

1 Introduction

“Israel’s Moment” comprised the two years from May 1947 to May 1949 when both the Soviet Union and the Soviet-bloc states of Eastern Europe as well as the president of the United States supported the establishment of a Jewish state in Palestine. That rare agreement took place in the interregnum between the end of World War II and the Holocaust, and the first months of the Cold War. In these years anti-Nazism, antifascism, and anticommunism existed in an uneasy simultaneity. The foundation of the state of Israel was a highly contingent event that was facilitated by the short-lived and, as we shall see, tenuous agreement between the Soviet Union and the United States.

The present study draws on existing scholarship and on a close reading of various primary sources to reach four core conclusions: First, although the favorable decisions of President Harry Truman were a necessary precondition for the establishment of the state of Israel, the United States government from 1945 to 1949 was far less supportive of or important for that outcome than were the Soviet Union and the Soviet-bloc states, particularly in the years of Israel’s Moment, which ran from May 1947 to the end of the Arab-Israeli war in early 1949. Second, though there were some moderate conservatives in the United States and France who supported the Zionist cause, the core of the Zionist passion in the United States and Europe, in addition first of all to the enthusiastic support of Jewish organizations and leaders, came overwhelmingly from American liberals and left-liberals, French socialists and, between 1947 and 1949, from communists in France and in the Soviet bloc, especially in Czechoslovakia. For these two years Stalin viewed the establishment of a Jewish state in Palestine as a possible instrument to eliminate or certainly reduce British and American presence and power in the Middle East. Yet, as records of United Nations debates indicate, support for the Zionist project in the Soviet Union and in Eastern Europe during these years also drew on the powerful memories and the antifascist passions of World War II on the Eastern Front and the Holocaust. Emotions and power politics were both motivating factors.

Third, while historians have documented the well-known active opposition to Zionist aspirations on the part of the British Labour government and the Division of Near Eastern and African Affairs in the State Department, a close reading of the American files reveals a hitherto underexamined depth and intensity of opposition not only among the State Department's Arabists but among leading officials in that department, in the Pentagon, and the Central Intelligence Agency. The belief that the establishment of a Jewish state in Palestine would undermine American national security interests remained a consensus of those officials when the issue hung in the balance. During the four decades of the Cold War, outside Israel, the limits of American support, the extent of American opposition, and the degree of support from left-of-center politicians and the press in the West, and from the Soviet Union and Soviet-bloc states, faded from public view. The American alliance with Israel that emerged only decades later was projected backward onto a romanticized – or demonized – view of early American support, as if President Truman's sympathies overcame the reservations of American diplomats and military leaders. The Soviet Union as well, after turning against Israel in late 1949, treated the short era of Soviet Zionism as anathema. The actual international history of the establishment of the Jewish state did not fit at all well into the communist and anticommunist binaries of the Cold War. This work offers a fresh look at the realities of the four years from the Holocaust to the Cold War during which the Zionists won their struggle to create a Jewish state in Palestine.

Fourth, the passions of two eras – World War II and the Holocaust, and the Cold War, one just past and another just beginning – shaped Israel's Moment. The controversies during this period reflected the lingering passions of the former and the new-found zeal of the latter. This work recalls and reveals political coordinates on the left–right spectrum that stand in stark contrast to those that have emerged in subsequent decades. In the years in which Israel was established, its supporters saw it as part of a broad movement against imperialism and racism, while its opponents outside the Arab world viewed the Zionist project as a hindrance to the British Empire and then to American power in the Middle East.

This history of the ideas and passions that motivated support and opposition to Zionist aspirations focuses primarily on events in the United States, but also those in France. It follows debates at the United Nations in New York, policy decisions and discussions in the State Department and Pentagon in Washington, DC, assessments of the US Central Intelligence Agency, and decisions made in France's Ministry of Interior and its Ministry of Foreign Relations. It is also a history of

American and French dissenters from an anti-Zionist consensus in the American national security institutions – those who saw a Jewish state in Palestine as both the logical outcome of the anti-Nazi passions of World War II and a state that would serve as a bulwark against, rather than a vehicle for, Soviet expansion in the Middle East.

It was in spring 1947, when Britain asked the United Nations to address “the problem of Palestine,” that the issue of whether or not there would be a Jewish state in Palestine first became an issue engaging many powers in international history. From the time of the Balfour Declaration in 1917 to that spring, it had primarily involved Britain, the Jews and the Arabs of Palestine, and other Arab states. While others, including the United States, had expressed views on the matter, it was not until the years after World War II, and especially after the involvement of the United Nations, that many other states exerted an impact on the outcome of events. The “international” history examined in the following pages focuses on only a few of the many states expressing views on the matter. The United States, the Soviet Union, Great Britain, France, Czechoslovakia, Poland, the Arab Higher Committee, and the Arab League loom largest because they, more than others, were at the center of this chapter of international history.

Support in the United States and Europe for the establishment of a Jewish state in Palestine was one aspect of the general shift to the left that was evident in the immediate aftermath of World War II and the Holocaust. There were conservative figures such as Winston Churchill, Senator Robert Taft, and a number of French Christian Democrats who looked favorably on the Zionist project. Yet Zionism’s most emphatic support came from those infused with the liberal and leftist anti-Nazi passions of World War II and from Jewish survivors of the Holocaust and their fellow Jews. They included liberals and noncommunist leftists in the United States, socialists in France, and the governments of the Soviet Union and the communist regimes in Eastern Europe, especially Poland and Czechoslovakia. In the United States, Zionism’s strongest advocates evoked the moods of Franklin Roosevelt’s anti-Nazism and the alliance of the first “United Nations,” that is, the alliance of nations united to defeat Nazi Germany during World War II. These liberals denounced the American and United Nations Organization decision to embargo arms shipments to both Israel and the Arab states as a form of “appeasement” that benefited the Arabs who, they pointed out, already had the advantages of statehood. In their view, support for the establishment of a Jewish state in Palestine, far from being an example of Western imperialism, was instead a product of the continuing antifascist passions of World War II that persisted up to 1949.

This history of the debate about the Zionist project offers added perspective on a familiar theme, that of acknowledgment of the Holocaust in the immediate postwar years. There was no German government in these years, but the history of the memory and forgetting of the crimes of the Nazi era resonate in this work.¹ Historians of Germany have examined judicial and political reckoning as well as the inclination to silence and amnesty that accompanied the displacement of the imperatives of the Nuremberg war crimes trials with those of rebuilding West Germany as an anticommunist bulwark.² Historians of postwar Europe have drawn attention to a European-wide “Vichy syndrome,” which downplayed or apologized for the actions of non-German collaborators with the Nazis while exaggerating the extent of national resistance.³ That syndrome was also evident in the discourse of anticolonialism that took the form of apologia and denials about the realities of collaboration with the Nazis by some Arab leaders who played central roles in opposing the UN Partition Resolution of 1947 and then launching the war of 1947–8.

This work connects the scholarship on memory and politics in postwar Europe with the international history of Zionism/Israel debates of 1945–9. It offers a history of support and opposition to the Zionist project which brings the perspectives and questions that emerged from that historiography to bear on the question of why there was support in 1947 to establish a Jewish state in Palestine and why, once established, it received outside

¹ See the discussion of these issues in Jeffrey Herf, *Divided Memory: The Nazi Past in the Two Germanys* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1997); Jeffrey Herf, *Nazi Propaganda for the Arab World* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009); Jeffrey Herf, *Undeclared Wars with Israel: East Germany and the West German Far Left, 1967–1989* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2016); and Mary Fulbrook, *Reckonings: Legacies of Nazi Persecution and the Quest for Justice* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2018).

² On the Nuremberg trials see, recently, Francine Hirsch, *Soviet Judgment at Nuremberg: A New History of the International Military Tribunal after World War II* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020); and Kim Christian Priemel, *The Betrayal: The Nuremberg Trials and German Divergence* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016).

³ On narratives of national resistance in postwar Europe that obscured the extent of collaboration see Tony Judt, *Postwar: A History of Europe since 1945* (New York: Penguin, 2006); Pieter Lagrou, *The Legacy of Nazi Occupation: Patriotic Memory and National Recovery in Western Europe, 1945–1965* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007). On France and the “Vichy syndrome” see Henry Rousso, *The Vichy Syndrome: History and Memory in France since 1944* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1991). Also see Istvan Deak, Jan Gross, and Tony Judt, eds., *The Politics of Retribution in Europe: World War II and Its Aftermath* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000); and Jan Werner Müller, *Memory and Power in Postwar Europe: Studies in the Presence of the Past* (New York and Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002). However, on the existence of memory of the Holocaust in France see Francois Azouvi, *Le mythe du grand silence: Auschwitz, les français, la mémoire* (Paris: Fayard, 2012); and Laura Jockusch, *Collect and Record! Jewish Holocaust Documentation in Early Postwar Europe* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2015).

support that helped it win its war for independence in 1948. On the whole, those who remembered the Holocaust and extolled the ideas of wartime anti-Nazism supported the Zionist project, while those who forgot or were uncomfortable with them, and wanted to turn the page quickly to the fight against communism, did not.

The East European dimensions of World War II, though a commonplace among historians, remain on the margins of American memory.⁴ Most of the refugees seeking to come to Palestine after the war came from Central and Eastern Europe. The most passionate supporters of the Zionist project were those who remembered World War II on its Eastern Front and the Holocaust. For Zionists in Palestine, and for American liberal and left-leaning supporters of the Zionist project, the fresh memory of World War II, the Holocaust, Nazi Germany's war on the Eastern Front, and the alliance of "the United Nations," the coalition that included the Soviet Union as well as the United States and its West European allies, loomed large. With the emergence of the Cold War, a forgetting or even reinterpretation of the realities of the anti-Hitler coalition took place both in Moscow and Washington. In both capitals the memory of *that* United Nations and *that* alliance became an embarrassment at best and evidence of communist sympathies or imperialist deviations at worst. In the Britain- and America-centric version of World War II, the history of the war on the Eastern Front and the Holocaust played a diminished role. In Europe the immediate postwar years witnessed leniency toward those accused of collaborating with Nazi Germany. Zionism's liberal and left-leaning supporters in the United States criticized the refusal of the governments of Britain, France, and the United States to indict Haj Amin al-Husseini, the former Grand Mufti of Jerusalem, for war crimes. Husseini had collaborated with the Nazis, especially in the fields of propaganda. These governments also refused to publish the evidence in their files of his collaboration. This work draws attention to the arguments and evidence of the critics of the leniency shown toward Husseini. They viewed that official reluctance in Washington, London, and Paris and the opposition to the Zionist project as related aspects of

⁴ See the now-standard overview Gerhard Weinberg, *A World at Arms: A Global History of World War II* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005); as well as Omer Bartov, *The Eastern Front, 1941–45: German Troops and the Barbarization of Warfare* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985); Horst Boog et al., *Germany and the Second World War*, vol. 4: *The Attack on the Soviet Union* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998); Richard Evans, *The Third Reich at War* (New York: Penguin, 2009); Christina Morina, *Legacies of Stalingrad* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011); and Richard Overy, *Why the Allies Won* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1995).

the above-mentioned shift from the passions of World War II to those of the early Cold War.⁵

The documents of the US State Department's "Palestine File" and those of the Pentagon on "The Problem of Palestine" from those years are notable for how little the events of World War II, especially the Nazi race war of extermination on the Eastern Front, and the Holocaust, seem to have influenced policy. In these files the press of ongoing events crowds out the very recent cataclysm. The absence was particularly striking since the secretary of state in the crucial two years was George C. Marshall, who had been chief of the Joint Chiefs during the war, and George F. Kennan, the conceptual architect of the policy of the containment of communism who served as the first Director of the State Department's Policy Planning Staff, had worked in the US Embassy in wartime Moscow. All the members of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and leaders of the postwar US armed forces had served in the military in some capacity in World War II. Yet their postwar memoranda and policy statements about the Zionist project contain scant reflection on the impact of the war and the Holocaust on events in the postwar Middle East.

That was unfortunate because American and Soviet support for the Zionist project at the UN in November 1947 turned out to be the last political expression of what remained of the anti-Nazi coalition that had won World War II. The controversy about the establishment of the Jewish state in Palestine has not occupied a large place in the historiography of the early years of the Cold War.⁶ It should. The following pages draw attention to the simultaneity between Israel's foundation and the beginnings of the Cold War. Recent historians of Western decision making in the early Cold War have underestimated the extent of antagonism to the Zionist project, overestimated pangs of guilt among Western policy makers, and overlooked the passions of antifascism, anti-Nazism, and anticolonialism among Zionism's most determined advocates.⁷

Though historians have documented aspects of the short but important era of Soviet and Soviet bloc support for the Zionist project, its existence

⁵ On the consequences of the failure to indict Hussein see Matthias Kuntzel, *Nazis und der Nahe Osten: Wie der Islamische Antisemitismus Entstand* (Berlin and Leipzig: Hentrich & Hentrich, 2019).

⁶ The paucity of attention is evident in the otherwise valuable first volume of the *Cambridge History of the Cold War*. See Melvyn P. Leffler and Odd Arne Westad, eds., *The Cambridge History of the Cold War*, vol. 1: *Origins, 1945–1962* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010).

⁷ For example, Odd Arne Westad writes, "Israel was first and foremost expiation for the Holocaust – an easy way of atoning to Jews for not having done enough to save them from Hitler's policy of extermination": *The Global Cold War: Third World Interventions and the Making of Our Times* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 127.

and its significance remain too little known, both in the scholarship and even more among a general readership.⁸ Instead, what looms larger in both are the results of forty years of antagonism to the state of Israel on the part of the USSR and its satellites. From 1949 until the Gorbachev era, Stalin and his successors made “Zionism” into a term of abuse. Soviet diplomats waged political warfare against Israel at the United Nations, and the Warsaw Pact countries armed and trained Israel’s Arab enemies.⁹ For four decades, with a modest reduction in the Gorbachev years, the Soviet Union claimed that the state of Israel was a tool of “US imperialism” and that Zionism was a form of racism.

Yet in 1947–8 the Czech, Polish, Ukrainian, and Soviet communist representatives at the United Nations were far more emphatic than the United States in support of Zionist aspirations. They opposed American, and of course British, efforts to postpone the establishment of the Jewish state and, once founded, to deprive it of territory it had been promised in the famous UN Partition Resolution 181 of November 29, 1947.¹⁰ Moreover, and very importantly, when the United States imposed an embargo on arms deliveries to the Jews and the Arabs, and then sought and gained United Nations support for that embargo in spring 1948, communist Czechoslovakia was the only government anywhere willing to violate the embargo. It did so by selling weapons first to the Jewish Agency, the political representative of the Jewish population in Mandate Palestine, and then to the new state Israel after it was established on May 14, 1948. These efforts by the Soviet bloc states in the UN deepened State Department and Pentagon suspicions of the Zionist project and the new state of Israel.

This study draws attention to the contingent meanings of famous oppositions such as “left and right,” progressive and reactionary, imperialism and anti-imperialism, fascism and antifascism, racism and antiracism in the late 1940s in connection with the Zionist project. Their meanings changed – in some cases were even reversed – in the “anticosmopolitan purges” carried out in the Soviet bloc from 1949 to 1953, and then again

⁸ See Laurent Rucker, *Stalin, Israël et les Juifs* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 2001); and his “Moscow’s Surprise: The Soviet-Israeli Alliance of 1947–1949,” Working Paper #46 (July 15, 2005), Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars. On the role of Czechoslovakia see Arnold Krammer, *The Forgotten Friendship: Israel and the Soviet Bloc, 1947–53* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1974).

⁹ On the East German chapter see Herf, *Undeclared Wars with Israel*. On Soviet policy toward Israel see Robert Wistrich, “The Soviet War against Zion,” in *A Lethal Obsession: Anti-Semitism from Antiquity to the Global Jihad* (New York: Random House, 2010); and Yaacov Ro’i, *Soviet Decision Making in Practice: The USSR and Israel, 1947–1954* (New Brunswick, NJ, and London: Transaction Books, 1980).

¹⁰ The resolution, passed by a two-thirds majority in the UN General Assembly, called for the partition of the former British Mandate in Palestine into an Arab and a Jewish state.

after the leftist attack on Israel and Zionism beginning in the 1960s and continuing for many decades.¹¹ From the 1960s the association of Zionism with imperialism became conventional wisdom, first in global politics, then in leftist academic discourse. The coupling of those terms with one another was foreign to supporters of the Zionist project in the late 1940s because in those years those who would be labeled “imperialists” in London and Washington opposed that project, while “anti-imperialists” supported it. Moreover, those officials in the United States and Europe who opposed Zionist aspirations did so, on the whole, to fight communism in the Middle East and preserve access to Arab oil, not to defend human rights or oppose racism. The establishment opponents were convinced that the Jewish state would undermine both past British and French colonial positions and new American efforts to expand economic and military influence. In 1947–8, other than in the Arab states and the Arab Higher Committee in Palestine, the principal opponents of the Zionist project came from the British Foreign Office, the US State Department, and the Pentagon – the very institutions and persons whom the communists castigated as imperialists.

The extent and intensity of opposition to the Zionist project in the entire top leadership of both the State Department and the Pentagon compose an important theme in the following pages. While historians have examined the antagonism to Zionism among State Department “Arabists,” this work demonstrates the degree to which opposition to the Zionist project extended well beyond them and became a constitutive aspect of American foreign policy at the dawn of the Cold War. It was shared by Secretary of State Marshall; the under secretary of state, Robert Lovett; the head of the Department’s Near East Division, Loy Henderson; the secretary of defense, James Forrestal; members of the Joint Chiefs of Staff; and Admiral Roscoe Hillenkoetter, the first director of the Central Intelligence Agency; as well as Kennan and his Policy Planning Staff in the State Department.

As the first director of the Policy Planning Staff, Kennan played an important role, the key conceptual role, in connecting opposition to the Zionist project with the policy and strategy of the containment of communism. He did so in important memoranda of January and February 1948 in

¹¹ In that sense, this work contributes to what historians call “the history of concepts,” *Begriffsgeschichte*. On *Begriffsgeschichte* see Melvin Richter, *The History of Political and Social Concepts: A Critical Introduction* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995); and Reinhard Koselleck, *The Practice of Conceptual History: Timing History, Spacing Concepts* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2002). On key concepts in the Cold War see Anson Rabinbach, *Begriffe aus dem Kalten Krieg: Totalitarismus, Antifaschismus, Genozoid* (Göttingen: Wallstein Verlag, 2009).

which he echoed but also elaborated on the conviction that establishing a Jewish state in Palestine would severely undermine American national security interests in the emerging Cold War in the Middle East and around the world. Kennan was among those who argued that the American alliance with its closest ally, Great Britain, required broad agreement with British policy in Palestine. Kennan articulated this consensus, but he did not create it. The view that the Zionist project opened a dangerous opportunity for Soviet expansion in the Middle East became widespread among diplomats, military officials, and intelligence analysts in Washington and London. Those associating Zionism with Soviet expansion generally did so with scant acknowledgment that the association of Jews with communism had been central for Nazi Germany's attack on "Jewish Bolshevism" and had become common in the vocabulary of antisemitic abuse.

The American policy makers who established the postwar Atlantic Alliance initiated the policy of containment of communism and launched the Marshall Plan of economic assistance to postwar Europe saw far and clearly when they examined totalitarianism in its communist form. Marshall, Lovett, and Kennan understood that containment in Western Europe would fail without support from left-of-center democratic parties. While they found common cause with the British Labour Party, French and Italian Socialists and West German Social Democrats, they did not do so when it came to the Zionist movement and then the new state of Israel, which were both predominantly on the democratic left. There were voices in American politics who did argue that the Jewish state in Palestine would be a significant asset to the Western democracies, comparable in its political outlook to the left-of-center democratic parties that the USA supported in Western Europe. But officials in the State Department did not see a center-left state of Israel as a comparable bulwark. American liberals criticized the State Department policy as a moral failing and a strategic blunder.

Historians have amply demonstrated that in these crucial years American policy toward Palestine and Israel operated on two tracks. The first came from the White House. It was apparent in President Truman's decision to support the UN Partition Resolution of November 29, 1947 and become the first country to recognize the new state of Israel on May 14, 1948. Truman's decisions to reject the unanimous advice of the diplomatic and military leadership of his administration have received much attention from historians.¹² As important as

¹² See Peter L. Hahn, *Caught in the Middle East: U.S. Policy toward the Arab-Israeli Conflict, 1945–1961* (Chapel Hill and London: University of North Carolina Press, 2004); Allis and Ronald Radosh, *A Safe Haven: Harry S. Truman and the Founding of Israel* (New York: HarperCollins, 2009).

those decisions were, the opponents of his policies regarding the Zionist project succeeded in limiting the extent of support the United States offered to the Zionist project and the infant state of Israel. The impact of this limitation is an important theme of the following pages.

Track two, supported by the State Department and the Pentagon, included an attempt to replace the Partition Plan with a trusteeship proposal in spring 1948, support for the Bernadotte Plan of summer and fall 1948, and, crucially, an embargo on arms to the Arab states and Israel, which caused more difficulties for Israel than for the Arab states. The embargo persisted even after the invasion on May 15, 1948 of the new state of Israel, primarily by Egypt, Iraq, Lebanon, Syria, and Transjordan, with the participation of Saudi Arabia and Yemen. In accord with the views of the Departments of State, Defense, and the CIA, the arms embargo remained in place throughout the Arab-Israeli war of 1948.¹³ This work gives to track two, the successful effort of American national security leaders to prevent more robust support for the Zionist project when its outcome hung in the balance, the overdue attention it deserves.

In April 1948, angered over the State Department's efforts to undermine his own efforts regarding Israel, Truman began to bring control over Middle East policy back into the White House. Yet, though the State Department lost some battles, it did not completely cede influence in this area, in part because Truman himself was the author of a doctrine that came to bear his name and that launched Western policy of containment of communism in the Cold War.¹⁴ While the State Department, Pentagon, and CIA failed to prevent Truman from supporting the Partition Plan and recognizing the new state of Israel, they did succeed in keeping the American connection to Israel cool and distanced, and in preventing military assistance from arriving when the Jews needed it the most.

American military support for Israel began to some extent in the Kennedy and Johnson administrations but reached significant dimensions

¹³ Track one did have an ally in the State Department: Truman's appointee, James McDonald, the first US ambassador to Israel; but his support for the Zionist project was an exception. See Norman J. W. Goda, Barbara McDonald Stewart, Severin Hochberg, and Richard Breitman, eds., *To the Gates of Jerusalem: The Diaries and Papers of James G. McDonald, 1945–1947* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press/United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, 2015); and Norman J. W. Goda, Richard Breitman, Barbara McDonald Stewart, and Severin Hochberg, eds., *Envoy to the Promised Land: The Diaries and Papers of James G. McDonald, 1948–1951* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2017).

¹⁴ On control of the policy see John Lewis Gaddis, *George F. Kennan: An American Life* (New York: Penguin, 2012), 308.

only after the Six Day War of 1967. The tendency to project that deeper post-1967 US-Israel connection back into the early decades obscures the realities of track two in Israel's crucial formative years. During the war of 1947–8 the offshoot of Jewish Agency's Haganah, the Mossad Le'Aliyah Bet, sought to bring immigrants and arms to Palestine and then Israel. At the behest of the State Department and the Pentagon the United States did what it could to prevent both from a timely arrival. In May 1949 the Israeli prime minister, David Ben-Gurion, told Ambassador McDonald that if the Jews had been dependent on the United States for survival in the 1947–8 war they would have been exterminated. The following pages indicate why Ben-Gurion had reached that grim assessment.

In the United States, critics in politics and the press of the State Department and Pentagon policy took a very different view of the connections between World War II and the Holocaust and the Arab-Zionist conflict than did the architects of the policy of containment. Of the many members of Congress who supported Zionist aspirations, Senator Robert Wagner and Congressman Emanuel Celler were central to the effort. Wagner was the co-sponsor of the Social Security Act, and an act carrying his name created the National Labor Relations Board. A major supporter of the Roosevelt-era New Deal, his was a leading pro-Zionist voice in the United States Senate. In the House of Representatives Celler, a Democrat from Brooklyn and a leader in the reform of American immigration law, initiated important congressional resolutions on Israel, conveyed his views in writing to Secretary Marshall, and engaged in substantive exchanges with Under Secretary of State Robert Lovett, who oversaw Palestine policy. Both Wagner and Celler argued that a Jewish state in Palestine would enhance, not undermine, American national security interests in the Middle East. Sumner Welles, the under secretary of state in the Roosevelt administration from 1937 to 1943, emerged as a minority voice from within the American diplomatic establishment who expressed support for the Zionist project.¹⁵

Among journalists, Freda Kirchwey, editor of the liberal-to-left-liberal magazine *The Nation*, was a strong supporter of Zionist goals. She played a key role in publishing material about the Nazi collaboration of Haj Amin al-Husseini and other members of the Arab Higher Committee when they sought recognition as representatives of the Palestine Arabs at the United

¹⁵ See Sumner Welles, *We Need Not Fail* (Boston: Houghton-Mifflin, 1948); William Roger Louis, "Postmortem Appraisal of the United Nations Game: Sumner Welles and the Zionists," in *The British Empire in the Middle East, 1945–1951: Arab Nationalism, the United States, and Postwar Imperialism* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1984), 487–493; Benjamin Welles, *Sumner Welles: FDR's Global Strategist: A Biography* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1997).

Nations. The left-leaning journalist I. F. Stone, in the pages of *The Nation* and in the daily left-leaning paper *PM*, reported on the Jewish refugees seeking to get to Palestine from Europe, excoriated British policy, and denounced the impact of the oil industry on American policy and what he called the “red smear” efforts of the British Foreign Office and the State Department to associate Zionism with the communists.¹⁶ The journalists Edgar Ansel Mowrer and Alexander Uhl, in the pages of the *New York Post*, published material on Husseini’s Nazi collaboration and sought, unsuccessfully, to convince the chief US prosecutor at the Nuremberg trial, Robert Jackson, to indict him for war crimes in the International Military Tribunal in Nuremberg. Henry Wallace, Roosevelt’s vice president from 1940 to 1944 and editor-in-chief of *The New Republic* during the Arab-Israeli war, also criticized British and American policy on similar grounds.

The American Zionist Emergency Council (AZEC) was the US representative to the Jewish Agency in Palestine. Hence its principals had the opportunity to meet with high-ranking officials in the State Department. Speaking for AZEC, Benjamin Akzin, Benzion Netanyahu, Joseph Schechtman, Rabbi Abba Silver, and Rabbi Stephen Wise wrote memoranda offering the outlines of an alternative Palestine policy. In 1945 and 1946 they urged that the United States indict Husseini for war crimes and bring him to trial. They regarded the Zionist project as an extension of the moral and political purposes for which World War II had been fought, and as a continuation of a struggle against racism and antisemitism in the Arab states and in the Arab Higher Committee. They described the Zionist project as a defense of otherness and difference that stood in opposition to Arab advocates of racial homogeneity. They argued that a Jewish state in Palestine would be a firm ally of the United States and the Western democracies and thus supportive of US national security interests. The State Department officials listened, but adopted none of their suggestions.

The records of the public political battles about the Arab-Zionist conflict at the newly established United Nations are important and revealing. What was called “the “problem of Palestine” loomed large. It was discussed frequently in the Security Council, and in five separate meetings of the General Assembly between May 1947 and May 1949. The UN records present the interventions of Warren Austin (1877–1962), the US ambassador to the UN. They also offer compelling

¹⁶ On Stone’s writing on Zionism in those years see Susie Linfield, *The Lion’s Den: Zionism and the Left from Hannah Arendt to Noam Chomsky* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2019).

evidence that at all of those five meetings of the General Assembly, at its associated committees, and in the more numerous sessions of the Security Council, the Jewish Agency prior to May 14, 1948 and the state of Israel thereafter received their strongest support from representatives of the communist states in Europe – Czechoslovakia, Poland, the Ukrainian SSR – and most importantly from the Soviet Union. Their advocacy was apparent in the famous interventions of Soviet UN ambassador Andrei Gromyko as well as in the less well-known statements of the Polish representatives, including Oskar Lange, and in particular Alfred Fiderkiewicz, who, as he made the case for the Partition Resolution, revealed that as a survivor of Auschwitz he had personally witnessed the murder of Jews. As the Israel representatives, Moshe Shertok (later Sharett) and Aubrey (later Abba) Eban, made their case, they repeatedly found that it was representatives from the Soviet bloc, countries where most of the Holocaust had taken place, who were the Zionists' strongest supporters – far stronger, more emphatic, and more passionate than the American representatives. Indeed, during the 1947–8 debates at the UN they were the only members, aside from Moshe Shertok, who spoke at length about the mass murder of the Jews of Europe.

France, and Paris in particular, was the headquarters of Zionist politics in Western Europe. The memory of the Holocaust among Jews and in the political circles was vivid, a memory that took political expression in support for establishment of the Jewish state in Palestine.¹⁷ Sympathy for Zionist aspirations extended beyond the organizations of French Jewry. It was voiced as well by Jews and non-Jews among Gaullists, Socialists, Communists, and veterans of the French Resistance.¹⁸ In the coalition governments of France's Fourth Republic, a policy difference emerged between the predominantly pro-Arab Foreign Ministry and Zionist supporters in the Ministry of the Interior. In 1945 and 1946, when Georges Bidault (1899–1983) served as the French foreign minister, the beginnings of that debate concerned what to do with the Grand Mufti of Jerusalem, Haj Amin al-Husseini, whom French soldiers

¹⁷ See David Lazar, *Opinion française et la naissance de l'état d'Israël, 1945–1949* (Paris: Calmann-Levy, 1972).

¹⁸ For example, Alfred Coste Floret, a Gaullist veteran of the French Resistance; Florimond Bonté, a member of the Central Committee of the French Communist Party; Jean-Paul Sartre, the author in 1946 of *Anti-Semite and Jew*; and leaders of French Jewish organizations, such as Marc Jarblum. On French government and public debates see two important works by Frédérique Schillo: *La France et la création de l'état d'Israël, 18 février 1947–11 mai 1949* (Paris: Éditions Artcom, 1997) and *La Politique française à l'égard d'Israël, 1946–1949* (Paris: André Versaille Éditeur, 2012); and Tsilla Hershco, *Entre Paris et Jérusalem: la France, le sionisme et la création de l'état d'Israël, 1945–1949* (Paris: Honoré Champion Éditeur, 2003).

captured in the French occupation zone in Germany in May 1945. The history of Husseini in these years is familiar. The history of the decisions not to bring him to trial to face accusations regarding his collaboration with the Nazis, and instead to facilitate his return to the Middle East, is less so. It was an important chapter in the broader history of shifting alliances from those of World War II to those of the Cold War. This work offers the first English-language account of the French government's decisions to resist calls to indict him for war crimes based on the files of the French Foreign Ministry. French files on Husseini document an example of the above-mentioned decisions to displace judicial reckoning for the crimes of the Nazi era with efforts to gain allies in the early period of the Cold War, and of a variation of the "Vichy syndrome" applied to a collaborator from the Arab world. His "escape" into friendly Arab hands in June 1946 contributed to a unique feature of Arab politics after World War II, namely the ability of a personality such as "the Mufti" to return to political life without abandoning the radical antisemitism that he articulated when he collaborated with the Nazi regime in sending Arab-language propaganda to the Middle East.¹⁹

The support for Zionist aspirations in the French Ministry of Interior (the counterpart to the US Department of Justice) was an important chapter of Israel's Moment. Three socialists, Adrien Tixier, Édouard Depreux, and then Jules Moch, served as minister of interior during the crucial period from 1946 to 1949. They did so as members of the coalition governments led by socialists Paul Ramadier and then Robert Schuman of the Christian Democratic Popular Republican Movement (MRP). Georges Bidault, also of the MRP, served as foreign minister in these coalitions during the crucial period of 1947–8.²⁰ The files of the French Interior Ministry document their efforts to support the Zionist project, primarily in facilitating Jewish

¹⁹ On Husseini's return to the Middle East and the distinctive feature of Arab politics toward Nazism see Küntzel, *Nazis und der Nahe Osten*. On Husseini in Nazi Germany see Herf, *Nazi Propaganda for the Arab World*; Richard Breitman and Norman J. W. Goda, "Nazis and the Middle East," in *Hitler's Shadow: Nazi War Criminals, U.S. Intelligence and the Cold War* (Washington, DC and College Park, MD: US National Archives and Records, 2010); and Martin Cüppers, *Walther Rauff – in deutschen Diensten: Vom Naziverbrecher zum BND-Spion* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 2013). On the role of ex-Nazis in Egypt see Ulrike Becker, "Die deutsche Militärberatergruppe in Ägypten 1951–1958," in Martin Cüppers, Jürgen Matthäus, and Andrej Angrick, eds., *Naziverbrechen: Täter, Taten, Bewältigungsversuche* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 2014), 319–334.

²⁰ On the sequence and political character of the government coalitions of the Fourth Republic see William I. Hitchcock, *The Struggle for Europe: The Turbulent History of a Divided Continent, 1945 to the Present* (New York: Anchor Books, 2004), 76–77; Paul-Marie de la Gorce, *Naissance de la France moderne: L'après guerre, 1944–1952* (Paris: Bernard Grasset, 1978); and Jean Pierre Rioux, *The Fourth Republic, 1944–1958* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1987).

emigration from Europe to Palestine. They were in a position to do so because the Interior Ministry's control over borders, passports, seaports, and the police enabled them to assist what the British called "illegal Jewish immigration" to Palestine. To the great irritation of the British Foreign Office the French socialist ministers facilitated the Mossad Le'Aliyah Bet's efforts to foster "clandestine" emigration despite the British naval blockade.²¹ Depreux and Moch believed, in contrast to the American policy makers, that the political orientation of the Zionist mainstream was similar to the democratic leftist anticommunism which the French socialists had adopted for themselves and had demonstrated in May 1947, when the socialist prime minister Paul Ramadier expelled the French communists from the government coalition. The history of the practical assistance that the French socialist ministers of interior offered to Zionist aspirations is an important but little-known chapter in the history of the foundation of the state of Israel. The French Foreign Office under Bidault and prime minister Robert Schuman, focused on retaining close ties to Britain, cultivating support in the Arab world, and responding to the concerns of the Catholic Church, voted in favor of the UN Partition Plan only after intense internal debate. As in the United States, leftist and liberal opinion, and the broader legacy of the French Resistance, was far more sympathetic to the Zionists in the crucial years.

Communist Czechoslovakia was the one government anywhere that was willing and able to sell heavy weapons to the Jews of the Yishuv, the Hebrew name for the Jewish community in Palestine, and then to the new state of Israel.²² It appears in the following pages primarily through concerned reports of American diplomats and military attachés who were observing the flow of tanks, planes, artillery, and trucks that the Czech government sold to the Jewish Agency before May 14, 1948 and to the new state of Israel thereafter. The Czech-Israeli connection reinforced the view in American policy-making circles that the new state of Israel did indeed have a suspicious connection to the Soviet bloc. Israel turned to the Czechs because the United States delivered not weapons but an embargo on weapons, and no other Western government, including France, stepped into the breach. Nevertheless, the suspicions in Washington lingered. In a tragically ironic turn of events, at the Slansky trial in 1952 the significant

²¹ On Britain's irritation see Arieh Kochavi, *Post-Holocaust Politics: Britain, the United States and Jewish Refugees, 1945–1948* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2001).

²² On Czechoslovakia and Israel see Uri Bialer, "The Czech-Israeli Arms Deal Revisited," *Journal of Strategic Studies* 8, no. 3 (1985): 307–315; Krammer, *The Forgotten Friendship*; Jiri Valena and Leni Friedman Valena, "The Birth of Israel: Prague's Crucial Role," *Middle East Quarterly* 25 (Winter 2019): 1–14; and Martin Wein, *A History of Czechs and Jews: A Slavic Jerusalem* (London: Routledge, 2015).

assistance provided by certain Czech communists who sent weapons to the Yishuv and to Israel was turned against them and used as evidence that they had participated in an American–Zionist conspiracy against the communist regime. This led to their convictions and executions.²³

An excellent historiography already presents the basic political history of the key events related to the foundation of the state of Israel. The reader will see that this work draws on the previous works by Uri Bialer, Michael J. Cohen, Peter J. Hahn, J. C. Hurewitz, Arieh Kochavi, Benny Morris, Allis and Ronald Radosh, Yaacov Ro'i, Anita Shapira, and Shlomi Slonim.²⁴ *Israel's Moment* explores in greater detail the intellectual and ideological texture of arguments in the debate, the interactions of war and politics at the United Nations, and the transition from World War II to the Cold War. It also inserts these events into the early history of the Cold War more than has been the case in some recent assessments of the origins and early years of that conflict.²⁵ Scholarship of recent decades on France by Frédérique Schillo, as well as Tsilla Hershco, has documented and interpreted the role of the French government. Also, in French, Laurent Rucker has examined Stalin's policy.²⁶ William Roger Louis's work on British decolonization encompassed valuable work on British strategy and opposition to the Zionist initiative.²⁷

²³ On the Slansky trial see, for example, Karel Kaplan, *Report on the Murder of the General Secretary* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1990); Meir Kotic, *The Prague Trial: The First Anti-Zionist Show Trial in the Communist Bloc* (New York: Herzl Press, 1987); and Herf, *Divided Memory*.

²⁴ Uri Bialer, *Between East and West: Israel's Foreign Policy Orientation, 1948–1956* (New York and Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990); and his *Israeli Foreign Policy: A People Shall Not Dwell Alone* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2020); Hahn, *Caught in the Middle East*; J. C. Hurewitz, *The Struggle for Palestine* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1950; repr. Greenwood Press, 1968); Kochavi, *Post-Holocaust Politics*; Louis, *The British Empire in the Middle East, 1945–1951*; Benny Morris, *1948: The First Arab-Israeli War* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2008); Radosh and Radosh, *A Safe Haven*; Ro'i, *Soviet Decision Making in Practice*; Anita Shapira, *Land and Power: The Zionist Resort to Force, 1881–1948* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1999); Shlomo Slonim, "The 1948 American Embargo on Arms to Palestine," *Political Science Quarterly* 94, no. 3 (1979): 495–514. On the embargo also see Amitzur Ilan, *The Origins of the Arab-Israeli Arms Race: Arms, Embargo, Military Power and Decision in the 1948 Palestine War* (New York: New York University Press, 1996).

²⁵ Odd Arne Westad, "The Cold War and the International History of the Twentieth Century"; Melvyn P. Leffler, "The Emergence of American Grand Strategy, 1945–1962"; and Mark Bradley, "Decolonization, the Global South and the Cold War, 1919–1962," all in Leffler and Westad, eds., *The Cambridge History of the Cold War*, vol. 1: *Origins, 1945–1962*, 1–19, 67–89, and 464–485 respectively.

²⁶ Schillo, *La France et la création de l'état d'Israël*; Schillo, *La Politique française à l'égard d'Israël, 1946–1949*; Hershco, *Entre Paris et Jérusalem*; Rucker, *Stalin, Israël et les Juifs*, 2015.

²⁷ See, for example, William Roger Louis, *The End of British Imperialism: The Scramble for Empire, Suez, and Decolonization: Collected Essays* (New York: I. B. Tauris, 2006); Louis, *The British Empire in the Middle East, 1945–1951*; and William Roger Louis,

The Establishment of the State of Israel: A Brief History

The following pages explore Israel's Moment in detail. Here, briefly, are key events in that history. In 1939 the British government, faced with Arab resistance to Jewish immigration to Palestine in the late 1930s resulting from longer-term Zionist goals as well as the shocks of Nazi persecution since 1933, issued a White Paper that restricted Jewish immigration to 1,500 persons a year. The White Paper not only represented a turn away from the promise of the Balfour Declaration of 1917 that Britain would support the establishment of a "Jewish national home" in Palestine but erected a major barrier to immigration that persisted throughout the years of persecution and mass murder of European Jewry. In April 1944 the British Labour Party passed a pro-Zionist resolution calling for the lifting of the White Paper restrictions. A month earlier the US House and Senate had both passed resolutions asking Britain to rescind the White Paper restrictions and offering support for the establishment of a Jewish state in Palestine. In summer 1944 the election platforms of both the Republican and Democratic parties called for an end to immigration restrictions. The Democrats went even further, proposing that Palestine be reconstituted as a "Jewish commonwealth."

President Franklin Roosevelt, in wartime meetings with the Saudi king, Ibn Saud, promised to consult with Arabs before taking a stance on the future of Palestine, yet also assured Jewish advocates in the United States that he would "find appropriate ways and means" of supporting Zionist aspirations "as soon as practicable." The liberal and leftist press in the United States focused attention on the wartime activities of Haj Amin al-Husseini, who had become world famous as a result of his radio broadcasts in support of Nazi Germany from 1941 to 1945.

Following their election victory of July 27, 1945 the government of prime minister Clement Attlee and foreign secretary Ernest Bevin reversed the Labour Party's wartime resolutions and sustained the White Paper restrictions. Bevin and his advisors in the British Foreign Office argued that the establishment of a Jewish state in Palestine, by inflaming Arab opposition, would undermine the British Empire in the Middle East, block access to oil, and enhance Soviet influence in the region. In August 1945, at a Zionist conference in Basel, Switzerland, David Ben-Gurion, leader of the Jewish Agency Executive in Palestine, emerged ascendent over Chaim Weizmann. Ben-Gurion captured the urgency, anger, and determination in the Jewish community in

"The Dissolution of the British Empire," in Judith Brown and William Roger Louis, eds., *The Oxford History of the British Empire*, vol. 4: *The Twentieth Century* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 329–378.

Palestine to quickly establish a sovereign Jewish state in Palestine as a way to end the centuries of stateless powerlessness in Europe that had preceded the Holocaust and, the Zionists argued, made it possible. In August 1945 the Arab League informed the British government of its unequivocal opposition to that same project. British hopes for a binational state of Jews and Arabs with some sort of continued British presence dimmed.

On August 31, 1945, following receipt of a report by Earl Harrison, the US commissioner for immigration and integration, describing appalling conditions in which Jewish displaced persons were being held in Germany and Austria, President Harry Truman urged the Attlee–Bevin government to admit 100,000 Jewish refugees to Palestine, a request that angered Attlee and Bevin and inaugurated a period of tensions with the United States’s closest ally. On October 31 the Haganah, the military arm of the Jewish Agency, blew up 153 railroad bridges in Palestine, a powerful expression of the growth of militancy and military effectiveness of the Jews in Palestine. In the first week in November antisemitic and anti-Zionist riots took place in Egypt, Syria, Lebanon, Iraq, and Libya. On November 13, in the hopes of finding a solution that would preclude a Jewish state in Palestine and find common ground with the Americans, Britain agreed to establish an Anglo-American Committee of Inquiry (AACI). On May 1, 1946, after hearing testimony and visiting Palestine and refugee camps in Europe, the twelve-member committee, six Americans and six Britons, issued a unanimous report that called for the admission of 100,000 Jewish refugees to Palestine, thus angering both the Arabs and Bevin, who sought to separate the issue of refugees in Europe from the future of Palestine via return of the refugees to countries in Europe, but pleasing the Zionists. Yet the committee also advocated the establishment of a binational state in Palestine, which pleased Bevin but angered both the Arabs and the Jews.

In Europe in 1945 and 1946 the hopes for postwar cooperation were strained by Stalin’s decisions to impose one-party regimes in Eastern Europe. On February 26, 1946 George Kennan, then not well known outside foreign policy circles, sent an 8,000-word “Long Telegram” from Moscow to the secretary of state, James F. Byrnes, in Washington, addressing the sources of Soviet conduct and the need to contain Soviet expansion in areas deemed vital to US national security. On May 5, the now former prime minister Winston Churchill delivered his “Iron Curtain” speech in Fulton, Missouri, in which he described Soviet repression in Eastern Europe and called for a unified Western response. The new “Cold War” would require unity of purpose between the United

States and Great Britain, a unity that was put to the test by differences over Palestine.

In summer 1945 details of the Nazi crimes filled newspaper front pages. Beginning in October 1945, and continuing for the following year, the Allies' International Military Tribunal in Nuremberg presented more facts, including details about the murders of European Jewry. Jewish and Zionist organizations in the United States, along with prominent American liberals in the press and politics, called on the United States, the Allied victors, and the United Nations War Crimes Commission (UNWCC) to list Haj Amin al-Husseini as a war criminal, indict him, and bring him to trial. None did so. On May 29, 1946, following a year of comfortable house arrest by the French government, Husseini "escaped" using an alias, and flew to Cairo. In June the Arab League meeting in Bloudan, Syria, formed a Palestine Committee to direct the struggle against Zionism and offer financial and military support toward that end. Britain, now with almost 100,000 troops in Palestine, cracked down on IZL, the Hebrew Resistance Movement composed of the Haganah, the Irgun, and Lehi (the latter were organizations that engaged in terrorist attacks on British forces). On July 22, 1946 the Irgun Zvai Leumi blew up the King David Hotel in Jerusalem, the military and civilian headquarters of the British Mandate in Palestine, with heavy loss of British, Arab, and Jewish lives.

The attack ended cooperation between the Haganah and the Irgun, led to intensified British repression of Jewish armed contingents, and reinforced British opposition to the Zionist project. On July 31 the Bevin Foreign Office announced the "Morrison-Grady" plan, which called for a binational state and linked support for the admission of 100,000 Jewish refugees to Zionist acceptance of a binational, not Jewish, state outcome. The Jewish Agency rejected it because it precluded a Jewish state. The Arab League rejected it because it allowed for some sort of Jewish political power in Palestine. In September the British Palestine Mandate authorities offered amnesty to the Mufti's associates.

On October 4, 1946 Truman, in response to the Harrison report as well as public sentiment in the United States, again urged Britain to admit 100,000 Jewish refugees to Palestine without conditions, a policy that again angered British decision makers hoping to link the admission of refugees to rejection of the Zionist project. In 1946 and 1947 the British Navy prevented ships organized by the Mossad Le'Aliyah Bet's clandestine emigration efforts from reaching Palestine with Jewish refugees from Europe. In January 1947 the Mufti and his associates consolidated control of the Arab Higher Executive, the political arm of Palestine Arabs. On February 18, faced with what its military viewed as the impossibility of

repressing both Zionist forces led by Ben-Gurion and the Arab Higher Executive led by Husseini, and frustrated by Arab refusals to accept even a binational solution, the Attlee–Bevin government announced that it was handing the decision about the future of Palestine over to the newly created United Nations. Bevin and the British Foreign Office did so confident that the Zionists would be unable to find a two-thirds majority of the UN General Assembly to vote in favor of their goals. On March 12, 1947, in an address to a Joint Session of Congress, Truman announced what became known as “the Truman Doctrine” of economic and military assistance to countries, Greece and Turkey first of all, to oppose communism. American officials increasingly evaluated the advisability of a Jewish state in Palestine regarding its impact on Soviet and communist policy in the Middle East.

From April 28 to May 15, 1947 the first Special Session of the United Nations took place in Lake Success, New York to discuss the Palestine issue. The United States was noncommittal and supported the creation of a United Nations Special Committee on Palestine (UNSCOP) to study the matter and offer recommendations to the UN. On May 14, 1947 Andrei Gromyko, the Soviet ambassador to the United Nations, stunned the United States and Britain when he announced that if Arabs and Jews could not agree on a binational state, then the Soviet Union would support the partition of Palestine into separate Jewish and Arab states. Contrary to British expectations, the possibility of joint American and Soviet support for Zionist aspirations now seemed to exist. At the same session, the UN granted observer status to the two non-governmental organizations from Palestine. The Jewish Agency could speak for the Jews, and the Arab Higher Committee for the Arabs.

In summer 1947 the situation in Palestine focused less on the conflict between Jews and Arabs and more on that between the Jews and the British. British decisions to execute members of the Irgun found guilty of terrorism led to Irgun retaliation by hanging two British sergeants on July 30, infuriating British public opinion. That July and August the world press was filled with reports of the efforts of 4,500 Jewish refugees to run the British blockade on a ship renamed the *Exodus*. The events are famous, reported in the world press at the time, retold in the 1958 bestselling novel by Leon Uris and depicted in 1960 by Hollywood in film.²⁸ The British Navy seized the ship and transferred the passengers to three British vessels, which then sailed to the coast of France. When officials of the French Interior Ministry refused to use force to compel

²⁸ Leon Uris, *Exodus: A Novel of Israel* (New York: Doubleday, 1958; repr. 1983).

the passengers to disembark in one of France's southern ports, the British took them to camps near Hamburg in Germany. The result was an expansion of sympathy for Zionist aspirations and a blow to British relations with both the United States and the French government, which continued to assist rather than prevent Jewish immigration to Palestine.

On August 31 UNSCOP issued a majority report in favor of the partition of Palestine and a minority report in favor of a binational state. The imprimatur of a UN committee in favor of Zionist aspirations constituted an important success for Zionist efforts to defeat British policy and a further step in the internationalization of what had been a British-Arab-Zionist triangular conflict. On September 26, 1947 Britain publicly announced that it intended to withdraw from Palestine. On November 29, following extensive discussions in a committee of the whole called the Palestine Committee, a two-thirds majority of the UN General Assembly voted in favor of a Partition Resolution to create Jewish and Arab states in Palestine. The very next day the Mufti's forces in the Arab Higher Committee began a civil war with the Jews, attacking traffic on the roads to oppose the UN Partition Plan.

The UN resolution was bracketed by decisive American policy developments regarding Israel. In September and October 1947 leading diplomatic and military leaders of the United States met with their British counterparts at "the Pentagon talks" in Washington. They agreed that a Jewish state in Palestine would weaken Western influence in the Middle East and enhance that of the Soviets. They also agreed that it would threaten Western access to oil needed for the world economy and thus undermine the European recovery program, the Marshall Plan, which had been announced by the secretary of state on June 5, 1947 in a speech at Harvard University. On December 10, only a little more than a week after the UN resolution had passed, and when the Arab attacks on the Yishuv had already begun, the State Department announced an embargo on arms going to both sides in the Middle East. In January and February 1948 the State Department's Policy Planning Staff, led by George Kennan, articulated a policy opposed to the partition of Palestine. On March 18 the US ambassador to the UN, Warren Austin, announced a reversal of that policy. The United States now supported a "trusteeship" rather than the Partition Resolution which had proposed separate Arab and Jewish states. President Truman, angered by an effort to undermine his own support for partition, decided to bring more control over Palestine policy into the White House.

In spring 1948 the State Department used the machinery of UN Security Council truce resolutions to prevent further Jewish immigration,

especially of military-age Jewish men, and to block delivery of any military equipment to the Jewish Agency. Though the Soviet Union itself did not send weapons directly to the Jews, the communist regime in Czechoslovakia began to send small arms and heavy weapons – tanks and planes – to the Yishuv.

On May 14, 1948 the British Mandate in Palestine ended, and David Ben-Gurion declared the existence of the state of Israel. That evening Truman granted de facto recognition to the new state. The next day Egypt, Iraq, Syria, and Transjordan, as well as Saudi Arabia and Yemen, invaded the new state of Israel, turning what had been a civil war between Jews and Arabs in Palestine into a war between Israel and six Arab states. On May 17 the Soviet Union granted Israel fuller – that is, de jure – recognition. The first Arab-Israeli war in 1948 was punctuated by periods of intense fighting interrupted by truce agreements negotiated by the United Nations. The war continued until armistice agreements between Israel and the Arab states were signed between January and July 1949. In July and September a UN “mediator,” Swedish diplomat Count Folke Bernadotte, proposed a peace plan that would give the Negev desert to Transjordan, the Galilee to Israel, turn Haifa into a “free” port, and internationalize Jerusalem. His plan, supported by the United States and Great Britain, would have reduced the size of Israel below what it had been promised in the original UN Partition Plan. It accepted the existence of a small Jewish state. The Arabs rejected it. On September 17 Lehi terrorists assassinated Bernadotte, damaging Israel’s cause at the United Nations.

On June 18, 1948 the Soviet Union began to blockade Berlin. The United States followed with an airlift of supplies to the city. In summer and fall 1948, as tensions between the Soviet Union and the West intensified in Europe, Israel’s strongest and most persistent support came from the Soviet Union and Soviet bloc countries, which rejected the Bernadotte Plan as an instrument of British imperialism. Israeli offensives in October 1948 drove the Egyptian army out of the Negev. As the fall American presidential election approached, Truman reiterated support for the November 29, 1947 UN Partition Resolution and thus rejected the Bernadotte proposals. Nevertheless, the American embargo on arms to the Middle East continued throughout the course of the war of 1947–8. Throughout summer and fall 1948 Truman’s support for the Zionists and the new state of Israel remained at odds with his own State Department, Pentagon, and CIA, all of which continued to believe that it undermined American national security interests in the region.

The war continued in several spurts of fighting and truces until early January 1949. The state of Israel survived, but the victory came at a great

cost. The Yishuv suffered 5,700–5,800 dead, a quarter of them civilians, and about 12,000 seriously wounded, in a population that numbered 628,000 in November 1947 and 649,000 in May 1948. Palestinian losses may have been higher or slightly higher. Egyptian losses amounted to about 1,400 dead and 3,731 “permanently invalidated.” The Jordanian, Iraqi, and Syrian armies each suffered several hundred dead, and the Lebanese several dozen. The war also resulted in the creation of 700,000 Arab refugees.²⁹ Israel survived and signed armistice agreements in February 1949 with Egypt, in March with Lebanon, in April with Jordan, and in July with Syria. On January 29, 1949 Britain offered de facto recognition, and on January 31 the United States offered de jure recognition to the state of Israel. France waited until May 11 to do so. On May 11, 1949 the General Assembly voted in favor of admitting the new state of Israel to membership in the United Nations.

²⁹ Morris, *1948*, 406–407.