

Territories

Ending the diaspora, 1890s: Jewish emigration to the region was encouraged after sympathizers purchased land from absentee Arab landlords in the late 1800s. These purchases were made after Russian and Polish pogroms convinced partisans that the Jewish diaspora, initiated by the Romans almost 2,000 years earlier, had to end. By 1914, over 60,000 Jewish settlers had migrated to what was then called Palestine.

Current border roots, 1920: What are now Israel's current borders were established by France and Great Britain in 1920 as part of the post-World War I division of the Ottoman Empire.

Partition to statehood, 1948: In 1947 the United Nations ordered the partition of Palestine into a Jewish and Arab state. The Arab powers of the region rejected the partition plan, and immediately invaded Israel when the Israeli state was declared by David Ben-Gurion. Israel's territorial claim expanded with victory.

Suez Canal crisis, 1956: U.S. policy reversal on Egyptian Aswan Dam project in 1956 compels Egypt to nationalize the Suez Canal. Prodded by French and British leaders, who had their own reasons for the invasion, Israel struck against Arab armies. The Egyptian Sinai is taken, but returned in 1957. France and Britain humiliated; Arab nationalism soars.

Six Day War, 1967: Acting on information of an impending Arab attack the Israelis launched a pre-emptive strike. Israel eventually took control of the Golan Heights, the West Bank of the Jordan River, the Old City of Jerusalem, the Gaza Strip, and the Sinai Peninsula (located in Egypt; returned in 1979).

Yom Kippur War, 1973: Displeased over land lost in 1967, Egypt and Syria launched an attack during the Jewish Yom Kippur holiday in an effort to catch the Israelis "while they prayed." Israel has since claimed that the Yom Kippur War shows the Arabs' true intentions, and that giving up territories won in 1967 would undermine national security because they act as a buffer zones against future Arab aggression.

— Mark Martinez

U.S. policy erratic as goals conflict

It's hard to imagine that during the first half of the 20th century, U.S. policy towards both the Jewish and Arab communities was rather ambivalent. Because of the emerging cold war, this position would become geostrategically impossible to follow. Because of the Holocaust, it would become impossible to justify morally.

Mark Martinez

After World War II, with the British withdrawing as trustee from Palestine (present day Israel) and the Soviet Union on the move in Eastern Europe, the U.S. had to begin lining up allies for the coming cold war.

Aware that the concentration camp atrocities committed by the Nazis had shifted moral sentiment towards the Jewish community, Arab leaders cautioned the U.S. to choose its allies wisely. With talk of a Jewish state in Palestine swirling around him, King Saud of Saudi Arabia warned the U.S. that it would soon be compelled to choose between "an Arab land of peace and quiet, or a Jewish land drenched in blood." Today the U.S. once again finds itself unsure about what to do in a region that helped make King Saud a 20th century prophet of death.

What we now call Israel was recognized as Palestine at the beginning of the 20th century. A sacred land claimed by three major religions — Christianity, Muslims, and Judaism — each religious group can make legitimate claims, and counter-claims, that the land is theirs by historical and religious right. It would be impossible, if not counter-productive, to go through the merits and individual histories of each group's claims. Rather, if we are to understand current disputes over land and security we need to outline the most recent history in the Middle East.

Aided by the Balfour Declaration of 1917, which committed the British to support a Jewish homeland, the League of Nations established a mandate in 1922 and made the British trustee of the region. At the beginning of the mandate, roughly 85,000 Jews and 650,000 Arabs lived in the region. The terms of the mandate were general, but called for creating a zone that would "secure the establishment of the Jewish national home ... and safeguard the civil and religious rights of all the inhabitants."

Arabs were quick to point out two things. First, a "Jewish national home"



The father, right and brother of Danielle Menscher, 22, cry as she is laid to rest in her grave at the in the northern Israeli city of Hafia on April 1. Danielle was killed when a suicide bomber blew himself up in the Arab-owned Matza restaurant, outside the Grand Canyon shopping mall. The explosion killed 16, injured 35.

is not the same as a promise for nation-statehood. Second, Arabs outnumbered Jews and, accordingly, were the core ethnic and religious group of the Palestinian region. For this reason, Arabs argue, statehood in Palestine should have been granted to the Arab peoples. Arabs also like to point out that, upon returning from Yalta, Franklin D. Roosevelt pledged he would not take any action on territorial considerations "which might prove hostile to the Arab people." But then came revelations of the Jewish Holocaust.

No politician, or religious leader of standing, could deny that a tremendous wrong had been done. There was no dispute there. The dispute was over whether — and how — to make up for the world's collective apathy during the war. We need to keep in mind that countries the world over, including the U.S. and the "neutral" Swiss, regularly turned Jewish asylum seekers back into the waiting arms of the Nazi regime. Collective apathy was now tied to collective guilt. Those of the Jewish faith understood this and acted quickly and forcefully. While the world waited and bungled its way through diplomatic niceties, the Jewish community organized and developed a strategy for creating a state that no one (outside of the Arab community) could morally oppose.

When the Jewish state of Israel was finally announced in 1948 — just hours before the British mandate was to expire — no one was surprised that Arab states decided to attack. In fact,

many believed it would be a quick war, and the Jewish question would be decided at a later date. Instead, in spite of being vastly outnumbered (16-1) and strategically boxed in by their enemies, the Israeli's emerged victorious. Incredibly enough, by 1949 the area controlled by Israel was larger than before the war.

Having lost on both military and territorial grounds, the Arab world reiterated its pre-war promise to one day "drive the Jews into the sea." Making matters more difficult, almost 1 million Arabs were rendered homeless by the conflict, with hundreds of thousands entering into the areas now in dispute. From the ashes of defeat and humiliation the Fedayeen, and other Palestinian resistance fighters emerged (including a young Yasser Arafat), holding Israel responsible for depriving them of their homeland.

Since then, the U.S. has found itself confronted by a series of Israeli-Arab conflicts. From the 1956 Suez Canal crisis, to the Six Day War in 1967, to the Arab-Israeli War in 1973, the U.S. and the world have watched as two of the world's dominant religious groups have fought over land that both feel is theirs by divine right.

In the process, the warriors on both sides have become handcuffed to one another by history, misunderstanding and hate. This is unfortunate because the combatants are focused on the next battle precisely at a time statesmen who think about the the next generation are needed.

There is, however, reason for hope. Leaders like Anwar Sadat and Yitzhak Rabin were radicals, who became warriors, who then became statesmen. They ended up falling to assassins' bullets for compromising on what the extremists believe shouldn't be compromised, their blood washing away hopes of a better future. To avoid another century of an Israeli state "drenched in blood," both communities must reconcile themselves to compromise.

Whether this means accepting pre-1967 borders (key to much of today's dispute), or adjusting those borders, two things are clear. Israel's security can only be guaranteed with the cooperation of the Arab world. The Arabs will only cooperate when they have a Palestinian state to call their own. Whether, and how, today's combatants accept these simple facts will help determine whether King Saud becomes a 21st century prophet, too.

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