



ZIONISM AND ANTI-SEMITISM: A CRITICAL STUDY ON EARLY PUBLICATIONS

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Political matters in which religion is used as an instrument have led, throughout history, to some of the most remarkable geopolitical consequences that conjointly involve military and paramilitary interventions, as well as casualties and violent reactions among civilians. The present paper examines various motivations that influenced the emergence of Zionism, where the use of the Jewish religion – along with the reported oppressions of the Jews in Europe – became a key justification for establishing Jewish settlements within the Palestinian borders. The colonization plans that had been debated since the end of the 19th century not only exceeded the initial agreements, but have been also escalating into extreme attacks against the indigenous Palestinian population. Also, Israeli armed incursions, ongoing at the time of the present paper’s publication, have been publicly compared to a genocide and the Holocaust.

Keywords: *Zionism; anti-semitism; geopolitics; Palestine; Israel; extremism.*

Introduction

The present article reveals political and international matters that led to the Israeli settlement.

It represents a brief analysis on some of the most relevant publications from the late 19th century and early 20th century about the definition and settlement of the Zionist movement, in the interest of differentiating the spiritual dimension of Judaism from the intrusive politics implied by Zionism. In addition, the present paper alludes

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to the contemporary perception of anti-semitism, which has become a censorship argument against public disclosure of offensive actions committed by Jewish actors. Thus, the analysis aims to bring better understanding of various perspectives and motivations that contributed throughout decades to the contemporary geopolitical landscape.

1. Romania's Involvement

Although there is no major impact from Romania's side upon the Jewish settlement in the Holy Land¹, its plentiful mentions in early Zionist publications suggest that our country was not only an unsuitable location for Jewish settlements, but also Jewish individuals born here could not be fully integrated into the Romanian society.

Numerous statements from the observed publications accused Romania of discrimination against Jews, including those who had been born in Romania: 'Thus it is left for a Jew to take the action of an avowedly anti-Semitic Government like that of Romania as a basis for raising an outcry against the nationalistic effort of Jews to emancipate their people' (Levy, Sarna and Baker 1902, 3). The reported hostility perceived in Romania led to a rather offensive portrayal, casting the country's intention to preserve its religious and social integrity in a negative light.

Further in the aforementioned publication, Romania is listed among the countries whose 'anti-semitism' and 'race-nationalism' had been responsible for the development of Zionism: 'Zionism is the child of anti-Semitism – of the race-nationalism of France, Germany, Russia, Roumania' (Levy, Sarna and Baker 1902, 5).

Later mentions challenge the country's lack of intention of granting Romanian nationality to Jewish citizens born in Romania:

'Every Jewish individual in the world, like every other individual, possesses the positive attribute of the legal Nationality of some State within the comity of Nations, and the negative and correlative attitude of alienage, apart from two exceptional varieties: the one is the Roumanian, which is an exception more apparent than real,

¹ Publications issued before 1948 mention that the Biblical Holy Land has been identified as the Palestinian Territories. 'The Holy Land of the Bible is the Holy Land of to-day. It has the same skies as those under which the Wise Men followed the Star to the birthplace of Jesus. It has the same flowers as those trodden by Joseph and Mary, and the water in Jacob's Well is still sweet, notwithstanding it is now compared with that of the Nile which flows in pipes over the desert almost to the Pool of Siloam (...). All these belong to the Palestine perennial, and to that Palestine belong the talks of this book. They are based on the notes dictated to my stenographer or written by me in the midst of the scenes they describe. I give them as they came hot from the pen, changing only a line here and there to accord with the changing conditions (...). Throughout the journey, the old is ever tramping on the heels of the new, and the Palestine of the future is seen through the veil of the Palestine of the past' (Carpenter 1922, 1-3).



for the status of the Jewish People in Roumania is, it would seem from the standpoint of International Law, one of Roumanian Nationality, even if Roumania chooses as yet to regard its autochthonous Jewry in such large numbers as within the sphere of alienage ; the other is an exception not specific to the Jewish People, but represents a phenomenon of International Law, of not infrequent recurrence it is the person of disputed nationality, disclaimed by one state and not acclaimed by the other. It can thus be seen that with the exceptions quoted the Jewish individual can acquire from the point of view of International Law the nationality of any Nation within the comity of Nations but that he cannot acquire a Jewish legal nationality, for such a nationality is at present non-existent' (Benas 1919, 11).

Another relevant comment pertains to a 19th century Jewish publication, where the author questions Romania's right of existence and his offenses are addressed in a relatively threatening tone:

'A most remarkable bit of intelligence has, just reached my ears with regard to the much-vexed question of the Roumanian Jews, which is again on the *tapis*. The bigotry and intolerance of the Roumanian people, and the incapacity or willful neglect of the Roumanian Government will, it seems, compel the powers to interfere again on behalf of the persecuted Israelites, whose position in Roumania is about what it was all over Europe during the middle ages. And there these continual protests and threats of intervention will, without doubt, sooner or later, end in the wiping from the map of Europe this bastard semi-independent little state, which certainly has no adequate *raison d'etre*, no sufficient cause in existence, even though it has to be done at the risk of opening up the muchdreaded Eastern Question' (Sneersohn 1872, 139).

2. Religiously Motivated Politics

The most debated case of political religion in the latest decades involves the usage of Islam as a pretext for extremist politics (Brandea 2024, 159-160). But Islam is not the only religion which can be manipulated in order to justify political and geopolitical outcomes.

Thus, for the purpose of the current study, it is necessary to distinguish Judaism from Zionism. While Judaism represents the monotheist religion of the Jewish people (Judaism n.d.), Zionism refers to 'a political movement that had as its original aim the creation of a country for Jewish people, and that now supports the state of Israel' (Zionism n.d.).

Even before the emergence of Zionism, the rejection of religious diversity in the 'Holy Land' was articulated in the early 19th century records. The following example illustrates a paragraph extracted from an 1844 Jewish book which tackles historical and biblical aspects of the 'Holy Land', advocating for the Jewish religion while



discrediting the Islamic one: ‘Palestine remained subject to Grecian authority till the rise of the Mahommedan power in the east. The followers of the false prophet, extending their doctrines and dominions by fire and sword, conquered successively the provinces of Arabia, Syria, and Egypt; and in 686, the caliph Omar’s troops marched to Jerusalem’ (Bonar 1844, 106).

2.1. Zionism versus anti-semitism: who’s who?

Theodor Herzl is believed to have conceived the characteristics of Zionism in his 1917 book entitled *A Jewish State. An Attempt at a Modern Solution of the Jewish Question*. It is worth mentioning that one of the matters he deliberates in this publication is whether the Jewish settlement could have been organized in either Argentina or Palestine (Herzl 1917, 12), Palestine being preferred for the Biblical connections between its land and the Jews.

At the beginning of the 20th century, Zionism was described as ‘one of the most articulate Jewish weapons directed against anti-Semitism’ (Moskowitz 1917, 1). The Zionist agenda had been divided in a 1918 publication into four stages: ‘first, the colonisation and development of Palestine; secondly, the cementing of the scattered sections of Jewry; thirdly, the strengthening of the Jewish national consciousness; and fourthly, the enlistment of the sympathy and assistance of powerful nations’ (Simon 1918, 11-12). Another publication, from the following year, suggests that the Zionist settlement would bring notable benefits to the entire humanity: ‘The re-establishment of the Jews as a nation among the nations is needed for the development of the Jews, and as a means for their working out their distinctive solution of the problems of humanity; that is, it is needed for the sake of a sane patriotism and a sane universalism it would help Jew and Gentile’ (Lewis 1919, 16).

Nevertheless, cynical comments had been addressed even among the publications of those times. One such perspective argues that the ‘return’ of the Jews in their own country could had been possible only through the interventions of ‘anti-semitic governments’ or through prophetic accomplishments: ‘The restoration of the Jews to the land of their old independence may occur in one of two ways. It may be by the concerted ‘act of the Governments of the countries of their dispersion, devised as a measure of self-protection against the spread of the Jews; or it may be by the fulfilment of prophecy when the Jewish mission as complete. The first is the creed of good anti-Semites, the second of orthodox Jews’ (Magnus 1917, 4).

Even nowadays, the ‘anti-semitism’ term is rather used to designate the hate against Jewish people. However, it is worth noting that, in fact, semitism refers to the speakers of semitic languages, such as Arabic, Hebrew, Amharic, Aramaic, or Tigrinya (Abella et al. 2025). Additionally, any sort of support addressed to occupied peoples from the former ‘Holy Land’ is considered an act of anti-semitism (Klug 2021), despite the fact that Israelis and Arabs are equally Semite.



The world's separation from the Jewish people which had been reported by the Zionists in the early 20th century is one of the most important justifications for their forceful approach: 'The oppression we endure does not improve us, for we are not a whit better than ordinary people. It is true that we do not love our enemies; but he alone who can conquer himself dare reproach us with that fault. Oppression naturally creates hostility against oppressors, and our hostility aggravates the pressure. It is impossible to escape from this eternal round' (Herzl 1917, 10).

A main objective of Zionism was believed to be the preservation of the Jewish culture, although a study published in 1917 observes that Zionists did not explicitly support this aspect:

'The advocates of Zionism as a solution of the subjective phase of the Jewish question assume, first, that Judaism, in its broader sense, is worth preserving, and consequently that its preservation is made possible only by the establishment of a Jewish State, acting as a cultural centre which will exist primarily for the purpose of perpetuating it. The Zionists say vaguely that Jewish culture is worthy of preservation. Whatever is of distinctive worth in a nationality should be cultivated and contributed for the enrichment of humanity' (Moskowitz 1917, 3).

On a rather philosophical note, one might notice a magnifying mirror effect in the pattern of the Zionist actions subsequent to their reported maltreatments. For example, the segregation they felt within the European societies could be comparable to an externally imposed psychological wall which has been eventually transmuted into an actual separation wall among the heir inhabitants of Palestine and West Bank (see OCHA, 2022, and Al Jazeera, 2020). Another accessible comparison points to the broadly debated Hamas attack from October 7th, 2023 (see UN News, 2023), which galvanized not only the military incursions on the Palestinian civilians – which had been proceeding since the 1948's settlement (Shaw 2010, Crowley-Vigneau, et al. 2025) – but also airstrikes and raids that had been equaled to the renowned Holocaust (Segal 2023).

2.2. Ownership contradictions

Racial differentiations between Jews and Palestinians had been reported in the early 19th century – namely before the emergence of Zionism from 1882 (Halperin 2015). Such perspectives challenged the inhabiting right of the contemporary residents within the 'Promised Land':

'In alluding to the origin of the name Palestine, it may be necessary to observe that the LXX translate the Hebrew word Philistiim, *Allophyli*, (strangers or aliens,) intimating that they were a people distinct from the Israelites. –When the twelve tribes of Israel came into possession of this their promised inheritance, the lots or territories of Judah and Benjamin were contiguously seated towards the Southern boundary of the country: and according to divine appointment, the kingdom of Judah was hereditary in the house of David' (Unknown Author 1823, 4).



The issue of land ownership in Palestine has been mainly maintained due to the lack of bilateral conventionalities. Specifically, lands that have been inherited for numerous generations by Palestinian inhabitants within the Palestinian Territories' borders had not been recognized as belonging to them, despite their official proofs. This context is exemplified in the statement below, which belongs to a Palestinian farmer and had been extracted from Malek and Hoke's (2014) research on Palestinian and Israeli perspectives upon the occupation:

'My extended family had land here going far back, and my grandfather inherited a piece of it. We have paperwork going back to 1943 that documents our right to these twelve acres and three houses (...). Then, when I was around fifteen years old, the settlers came onto our land. There had been settlements in the area since I was a boy, but none so close. First, we started seeing roads going in sometime around 1996. That same year, the first settlers showed up in trailer homes. There were maybe fifteen to twenty trailers that appeared near our village. These first settlers were just a few families. But they were never without guns – AK-47s, big guns. The first thing they did was come to the village to see if they would have any trouble. They were pretty rough. There were some clashes at first over land. I remember one old man whom the settlers struck on the head – he almost died. They also started building a fence around the settlement and some of our farmland right away. We had a fence around most of our property, and that helped keep the settlers from building directly on our land, but they took the land where our sheep graze outside the fence, about a thousand square feet of grazing land. They also took some of my father's sheep. And they took other villagers' land and sheep when they could (Malek and Hoke 2014, 64-65).

3. The imminence of violent responses

Although the Israeli settlement in the Palestinian territories was expected to be peaceful for the three religions inhabiting the land in question – Christianity, Islam, Judaism (Carpenter 1922, 197) –, its expansion not only that exceeded the borders that had been initially established, but has also led to military interventions in order to impose the civilians' relocation (Rubin, Arnon and McAlexander 2023).

The settlement of the Jews in the Palestinian territories had been explicitly supported by the British Parliament in the early 20th century (English Zionist Federation 1901) and was later described as a colonization process comparable to the one from America (Carpenter 1922, 196).

The UN's Resolution 181 adopted in 1947 was meant to support the partition of Palestine into Arab and Jewish states, handing over about 55 percent of the land to the settling Jews, while Arabs were granted 45 percent of the land; Jerusalem was declared a separate internationalized territory. However, this partitioning plan had never been implemented (Haddad and Chughtai 2023).

According to various studies on radicalization, terrorism, and violent attitudes, individuals who had been raised in unstable environments and constant aggression from dominant authorities are more prone to extremist acts (Hudson 1999, 15-16) and revenge-seeking behaviors (Andros 2023). Consequently, the emergence of paramilitary, nationalist, and politically extremist movements and organizations are rather predictable especially due to the insufficient international and diplomatic involvement.

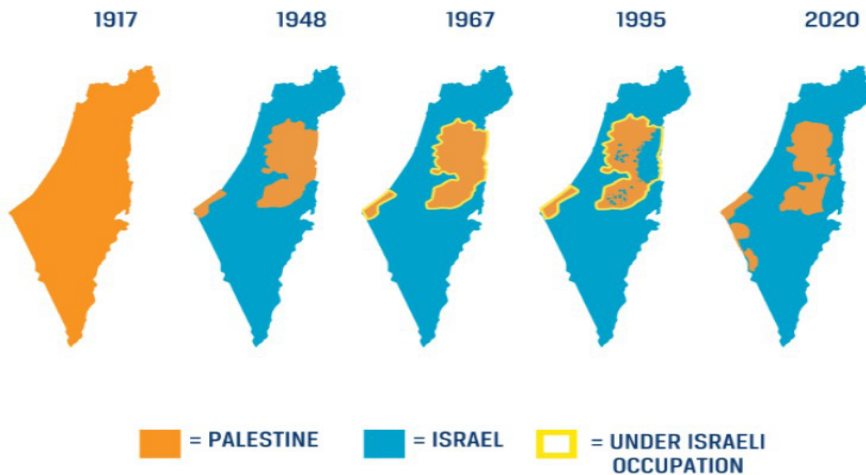


Figure no. 1 Over time changes in the Palestinian territories' occupation (Andros 2023)

In addition to these formal factors, it is worth acknowledging the education restrictions imposed by the Israelis against the Palestinian citizens (Abu-Saad 2018, Anwar, Wong and Bright 2022, Smith and Howard 2023, Quneis and Rafidi 2023), which can only perpetuate and aggravate this vicious circle where insufficient education could lead to radicalization and extremism (Macaluso 2016, Sajjad 2022, Gereluk 2023), and, eventually, to the so-called legitimate 'self-defense' (Tsagourias 2023) that involve military and ballistic assaults against civilians (OHCHR 2024, Israel's actions in Gaza 'intentional attack on civilians': UN inquiry 2024, Khalil and Sio 2025).

From a wider perspective, it is notable that a general consequence of the World War II end and the succeeding Cold War was the continuity of 'low intensity' conflicts around the world in a geopolitical context where terrorism was turning 'into an instrument of resistance' (Chaliand and Blin 2007, 208).



3.1. The Muslim Brotherhood (its beginning in Egypt)

One of the most important organizations from the Middle East that had contributed to preserving the antagonism between the Zionist actors and the local Arab world is the Muslim Brotherhood, which had been founded in 1928 in Egypt. The British interventions in Egypt during World War II has contributed to the fall of the local political system, which has been paralleled by an increasing popularity of non-governmental opposition and political pressure movements that assured the rise of the Muslim Brotherhood (Zollner 2009, 11-2).

Moreover, according to Zollner's (2009) observations, the of the Muslim Brotherhood's paramilitary branch training camps, activities, and involvement in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict not only that were tolerated by the Egyptian government, but it has also become their primary instrument for advancing its political agenda within Egypt itself (Zollner 2009, 13).

3.2. From the Muslim Brotherhood to Hamas in Palestine

A remarkable consequence of the Muslim Brotherhood development and involvement in the Palestinian matter is the emergence of the extremist branch of the Hamas party from Palestine, founded in January 1988 and aiming for resistance to the Israeli rule; following the continuous and militarized expansion of Israel within the Palestinian Territories, the 'resistance' of Hamas has turned into plotting the eradication of Israel (Frisch 2010, 91).

The initial ideology promoted by Hamas during its early years was that 'Palestine is Arab, Islamic land that fell to colonial control with the demise of the Ottoman Empire', disagreeing with Israel's legitimacy and encouraging the Palestinians to 'struggle in order to regain their homeland and freedom'. This approach of calling for the defeat of the occupier reveals a rather nationalist – not religious – agenda (Roy 2011). Simultaneously, Hamas has remained attached to the Muslim Brotherhood and became their Palestinian branch, focusing on violent anti-Israel activities – or Jihad against the Israeli *infidels* – rather than promoting Islamic values (Levitt 2006, 30).

Following their victory in the 2006 elections in Palestine, Hamas became 'the only Muslim Brotherhood group in the world that also forms a government and rules over large numbers of people'. Their popularity among Palestinian voters was mainly motivated by the violent approaches that led to the withdrawal of the Israel Defense Forces from Gaza on September 12, 2005. Nonetheless, the influence gained by Hamas had motivated Egypt – together with the Muslim Brotherhood – to maintain public distance from them. A similar attitude has been promoted among other Sunni organizations as a consequence of Hamas' connection with Iran (Frisch 2010, 89-101).



Conclusions

The colonization plans which had been debated by the first Zionists and supported by the great powers, especially after World War I and World War II, have led to disproportionate conflicts in the Palestinian Territories ever since 1948. The continuous hostility has led to post-traumatic stress disorder and even radicalization among some indigenous Palestinians and their international supporters, which contributes to the continuity of the local instability.

The consequent violent extremism, from both Jewish and Muslim actors, do not reflect the intention of their religious values' preservation; contrarily, radical and violent actions use—mostly in the Zionists' case—religious pretexts or justifications which, eventually, generate confusion and even repugnance from international communities.

Thus, the paper hints that Zionist actions generally use Judaism as a justification for aggressive approaches, although the nature of their purposes is rather political. The question of anti-semitism is also relevant in this context since it disputes the semitic identity of the Arabs and would not classify the occupation of the Palestinian Territories as an anti-semitic act, while any disagreement against the Zionist plans throughout history has been labelled as an anti-semitic intention. The earliest studies on this matter reveal a hostile attitude of the Western world against the “Jewish problem” and vice versa, leading to favourable denunciation of anti-semitism addressed to Western governments that had been, in fact, consequences of not supporting the Zionist settlement plans.

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