



# **U.S. Foreign Policy Towards Israel**

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MVZ244

Dr. Aaron T. Walter

# Course Overview

- Examine the continuity and change of U.S. foreign relations with Israel
  - tight bonds with inherent tension
- Examine key milestones in the relationship of the two nations
- Impact of U.S. presidential decision making on foreign policy
- Impact of foreign policy crisis on relationship with Israel

# Course Objectives

- Explore major themes, historical events, and personalities in U.S.-Israeli relations
  - before 1948
  - after 1948
- Discuss the nature of America's 'special' and 'strategic' relationship with Israel
- Role, if any, of lobbies
- Familiarity of key players and issues and complexities of U.S. diplomatic efforts in the Middle East
- Provide critical thinking tools necessary to examine with a critical eye the day-to-day happenings in Israel, the broader Middle East, and America's relationship within.

# Structure of Class

- Overview of topic
- Case study on key episode(s) of U.S.-Israeli relations
- Review and commentary
- Discussion on contemporary aspects, as necessary
- This is NOT a class on the Arab-Israeli conflict
- This is NOT a class on the Israeli-Palestinian peace process

# Expectations

- Arrive prepared and ready to participate
  - weekly readings
  - awake
  - not preoccupied
    - this is a 90 minute class
      - split into two 45min. sections (think football)
- Ask questions
- Respect for classmates and instructor

# Exam Schedule

- Midterm Exam
  - first 5 weeks (Week 6)
- Final paper upload to IS (Week 12)
- Analysis of case study
  - choice of topic by email (Week 2)
  - list of topics provided (Week 1)

# Grading

- 15 % classroom participation
- 20 % midterm exam
- 65 % final paper

# Readings

Stay current with relevant online news

Times of Israel: <http://www.timesofisrael.com>

Jerusalem Post: <http://www.jpost.com>

New York Times: <http://www.nytimes.com>

Wall Street Journal: <http://www.wsj.com>

Fathom: <http://fathomjournal.org>

Tablet: <http://tabletmag.com>



# What is Foreign Policy

- Self-interest strategies
  - trade
  - national security
  - common or shared “values”
- Strategically employed to interact with other countries

# Theories

- Realist
  - Hans Morganthau
    - Realism in International Politics
    - Political realism. Realism that is objective. Rational.
      - *Politics Amongst Nations: Struggle for Power and Peace (1985)*
- Neorealist
  - Waltz, *Theory of International Politics (1978)*
    - Power is most important in International politics

# Theories Cont.

- Neoclassical
  - Classical realist and neorealist plus defensive realist theories.
  - mistrust and perception leads to underexpansion or underbalancing behavior = imbalances within the international system
  - Rose *World Politics* (1998)
- Constructivist
  - significant aspects of IR are historically and socially constructed, rather than inevitable consequences of human nature or other essential characteristics of world politics
  - Wendt (2004), Ruggie

# President Wilson Legacy

- Wilsonian Idealism
- Rooseveltian (TR) realism
- Marriage of domestic policy to foreign policy that enables liberal internationalism
- element in the never-ending debate between International Relations theory and practice: the ideological tug-of-war between the Wilsonian and Rooseveltian worldview. liberal internationalism's "multilaterist" element of Wilsonianism and the "democratization" element, a euphemism for American primacy.
- A difficult question is raised: what happens if the liberal internationalism and the concept of assertive multilateralism slide into liberal imperialism?

# Who Creates Foreign Policy?

- The President
- The Cabinet
- Congress
- Bureaucracy
- Interest Groups
- The Media



**Case Study:**

**The creation of Foreign Policy  
towards Israel**

# U.S. as Superpower

- From 1946-1948 rapidly changing geopolitical circumstances
- US policy in the Middle East was focused on supporting Arab states' independence; aiding the development of oil-producing countries; preventing Soviet influence from Greece, Turkey and Iran;
- Also, attempts were made to prevent an arms race and maintaining a neutral stance in the infant Arab-Israeli conflict.

# Genesis + Crucible

- U.S. relationship with Israel was genesis of national interests in the Middle East both of military and cultural value
- It was also a crucible for U.S. President Harry Truman and early post-WWII foreign policy.



# Genesis

- President Truman had conflicted attitudes toward establishment of the State of Israel.
  - ethical paradoxes
  - moral ambiguities
  - deeply flawed region

# Genesis

- The Mandate was a recognition that the number of stateless and endangered Jews in the world at that time far exceeded the number of Arabs living in the backwater of a defeated Ottoman Empire.
  - Also, The Mandate indicated belief that self-determination for the Jewish people was not possible without a Jewish state.
- Truman when he became president had extensive experience in Midwestern machine politics, but was a relative neophyte in the realm of foreign policy.
  - He had been largely excluded the circles of power as Roosevelt's vice president; had to work against a tremendous information deficit

# Crucible

- Before 1948, sentiment as well as policy was aligned with Arabist mentality
  - anti-Zionist U.S. State Department
  - The 'Arabists' exerted considerable influence both as career diplomats and as bureaucrats within the State Department. But over time, group became insular and headstrong and showing a marked tendency to assert the Arab point of view. Nevertheless this Arabist elite, demonstrated their profound influence on American attitudes toward the Middle East.

# Crucible

- Pre-1948 existed the “prevailing standards of self-determination” that led to the 1922 League of Nations Mandate, which formally recognized “the historical connection of the Jewish people with Palestine” and endorsed their “reconstituting their national home” in that land.
  - offered legitimacy to the Balfour Declaration
  - infuriated the Arabs and Arabists (Orientalist's)
    - CIA’s pro-Arab operations in the 1940s and 50s by the agency’s three most influential—and colorful—officers in the Middle East. Kermit “Kim” Roosevelt was the grandson of Theodore Roosevelt and the first head of CIA covert action in the region; his cousin, Archie Roosevelt, was a Middle East scholar and chief of the Beirut station and Miles Copeland, a maverick covert operations specialist.

# Crucible

- The U.S. has been the principle power outside the region since the end of WWII
  - Therefore any efforts in the Middle East imposed by outside powers and then enforced until both Jews and Arabs agreed to abide by it.
    - British Mandate principle and policy
  - The two peoples' national aims were irreconcilable.
    - British gave UN the “problem” of Jews and Arabs
    - Anglo--American Morrison-Grady plan,
      - a federated Palestine with autonomous Jewish and Arab provinces

# Origins to U.S. policy

- By 1946 (first full year of Truman's presidency), thousands of Jewish refugees were stranded, caught between an unwillingness to remain in Europe, and displaced otherwise.
  - Wish to join fellow Jews in British-Mandate Palestine.
  - To Palestine's Arab population these Jews represented an enormous threat to their own desire for self-determination.
  - A huge new influx of Jewish refugees from Europe endangered both their majority and their land.
  - "There was probably never a time after December 1917" — in the wake of the Balfour Declaration supporting a Jewish homeland in Palestine — "that the Jews and Arabs in Palestine could have agreed on their own to share or divide the country,"
- 
- -*'Genesis: Truman, American Jews, and the Origins of the Arab/Israeli Conflict,'* by John B. Judis (2014)

# Christian Zionism

- Allis and Ronald Radosh in their 2009 book, *A Safe Haven: Harry S. Truman and the Founding of Israel* offers a most complete blow-by-blow account of what happened in Truman's recognition of Israel
  - Key to Radosh is Truman's Christian Zionism
    - coincidentally this is offered as evidence as to earlier support from British Foreign Minister Balfour to U.S. President Wilson.
- Verbal and archival evidence indicates that Truman often quoted Deuteronomy ("Go in and take possession of the land to which the Lord has sworn unto your fathers")
  - Alfred Lilienthal, a State Department Arabist, said Truman "was a Biblical fundamentalist who constantly pointed" to those words;
  - Truman and his chief White House aide, Clark Clifford, exchanged biblical passages on the boundaries of Israel; and
  - Six months after recognizing Israel, Truman wrote Chaim Weizmann that "[w]hat you have received at the hands of the world has been far less than was your due."

# Truman's Crucible

- Relationship with the burgeoning Zionist lobby was strained.
  - Truman exhibited a casual anti-Semitism that was certainly not out of place in his day, but also counted Jews among his close friends and advisers.
- He felt put-upon by Zionist groups clamoring for his administration's support and comes across as whiny — the “one constant in his reproaches were the ‘emotional Jews’ of the United States,”
  - Truman was also aware of the political risks of taking sides.
- On the one hand, to support Israel might be to involve the United States in a new world conflict after having just emerged from World War II.
- On the other, domestic political pressure mitigated strongly against remaining neutral.
  - “I’m sorry, gentlemen,” the president said, “but I have to answer to hundreds of thousands who are anxious for the success of Zionism; I do not have hundreds of thousands of Arabs among my constituents.”
- -‘Genesis,’ by John B. Judis (2014)



# Pre-1948 Statehood

- Zionist and Palestinian were often unreconcilable during the pre-1948 statehood.
- Important to acknowledge the political realities behind American decision-making that often disregarded Palestinian needs.
- Due to the Balfour Declaration, “The British and the Zionists had conspired to screw the Arabs out of a country that by the prevailing standards of self-determination should have been theirs.” (*Genesis*, p.251)
  - view of Arabists in U.S. State Department
  - view of T.E. Lawrence (British military commander, author)
  - arguably the revisionist view of some contemporary historians and authors
- However, contemporary policy decisions override past events.

# Bi-nationalism

- Binationalism, the Zionist movement associated with Judah Magnes, Martin Buber, and Henrietta Szold: support a Jewish presence but recognized Arab rights in British Mandate Palestine.
  - Important to note that Zionist binationalism, never a potent force.
  - When discussing the period 1947–48, a revised partition plan would have given Palestinians more territory than allotted by the 1947 United Nations (UN) plan.
- Although various Arab League countries and some Palestinian leaders were willing to entertain such ideas, Grand Mufti Haj Amin al-Husayni's influence still prevailed among Palestinians, and Arab leaders mistrusted each other's intentions; thus they rejected any compromise.

# Bi-nationalism cont.

- Also of importance is to recognize the differences between liberal Zionism, as embodied by Justice Brandeis and Rabbi Stephen Wise, and militant American Zionism, with each varying approaches to the American public and politicians.
  - Important to note: neither camp considered the Palestinians as having any rights; Palestinians were equivalent to American Indians, inferior peoples whose concerns were minimal when compared to those of whites.
  - This is an indictment of American liberal Zionists, a double standard, where concern for the less fortunate could apply in Western countries but not to non-Westerners.

# Partition + Independence

- Britain and the United States, in a joint effort to examine the dilemma, established the "Anglo-American Committee of Inquiry."
- In April 1946, the committee submitted ten recommendations covering topics such as "The European Problem," "Refugee Immigration Into Palestine," "Principals of Government," "United Nations Trusteeship," "Equality of Standards," "Land Policy," "Economic Development," "Education," and "The Need for Peace in Palestine."

# Partition + Independence

- British, Arab, and Jewish reactions to the recommendations were not favorable. Jewish terrorism in Palestine antagonized the British, and by February 1947 Arab-Jewish communications had collapsed.
- Britain, anxious to rid itself of the problem, set the United Nations in motion, formally requesting on April 2, 1947, that the U.N. General Assembly set up the Special Committee on Palestine (UNSCOP).
  - This committee recommended that the British mandate over Palestine be ended and that the territory be partitioned into two

# Independence

- Jewish reaction was mixed--some wanted control of all of Palestine; others realized that partition spelled hope for their dream of a homeland. The Arabs were not at all agreeable to the UNSCOP plan.
- In October the Arab League Council directed the governments of its member states to move troops to the Palestine border.
- President Truman instructed the State Department to support the U.N. plan, and, with protest it did so.
- On November 29, 1947, the partition plan was passed by the U.N. General Assembly.

# Independence

- At midnight on May 14, 1948, the Provisional Government of Israel proclaimed a new State of Israel.
- On that same date, the United States, in the person of President Truman, recognized the provisional Jewish government as *de facto* authority of the Jewish state (*de jure* recognition was extended on January 31, 1949).
- The U.S. delegates to the U.N. and top-ranking State Department officials were angered that Truman released his recognition statement to the press without notifying them first.
- On May 15, 1948, the first day of Israeli Independence and exactly one year after UNSCOP was established, Arab armies invaded Israel and the first Arab-Israeli war began.

# Food For Thought

- Gudrun Kramer, *A History of Palestine* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2002);
- Ilan Pappé, *The Forgotten Palestinians* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2011);
- Paul C. Merkley, *The Politics of Christian Zionism, 1891–1948*, (Portland: Frank Cass Publishers, 1992);
- Lawrence Davidson. “Truman the Politician and the Establishment of Israel,” *Journal of Palestine Studies* XXXIX, no. 4 (Summer 2010) 29–42;
- Earl D. Huff, “A Study of a Successful Interest Group: The American Zionist Movement,” *The Western Political Quarterly* 25, no. 1 (March 1972): 109–24;
- Walter Russel Mead, “The New Israel and the Old,” *Foreign Affairs* 87, no.4 (July 2008): 1–15
- Hugh Wilford, *America’s Great Game: The CIA’s Secret Arabists and the Shaping of the Modern Middle East* (Basic Books, 2013)
- Robert D. Kaplan, *The Arabists: The Romance of an American Elite* (First Press, 1995)



# Sources

- The telegram reproduced here is from decimal file 867n.01/5-1448, [Records of the Department of State](#), Record Group 59, National Archives and Records Administration, Washington, DC.
- The [press release](#) is from the records of Charles G. Ross, Alphabetical File, Handwriting of the President at the [Harry S. Truman Presidential Library](#), Independence, MO.
- The Library is part of the [Presidential Libraries](#) system of the National Archives and Records Administration.
- Recognition of Israel. <http://jcpa.org/article/president-truman's-decision-to-recognize-israel/>