience enforced the lesson of 1948: that military conquests could yield political gains. In its modest way, the Canadian government contributed here too, opposing any penalties for Israeli aggression while favouring rewards that would allow Israel to withdraw with an air of strategic success. An interesting thread of Canadian participation in peacekeeping runs through this history. And there may be something of political worth in it. But Pearsonian diplomacy itself is an extraordinarily weak precedent for criticism of Israeli policy. The role of Western diplomacy in cultivating the Israeli leadership's sense of impunity has worsened the Palestine crisis at every stage. And in this respect as in others, Pearson's Canada contributed to the problem.

¹⁰ On the doctrine of 'massive retaliation' see Michio Kaku and Daniel Axelrod, *To Win a Nuclear War: The Pentagon's Secret War Plans* (Boston: South End Press, 1987), 105.

¹¹ Alfred Grosser, trans. Michael Shaw, *The Western Alliance: European-American Relations Since 1945* (New York: Vintage Books, 1982), 137.

¹² See, for example, José E. Igartua, "'Ready, Aye, Ready' No More? Canada, Britain, and the Suez Crisis in the Canadian Press,' in Phillip Buckner, ed., *Canada and the End of Empire* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2005), 47-65.

¹³ Bernard Figler, 'History of the Zionist Ideal in Canada,' in ed. Eli Gottesman, *Canadian Jewish Reference Book and Directory* (Ottawa: Central Rabbinical Seminary of Canada, 1963), 93.

Israel Propositions the Western Alliance

From the moment of the Israeli state's establishment, its leadership approached neighbouring Arab societies, as it approached the Palestinians, with a strategy based on military force. External support was needed to provide the means for this policy. At first, the Israeli leadership courted the support of the Soviet bloc as well as the West. Western Zionist networks had been critical to Zionist arms procurement in 1948; but one of the most important logistics and procurement centres operated by these very networks had been in Zatec, Czechoslovakia. In United Nations partition diplomacy too, the Soviet bloc had joined US allies in supporting Zionist efforts. It was against the Arabs that Israel sought support. A posture of neutrality between the Western and Soviet blocs initially seemed expedient. For the Western alliance being marshalled by the US, however, hostility to the Soviet Union soon became the structuring element of global policy. And securing Western support was Israel's over-riding priority. In July 1950 Israel abandoned its posture of neutrality by declaring support for US operations in Korea.¹⁴ In the years ahead, it sought to position its own regional war aims within the framework of Western Cold War strategy.

'The principal goal of Israel's foreign policy,' writes Zach Levey, 'was the creation of a strategic relationship with the United States, the leader of the free world.'¹⁵ US economic support for Israel built up quickly. In January 1949 the US Export-Import Bank extended \$100 million in credits to Israel to import US goods and services, which Levey identifies as having saved Israel from economic collapse.¹⁶ Fundraising for Israel on the part of allied Western Jewish organizations was another indispensable line of support. In the first decade of Israeli statehood the United Israel Appeal (UIA) and related successors to the old Zionist funds were 'the principal source of Israel's foreign currency "earnings".'¹⁷ While Canadians contributed, the most large-scale fundraising occurred in the US. For all of these links, however, US planners were reluctant to directly supply Israel with advanced weaponry. Israel never ceased in its efforts to

¹⁴ Benjamin Beit-Hallahmi, *The Israeli Connection: Who Israel Arms and Why* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1987), 189.

¹⁵ Levey, *Israel and the Western Powers*, 1.

¹⁶ Levey, *Israel and the Western Powers*, 4.

¹⁷ Daniel Elazar, Introduction to Ernest Stock, *Partners and Pursestrings: A History of the United Israel Appeal* (Lanham: University Press of America with the Jerusalem Centre for Public Affairs, 1987), xi.

widen US strategic assistance. In the meantime, it looked to acquire weapons from other powers – especially from France and Britain, but also from smaller Western states including Italy, Belgium, and Canada.

Canadian foreign policy planning took local interests into account. This encouraged, among other things, pursuit of export opportunities for the Canadian armaments industry.¹⁸ But the supply of weaponry raised larger strategic questions. Planners considered these in light of the Canadian state's position within the alliance systems structured around US and British power. A strategic case for attaching Israel to these alliances as a regional enforcer was already in public circulation. Arabs were considered unreliable subjects in an age of decolonization. The proposal to use Israel as an instrument to manage them was summarized in 1951 by Gershon Schocken, editor-in-chief of the Israeli daily *Ha'aretz*. Israel, wrote Schocken, could be trusted not to pursue 'an aggressive policy against the Arab countries, if that will run clearly counter to the wishes of the United States or Britain.' But in the right circumstances Israel could deliver powerful blows against Arab upstarts: 'if the Western powers will prefer, once, for whatever reason, to close their eyes, you can rely on it that Israel will be capable of sufficiently punishing one or more of the neighbouring countries, whose lack of courtesy towards the West has gone beyond the permissible limits.'¹⁹

Canadian officials sometimes echoed this argumentation. The August 1951 cabinet discussions concerning sale to Israel of a stock of 25-pound guns is a case in point. The cabinet minutes record that Pearson, speaking for external affairs, and Brooke Claxton, then minister for national defence, agreed that Canada's North Atlantic commitments were compatible with the supply of weaponry to Israel: 'With the Arab world in a state of internal unrest and mounting anti-Western hysteria, Israel was emerging as the one stable element in the area.'²⁰ But here as across the world, Canadian officials were looking to US and British strategy and working to align themselves with it. Their interpretation of Anglo-American strategy and their thoughts on how best to relate to it set the terms of discussion. The strategic rationale for supporting

¹⁸ See, for example, Greg Donaghy, ed., *DCER Vol. 17* (Ottawa: Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade, 1996), 1735; and Greg Donaghy, ed., *DCER Vol. 21* (Ottawa: Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade, 1999), 1217.

¹⁹ Beit-Hallahmi, *The Israeli Connection*, 189.

²⁰ *DCER Vol. 17*, 1728-9.

Israel persistently surfaced. But during the 1950s this was not the main strategic conception, either in the US or in Britain.

The relations of power between the US and Britain strongly favoured the US. It was nonetheless Britain that had facilities in the Middle East and experience with the region. In the overlapping spheres of influence established by the two powers, the Middle East was thus identified at the beginning of the 1950s as 'a British and Commonwealth responsibility.'²¹ Here the term 'Commonwealth' is ambiguous. Decolonization was bringing Third World states into the organization. With dilution of its racial character came erosion of its utility as an imperial forum. Pearson is cited as having said that 'the advent of African Commonwealth states doomed the Commonwealth system.'²² In the early postwar period, the problem was Asian membership. British officials managed the problem by drawing a distinction between the 'new' and the 'old' Commonwealth. In this way the 1951 meeting of Commonwealth prime ministers yielded opportunities for more reliable coordination. Ritchie Owendale explains that special sessions were convened from which Asian members were excluded. 'Talks on the defence of the Middle East and Africa were confined to Britain, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, South Africa and Southern Rhodesia.'²³ Here Britain and the 'old Commonwealth' developed plans for a Middle East Command based in Egypt. Canada was old Commonwealth; but it was also deeply integrated into a North American arrangement. The Canadian government was therefore assigned to US rather than to British areas of responsibility. It associated with allied policy in the Middle East from a distance.

British strategy centred on maintenance of a direct troop presence in Arab countries, approved by nominally independent governments tied to Britain by treaty obligations. The Hashemite monarchies of Jordan and Iraq were among Britain's closest protectorates. But it was Egypt, where Britain had maintained an uninterrupted troop presence since 1882, that was the centrepiece of British strategy. Managing Egyptian politics proved challenging. An Egyptian popular upheaval in 1935 had forced

²¹ Ritchie Owendale, *The English-Speaking Alliance: Britain, the United States, the Dominions and the Cold War, 1945-1951* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1985), 124.

²² Gordon T. Stewart, "'An Objective of US Foreign Policy since the Founding of the Republic": The United States and the End of Empire in Canada,' in ed. Buckner, *Canada and the End of Empire*, 96.

²³ Owendale, *The English-Speaking Alliance*, 119, 126.

Britain to make concessions to nationalist demands, producing a compromise in the Anglo-Egyptian treaty of 1936. The result was not outright colonial rule. But nor was it independence. After World War II agitation spread in Egypt against various provisions of the 1936 treaty, especially the authorization for Britain to maintain its military occupation of the Suez Canal zone. Anglo-Egyptian negotiations to revise the treaty made little progress. In October 1951 the Egyptian government, impelled by popular pressure, unilaterally renounced the treaty. Alongside diplomatic pressure for a British withdrawal there emerged a guerrilla campaign. From October 1951 to January 1952, British forces in the Canal zone faced periodic attacks from units of volunteer irregulars.²⁴

Canada was asked only for declaratory support. Soon after Egyptian renunciation of the treaty the Canadian government received a message to this effect from Britain. The message explained that the British, tasked with the security of the Middle East, 'shall regard ourselves as agents acting on behalf of the free world when we say that we intend to stay in Egypt whatever the cost.' Egyptian consent was besides the point:

We would reject any suggestion that as the existence of a base in Egypt is a cardinal feature of the Allied Middle East Command organization there can be no Allied base there if Egypt will not participate. If the Egyptians agree to participate in the Middle East Command, well and good, and the base would become an Allied base. But if there is no agreement with Egypt we still intend to hold the base so that it may be available for use by the Allies.²⁵

The Canadian government publicly supported this position. But significantly, Canadian officials repeatedly emphasized among themselves that this support came only after US support had been confirmed. 'As a matter now almost of instinct and habit,' wrote one external affairs official, 'we were accustomed to consult both London and Washington on all major questions.'²⁶

For its part, the Israeli threat was not altogether removed from Anglo-Egyptian negotiations. Amidst the wave of anti-Egyptian racism that swept the British sphere during this period, Winston Churchill, who returned to the office of prime minister in October 1951, invoked the possibility of authorizing an Israeli attack. In December 1951 he suggested that this threat be conveyed to the Egyptians in the tradition of gunboat

²⁴ Anouar Abdel-Malek, trans. Charles Lam Markmann, *Egypt: Military Society* (New York: Random House, 1968), 31.

²⁵ *DCER Vol. 17*, 1719-20.

²⁶ *DCER Vol. 17*, 1725.

diplomacy: 'Tell them that if we have any more of their cheek we will set the Jews on them and drive them back into the gutter, from which they should never have emerged.'²⁷ But this was more an outburst than a statement of policy. Britain had its own troops in place. Moreover, the effort to maintain treaty obligations with Arab states needed on some level to reflect the fact that the main external threat to them came from Israel. Even in 1956 the British government would seek, if clumsily, to downplay its collusion with Israel.

By the time the Free Officers movement within the Egyptian military staged their *coup d'état* of July 1952, the country had been pushed to the brink of chaos. Perhaps the worst moment came in January of that year, when British tanks and artillery attacked the Government House at the Suez Canal station of Ismailia. British forces killed more than 150 Egyptians, mostly peasant policemen, provoking massive outrage. Anouar Abdel-Malek describes a broad popular response, with factories closed by a general strike and workers converging with large student demonstrations. Abdel-Malek also describes the descent upon Cairo of organized teams of arsonists whom he associates with the Egyptian far right.²⁸ Many lives were lost in the ensuing destruction, including that of Canadian trade commissioner J.M. Boyer; Churchill took the occasion to deride Egyptians as 'lower than the most degraded savages now known.'²⁹ At moments like this US confidence in British policy frayed. Faced with the destruction in Cairo, US secretary of state Dean Acheson remarked that the 'splutter of musketry' may not deserve the confidence that Churchill placed in it.³⁰

Against this backdrop the Egyptian Free Officers coup was greeted with cautious US optimism. Abdel-Malek describes the consolidation of the new regime in the summer of 1952. 'Political confusion was at its height,' writes Abdel-Malek, 'and some people went so far as to wish for a *real* popular revolution.' With peasants calling for agrarian reform and organized labour echoing demands for change, a strike was declared by workers in the Anglo-Egyptian textiles factories of the Beyda Dyers Company at Kafr el-Dawwar. Union leaders Mustafa Khamis and Mohammed Hassan

²⁷ Simon C. Smith, *Ending Empire in the Middle East: Britain, the United States and Postwar Decolonization, 1945-1973* (London: Routledge, 2012), 19.

²⁸ Abdel-Malek, *Egypt*, 35-7.

²⁹ *DCER Vol. 21*, 1237; and Keith Kyle, *Suez: Britain's End of Empire in the Middle East* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2003), 40-41.

³⁰ Smith, *Ending Empire in the Middle East*, 19.

el-Bakary addressed a demonstration of workers and peasants in front of the factories, speaking 'of a new era, of the end of injustice, of oppression.' The response was swift: 'This was August 13. On the same day the army surrounded the factory, dispersed the demonstrators and set up a military tribunal that tried the two labour leaders on the spot and sentenced them to death. They were hanged high the next day.'³¹ US planners were enthusiastic about this suppression of the communist threat. The 'robust handling' of the strike, writes Steven C. Smith, 'sealed US approval of the Free Officers.'³² The next month Acheson pledged to Egypt 'the active friendship of the United States.'³³

British officials had misgivings about US policy on Egypt. In part this reflected different strategic calculations. As the Egyptian military regime suppressed the left it also pursued a programme of agrarian reform. This effort was supported by banking and industrial capital; the National Bank of Egypt remarked that 'any reform whatever, no matter how radical, is preferable to the anarchy of a mass movement.'³⁴ The regime was also making overtures to foreign capital that were welcomed both by the Egyptian Federation of Industries (EFI) and by the US ambassador to Cairo, Jeffersen Caffery.³⁵ Britain, on the other hand, stubbornly continued to support traditional landed interests. It also continued to collide with Egypt over occupation of the Canal zone. Anglo-American disagreement was compounded by a growing sense of rivalry. Just as the US had driven a unanimous NATO resolution in support of French warfare in Vietnam, it had publicly supported Britain against Egypt.³⁶ British foreign secretary Anthony Eden was among those questioning US motives: 'All the Americans want to do is to replace France and run Indochina themselves. They want to replace us in Egypt too. They want to run the world.'³⁷

For Canadian officials, for the time being, such Anglo-American differences were not especially troubling. Canada's regional arms supply policy was harmonized with both the US and Britain, which, alongside France, coordinated Western arms shipments to the Middle East under the terms of the Tripartite Declaration of 1950. The Canadian

³¹ Abdel-Malek, *Egypt*, 69-70.

³² Smith, *Ending Empire in the Middle East*, 21.

³³ Abdel-Malek, *Egypt*, 97.

³⁴ Abdel-Malek, *Egypt*, 80.

³⁵ Abdel-Malek, *Egypt*, 80.

³⁶ Grosser, *The Western Alliance*, 131.

³⁷ Smith, *Ending Empire in the Middle East*, 26.

government also participated in more direct international management of the Arab-Israeli conflict. In 1954 a Canadian soldier, E.L.M. Burns, was appointed to command the United Nations Truce Supervision Organization (UNTSO). This was the force tasked with monitoring the armistice lines of 1949 that served as Israel's undeclared borders. Arms supply and peacekeeping policies involved the Canadian government in Middle East politics to some extent. But in the final count the region was as peripheral to core Canadian concerns as Canada was to the Middle East.

By 1954 the British proposal for a Western strategy centred on military bases in Egypt was discredited. The US under the Eisenhower administration was no longer following the British lead. US secretary of state John Foster Dulles came to feel that close US association with Britain could be almost as provocative to the Arab world as US association with Israel. As an alternative to reliance on the British in Egypt, Dulles proposed developing a 'northern tier' of Western-allied states, to include Turkey, Iraq, Syria, Pakistan, and perhaps Iran.³⁸ British forces in the Suez Canal zone were anyway doing little beyond dealing with the periodic guerrilla attacks provoked by their presence. That year Colonel Gamal Abdel Nasser consolidated his control of the Egyptian military government. And in October, an Anglo-Egyptian agreement for British troop withdrawals was finalized. The agreement was a compromise. The British military would be authorized to make use of Egyptian territory in the event of an international war, but it would not maintain a presence in peacetime. All British military personnel would be withdrawn from the Canal zone by June 1956.³⁹ Late 1954 witnessed two other inter-related developments in Egypt. The first was another wave of government repression against the left. The second was a stepped-up effort on the part of Nasser's government to cultivate strategic ties with the US and Britain.⁴⁰

To Canadian officials Britain, taking the US cue, seemed to be accommodating itself to the Nasser government. The same could not be said of Israel. Western alliance with anti-communist regimes in the Arab world might isolate Israel from Western support as it sought to consolidate and expand the conquests of 1948. In the summer of 1954 Colonel Benjamin Givli, head of Israeli military intelligence, thus instructed Israeli

³⁸ Keith Kyle, *Suez*, 50.

³⁹ Erskine Childers, *The Road to Suez: A Study of Western-Arab Relations* (London: MacGibbon & Kee, 1962), 105.

⁴⁰ Abdel-Malek, *Egypt*, 97.

intelligence assets in Egypt to carry out attacks on US and British targets in order 'to break the West's confidence in the existing regime.' 'The Israeli origin should be totally covered,' instructed Givli, 'while attention should be shifted to any other possible factor.'⁴¹ In July the unit responsible was caught after a bomb in the pocket of one operative accidentally exploded in Alexandria. The mission was a spectacular debacle. Canada had just established a diplomatic mission in Cairo. In December 1954 Israel requested that the Canadian government use its representatives in Cairo to protest the trial of the captured Israeli operatives.

The request came from the Israeli ambassador to Ottawa, Michael Comay. Comay's representations were summarized in a memorandum written for Pearson by external affairs diplomat Jean Chapdelaine. Comay, like other Israeli diplomats across the world, charged the Egyptian government with conducting a 'show trial' against 'a group of Jews in Egypt who had been falsely accused of plotting in favour of Israel.'⁴² He also urged that Canada support Israel in its demand that Egypt forego belligerency rights and allow Israeli shipping through Egyptian territorial waters.

Naturally 'the Israelis wish to show that they want peace,' Chapdelaine wrote, 'that it is the Arabs who maintain warlike measures.' The situation was, however, more complex. And under the circumstances, domestic Egyptian politics made government abandonment of official belligerence unlikely. 'Because the Nasser régime is perhaps the last chance for stability in Egypt,' he continued, 'it should not be condemned too strongly for resorting to those tactics in order to survive.' The Canadian government considered Israeli claims against Egypt with caution. On the issue of the 'show trial,' Chapdelaine emphasized that Canada could not afford to give Israel unqualified support. 'Whereas for a variety of reasons we can be reasonably assured that our relations with Israel are on a sound footing, we have less reason to be complacent about Canada's relations with the Arab states.' The fact that the Egyptian story concerning these arrests seemed more credible than the Israeli enforced a measure of caution. Chapdelaine concluded: 'the future of our diplomatic mission in Egypt should not be jeopardized so soon after its establishment by pressing too vigorously Israeli contentions which may not be as well founded as Israel might make them appear.'

⁴¹ Rokach, *Israel's Sacred Terrorism*, 34.

⁴² *DCER Vol. 21*, 1223.

Chapdelaine recommended that the Canadian government take no action beyond the usual: consultation with the US and Britain.⁴³

Reflecting on this period in his memoirs, Pearson writes that Israel emerged as ‘an outpost . . . of the West in the Middle East.’⁴⁴ This is accurate enough; while Britain positioned itself as the regional guardian of Western interests, Israel tried to do likewise – it also did all it could to disrupt the development of competing Arab client relationships. The Canadian government associated both with Britain and with Israel, but cautiously. US power was increasingly making itself felt. Prime minister St.-Laurent summarized the linchpin of Canada’s global policy: ‘while we sometimes differ about tactics, the rest of the free nations cannot quarrel with the strategy of American leadership.’⁴⁵ And in 1954 US strategy seemed to involve extension to the Middle East of something like the Latin American model. In these circumstances the Canadian government limited its own Western alliance commitments in the region while avoiding disputes among allies.

Converging Drives to War

Israeli politics before 1967 are the object of much liberal nostalgia. These were the years of an Israel dominated by Ben-Gurion’s Labour Zionism, before the perpetual occupation of the Gaza Strip and the West Bank. In all that concerns this period the gap between the record of Israeli politics and its established representation in the West is at its widest. One useful source detailing actual Israeli conduct during this period is the account provided by the Canadian commander of UNTSO, E.L.M. Burns. As head of UNTSO from 1954-6 Burns was responsible for monitoring the 1949 armistice lines. He was then appointed to command the United Nations Emergency Force (UNEF) that replaced Israeli forces in Gaza and the Sinai when Israel finally withdrew after the occupation of 1956-7. Burns provides a record of his service in a book entitled *Between Arab and Israeli*.

⁴³ DCER Vol. 21, 1224.

⁴⁴ Munro and Inglis, *Memoirs of the Right Honourable*, 219.

⁴⁵ Victor Levant, *Quiet Complicity: Canadian Involvement in the Vietnam War* (Toronto: Between the Lines, 1986), 13.

Burns writes ruefully of the early period of his service, when he 'was still sufficiently naïve to believe that statements of senior officials of the [Israeli] Ministry of Foreign Affairs could be relied upon to represent the intentions of the real directors of Israel's foreign and defence policies.'⁴⁶ The policies he observed were so at odds with official Israeli statements that common sense drove him to a certain degree of criticism. The mythology of a defensive Labour Zionist Israel was from the beginning at odds with the record provided by observers like Burns. Rejection of this mythology now has more irrefutable foundations. In more than 2,400 pages of diary entries Moshe Sharett, Israel's first foreign minister and then prime minister from 1954-5, sheds light on Israeli strategy. The Sharett diaries were eventually published in Hebrew, and after a struggle over publication rights the Association of Arab-American University Graduates (AAUG) made selections available in English.⁴⁷ The reality depicted by Sharett is now also corroborated by declassified Israeli materials. The details of Israeli government discussions are accessible in a study written by Motti Golani, *Israel in Search of a War*.⁴⁸ The Canadian government's policies towards Israel should be considered alongside the reality revealed in materials such as these.

The priorities of the Western powers aside, the Israeli leadership was from the early 1950s developing ambitious war plans on every front. War was pursued most aggressively by Ben-Gurion and those closest to him, especially Moshe Dayan and Shimon Peres. As early as 1951 Ben-Gurion had his military advisers draw up plans for occupation of the West Bank.⁴⁹ When Israeli cross-border warfare escalated in earnest, it was the West Bank that was first targeted, in the Qibya massacre of October 1953. Publicly Sharett defended the action as foreign minister. Privately he was livid: 'when I opposed the action,' he wrote on learning details of the Qibya raid, 'I didn't even remotely suspect such a bloodbath.'⁵⁰ In the years leading up to the Gaza-Sinai campaign of 1956 Israel considered war against every neighbouring country. To observers like Burns, Israeli policy seemed dangerously provocative. Sharett defended the attacks publicly while leaving a remarkable record of private hand-wringing. In

⁴⁶ E.L.M. Burns, *Between Arab and Israeli* (Toronto: Clarke, Irwin & Company Ltd, 1962), 97.

⁴⁷ See Rokach, *Israel's Sacred Terrorism*; full citation details in note 2, above.

⁴⁸ Motti Golani, *Israel in Search of a War: The Sinai Campaign, 1955-1956* (Brighton: Sussex Academic Press, 1998).

⁴⁹ Avi Shlaim, *The Iron Wall: Israel and the Arab World* (London: Penguin Books, 2000), 68.

⁵⁰ Rokach, *Israel's Sacred Terrorism*, 13.

March 1955, for example, Sharett, then Israeli prime minister, described the latest IDF attack on the West Bank as follows: 'This may be taken as a decisive proof that we have decided to pass on to a general bloody offensive on all fronts: yesterday Gaza, today something on the Jordanian border, tomorrow the Syrian DMZ.'⁵¹ Recorded Israeli war aims ranged from establishment of a Christian protectorate in Lebanon to the occupation of southern Syria.⁵²

The most sustained Israeli war planning targeted Gaza and Egypt. The Jordanian government held the West Bank, and it was closely tied to Britain. Syria and Lebanon, despite the evacuation of French forces in 1946, were still considered part of the French sphere. Egypt was not only the most important of the Arab states. It also came to be seen by Western planners as one of the most challenging centres of anti-imperialist agitation. In 1951 Churchill invoked the possibility of prompting an Israeli assault on Egypt. That year, Ben-Gurion considered approaching Britain with a proposal for Israel to occupy the Egyptian Sinai, expel the population, and offer the Suez Canal up for international control.⁵³ As it happened, Israeli and Western warfare against Egypt was not coordinated until 1956. But much earlier, Israeli hawks were already trying to provoke a war. Motti Golani reviews how Israeli planners directed raids on Gaza with the aim of sparking a widened conflict. 'Dayan never spoke about an Israeli-initiated war in so many words before April 1955,' writes Golani, 'but this had always been the real thrust of his entire posture, which was in no way "hysterical", as Sharett tended to describe it.'⁵⁴ As it prepared for war, Israel appealed to the West for more weaponry.

It was clear to Canadian officials that Israel's border wars were about more than self-defence. IDF raids were being framed as retaliation for Palestinian infiltration. In other words, Israel was demanding that the Arab states clamp down on the 1948 refugee populations. In Gaza, as Burns noted, Palestinians were trapped, blocked from entering Egypt by Egyptian authorities and excluded from their former lands by an 'Armistice Demarcation Line which they cross in peril of being shot by Israelis or imprisoned by Egyptians.'⁵⁵ Between the wars of 1948 and 1956 Israeli forces killed

⁵¹ Rokach, *Israel's Sacred Terrorism*, 31.

⁵² Rokach, *Israel's Sacred Terrorism*, 17-23.

⁵³ Shlaim, *Iron Wall*, 68.

⁵⁴ Golani, *Israel in Search of a War*, 6.

⁵⁵ Burns, *Between Arab and Israeli*, 70

thousands of Palestinians as they tried to return to territory held by Israel. Although the 'vast majority' (in the estimation of Benny Morris) made the journey for social or economic reasons, Israeli diplomacy focused on those few who returned in small guerrilla units, the *fedayin*.⁵⁶ Burns was among those pointing out that the Arab states could not be expected to repress the Palestinians as thoroughly as Israel demanded. The exclusion of the Palestinians and the annexation of their lands were viewed with nearly unanimous Arab outrage. As Arab regimes clamped down on Palestinian infiltration they were enforcing 'a suspension of hostilities against Israel,' wrote Burns, 'a state of affairs which would lead towards a peace leaving Israel in possession of the lands from which she had forcibly expelled the Arabs.'⁵⁷ Any regime that did not want to make an enemy of its public had to approach this issue with caution. Israel, moreover, did not seem set to confine itself to disproportionate retaliation. Burns was especially critical of the Israeli operations he was monitoring. But as Israel sought to build up its intervention forces, few found the cover story of cross-border retaliation credible.

One obvious contradiction was identified in a November 1954 memorandum written by Canadian under-secretary of state for external affairs Jules Léger. He wrote:

The weapons which the Israelis have been seeking – jet aircraft, tanks, aerial bombs and increased artillery – seem well beyond their needs for defence against the Arabs, in the present disorganized state of the latter. The best available evidence indicates that Israel could now defend itself against any attack the Arabs could mount. Moreover, the weapons in demand are not those normally used for punitive raids (assuming one could find justification for the retaliatory raids carried out by Israeli forces). This circumstantial evidence could mean, therefore, that the Israelis are contemplating large-scale operations.⁵⁸

Since the spring of 1954 Israel had been appealing to Canada to supply it with a squadron of advanced fighter aircraft.⁵⁹ The jets in question were F-86s which a Canadian firm was producing under a licensing agreement with the US. But 'the Israeli air force,' in the judgement of the Canadian defence ministry, was already 'at least a match for the combined air power of the Arab States.' The F-86s were in a class of swept-wing aircraft that even British forces were not deploying in the Middle East. Officials were most worried about the implications of expanded Israeli attacks on the

⁵⁶ Cited in Nur Masalha, *A Land Without a People: Israel, Transfer and the Palestinians 1949-96* (London: Faber & Faber, 1997), 36.

⁵⁷ Burns, *Between Arab and Israeli*, 60.

⁵⁸ Greg Donaghy, ed., with asst. ed. Ted Kelly, *DCER Vol. 20* (Ottawa: Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade, 1997), 1621-2.

⁵⁹ *DCER Vol. 20*, 1629.

West Bank. In the Canadian nightmare scenario, what if Israel launched an invasion to the east in circumstances that compelled Britain to intervene under the terms of its treaty with Jordan, only to face an Israel armed with Canadian aircraft?⁶⁰ Canada's international commitments seemed to dictate a cautious approach to Israel's military build-up. The issue of Canadian fighter aircraft for Israel was, however, not yet put to rest.

In 1955, relations between the Nasser government and the Western powers began to deteriorate. From the Egyptian perspective, US conditions for military and economic assistance too closely resembled the old imperialism. Since the Free Officers *coup*, Egypt had been appealing to the US for military supplies. The US provided Egypt with domestic policing equipment – but attached strict conditions to military aid. In return for US supplies Egypt would be obliged to adhere to a Western defence pact; the US also proposed direct supervision of Egyptian by US military personnel.⁶¹ US officials meanwhile blocked alternative sources, instructing Spain, for example, to cancel a \$3 million arms shipment that Egypt was expecting.⁶² In the economic sphere, conditions were similarly strict. Repressing the left and opening the country to foreign capital was not enough. Abdel-Malek recalls the conditions that the US attached to 1955 loan offers through the IBRD (the original centrepiece of the World Bank): 'control of the Egyptian budget by the IBRD, and a ban on any new borrowing; in order to modernize herself Egypt would thus be called upon to return to the days of Anglo-French control under Ismail, the prelude to the occupation of 1882!'⁶³ The Nasser government had in its foreign policy oriented towards the West. But it was also pursuing Egyptian independence and trying to part with a colonial past. It was not prepared to accept demands of this kind.

Israeli attacks lent a sense of urgency to Egyptian arms procurement. In September 1955, with negotiations with the West stalled, Egypt concluded an arms deal with Czechoslovakia. The agreement came without political conditions. But much as leading Egyptian communists remained in jail, the Nasser government had now bought arms from a Soviet bloc state. It was campaigning against Anglo-American efforts to

⁶⁰ *DCER Vol. 20*, 1632.

⁶¹ Michael B. Oren, 'Canada, the Great Powers, and the Middle Eastern Arms Race, 1950-1956,' *The International History Review* 12, no. 2 (1990), 289-90.

⁶² Abdel-Malek, *Egypt*, 224.

⁶³ Abdel-Malek, *Egypt*, 103.

press Arab states into a Western defence pact. And Nasser himself had attended the Bandung conference of April 1955, the launching point for a coordinated Third World anti-colonialism. The Egyptian government had not yet ruptured with the West. Through to the summer of 1956, it continued to negotiate with the Western powers for development assistance. Most significantly, it was to the IBRD that the Egyptian government looked for loans to finance its priority project, the Aswan Dam, aimed at addressing Egypt's food crisis by opening new lands for agricultural cultivation.⁶⁴ But Cold War neutralism meant defiance of US power. And the logic of supporting Israel as an enforcer gained ground. In October 1955 Kermit Roosevelt, director of the CIA and grandson to Theodore, sent the Israeli government a message: 'if, when Soviet arms are received by Egypt, you will choose to hit them, no one will challenge you.'⁶⁵

The Czech arms deal had a contradictory effect on Israeli war plans. On the one hand, an Israeli invasion now seemed more likely to receive US support. '[T]he US is interested in toppling Nasser's regime,' remarked Ben-Gurion on receiving Roosevelt's message, 'but it does not dare at the moment to use the methods it adopted to topple the leftist government of Jacobo Arbenz in Guatemala and of Mossadegh in Iran . . . It prefers its work to be done by Israel.'⁶⁶ It seemed that Israel might finally receive recognition as an instrument of US empire. On the other hand, Israeli planners had for months already been doing everything possible to provoke a war with Egypt. The Czech weapons may have enforced Israel's Cold War position. But they also produced a credible deterrent. As a result, writes Golani, 'the Egyptian-Czech deal did not push Israel into war: on the contrary, it put an end, for the time being, to Israel's efforts to bring about war.'⁶⁷ Ben-Gurion looked to strengthen Israel's position before launching another major attack. He was especially deterred by the prospect of retaliatory air strikes from Egypt, and felt that better air cover was needed to guarantee that the war would not spill back into Israeli territory.⁶⁸

It was thus under changed circumstances that, in 1956, Israel renewed its appeals for Canadian F-86 fighter jets. The terms of Canadian production of these

⁶⁴ Kyle, *Suez*, 82-85.

⁶⁵ Golani, *Israel in Search of a War*, 13.

⁶⁶ Rokach, *Israel's Sacred Terrorism*, 47.

⁶⁷ Golani, *Israel in Search of a War*, 183.

⁶⁸ Golani, *Israel in Search of a War*, 7.

swept-wing aircraft required US consent for export to any non-NATO power. Even if the Canadian government had wished to fulfil Israel's requests in 1954, the US may well have cautioned against it. Now things were different. In April 1956 secretary of state Dulles directly appealed to the Canadian government to make the deal.⁶⁹ US support amplified Israel's requests like nothing else could. The next month prime minister Ben-Gurion reiterated the official narrative in a letter to his Canadian counterpart, St.-Laurent: 'we are convinced that trebling the number of our fighter planes of this class is the indispensable minimum to deter aggression and to enable us, if need be, to withstand attack.'⁷⁰ This defensive posture continued to lack credibility. No Canadian official meaningfully refuted Léger's earlier judgement that 'the Nasser Government has demonstrated its desire not to be stampeded into a renewal of hostilities with Israel.'⁷¹ But Canadian government ink flowed in an effort to rationalize the combined force of local defence industry interests and US requests.

Before Canada shipped the aircraft to Israel, the Suez Crisis erupted. It was not Canadian-supplied aircraft, nor the Israeli Air Force at all, that provided the air cover for Israel's 1956 occupation of Gaza and the Sinai. Egypt's aerial deterrent was instead neutralized by direct Anglo-French bombing. The European powers had their own reasons to wage war. France identified the Nasser government with the resistance to French colonialism in Algeria. By the summer of 1956 shared objectives brought France and Israel into a wide-ranging strategic partnership.⁷² Meanwhile Egyptian negotiations with the US and Britain collapsed. Egypt was extraordinarily invested in development of the Aswan Dam. And negotiations with the IBRD seemed to be making progress. But in July 1956, the US made a public show of rebuking Egypt through a sudden cancellation of IBRD loan offers. Dulles boasted that this was 'as big a chess move as US diplomacy has made in a long time.'⁷³ It was expected that Nasser would be forced to appeal for Soviet funds. Instead, Egypt looked to a local source. On 26 July 1956 Nasser announced nationalization of the largely European-owned Suez Canal company. In British cabinet discussions the next day it was privately conceded that Nasser was not

⁶⁹ *DCER Vol. 22*, 69.

⁷⁰ *DCER Vol. 22*, 84.

⁷¹ *DCER Vol. 21*, 1228.

⁷² Golani, *Israel in Search of a War*, 28.

⁷³ Kyle, *Suez*, 130.

breaking any laws; 'from the strictly legal point of view, his action amounts to no more than a decision to buy out shareholders.'⁷⁴ But this was not friendship to the West. Dulles proposed patience and coordinated Anglo-American subversion of Nasser.⁷⁵ Britain's Eden government took a different course, mobilizing its troops for a conventional war. So it was that Israeli forces would strike Gaza and Egypt under European air cover.

Canadian discussions about the supply of fighter aircraft to Israel nonetheless offer a telling glimpse into Pearson's department of external affairs. The request from Dulles carried enormous weight. Pearson wanted to oblige, but he did not want Canada to seem too far ahead of the US and Britain in its military support for Israel.⁷⁶ On the other hand, that Canada had so little invested in the Middle East seemed to make it a strategic Western arms conduit. R.M. Macdonnell, one of the Canadian officials most involved in these discussions, explained:

It is true that we, rather than the United States, would have to take the anger of the Arabs and this is unpleasant. However, we have no purely national interests in the area, our fund of goodwill is apparently fairly large and this might be a small sacrifice for us to make for a common cause. It is not right to think in terms of 'pulling American chestnuts out of the fire.' The chestnuts in this dangerous area are as much Canadian as they are American or British, because we would be inevitably involved in the consequences of war.⁷⁷

Macdonnell argued that Arab outrage could anyway not cost Canada much, 'with the possible exception of a few broken windows in our Missions in Cairo and Beirut.'⁷⁸ True, he conceded, others in the Third World might be upset, since 'Israel is looked upon by most of the anti-colonial nations of Africa and Asia as something in the nature of an imperialist stronghold.'⁷⁹ But Canada's primary attachment was to the West. Pearson shied away from unilateral action. He pressed for the US to announce an accompanying arms shipment of its own to Israel in order to give the impression of collective Western action. On this condition he consented to the deal.⁸⁰

⁷⁴ Kyle, *Suez*, 30.

⁷⁵ Kyle, *Suez*, 254.

⁷⁶ *DCER Vol. 22*, 96.

⁷⁷ *DCER Vol. 22*, 76.

⁷⁸ *DCER Vol. 22*, 77.

⁷⁹ *DCER Vol. 22*, 78.

⁸⁰ Nina Noring, ed., with John Glennon, ed. in chief, *Foreign Relations of the United States [henceforth FRUS] 1955-1957, Vol. 16* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1990), 23-4.

The contracts were signed and delivery of a squadron of Canadian F-86s to Israel was scheduled to begin in November 1956.⁸¹ The eruption of the Suez Crisis at the end of October resulted in a quiet refund.⁸² Pearson rushed to New York to earn his Nobel Peace Prize. But the fact remains: Pearson was willing to position Canada alongside France at the cutting edge of Western military support for Israel. From the 1949 armistice lines, Burns documented Israeli aggression on various fronts and urged against such arms sales.⁸³ It was Pearsonian policy to brush aside these misgivings, in support of Israel and in partnership with the politics of US empire.

Challenges to Western Cohesion

For fully a decade after the 1948 war, British and Israeli policy in the Middle East were at odds with one another. Not until 1958, when a military revolt in Iraq overthrew Britain's Hashemite protectorate and Israel assisted Britain in its defence of Hashemite rule in Jordan, did Britain stop pressuring Israel for border concessions and start supplying Israel with advanced weaponry.⁸⁴ In the lead-up to the Suez Crisis, Britain's Conservative government was by no means publicly aligned with Israel. But by late 1956, both British and Israeli war planners came to consider collusion against Egypt expedient. The result was the coordinated assault launched in the final days of October 1956. It would be the last war that either state waged without the support of the US.

Canadian concerns over British policy in the Middle East were building up throughout 1956. In March, US secretary of state Dulles commiserated with Pearson over 'the rather jittery' behaviour the British were exhibiting under the leadership of Anthony Eden, prime minister since Churchill's retirement in early 1955. Pearson assumed the role of an old Commonwealth confidante, sympathizing and adding that Eden's father, too, had been 'quite eccentric.'⁸⁵ The British response to Egyptian nationalization of the Suez Canal sharpened Canadian concerns. Soon after the

⁸¹ *DCER Vol. 22*, 118.

⁸² *DCER Vol. 22*, 187.

⁸³ *DCER Vol. 22*, 86.

⁸⁴ Orna Almog, *Britain, Israel and the United States, 1955-1958: Beyond Suez* (London: Frank Cass, 2003), 201-204.

⁸⁵ Kyle, *Suez*, 101.

nationalization was announced, Eden wrote to St.-Laurent that 'we should seize this opportunity of putting the canal under proper international control as a permanent arrangement.' If political pressure to this end did not suffice, Eden continued, 'force may have to be used to secure Egyptian agreement.'⁸⁶ This was precisely the kind of clumsy colonial gesture that Dulles had complained to Pearson about. The day that Eden's telegram arrived, Pearson wrote to Canada's high commissioner in London, Norman Robertson. US representatives had confirmed to Pearson that the British line did not have US blessing. Pearson expressed his abiding hope to Robertson: 'Surely the UK Government will not do anything which would commit them to strong action against Egypt until they know that the US will back them.'⁸⁷

That was July. Through August and September, the British government simultaneously mobilized for a war against Egypt and campaigned to strip Egypt of control of the Suez Canal. The French government wished to topple Nasser over Algeria and supported Britain's maximalist positions; the US State Department worked to prevent the allies from investing themselves in demands that were no longer within their power to impose. Canada's St.-Laurent government was torn by its traditional alignments. In August John Diefenbaker, the leader of Canada's Progressive Conservative opposition, asked in the House of Commons whether the government stood with the US or with the European powers. The Canadian government was loathe to publicly make a choice. 'I must deprecate,' responded Pearson, 'in a friendly way, the implication of my hon. friend's question that there is necessarily any difference of policy in this matter between the United States on the one hand and the United Kingdom and France on the other.'⁸⁸ All knew that this was wishful thinking. Privately, Canadian representatives urged restoration of NATO cohesion.

The Canadian government at first avoided unnecessary involvement in diplomacy on the Suez question while urging that British strategy be made 'consistent with present-day political facts in Asia and Africa.'⁸⁹ Trying to outmanoeuvre Third World anti-colonialism was one thing; confronting it head-on was another. September opened with the Canadian government's faith in the Eden government's approach wearing thin.

⁸⁶ *DCER Vol. 22*, 132.

⁸⁷ *DCER Vol. 22*, 133.

⁸⁸ Munro and Inglis, *Memoirs of the Right Honourable*, 230.

⁸⁹ *DCER Vol. 22*, 166.

‘There seems,’ Robertson reported from London on 3 September, ‘to be a lack of imagination and skill on the part of those who are concerned here with the public relations aspect of UK policy moves.’⁹⁰ A meeting of the NATO Council later that week provided the opportunity for Pearson to state the Canadian government’s position. The Egyptian government had been characterizing demands for international control of the Suez Canal as ‘collective colonialism,’ in Nasser’s phrasing.⁹¹ In his speech to the NATO allies Pearson dismissed this notion, affirming that Suez was of course not an issue to be discussed ‘in terms of nationalism, colonialism, imperialism, etc.’; it was, Pearson argued, simply in the interests of the general good that the Suez Canal be subject to ‘agreed international arrangements which would minimize the possibility of interference – political or economic – and prevent its exploitation by any single state – including the state through whose territory the Canal runs.’ But, he emphasized, force should only be used as a last resort and in harmony with NATO and the UN.⁹² In sum, it was Canadian policy throughout this period to try and dissuade Britain from rash action while promoting strategies for ‘selling internationalization . . . to the Afro-Asians.’⁹³ In October, the Canadian government was prompted to a new level of involvement.

Public diplomacy had not provided a viable basis for Britain to wage war on Egypt. A classic colonial intervention of the sort that Britain could have undertaken in an earlier era no longer seemed possible. Thus, in the search for a pretext, the Eden government turned to Israel. ‘The French were the matchmakers,’ writes Avi Shlaim.⁹⁴ On French initiative and by means of French mediation, the British and Israeli governments combined their war plans. After preliminary discussions, planners from all three powers met from 22-25 October in the Parisian suburb of Sèvres to finalize a plan of action. Forty years later a copy of their signed agreement was released to researchers by the Ben-Gurion Archive at Sde Boker. ‘With the release of the protocol,’ writes Shlaim, ‘the tripartite meeting at Sèvres became not only the most famous but also the best-documented war plot in modern history.’⁹⁵ Operations and publicity were

⁹⁰ *DCER Vol. 22*, 154.

⁹¹ Kyle, *Suez*, 221.

⁹² *DCER Vol. 22*, 156.

⁹³ *DCER Vol. 22*, 166.

⁹⁴ Avi Shlaim, ‘The Protocol of Sèvres, 1956: Anatomy of a War Plot,’ *International Affairs* 73, no. 3 (1997), 511.

⁹⁵ Shlaim, ‘Protocol of Sèvres,’ 510.

planned along the following lines. An Israeli attack would spark the campaign. In the name of self-defence, Israel would strike across Gaza and the Sinai, and Israeli troops would advance towards the Suez Canal. Britain and France would provide cover for Israel by means of air strikes against Egyptian airfields. They would then invade Egypt in the name of peacekeeping, declaring that the safety of the Canal demanded Anglo-French intervention in order to impose a buffer between the Israeli and Egyptian armies. Israel would get its air cover and Britain its political pretext.⁹⁶ On 29 October, Israel initiated this scenario.

Canadian involvement in managing the ensuing backlash at the United Nations is considered the historic summit of liberal Canadian internationalism on the Middle East. This Canadian perspective is defined by its fixation on inter-allied tension. Looking at the impact of the tripartite attacks can help to provide a broader perspective. The principal study of the crisis is Keith Kyle's *Suez*, a more than six-hundred page volume first published in 1991 and updated in 2003. Kyle describes the opening attacks:

The first casualties of the war were Palestinian Arab civilians. At midday on 29 October a curfew affecting them was announced on the radio to begin that evening at 5pm. When a unit of the [Israeli] Border Guard arrived at the village of Kafr Kassem [a village within the 1949 armistice lines, its inhabitants citizens of Israel] ... to notify the village of the curfew and to enforce it, it was told that a number of farm workers, mainly olive-pickers, would come back to the village later than five. When they arrived in carts, lorries or on bicycles they were shot. Forty-three were killed, many of them women and young boys and girls.⁹⁷

Yitzhak Rabin was then commander of Israel's northern front, and as the war began he also took the opportunity to expel somewhere between two and five thousand Palestinians whom he identified as 'a burdensome security problem' from the Galilee into Syria.⁹⁸ The major IDF operations targeted Gaza and the Sinai.

Thus began Israel's four-month occupation of the Gaza Strip. The IDF occupied the territory quickly, bringing an additional three-hundred thousand Palestinians under Israeli control, more than two-thirds of them refugees from 1948. It proceeded to carry out massacres which Nur Masalha attributes to the Israeli objective of pushing Palestinian refugees away from the armistice lines. Some fled; a reporter for *The Times* of London wrote that on 1 November the narrow road between Gaza and El Arish 'was

⁹⁶ Kyle, *Suez*, 329.

⁹⁷ Kyle, *Suez*, 348-9.

⁹⁸ Masalha, *Land Without a People*, 33.

choked with fleeing Arab refugees,' while others 'had taken to the sea in frail little boats.'⁹⁹ But the vast majority stayed. Masalha cites testimony on the aftermath of the Israeli occupation of Khan Yunis. 'When the soldiers came in,' explains one resident of the town, named Abu Talal, 'we did not even know which country they were from. We had heard talk about British and French troops.' Abu Talal describes how Israeli soldiers entered his house and opened fire on him and his brothers, killing one, shooting another in the leg, and hitting Abu Talal's elbow. Outside, larger killings took place: 'There were corpses everywhere, and because of the curfew no-one could go out to bury them for about four days.'¹⁰⁰ A *New York Times* report cited UN sources to the effect 'that 400 to 500 persons were killed at Khan Yunis during the first days of the occupation, 700 at Rafah and thirty to fifty in the town of Gaza.'¹⁰¹ In parallel, the IDF invaded Egypt. This began with the dropping of paratroopers about seventy kilometres from the town of Suez and a ground offensive from Israel, more than 250 kilometres further east.¹⁰²

British and French reactions to Israel's attacks immediately raised suspicions across the world. In a White House meeting on the evening of 29 October, Dulles speculated that the three powers might be coordinating policy.¹⁰³ The next day, the Canadian government received contradictory appeals from the British and the US governments. In a telegram to St.-Laurent, Eden presented Britain's declared narrative, which he had just announced in the British House of Commons. 'Our latest information is that Israel has accused Egypt of aggression and is delivering a counter attack,' wrote Eden. 'We and the French with us propose therefore at once to send a requirement to Israel and Egypt demanding that hostilities must cease immediately and that troops must be withdrawn from both banks of the Canal.'¹⁰⁴ Otherwise the allies would intervene. This was the famous Anglo-French 'ultimatum.' Its plain meaning was that Israeli troops should hold territory up to the eastern bank of the Suez Canal. Abba Eban, then Israeli ambassador to the US and the UN, later wrote: 'Since we were nowhere near the Canal, we would have to withdraw forward in order to obey the

⁹⁹ Cited in Masalha, *Land Without a People*, 38.

¹⁰⁰ Masalha, *Land Without a People*, 40.

¹⁰¹ Cited in Masalha, *Land Without a People*, 41.

¹⁰² Kyle, *Suez*, 349.

¹⁰³ Kyle, *Suez*, 354.

¹⁰⁴ *DCER Vol. 22*, 182.

ultimatum.¹⁰⁵ US planners expressed dismay with the allies' failure to consult them before initiating this explosive scenario.

US representatives provided a powerful counter-point to Eden's appeal. 'Dulles telephoned me from Washington,' Pearson wrote to Robertson on 30 October, 'in a state of emotion and depression greater than anything I have seen before in him.'¹⁰⁶ Dulles felt that the West was losing a significant opportunity. A week earlier, workers, students, and writers in Hungary had risen up in one of the most important popular rebellions in the history of Soviet-ruled Eastern Europe. The movement that erected barricades in the streets of Budapest was no fifth column of the West; it was from a position far to the left of Soviet authorities that the movement spoke of freedom of expression, of independence, and of socialist self-management. Workers' councils were the backbone of the Hungarian uprising, which was soon facing off against Soviet tanks.¹⁰⁷ But this was the one region in the world where the US could with some consistency oppose the imperial authorities. The Soviet Union seemed politically exposed. Dulles had hoped to press this point to Cold War advantage; now, he told Pearson, 'the British and French decision undid everything.'¹⁰⁸ Allied diplomats scrambled to get ahead of the evolving world backlash.

Israeli attacks were immediately taken up at the Security Council. Loathe to lose the initiative, the US proposed a draft resolution on the Palestine question demanding an immediate withdrawal of Israeli forces to the 1949 armistice lines. The resolution also called on all UN member states 'to refrain from giving any military, economic or financial assistance to Israel so long as it has not complied with this resolution.'¹⁰⁹ Britain and France cast their vetoes. And that evening, British and French warplanes began bombing Egypt. The Canadian ambassador to the US, Arnold Heeney, reported from Washington: 'There is no doubt whatever that this is regarded here as a very

¹⁰⁵ Golani, *Israel in Search of a War*, 140.

¹⁰⁶ *DCER Vol. 22*, 180.

¹⁰⁷ A classic English-language publication on the uprising is Andy Anderson's *Hungary '56* (London: Solidarity, 1964).

¹⁰⁸ *DCER Vol. 22*, 180.

¹⁰⁹ United States Draft Security Council Resolution, 'The Palestine Question: Steps for the Immediate Cessation of the Military Action of Israel in Egypt' (30 October 1956), <<http://unispal.un.org/UNISPAL.NSF/0/5943FD140CF8D53505256523005CD36C>>.

serious blow to the Western alliance and to the cohesion of the free world.¹¹⁰ War in the Middle East now struck at the Canadian leadership's core priorities.

If the allies' diplomatic narrative was on the face of it implausible, it was further undercut by the coordination of Anglo-French with Israeli attacks. The extent of French support in particular troubled British planners, who still hoped, somehow, to obscure the collusion. Ralph Murray, political adviser to the British command, cited French naval shelling of Rafah and the deployment of French planes from Israeli airfields. 'As seen from here,' wrote Murray, 'there is little if anything covert about French close and active support of Israel.'¹¹¹ Meanwhile Britain and France mobilized to land their troops on Egypt's Mediterranean coast, at the mouth of the Suez Canal.

At the beginning of the Korean War, the Western powers had pushed for a UN mechanism that could in exceptional circumstances bypass a Soviet veto at the Security Council. The procedure was termed 'Uniting for Peace,' and provided for General Assembly action in the event of Security Council deadlock. On this basis the General Assembly met late 1 November for an overnight emergency session concerning the tripartite attacks. Dulles represented the US and tried to keep the initiative. He proposed a resolution calling for an end to the Anglo-French bombing and for Israeli compliance with the US-sponsored Security Council resolution of 30 October. The General Assembly carried this resolution sixty-four votes to five, with Australia and New Zealand alone joining the three attacking powers in opposition. The Canadian delegation cast one of six abstaining votes. Time was allotted for representatives to explain their votes. Pearson represented Canada; and in his speech explaining Canadian abstention, he tried to lay the groundwork for an alternative course of action.¹¹²

It was in this speech to the General Assembly on 2 November that Pearson presented the proposal for which he was to win the Nobel Peace Prize. Pearson proposed establishment and deployment of what was to become the United Nations Emergency Force (UNEF). This proposal responded to the one signal of flexibility made by the Eden government. Despite its alignment with Israel, the British war effort had encountered resolute opposition even from some of Israel's most fervent supporters.

¹¹⁰ *DCER Vol. 22*, 184.

¹¹¹ Kyle, *Suez*, 409-410.

¹¹² Kyle, *Suez*, 403.

The US, which had repeatedly been a source of pro-Zionist pressure on Britain, was demanding an end to the attacks; Britain's Labour Party opposition, which had long called on the Conservative government to arm Israel as a means of striking at Nasser, also condemned the war.¹¹³ Hugh Gaitskell, the leader of the Labour opposition, expressed his 'deep appreciation' for the US position and proposed a motion of censure against the Eden government.¹¹⁴

Just before the General Assembly's early November emergency session, Robertson reported to Pearson that the British government was feeling the pressure. Robertson's account of a discussion with Ivonne Kirkpatrick, the ranking civil servant in the British foreign office, indicates the origin of Pearson's proposal:

Kirkpatrick told me that in the speech he is going to make in this afternoon's censure debate, Eden will say, after referring to the fighting going on between the Egyptians and the Israelis: 'But police action there must be to separate the belligerents and to prevent the resumption of hostilities between them. If the UN were then willing to take over the physical task of maintaining peace, no one would be better pleased than we.' This is not much, but it is something. It means, I take it, that the UK and France would be prepared to 'hand over' the police task they have taken upon themselves to a UN force strong enough to prevent the renewed outbreak of hostilities between Egypt and Israel pending the conclusion of a peace treaty which would guarantee the existence and integrity of the latter.¹¹⁵

Pearson sought to provide Britain with this option. He suggested to the St.-Laurent cabinet that Canada propose 'an emergency UN force to police the area of combat and to provide a substitute for British-French intervention, thus giving them a good reason to withdraw from their own stated objective of restoring peace before they could be formally condemned by the Assembly.'¹¹⁶ On 1 November, Pearson flew to New York authorized to make the proposal.

This was the substance of Pearson's intervention at the General Assembly. He argued that demands for an end to the fighting were not enough. It was necessary also to deal with the problems that had prompted the attacks, namely the Palestine question and management of the Suez Canal. This was the only responsible way forward; 'if we do not take advantage of this crisis to do something about a political settlement, we will regret it.'¹¹⁷ He then proposed that the General Assembly authorize UN secretary-general Dag Hammarskjöld to coordinate establishment of a UN peacekeeping force as

¹¹³ Kyle, *Suez*, 89.

¹¹⁴ Kyle, *Suez*, 378.

¹¹⁵ *DCER Vol. 22*, 191.

¹¹⁶ Munro and Inglis, *Memoirs of the Right Honourable*, 244

¹¹⁷ Munro and Inglis, *Memoirs of the Right Honourable*, 247; and Kyle, *Suez*, 403.

an international instrument for regulating these questions. He hoped to provide the British with an exit strategy and to enlist the US in buffering against Third World and Soviet moves towards condemnation of the attacking powers. To Robertson in London Pearson wrote that Britain, having already completed 'the blasting of Egyptian military airfields and the destruction of Egyptian military aircraft,' should announce that it had contained the threat to Israel and conclude its operations.¹¹⁸ To Henry Cabot Lodge, US permanent representative to the UN, Pearson expressed Canada's desire 'to head off any condemnatory resolution proposed by the Afro-Asians.'¹¹⁹ A measure of support for this initiative came from both Britain and the US. This probably marked the high point of Canadian Middle East diplomacy.

These were days in which Israel consolidated its occupation of Gaza and fought its way into Egypt. For this it faced little allied criticism. The focus had turned from Israeli to Anglo-French actions. It is remarkable just how brazenly some Western liberals sought in the same breath to criticize the colonial powers and to empower Israel. On 3 November Hugh Gaitskell, the leader of Britain's Labour opposition, went so far as to include among his critiques of the Eden government that it was trying to bring the fighting between Israel and Egypt 'prematurely to an end.'¹²⁰ We will return to Pearson's proposals concerning Palestine. Suffice it for the moment to note that his plan for a UN force was much more focused on addressing Israeli than Arab grievances. In any case, in the early days of November, the main question under discussion was not the Israeli attack but the threat of Anglo-French troop landings. Pearson cautioned the allies against a ground invasion while preparing to soften its diplomatic impact. His proposal for UNEF initially involved a two-stage operation. In the first stage, British and French troops in Egypt would become the main component of the proposed UN force, to which other countries, including the US and Canada, could contribute additional units. In the second stage, these troops would be replaced by a broader international police force.¹²¹

The US pressed for modifications. When Pearson first made his proposal on 2 November, Dulles immediately spoke in favour of it. As the St.-Laurent Cabinet fleshed

¹¹⁸ *DCER Vol. 22*, 197.

¹¹⁹ *DCER Vol. 22*, 212.

¹²⁰ Kyle, *Suez*, 429.

¹²¹ Kyle, *Suez*, 436.

the proposal out, it instructed Arnold Heeney to get further State Department feedback. Heeney relayed the concern of US officials: 'Although they were as anxious as we were to extricate Britain from her present position, it was important that they should not give occasion for a charge of collusion with others to that end.'¹²² In short, the first phase of UNEF operations proposed by Pearson looked too much like conferral of UN legitimacy on an Anglo-French invasion. Under US pressure the Canadian proposal was modified before being presented to the General Assembly on 4 November. The final text made no mention of two stages or of incorporating Anglo-French troops into the UN force. In this modified form the resolution passed, as did a second General Assembly resolution, sponsored by nineteen Third World states and demanding that no additional troops or weaponry be moved into the area. Britain and France abstained from the first resolution while opposing the second. Their approach, writes Keith Kyle, was 'to back the implementation of the Canadian resolution as opposed to the Afro-Asian one.'¹²³

'While all this was going on,' writes Motti Golani, 'Israel was reduced virtually to the position of bystander. Britain and France took the brunt of international pressure and superpower outrage, and this was one of the most important kinds of help they gave Israel in the Sinai War.'¹²⁴ Israel took the opportunity to occupy positions it had long coveted in the Sinai. In the evening of 4 November the IDF launched its assault on Sharm al-Sheikh. Egyptian forces repelled Israel's first attacks, and the fight lasted through the night. Kyle writes that 'only total air superiority, expressed in two days of strafing with rockets and napalm, enabled the daylight attack of [the IDF's] 9 Brigade to succeed by 9.30 a.m.'¹²⁵ These facts on the ground having been established, Ben-Gurion was by 7 November publicly boasting that Israel had permanently expanded. He declared Israeli sovereignty over the city which 'until two days ago was called Sharm al-Sheikh and whose name is now Mifratz Shlomo.'¹²⁶ The Israeli state, its prime minister explained, no longer considered itself confined to the battles lines of 1949: 'The Armistice Agreement with Egypt is dead and buried and will never be resurrected.'¹²⁷

¹²² *DCER Vol. 22*, 205.

¹²³ Kyle, *Suez*, 439.

¹²⁴ Golani, *Israel in Search of a War*, 146.

¹²⁵ Kyle, *Suez*, 446.

¹²⁶ Kyle, *Suez*, 477.

¹²⁷ Kyle, *Suez*, 478.

Enough world pressure eventually built up to dislodge Israeli forces from these positions. In the end, Israeli territorial expansion in 1956-7 lasted only a few months longer than the Anglo-French invasion of Egypt. But whereas the European allies suffered political losses through the Suez Crisis, Israel made political gains. It enforced its position as a regional power and established the diplomatic foundation from which it would launch the war of June 1967. The aggressive approach of hawkish planners like Ben-Gurion, Dayan, and Peres was vindicated, and the relative moderation of internal critics like Sharett forever brushed aside. The Israeli leadership's expectation of impunity in aggression remained intact; the consequences for the region, and for the Palestinians in particular, were to be severe.

Under Pearson's direction, Canadian external affairs officials were prominently involved in Suez Crisis diplomacy through to Israel's March 1957 withdrawal from Gaza and the Sinai. But they in no way tried to avert this outcome. Instead, Pearson carried out what amounted to diplomatic damage control for the attacking powers. Israel, like Britain, was over-extended. It could not yet sustain the annexation of additional territory. Some in the international community tried to impress upon Israel the lesson that aggression of this kind would not yield gains. Pearson was not among them. Instead, for Israel as for Britain, Pearson tried to secure the most favourable conditions possible for an end to this wave of attacks.

For Europe and the Old Commonwealth

The record of Canadian policy during this period, and of the internal government discussions that oriented it, is accessible in volumes published by the Canadian government, notably its *Documents on Canadian External Relations*. The details undermine the mythology about Pearson's commitment to wide internationalism and the rule of international law. It was a few years after the Suez Crisis that ambassador Smith discussed Canadian policy in the Middle East in terms of the 'relations between the white nations of western Christendom and the rest of the world.'¹²⁸ By then, control of

¹²⁸ Janice Cavell, ed., *DCER Vol. 27* (Ottawa: Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade, 1960), 1044.

the federal government had shifted from Pearson's Liberals to Diefenbaker's Progressive Conservatives. It was a decade earlier that prime minister King had written that Canada should never be treated 'as if it were some Colonial possession of inferior races.'¹²⁹ Perhaps he was rooted in an earlier political era. Nonetheless, the golden years of Canada's liberal internationalism were bracketed by these signs of enduring racism. And during these years, Canadian leaders like Pearson did not rupture with the tradition that produced them. Pearson acted with a measure of diplomatic flexibility. His approach to the Suez Crisis nonetheless upheld and was enabled by the same politics of colonial hierarchy.

Internal government discussions aside, Pearson admits as much in his memoirs. He explains that in the late 1960s he joined with Paul Martin, then secretary of state for external affairs, in requesting a written review of Canadian foreign policy from Norman Robertson. Pearson fully identifies with the result: 'It summarizes my views better than I could myself.' He cites Robertson's explanation of how Canada lost its relative prominence at the UN. Canada, argues Robertson, initially enjoyed a postwar position that made it 'the object of respect and admiration, especially from the lesser powers.' But decolonization complicated things. 'It is harder for us now to seem to act objectively on most issues.' Robertson identifies the reason with some honesty: 'as the balance of opinion and voting is weighted on the side of the "have-nots" there is less room for bargaining.'¹³⁰ There can be little doubt that Pearson's style of bargaining at the UN depended upon the disempowerment of the formerly colonized world. In the 1960s, what Vijay Prashad refers to as the Third World project largely swept the privileged influence of states like Canada out of the General Assembly.¹³¹ Even in 1956, Pearson was pressing the limits.

Canada's UNEF initiative was immediately controversial. Pearson sought to provide the US with a means of distancing itself from the allied invasion without confronting the allied powers too directly. The Canadian government thus established a position it would maintain throughout the Suez Crisis: as a moderate supporter of the attacking powers that was not tainted by association with their attacks. Parallel efforts

¹²⁹ See Chapter 3, note 35.

¹³⁰ Kyle, *Suez*, 133-4.

¹³¹ See Vijay Prashad, *The Darker Nations: A People's History of the Third World* (New York: The New Press, 2007).

were pursued by Norway. The main competition to this approach came from India, whose Nehru government had gained considerable world prestige and was the leading point of contact between the US and the UN's emerging Third World bloc. Krishna Menon, a leading Indian diplomat close to Nehru, appears in the Canadian record as a main competing source of diplomatic initiative. Thankfully for Pearson, Menon did not arrive in New York until 5 November. Pearson writes with some satisfaction about Menon's 'discomfiture' when he arrived and moved to oppose the UNEF initiative, only to find that its momentum was too well established.¹³² Before Menon's arrival, the Third World representative who looms largest in the Canadian record is India's permanent representative to the UN, Arthur Lall.

Disagreements over the UNEF plan surfaced on 4 November, just after the General Assembly approved the basic plan. Secretary-general Hammarskjöld convened a smaller meeting to discuss UNEF's composition. He took the opportunity to re-introduce Pearson's suggestion that the Anglo-French troops who, conveniently, were already in the area, should form the initial basis for the UN force. This element of the proposal had been omitted when the plan was submitted for General Assembly approval. The Canadian report on this meeting cites an immediate reaction from Arthur Lall. He emphatically declared 'that the Afro-Asians would never accept UK and French forces in the emergency forces. It would . . . create the impression that the proposal for an emergency force had been made to cloak with respectability the impending occupation of Egypt by Anglo-French forces.' Pearson cautiously responded that while it might be best to find alternatives, Anglo-French participation should not necessarily be ruled out. Lall insisted on clarity on this point, 'argu[ing] with some force that if such participation was even contemplated, it would be tantamount to a polite invitation from the UN to land troops at once.' The simple fact was that whereas Lall's position was in keeping with the spirit of the General Assembly vote, Hammarskjöld's violated it. 'This Indian reaction was of course to be expected,' acknowledged Lall's Canadian counterpart, Robert Mackay, 'and we have no reason to doubt that Lall was saying moderately what the Egyptians and others would denounce in violent terms.'¹³³ In the end, UNEF deployment would be strictly distinguished from the Anglo-French invasion.

¹³² Munro and Inglis, *Memoirs of the Right Honourable*, 251.

¹³³ DCER Vol. 22, 209-11.

The British government, undeterred, continued to invest Pearson's proposal with hopes to the contrary.

Eden was pushing forward in line with the signal that Pearson had initially picked up on. First there would be an invasion and then a 'hand-over' to a UN force. Eden fed this line to the Canadian government as Anglo-French ground forces invaded Egypt. On 5 November Britain dropped several hundred paratroopers west of the Mediterranean city of Port Said; the French dropped their own force to the city's south. 'We warmly welcome the Canadian initiative in New York to establish an emergency international United Nations force,' Eden wrote that day to St.-Laurent. But, Eden noted, the UN force would take some days to deploy. 'This makes it imperative for us to take a grip of the situation and to create conditions under which the United Nations force, once it is formed, can relieve us of our responsibility.'¹³⁴ The next day, British troops landed in force at Port Said. Anglo-French paratroopers were now joined by an additional commando force, which stormed the beach under cover of RAF bombardment and naval shelling. Twenty-one of the attacking soldiers were killed in the course of occupying the city; Keith Kyle estimates an Egyptian death toll of 750-1,000.¹³⁵ Amidst the assault, Eden sent an updated message to St.-Laurent: 'We are ready to stop our operations as soon as we can hand over responsibility to a United Nations force.'¹³⁶

In these circumstances, allied bargaining at the United Nations proved challenging. On 6 November Pearson discussed the circulation the day before of 'a draft Arab-Asian resolution which we certainly would not have been able to support.' In this light he wrote approvingly of Hammarskjöld's initiative 'to cancel the meeting of the General Assembly where there would be intemperate language and a strong resolution under the impetus of the events of the day in Egypt.'¹³⁷ As the effects of the Anglo-French occupation of Port Said reverberated, the NATO powers tried to contain condemnation of the allies. Nathan Pelcovits observes that Canada and Norway were most prominently partnered with the US in this effort.¹³⁸ The Eden government still hoped that UNEF could be a mechanism for controlling the Suez Canal more reliable

¹³⁴ *DCER Vol. 22*, 215.

¹³⁵ Kyle, *Suez*, 461-3, 503.

¹³⁶ *DCER Vol. 22*, 222.

¹³⁷ *DCER Vol. 22*, 223.

¹³⁸ Nathan Pelcovits, *The Long Armistice: UN Peacekeeping and the Arab-Israeli Conflict, 1948-1960* (Oxford: Westview Press, 1992), 124.

than anything that Britain could have installed without an invasion.¹³⁹ Western diplomats at the UN had more defensive preoccupations. Opposition to the attacking powers was strong and building. Against this threat, the Canadian delegation felt that ‘the constructive effort to establish a UN force had a moderating influence on the pressure tactics which were being employed by the Afro-Asians.’¹⁴⁰ The effort, anchored by the US, focused on drawing the momentum of Third World diplomacy away from ‘condemnatory resolutions’ and towards efforts to ensure the establishment of UNEF as a credibly international force.

In the early days of November, the St.-Laurent government was taken aback by British actions, which seemed to be disrupting that ‘harmony of sentiment between the British Empire and the United States’ which had at least since Ogdensburg been the keystone of Canada’s approach to world order. By the end of the month, Canadian frustration turned on the US. For the remainder of the Suez Crisis, Pearson took to lobbying US representatives on behalf of the Western diplomatic bloc he referred to as ‘European and Old Commonwealth.’¹⁴¹

The Anglo-French occupation of Port Said was costly. The Nasser government immediately sunk vessels to block the Suez Canal. At the time, before the advent of supertankers that could transport oil around the Cape of Good Hope, this was still the major conduit for West-European oil imports.¹⁴² The crisis for the Eden government deepened when US Treasury Department officials rebuffed a British appeal for IMF funding to prevent a run on the pound.¹⁴³ From the US, Walter Lippman voiced the position of an influential swath of critically pro-war opinion. ‘The American interest,’ he wrote, ‘now that we have dissented from the decision itself, is that France and Britain should now succeed.’¹⁴⁴ This was essentially the Canadian government’s position. The Eisenhower administration, however, seemed more interested in cutting Western losses than in securing wartime gains for the allies. Allied accomplishments were not amounting to much. Under Third World pressure, UNEF was being constituted not as

¹³⁹ Kyle, *Suez*, 480.

¹⁴⁰ *DCER Vol. 22*, 238.

¹⁴¹ See for example *DCER Vol. 22*, 445

¹⁴² Daniel Yergin, *The Prize: The Epic Quest for Oil, Money and Power* (New York: Free Press, 2008), 538.

¹⁴³ Kyle, *Suez*, 465.

¹⁴⁴ Kyle, *Suez*, 426.

an alternative occupation force, but as a face-saving gesture that could facilitate unconditional withdrawal by the invading powers.

The Eisenhower administration's refusal to pit itself against Third World diplomats in the manner that European and white Commonwealth representatives requested cannot be understood through isolated analysis of UN diplomacy. Nor can it be taken to show US moderation in the Middle East. The administration had earlier explained to both British representatives and to leading US journalists that US planners hoped to topple the Egyptian government – they wished to do the same in Syria. The problem was tactical. For the US, economic destabilization and covert action were the preferred means.¹⁴⁵ Imperial warfare had to adapt to the era. Even in South Vietnam, which was emerging as the main theatre for US intervention in the Third World, the US had developed a local client government with some regard for neocolonial norms. In December 1957, the commander of British operations in Egypt conceded the point. 'The one overriding lesson of the Suez operation,' reflected General Sir Charles Keightley, 'is that world opinion is now an absolute principle of war and must be treated as such.'¹⁴⁶ The US related to Anglo-French operations accordingly. The allied split over the Middle East reflected different imperial styles. But more fundamentally, it reflected US commitment to maintaining Western control of the region. With this in mind it is worth surveying the impact of the allied campaign that the Eisenhower administration was being asked to support.

In Egypt, the Nasser government could not hope to counter the combined force of the British, French, and Israeli armies by means of conventional warfare. Facing the threat of foreign occupation, it instead facilitated preparations for a guerrilla war. Nasser broadcast a call for Egyptians to prepare to fight the invading forces 'from village to village, from place to place.'¹⁴⁷ In Port Said the government began to arm the population. Keith Kyle describes the scene: 'masses of brand-new Czech rifles and machine-guns taken from their crates in the warehouses, often with the grease still on them, had been distributed freely throughout the city to civilians of whatever age from lorries and from piles dumped in the streets.'¹⁴⁸ Guerrilla fighting could not block initial

¹⁴⁵ Kyle, *Suez*, 257.

¹⁴⁶ Kyle, *Suez*, 392.

¹⁴⁷ Childers, *The Road to Suez*, 265.

¹⁴⁸ Kyle, *Suez*, 455.

allied advances. On the beaches of Port Said, Egyptian irregulars were quickly cut down by British forces. 'I suppose the Wogs must have been very bad shots,' reflected one British commando, 'and, as we found out throughout the day, practically without organization.'¹⁴⁹ But popular support for a sustained struggle was widespread. An expanded occupation would have been an extraordinarily risky undertaking.

Nor would the risks be confined to Egypt. As diplomats pursued diplomacy, people across the region took matters into their own hands. Abdel-Malek samples the upsurge sparked by the Suez Crisis:

general strikes in Iraq, Pakistan, Syria, Jordan, Lebanon, the Sudan, Libya, Tunisia, Morocco, Bahrein, Qatar, Kuwait and Aden; student and worker demonstrations; the enlistment of volunteers for the defence of the Canal; effective sabotage of the pipeline on the Syrian-Iraqi border and Homs as a token of reprisal. The wave of solidarity spread that spread from Tangier to the Arabian Gulf brought to light a new leadership whose action proved more effective than that of the traditional politicians: the Arab labour unions, particularly in the oil industry. It was the action launched at the time of Suez from which the two powerful Arab labour federations were born: the International Federation of Arab Trade Unions (IFATU) and the Arab Federation of Oil and Chemical Industry Workers (AFOCIW).¹⁵⁰

The local social forces against which US interventions in the Third World were most commonly directed were being strengthened by allied action. A regional struggle was being set in motion in some of the least favourable conditions imaginable for the West.

As for the official Cold War enemy, the Soviet Union was gaining in regional prestige. Even as it crushed the Hungarian workers' uprising it appeared alongside the Western powers as comparatively benign. 'The thunder of Soviet tanks in Budapest,' observed Erskine Childers, 'had been quite drowned out by the sound of guns in Port Said, Sinai and, as always since 1954, in Algeria.'¹⁵¹ This effect was all the more profound in that the Soviet Union struck a plausible posture as a defender of Egyptian sovereignty. On 5 November Soviet premier Nicolai Bulganin publicly communicated to Britain, France, and Israel that Soviet forces were prepared to intervene on Egypt's behalf. The Soviet delegation to the UN meanwhile proposed to the UN Security Council that an intervention force be established, including both US and Soviet troops, in order to deploy against the three attacking powers on behalf of the United Nations.¹⁵² No proposal of this kind would ever be accepted. But the boost to Soviet prestige was

¹⁴⁹ Kyle, *Suez*, 462

¹⁵⁰ Abdel-Malek, *Egypt*, 254.

¹⁵¹ Childers, *The Road to Suez*, 306-7.

¹⁵² Letter from USSR Foreign Affairs Minister D. Shepilov to the Security Council (5 November 1956), <<http://unispal.un.org/UNISPAL.NSF/0/80132A915CA8CACA052566CE0067A794>>.

immense. In Egypt itself, these developments were matched by a much more genuine mobilization of the Egyptian left; 'the Communist organizations went into the streets,' writes Abdel-Malek, 'organizing firearms lessons and setting up resistance committees, while writers and journalists of the Left blanketed the country with intense patriotic propaganda that produced a few splendid poems.'¹⁵³ These movements gained a prestige that temporarily afforded them political protection. During the two years after the Suez Crisis, the Nasser government relaxed its repression of the left.¹⁵⁴

Whether the Eisenhower administration could have done much more than it did to sideline Third World criticism at the UN is an open question. Success in doing so would in any event have been a hollow victory. The administration instead pressed for allied withdrawals so that the struggle for control of the region could resume in more favourable circumstances. Pearson did not see the need for this tactical retreat. The Canadian diplomats under his direction thus formed the moderate wing of a 'European and old Commonwealth' bloc that urged greater US solidarity with the invading powers. If US leadership of the Western alliance was an agreed fact, Pearson sided with the Western alliance's pro-war opposition.

On 24 November came what much of Western pro-war opinion considered 'the last straw.'¹⁵⁵ The US voted in favour of a General Assembly resolution sponsored by twenty Third World delegations and calling for a complete British, French, and Israeli withdrawal. Belgium moved an amendment on behalf of the colonial powers. The amendment noted with approval that France had already withdrawn one-third of its troops; it cited a British decision to withdraw a battalion of its own; and it related planned Anglo-French withdrawals to the functions that UNEF would take up in the wake of the invasion. The US joined the Third World in voting the Belgian amendment down. US delegates asked the State Department to inform Europe and the white Commonwealth that the US could not appear to support 'the Anglo-French thesis that UN forces should take over the job which the French and British had begun.'¹⁵⁶ Canadian ambassador Heeney immediately conveyed to the State Department

¹⁵³ Abdel-Malek, *Egypt*, 120.

¹⁵⁴ This phase terminated spectacularly in the repression of January 1959. See Abdel-Malek, *Egypt*, 129.

¹⁵⁵ *DCER Vol. 22*, 283.

¹⁵⁶ Noring with Glennon, *FRUS 1955-1957, Vol. 16*, 1192-1193.

'Canada's anxieties lest the US be weakening in its adjustment to the Western Alliance.'¹⁵⁷ Pearson directed Canadian diplomats to continue to press this line. On 29 November, Heeney summarized the Canadian position in a meeting with the US secretary of state. 'It seemed to us,' Heeney argued, 'that the time for recriminations was past and that we should concentrate on the earliest possible realignment of the Western Alliance of which the Anglo-American partnership was the essence.'¹⁵⁸

Without US assistance, Britain was unable to sustain its mobilization. The perception that the St.-Laurent government had joined in undercutting international support for the invasion inflamed Tory opinion in Canada. In early November, the *Calgary Herald* editorialized that Canada's Liberal government had 'run out on Britain at a time when Britain was asserting the kind of leadership the world has missed, and needed, in these ominous times.'¹⁵⁹ By month's end, the Tory foreign affairs critic was declaring from the House of Commons that November 1956 was 'the most disgraceful period for Canada in the history of this nation.'¹⁶⁰ The criticism that Pearson abandoned Britain was unfair. His external affairs department did all for Britain that the balance of forces allowed. The Suez Crisis did, however, put to rest the idea that any of the Western allies could relate to the US on equal footing. Pearson did his best to plead the allies' case. None of this changed the fact that authority over Western initiative in the Middle East was passing to Washington.

On 6 December, the assistant under-secretary of state at external affairs, John Holmes, expressed a new Canadian perspective on the Middle East. He suggested that the politics of Western solidarity should give way to a narrower politics of US empire. In its forthright relegation of Britain to a secondary position, this perspective remained contentious in Canada. But before Suez it is difficult to imagine any Canadian official turning so openly from London to Washington. Holmes wrote:

It is clear that the interests of the free world depend upon the extension of the influence of the USA in the Middle East. This extension may have to be to some extent at the expense of the interests and prestige of the UK in that area. That is not a situation we would have wished, and [it

¹⁵⁷ *DCER Vol. 22*, 276.

¹⁵⁸ *DCER Vol. 22*, 280. This was Herbert Hoover, temporarily replacing Dulles, who was for medical reasons on leave through much of the Suez Crisis.

¹⁵⁹ José E. Igartua, "Ready, Aye, Ready" No More? Canada, Britain, and the Suez Crisis in the Canadian Press,' in ed. Phillip Buckner, *Canada and the End of Empire* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2005), 48.

¹⁶⁰ Igartua, "Ready, Aye, Ready", 47.

is one] which should do everything to mitigate but the stakes are such that British and French feelings, if not their basic interests, may have to be sacrificed. Although relations between the NATO Powers must be re-established, the USA cannot play the role it must play in the Middle East unless it stands somewhat aloof from British and French policies in that area of the world . . . Our anxiety over relations between the USA and its European allies should not lead us into pressing the USA to accommodate these allies to such an extent that it loses its position of influence in the Middle East and Asia, because it is a fundamental interest of NATO that the influence be maintained.¹⁶¹

Pearson was not nearly so unequivocal. The first round of inter-allied conflict during the Suez Crisis concerned Anglo-French occupation of Port Said. The second concerned Israeli occupation of Gaza and the Sinai. In both cases, Pearson lobbied for greater US solidarity with the attacking powers against their Third World adversaries.

Imposing Conditions for Withdrawal

In early 1957, the politics of US empire were extended to the Middle East more clearly than ever before. On 5 January, Eisenhower delivered a major policy speech to Congress establishing what came to be known as the Eisenhower Doctrine. The president reaffirmed the US insistence that the major threat to the peoples of the Middle East came not from the Western powers or from Israel but from ‘the menace of International Communism.’ By opposing the tripartite aggression, the US had demonstrated peaceful and purely defensive intentions. ‘We have shown,’ declared Eisenhower, ‘so that none can doubt, our dedication to the principle that force shall not be used internationally for any aggressive purpose and that the integrity and independence of the nations of the Middle East should be inviolate.’ But, the speech emphasized, Europe depended on the supply of oil from the Middle East; and both local and world interests demanded US vigilance. On these grounds, Eisenhower sought and received Congressional approval for expanded US military assistance programmes in the region, to be supplemented if necessary by US troop deployments. ‘The proposed legislation,’ he explained, ‘is primarily designed to deal with the possibility of Communist aggression, direct and indirect.’ In the struggle over the Middle East, ‘a greater responsibility now devolves upon the United States.’¹⁶²

¹⁶¹ *DCER Vol. 22, 297.*

¹⁶² Dwight Eisenhower, *Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States: Dwight D. Eisenhower, 1957* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1999), 6-16.

Expansion of the US empire was always enveloped in such defensive pretensions. It is necessary to highlight the elasticity of the concept of 'indirect aggression' that Eisenhower invoked, and against which the US claimed the right to intervene throughout the Third World. Both Dean Acheson and Adlai Stevenson would describe the US war in Vietnam, for example, as an act of defence against what they called 'internal aggression,' an offence committed by the local population against the US-allied government.¹⁶³ It was against threats of this kind that Eisenhower pledged increased US assistance to those states in the Middle East 'which have governments manifestly dedicated to the preservation of independence and resistance to subversion.'¹⁶⁴ US sights were trained as much on the popular upsurge described by Abdel-Malek as on the Soviet Union, or as on Nasser, whose nationalist policies were viewed with increasing US suspicion. Nonetheless, as E.H. Carr emphasizes, effective propaganda 'is limited by the necessity of some measure of conformity with fact.'¹⁶⁵ The Eisenhower doctrine claimed to rally allies not for a war against popular rebellion or independent nationalism but against aggression. Resolution of the Suez Crisis seemed a minimum prerequisite to provide allied governments with a plausible cover.

Some Canadian diplomats recognized this logic. Herbert Norman, for example, Canada's ambassador to Egypt, agreed that the US needed to roll back the allied attacks of 1956 if its campaign was to have any credibility: 'Those Arab leaders who wish to stand forth as friends of the USA and the West must have some tangible evidence that such friendship pays off, and this in the present situation means more than military aid to a King of Arabia.'¹⁶⁶ Pearson, in contrast, tended to align with West-European resentment of the US push for unconditional troop withdrawals.

Pearson's UNEF initiative had been transformed by the General Assembly's insistence that the new force could deploy in Egypt only with Egyptian consent. This was a major disappointment. In mid-November Eden still hoped that UNEF would be mainly Canadian in composition and that a 'hand-over' could be carried out with an appearance of continuity.¹⁶⁷ Things developed quite differently. E.L.M. Burns was

¹⁶³ Noam Chomsky, *For Reasons of State* (New York: The New Press, 2003), 22, 114.

¹⁶⁴ Eisenhower, *Public Papers*, 15.

¹⁶⁵ Edward Hallett Carr, *The Twenty Years' Crisis: An Introduction to the Study of International Relations* (New York: Perennial, 2001), 144.

¹⁶⁶ *DCER Vol. 22*, 437.

¹⁶⁷ Kyle, *Suez*, 512.

confirmed as the commander of UNEF, but the Egyptian government came close to vetoing any additional Canadian participation. Nasser suggested to the US ambassador to Egypt that public opinion might react unfavourably if 'Her Majesty's British troops were replaced by Her Majesty's Canadians.'¹⁶⁸ A compromise on the question of Canadian participation in UNEF was eventually reached: Canada would contribute technical and administrative personnel but not armed units. Later, in March, an armoured reconnaissance unit from Canada was also accepted into Egypt. But UNEF took shape as a broadly international force, not the Western policy instrument sought by Eden. The Eisenhower administration tried to soften the blow. Once British officials agreed to carry out a full withdrawal, the US immediately resumed economic assistance, releasing IMF funds to the British government and providing it with a large loan through the Export-Import Bank.¹⁶⁹ But if Anglo-American relations gradually improved, British opinion was more incensed than ever at Nasser's insolence; and this echoed in Canada.

The evacuation of British and French troops from Port Said was completed two weeks before Eisenhower delivered his speech to Congress. The allies tried to maintain a posture of strength during their withdrawal. 'From time to time,' recalls Burns, 'jet fighters screamed overhead, at low altitude, to remind the Egyptians that Allied air power was still ready to counter any resumption of hostilities.'¹⁷⁰ But they could boast few achievements from their costly war. On the one hand, this allowed Eisenhower to argue that Britain and France had shown themselves to be responsive to world opinion in a way that the Soviet Union was not. On the other hand, it left the allied desire to secure war gains at Egypt's expense almost entirely unsatisfied. It was in this context that attention shifted to the question of Israeli troop withdrawals.

In late 1956 Israel had to some extent cooperated in deflecting world attention away from its own attacks. US pressure quieted the spirit of conquest expressed in Ben-Gurion's speech of 7 November. The task of conveying US outrage over Ben-Gurion's expansionist declaration had fallen to Herbert Hoover, who temporarily replaced Dulles as US secretary of state when the latter was hospitalized on 3

¹⁶⁸ Noring with Glennon, *FRUS 1955-1957, Vol. 16*, 1096.

¹⁶⁹ Kyle, *Suez*, 514.

¹⁷⁰ Burns, *Between Arab and Israeli*, 239.

November. Hoover summoned Abba Eban's deputy in Washington and delivered an extremely rare US message: 'Israel's attitude will inevitably lead to most serious measures such as the termination of all US governmental and private aid, UN sanctions and eventual expulsion from the UN.'¹⁷¹ The Israeli government could not afford to ignore this warning. It back-tracked and announced that it would in fact withdraw from the Sinai. But what Israel could not accomplish by confrontation, it aimed to pursue by quiet delays. By 1957 Israel continued to hold both the Gaza Strip and much of the Egyptian Sinai. Following the Anglo-French withdrawals and announcement of the Eisenhower doctrine, Israeli diplomats braced for renewed pressure.

On 8 January Robert Mackay, permanent Canadian representative to the UN, reported to Ottawa about a large meeting of UN delegates convened the day before by Israeli foreign minister Golda Meir. Israeli diplomats were communicating separately with the US and Britain; in this meeting they brought together 'the representatives of all the Scandinavian countries, Belgium, [the] Netherlands, France, Australia, Canada, NZ, South Africa, Italy and Austria.'¹⁷² Israel was seeking allied support for the coming confrontation at the General Assembly. Meir and Eban addressed the meeting, laying out Israel's case. Their arguments focused on two areas that would be at the centre of international diplomacy for the next two months: the Gaza Strip and the Gulf of Aqaba.

Concerning Gaza, Meir phrased things more carefully than she had in early November 1956, when she declared to an Israeli audience that the territory would be permanently annexed by Israel.¹⁷³ In the intervening months, both international pressure and Israeli deliberations about how to deal with Palestinian refugees had nuanced Israel's position. Mackay reported that Meir conceded in principle that Israel should not annex Gaza. 'In the present circumstances,' she nonetheless insisted, 'the inhabitants of Gaza and the refugees were happier under Israel than they had been under Egypt.'¹⁷⁴ Meir argued that it would be best for the UN to formally take control of Gaza, with Israel retaining administrative and policing authority.

It is significant that Meir differentiated between those Palestinians who had lived in the Gaza Strip before 1948 (alone deemed its 'inhabitants') and the majority, who

¹⁷¹ Kyle, *Suez*, 478-9.

¹⁷² *DCER Vol. 22*, 338.

¹⁷³ Masalha, *Land Without a People*, 37.

¹⁷⁴ *DCER Vol. 22*, 339.

came from lands now held by Israel. The Israeli leadership still hoped to further disperse these refugees. This would involve a fierce confrontation. Palestinian refugees in Gaza overwhelmingly demanded their right to return. An indication of Palestinian opinion about resettlement schemes had come in 1954, when the Nasser government pursued discussions with the US and UNRWA concerning relocation of Palestinian refugees to the Sinai. When the plan was leaked it provoked a sharp Palestinian reaction, including two days of demonstrations and rioting in the Gaza Strip; Egyptian authorities were forced to abandon the plan.¹⁷⁵ Such a policy could only be executed by authorities more willing to suppress Palestinian resistance and less concerned with Arab public opinion. This prospect loomed large over Israeli proposals that Israel and a UN force co-govern Gaza.

Israeli claims on the Gulf of Aqaba were in some ways even more ambitious. Here Israel's position needs to be put in context. In 1949 Israel occupied the southern tip of Palestine, opening onto this body of water. This completed a geographic splitting of the Arab world between Egypt and Jordan. The Israeli foothold on the Gulf of Aqaba was enforced by Israel's establishment in 1951 of the port city of Eilat. In the period leading up to the Suez Crisis, this area was at the centre of British and US diplomacy on the Arab-Israeli conflict. Israel, reasoned Anglo-American planners, had occupied territory well beyond what was recommended by the 1947 partition plan; it would not be unreasonable to ask that it make border concessions to the Arab states in return for peace. If Israel conceded a land link between Egypt and Jordan in the south, it would lessen the blow that Israel's establishment had inflicted upon hopes for Arab regional integration. In 1955, British planners even suggested to their US counterparts that Israel be pressed to provide 'direct access between Egypt and Jordan on the Gulf of Aqaba.'¹⁷⁶ This implied that Israel would cede what was now Eilat. US planners aimed for a more modest formula, linking Egypt and Jordan through a land corridor further north. Anglo-American discussions over possible details were pursued at length.¹⁷⁷

Israel, on learning of these plans, declared its refusal to cede any territory. In November 1955, writes Zach Levey, 'Eban told the Americans that Israel would not give

¹⁷⁵ Masalha, *Land Without a People*, 36.

¹⁷⁶ Neil Caplan, *Futile Diplomacy, Vol. 4: Operation Alpha and the Failure of Anglo-American Coercive Diplomacy in the Arab-Israeli Conflict, 1954-1956* (London: Frank Cass, 1997), 90.

¹⁷⁷ The volume of Caplan's *Futile Diplomacy* cited in full in note 176, above, details these discussions.

up the Negev or any part of it.' Levey explains that Eban went on to present a Cold War rationale for splitting the Arab world: 'The West could "bless every day" the absence of territorial contiguity that would allow freedom of passage of communist technicians and Soviet arms to the entire Arab world, as well as the establishment of a military command that would operate against not only Israel but the West.'¹⁷⁸

Far from showing any willingness to cede ground in the south, Israel went on the diplomatic offensive. It pressed a case for expanded Israeli naval rights. Egypt controls the Straits of Tiran, through which the Gulf of Aqaba opens to the Red Sea. Israel demanded that Egypt allow access to Israeli vessels. Motti Golani's analysis of Israeli government planning suggests that this was above all a tactic in the pursuit of war against Egypt. Cross-border provocations around Gaza were not yielding the desired escalation. Israel thus built up the infrastructure that would make its navigation demands relevant. 'It was only when Israeli leaders began looking for a *casus belli*,' writes Golani, 'i.e., since early 1955, that the dust was shaken off the old plans to build a harbour at Eilat.'¹⁷⁹ Others emphasize that the Straits of Tiran offered Israel a potential air corridor through to the rest of Asia and Africa.¹⁸⁰ In any event, establishing Israeli claims in the Gulf of Aqaba was a major aim of Israel's Sinai campaign. So it was that Israel focused on occupying and holding the entire Egyptian coast of the Gulf all the way to Sharm al-Sheikh, on the Red Sea.

Meir and Eban's diplomatic presentation of 7 January 1957 nuanced Israel's position on the Gulf of Aqaba, as on Gaza. It had been two months since Ben-Gurion declared that Sharm al-Sheikh was no longer Sharm al-Sheikh at all, having been re-baptized 'Mifratz Shlomo.' Mackay reported that Meir and Eban were more rhetorically restrained. Meir argued that the Straits of Tiran should be recognized as an international waterway, in which Israeli navigation rights were guaranteed. She 'admitted that technically Israel was required to withdraw' and focused on Israeli preconditions. If Israel was not to be allowed to occupy the Egyptian coast itself, an international force should deploy to enforce Israeli rights.

¹⁷⁸ Levey, *Israel and the Western Powers*, 29.

¹⁷⁹ Golani, *Israel in Search of a War*, 183.

¹⁸⁰ Almog, *Britain, Israel and the United States*, 82.

As ever, the Israeli representatives argued that there was something in it for the West for supporting Israeli demands. 'Eban attempted to win sympathy,' reported Mackay, 'by saying that in a very short time there would be a link by pipeline and road between the Gulf of Aqaba and the Mediterranean, a link which would release Western Europe from the "monopolistic stranglehold" which Egypt had on the Suez Canal.' Through Israel, in other words, the West could find a secure path between the Mediterranean and the Red Sea, unobstructed by the Arabs. Mackay felt that Israel was over-reaching: 'Whatever influence this might have had on the West Europeans was probably offset by their lack of sympathy with Israel's bold attempt to capitalize on armed aggression.'¹⁸¹ Several days later Mackay seemed to correct himself, reporting that France had offered to help Israel build the planned pipelines.¹⁸²

Through January and February of 1957, allied differences built up over the terms of Israeli withdrawal. France aligned with Israel most wholeheartedly. Put simply, it had the least to lose. Since de Gaulle's ill-fated bombardment of Syrian parliament, French influence in the region had faded. Moreover, the war in Algeria already guaranteed a regional backlash. France could by its policies on Egypt or Palestine scarcely earn anti-colonial hostility in the Arab world more intense than what was already developing over Algeria. Even before the Suez Crisis, France and Israel were aligned to the point of planning a coordinated assassinations policy across North Africa.¹⁸³ This was the historic peak of French support for Israel. It was on the strength of Michael Bar-Zohar's glowing account of this 'golden age' of Franco-Israeli relations, *Suez: Ultra-Secret*, that Ben-Gurion commissioned him as his authorized biographer.¹⁸⁴ Bar-Zohar records French foreign minister Christian Pineau's argument against the demand that Israel withdraw from Gaza. France, Pineau explained, 'considers the Gaza Strip an integral part of Palestine'; and since it was Israel, not Egypt, that was the rightful ruler of Palestine, demands for a restoration of the 1949 armistice were inappropriate.¹⁸⁵

The British position was more restrained. The British government was as hostile to Egypt as was the French; but if British influence in the Arab world was declining, it

¹⁸¹ *DCER Vol. 22*, 341.

¹⁸² *DCER Vol. 22*, 364.

¹⁸³ Golani, *Israel in Search of a War*, 28.

¹⁸⁴ Michael Bar-Zohar, *Ben-Gurion: A Biography* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1977), 1-2.

¹⁸⁵ Michael Bar-Zohar, *Suez, Ultra-Secret* (Paris: Fayard, 1964), 218.

was still appreciable. Further British association with Israel would only make it more difficult to defend Britain's Arab protectorates against popular opposition. The British desire to see Egypt cede ground through the Suez Crisis had, however, not at all dissipated. Pearson suggested that Canadian opinion wished to see Egypt concede to Israel in part out of support for Israel, but also as a result of the Egyptian government's perceived slighting of the West.¹⁸⁶ The British position was no doubt informed by the same sentiment.

On 9 January, Mackay reported to Pearson on a conversation he had with a British delegate to the UN, Peter Ramsbotham. 'Ramsbotham confirmed our impression that the UK was disposed to mobilize support in the Assembly for the position taken by Mrs. Meir,' wrote Mackay. Ramsbotham argued that Israel should not be required to withdraw without at least some of its demands being met. Israel, he insisted, 'could not be expected to relinquish its hold on the Gaza Strip and on the Strait[s] of Tiran unless and until Israel had adequate assurances about future developments in these two areas.'¹⁸⁷ The British delegate argued that UNEF should be enforced and deployed to replace Israeli forces in the Gaza Strip and at Sharm al-Sheikh; in this way 'the Egyptians would be prevented from restoring their military position there. Until some arrangement along these lines could be made *we should resist efforts to bring pressure on Israel to withdraw*.'¹⁸⁸ This British posture produced a new dynamic in Anglo-American relations. The Eisenhower administration seemed intent on bringing about an unconditional Israeli withdrawal in the manner of Anglo-French withdrawal from Port Said. Britain, in contrast, aimed to avert any outcome that would be perceived as an Egyptian victory. This was the first time since the Israeli state's establishment that Britain was more supportive of Israeli demands than the US.¹⁸⁹

Whether at the British government's prompting or of his own volition, Pearson took up the task of resisting pressure for unconditional Israeli withdrawal with gusto. It seemed that there were two ways, broadly speaking, in which the Suez Crisis could now be resolved. The first was for international pressure on Israel to build to such a point that Israel felt compelled to withdraw, an approach requiring credible momentum

¹⁸⁶ *DCER Vol. 22*, 425.

¹⁸⁷ *DCER Vol. 22*, 341.

¹⁸⁸ *DCER Vol. 22*, 341. Emphasis added.

¹⁸⁹ Almog, *Britain, Israel and the United States*, 110.

towards sanctions. The second was for the international community to accommodate Israeli war gains and pressure Egypt to accept them in some form, to provide Israel with an 'inducement,' in Pearson's language, to withdraw with a sense of victory. Pearson directed Canadian diplomats to act with some flexibility. But his priority was the second approach; and he ended up distinguishing himself as one of the most insistent Western spokespeople for Israeli demands, especially on Gaza.

In the UN diplomacy of January-February 1957, this required parallel efforts: to deflect Afro-Asian demands for sanctions; and to establish an internationally palatable iteration of Israel's demands. The activities of Canadian diplomats on 15 January offer a snapshot of these inter-connected efforts. Mackay spoke to the Indian delegation, which was once again the main point of contact between Western and Third World diplomats. 'Lall indicated that efforts were being made to tone down the Afro-Asian draft,' Mackay reported, 'and that perhaps it need not be pressed to a vote this week, provided that a sufficient number of delegations outside the Afro-Asian group should support in principle the contention that the Israeli withdrawal must be unconditional.'¹⁹⁰ The challenge for Pearson was thus to counter calls for unconditional Israeli withdrawal without framing Israeli demands as *conditions*. Pearson records the formulation he used in discussions that day with Henry Cabot Lodge, anchor of the US delegation: 'I agreed that Israel should not be allowed to attach conditions to its withdrawal but the Israelis could not reasonably be expected to accept the conditions which existed before October 29.'¹⁹¹ Israel, so Pearson proposed, should not be permitted to impose conditions on its withdrawal. Nonetheless, it could reasonably refuse to withdraw until it received adequate *assurances*. In the first new round of General Assembly voting, on 19 January, these distinctions did not come into play. Pearson was satisfied that 'the Afro-Asian draft resolution on withdrawal had been watered down' as much as was realistic.¹⁹² He felt there was no point in trying to press things further. Only France joined Israel in voting against this resolution. But further allied differences were taking shape. By 22 January, Pearson acknowledged that Canadian opposition to sanctions against Israel might involve a split with the US.¹⁹³

¹⁹⁰ *DCER Vol. 22, 366.*

¹⁹¹ *DCER Vol. 22, 360.*

¹⁹² *DCER Vol. 22, 376.*

¹⁹³ *DCER Vol. 22, 378.*

That day marked the completion of Israel's withdrawal from most of the Sinai Peninsula, and the arrival of UNEF on the outskirts of the Gaza Strip. Controversy immediately escalated concerning whether and under what conditions Israel would withdraw from Gaza and Sharm al-Sheikh. On 23 January Eban sent an aide-mémoire to secretary-general Hammarskjöld, confirming Israeli rejection of the withdrawal resolution of 19 January. In the Gaza Strip, Eban declared, Israel would retain policing powers; but he added that Israel was still open to coordinating with UN partners to govern the territory. The aide-mémoire invoked possible dispersal of the refugees: 'Israel will make its full contribution towards any UN plan for the permanent settlement of the refugees, including those of Gaza.' As for Sharm al-Sheikh, Israel would agree to withdraw – but only on the condition that Egypt would be blocked from re-establishing its authority there. Israeli forces would instead be replaced by UNEF, armed with an international mandate to enforce Israeli freedom of navigation. The US delegation to the UN was outraged. Lodge described Israel's position as 'on a par with the invasion of Sinai on 29 October of which it is a continuation.'¹⁹⁴

Pearson busied himself trying to work Israeli demands into terms that could be sold to the General Assembly. On 26 January he discussed Israel's refusal to withdraw with Michael Comay, Israeli ambassador to Canada. He provided words of encouragement: 'I said that in the absence of satisfactory assurances I could hardly blame Israel for adopting this attitude.'¹⁹⁵ He meanwhile worked to establish an agreed text that the US could join Canada in presenting to the UN, responding to Israeli demands on Gaza and the Straits of Tiran. As he worked to develop an 'inducements' track for General Assembly diplomacy, Pearson travelled to New York to participate directly in the proceedings. He wrote somewhat dismissively about General Assembly plenary discussions: 'There was much to be said for letting the Afro-Asians, and especially the hotheads, talk themselves out before serious efforts should be made behind the scenes to break the deadlock.'¹⁹⁶ Yet he himself repeatedly addressed the General Assembly to put the call for 'assurances' for Israel on the record. On 29 January, for example, he argued in favour of deploying UN forces for 'pacification

¹⁹⁴ Kyle, *Suez*, 536.

¹⁹⁵ *DCER Vol. 22*, 393.

¹⁹⁶ *DCER Vol. 22*, 397.

purposes' in both Gaza and Sharm al-Sheikh.¹⁹⁷ His position earned praise from traditional allies. 'The representatives of Australia, [the] UK and a number of West European countries privately expressed satisfaction to us,' he reported to Ottawa.¹⁹⁸ But as the US delegation worked to ease the confrontation with Arab and other Third World diplomats, Pearson once again found himself siding with the Western opposition.

The Canadian split with the US delegation opened up when Pearson saw US revisions to the text that Canada had proposed to jointly move in the General Assembly. Canadian diplomats felt that the US delegation had diluted the assurances to Israel in order to secure Indian support. What was once considered a partly Canadian draft was now discussed with resentment as 'the Lodge-Menon text.' The Canadian delegation withdrew Canada's co-sponsorship of the resolution on the grounds that it had become 'inadequate to the purpose for which it was designed, that is, as an inducement to Israel to comply with the resolution on withdrawal.'¹⁹⁹ On 1 February Pearson informed Lodge of this decision. In the weeks ahead, he fully aligned Canadian diplomacy with the pro-Israel opposition to the Eisenhower administration.

The diplomacy of February 1957 sheds unflattering light on contemporary Canadian liberalism's reverence for Pearson. Pearson's resentment over fraying US racial solidarity was barely disguised. Just as it was understood that 'old Commonwealth' meant 'white Commonwealth,' 'leader of the free world' was taken to mean 'leader of the Western world.' It was in this sense that the West looked to Washington. To Western diplomats like Pearson, it seemed that US representatives were being inappropriately responsive to pressure from other quarters. Robert Mackay's description of the US and Canadian experiences in the General Assembly meeting of 1 February is telling. Lodge, while not going so far as Pearson, spoke to the Assembly about ensuring 'the non-exercise of any claim to belligerent rights' on Egypt's part, and implied US support for UNEF enforcement of Israeli navigation rights through to the Red Sea. Lodge's assurances were not enough to satisfy Israel or many of its Western supporters; but to others they looked like an international reward for Israel's invasion of Egypt. 'Although the debate continued after Lodge had spoken,' reported

¹⁹⁷ Lester B. Pearson, *The Crisis in the Middle East, January-March 1957* (Ottawa: Queen's Printer and Controller of Stationery, 1957), 17-18.

¹⁹⁸ *DCER Vol. 22*, 398.

¹⁹⁹ *DCER Vol. 22*, 404.

Mackay, 'the main centre of activity shifted from the Assembly to the corridors where the USA delegation was under angry attack by the Arabs.' Mackay immediately adds: 'Our own activity behind the scenes was more concerned with the delegation of Israel, on the one hand, and with the Old Commonwealth representatives and some of the Western Europeans on the other.'²⁰⁰

European and white Commonwealth efforts to pull the Eisenhower administration towards greater support for Israel were in sync with important sections of the US political system. In Congress, notably, Senator Lyndon Johnson headed up an influential pro-Israel opposition that called on the administration to be more forthcoming.²⁰¹ The Eisenhower administration's approach to developing neocolonial partnerships in the Arab world was running up against a culture of Western solidarity that combined identification with Israel with indifference to Third World opinion. Pearson was among its spokespeople. On 19 February Pearson reported to the St.-Laurent Cabinet on his efforts at the UN. Pearson 'found it hard to believe,' recorded Cabinet secretary Robert Bryce, 'that, in the last analysis, the US would support the Arab-Asian move for sanctions even though Mr. Lodge appeared to have said his government would take such a stand. He had told Mr. Lodge that the Canadian delegation would not support such a resolution under any circumstances and would do its best to avoid a vote by introducing other ideas.' Pearson explained that he was in regular communication with Israeli as well as Western diplomats. One of the themes that he emphasized was that directly controlling Gaza would be a challenge to the Zionist politics of exclusion. 'The Minister,' Bryce recorded Pearson as explaining to the Cabinet, 'had told the Israeli Ambassador to the UN that, if Israel maintained its hold on Gaza, it would also have to assume responsibility for the welfare of the refugees in the area, of which there were over 250,000.'²⁰² In friendship, Pearson cautioned Israel against taking responsibility for those it had displaced and excluded at such great effort.

Pearson's advocacy for Israel through February was remarkably frank. On 11 February, for example, he got into a heated exchange with UN under-secretary Ralph

²⁰⁰ *DCER Vol. 22*, 413.

²⁰¹ William B. Quandt, *Peace Process: American Diplomacy and the Arab-Israeli Conflict Since 1967* (Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution Press, with the University of California Press, 2005), 45; David Hirst, *The Gun and the Olive Branch: The Roots of Violence in the Middle East* (Boston: Faber and Faber, 1984), 209.

²⁰² *DCER Vol. 22*, 440.

Bunche, a US diplomat well-known for his involvement in Arab-Israeli diplomacy, and later in the US civil rights movement. Pearson and the Norwegian ambassador to the UN, Hans Engen, told Bunche that their countries would refuse to use sanctions to pressure for Israeli withdrawal. 'Bunche was clearly disappointed by what Engen and I said about sanctions,' writes Pearson. 'He did not see how the UN could shrink from its duty of combating military aggression by any means available.'²⁰³ Pearson responded by taking exception to the description of Israel's attacks as aggression. He retorted that 'many regarded Israel's military action last November as a defensive move made in desperation, even though it was unwise.'²⁰⁴ Pearson, from this perspective, was not working to secure for Israel rewards for aggression; he was only aiming to ensure that Israel's efforts to defend itself had not been undertaken in vain.

Such Western support for Israel was one of the factors that the Eisenhower administration had to reckon with in contemplating the use of sanctions against Israel. On 19 February the CIA produced a memorandum concerning the challenges that the US would face in imposing sanctions. 'A program of UN sanctions against Israel would be supported by the Arab states and by the USSR,' the CIA estimated, 'which has already halted shipments of oil to Israel. It would also be complied with by most of the Arab-Asian and under US leadership by many Latin American states.' Ensuring Western compliance, the CIA authors continued, would be more difficult:

Even given active US participation in the program, most of the NATO countries, including the UK, would at best give reluctant support to a program of sanctions. Canada, which from the start backed UN resolutions calling for Israeli withdrawal from Egypt and itself proposed the UN Emergency Force, has indicated that it would not cooperate. West Germany has stated it would not suspend reparations payments. France would almost certainly refuse to participate in economic sanctions and in fact would probably increase shipments to Israel.

It is possible that this CIA assessment reflected bureaucratic divisions within the US government. The Eisenhower presidency was only one element of the US political system among others, and although it predominated in foreign policy making, influential US strategists and ideologues alike wished that the administration had shown more consideration to the attacking powers in the Suez Crisis. The case against sanctions would be strengthened to the extent that the policy did not seem feasible. In any case, it is significant that the CIA authors repeatedly mention 'the attitudes of France, Canada,

²⁰³ *DCER Vol. 22, 426.*

²⁰⁴ *DCER Vol. 22, 426.*

and other countries' as a factor emboldening Israel in its resistance to pressure from the Eisenhower administration.²⁰⁵

The US administration had too much invested in Israeli withdrawal to back off entirely. On 20 February, Eisenhower delivered a dramatic televised address intended to marshal public support against those advocating full satisfaction of Israel's demands. He criticized Israel for demanding 'firm guarantees as a condition to withdrawing its forces of invasion.' Eisenhower asked rhetorically: 'Should a nation which attacks and occupies foreign territory in the face of United Nations disapproval be allowed to impose conditions on its withdrawal?'²⁰⁶ In the US and throughout the West, many were responding: Yes. In fact, through secretary of state Dulles, the Eisenhower administration itself had already begun promising Israel war gains. Outside of the UN structures, Dulles was offering a US declaration of support for Israeli navigation rights through the Straits of Tiran if Israeli forces withdrew to the armistice line.²⁰⁷ Israeli and allied resistance to demands for an immediate withdrawal continued. But by this point, the differences among allies really concerned the *extent* of Israeli war gains.

On 24 February, Israeli ambassador Comay approached Pearson 'unofficially and confidentially,' addressing himself to a perceived ally. Comay continued to list Israeli demands to which even Pearson, much less the Eisenhower administration, could not agree. But in the face of mounting pressure, the Israeli government also showed some signs of flexibility. Concerning Gaza, Comay explained that Israel's position had changed. Israel still demanded that Egyptian authorities be blocked from regaining control of the Gaza Strip. But, as an alternative to direct Israeli policing powers within Gaza, 'Israel would accept instead a UN administration of the area.' Comay explained that allies at the UN could then take on the task of dealing with the two distinct groups in the Gaza Strip, 'the refugees' and 'the indigenous inhabitants,' while 'maintaining order in the area.' Pearson praised Israeli concessions but suggested that more flexibility on various points was needed if the allies were to have a chance of success with the General Assembly. Pearson's approach was the polar opposite of imposing a deterrent on a possible aggressor. Instead, he argued that the Israeli

²⁰⁵ Noring with Glennon, *FRUS 1955-1957, Vol. 17*, 209-11.

²⁰⁶ Burns, *Between Arab and Israeli*, 251.

²⁰⁷ *DCER Vol. 22*, 428.

leadership should already feel empowered by its military efforts, and should appreciate and build upon what the invasion had already accomplished: 'I suggested that Israel had gained something out of the Sinai expedition. If Israel completed her withdrawal now the main problem for the Arabs would be to hold Israel behind its present borders and there would be less heard about the partition plan of 1947; less about territorial adjustment and the status of Jerusalem.' Comay agreed that the attack had been 'worthwhile.'²⁰⁸ Pearson then returned to his own efforts at the UN, seeing how far Israeli gains could be pressed.

The resumption of General Assembly discussions on 26 February provided the occasion for Pearson's last contribution to Suez Crisis diplomacy. It was not especially influential. Pearson was positioned to advocate for Israel and against the Arabs much more freely than, for example, the British delegation, much as it was largely from Britain that the Canadian political system had absorbed its hostility to Israel's enemies. Even if British planners did not always match the neocolonial sense of their US counterparts, they retained weighty imperial responsibilities. The Canadian government, on the other hand, had little influence in the Middle East to squander. The same lack of 'purely national interests in the area' that had allowed the Canadian government to approve shipment to Israel of F-86 fighter jets a few months earlier now allowed Pearson to distinguish himself in his support for Israeli demands. Of course, this lack of influence also softened the impact of the policy that it enabled. These final days of the Suez Crisis nonetheless reveal much about the approach to Palestine and racial entitlement underlying Pearsonian politics.

In front of the General Assembly, Pearson boldly called for a UN-authorized occupation of the Gaza Strip and Sharm al-Sheikh. On Gaza, he scarcely concealed that he was aiming to internationalize the implementation of Israeli objectives. Pearson tried to orient the General Assembly to the difficult reality that Israel faced in Gaza: 'In this tiny area are crowded 267,000 refugees and a much smaller native population. They are bitter and frustrated, administered by strangers; rebellious, riven by frictions, and in a mood, I have no doubt, to erupt in violence and bloodshed if firm control were removed.' For Pearson, as for the Israeli diplomatic corps, it was an important point that

²⁰⁸ *DCER Vol. 22, 450.*

the majority of the Gaza Strip's population was not 'native' to Gaza. The implication was that a future for these refugees could perhaps be found elsewhere. Whatever the solution, Pearson suggested that Egypt lacked the political will to exercise 'firm control'; Israel lacked international authorization. Pearson thus called for deployment of a UN force in Gaza that could allow 'transition from the administration of Israel to something no less strong and effective and at the same time more generally acceptable.'²⁰⁹

What is as remarkable as this proposal is Pearson's indignation that US representatives were no longer welcoming its advocate into their diplomatic inner circle. 'The most disconcerting and disappointing feature of today's developments,' he wrote some hours after the General Assembly met, 'is the failure of the USA delegation to show us or even take us into their confidence about their draft [resolution]. The UK, French, Australian, and NZ delegations are even more in the dark, having been told nothing. As Spender put it to me, "The Assembly apparently think the Indians, Egyptians etc. speak better English." It would be easy for us to become very annoyed about this and to suspect that Lodge is trying to pay us [back] for not having sponsored his earlier resolution.'²¹⁰ Representatives from the dependencies seemed to be getting a hearing at the expense of the empire's rightful Western partners.

The US guarantee for Israeli navigation through the Straits of Tiran ultimately proved much more consequential than 'the Canadian proposal' on Gaza.²¹¹ Deployment of the UNEF in Gaza, against Egyptian wishes and in the face of local resistance, would have involved a diplomatic effort for which there was scarce international support. 'We expected a violent Arab reaction to the manoeuvre,' acknowledged Mackay, 'and we knew that this could lead to the breakup of UNEF, because India, Indonesia and Yugoslavia, for example, might refuse to allow their contingents to be used for the "occupation" of the Gaza Strip and Sharm-El-Sheikh.'²¹² As it happened, the Egyptian government accepted a UNEF presence in the Sinai and a temporary presence in Gaza during the transition between Israel's occupation and the restoration of Egyptian authority. With the imposition of US-backed UN sanctions looming, Golda Meir announced that Israeli forces would withdraw; the withdrawal was carried out in the first

²⁰⁹ Pearson, *The Crisis in the Middle East*, 28.

²¹⁰ *DCER Vol. 22*, 454.

²¹¹ Almog, *Britain, Israel and the United States*, 114.

²¹² *DCER Vol. 22*, 465.

week of March. The guarantee that Israel extracted concerning the Straits of Tiran would reverberate in the politics of the Middle East. In the spring of 1967, Israel used this guarantee as leverage to develop wide Western support for its expanded military conquests. The cultivation of this *casus belli* over the preceding twelve years paid off spectacularly. The brief presence of UNEF troops in Gaza in March 1957 was by comparison a small historical footnote.

The observations of Burns, under whose command UNEF supervised the withdrawal of Israeli troops and then briefly replaced them, nonetheless speak to the substance of Pearson's proposal. 'Suggestions backed by very little evidence had been put about that the Strip population would prefer UN administration to the previous Egyptian régime,' reflected Burns. The reality he observed was altogether different. Burns reported large Palestinian demonstrations denouncing the Eisenhower doctrine and displaying a mood of assertive anti-colonialism.

It was perfectly clear from the attitude of the crowds that, whatever they wanted, they did not want rule by outsiders. There were slogans against colonialism and imperialism (the Arabic word *ista'amar* is translated as either of these 'isms'). They might not have particularly desired to be governed by Egyptians, but the Egyptians . . . were better than any 'white' foreigners.

Burns was not charged with exercising the 'firm control' that Pearson had advocated. Nonetheless, on 10 March a Palestinian was killed as UNEF units under his command dispersed a demonstration at one of their positions. Burns did not aim to continue occupation of the Gaza Strip against local opposition; but his command contemplated what would happen if the Palestinians actively opposed the presence of UNEF. 'Once the problem was considered,' he wrote, 'it was plainly impossible to think of UNEF's checking disorders as the Israelis had done, by shooting enough rioters to cow the rest.'²¹³ Exactly what Pearson intended when he called for deployment of a force 'no less strong and effective' than the IDF in its control of Gaza may be debated. What is clear is that he was either woefully ignorant of local realities or advocating a brutal military campaign to pacify the territory.

There may be little point in rebutting the judgement of Israeli and Canadian scholar-statesmen Oren and Bell that Pearson's approach was above all 'fair-minded.' This is a question of values and priorities. There is, in any event, little in the record of

²¹³ Burns, *Between Arab and Israeli*, 264-5.

the 'golden age' of Canadian diplomacy that can serve as the precedent for a genuine internationalism, on Palestine or in international affairs more generally.

Conclusion

The Suez Crisis is conventionally regarded as marking the high point of liberal Canadian internationalism in the Middle East. It is perhaps fitting that Canadian diplomacy at the time so clearly showcased both the scope and the bounds of this internationalism. That a Canadian policy so manifestly at odds with Afro-Asian opinion and diplomacy is remembered for its 'fair-minded' beneficence says as much about contemporary Canadian political culture as it does about the history itself. The pretence of US anti-colonialism in the Middle East appears, in retrospect, as a subterfuge under which was developed what would become the most important imperial presence in the Middle East for the remainder of the twentieth century, and into the twenty-first. It bears repeating that Pearsonian diplomacy was unwilling to match even this pretence. The Western internationalism that Canadian diplomats championed may have involved greater tactical moderation than exhibited by the European powers; but it was as their allies, and against majority world diplomacy, that Pearson and his colleagues operated.

Tareq Ismael has noted the Western parochialism of Canadian diplomacy during the Suez Crisis.²¹⁴ This chapter uses an analysis of the Canadian documentary record to build upon this theme. It finds not only that Canadian responses to Anglo-French belligerence were limited by allied sympathies and framed by a deference to US power, but also that Canadian diplomats in turn pressed Eisenhower administration officials to temper what seemed to Canadian diplomats an excessive anti-colonialism – the Canadian priority was the restoration of Western alliance cohesion against common enemies. On the question of Palestine more specifically, the extent of Pearson's pro-Israel belligerence at the time has not been properly represented in the existing literature. Pearson was among the most persistent international opponents of compelling an Israeli withdrawal by means of sanctions, and he distinguished himself in

²¹⁴ Tareq Ismael, *Canada and the Middle East: The Foreign Policy of a Client State* (Calgary: Detselig Enterprises Ltd., 1994), 18.

the effort to reward Israel for its military campaign by means of 'inducements,' notably an international occupation of the Gaza Strip. This speaks to the weakness of contemporary efforts to 'balance' Canadian diplomacy in the Middle East through the invocation of Pearsonian diplomacy.

As against this mythology, Canadian Middle East diplomacy in this 'golden age' of Pearsonian internationalism ought to be remembered, from arms supply policy through to Suez Crisis diplomacy, in the wider context of Canada's 'national role of helper to larger Western nations in their colonial activities in the Third World.'²¹⁵

²¹⁵ See Sherene H. Razack, *Dark Threats and White Knights: The Somalia Affair, Peacekeeping, and the New Imperialism* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2004), 34.

Conclusion

'[W]e are now in a Third World War. And when I am saying "we," it is not the Israelis. It is the whole Free World. It's Europe, North America, Australia; all the Free World is part of this war.'¹

-Matan Vilnai, at Israel's annual Herzliya Conference (2011)

'[I]t is a fantastic environmental project, but the ... most important thing is this: It is where it is, in the homeland of the Jewish people, in that light of freedom and democracy in what is otherwise a region of darkness, the State of Israel.'²

-Stephen Harper, addressing a JNF gathering on the occasion of its dedication to Harper of an Israeli project in the Galilee (2013)

* * *

The international politics of the Zionist and Israeli leadership show considerable historical continuity. Theodor Herzl's suggestion that a Jewish state in Palestine could form 'an outpost of civilization against barbarism,' as he phrased it at the end of the nineteenth century, echoes into the twenty-first. On the plane of ideological declarations, leading figures in contemporary Israel suggest that their state is 'a villa in the jungle,' in Ehud Barak's well-known formulation.³ This rhetoric is paired with a familiar strategic orientation. In 2007, for example, in the context of the so-called war on terror, a number of influential Israeli planners insisted upon the continued need for Israel to prioritize 'comprehensive association with both North America and Europe across the political, economic, societal and military spectrums.'⁴

A measure of Canadian association with Israel against Palestinian and neighbouring Arab societies has likewise proved durable. Pearson's description of Israel as a Western outpost in the Middle East finds continued expression in comments like those of Stephen Harper, cited above, which stress identification with Israel against the 'region of darkness' in which it was established. This dissertation finds that a similar identification with Israel historically extended across Canada's main governing factions, and has roots in the era of formal imperialism. From the outset, shared imperial alignments shaped Canadian engagement with the Zionist enterprise.

¹ Matan Vilnai, 'Shared Strategic Challenges: Panel of Defense Ministers,' *Eleventh Annual Herzliya Conference* (6 February 2011), <www.herzliyaconference.org/eng/?CategoryID=440>.

² Adrian Morrow, 'Harper to promote "Canadian values" on first Middle East visit,' *Globe and Mail* (2 December 2013); fuller citation at 'JNF Canada honors Canadian PM Stephen Harper,' <<http://www.kkl.org.il/eng/about-kkl-jnf/green-israel-news/december-2013/jnf-canada-negev-dinner-stephen-harper/>>.

³ Cited, for example, in Yitzah Laor, *The Myths of Liberal Zionism* (London: Verso, 2009), xxxvi.

⁴ Uzi Arad et al., *Anchoring Israel to the Euro-Atlantic Community* (Herzliya, January 2007), <http://www.herzliyaconference.org/_Uploads/2469NATO.pdf>, 2.

Canada is, of course, far removed from the Middle East. But this very distance has facilitated the Canadian tendency towards pro-Israel partisanship in the Palestine conflict. The Canadian state has not only formed part of the Western alliance to which the Zionist and Israeli leadership have sought to attach themselves; it has also had particularly close relationships with the Zionist movement's primary Great Power sponsors: Britain until the 1940s, and subsequently the United States. The politics of Canadian partnership with empire have repeatedly encouraged support for Zionism and for Israel. This was the case of successive Canadian governments' declaratory support for Zionism in the interwar years, and of the diplomatic support that Canada provided for the establishment of the Israeli state in 1948.

From early on, the assertion of Canadian autonomy within the British Empire was matched by processes of North American continental integration. In the years after World War II, the Canadian state became formally attached to US power. A telling moment in the process of Canada's incorporation into US-led imperial coalition politics in the Middle East came with the Liberal government's decision to supply Israel with swept-wing fighter aircraft. Despite the cancellation of this sale as a result of Israel's Gaza-Sinai campaign, this episode attests to the realignment of Canadian foreign policy that began in earnest in the 1940s. Canada was transitioning from its former status as one of Britain's white Dominions to that of a secondary Western state closely aligned with Anglo-American power ('with the accent on "American"').

Unlike Britain and the US, however, Canada, owing to its distance from the Middle East and its limited global reach, had few regional commitments to temper a posture of indifference to Arab opinion. At the level of government policy, this permitted forms of support for Israel that Canada's Great Power allies – committed as they were to the cultivation of neocolonial relationships with the Arab world – did not feel they could afford. The decision to supply Israel with F-86 fighter jets is a case in point. Notably, so too is Pearson's famed Suez Crisis diplomacy, at least in 1957. The role that Pearson played in the diplomacy of autumn 1956 is well known. In this context, it is true that the Canadian government was less rigidly aligned with Britain than were other members of the 'old Commonwealth,' and that it urged greater tactical moderation than

was exhibited by the European powers. Its internationalism during the Suez Crisis nonetheless proved to be sharply restricted.

Like France, whose war in Algeria had already earned it fierce regional hostility, Canada, with little standing in the region to begin with, discarded international legal norms in order to support Israel's demand that it be diplomatically rewarded for its military campaign against Gaza and Egypt. The Canadian government's initial diplomatic effort to encourage Anglo-French realignment with the US evolved, by the end of November 1956, into lobbying for greater US support for the attacking powers, and by early 1957 found Pearson representing Canada from the pro-Israel fringe of the UN General Assembly. 'Pearsonian internationalism' involved a diplomacy anchored in the Western alliance and facing off against Afro-Asian adversaries who were viewed with a disrespect bordering on contempt. Pearson thus earned for Canada a share of Western responsibility for the Israeli leadership's sense of impunity emerging from the Gaza-Sinai campaign. The war gains secured for Israel in 1957, along with the impression that the campaign left – that further military aggression could also be 'worthwhile' – had dire consequences for the region in the decades ahead.

At the time, Pearson faced Tory criticism for having not more directly supported the Anglo-French assault. If it is the replacement of rigid British with more varied imperial commitments that makes for Pearsonian internationalism, this should be spelled out with greater honesty. Contemporary liberal invocation of this tradition as a positive precedent is another matter. The approach of Pearson's department of external affairs was framed by narrow international alignments and a racialized politics of entitlement. Especially telling was Pearson's echo of Spender's complaint about Third World upstarts who were pretending to 'speak better English' than those accustomed to a privileged seat at international tables. This was the entitlement of leaders who felt that they shared in the rightful global predominance of the English-speaking West.

It was, at the turn of the twentieth century, an explicitly racist doctrine that prompted James Bryce to stress the value of 'constant cordial co-operation' between the Anglo-Saxon nations. Canadian attachment to this conception evolved with the times. Still, this heritage loomed large over the postwar Canadian effort at 'playing the triangle in the international symphony.' These were the politics of imperial partnership

through which Canadian officials approached the world; and they had long reverberated in respectable Canadian society.

Even before global imperial alignments brought the Canadian government into sustained engagement with the Middle East, they helped to cultivate within Canada a remarkably pro-Zionist domestic political environment. Not that the Zionist movement was uniformly celebrated in Canada, least of all when conflict between British authorities and the Yishuv peaked just prior to the Israeli state's establishment. However, in the long term, support for Zionism was generally quite compatible with the patriotic norms of Canadian civil society. This determined the early realities of Canadian Zionist leadership. From the beginning, the Canadian Zionist movement was directed not from those sections of the Canadian Jewish community involved in dissident politics or the development of independent social movements, but from more respectable circles, socially and politically aligned with the Canadian establishment. In this setting, the movement owed its standing in Canadian society to dynamics much wider than Jewish communal politics.

The argument that racism played a central role in shaping Canadian engagement with the Palestine question is sure to be contentious. To suggest that the politics of support for Zionism and Israel were shaped by structural realities of racism is, within the terms of contemporary liberal discourse, counterintuitive. Support for a state that claims to be Jewish is more often presented as atonement for the Western history of racism, counterposed to the horrific realities of European antisemitism. Liberal conventional wisdom would have it that the support that the English-speaking West provided for Zionist settlement, and later for Israel, is yet another indication of its inclusive tolerance. The research findings presented in the preceding chapters suggest a different interpretation.

Hints of another possibility can even be found in studies of Canadian Jewish politics written by assertively pro-Zionist academics. For example, consider how Daniel Elazar and Harold Waller introduce the question of racism in their study, *Maintaining Consensus: The Canadian Jewish Polity in the Postwar World*. They write,

Modern racism took shape in the generation that began in the late 1870s and lasted until World War I, when Western imperialism was at its height. . . . The Western world saw itself as a great civilizing force confronting inferior nonwhite elements. This view became strongest in the Anglo-Saxon and Teutonic countries, whose people saw themselves as the culmination of civilization

and even doubted the 'whiteness' of the 'inferior' peoples of Southern and Eastern Europe including Jews. Even those not swayed by the new anti-Semitism saw the Jews as an Oriental people. It is no wonder that the Jews suffered as a result.⁵

Antisemitism, as the authors suggest, developed in conjunction with an imperial racism that was also directed at 'Oriental peoples' more fully outside the supposed bounds of Western civilization. Zionism was not insulated from this political atmosphere. For all the mythology of a Jewish 'return' to Palestine, the Zionist leadership actively accommodated itself to Western derision of the peoples of the region. 'Although we were an Oriental people,' insisted Ben-Gurion, 'we had been Europeanized and we wished to return to Palestine in the geographical sense only.'⁶

Early Canadian support for Zionism embodied the racial logic of the era. The reigning Western approach both to Indigenous peoples and to Jews seemed to recommend the Zionist option. Discussing contemporary politics, the Israeli writer Yitzhak Laor observes that 'it has become common in the West to see "us" Israelis as part of "them," at least as long as we are here, in the Middle East, a late version of *pieds noirs*.'⁷ In considering early Canadian politics on Palestine, the phrase 'as long as we are here' is especially significant. Support for Zionism reflected not only indifference to the Arab world, but also the limits of Jewish inclusion in the Canadian polity. The presumed hierarchy of peoples allowed for the casting of European Jews as the bearers of civilization vis-à-vis Arabs, while also as racialized European foreigners not fully suited to becoming 'true Canadians.' Unfortunately, the first of these racial premises has not been excised from Canadian politics as effectively as has the second.

The problem lingers, including in Canadian scholarship. The devaluing of Arab societies within imperial political culture historically took on different forms, associated with the forms of political domination with which various societies were targeted. For its part, the colonization of Palestine was indeed enveloped in an ideological assault on its native population; however, Palestinians, facing a colonization of exclusion rather than exploitation, were subjected to ideological erasure rather than vilification. More precisely, efforts at erasure preceded efforts at vilification, and substituted for them

⁵ Daniel Elazar and Harold Waller, *Maintaining Consensus: The Canadian Jewish Polity in the Postwar World* (Lanham, MD and London: University Press of America and the Jerusalem Centre for Public Affairs, 1990), 13.

⁶ Cited in Simha Flapan, *Zionism and the Palestinians* (New York: Barnes & Noble Books, 1979), 133

⁷ Yitzhak Laor, *The Myths of Liberal Zionism* (London: Verso, 2009), 1.

whenever possible. The slogan suggesting that Palestine was ‘a land without a people for a people without a land’ did not result from innocent misunderstanding, but from an effort to brush aside native in promotion of settler claims. Outside of the circles of Zionist leadership, genuine misunderstanding did develop around this concept. But it is difficult to see how researchers with access to the relevant materials could still be party to this misunderstanding. Whatever the reasons, Canadian Zionism’s impact on Palestinian society has been all but written out its history. This dissertation identifies a series of points of contact between Canadian Zionism and Palestinian society, from the displacement of the community of Wadi al-Hawarith through to the atrocities of Operation Hiram, that demand a presence in the Canadian historical record.

This dissertation points to various possibilities for future research. Notably, the theme of long-term continuity in Canadian engagement with the Palestine problem finds further grounding in developments since Canada’s internationalist ‘golden age.’ A brief sketch of subsequent trends can serve to highlight the possibilities.

In the period covered in this dissertation, there exists a parallel between the nature of Canadian association with the Zionist enterprise in the eras of British and then of growing US predominance in Canadian politics. Following the First World War, the Zionist movement was brought into the British imperial orbit within which Canada operated. The association of Zionism with official imperial policy commanded a measure of deference from the Canadian government, and enforced a Canadian variety of patriotic Zionism. The international Zionist leadership’s reorientation from Britain towards the US in the 1940s roughly corresponded with a parallel shift on the part of the Canadian leadership; Canada’s relationship with the Empire diminished in relation to the leadership of the US. Similar dynamics to those that took shape in the era of British-Zionist alignment can be discerned. Initial research suggests that it was in the 1960s, however, that the parallel became most striking.

From the summer of 1957 through to the spring of 1963, Canada’s Progressive Conservatives held federal office under the leadership of John Diefenbaker. The Diefenbaker government sought with limited success to reassert Canada’s relationship with Britain.⁸ In 1963, however, a Liberal Party now under Pearson’s leadership

⁸ See John Hilliker and Greg Donaghy, ‘Canadian Relations with the United Kingdom at the End of Empire, 1956-73,’ in ed. Phillip Buckner, *Canada and the End of Empire* (Vancouver: University of British

returned to federal office, and accommodated itself to accelerated North American integration. The Canadian political economy was further restructured around a US centre. In early 1965, notably, Pearson travelled to US president Lyndon Johnson's Texas ranch to sign a new economic agreement between the two countries, the Auto Pact. Victor Levant's study of Canadian policy towards Vietnam notes the newfound public confidence of calls to match these links with a US-aligned foreign policy. Levant cites the report *Principles for Partnership*, co-authored by Arnold Heeney, former Canadian ambassador to US, and Livingston Merchant, former US ambassador to Canada. The report affirmed Canadian independence. But the essential thrust of its argumentation was that 'Canadian authorities should have careful regard for the United States Government's position . . . as leader of the free world and specifically under its network of mutual defence treaties around the globe.'⁹ This approach was increasingly coming to dictate Canadian foreign policy. Were Pearson's government not already substantially aligned with Israel, it would have drawn it in that direction.

Noam Chomsky cites a US National Security Memorandum from 1958, recommending 'support [for] Israel as the only strong pro-West power left in the Middle East.'¹⁰ The terms of US strategic discussion were shifting. It was in the 1960s and 1970s, though, that US military and economic aid to Israel truly exploded. Especially after Israel's expanded conquests of June 1967, two opposing dynamics thus reshaped the international politics of Palestine. On the one hand, Israel gained unprecedented standing as a regional surrogate for US power. And on the other, the independent reconstitution of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) provided a new means of Palestinian self-assertion. As Palestinian claims were buoyed by growing support from the Non-Aligned Movement, Israel/Palestine became a major flashpoint for diplomatic tension between the US-anchored Western alliance and the wider world community. Few states in the world were as closely aligned as was Canada with the US and Israel.

In the years after the Balfour Declaration, support for Zionism in Canada carried the prestige of official imperial policy. By virtue of a similar dynamic, patriotic Zionism

Columbia Press, 2005), 25-33.

⁹ Victor Levant, *Quiet Complicity: Canadian Involvement in the Vietnam War* (Toronto: Between the Lines, 1986), 18.

¹⁰ Noam Chomsky, *The Fateful Triangle: The United States, Israel, and the Palestinians* (Montreal: Black Rose Books, 1999), 21.

surged in Canada in the years after 1967: support for Israel involved simultaneous alignment with the US and Canadian governments, and served as a proud marker of Western alliance patriotism. In the existing literature, this dynamic is only indirectly discussed in terms of the domestic politics of empire that shaped it. But scholars of Jewish community politics struggle to contain these dynamics within a communal framing. ‘During the Israeli wars of 1967 and 1973,’ write Daniel Elazar and Harold Waller, ‘there was some surprising non-Jewish involvement, especially in terms of contributions to the Israel Emergency Fund.’¹¹ David Taras likewise notes: ‘Given the involvement of major corporate interests, financial aid to Israel cannot be described as exclusive to the Jewish community.’¹² It remains to seriously analyze the interplay between Canada’s place in US-led imperial coalition politics and the domestic base of organized support for Israel that in turn resulted from and enforced it.

The evolution of this interplay through the end of the twentieth century and into the twenty-first is beyond the scope of this dissertation. The present submission stands in its own right as an original contribution to understanding of the historical engagement of Canadian state and society with the Palestine problem. It also offers a strong foundation for further research concerning the dynamics of Western association with the Zionist enterprise and Israel, in the realms of government policy, political culture, and civil society organization – both in the Canadian case and more broadly.

¹¹ Elazar and Waller, *Maintaining Consensus*, 83-4.

¹² David Taras, ‘From Passivity to Politics: Canada’s Jewish Community and Political Support for Israel,’ in eds. David H. Goldberg and David Taras, *The Domestic Battleground: Canada and the Arab-Israeli Conflict* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1989), 51.

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