The Truman Administration, Israel, and Containment in the Middle East 1945-1952

Leslie Tarbutton

Follow this and additional works at: https://digitalcommons.odu.edu/history_etds

Part of the Diplomatic History Commons, International Relations Commons, Islamic World and Near East History Commons, Near and Middle Eastern Studies Commons, and the United States History Commons

Recommended Citation
https://digitalcommons.odu.edu/history_etds/47

This Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by the History at ODU Digital Commons. It has been accepted for inclusion in History Theses & Dissertations by an authorized administrator of ODU Digital Commons. For more information, please contact digitalcommons@odu.edu.
THE TRUMAN ADMINISTRATION, ISRAEL, AND
CONTAINMENT IN THE MIDDLE EAST:
1945-1952

by

Leslie S. Tarbutton II
B.A. May 1988, Christopher Newport College

A Thesis Submitted to the Faculty of
Old Dominion University in Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements for the Degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

HISTORY

OLD DOMINION UNIVERSITY
May, 1990

Approved by:

Dr. Lorraine Lees (Director)
ABSTRACT

THE TRUMAN ADMINISTRATION, ISRAEL, AND CONTAINMENT IN THE MIDDLE EAST: 1945-1952

L.S. Tarbutton II
Old Dominion University, 1990
Director: Dr. Lorraine M. Lees

This thesis examines United States policy towards Israel from 1948 to 1952 to determine the extent to which the support given to Israel during the Truman administration reflected the major United States policy goal in the Middle East, the containment of the Soviet Union.

Sources used in this thesis include: archival material; printed collections of documents; memoirs; and secondary sources.

The Truman administration pursued containment in the Middle East by cooperating with Great Britain to improve the economic and military well-being of the Arab states so they could resist any Soviet attempts to dominate the region. However, domestic political pressure persuaded the Truman administration to also become the major international supporter of Israel; the sworn enemy of the Arab states. Therefore, Truman's decision to support Israel undermined United States attempts to strengthen the Arab states and weakened the United States containment policy in the region.
To my family, whose patience, understanding and financial support made this thesis possible.
TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>LIST OF MAPS</td>
<td>iv</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>INTRODUCTION</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>PALESTINE AND CONTAINMENT: 1945-1948</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>THE BERNADOTTE PLAN AND CONTAINMENT: MAY 1948-JANUARY 1949</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>CONCLUSIONS</td>
<td>133</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>LIST OF SOURCES</td>
<td>136</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
LIST OF MAPS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>MAP</th>
<th>PAGE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2. Israeli Offensives-1948 and Armistice Lines-1949</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
INTRODUCTION

In the years immediately following World War II, the United States and the Soviet Union vied for influence in the Middle East and elsewhere across the globe. In response to this struggle, the United States developed a policy of containing the spread of Soviet influence in areas vital to United States interests. Devised by George F. Kennan, containment stressed a number of means to resist Soviet influence, including the development of economically independent nations in areas vital to United States interests. Thus Kennan postulated, these areas would resist the lure of communist subversion.1

In 1948, at the height of this East-West struggle, Jewish settlers in Palestine created the state of Israel. The administration of Harry S. Truman played a major role in bringing the Jewish state to fruition and the United States has continued to be Israel's most reliable international supporter. United States favor proved critical to an Israeli nation born of war with the Arab states, and American economic support, both private and governmental,

helped ensure the survival of Israel.²

Yet most State Department officials perceived these developments as detrimental to containment in the Middle East. Department strategists had determined after World War II that the oil reserves in the Middle East made the region vital to the United States. The Soviets also demonstrated a growing interest in the Middle East after World War II. The United States, therefore, attempted to contain Soviet influence in the Middle East by improving economic conditions in the region. The British, who had considerable influence in the region, agreed to help the United States in enhancing the vitality of the Middle East. In 1947, the United States and Great Britain agreed to pursue "parallel policies" in the Middle East to foster economic improvements among the Arab states. Yet existing political circumstances in the Middle East complicated United States containment policies.

Great Britain's colonial domination of the Middle East had inspired deep resentment among the Arab states. The British remained the major economic and military partners of the Arab states, but growing Arab nationalism endangered the future of British holdings in the region. This made the British less than ideal partners for implementing a Middle East containment policy. Equally problematic for United

States containment policy was British opposition to a Jewish state in Palestine. The British refused to support any Jewish state in Palestine because her Arab allies would consider it a serious threat to their security.\textsuperscript{3}

The State Department was also reluctant to support the claims of Jewish settlers in Palestine because of Arab opposition. Secretary of State George C. Marshall believed that support for a Jewish state in Palestine would alienate the Arab world and make the region vulnerable to Soviet aggression or subversion. However, Jewish-Americans lobbied the Truman administration to support a Jewish state in Palestine. President Harry S. Truman found himself in a difficult political situation in 1948. While Truman's major foreign policy objective in the Middle East remained the containment of the Soviet Union by revitalizing the Arab states, he had sympathy for the plight of Jewish refugees in Europe who wished to immigrate to Palestine. Furthermore, 1948 was a presidential election year and Truman's main political advisor, Clark Clifford, perceived the Jewish vote in New York as the key to winning the election.\textsuperscript{4}

Truman attempted to balance the perceived need for a


strong containment policy in the Middle East, which required the cooperation of the Arabs and the British, against the need to help Jewish refugees relocate in Palestine, which would solve a pressing humanitarian problem and be politically beneficial. Eventually Truman decided to support the creation of Israel, thus solving the refugee problem and satisfying Jewish-American voters. At the same time, the Truman administration attempted to maintain relations with the Arab states to promote containment and to protect vital oil interests in the region. However, congressional opposition to aid for the Arab states, because of those states' animosity toward Israel, made it difficult to send substantive aid to them. Stymied by Congress, the Truman administration sought ways to fund the Arabs without congressional approval. Although the Truman administration attempted to aid the Arabs through third parties, this assistance did not substantially increase the standard of living in the region.5

While economic aid to the Middle East was failing to improve the stability of the Arab states, the United States dramatically altered Kennan's conception of containment. National Security Council [NSC] report 68, completed in 1950, described a world where Soviet military capabilities

---

posed an immediate threat to the free world. While Kennan only wanted to protect vital areas from the Soviets, NSC 68 postulated that any further losses to communism would deal a serious psychological blow to the western world. The Korean War, which began just a short period after the completion of NSC 68, seemed to validate this new conception of containment. In response to this perceived threat, the Truman administration placed more emphasis on increasing the military capacity of areas vulnerable to communist aggression.

This new emphasis on military capabilities altered containment in the Middle East as the administration placed greater emphasis on arming the Arab states to resist Soviet aggression. However, the lingering hatred brought about by the 1948 Arab-Israeli war made it difficult to allocate money to arm the Arab states because of congressional fear of a Middle Eastern arms race with Israel. The administration thus attempted to work through the British to develop a loose Anglo-Arab alliance to increase the military capabilities in the region. However, Arab resentment over the British and American roles in the creation of Israel had made attaining their cooperation into a defense organization extremely difficult.

---


This thesis examines United States policy toward Israel from 1948 until 1952 to determine the extent to which the support given to Israel during the Truman administration reflected the major United States policy goal in the Middle East, containment of the Soviet Union. In examining American policy towards Israel, I will describe Truman's Middle Eastern policy, the manner in which support for Israel altered the implementation of this scheme, and the general success of Truman's containment policies in the Middle East.
During the 1800s, the Middle East was a relative backwater of American diplomacy. Aside from occasional government action to protect American business interests and missionaries in Arab countries, the United States government showed little interest in the region. By World War I, Great Britain and France politically and economically dominated the oil rich Arab states. However, American oil companies also moved into the Middle East in the aftermath of the First World War and dramatically increased United States economic interests in the region.¹

After the Second World War, drastic political and economic changes compelled the United States government to play a more active role in the Middle East. This development paralleled the heightening of post-war tensions between the United States and the Soviet Union as the wartime alliance between the Soviets and the western powers began to unravel. By 1946, Soviet efforts to create a

¹Robert W. Stookey, America and the Arab States: An Uneasy Encounter (New York: John Wiley and Sons, 1975), 1-68.
buffer zone of nations in Eastern Europe and the Truman administration's efforts to maintain some American influence there placed the United States and the Soviet Union in an antagonistic position. Truman then came under intense domestic pressure to formulate a more effective strategy to deal with what America perceived as an aggressive Soviet Union.

In February of 1946 the American charge d'affaires in the Moscow embassy, George F. Kennan, in response to a Washington query, penned a lengthy telegram explaining soviet post-war behavior. Kennan's "long telegram" became the genesis of the United States containment policy, which after 1946, would be the basis of United States policy towards the Soviet Union. To Kennan, Soviet foreign policy had developed to justify the regime's tyrannical internal policies. Marxist ideology provided a convenient excuse for authoritarian rule: a hostile capitalist world. The Soviets needed an enemy, and in the post war world the United States would have to serve as communism's foe.

According to Kennan, then, the Soviets created their foreign policy to suit domestic requirements rather than in response to United States policies. Kennan also believed that the Soviets were basically weak. When faced by a determined adversary, Kennan asserted, the soviets would retreat. Therefore, if the United States decisively blocked soviet attempts to expand, the Soviet Union would realize
that an expansionist foreign policy would endanger its internal security. Therefore, the United States could "contain" Soviet attempts to expand and let the internal contradictions of communism erode Soviet power.

Yet the United States did not have the resources to defend and support every area of the world. Accordingly, Kennan stated that the United States should only protect and strengthen areas vital to American interests, so they would not fall under Soviet control. This "strongpoint" defense would ensure that the United States could defend its security interests with its limited resources.

Although military strength played a role in Kennan's thinking, Kennan saw the battle between the United States and the Soviet Union as primarily a psychological struggle. Both the United States and the Soviet Union would have to vie for the favor of less powerful nations. Kennan stated in his telegram that "communism is like a malignant parasite which feeds only on diseased tissue." Since communism only had appeal to societies suffering from poverty and deprivation, Kennan hoped the United States could create economically, politically, and militarily independent countries in areas vital to its security so that Soviet propaganda would have no appeal. These independent nations

---

could then resist Soviet aggression, with United States economic assistance. If independent powers in vital areas rebuffed the Soviets, there would be little threat to American security. With Soviet growth stunted, the West could wait patiently while the deficiencies in communism inevitably weakened the Soviet capacity to expand.3

Kennan's writing had a remarkable influence on the Truman administration, which had been moving towards a policy change. Based on Kennan's theory, the Truman administration pursued a new policy based on "patience and firmness" with the Soviet Union. Although Europe remained the major focus of the United States containment policy, the Middle East also received a good deal of United States attention.

Officials in Washington had no doubt of the Middle East's importance to Western security. Because of the Suez Canal, the Middle East served as a critical line of communication for the western powers. Middle Eastern oil would be increasingly vital if Europe's shattered economies were to recover, since by 1945 about 42 percent of world oil

resources came from the Middle East. Undersecretary of State Dean Acheson declared in a memorandum sent to President Truman in October of 1945 that oil reserves in the Middle East constituted "one of the greatest material prizes in world history." Kennan, Secretary of the Navy James Forrestal and other prominent figures in Washington shared similar convictions about the strategic value of Middle Eastern oil.

The Middle East's close proximity to the Soviet Union also made it a critical area. The Truman administration believed that a successful defense of the Middle East hinged on Iran, Turkey and Greece, what policy makers in Washington commonly called the "northern tier." These nations would have to serve as a bulwark against possible Soviet expansion into the area. Loy Henderson, Director of the Office of Near Eastern and African Affairs for the State Department, asserted on 28 December 1946 that a Soviet victory in Turkey, Iran, or Greece would allow "Russian power and


influence to sweep unimpeded” over the entire Middle East.6

Henderson's fear that the Soviets could easily conquer the Middle East stemmed from the sorry state of economic conditions across the region. The economic, political, and military weakness of the Arab states, coupled with the strategic significance of Middle Eastern oil, seemed to present the Soviets an easy target for aggression or subversion. Revitalizing economic conditions in the Middle East thus became the primary goal in the United states containment strategy for the area.7

However, economic development would take time and officials in Washington believed the Soviet threat to the Middle East was an immediate one. The Truman administration believed it had to stop Soviet penetration into the Middle Eastern region before economic reform could be implemented. Thus the United States reacted forcefully to Soviet attempts to gain influence in the "northern tier" during 1946 and 1947.8 Yet despite the Truman administration's success in foiling Soviet efforts to gain influence in Iran, Turkey, and Greece, shifts in the western balance of power seemed to


8Kuniholm, 302-410.
imperil the American effort to contain Soviet influence in the Middle East. Just as Washington began to place greater strategic importance on the Middle East, Great Britain found herself increasingly unable to manage her traditionally dominant role there.

Great Britain found her position in the Middle East eroded by two factors. In the aftermath of the Second World War, the British faced serious financial difficulties at home that forced them to curtail foreign aid. Equally problematic for Great Britain was the rising tide of Arab nationalism hostile to British dominance of their nations. Yet British foreign policy experts believed that their position in the Middle East was strategically crucial. British owned oil companies in the Middle East, especially in Iran and Iraq, were economically important to a financially strapped Great Britain. The importance of the Suez Canal as a trade route made Egypt crucial to the British. The British Foreign Office also believed that the defense of these key areas from the Soviets rested, in large part, on English military bases in Palestine. Therefore, the British had no intention of giving up influence in these areas of the Middle East.9

The British solution to this problem was to reduce expenditures towards countries that were of peripheral importance to her critical Middle Eastern interests. Thus Great Britain announced in 1947 the termination of aid to Greece and Turkey. British officials counted on the United States to take up large portions of the economic assistance to the two states. The British believed that if the Americans took a greater share of the economic burden in Greece and Turkey, they could concentrate on developing the oil producing regions of the Middle East.10

The United States reacted much as the British expected. To the Truman administration, which saw Greece and Turkey as the key to defense of the Middle East, the British withdrawal marked the beginning of the collapse of British influence in the entire region. The Truman administration feared that the ensuing power vacuum would be an open invitation for Soviet influence in the Arab states. Consequently, the United States quickly extended aid to Greece and Turkey.11

In addition, the seeming inability of Great Britain to protect and develop the Middle East and the steadily growing fear of Soviet penetration into the region forced the Truman

10Louis, 90-102.

administration to formulate a specific containment strategy for the Middle East. In October and November of 1947, British and United States officials met in Washington to discuss Middle Eastern security. Both Britain and the United States feared Soviet infiltration or aggression in the Middle East, an area that both sides considered important to their nations' security interests. In the October and November meetings, which were dubbed the "Pentagon Talks," both sides agreed that improving living standards in the Middle East was the best way to prevent communist influence in the region. The British agreed to play the major role in the defense and economic development of the Middle East; but because of Great Britain's financial difficulties, the United States agreed to help finance Britain's involvement. Both nations hoped to pursue "parallel policies" in the region, so that British manpower and American money could effectively strengthen the Middle East.\(^\text{12}\)

This arrangement suited the foreign policy objectives of both nations. The British would be able to maintain their political and economic position in the Arab world, with considerable financial aid from the United States. The United States would be able to use its limited post-war means to defend a vital area from the Soviets. According to

\(^{12}\text{Louis, 110-113; FRUS, 1947, 5: 506-583.}\)
a State Department memorandum, the United states would make "economic concessions" in the Middle East so that the British will "meet our desires in the political and strategic field." Therefore, the United states would bear a considerable portion of the bill for revitalizing the economies of the Arab states without displacing British leadership in the region.13

Due to England's colonial dominance of the Middle East, the American delegation to the Pentagon Talks, which included George Kennan, feared that the Arab countries would perceive the Pentagon Talks as a "sphere of influence" agreement. The United States delegation, therefore, emphasized the necessity of increasing the economic independence of Middle Eastern countries, despite compromises designed to protect the British position in the Middle East. In the end, the United States and Great Britain agreed to pursue several general plans for the economic revitalization of the Middle East. Most of these economic schemes centered on oil production or large irrigation and water development projects. The American delegation stressed that any economic projects should be owned and controlled by the Middle Eastern governments. This would limit traditional British dominance of the region, while improving the economic strength of Middle

13Ibid., 516-19.
On 25 November 1947, Truman approved a report developed at the Pentagon Talks which stated that the security of the Middle East was "vital" to the United States and Great Britain. The report targeted the improvement of economic conditions in the Middle East as the best way to contain Soviet attempts to infiltrate the region. The report, while general in nature, also stressed the importance of maintaining British influence in the region. The United States aimed to help the British fund economic revitalization in the Middle East, but without displacing British leadership in the region.\textsuperscript{15}

The policies that Truman approved in November of 1947 were generally consistent with George Kennan's conception of containment. The conclusions reached in 1947 recognized that the United States had limited resources in the Near or Middle East. British participation in Middle Eastern security would free the United States from the primary responsibility of defending the region, while allowing the United States to apply its economic strength to the revitalization of the area. Despite the continuation of British influence on Middle Eastern countries, the United States would work to develop strong, independent Middle

\textsuperscript{14}Ibid., 518, 546-48.  
\textsuperscript{15}Ibid., 582-626.
Eastern governments that could eventually defend themselves. The British agreed to these conclusions because they allowed Great Britain to maintain their economic and political position in the Middle East, while forcing the United States to pay for needed economic development. However, apart from the increased financial burden accepted by the United States in the Middle East, the policy goals remained similar to the aims Truman pursued in the Middle East in the aftermath of the World War II.

This policy did have one main weakness. The agreements reached at the Pentagon Talks assumed that Britain and the United States would always pursue "parallel policies" regarding the Arab world. While the pursuit of similar Middle Eastern policies had been a consistent post-war Anglo-American foreign policy goal, issues had risen at the same time, such as that of Palestine, which threatened western unity.

While the British and Americans could agree on policies towards Turkey and Greece, the fate of Palestine had, as early as 1946, been the major source of Anglo-American tension in the Middle East. Ever since the League of Nations had made Palestine a British protectorate in 1922, Palestine had posed problems for British policies in the Middle East. Along with the mandate, the British inherited a growing struggle between the native Arab populations and Jewish settlers, both determined to establish their own
nation in Palestine. Most of the Jewish settlers were Zionists who believed that all Jews should return to Palestine, the historic site of their biblical kingdom, and establish a Jewish state.16

In the Balfour Declaration of 1917, the British had promised to establish a "national home for the Jewish people" in Palestine.17 However the British had also promised their Arab allies in World War I that Palestine, as well as the rest of the Middle East, would become an independent Arab-controlled nation after the war.18 As the British took control of Palestine, they refused to honor either promise. Both Arabs and Zionists continually pressed Britain throughout the 1920s and 1930s to fulfill their specific wishes for the future of Palestine. Because of the seemingly irreconcilable Arab-Zionist differences, as well as Great Britain's proven bad faith, British attempts to mediate the Palestinian debate proved consistently


As the Second World War began, Zionist-Arab relations, violent throughout the inter-war years, grew increasingly chaotic. The threat posed by Nazi Germany served as the catalyst that sparked the tense situation in Palestine into open warfare. The British, in the wake of numerous unsuccessful plans to settle the Jewish-Arab dispute in Palestine, published a White Paper in 1939 that renounced the Balfour Declaration and would establish one democratic state in Palestine that would favor the Arab majorities. Great Britain decided to support Arab claims in Palestine because it offered a solution, albeit a one-sided one, to the Palestinian stalemate. Winston Churchill, then a vocal critic of Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain, also accused the government of forsaking the Balfour Declaration in "the vain hope" of mollifying German Chancellor Adolf Hitler, who violently opposed Jewish claims in Palestine. Whatever the reason for the 1939 White Paper, Zionists deeply resented Great Britain's decision to concede to Arab demands.

To

---


complicate matters in Palestine further, a flood of European Jews escaping from Nazi persecution swelled the Jewish population in Palestine to over 500,000 by 1944. Arabs in Palestine, who numbered just over a million, were fearful they would become a minority in what they considered to be their own land. Arab opposition to Jewish immigration persuaded the British to limit the Jewish influx into Palestine during and after the war. This further infuriated Zionist leaders. The Arab-Zionist dispute over immigration continued to be a key area of contention in Palestine up to the birth of an Israeli state in 1948.

As the struggle for control of Palestine became more heated, both Arabs and Jews resorted to violence to further their ends. Terrorism and random violence between Jews and Arabs, which had occurred periodically during the British mandate, became an everyday occurrence in Palestine by 1945. Both Arabs and Jews engaged in a violent series of bombings and massacres and Palestine was plunged into an undeclared war. Great Britain did not escape the violence in Palestine as their troops suffered through a rash of Zionist terrorist attacks because of Britain's pro-Arab stance.


The British did not wish to give up Palestine, but they could not quell the constant Arab-Jewish violence. The pressure Palestine placed on Great Britain's treasury, as well as the British casualties caused by Jewish terrorist attacks, compelled the British to find a new solution. As Great Britain announced her decision to cease aid to Greece and Turkey, the British also placed the Palestinian problem before the United Nations and promised to remove all her troops by 14 May 1948. The British hoped to obtain United Nations approval for a binational Palestinian state under English tutelage. This would favor the Arab majorities, whom Great Britain supported, and enable the English to maintain their military bases in Palestine.

The rationale behind British support for Arab claims in Palestine is not hard to understand. Zionist aspirations were abhorred not only by the Palestinian Arabs, but by other Arab nations throughout the region. This regional concern for the Palestinian Arabs was a manifestation of one unique quality of Arab nationalism. It consisted not only of a political loyalty to the various emerging Arab nations, but a sense that all Arabs are members of a larger Arab community. This pan-Arabic view led the other Arab countries to resent Zionist ambitions in Palestine.

23 Adabi, 29-31.
24 Louis, 394-96, 458-63.
leaders fanned the flames of this anti-Zionist feeling amongst the masses to divert attention from their own economic problems. The Arab leaders succeeded in focusing and intensifying their populations' anger towards Zionism through effective propaganda that stressed the significance of Palestine to Islam and the supposed wickedness of the Zionists. The English were well aware of this phenomenon and did not wish to jeopardize their political position among the Arab countries by supporting Jewish claims in Palestine.

Unlike the decisive course of action taken during the British withdrawal from Greece and Turkey, the Truman administration never formulated a clear course of action for Palestine. In 1946 Truman's policy generally supported Zionist objectives. The president's first substantial action in support of Zionism occurred in the aftermath of an Anglo-American study of the Palestinian problem, published in April of 1946, which offered general ideas concerning the political and economic future of Palestine. The report stressed that neither Arabs nor Jews should dominate Palestine and supported some sort of United Nations trusteeship. The Anglo-American report also suggested measures to improve the economic standing of the Arab

---

25 Stookey, 93-106.

26 Ibid., 112-117.
populations and supported admitting 100,000 Jewish refugees into Palestine. Although the mechanism for installing this trusteeship remained vague, the report presented a balanced proposal that made substantial compromises to both Arabs and Jews.27

On 30 April 1946, Truman made his first public comments concerning the report. Truman accepted the sections concerning transferring 100,000 Jewish refugees to Palestine while ignoring the political problems in Palestine.28 Truman, in the following months, continued to pressure Great Britain to admit 100,000 Jewish refugees into Palestine, but refused to act on any of the other recommendations in the report.29 The British were furious because Truman's support of drastically increased immigration was divorced from any overall political settlement in Palestine. The British argued that the influx of Jewish immigrants would complicate an already chaotic situation in Palestine, anger the Arab nations, and strengthen the Zionists who were killing British troops in Palestine. The State Department also urged Truman to develop a policy towards Palestine that addressed problems in Palestine other than the refugee

27Moore, 185-97.


29Ibid.
question. Despite British and State Department opposition, Truman continued his campaign to pressure Britain into accepting large numbers of Jewish refugees. This Anglo-American disagreement reached a low point in June of 1946 when British Foreign Minister Ernest Bevin angrily claimed that the United States supported Jewish immigration into Palestine because "they did not want too many [Jews] in New York."  

Because of the deteriorating state of Anglo-American relations, a further effort to reach an Anglo-American agreement on Palestine took place in July of 1946. On 24 July an Anglo-American group met to discuss a solution for Palestine and penned a report known as the Morrison-Grady plan. The Morrison-Grady plan was more detailed than the earlier Anglo-American report. It proposed creating a federal nation in Palestine composed of an Arab state and a Jewish state. Each federal state would control its internal affairs, while Britain would administer Palestine's foreign policy and defense. The Morrison-Grady plan would allow 100,000 Jewish refugees into Palestine one year after Great Britain and the United States implemented the scheme. Thereafter the federal states could control their own immigration, within certain limits. While the State

---

30 Ibid., 153-88.
Department and Truman favored the Morrison-Grady plan, Truman decided not to support its conclusions.32

Truman's actions concerning Palestine seem strange considering United States policy objectives in the Middle East. Truman's support for increased Jewish immigration into Palestine damaged American relations with the Arab countries and caused a growing rift between British and American policies in the Middle East, consequences contrary to United States policy objectives there. A number of factors prompted Truman to support unconditionally increased Jewish immigration and to reject Anglo-American plans to solve the political problems in Palestine.

Because of the president's sympathy for the survivors of the Holocaust, Truman felt that Palestine should be a haven for the thousands of Jews who survived Hitler's death camps.33 Furthermore, Truman hoped that the technical expertise of Jewish settlers would help economically revitalize Palestine.34 Because of these convictions, Truman tended to be sympathetic towards some Zionist initiatives, particularly increased immigration into Palestine.

32FRUS, 1946, 5: 651-62.
33Harry Truman, 132-33.
34Ibid., 156.
Although Truman had some compassion for the Zionist cause, domestic politics also influenced Truman's attitude toward the Palestinian dilemma. The Holocaust had galvanized support for the Zionist struggle in the American Jewish community. The overwhelming majority of Jewish-Americans favored the establishment of a Jewish state in Palestine. American Zionist supporters formed the American Zionist Emergency Council (A.Z.E.C), a subgroup of the United Jewish Appeal, to coordinate the many groups working to help Jewish settlers in Palestine. The A.Z.E.C. had formidable monetary backing and was able to mount an intensive lobbying campaign in Washington.\textsuperscript{35} Truman and other Democratic party officials feared that losing Jewish votes over Palestine might cause Democratic congressional candidates in the Northeast to be defeated in the fall elections.\textsuperscript{36} Pressure from Jewish groups, in large part, caused Truman's rejection of the Anglo-American Inquiry and the Morrison-Grady plan. Jewish-American groups, while heartened by Truman's stand on immigration, refused to consider either Anglo-American plan because of the limits it would have placed on the proposed Jewish states sovereignty. In particular, Zionist supporters opposed the Morrison-Grady plan because of the one year waiting period before the


\textsuperscript{36}Snetsinger, 24-25.
admittance of Jewish refugees.\textsuperscript{37} In the aftermath of Truman's rejection of the Morrison-Grady plan, Dean Acheson admitted to the British that although Truman favored that Anglo-American plan, "the extreme feelings in centers of Jewish populations" prevented the administration from acting on it.\textsuperscript{38}

Supporting increased immigration into Palestine also proved politically beneficial in another important way. While a strong core of support for Israel existed in the large Jewish communities in the Northeast, the majority of the nation remained apathetic towards the struggle. Despite the indifference of the general population towards Israel, supporting Zionist demands in Palestine proved politically beneficial in helping Truman resist international pressure to embrace some of the Jewish refugees. Despite the plight of Jewish refugees, Congress had established strict limitations on immigration and one public opinion survey in 1946 showed that only forty-three percent of those polled supported allowing any Jewish refugees into the country.\textsuperscript{39} In a memorandum to the president in May of 1946, Truman's administrative assistant David Niles predicted that any increases in immigration would lead to "terrific resistance"


\textsuperscript{38}\textit{FRUS}, 1946, 5: 673-74.

\textsuperscript{39}Kuniholm and Rubner, 49.
by the American public. He wondered how the United States could ask other nations to accept Jewish refugees "when we ourselves are unable to." Because of domestic opposition to increased immigration, Truman never seriously pressured Congress to allow Jewish refugees to immigrate to the United States. Since allowing Jewish refugees to immigrate to the United States presented domestic problems, a Jewish state in Palestine must have seemed an attractive solution to the problem of Jewish refugees in Europe.

The role of presidential adviser David Niles in forming a Palestinian policy also bears examination. Niles began his government career in the Roosevelt administration where he worked to secure political support for Roosevelt's policies among Jewish-Americans. The Palestinian question also concerned Niles, who was unabashedly pro-Zionist. Because of his domestic relationship with Jewish-Americans and his interest in the Palestinian problem, Niles became Truman's chief White House adviser concerning Palestine from 1945 to 1947. Niles screened all documents concerning Palestine before he sent them to the president, but many of those he sent were taken verbatim from Zionist sources and

---

41 Kuniholm and Rubner, 48-50.
42 Ganin, 24-25, 60, 73-74, 103-106.
were of questionable objectivity.\textsuperscript{43} While Niles' rapport with Jewish-American groups may have been beneficial to Truman domestically, as a foreign policy adviser Niles displayed a distressing ignorance of the situation in Palestine, particularly concerning the Arabs. For example, Niles stated, in a 1946 report, that there was little chance of a violent Arab reaction against increased Jewish immigration since most Arabs followed "Gandhi and his philosophy of nonresistance."\textsuperscript{44} Niles' portrayal of the Arabs, which minimized their resistance to Zionism, probably had some bearing on Truman's decisions concerning increased immigration to Palestine.

The possible effects of Jewish refugees on European recovery also may have compelled Truman to support increased immigration into Palestine. General John H. Hilldring, assistant secretary of state for occupied areas in Europe, wrote Assistant Secretary of State Acheson on 3 May 1946 that "military and political interests in Germany and Austria" made it imperative to resettle immediately Jewish refugees. To this end Hilldring urged the administration to pursue "an aggressive policy of needling the British" to admit Jewish refugees into Palestine.\textsuperscript{45}

\textsuperscript{43} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{44} Memorandum, Niles to Truman 27 May 1946, Harry Truman Library, Independence, Missouri. Quoted in Tschirgi 184-85.

\textsuperscript{45} FRUS, 1946, 7: 591-92.
never specifically mentioned how the refugee problem would adversely affect the political situation in Germany, Truman viewed any possible threat to European security seriously.

While none of these motivations alone shaped Truman's policy towards Palestine, the combination of domestic pressure, from both pro-Zionists and the general public, Truman's own thoughts concerning Palestine, the situation in Europe and the influence of David Niles caused Truman to give United States support to large-scale Jewish immigration into Palestine. By supporting increased immigration, Truman hoped to satisfy domestic pressures and solve a pressing humanitarian problem. Eager to solve the Jewish refugee problem, Truman may have believed, in large part because of Niles' influence, that a solution to the political questions in Palestine could be readily attained.

Unfortunately for Truman, this policy failed miserably. Despite Truman's pleas, the British refused to increase immigration without a political settlement in Palestine. Because of this impasse, Great Britain lost interest in working with the United States to find a solution in Palestine. After the failure of the Morrison-Grady plan, Great Britain decided to use the United Nations to find a settlement that would restore order and allow the British to retain some influence in Palestine. The British placed the future of Palestine before the United Nations on 28 April
Supporting increased immigration did win some short term support for Truman from Zionist supporters in America, but it ruined Anglo-American cooperation. In addition, Truman found that Jewish-Americans began to demand much more from him in 1947 and 1948 as the Palestinian question came before the General Assembly.

On 15 May, the General Assembly formed the United Nations' Special Committee on Palestine (U.N.S.C.O.P) to study the crisis and develop a proposal for a settlement. The U.N.S.C.O.P. proposal, submitted on 3 September 1947, favored a partition of Palestine into two states, one Arab and one Jewish. The two states were to be politically separate but tied together by an economic union. Each state would have almost complete control over issues such as immigration in their own regions. To foster the economic revitalization of the area, U.N.S.C.O.P gave large Arab controlled areas to the Jewish state, in the hopes that the Zionists could develop the region.

Zionists roundly applauded this scheme because of its implicit recognition of the viability of a Jewish state in Palestine and pledged to form their state as soon as the British withdrew from Palestine. On the other hand, the Arab nations pledged to erase any Jewish state from the map

---

46 Louis, 459-77.

47 Moore, 260-299.
Reprinted from Louis, 494.
and looked more favorably on a report published by three members of the U.N.S.C.O.P commission that dissented from the majority report. This minority report, which was similar to the 1939 White Paper, proposed the establishment of a democratic state in Palestine, which would favor the Arab majorities. The minority report granted political guarantees for the Jewish minorities and strictly limited Jewish immigration.\textsuperscript{48} The British also supported the minority report because it would create a Palestinian state that would be more acceptable to her Arab allies. Furthermore, the British hoped that an Arab-controlled Palestine might allow Great Britain to retain some influence in the state, despite rising Arab nationalism, because any new Palestinian state, Arab or Jewish, would need international support.\textsuperscript{49}

State Department personnel who dealt with the Middle East had grave reservations about the wisdom of the partition plan. Loy Henderson and United Nation's Ambassador Warren V. Austin told Secretary of State George C. Marshall, at a meeting on 15 September 1947, that the United Nations could not implement the partition plan without military force, considering the violent situation in

\textsuperscript{48} FRUS, 1947, 5: 1143-45, 1292-93, 1305.

\textsuperscript{49} Louis, 464-77.
Palestine. A week later Henderson prepared a report on the U.N.S.C.O.P. that detailed several reasons why the United States should not support the plan. Henderson emphasized the importance of Arab oil and the severe damage supporting the partition plan would have on Arab-American relations. Furthermore the partition plan gave too much of Palestine to the Jewish minority.

Despite opposition from his foreign policy experts and the British, Marshall publicly announced United States support for the U.N.S.C.O.P majority partition plan on 3 October 1947. The United Nations scheduled a General Assembly vote on implementing the partition plan for 29 November 1947. Pressure by the American delegation was largely responsible for the General Assembly's approval of the partition plan on that date. The British, stung by the partition vote, immediately announced that they would withdraw her troops from Palestine on 15 May 1948. Zionist leaders roundly applauded the decision and pledged to form their nation as soon as the British withdrew from Palestine. The Arabs also pledged to attack any Jewish state as soon as

---


51 Ibid., 1153-59.

it was formed. 53

As with support for increased Jewish immigration, the administration backed the partition plan because of Truman's beliefs and because of international and domestic pressures. Since Truman's efforts to settle the refugee problem had failed throughout 1946, the partition plan offered a new opportunity to resettle Jewish refugees. 54 In addition, as the United Nations debated the future of Palestine, the Holy Land plunged deeper into an undeclared war between Arabs and Jews. The deteriorating situation heightened Jewish-American political pressure on the White House to aid the Zionists. In his Memoirs, Truman later claimed that political pressure concerning Palestine was the most intense he ever felt. Between 1947 and 1949, the White House received over one million letters supporting Jewish claims in Palestine. The A.Z.E.C. also effectively lobbied Congress. By 1948 a majority in both houses of Congress had publicly announced support for a Jewish state in Palestine. Although Truman grumbled about the occasionally blunt tactics used by Zionist supporters, the president could not ignore the domestic support for Zionism among Jewish-

53 Louis, 492-500.
54 Harry Truman, 156-58.
Americans because of the upcoming presidential election.  

As the presidential election neared, Niles' influence on policies toward Palestine began to wane as special counsel to the president Clark Clifford gained influence in the White House. By 1947, Clifford had become one of Truman's closest advisers. While Clifford remained Truman's chief political adviser, he also often became involved in foreign policy affairs, particularly concerning Palestine. Clifford soon became the most important supporter of the partition plan in the administration.

Some historians have accused Clifford of supporting partition simply to placate Jewish-American voters. Clifford, for his part, has consistently maintained that politics were only "a minor factor" in Truman's decision to support the partition plan. While it is true that other factors besides politics influenced Truman's decisions concerning Palestine, the evidence suggests that the quest for Jewish votes became the major motivation behind United States policy by November of 1947. On 19 November 1947, Clifford explained his strategy for the upcoming 1948


56Historians that share this view include Snetsinger; Peter Grose, Israel in the Mind of America (New York: Alfred A Knopf, 1983); Kuniholm and Rubner; and Tschirgi.

election campaign to the president in a lengthy memorandum. The Palestinian question loomed large in his thinking. Clifford considered New York state as "the first prize" in any presidential election. Furthermore, Clifford reminded the president that, besides Woodrow Wilson, "no candidate [had] lost New York and won the Presidency." To win New York's forty-seven electoral votes, Clifford wrote that Truman needed strong support from Jewish voters in New York City to neutralize the Republican majority in the rest of the state. Clifford also realized that "the Jewish bloc [was] interested primarily in Palestine" and United Nations policies in support of Zionism had the "general approval" of Jewish-Americans.

While Clifford acknowledged the political advantages of supporting Zionism, he also stressed that United States policies towards Palestine should be "founded upon intrinsic merit" and not "political expediency."58 While Clifford emphasized that Truman should not play politics with the Palestinian question, as the presidential election drew closer and Truman's chances at winning seemed almost nil without the Jewish vote in New York City, it became increasingly difficult for Clifford and Truman to base their support of partition on "intrinsic merit."

58 Memorandum, Clifford to Truman, 19 November 1947, Clifford Papers, Harry S. Truman Library. Quoted in Snetsinger, 95-96.
While Jewish-Americans hailed Truman's stand on the partition plan, State Department personnel who had devised the Middle Eastern containment policy overwhelmingly opposed it. A flood of reports and memoranda poured out of the State Department before and after Truman had decided to support the partition plan, pointing out the problems that a pro-Zionist policy posed to a containment policy for the Middle East. According to the State Department, supporting a Jewish state in Palestine would hopelessly antagonize the Arab states whose friendship the United States was cultivating. Arab hostility over this emotional issue would certainly push the Arab states closer to the Soviet Union and imperil Middle Eastern oil supplies. Israel could only survive, in the eyes of most State Department officials, with large levels of American economic and military support. In addition, backing a Jewish state in Palestine would place the United States in direct conflict with Great Britain, who militarily supported the Arab nations. Any substantial support for a Jewish state would create a situation, according to all these reports, that would enhance Soviet efforts to infiltrate the Middle East.\(^{59}\) George Kennan, head of the Policy Planning Staff, bluntly stated that support of a Jewish state in Palestine would be "directly counter to our major security interests" in the Middle East.

Truman and Marshall seemed to have been swayed by the volume of dissent echoing from the State Department, as well as the growing awareness in Washington that the Arab states would not abide by the United Nations' partition plan. Marshall came to view the partition plan as unworkable and hoped the General Assembly would reconsider the issue of Palestine. On 9 March 1948, Marshall, with Truman's approval, ordered Ambassador Austin to stop actively supporting partition at the United Nations. If a vote came up to kill the partition plan, Austin was to abstain and let it die. By early March, Truman had approved a gradual withdrawal of support for partition. This change of tactics was almost certainly caused by the fear of weakening the United States containment policy for the Middle East.

By early March, it had become apparent to pro-Zionist supporters that the Truman administration was trying to withdraw support for the partition plan. This policy shift manifested itself in the United Nations, where the United States refused to sanction the use of troops to enforce the partition plan. Furthermore, the United States delegation, which had once been the most vocal supporter of partition,

---

60 Ibid., 656.
61 Ibid., 679-85, 701-705.
began to hint that the plan might be unworkable.\footnote{Weizmann, 472.}
Clifford, in response to these actions, launched a campaign to protect the partition plan.

Clifford penned a report on 8 March 1948 that staunchly supported partition, but again stressed that domestic politics should play no part in the president's decision. Clifford's long range goals for the Middle East were radically different from those approved by Truman at the Pentagon Talks. Unlike Department analysts, who saw support for the Arab states as the key for stabilizing the region, Clifford stated that increased aid for Israel would be in the United States best interest. Clifford asserted that contrary to State Department wisdom, moving away from partition would weaken the United Nations and enhance Soviet attempts to infiltrate the Middle East. Rejecting partition would damage United States credibility by making it appear that Truman was "trembling before the threats of a few nomadic tribes."\footnote{FRUS, 1948, 5: 687-96.}

Clifford also insisted that the Jewish state would present a stronger and more dependable ally in the Middle East than the "fanatical Moslems." Clifford, unlike the analysts in the State Department, saw that the Jewish settlers had a good chance of winning the almost inevitable
conflict with the Arab states. By contrast, by early 1948, most analysts in the State Department shared Secretary Marshall's conviction that the Zionists could not "hope to hold out" against the combined weight of the Arab nations.\textsuperscript{64} However, Clifford's faith in the Zionist leaders was well-founded. By January of 1948, the A.Z.E.C. had raised at least $50,000,000 for Zionist leaders in Palestine. These funds enabled Zionist leaders to train their forces and buy large quantities of modern military equipment from across Europe and America and smuggle it into Palestine. The Zionist cause had the men, equipment, and leadership to defend itself by 1948.\textsuperscript{65} The economically and militarily weak Arab states could not hope to match this degree of funding.

Clifford's report also attempted to minimize the danger of Arab resentment towards United States support for Zionism. Clifford stated correctly, at least in the short term, that the Arabs depended on revenues from American companies for economic survival. In 1948, American oil companies controlled Arab oil fields and compensated the Arab political leaders with a large royalty check. Because of this economic influence, Clifford asserted that the

\textsuperscript{64}Kuniholm and Rubner, 45.

United States could support Israel and not lose the use of Arab oil. Clifford contended that the Arab countries would never embrace communism because it "would be committing suicide" to turn away from the United States.\(^{66}\)

While Clifford's analysis proved correct in the short term, it completely discounted the importance of Arab nationalism. Furthermore, Clifford's ideas ran completely counter to the major goal of the containment policy outlined at the Pentagon Talks, bolstering the economic well-being of the underdeveloped Arab states, and sprang from his obvious contempt for the military and political influence of the Arab states. While Clifford's analysis of the Arab states' power in 1948 proved correct, it overlooked the fact that the whole premise of the Middle Eastern containment policy centered on strengthening the Moslem world as a buffer against the Soviets. Supporting the partition plan would surely alienate the Arab states and sabotage attempts to improve their economies.

As the State Department and Clifford continued their debate on the course of United States policies in Palestine, Zionist supporters looked for a direct avenue to the president to press their case. However, because of the intense pressure on the White House Truman refused to meet with any Zionist supporters. Desperate for a meeting with

\(^{66}\)FRUS, 1948, 5: 696; Stookey, 70-73.
Truman, Frank Goldman, president of B'nai B'rith, persuaded the president's old friend Eddie Jacobson to arrange a meeting with Chaim Weizmann, a respected Zionist leader. Jacobson, a Jewish-American and an ardent Zionist supporter, convinced Truman to meet Weizmann on 18 March 1948.  

Weizmann, a thoughtful and persuasive speaker, intrigued Truman with his vision of an economically revitalized Palestine. Weizmann reiterated his contention that Jewish settlers had the technological ability to construct a Jordanian water project that would improve the living conditions for all inhabitants of Palestine, both Jewish and Arab. Truman, by all accounts, was taken by Weizmann's message and promised the Zionist leader that the United States would continue to support the United Nations' partition plan. Indeed, Clifford's memoranda and Weizmann's 18 March visit seemed to have revitalized Truman's support of the partition plan. Unfortunately for the president, the State Department had just begun to implement Truman's earlier decision to withdraw support for partition.

On 19 March 1948, the day after Truman promised Weizmann he would continue to support partition, the United States ambassador to the United Nations, Warren Austin, 

---

67 Tschirgi, 249; Harry Truman, 160-61.

68 Weizmann, 472-73; Harry Truman, 161.
announced that the partition plan was dead and withdrew support for the proposed Jewish state in Palestine.\footnote{FRUS, 1948, 5: 742-44.} Truman claimed, and maintained throughout his life, that he never approved Austin's speech on 19 March 1948. The president asserted that Austin's speech was a ploy by an anti-Semitic State Department to force him into abandoning support for Zionism.\footnote{Margaret Truman, 388; Harry Truman, 159-60, 164.} However, Robert Lovett, Undersecretary of State, vehemently denied this charge and maintained that Truman had approved the speech.\footnote{FRUS, 1948, 5: 749-50.}

There has been considerable historical debate on whether Truman approved Austin's speech. Truman almost certainly approved a draft of the speech on the morning of 8 March 1948. Marshall and Truman also discussed and approved withdrawing support for partition on 9 March.\footnote{Ibid., 744-46 and 749-50.} However, Clifford's memo and Weizmann's visit came after Truman approved the speech. It simply appears that Truman had another change of heart concerning Palestine after approving Austin's 19 March speech.

Truman's assertion that State Department officials were anti-Semitic also merits examination. While it is quite possible that some State Department personnel were anti-
Semitic, there is no compelling evidence that racism drove State Department opposition to Israel. While some in the Department may have disliked Jews, some American officials also referred to the Moslems as "dirty A-rabs." State Department officials supported the Arab states, not because of any hatred for either side, but simply because they believed that the vast oil reserves in the Middle East made it strategically vital to strengthen the Moslem world against communism. Consequently Department officials resented the influence supporters of Israel seemed to have with Truman.

In the aftermath of Austin's remarks, Truman felt the wrath of outraged Zionist supporters who branded Austin's speech as an act of appeasement equal to the Munich Conference of 1938. Whether or not he was misled concerning Austin's speech, Truman blamed the State Department for placing him in an embarrassing position. Despite his displeasure, Truman allowed the State Department and the United Nations to develop an alternate settlement in Palestine, based on a United Nations trusteeship. The United States delegation at the United Nations worked long hours in an attempt to set up this trusteeship before the

---

73 Louis, 484.

removal of British forces from Palestine on 15 May 1948.\textsuperscript{75} However, by May of 1948, events in Palestine had made either partition or a trusteeship obsolete.

Zionist leaders refused to consider any United Nations plan that did not include a sovereign Jewish state. Regardless of what the United Nations did, Zionist leaders announced they would establish their own state in Palestine in the areas allotted by the partition plan on 15 May 1948, the day that the British mandate ended.\textsuperscript{76} Clifford urged that the United States immediately recognize the new Jewish state, while the State Department continued to oppose this step and supported a trusteeship.\textsuperscript{77} As May approached, Truman remained non-committal concerning Palestine. The debate between Clifford and the State Department over recognition of Israel came to a head at a meeting on 12 May 1948.

At this meeting, which Secretary Marshall described in a memorandum, Truman and his top advisers bluntly stated their positions. Clifford argued that recognition of Israel would boost American prestige in the United Nations. Clifford also feared that the Soviet Union would recognize Israel and that the new state might fall into the Soviet


\textsuperscript{76}Ibid., 756-57, 764-65.

\textsuperscript{77}Ganin, 162-63.
sphere. On the other hand, Robert Lovett opposed recognizing the Jewish state until the United States was certain what kind of government would be established there. Lovett compared prematurely recognizing Israel to "buying a pig in a poke." He also stated that Clifford's advice was a very transparent attempt to win the Jewish vote."

Marshall agreed with Lovett's assessment of Clifford's motives. Marshall declared that Clifford based his advice on "domestic political considerations, while the problem which confronted us was international." Marshall also proclaimed that if he were a voter in the upcoming presidential election and Truman followed Clifford's advice, he "would vote against the President."78

The harsh criticism from Marshall, a man Truman revered, convinced Truman to reconsider the recognition question. However, Clifford continued to pressure Lovett into supporting recognition. On 14 May, Clifford informed Lovett that "the President was under unbearable pressure to recognize the Jewish state promptly." Clifford declared that State Department arguments had at first convinced Truman to delay recognition, but Truman feared that anarchy would reign in Palestine on 15 May unless a Jewish state replaced the British presence in Palestine. Because of these reasons Truman had decided to extend de facto

78 FRUS, 1948, 5: 972-77.
recognition of the new state. While Clifford's arguments did not sway Lovett, the undersecretary, fearful that Marshall might resign and convinced that Truman would eventually recognize Israel anyway, agreed to work to implement this new policy. Lovett only asked that Truman delay recognition for a few days so that the Department could study the Jewish proclamation and inform their diplomatic personnel of these developments. Clifford again insisted that quickly recognizing the new Jewish state would be "of the greatest possible importance to the President from a domestic point of view." Lovett and Marshall thus reluctantly went along with Truman's decision on Palestine. 79

Clifford and Truman carefully concealed their decision to recognize Israel immediately from the United Nations delegation, because Truman's recognition of the Israeli state would surely embarrass Ambassador Austin and the United States delegation, who had worked for weeks in the General Assembly to garner support for a United Nations trusteeship in Palestine. On 14 May 1948, Clifford only gave Austin fifteen minutes warning of Truman's decision to recognize the new Jewish state. The president's sudden reversal so disgusted Austin, that he left the United Nations before the official announcement became known in the

General Assembly. Furthermore, according to Dean Rusk, Director of the Office of Special Political Affairs in the State Department, when news of Truman's recognition of Israel became known in the General Assembly, the United Nations dissolved into "pandemonium." Rusk also claimed that Truman's policy reversal so upset members of the General Assembly that a "U.S. Mission man literally sat on the lap of the Cuban Delegate to keep him from going to the podium to withdraw Cuba from the United Nations." Predictably the Arab states denounced the United States action. As soon as Jewish settlers proclaimed the existence of Israel, the Arab states attacked the new state and the area plunged into the war.

Despite Clifford's protestations that Truman based his Palestine policy on "intrinsic merit," the documents clearly show that political concerns played a key role in Clifford and Truman's support for the immediate recognition of Israel. However, Clifford's analysis of the situation in Palestine and Truman's sympathy for the plight of European Jews also had an impact. Although immediate recognition of Israel won him support from Jewish-Americans, Truman gained only a slight reprieve from pro-Israeli pressure. As the election neared Jewish voters demanded Truman send military and economic aid to embattled Israel, a step the State

\[80\text{FRUS, 1948, 5: 993.}\]
Department opposed.  

In conclusion, Truman's policy towards Israel underwent two embarrassing public policy reversals in 1948. Truman's indecision damaged both Anglo-American and Arab-Americans relations, as well as injuring United States prestige in the United Nations. Unfortunately for Truman, the remainder of 1948 would see another emotional struggle between the State Department, which continued to promote containment in the Middle East along the lines established at the Pentagon Talks, and Clifford who pushed for increased support of Israel. And as the election neared, Truman and Clifford found it increasingly difficult to withstand the political pressure from Jewish-Americans.

---

81 Snetsinger, 117-119; and Ganin, 188-89.
CHAPTER 2

THE BERNADOTTE PLAN AND CONTAINMENT
MAY 1948–JANUARY 1949

Truman's swift de facto recognition of Israel gained him broad support in the American-Jewish community. Jews around the world hailed President Truman for his actions as well.¹ Yet the decision had been one that had nearly torn the Truman administration apart and severely damaged United States relations with Great Britain and the Arab states. In addition, Jewish leaders in Palestine had little time to celebrate their victory. On 15 May 1948, within hours of Israel's declaration of statehood, the Arab League, a loose alliance of Arab states made up of Iraq, Saudi Arabia, Lebanon, Syria, Transjordan, and Egypt, attacked Israel. Domestic and international constraints had limited the Truman administration's attempts to implement a Middle Eastern containment policy before May of 1948; the war further complicated the administration's task. De facto recognition had made the United States one of the major

¹Snetsinger, 115-119.
international supporters of Israel. In the months following, the Truman administration attempted to sustain this support for Israel while helping to mediate an end to the war. Simultaneously, the Truman administration sought to strengthen the Arab states and help Great Britain maintain its status in the Middle East. Pursuing all of these goals proved almost impossible for the administration.

The 1948 Arab-Israeli war was a confusing swirl of violent small engagements that some historians have hopelessly romanticized.\(^2\) Contrary to popular belief, Israeli forces were never seriously threatened by the invading Arab armies. At the outbreak of the conflict, Israeli military forces were of at least equal strength, were better trained, and fielded superior equipment than the badly disorganized Arab armies. Although United States intelligence estimates had underestimated Zionist strength before the conflict, it quickly became evident that Israel held military superiority over the Arab states.\(^3\)

From 15 May to 10 June, the Arab League prosecuted its war against Israel, but Arab forces made almost no penetration into predominantly Jewish regions. The only Arab successes of the conflict occurred in Jerusalem and in

\(^2\)Dan Kurzman's *Genesis 1948* is a good example of this phenomenon.

Reprinted from Louis, 572.
the Negev desert, which were remote from major Jewish strongholds. While only a few Jewish settlers lived in the desert, the area had been allotted to the Jewish state by U.N.S.C.O.P. Although these areas remained distant from the main body of Jewish troops, the Israelis managed to hold the northern part of the Negev and maintained their positions in Jerusalem. After Israel stopped the initial Arab attack, Jewish forces pushed back the invaders and seized areas in Galilee that were not part of the U.N.S.C.O.P. Jewish state.

The United Nations, which had been working since 1947 to find a settlement in Palestine, sought to end the fighting and affect a permanent settlement. The unenviable task of mediating the Arab-Israeli conflict fell on Count Folke Bernadotte, head of the Swedish Red Cross, on 20 May 1948. During World War II, Bernadotte had used his position in neutral Sweden to arrange prisoner exchanges between Allied and German troops. As the war ended, Bernadotte delivered a surrender offer by German Gestapo chief Heinrich Himmler to the Allied command. Bernadotte was, therefore, a well known international figure who was well versed in delicate international negotiations. While Bernadotte began his mediation in earnest, the battle in Palestine

---


raged on.

Although the Israelis held a military advantage over their Arab enemies, Israel maintained a public image of a nation on the brink of military disaster. Considering the tremendous size and population advantages held by the Arab states, this fiction was easy for Israel to maintain.6 Such an inaccurate notion of the Arab-Israeli conflict certainly served Israel's war effort. The American Zionist Emergency Council [A.Z.E.C.] raised $71,800,000 of donations in the United States for the new state of Israel during a May 1948 visit by Zionist leader Golda Myerson [Meir].7 These funds, combined with the huge sums that the A.Z.E.C. raised in January of 1948, gave Israel impressive financial resources.

Furthermore, the Zionists began receiving secret military aid from Czechoslovakia as early as December of 1947. The Czechs supported Israel in the hope that Czechoslovakian Jews, a perceived threat to their regime, would move to Israel.8 With the Communist takeover in Czechoslovakia in February 1948, the flow of arms into Israel increased and the Soviets approved a Czechoslovakian plan to train Jewish troops outside of Prague.9

---

7Meir, 233-35.
8Green, 60-65; FRUS, 1948 5: 1580.
9Ibid., 69-70.
support for Israel had also manifested itself in backing for the United Nations partition plan. In addition, while the United States was the first state to extend de facto recognition of Israel, the Soviets also quickly recognized the new state and became the first nation to extend the more formal de jure recognition.

The motives behind Soviet support for Israel were based on some common ground held by the Zionists and the Soviets and the joint desire to remove the British from Palestine. Soviet dogma had, since 1930, denounced Zionism as an "exponent of the exploiting, big power, imperialist oppressive strivings of the Hebrew bourgeoisie." However, during World War II, Jewish settlers in Palestine gave the Soviet Union money and supplies to aid in the battle against Hitler. This aid to the Soviets, while not of any genuine military consequence, did build some friendly ties between Zionist leaders and the Soviets. The Soviets also hoped that supporting the Zionists would hasten the departure of the British from Palestine and place strains on the already tense Anglo-American and Arab-American relations. Israel thus found itself in the enviable international position in 1948 of receiving support from both the United States and

\[10\] Ibid., 23.

the Soviet Union.

This international support for Israel, from both sides of the iron curtain, left the Arab states without the means to overcome the restraints of the Anglo-American arms embargo. The British could not send arms to their Arab allies because of an earlier Anglo-American arms embargo to the Middle East. In an attempt to limit the terrorist violence leading up to the war in Palestine, the United States had imposed an arms embargo on the Middle East on 5 December 1947. In response to the American embargo, the British also placed an arms embargo on the region. With Anglo-American support, the United Nations had also passed a resolution to institute an arms embargo on Palestine as of 17 April 1948. When the war began in May, the Arab states demanded arms from their British allies and Jewish-Americans pressured the United States to supply weapons to Israel.

Unbeknownst to most Zionist supporters in America, who pressured the Truman administration to end the embargo, the Israelis were able to use the huge influx of money from private Jewish contributions to smuggle in arms. American supporters of Israel were also unaware of the support Israel

---

12 Saul Slonim, "1948 American Embargo on Arms to Palestine," Political Science Quarterly, 94 (Fall, 1979): 495-514.

13 A. Joseph Heckelman, American Volunteers and Israel's War of Independence (New York: Ktav Publishing House, 1974), 72-81; Green, 58-75; Avriel, 327-54.
received from Czechoslovakia; thus most Israeli supporters in the United States thought the Zionists were desperately short of military equipment. Therefore Jewish-Americans placed severe political pressure on the Truman administration throughout 1948 to forward large loans to Israel and repeal the arms embargo so the United States could extend military assistance to what they saw as an embattled Jewish state.\textsuperscript{14} At the same time, the Arab states demanded that Britain, their major military supplier, help them in their struggle against Israel.\textsuperscript{15} However, British Foreign Minister Ernest Bevin believed that if Great Britain tried to supply arms to her Arab allies, the United States would be compelled to drop the embargo and might aid Israel. If the United States sent military aid to Israel, the British would be forced by treaty obligations to send military aid to the Arab states. Either event would place the two allies on opposite sides of the Arab-Israeli conflict.\textsuperscript{16}

The possibility of an Anglo-American clash over Palestine seemed possible by May and June of 1948. In June, British officials warned Loy Henderson that any Israeli attack on Transjordan would result in military action from

\textsuperscript{14}Tivnan, 24-35; Harry Truman, 158-60; Margaret Truman, 384-90.

\textsuperscript{15}Louis, 362-63.

\textsuperscript{16}Louis, 536.
Great Britain, no matter what side the United States backed. While the thought of facing off against the United States horrified the Foreign Office, British officials were clearly determined to defend their interests in the Middle East. United States officials viewed these developments as devastating to containment since pursuing "parallel policies" in the Middle East with Great Britain remained a key element in United States containment policy.

Despite the perceived importance of Jewish votes to Truman's re-election campaign, the administration did not immediately respond to Zionist demands. Truman did not extend economic aid to Israel until January of 1949 and also refused to lift the Middle Eastern arms embargo. The president chose a cautious stance towards Israel in the latter half of 1948 because of his concerns about containment and Soviet influence in the Middle East. United States officials saw actions such as support for the U.N.S.C.O.P. partition and the Czechoslovakian arm shipments to Israel as proof of Soviet efforts to take advantage of the chaos brought on by the Arab-Israeli conflict. United States officials also believed that the goal of Soviet policy in the region was the removal of British influence in the Middle East, the creation of instability in the region,

17 FRUS, 1948, 5: 1100-1101.

18 Louis, 535-40.
and the disruption of Arab-American and Anglo-American relations.  

The Soviets did attempt to maintain ties with the Arab states, even while supporting Zionism. Throughout the inter-war years, the Soviet Union had backed Arab claims in Palestine, because of the Soviet's dogmatic opposition to Zionism. Although Arab communist parties existed in the 1930s and 1940s, they remained small because of the conservative nature of Moslem society. While the Arab governments were stridently anti-communist, their defeats at the hands of the Israelis encouraged Arab communist parties, who played on the anger over United States support for Israel to win followers. Even more distressing to the United States was the plight of the 750,000 Palestinian refugees displaced by the war. Both the Israeli and Arab governments refused to deal with this problem and the Palestinians were forced to live in squalid camps on the edge of starvation. To American policy makers, these destitute people might serve as a prime target for Soviet propaganda.

---

20 Voth, 19-28.
21 FRUS, 1948, 5: 1169, 1182, 1293.
22 Ibid., 1331-32, 1444, 1486, 1491, 1567-68.
Because of the conservative nature of Arab culture, the threat of communism did not appear to be a significant short term threat to most United States officials. However, the State Department and the Central Intelligence Agency feared that the dislocation and misery brought about by a prolonged conflict would create opportunities for Soviet infiltration into the Middle East. Furthermore, there was considerable concern in the State Department that Truman, under political pressure, would repeal the Middle Eastern arms embargo and send military hardware to Israel. If Truman changed his position on the arms embargo, it might lead to conflict with the British and place the United States in the position of making another embarrassing policy reversal before the United Nations. These concerns about the arms embargo led the State Department to reject any Israeli request for military aid.

In a meeting with Truman on 17 May, Secretary Marshall told Truman that the United States decision to recognize Israel had caused "a hell of a mess" and had caused United States prestige in the United Nations to "hit an all-time low." Consequently, any changes in United States policy concerning the arms embargo, considering previous United States support for the 17 April arms embargo resolution in the United Nations, might "give a final kick" to the

23Ibid., 1246-48.
authority of the United Nations.24

The State Department position on Israel was further clarified by George Kennan and Undersecretary of State Robert Lovett. On 21 May, Kennan warned that the United States should not become the permanent guarantor of Israeli interests. By directly backing Israel, the United States would push the Arab states closer to the Soviets and endanger important United States interests in the Middle East. Kennan also felt, in keeping with the Middle East containment policy, that the United States should not take any action that would "bring us into conflict with the British over the Palestine issue." In Kennan's opinion, close United States support of Israel would "disrupt the unity of the western world and . . . undermine our entire policy towards the Soviet Union."25 Undersecretary of State Robert Lovett immediately sent Kennan's memorandum to Secretary of State Marshall. Lovett added a brief note that supported the major points in Kennan's memo.26 Upon receiving these memos on 25 May, Secretary Marshall noted his agreement concerning Palestine.27

24Ibid., 1007-1008.
25Ibid., 1020-21.
26Ibid., 1021-22.
27Ibid.
After the start of the war the Israeli government wasted little time in asking for United States aid. On 25 May, Truman met with Chaim Weizmann, President of the Provisional Government of Israel. In the brief meeting and in a note Weizmann left with Truman, Israel pleaded for American military and economic assistance. On 26 May, Weizmann wrote another note to Truman in which he reiterated Israel's plea for assistance and also requested, as did Israeli Foreign Secretary Moshe Shertok on 19 May, that the United States and Israel exchange diplomatic representatives.28

Marshall agreed with Kennan's very broad policy objectives: that the United States should not become closely aligned with Israel and should not further damage Anglo-American cooperation in the Middle East. However, Weizmann's letters forced the United States to formulate specific responses to requests made by the Israeli government for military assistance, economic aid, and an exchange of diplomats. The State Department's response was not long in coming. In a memo delivered to Truman on 26 May, the Department warned that repeal of the arms embargo would cause "greater bloodshed in Palestine," place a "serious strain" on Anglo-American relations, and would be contrary to the Security Council's 17 April resolution. The

28Ibid., 1012-1013, 1042-43, 1050-51.
memo urged that Truman continue to work for an immediate end to the conflict in Palestine and support United Nations' attempts to implement an arms embargo.29

Despite intense Jewish lobbying to repeal the arms embargo, Truman backed the State Department's recommendations of 26 May. Furthermore, on 29 May, the United States supported another United Nations resolution including a Palestinian arms embargo. Although State Department arguments may have been persuasive, domestic considerations probably entered into Truman's calculations. One poll in 1948 indicated that eighty-two percent of the population opposed any United States military aid to Israel.30 Although Israel had a strong base of support, with over ninety percent of American Jews extremely sympathetic to Zionism, over half the non-Jewish American citizens polled were apathetic towards the fate of Israel. Israel only became an important election issue to the general public if the voters perceived the United State might become militarily involved in the Arab-Israeli conflict.31 This domestic opposition to sending military

29 Ibid., 1026-27.


aid to Israel might explain why Clark Clifford offered little, if any, opposition to a policy decision sure to anger Jewish voters.

As for economic assistance, the Israeli government requested a $100 million loan from the Export-Import Bank. According to Weizmann, Truman assured the Israeli president that the loan would be approved. However, Truman then forwarded the loan request to the Export-Import Bank for consideration and refused to comment on approval of the loan until the Board of Directors of the Export-Import Bank had considered the request.

While the Export-Import Bank deliberated the Israeli loan request, another battle developed between Clark Clifford and the State Department over diplomatic representation for Israel. On 27 May, Lovett sent a memorandum to Truman detailing a State Department plan for establishing a diplomatic mission in Tel Aviv, the capital of Israel. President Truman approved this plan and the State Department worked to establish the mission. However, Clifford penned an angry memorandum on 17 June criticizing the State Department for not establishing "full

32 Weizmann, 480-81.
33 FRUS, 1948, 5: 1072-75.
34 Ibid., 1058-60.
diplomatic relations" with Israel.\textsuperscript{35}

The State Department plan would have created a mission in Tel Aviv equal in status to the other United States consulates in the area. However, Clifford wanted the new mission to have far greater status than consulates in Jerusalem or Haifa. Clifford charged that the State Department had originally supported greater status for the Tel Aviv mission and changed their stance to "conciliate the Arabs." Clifford also predicted that the State Department would oppose the selection of any "big calibre man of large reputation" to be the Israeli minister. Instead, the Department would try to place "a career man" in the Israeli mission to further State Department goals with regard to Israel.\textsuperscript{36}

Clifford, much to the annoyance of Marshall and Lovett, managed to convince Truman to boost the status of the Israeli mission and appoint a pro-Zionist as special representative. On 22 June, Truman selected James G. McDonald, a prominent pro-Zionist, to head the mission to Israel. McDonald became the "special representative" of the United States in Israel and the ranking diplomat in the country. Truman also gave McDonald the authority to send critical information directly to the White House, thus

\textsuperscript{35} Ibid., 1117-1119.

\textsuperscript{36} Ibid.
bypassing the State Department. Furthermore, Clifford did not inform the State Department about McDonald's appointment until after the president's decision.37

Clifford's obvious attempt to keep the State Department in the dark concerning McDonald's appointment deeply upset Lovett and Marshall. Lovett told Clifford on 24 June that McDonald's appointment had angered the secretary of state, who was in the hospital, and that Marshall had penned a letter complaining about the procedure used to pick McDonald.38 Marshall later told McDonald that he "disliked" the White House announcing such an important nomination without his "consultation or comment."39 Lovett also expressed his anger over this incident on 28 June in a meeting with McDonald. When McDonald expressed his opposition to State Department policies in the Middle East, Lovett sarcastically replied that the State Department was lucky to have men like Egyptian Ambassador Stanton Griffis who were not "pro-Arab or pro-Zion or pro-anything, but just plain pro-American."40 While Marshall and Lovett disliked Truman's decision, McDonald's appointment pleased both the

38FRUS, 1948, 5: 1140.
39McDonald, 8.
40FRUS, 1948, 5: 1152.
Another pro-Israeli policy that Clifford supported was the extension of de jure recognition to Israel. The difference in de facto and de jure recognition is slight. De facto recognition, extended to Israel on 14 May, meant that while the United States fully recognized the existence of the state of Israel, it would not fully recognize the Provisional government until they had proven they had the consent of the people and control of the government. De jure recognition would fully accept the current Israeli government, run by Prime Minister David Ben-Gurion. The more permanent de jure recognition would probably make it easier for Israel to get economic assistance from the United States, but the State Department convinced Truman that de jure recognition should be withheld until the Israelis held elections. The Department argued that, because of Israel's ties with Czechoslovakia, de jure recognition should be withheld until the administration was certain that non-communists had control of the Israeli government.42 Clifford felt that de jure recognition should be given immediately, but in this case Truman followed State Department advice.43

41 Snetsinger, 118.
42 FRUS, 1948, 5: 1036-37.
43 Ibid., 1060, 1119.
Early United States dealings with Israel showed the strains of the two opposing forces within the Truman administration: the goal of maintaining the Middle Eastern containment policy versus that of supporting Israel. While supporting the State Department's position on de jure recognition and the Middle Eastern arms embargo, Truman backed Clifford and appointed a Zionist supporter to represent the United States in Israel. Pro-Israeli supporters, spearheaded by Clark Clifford, continued to vie with the State Department for Truman's favor during the last days before the presidential election of 1948.

While the United States tried to clarify its relationship with Israel, Count Bernadotte worked to find an Arab-Israeli peace settlement. Bernadotte, through countless hours of negotiating, persuaded both sides to accept a four week cease fire on 10 June. The Arabs only accepted this cease-fire after suffering serious military setbacks and receiving heavy pressure from Great Britain to accept the truce.44

On 28 June, Bernadotte offered both sides a broad set of proposals as a basis for a settlement. Bernadotte proposed that Arabs and Jews form two separate states joined together by strong economic ties. The Arab portions of Palestine would come under the control of King Ibn Hussein

44Perrson, 126-45; FRUS, 1948, 5: 1100, 1115.
Abdullah of Transjordan. By late June, Abdullah had become a major player in the Palestine controversy. Abdullah's army, the Arab Legion, had fared much better in the early fighting than the other Arab forces. Furthermore Abdullah was willing to initiate negotiations with Israel. Because of these factors, the United States and Great Britain, as well as Bernadotte, placed a good deal of their hope for a peace settlement on Abdullah.

When forming his peace plan, Bernadotte had realized that the proposed borders established by the United Nations partition plan were unworkable. Because of the war, each side controlled territory that was not part of the United Nations border. Bernadotte, therefore, suggested that areas of Galilee captured by Israel should remain in the Jewish state, while the Negev desert and Jerusalem should go to a united Arab state under Abdullah. This would remedy many of the shortcomings of the partition plan, which not only granted Israel a disproportionate amount of Palestinian land, but also created unworkably confused borders. The muddled borders created by the U.N.S.C.O.P plan had prompted one United Nations delegate to compare the map of the

---

45 Perrson, 176-207.

partition of Palestine "to a portrait by Picasso." 47

Bernadotte's line of thought concerning a peaceful settlement in Palestine matched, in most key areas, the evolving sentiment in the United States government. On 2 June, Phillip Jessup, Deputy United States Representative on the United Nations Security Council, detailed how a final settlement in Palestine might be achieved. Jessup pointed out that Israel would survive and that Great Britain and the Arab states, who refused to recognize Israel's existence, would have to accept that fact. Jessup believed that there must also be an Arab state in Palestine, probably under the control of Transjordan. Jessup also considered an economic union between these two states as critical to a lasting peace. To achieve these goals in a peace settlement, Jessup wrote, both sides should make territorial concessions, specifically regarding Galilee and the Negev desert. Jessup, however, stressed that any settlement must come from the mediator. 48

Jessup's views on a Palestinian settlement were echoed by the State Department. Loy Henderson, Director of the Office of Near Eastern Affairs, told British officials on 6 June that Israel would continue to exist and United States policy would continue to accept that reality. Henderson

47 FRUS, 1948, 5: 1135.

48 Ibid., 1088-90.
also stressed that any territorial concessions made to the Arab states, specifically in the Negev desert, should be matched by transferring a part of Galilee to Israel.\textsuperscript{49} While the Department had definite desires concerning Bernadotte's plan, the prevailing wisdom in the State Department was to let Bernadotte try to work out a settlement.\textsuperscript{50} The State Department, while in no way controlling Bernadotte, seemed to be confident that the mediator would develop an equitable settlement.

The major problem in arriving at a settlement in Palestine was the driving force of nationalism, which seemed too intense and ingrained to allow either side to compromise on a peace settlement. However, Great Britain had already demonstrated that she could influence, to an extent, Arab policies by convincing the Arab League to accept Bernadotte's 10 June truce.\textsuperscript{51}

State Department officials began to look for similar leverage with the Israelis. Robert McClintonck, Special Assistant to Dean Rusk, Director of the Office of Special Political Affairs, wrote Loy Henderson on 18 June suggesting that the Israeli loan request be used to place pressure on Israel. McClintonck reminded Henderson that the requested

\begin{thebibliography}{1}
\bibitem{49} Ibid., 1100.
\bibitem{50} Ibid., 1113-14.
\bibitem{51} Ibid., 1121-22.
\end{thebibliography}
Export-Import Bank loan would give the United States "considerable leverage on the government of Israel." McClintock predicted that any influence the United States had in the Middle East would be useful in attempts to persuade Arabs and Jews to accept a final settlement. To this end, the State Department delayed consideration of the loan as Bernadotte attempted to work out a settlement between the Arabs and the Israelis. While Truman had assured Weizmann in May of 1948 that the loan would be approved, he remained noncommittal on the issue until just prior to the presidential election.

The State Department had already largely formed its position concerning a settlement in Palestine when Bernadotte released his initial peace plan on 28 June. On 30 June and 1 July, Phillip Jessup penned two long memos detailing the opinions of the American delegation to the United Nations concerning Bernadotte's plan. While Jessup's proposals differed in some ways from Bernadotte's, such as on the status of Jerusalem which Jessup wanted to make an international enclave and Bernadotte wanted to give to the Arab state, they were very similar.

52 Ibid., 1120-21.
53 Ibid., 1072-75.
54 Ibid., 1161-1171, 1180-86.
To Jessup and Bernadotte, a settlement still revolved on redrawing Palestinian borders to create a more equitable distribution of land and give Israel "a more compact and defensible state." Furthermore, the Arab states had to accept Israel's right to exist and both sides had to agree to an economic union between Israel and Palestinian Arabs. Yet Jessup declared that Bernadette's peace initiative would probably fail when faced by the extreme positions held by Israel and the Arab states. However, both men agreed that the United States and the British could "persuade [the] parties to come to terms." Jessup also emphasized that Anglo-American cooperation remained essential, not only in securing approval for Bernadette's plan, but in preventing the expansion of Soviet influence in the Middle East.

On 3 July, Marshall, who echoed the sentiments of Jessup's memorandum, informed the British that the State Department held a "favorable" impression of Bernadette's tentative peace plan. Marshall described Bernadette's findings as "statesmanlike" and promised to urge "in the strongest possible terms" that Israel and the Arabs accept Bernadotte's recommendations. The State Department looked favorably upon Bernadotte's proposals because the plan

---

55 Ibid., 1166.
56 Ibid.
57 Ibid., 1186-87.
allowed the United States to pursue its Middle East containment policy, despite the existence of Israel. The tentative peace plan seemed to offer a fair compromise and if the Arabs and Israelis could be coaxed into accepting a peace proposal the chaos in Palestine would end. The continuation of the fighting would only help the Soviets gain ground in the Middle East and slow down the pace of economic development in the region. The Department also believed that Bernadotte’s proposals established common ground between Great Britain and the United States and allowed the continuation of Anglo-American cooperation in the Middle East.

The British also looked favorably on Bernadotte’s conception of a peace settlement since it not only offered a reasonable chance for a peaceful Palestinian settlement, but also offered an avenue for Anglo-American accord. Since 14 May, the British had refused to recognize the existence of Israel and hoped the Arab states would prevail in Palestine. By the latter half of June, the failure of the Arab League’s military effort had become obvious and the British resigned themselves to the fact that Israel would survive. In the face of this inescapable truth, the British considered Bernadotte’s proposals the least objectionable avenue for her Arab allies. The British hoped that a smaller Israel would be less likely to control all of Palestine, a constant British fear. The British Foreign Office also
believed that a Jewish state might serve as a catalyst to unify further the Arab states.\textsuperscript{58}

However, as Jessup had feared, neither side accepted Bernadotte's proposals. The Arabs refused to recognize Israel, while Israel refused to accept any territorial concessions. While Bernadotte tried to reconcile Arab-Israeli differences, the mediator's main problem in early July centered on getting both sides to extend the four week truce agreed upon on 10 June. While the Israelis accepted the truce extension, the Arabs refused and attacked Israel on 9 July.

The Arab League resumed combat for a variety of reasons. Arab leaders, who had convinced their people they would destroy the Zionists, faced growing internal pressure to do something about Israel. For every day the truce continued, Israel's military strength grew. Despite the arms embargo, Israel's connections with the west and Czechoslovakia supplied the Jewish state with large amounts of arms and ammunition.\textsuperscript{59} The Arab states could do little to improve their armies during the truce and daily saw the military balance swing precipitously towards the Israelis. The Arab states, facing domestic pressure and a rapidly deteriorating military situation, therefore decided to

\textsuperscript{58}Ibid., 1124-25; Louis, 538-40.

\textsuperscript{59}Voth, 68.
attack Israel.

The Arabs initially chose to ignore pressure from both Great Britain and the United States when they launched their attack on 9 July. On 8 July, Phillip Jessup had informed the Arabs that they would face stiff sanctions in the United Nations, including possible military action if they not accept the truce. Syria's United Nations Representative Faris el-Khoury brazenly retorted that the Arabs were "ready to be killed by your atomic bombs" and the Arab League continued its attack.60 However, the Arabs were not ready to face Israeli military might. The Israeli Army sent Arab forces reeling and within a week had captured considerable portions of Arab territory.61 Furthermore, Great Britain withheld all aid to the Arab states until the fighting ended. The United Nations, led by the United States delegation, threatened to brand the Arab states as the aggressors in the Arab-Israeli conflict.62 This combination of serious military setbacks and growing international pressure persuaded the Arabs to accept a cease-fire on 18 July.


While the State Department considered the July fighting a setback to peace negotiations, events partially vindicated the effectiveness of coordinated Anglo-American pressure on protagonists in the Arab-Israeli conflict. The brief resumption of the conflict seriously injured the prestige of all of the Arab countries except Transjordan. Abdullah had favored accepting the United Nations truce extension and Transjordan avoided any serious fighting with Israel during the July battles. To American officials, Abdullah seemed to be a pragmatic politician while the other Arab leaders were, in the words of Robert McClintock, "fanatical and overwrought."  

Meanwhile, the resumption of hostilities fueled domestic pressure from Zionist groups on the Truman administration to lift the arms embargo, but State Department pressure and unfavorable public opinion combined to convince Truman to keep the United States arms embargo in effect. However, the Democratic National Convention met in the midst of the July fighting and the events, both at home and in Palestine, probably helped fuel support for Israel at the convention. In response to a supportive, but somewhat general pro-Israeli pledge in the Republican Party Platform, the Democrats on 14 July put a plank in their

---

63 Ibid., 1173, 1230.

64 Ibid., 1217-18, 1221-22.
party platform that promised to make no adjustments to Israeli borders unless they were "fully acceptable to the State of Israel." The platform also pledged to extend aid to Israel and to work to repeal the arms embargo.\textsuperscript{65}

While this gave Truman the inside track to the critical Jewish vote in New York, the Israeli plank in the platform could not be reconciled with the Bernadotte plan. Israel had shown little enthusiasm for trading away territory won in the 1948 war. Israel's first year saw an influx of almost 250,000 immigrants. Finding land, food, and employment for these refugees proved to be a severe problem for the fledgling Jewish state. Furthermore, since Israel had spent most of the funds raised by Jewish-Americans on military equipment, the Israelis grew increasingly desperate for money to feed the growing numbers of Jewish settlers in Israel.\textsuperscript{66} The Israeli government needed every inch of Palestinian territory it could acquire to accommodate these refugees. Considering Israel's desperate need for land, attempts to gain Israeli acceptance of the Bernadotte plan would require considerable United States pressure on Israel, a clear violation of the Democratic party platform. While United States policy did not change concerning Bernadotte's

\textsuperscript{65}New York Times, 15 July 1948.

peace initiative, the Israeli plank in the Democratic Party platform would soon return to haunt United States diplomatic efforts with Israel.

However, rather than change policy in July, Marshall reaffirmed United States confidence in Bernadotte's mission on 19 July. State Department and Central Intelligence Agency documents still emphasized supporting Bernadotte's attempts at mediation by placing pressure on the Arabs and the Israelis to accept a settlement. To place pressure on Israel, the State Department also reiterated its decision to withhold Israel's loan request until the Israeli government agreed to a settlement.68

Several Israeli actions in August of 1948 gave the State Department another reason to place economic and political pressure on Israel to negotiate. First, Jewish forces attacked Arab positions across Palestine in clear violation of the truce. Secondly, Jewish leaders such as Golda Meir (Myerson) took a dim view of returning any territory to the Arabs. Thirdly, the constant flow of weapons from Czechoslovakia into Israel also caused serious concern in Washington about Soviet influence in Israel. In sum, the Israelis, according to Phillip Jessup, had become "increasingly intransigent" towards the Arabs and the peace

67 FRUS, 1948, 5: 1230.
68 Ibid., 1261-62.
With this in mind, on 16 August, Marshall sent a strong memo concerning United States Israeli relations to Truman. Marshall described "systematic violations" of the United Nations truce by Israel, intransigence in negotiations by Israeli officials, and "conclusive evidence" of arms shipments from communist Czechoslovakia. Considering Israel's "aggressive attitude" Marshall urged that the United States inform Israel that aid and de jure recognition would be withheld until Israel became more cooperative. Marshall also wanted to stress to Israeli representatives that the United States would oppose Israeli aggression just as ardently as it had opposed Arab aggression in July. Marshall also reminded Truman that a war between Israel and Transjordan might very well draw the "two great Anglo-Saxon partners" into a conflict between "two little states." With no objections from Truman, Marshall sent a note on 21 August to the Israeli government threatening serious sanctions if Israel made any deliberate attempts to break the truce.

Marshall sent Truman another memorandum on 31 August discussing the Bernadotte plan, and asked the president to

---

69 Ibid., 1297-98, 1300, 1302, 1307.
70 Ibid., 1313-1315.
71 Ibid., 1334-35.
approve another telegram to Israel stating American support for the Bernadotte plan in the United Nations. Marshall stressed that Bernadotte's views on boundary concessions were similar to United States proposals and would make Israel "more homogenous and well integrated than the hourglass frontiers" established by U.N.S.C.O.P. Trading Galilee for the Negev would leave Israel, according to Marshall, "with materially improved frontiers and considerably enriched in terms of natural resources." Truman, in a marginal notation, approved this memorandum on 1 September and Marshall subsequently drafted a stern message to the Israeli government. Marshall's note, delivered on 7 September, stressed the importance of territorial concessions, specifically concerning the Negev desert, to a final settlement. Furthermore, Marshall expressed United States willingness to "use all of its influence to prevent a violation of the truce" whether that aggressor be an Arab nation or Israel.

The State Department informed Great Britain on 3 September of Marshall's imminent message to the Israeli government. The American position on the Bernadotte plan pleased the British because it officially created an Anglo-American consensus on Palestine. Marshall also dispatched

---

72Ibid., 1361-1363.
73Ibid., 1366-69, 1377-78.
Robert McClintock to inform Bernadotte of the American position. As McClintock conferred with Bernadotte, the mediator was putting the finishing touches on his final peace proposal for Palestine. On 16 September Bernadotte signed his peace plan. The Bernadotte plan matched United States opinions on a settlement on all major issues, including the internationalization of Jerusalem. Unfortunately, the mediator never lived to see the results of his plan. On 18 September Jewish terrorists assassinated Count Folke Bernadotte because of his suggestion that Israel give up its claim to the Negev desert.

United States officials felt that Bernadotte's tragic death would "give the maximum weight to the recommendations in his report" and pushed to have the Bernadotte report made public immediately. The United Nations agreed and released the report on 20 September. The next day Marshall, while at a United Nations meeting in Paris, publicly announced that the United States considered the Bernadotte plan a "generally fair basis for settlement of the Palestine question." Marshall went on to urge that the General Assembly endorse the peace plan that Bernadotte "gave his

74 Ibid., 1387.
75 Perrson, 204-209.
76 FRUS, 1948, 5: 1413.
life for." But, as expected, Israel and the Arab states rejected Bernadotte's plan. The Israelis refused to give up any territory in Palestine, especially the vast Negev desert, while the Arabs refused to sign any agreement that recognized Israel. However, Transjordan seemed increasingly willing to negotiate.

Marshall's statement in support of the Bernadotte plan ignited a domestic firestorm of controversy during Truman's election campaign. Israeli supporters in the United States, including Progressive Party candidate Henry Wallace, accused the president of forsaking the Democratic Party Platform's pledge concerning Israeli borders. On 28 September, President Truman met with Clark Clifford and other political advisers on his campaign train in Oklahoma City to assess the damage. Truman and his political advisers drafted a memorandum to send to Marshall, declaring that Truman's position on Palestine had always been consistent with the Democratic Party Platform and that the president's "position on boundaries had not changed." 

---

77 Ibid., 1415-1416.
78 Ibid., 1419-1420.
80 FRUS, 1948, 5: 1430.
Clifford called Lovett on 29 September and declared that because of Marshall's support for the Bernadotte plan "the pressure from Jewish groups on the president was mounting and it was as bad as the time of the trusteeship suggestion." Clifford also told Lovett that because of this pressure, Truman had instructed him to send a memo to the Secretary of State, repudiating Marshall's position on the Bernadotte plan. Lovett then engaged in a "prolonged argument" with Clifford over plans to place the secretary of state in an "intolerable position" concerning Palestine. Lovett informed Clifford that Truman had approved a memorandum on 1 September which plainly discussed an exchange of Galilee for part of the Negev. Furthermore, Marshall had sent a telegram to the White House Signal Center the day before his statement on the Bernadotte plan and there was no objection from the president. Clifford "said this was all news to him" and ended the conversation. 81

In his Memoirs, Truman claimed that he never supported the Bernadotte Plan because Israel "had to be given the space and opportunity to prove itself." Truman stated that he disliked the plan because "it looked like a fast reshuffle that gave to the Arabs the [Negev] area." 82 Yet

81 Ibid., 1430-31.
82 Harry Truman, 166-67.
Truman approved the memorandum of 1 September that, in no uncertain terms, supported the Bernadotte plan. While Truman may have been concerned that Israel's security interests would be jeopardized, Marshall noted no such objection from the president during their 1 September meeting. United States policy, since June of 1948, had moved towards supporting the Bernadotte Plan as the basis for settlement in the Middle East. Marshall and Lovett had agreed that the Bernadotte Plan offered a fair settlement and would create an easily defensible Israel while mollifying the Arabs. Even Truman conceded in his Memoirs that "if one looks at the map and how the two partition proposals appeared there, the Bernadotte plan may have seemed an improvement" because it reduced "the number of friction points between Jews and Arabs." 83

However, in early September, as outraged Jewish-Americans pressured the president to support the Democratic Platform, Truman seemed willing to abandon United States policy goals. The key elements of the Bernadotte plan, a territorial swap between Israel and Transjordan and Arab recognition of Israel, offered a solid basis for negotiations. A negotiated peace would allow the United States to concentrate on revitalizing the economies of the Middle East. Yet, this policy depended on concerted Anglo-

---

83 Ibid., 166.
American pressure on both sides to accept the agreement. While the State Department had been willing to apply pressure on the Arabs in July, domestic political pressure shackled American efforts to exert its influence on the Israelis.

However, despite intense political pressure from Jewish-Americans, Truman did not immediately rebuke his secretary of state. If Truman reversed the United States position on Palestine, he would leave Marshall in an extremely embarrassing situation. Even worse for Truman, if the truth came out concerning Truman's approval of the Bernadotte Plan, the presidential campaign might be endangered. In addition, Republican presidential candidate Thomas E. Dewey and Truman had pledged to keep foreign policy issues out of the campaign. Truman's political advisers feared that a statement contradicting Marshall would look like a political ploy and cause Truman to lose votes.84

Therefore, Truman made no public statements retracting support for the Bernadotte Plan, but the administration did begin to soften American backing for it. On 6 October, McClintock wrote to Lovett and stressed that the British were working hard to secure Arab consent to the Bernadotte plan and Great Britain looked to the United States "to do

84Ibid., 167; Snetsinger, 127.
our share" in securing Israeli acceptance of the peace proposal. To reiterate American support for the Bernadotte plan, Lovett planned to deliver a public statement on 13 October that admitted the Arabs and Israelis were still deeply divided over recognition of Israel and the proposed swap of the Negev for Galilee. Lovett's statement, however, concluded that the Bernadotte plan provided a "sound basis" for negotiations and "it should not be too difficult to reach an agreement given a real desire on part of the two peoples."

On 11 October, Clifford sent Lovett a message from the president, instructing the undersecretary of state to make no comments concerning Palestine at his 13 October press conference. Interestingly, according to a marginal citation on the draft statement concerning Palestine for the 13 October press conference, McClintock noted that Truman had originally approved Lovett's statement. However, Truman's political aides disapproved of the statement because they "preferred to say nothing than to give this statement."

Obviously Truman's political advisers feared that the positive allusions to the Bernadotte plan in this statement

85 FRUS, 1948, 5: 1459-60.
86 Ibid., 1400.
87 Ibid.
would have further damaged Truman's standing with Jewish voters. To bridle further support for the Bernadotte plan, Truman issued a statement to Lovett on 17 October forbidding the United Nations delegation to make statements or take actions concerning Palestine without "obtaining specific authority" from the president.88

The White House, while not publicly rejecting support for the Bernadotte plan, was making sure that there was no public State Department support for it either. However, this all changed on 22 October when Dewey publicly criticized Truman's handling of the Palestinian issue. Clifford immediately seized on this violation of foreign policy bipartisanship as an opportunity for Truman to "reaffirm [his] support of the Democratic platform." Truman subsequently accepted Clifford's urging to make a policy statement on Israel.89 On 24 October the president released a statement reaffirming support of the Democratic Party Platform on Israel. Truman also stressed that he would expedite the Israeli loan request and extend de jure recognition after the Israeli election, which would take place 25 January.90 Furthermore, on 28 October Truman delivered a pro-Israeli speech in New York City in which he

---

88Harry Truman, 167.
89FRUS, 1948, 5: 1509.
90Ibid., 1512-1514.
once again reaffirmed his commitment to the Democratic Party Platform. Truman, while never mentioning the Bernadotte Plan by name, stated that Israel needed to be "large enough, free enough and strong enough to make its people self-supporting and secure."\textsuperscript{91}

Truman further undercut State Department support for the Bernadotte plan in the United Nations on 29 November. While the United Nations deliberated whether or not the Negev desert should be part of Israel, Israeli Prime Minister David Ben-Gurion took matters into his own hands. The Israelis saw the Negev as a vital region for their new state. Control of the area would give Israel considerable room to settle Jewish refugees and provide a buffer zone between Israel and Egypt. On 14 October, Israeli forces moved out from their positions in the northern Negev desert and attacked Egyptian forces to the south. Despite United Nations protests, the Israelis quickly routed the outmatched Egyptian forces and soon captured all of the Negev.\textsuperscript{92} On 28 October, Britain and Nationalist China drafted a United Nations resolution that would place sanctions on the Israelis if they refused to withdraw forces from the Negev. The United States representative at the United Nations, Warren Austin gave tentative approval to the sanctions.

\textsuperscript{91}New York Times, 29 October 1948.

\textsuperscript{92}Schiff, 40-45.
However, Clifford phoned Austin prior to the vote and informed him that Truman opposed sanctions against Israel. Austin revoked his support for sanctions during the 29 October session.93

Political concerns clearly were the major motivation behind Truman's sudden policy reversal towards Israel in October of 1948. After supporting the Bernadotte proposals, from June until Marshall's public statement on 29 September, Truman changed his position, as Clifford bluntly told Lovett, because of Jewish-American political pressure. Ironically, despite Truman's support for Israel, the president did not carry New York in the election. However, Truman's eleventh hour public statements, reassuring Jewish-Americans of strong support for Israel probably helped him win some other key states. Many Jewish-American groups, who saw the survival of Israel as the key issue in the 1948 election, threatened to switch their traditionally Democratic votes to Dewey or Wallace, both of whom had publicly backed Israel and rejected the Bernadotte plan.94 In Ohio, California and Illinois, where Truman only won by a few thousand votes, an angry bloc of Jewish voters could have swung those states into the Dewey camp if Truman had not refuted the Bernadotte Plan. However, Truman's speech

93John Donovan, 60; FRUS, 1948, 5: 1527.
at Madison Square Garden on 29 October convinced Jewish voters that he would continue to support Israel and helped Truman garner between 60 and 75 percent of the Jewish vote nationally.\textsuperscript{95} In addition, Truman redeemed his late October pledges and, on 31 January 1949, announced the de jure recognition of the Israeli government and the extension of a $100 million Export-Import Bank loan to Israel.\textsuperscript{96}

Despite this, the United States continued its attempts to find a permanent settlement in Palestine. However, Truman's policy reversal in October of 1948 effectively ruined United States attempts to solve the Arab-Israeli conflict. Throughout the remainder of 1948 and much of 1949, the United States tried, with no success, to persuade Israel to accept a territorial compromise. Most of the United States diplomats dealing with the Israelis became exasperated with Israel's inflexible position and aggressive behavior towards her Arab neighbors. Lovett suggested cutting off aid to Israel to force them to be more cooperative in negotiating peace. Even President Truman became exasperated with Israeli intransigence. Truman warned Jewish leaders that "unless [Israel] played the game properly . . . they were probably going to lose their best

\textsuperscript{95}Ibid., 134.

\textsuperscript{96}\textit{FRUS}, 1949, 6: 713.
friends."\(^{97}\)

The reason this disapproval never changed official American policy relates back to Truman's acceptance of the Israeli plank of the Democratic Party Platform. The United States government told Israel on several occasions that the United States would not back any territorial concessions in Palestine "without Israeli consent."\(^ {98}\) Truman yielded to Jewish political pressure on this issue; Israel realized that Truman's threats were empty and refused to concede any territory. Because of the animosity between the Arabs and Israelis and the unwillingness of the United States to place pressure on Israel to negotiate, United Nations' attempts to find a permanent settlement failed. Dr. Ralph Bunche, the head of the United Nations Palestine Conciliation Committee, could only arrange for separate armistices between Israel and each of the Arab states. The last of these armistice agreements was signed on 20 July 1949.\(^ {99}\)

Unfortunately, the inability of the United States to pressure Israel into negotiations dashed any hopes of reaching a lasting peace settlement. Truman had approved strong United States backing for the Bernadotte Plan, a

---

\(^{97}\)There are literally dozens of dispatches complaining about Israeli behavior. Some of the most lively can be found in Ibid., 657, 658-60, 703-705, 762, 778-79, 810-11, 911, 1060-63. Truman's statement found on p. 1109.

\(^{98}\)Ibid., 890-93, 681-82.

\(^{99}\)FRUS, 1948 6: 768-69, 888, 854, 1239
scheme that had some chance of developing into a permanent settlement. While it is doubtful that any plan would have brought a permanent peace to the entire region, Jordan was willing to negotiate with the Israelis. While an Israeli-Jordanian accord would not have solved all of the problems that arose from the Arab-Israeli conflict, a permanent settlement between the two states would have reduced, to a degree, tensions in the Middle East. However, the political pressure placed on Truman by Jewish-Americans, convinced the president he could not win the 1948 presidential election without publicly rejecting the Bernadotte Plan.

The United States policy reversal, particularly the refusal to impose United Nations sanctions on Israel, infuriated the British, and severely weakened Anglo-Arab relations. The British had exerted pressure on their Arab allies to accept the Bernadotte plan, based on the assumption that the United States would place similar pressure on Israel. The United States policy reversal left Great Britain in an uncomfortable position with her Arab allies. The Arab states harbored deep resentment towards Britain's ineffective policies. Arab extremists soon began assassinating pro-western Arab leaders, including King Abdullah of Transjordan, and agitating for removal of British colonial influence across the Middle East.100 Any

100Stookey, 121-22.
hopes for using the British to further containment in the
Middle East had been dashed as British prestige in the
region, already low in 1948, was dealt a fatal blow by the
failure of the Bernadotte Plan.

Unable to develop a comprehensive regional peace plan,
the United States looked for other ways to stabilize the
Middle East and prevent Soviet expansion into the region.
However, the hatred and extreme nationalism on both sides of
the Arab-Israeli conflict, as well as the inability of the
United States to deal effectively with these emotions, would
continue to frustrate the Truman administration's attempts
to bring economic and political stability to the Middle
East.
The failure of American policies in 1948 left the State Department in search of new ways to implement containment in the Middle East. The Arab countries railed against the American and British policies that they blamed for their military setbacks in 1948. Zionist supporters continued to place pressure on the Truman administration to increase aid to Israel. Furthermore, the failure to develop a peace plan for the region left the fate of the Palestinian refugees in limbo.

To assess the damage done to American standing in the Arab states, the State Department sent Colonel William Eddy to the Middle East on a fact finding tour in January of 1949. Eddy, a retired Marine Colonel, had worked for years in the Middle East for the State Department, American oil companies, and the American University in Cairo. As a staunch supporter of the Arab states, he had the confidence of Arab officials.\(^1\) Eddy penned a pessimistic report after

\(^1\)Tschirgi, 189-90.
a three week visit to Saudi Arabia, Egypt and Lebanon. He reported that United States support for Israel and Great Britain's inability to aid her Arab allies in the war had completely discredited western diplomacy in the eyes of Arab leaders. Furthermore, the Arab states viewed the United Nations with disdain because of the its inability to enforce the arms embargo on the Israelis. The chaos and dislocation caused by the war, according to Eddy, had left the Middle East in a particularly vulnerable position vis-à-vis the Soviets. Eddy reported that communists "may upset the Iraq government at any time" and that amongst the 700,000 Palestinian refugees there were "many intellectuals who [were] more than ripe for Communist propaganda." Because of the sorry economic and political situation in the Arab world, Eddy predicted that "blocked in Western Europe, Russia will divert her Cold War to the 'soft-underbelly' of the Near East."2

Eddy's report was widely read by State Department officials. In one memorandum reacting to it, Gordon P. Merriam, a member of the Policy Planning Staff wrote an angry critique of United States policies. While Merriam believed that the conservative nature of Moslem society and the oppressive nature of the Arab regimes would stifle any immediate communist uprisings in the Middle East, the Arab-

---

Israeli struggle would eventually "promote communism in the Arab world." Merriam declared that the United States already had an effective policy for the Middle East but Jewish-American political pressure had stopped its implementation. Merriam caustically added that even if the United States approved a more balanced Palestinian policy, "it would be overturned whenever the Zionists felt like buying a page in the New York Times." Merriam felt that the only hope for salvaging the situation in Palestine was a large infusion of economic aid.³

Merriam's memo is indicative of the State Department's attitude towards the Middle East in 1949. Department officials resented pro-Israeli lobby groups that they blamed for the failures of United States policies in 1948. While most officials in the Department believed that supporting Israel had been detrimental to containment of the Soviets in the Middle East, communist groups in the Arab world were still not an immediate threat in 1949. Despite the failures of United States policies since May of 1948, the Department still held out hope that economic aid for the Arab states

³Memorandum, Merriam to Kennan, 18 March 1949, File 79, Box 30.
could salvage the situation. As Samuel K.C. Kopper, Assistant Chief of the Division of African Affairs, put it, "an economic boost to [the Middle East] might well alleviate some of the bitter feeling in the Arab states."  

This emphasis on economic aid found its way into NSC 47/2, approved by Truman on 20 October 1949. NSC 47/2 emphasized the importance of revitalizing the economies of the Middle East to promote stability and keep the Arab states oriented "towards the west and away from the Soviet Union."  

While NSC 47/2 did not address the issue of American favoritism towards the Israelis, a report written at a meeting of State Department Middle East experts in Istanbul, Turkey in November of 1949 did address this key issue. The Istanbul reports stated that the most important United States policy objectives in the Middle East was preventing "the Soviet Union from gaining control of the Near East countries by subversion or by any other means short of war." The report proposed a two part program to contain Soviet influence in the region. It suggested giving large amounts
of military aid to the Northern Tier countries while giving the Arab states substantial amounts of economic aid so that these countries could achieve "economic stability." To achieve these goals the Istanbul report stressed the need for the United States government to maintain "strict impartiality between the Arab states and Israel." On 30 November, Assistant Secretary of State George C. McGhee publicly endorsed the findings in the Istanbul report. McGhee emphasized the importance of economic development in the Middle East and emphasized that the United States "had no axe of special interest to grind" in the region.

While regional economic improvement remained the overall goal of United States policy in 1949 and 1950, the State Department perceived the refugee problem as the most pressing obstacle to an effective Middle East containment policy. During the 1948-49 war, about 725,000 Palestinian Arabs fled from Israel. A fierce historical debate has raged on whether Israel forced the Arab populations out of Israel, or Arab propaganda caused unreasonable fear among Palestinian Arabs who fled from imagined Israeli atrocities. However recent scholarship indicates that the Israeli government did systematically chase Arabs out of Israeli

---

7Ibid., 168-69.

8Ibid., 178-79.
territory. Whatever the reason for the mass exodus of Palestinian Arabs from Israel, neither the Israelis or the Arabs would absorb these refugees. With nowhere to settle, Palestinian Arabs were forced to occupy squalid refugee camps, mostly on the West Bank.

Colonel Eddy, like many in the State Department, feared that the dismal economic conditions and resentment felt towards the United States for its role in the birth of Israel made the Palestinian refugees likely targets for communist propaganda. George McGhee stated these concerns before a congressional committee in February of 1950. McGhee asserted that Palestinian refugees would continue "to serve as a natural focal point for exploitation by Communist elements." McGhee continued that "the presence of three-quarters of a million idle destitute people ... whose discontent grows with the passage of time, is the greatest threat to the security of the area that now

---

9Supporters of the theory that Arab propaganda caused the refugee problem include, McDonald, 159-60; Meir, 280-81; Eban, 92-100; and Ralph Martin, Golda: Golda Meir: The Romantic Years, (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1988), 326-28; Recent research by British historian Benny Morris, with access to previously classified Israeli documents has cast serious doubts on the previous accounts. See "Operation Dani and the Exodus from Lydda and Ramle in 1948," Middle East Journal 40 (Winter 1986), 102-106; and "The Harvest of 1948 and the Creation of the Palestinian Refugee Problem," Middle East Journal 40 (Autumn 1986) 671-85.

10FRUS, 1949, 6: 828-42.

11Ibid., 170, 663-64, 698-99, 788.
exists."¹²

The long term future of the Palestinian refugees remained deadlocked in the political struggle between the Arabs and Israelis. Negotiations stalemated throughout 1949 on how to deal with the Palestinian refugee problem because the various armistice agreements between Israel and the Arab states made no provisions for the refugees. The Arab states demanded that Israel repatriate most of these refugees, while Israel refused to accept any Arab refugees until a final peace settlement had been signed.

In a 13 January 1949 press conference, Truman expressed his support for a statement made by Warren Austin on 20 November, 1948. Austin had asserted that Palestinian refugees "should be allowed to return to their homes and that adequate compensation should be arranged for the property of those who choose not to return."¹³ Accordingly the Truman administration attempted to persuade Israel to accept some of the responsibility for the refugee problem. Secretary of State Dean Acheson, who replaced Marshall in January of 1949, sent numerous messages to the Israeli government, urging it to negotiate on the refugee question. On 17 February 1949, for example, Acheson requested that the

¹²U.S. Congress, House, Committee on Foreign Affairs, Palestine Refugees: Hearings before the Committee on Foreign Affairs, 81st Congress., 2nd sess., February 1950, 9.

¹³FRUS, 1949, 6: 722-23.
Israelis not place Jewish settlers on land owned by Palestinian refugees. Despite the insistence of the United States, Jewish settlers quickly seized and began to farm land formerly owned by Palestinian Arabs. Acheson sent another note to the Israelis on 9 March 1949 that implored the Israelis to allow Palestinian Arabs to return to Israel. However, the Israelis continued to refuse to repatriate refugees.

In the face of this Israeli opposition, George McGhee penned a detailed report on how to implement an effective policy to solve the refugee problem. McGhee insisted that the United States should "persuade Israel to initiate the gradual repatriation" of Palestinian refugees. The United States should also help Israel and Jordan develop a water project on the Jordan River to increase "the productive capacity and economic potential of the area." Acheson approved McGhee's recommendations on 23 March 1949. This issue, as well as the Israeli refusal to exchange any

---

14 Ibid., 754-55.
15 Morris, "Harvest of 1948."
16 FRUS, 1949, 6: 804-805.
17 Ibid., 827-42; Transjordan was the name given the Jordanian nation when it was under English mandate. Jordan declared its independence in 1946 and named itself the Hashmetite Kingdom of Jordan. However, United States officials continued to refer to Jordan as Transjordan until the Truman Administration officially extended recognition to Jordan in January of 1949. Jordan will be used through the remainder of the paper.
territory for a peace settlement, caused the State Department to suggest cutting off aid to Israel in 1949. As with territorial concessions, Truman would not place substantive pressure on the Israelis to cooperate, and Israel, faced with a huge influx of citizens, refused to compromise on issues she deemed vital to her national interests.18

Unable to find a political solution in Palestine, Truman approved a policy of increased economic aid to the Arab states, to give them, in the words of George McGhee, "incentive to continue to cooperate with the free world by demonstrating that such cooperation offered more than adherence to Communism."19 However, domestic politics and the Arab-Israeli conflict hindered the implementation of these policy objectives. Despite the administration's pledge to increase economic aid to the Middle East, only Israel and the Northern Tier nations received substantial American aid from 1949 to 1952. In the aftermath of the first Arab-Israeli war, the United States Congress remained pro-Israel. This support for Israel produced generous economic aid packages from the United States from 1949 to 1952. During this period Israel received $221.5 million in

18Ibid., 811, 911, 1060-63, 1109; Ben-Gurion, A Personal History, 149 and 187.

19FRUS, 1950, 5: 1153.
official United States economic aid. The Congress also approved sizable military and economic appropriations to Turkey and Iran.

However, the Arab states received only a fraction of the economic assistance given to Israel. From 1949 to 1952 the United States gave the governments of Iraq, Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon and Syria a combined total of only $14 million in economic aid. While increased economic aid to the Arab states remained a priority, the Truman administration had difficulty convincing a pro-Israeli and budget conscious Congress to allot money to Israel's mortal enemies. Any attempts to arm or extend substantial aid to Arab states led to criticism from Zionist supporters in and out of Congress. Despite State Department pleas for the president to follow NSC recommendations on Middle Eastern aid, Truman was unable to convince Congress to approve a more balanced Middle Eastern

---


21 Agency for International Development, 4-11.

22 Ibid. Economic aid to each Arab state from 1949-1952 in millions of dollars: Iraq .05, Saudi Arabia, 5.2, Egypt, 1.5, Transjordan, 5.2, Lebanon, 2, and Syria, .04.

aid package. According to Acheson, Truman informed him on 28 March, 1950, that "it would be utterly impossible to get this Congress, certainly at this time or in the immediate future, to consider, much less to enact, substantial economic aid measures for . . . the Middle East." Because of congressional pressure, the State Department did not even propose a large-scale economic program for the Arab states in 1950. The Truman administration tried to present more balanced Middle Eastern aid packages in 1951 and 1952, but congressional pressure once again defeated attempts to increase economic aid to the Arab states.

Relief aid to the Palestinian Arabs was the only meaningful aid the Truman administration could convince Congress to approve for the Arabs. Between 1949 and 1952, the Congress sent over $130 million in relief aid to the Palestinian refugees through the United Nations Relief and Work Agency for Palestine Refugees (U.N.R.W.A.). Although the United States provided U.N.R.W.A. with over half of its funds, the relief effort could only provide the Palestinians

24 FRUS, 1950, 5: 1033-34; Memorandum, Jones and Kopper to Truman, 5 April, 1951, File 89, Box 30.
26 Ibid., 186.
with the bare necessities of life. With no political settlement likely, there seemed little hope for solving the problem. Furthermore, the inability to garner congressional approval for aid to the Arab states frustrated attempts to bring about meaningful economic improvements there. Since the passage of large scale economic aid to the Arab states remained politically difficult, the administration looked for other ways to fund the Arab states and address the refugee problem.

The Truman administration attempted to use aid for Israel as a way not only to benefit Israel and placate Jewish-American groups, but also to foster a regional water project that would economically revitalize other states in the region. Vocal congressional supporters of Israel, such as Jacob K. Javits of New York, constantly pushed for large loans and grants to Israel. According to Javits, large amounts of American aid for the Jewish state could turn Israel into "the focal point" of Middle Eastern industry. By utilizing the technological ability of Jewish settlers, Israel could become "not only the bridgehead of democracy in the Near East but its workshop" to bring the cost of consumer goods "within reach of the mass of the Arab people." Javits believed that Israel would bring prosperity to the region by creating a large irrigation project on the

---

Jordan River. This water project would improve economic conditions in the region and prevent "the next Communist move westward." Support for this development scheme came from Zionist groups, members of Congress, and Secretary of the Treasury John W. Snyder, who proclaimed that Israel's economic capabilities "appear limitless." 

The concept that Israel could be the base for the economic revitalization of the Middle East had already intrigued Truman. It also interested Ralph Bunche, head of the Palestine Conciliation Committee (P.C.C.) who, having failed to reach a final settlement to the 1948 war, looked towards an economic solution to the Middle East problem. To this end, the P.C.C. sent a group to the Middle East, known as the Economic Survey Mission, to find solutions to economic problems in the Middle East. A water development program, centering on the Jordan River, became one of the centerpieces of the Economic Survey Mission's report, published in December of 1949.

However, this report also found that the political and emotional scars of the 1948 war would make any cooperation between Israel and the Arab states difficult. The Economic


31Saliba, 83; FRUS, 1949, 5: 54-55.
Mission proposed delaying any major plans for the Jordan River until the passions of the Arabs and Israelis had cooled enough so that they could cooperate fully in the project. Until that happened, the Economic Survey Mission suggested the development of small test projects in Israel and Jordan.\textsuperscript{32} In December of 1949, Acheson pronounced the plan "prudent and wise" and was eager to help the United Nations fund these programs. Acheson hoped these programs would lessen tensions between Jordan and Israel and improve economic conditions in those two nations, as well as improve the lot of Palestinian refugees on the West Bank.\textsuperscript{33}

In May of 1950 Congress approved a plan to fund a United Nations sponsored regional irrigation and hydroelectric program for the Jordan River that, according to Javits, "would unalterably" link Israel "to the fate of the whole region" and "bring permanent peace and neighborly relations between Israel and other Near Eastern countries."\textsuperscript{34} Despite the pledge to fund a Jordanian water project, no one had yet developed a regional United Nations plan for the Jordan River. However, Israel made plans for the Jordan River that proved much more than small test projects. Israel intended to divert a major portion of the

\textsuperscript{32}Ibid., 1548-51; Saliba, 84.

\textsuperscript{33}FRUS, 1949, 5: 1557-58.

\textsuperscript{34}New York Times, 18 May 1950.
Jordan River's water southward for irrigation and to generate electrical power. These plans would divert most of the Jordan River into Galilee and the Negev desert, thus depriving Jordan of the benefits of the development and severely diminishing the flow of the Jordan River eastward. While not substantially helping Jordan or the refugees, this plan allowed Israel to deal with the influx of 250,000 Jewish settlers into Israel. The Israeli government had no intention of sharing the benefits of a Jordan River water project with her Arab enemies when these new Israeli citizens had to be settled.35

Yet United States plans for economic revitalization in the Middle East hinged on Israeli generosity, a luxury the Jewish state was unable and unwilling to provide, considering its policy of absorbing all of the world's Jewish population. With Israel planning a strictly nationalistic scheme for the Jordan River, the administration halted its support and the regional Jordanian water project languished on the backburner of Truman's Middle Eastern policy.

Another Truman administration attempt to give aid to the Arab states proved somewhat more effective. To make up for its lack of official funding, the administration worked with American oil companies to help give unofficial aid to

35Saliba, 17-23, 25-29, 72-75; Eban, 77-86.
the Arab states. By 1950, the Arab states began to demand that American and English oil companies share more of the profits from Middle Eastern oil. Two events brought about this pressure. The Arab-Israeli conflict exacerbated the growing nationalistic feelings among the Arab states, who felt that western oil companies were exploiting their natural resources. However, events in South America provided the spark that forced western oil companies to make some economic concessions to the Arab states. In 1948 Venezuela placed a fifty percent tax on companies producing oil within her borders. The Arab states, led by Saudi Arabia, demanded a similar deal from American oil companies. Aramco, the oil company which controlled the oil concession in Saudi Arabia did not want to lose its holdings in Saudi Arabia, but did not want to lose half of its profits either.36

The State Department, which had always worked closely with oil companies in the Middle East, devised a way to solve the problems of Aramco, Saudi Arabia, and the Truman administration. In a report prepared and delivered to Aramco on 18 September 1950 the Department stressed to the oil company the threat of communist influence in the Middle East. This threat would prove even more dangerous because events such as American support for Israel and British

36Stookey, 72; Stephens, 101-110.
colonialism had made the western powers "unpopular" in the Arab world. The Department believed that the oil companies, which had the "broadest contacts with local peoples at the lowest level" could convince the Arab states that "oil operations work to their direct benefit." Furthermore the Department hoped that the oil companies could convince the Arab states that support of the United States would lead to "economic progress, political stability and the development of Western orientation and democratic processes." To that end, the Department urged Aramco to meet Saudi Arabian demands for a fifty percent tax on Aramco profits from Saudi oil fields. To soften the economic blow on Aramco, the Department stated that the United States Treasury Department might give the oil company a tax credit to compensate for the losses in revenue.

Aramco and the State Department reached an agreement in December of 1950. Aramco accepted a fifty percent tax from the Saudi government, which would be considered a foreign tax by the Treasury Department. United States tax laws protected companies from double taxation, therefore Aramco would not be subject to United States taxes on their Saudi Arabian profits. Furthermore, taxes paid to the Saudi government could be deducted from Aramco's American taxes.

37 FRUS, 1950, 5: 86.
38 Ibid., 90.
This saved Aramco millions of dollars and allowed it to give Saudi Arabia $50 million in additional revenues without diminishing the company's profits. Soon all of the major American oil companies and Middle Eastern oil producing nations took advantage of this tax loophole.\textsuperscript{39}

Despite the increases in oil revenue, economic conditions in the Arab states did not substantially improve. While the increases in oil revenues enriched the ruling classes in Arab countries, they used little of this increased revenue to improve general economic conditions in the Arab states.\textsuperscript{40} However, by persuading American oil companies to grant generous oil concessions, the Truman administration avoided threats by the Arab states to nationalize their industries. Great Britain, on the other hand, did not immediately liberalize her concessions and consequently faced a serious crisis in Iran, where the government attempted to nationalize Iranian oil interests and remove British influence from the country. Eventually Iranian pressure forced the British to evacuate Iran on 4 October 1951.\textsuperscript{41}

\textsuperscript{39}Congress, Senate, Committee on Foreign Relations, Subcommittee on Multinational Corporations, \textit{Multinational Corporations and United States Foreign Policy: Hearings on Multinational Petroleum Companies and Foreign Policy}, 93rd Cong., 2d sess., January 1974, Part 4, 88-95; Stevens, 110-112.

\textsuperscript{40}Ibid., 110-113.

\textsuperscript{41}John Donovan, 87-115; Louis, 680-89.
Throughout 1949 and 1950, efforts by the Truman administration to find alternate ways to improve economic conditions in the Arab states proved unworkable or ineffective. However, even if aid could have improved economic conditions in the Middle East, this policy tended to discount the importance of Arab nationalism. No amount of economic aid could immediately lessen the blow to Arab nationalism that the Israeli military victory had in 1948 and 1949. The inability of the United States to act in an impartial manner concerning the Arab-Israeli conflict poisoned any attempt by the Truman administration to aid the Arab states.42

On 1 June 1951, Henry Villard, a member of the Policy Planning Staff, wrote a memo to Paul Nitze, who replaced Kennan as its head in 1950, to discuss the effectiveness of economic aid to the Arab states. Villard noted that Arab leaders tended to "look a . . . gift horse in the mouth" when the United States offered aid to them. According to Villard, Arab leaders "distrusted" American intentions and their mistrust "jumps quickly to the question of Israel and what Israel is getting out of it." Villard concluded that American aid might not "produce the expected returns" from the Arab states.43

42Stookey, 121-22; Saliba, 75-81.
43Memorandum, Villard to Nitze, 1 June 1951, Box 30, File 132.
The statements of Arab leaders seem to support Villard's conclusions. In July of 1949, Iraqi Prime Minister Tawfiq Suweidi claimed that United States attempts to aid the Arab states were little more than "propaganda" and lacked "good faith, sincerity and earnestness." The Secretary of the Arab League, Abdul Rahman Azzaro Pasha, stated on 22 April 1950 that the Arab states might negotiate a non-aggression pact with the Soviet Union because the United States remained "pro-Jewish."

By spring of 1950, attempts to improve economic conditions in the Middle East had begun to stall and the risk of communism in the Middle East seemed more of an immediate threat as Arab attitudes became increasingly anti-American. State Department sources in the Middle East also believed that "Communist activities had increased both in volume and effectiveness." An official in Beirut explained that Communists were able to "play upon the traditional grievances of the under-privileged Arab people" and "say in effect . . . 'You'll never get justice out of the West.'" This official, as well King Ibn Saud of Saudi Arabia compared the situation in the Middle East to the recent communist conquest of China.

---

44 FRUS, 1950, 5: 898.
As some within the Truman administration began to question the effectiveness of economic aid for the Middle East, a major shift in Cold War strategy had already begun in Washington. In January of 1950, Truman ordered a group of State and Defense Department officials to reevaluate the United States containment policy in the aftermath of the communist victory in China. The resulting document, NSC 68, finished in April of 1950, dramatically altered George Kennan's concept of containing the Soviet Union.

While Kennan had favored a "strongpoint" defensive scheme of only protecting "vital" strategic centers from Soviet influence, NSC 68 suggested a more sweeping policy. NSC 68 maintained that American allies, as well as the American public, would perceive any further loss of territory to the Soviet Union as a victory for communism. Any communist victory anywhere would damage the prestige of the United States and harm the morale of the free world. Therefore, the United States had to defend all non-communist areas because "a defeat of a free institution anywhere is a defeat everywhere." Thus the United States and her allies had to defend the entire "perimeter" of non-communist states bordering Soviet and Soviet client states because they now were all vital.47

The conclusions of NSC 68 fundamentally changed the

47 FRUS, 1950, 1: 240; Gaddis, Strategies of Containment, 90-91.
Truman administration's containment policy. In 1950, the United States did not have enough military forces to even contemplate implementing a "perimeter" defense of the free world.\textsuperscript{48} Although NSC 68 recommended a considerable increase in military expenditures, administration officials remained concerned that a budget conscious Congress would not appropriate money for a substantial military buildup. However, the outbreak of the Korean War made a military buildup easy to sell to Congress, while the manner in which the communists in North Korea attacked the South seemed to validate the new emphasis on military preparedness.\textsuperscript{49}

The implications of NSC 68 were not lost on State Department personnel trying to implement containment in the Middle East. While the Department continued to advocate increased and impartial economic aid packages for the Middle East throughout 1951 and 1952, the emphasis shifted towards increasing the military capabilities of the Middle East to repel a possible Soviet invasion. Just as NSC 68 did not prevent the Truman administration from advocating increased economic aid, the earlier emphasis on economic problems had not precluded the administration from pressing for increased levels of military equipment for the region. On 11 August 1949, in the aftermath of the final Arab-Israeli armistice


\textsuperscript{49}Gaddis, \textit{Strategies of Containment}, 93-95.
agreement, the United Nations lifted its arms embargo on the Middle East.\textsuperscript{50} State Department policy statements after August 1949 began to mention shipping arms to the Arab states. Although NSC 47/2 emphasized economic development, it also noted the desirability of supplying "reasonable amounts of military equipment" to the Middle East to promote "internal security" in the region.\textsuperscript{51}

While the United States did not immediately supply arms to the Arab states, Great Britain did begin shipping small quantities arms to Egypt and Jordan in early 1950.\textsuperscript{52} The public disclosure of British arms sales to Arab states sparked considerable controversy in the United States. Throughout early 1950, Israeli supporters demanded that Truman prevent the British from arming the Arab states.\textsuperscript{53} Furthermore, in March of 1950, thirty-two congressmen met with Acheson and voiced fears of an "arms race" between Israel and the Arab states if Britain continued to arm Egypt. At this meeting several congressmen threatened to cut aid to Great Britain because "if the UK could use its own funds to send arm to the Arabs, it obviously needed no

\textsuperscript{50} \textit{FRUS}, 1949, 6: 1302-1304.

\textsuperscript{51} Ibid., 1439.

\textsuperscript{52} Louis, 583-84; \textit{FRUS}, 1950, 6: 130.

Despite congressional opposition to arms sales to the Arab states, the administration continued to look for avenues to increase military capabilities in the Middle East. Truman and Acheson decided to use a planned meeting of British, French and American foreign ministers in May 1950 to push for "non aggression declarations from the Middle East countries which could be announced." Truman hoped this would remove much of the domestic opposition to British arms sales to the Arab states. According to Acheson, the president "was much interested in this idea."\(^{55}\)

At the Foreign Ministers meeting, the United States successfully arranged British and French approval, on 25 May 1950, for a Tripartite Declaration on the Middle East. This agreement recognized that Israel and the Arab states had to have enough military power for "self defense and to permit them to play their part in defense of the area as a whole." The agreement stated that any Middle Eastern states desirous of arms had to pledge not to attack another state. The agreement also warned that any aggressive actions undertaken by a Middle Eastern state against another would be met by "action, both within and outside the United

\(^{54}\) FRUS, 1950, 5: 125-126.

\(^{55}\) Ibid., 135.
Nations" from the Tripartite powers.\textsuperscript{56}

Israel and most of the Arab states approved of the Tripartite Agreement. It gave Israel, what their United Nations Representative, Abba Eban, would later call "a hint of recognition for Israel's right to security" and it gave the Arab states access to western weapons.\textsuperscript{57} The Tripartite Agreement also marked the reemergence of attempts to create Anglo-American cooperation in the Middle East.

Even after the failure of the Bernadotte Plan, Anglo-American talks continued to discuss the importance of a joint policy in the Middle East, but the American emphasis on economic revitalization in the region in 1949 had made Britain cooperation unnecessary. However, any attempt to arm the Arabs had to be done through Great Britain because of domestic opposition. Even that aid would be difficult to justify without the guarantees of the Tripartite Agreement.

The conclusions of NSC 68 probably had an effect on the Tripartite discussions. United States officials, now faced with the proposition of defending all areas threatened by the Soviets, had to find ways to make these commitments manageable. Besides having the British arm the Arab states, United States officials encouraged the British to play a larger role in the defense of the Middle East. While

\textsuperscript{56}Ibid., 168; Acheson, 396.

\textsuperscript{57}FRUS, 1950, 5: 168; Eban, 100-101.
enlisting Great Britain's aid in defense of the Middle East was hardly a new concept, earlier plans had also stressed the importance of helping the Arab states become independent. By 1950, United States officials were so concerned about the Soviet threat to the Middle East that they were willing, at least in the short term, to support British control of the Arab states. Phillip Jessup summed up this attitude on 24 April 1950, when he maintained that Great Britain "is and should be [a] world power and the more powerful and worldly the better."\(^{58}\)

To this end, Acheson discussed with the British the possibility of creating a loose military alliance of Middle Eastern states with Great Britain as the chief member. The British would supply most of the troops, weapons and leadership for this organization. The idea attracted the British because they hoped to use this threat to maintain military bases in Egypt.\(^{59}\) The outcome of the 1948 War had unleashed Egyptian demands that all British troops leave their soil. The British, therefore, supported efforts to form some kind of military alliance so she could have a rationale to maintain her bases in Egypt.\(^{60}\)

\(^{58}\) *FRUS*, 1950, 3: 55.

\(^{59}\) *FRUS*, 1950, 5: 164-66.

\(^{60}\) Louis, 711-713.
The Korean War further intensified administration fears about Soviet aggression in the Middle East. The administration held meetings with British officials in July of 1950 to identify areas vulnerable to Soviet aggression "in the light of the Korean aggression." The Middle East remained, in the eyes of the Anglo-American planners, highly vulnerable to Soviet attack. The British agreed to undertake the "primary responsibility" for defending the region and the group suggested further study of possible strategies for that defense.61

In October, after further study, the State Department composed a pessimistic note on the military situation in the Middle East, which concluded that Soviet forces could easily defeat any regional forces in the area. This study also found that Syria and Iraq were vulnerable due to subversive internal groups and "Russian irregulars operating under the guise" of a popular uprising. The report was also somber about the possibility of improving the situation since the Arab states could only receive limited amounts of arms. The report suggested close Anglo-American collaboration to develop indigenous armies in the areas.62

On 27 December 1950 McGhee sent another note to Acheson concerning the military situation in the Middle East.

62 Ibid., 221-30.
McGhee pointed out that, although the British had "primary responsibility" for defense of the Middle East, Great Britain could not defend the region alone. Furthermore, the Arabs and Israelis were of little military value and the Joint Chiefs of Staff estimated that the United States could not commit troops to the Middle East, in the case of a general war, for two years. To McGhee this "clearly implies that the United State contemplates the abandonment of ... the Middle East in time of global war."\(^{63}\)

McGhee argued that this was intolerable considering the vital nature of the Middle East. To prove his point, McGhee liberally quoted NSC 68, which stated that "commitments in one area must not be permitted to jeopardize capabilities to act in other areas." McGhee argued that abandonment of the Middle East would allow an area vital to American interests to fall into Soviet hands. Equally problematic to McGhee was the negative "world-wide political repercussions" that would follow United States abandonment of the region. To show United States determination to defend the region, McGhee proposed to pledge to all states in the Middle East that Soviet aggression against them would "lead inevitably to global war." To increase western capabilities, McGhee also favored Anglo-American efforts to increase military capabilities in the region and to encourage states to

\(^{63}\)Memorandum, NEA and McGhee to Acheson, 27 December 1950, File 85, Box 30.
"participate in the defense of the area, on the basis of equal-to-equal partnership." 64

The idea of some type of regional defensive pact in the Middle East quickly became the centerpiece of American policy in the region throughout the remainder of the Truman administration. On 27 January, Acheson submitted a plan to the Defense Department to protect American interests in the Middle East from "the historic movement of Russia southward to warm-water, to oil, and to mischief-making." 65 Acheson proposed that the British establish a "military mission" to make plans for the defense of the region by the Middle Eastern countries and Great Britain. While the United States would help in developing regional defense plans, and provide some training and small amounts of arms for the Middle Eastern states, Acheson stressed that no American forces would be introduced because of commitments in Europe and Korea. Therefore, Great Britain and the indigenous regional forces would have to defend the area. 66 On 24 September 1951 Truman told Acheson to take "whatever actions necessary" to develop a Middle East Command. 67

Thus the Truman administration began negotiations with

64 Ibid.

65 Acheson, 562.

66 FRUS, 1951, 5: 22-23.

67 Memorandum of Conversation with the President, Acheson to Nitze, 24 September 1951, Box 30, File 100.
the British to create a Middle East Command (M.E.C.) that would plan and coordinate the defense of the region. The administration's fear of Soviet aggression in the Middle East compelled it to increase the western world ability to defend the region. However, because of the limited military means of the United States and the global commitments described by NSC 68, the Truman administration tried to defend the Middle East without making military commitments to the region. To this end, the idea of a regional military pact, with Great Britain and the Middle Eastern states carrying the burden of supplying forces seemed to make sense.

While United States officials in 1950 perceived a growing Soviet threat in the Middle East after the outbreak of the Korean War, the danger to the region was exaggerated. Soviet relations with Israel had begun to sour in the early 1950s as Israel became increasingly dependent on the United States.68 At the same time, Iran and Egypt underwent strong anti-western movements, but Soviet Premier Joseph Stalin refused to support either Mohammed Musaddiq in Iran or Gamal Abdel Nasser in Egypt because he considered them "untrustworthy, ultimately bourgeois in orientation and an

enemy of the socialist future." While the anti-western stance of the Arab states may have created openings for increased Soviet influence in the region, Stalin did little to take advantage of the situation.

However, State Department officials perceived the anti-western sentiment in the Arab world as an open invitation to communist subversion in the region. The Truman administration feared Soviet expansion enough to aid the British in maintaining their colonial outposts in the Middle East, even though this worked against the policy of improving relations with the Arab states. Therefore, throughout 1951 and 1952, the United States doggedly pursued negotiations with Great Britain and Egypt, where Britain stationed most of its troops in the Middle East, to create the M.E.C. Unfortunately for the western powers, Egypt and the rest of the Arab states did not share the Anglo-American enthusiasm for the M.E.C. Anger and resentment over their recent military setbacks, coupled with long standing Arab grievances over continued British colonial dominance, combined to deal a devastating blow to British prestige in the area. In Egypt, a strong nationalist movement sought to expel the British. Throughout the heated negotiations, the British demanded that Egypt join the M.E.C. and the Egyptians demanded that British troops leave Egypt.

---

69Voth, 95.
refused every western attempt to alter its decision on this point.  

This difference of opinion, fueled by Arab nationalism, led Arab leaders to view the world differently than did the cold warriors in Washington. While the United States feared the possibility of a Soviet invasion of the Middle East and attempted to mobilize the area in a defensive organization, one Iraqi newspaper claimed "the call of the West finds no echo in [Arab] hearts." The Arabs did not consider themselves a "part of the so-called 'free world' which they say they are defending." The Iraqis considered themselves "part of the oppressed world which is struggling against [the west] to achieve its freedom and throw off their yoke." Further evidence of Arab mistrust of the west came on 22 November 1951 when the Soviets issued a public statement which denounced the M.E.C. as a tool of the western powers designed to subjugate the Arab states. While Acheson dismissed this charge as "erroneous," he later admitted that the Arab states did not find the Soviet statement "far from the mark."  

---

70Louis, 692-735.
72John Donovan, 80; Acheson, 565.
Furthermore, because of the enmity between Israel and her neighbors, Israel could not be an official member of the Middle East Command, even though she had the best military force in the region. Although the administration hoped that Israel would participate in an informal manner, the Israelis could not be brought into the alliance until the M.E.C. had been "firmly established with the Arabs."\(^{73}\)

Despite the deteriorating position of Great Britain in the region and the constant tension between Israel and her neighbors, the Truman administration continued to pursue a regional defense organization as the central point to its Middle East policy.\(^ {74}\) Although the United States and Great Britain renamed the M.E.C., the Middle East Defense Organization (M.E.D.O) by 1952, the concept of a regional defense pact under a British commander remained essentially the same idea and met the same fate as the M.E.C.\(^ {75}\) Despite intensive efforts by the United States a regional defense pact was not adopted and became what Acheson later called a "political stillbirth."\(^ {76}\)

While the conflict in Korea made it expedient for the United States to push the burden of defending the Middle

\(^{73}\) FRUS, 1951, 5: 186.


\(^{75}\) Ibid., 250-328.

\(^{76}\) Acheson, 564.
East on the British, the administration could not have picked a worse moment to depend on Great Britain's influence in the area. Faced by overwhelming opposition in the Arab world, and rapidly losing its military and economic power in the aftermath of World War II, Great Britain was in no position to become the main defender of the Middle East. Yet because of the unsettled international picture, even in the waning months of the Truman presidency, the administration clung to its efforts to find some way to implement a defense pact in the area.77

The futility of United States efforts to extend economic and military aid to the Arab states, one of the main objectives of American policies in the region, frustrated State Department personnel attempting to implement containment in the Middle East. The American ambassador in Lebanon, Harold Minor, expressed these frustrations during the last days of the Truman administration when he composed a scathing critique of the administration's attempts to implement containment in the Middle East. Minor, reacting to "the dream world aura" of United States support for M.E.D.O, wrote the Department to "play this last (tragic) movement of the Near Eastern Sonata." Minor stated his support for an "unbiased" Middle Eastern policy, "free from Zionist pressures or Arab

77Ibid., 288-330.
emotional intrangencies." However, the anger caused by American favor for Israel had left the Arab states to "drift into chaos."

Minor went on to stress "that mechanisms of power in [the Middle East] are inadequate to remedy [the] situation until [the] human, psychological, and political atmosphere is improved." In Minor's view, the political strife in the region made any military organization impossible and economic aid ineffective unless the "psychological setting" of the region could be improved. Minor quoted an Iraqi official who claimed that "15 billion dollars of [American] money under these circumstances [would] not win [the] Arab world and had just as well be poured into the Mediterranean." Minor believed that unless the United States proved to the Arab states she could "say 'no' to Zionism," the area would go the way of China.78

Minor's suggestions and criticisms encapsulated the problems with the Truman administration's Middle Eastern containment policy. In an attempt to mollify the Arab states in the wake of the 1948 war, the Truman administration made substantial efforts from 1949 to 1950 to improve the economic conditions of the Arab states. This United States aid failed to improve conditions substantially in the area because of the unsettled political situation in

CONCLUSIONS

The Truman administration made substantial efforts from 1948 to 1952 to defend vital American interests in the Middle East from Soviet aggression or subversion. Because American officials perceived that the weak Arab states were a likely target for Soviet attempts to infiltrate the region, the administration's containment policy centered on improving the economic standing and military ability of the Arab states. However, these attempts to strengthen the Middle East consistently failed because of the unsettled political situation in the region and the inability of the administration to aid the Arab states due to domestic political support for Israel.

Yet the problems with Truman's policy went much deeper. The administration, as well as the State Department, underestimated the depths of Arab resentment over the United States' role in the creation of Israel. United States officials seemed to believe that an influx of American money would quickly calm the anger of the Arab states. However, what was really needed was some demonstration that the United States could deal impartially with Israel and the Arab states. Although the United States constantly professed its impartiality towards the Arab states and
Israel, the Truman administration constantly favored the Israelis. This favoritism towards Israel, the most hated entity in the Moslem world, entirely prejudiced United States efforts to aid the region. Without some effort to ameliorate the Arab-Israeli conflict, this enmity would remain constantly to frustrate United States policy objectives.

Truman's unconditional support of Israel made it virtually impossible to develop a peace plan agreeable with the Arab states. The Truman administration had enough influence in the region, particularly with Israeli dependence on American economic aid, to force some kind of compromise along the lines of the Bernadotte Plan. Yet the administration did not feel free to use this leverage on Israel because of domestic pressure. Without a settlement, the Arab states remained embittered towards Israel and her most ardent international supporter, the United States.

Truman realized this and in the last years of his administration attempted to find ways to ameliorate Arab feelings so that these states would not be susceptible to Soviet subversion. To this end, the administration sought to increase economic aid to the Arab states in 1949. Congressional opposition frustrated many of Truman's aid programs and the money that did get to the Arab states did little to lessen their ire towards the United States.

The outbreak of the Korean War and NSC 68 convinced the
administration that the military capabilities of the Middle Eastern states had to be improved immediately. However, Truman was faced with a myriad of commitments across the globe and did not wish to commit American troops to defend the region. Furthermore, Congress would not send military equipment to the Arab states. To defend the Middle East without a substantial American commitment, Truman attempted to form a British dominated alliance system among the Arab states. However, the Arab states, wary of Britain's colonial past, would not participate in any regional defense program and United States' attempts to improve the military readiness of the Arab states failed.

President Truman was unable to simultaneously balance the political necessities of supporting Israel and the strategic requirements of aiding the Arab states. It is difficult to blame Truman for supporting Israel, considering his desperate 1948 presidential campaign. Nonetheless, Truman's policies in the region failed to materially strengthen the Arab states and left them with an abiding resentment towards the West. While the Soviets did not choose to exploit this situation during the Truman administration, the unsettled situation left ample opportunities for future Soviet attempts to gain a foothold in the area. Therefore, support for Israel during the Truman administration weakened the United States containment policy in the Middle East.
LIST OF SOURCES

PRIMARY SOURCES

Unpublished Documents


Policy Planning Staff Files, "The Middle East 1947-1953," Box 30, Record Group 59, National Archives, Washington D.C.

Published Documents


Memoirs


SECONDARY SOURCES

Books


**Articles**


**Newspapers**