

National Independence Movement and Political Game of Great Powers

-- An Analysis of The Position of the British Balfour Declaration and the Reasons for Israel's Victory in the Second Stage of the 1948 War

Yixin Zhang

Gershon H. Gordon Faculty of Social Sciences Tel Aviv University, Israel

Abstract

The Middle East issue has always been a hot and sensitive issue in the world. The Contemporary Middle East issue mainly includes the contradiction between Arab and Israel, and the core of the Middle East issue is the Palestinian issue. In the process of the rise and development of Zionism and the establishment of the state of Israel, in addition to the subjective role of the national will and national power of the Jews, the intervention and interference of big powers played an important and sometimes even decisive role. The interference of external political forces can be traced back to the Balfour Declaration issued by the British government. After the Second World War, the Zionists turned to gain support from the United States and Soviet Union and realized their long cherished wish for the establishment of the state of Israel. This paper first analyzes the motivation of Britain to publish Balfour Declaration, and then analyzes the reasons for Israel's victory in the 1948-1948 war. This is the process of Israeli Zionism development and the result of mediation game among political forces.

Keywords

Israel; Palestine Issues; The Balfour Declaration; Civil War of Israel.

1. The Balfour Declaration

On November 2, 1917, the British government issued the famous Balfour Declaration. This is the first Declaration of major countries in the world formally supporting the return of Jews to Palestine. The core content of the text has only 67 English words, but the Balfour Declaration still affects the sensitive nerves of all parties. This is the first time that a western power openly supports the Zionist movement. It has affected the whole history of Palestine since then and has become the root of the conflict between modern Arabia and Israel. During the first World War, British imperialism supported Zionism on the one hand and instigated the Arabs in the Middle East to fight against Turkey on the other. Britain's aim is to secure the Suez Canal and expand its interests in the Middle East. It took advantage of the demands of France, the United States and Russia for war to dominate the Middle East by occupying Palestine militarily. The Zionists made great efforts for the British occupation of Palestine in the first World War, but as a result, they tied the Jews to the chariot of imperialism. Although the Arabs got rid of the rule of Turkey in the war, they were bound by Britain. The Middle East is the pillar of British interest, and Palestine is the cornerstone of that pillar. Britain had long coveted the Middle East, until the outbreak of World War I, the war provided Britain with an opportunity to intervene in the Middle East, and Britain formulated and implemented a series of Middle East policies, from the report to the Hussein McMahon correspondence to the subsequent Sykes-Picot Agreement, to safeguard Britain's interests in the Middle East. These Middle East policies were a prerequisite

for the creation of the Balfour Declaration, which had not been implemented to achieve the goal of monopolizing Palestine. The Balfour Declaration is an important part of a series of British Middle East policies, and the main motive of British declaration is to try to dominate Palestine after the war.

1.1. The British Motivations in Issuing the Balfour Declaration

Scholars from different backgrounds also have different views on the motives of the British government's Balfour Declaration. For example, the Arabs say that the Declaration is the result of the collusion between the British and the Zionists against Arab independence after the beginning of the war, or that it was imposed on Britain by the Zionists. The Zionists think that this Declaration is a representation of Cyrus' rescue of "the prisoner of Babylon". [3]. Apart from these political positions, to explain the motivation of the British Declaration, we need to sort out the political situation at that time. Britain's strategic intention in the Middle East is consistent with the goal of Zionist movement in Palestine, which is the background of the Balfour Declaration.

1.1.1. The Strategic Significance of Palestine and the Middle East to Britain

When discussing the motives of the Balfour Declaration, we should first pay attention to the status of Palestine in the British Oriental Strategy and the changes of British Oriental policy. Since the loss of the North American colonies, South Asia, East Asia, especially India, have occupied a very important position in the economic, political and military strategic position of the British Empire. Before 1870s, Britain's Oriental policy was to maintain a "weak but complete" Ottoman Empire. [2] However, after the navigation of Suez Canal, Palestine was valued by Britain because of its geographical location. Before the Suez Canal was built, Britain wanted to use Jews to control Palestine. In 1840, British Foreign Secretary Palmerston pointed out in his letter to the British ambassador to Istanbul: "if the Jews return to Palestine with the permission, protection and encouragement of the Sudan, they can prevent any evil plot of Muhammad Ali or his successor in the future." In the following year, he urged the ambassador to persuade Sudan to allow Jews to immigrate to Palestine, saying: "if Sudan can encourage Jews scattered in Europe and Africa to immigrate to Palestine, it will be of great benefit to him. Of course, Jews should get a real and specific security guarantee, so I suggest that they can rely on British protection and allow them to submit their representations to the Turkish government through the British authorities. "As mentioned by Morris in *Righteous Victims*, Britain feared for its possessions, especially the Suez Canal. [5] Therefore, to "strive for the possession of Palestine, which is strategically integrated with Egypt, has always been one of the goals of Middle East diplomacy." [10]

1.1.2. Britain's Middle East policy before and after World War I

According to the prelude of third part *Righteous Victims*, focusing on World War I, the Balfour Declaration and the British Authorization, the publishing process of the Balfour Declaration is as follows. After the outbreak of the first World War in August 1914, the Ottoman Empire, which ruled Palestine, joined the German Austrian alliance in October to fight against the Allies represented by Britain, France and Russia. This event had a profound impact on the fate of the Jews. Early Zionist leaders had been hoping to get permission from the Ottoman government to allow Jews to settle in Palestine, and offered financial assistance to the Ottoman government in return. Although the headquarters of the World Zionist Organization in Berlin declared neutrality, many Jews participated in the first World War and divided into pro German and pro British groups. The pro German faction headed by sociologist Franz Oppenheimer firmly believes that Germany and Turkey will win. German Zionist organizations even make public statements to encourage Jewish youth to fight for Germany; The pro British faction represented by Weizmann (later the first president of Israel) believes that Palestine will eventually be included in the British sphere of influence, and the Zionist cause should aim at

Britain. Under the strong promotion of Weizmann and others, on November 2, 1917, the British wartime cabinet authorized the foreign secretary Balfour to issue the famous Balfour Declaration by writing to Lionel Walter Rothschild, vice chairman of the British Zionist alliance. [5]

In terms of military and political strategy, for Britain, the promoters of the Balfour Declaration were mainly the "Eastern Front faction", which advocated strengthening the eastern strategy of the allies to Germany and Turkey, striving for Jewish support for wartime Britain, and at the same time restraining the expansion of France in greater Syria. To prevent Palestine from becoming a French dependency. Britain opposes the independence of Palestine and its internationalization. Its real purpose is to seize Palestine for itself. However, under the circumstances at that time, if we hold on to Palestine, it is likely to affect British French relations and lead to the collapse of the group of treaty nations, which is the result that Britain is most reluctant to see. In the report of British Prime Minister Asquith in 1915, it was mentioned that Palestine involves the interests of all major powers, especially France's repeated claims of sovereignty over it, so Britain should not publicly declare that it wants to occupy Palestine. [8] The Zionist movement is providing a support for Britain's intention of seizing Palestine with other forces. Therefore, for this coveted important place, Britain plays with the plot of "divide and rule", supports and uses Zionism, supports their demands for the restoration of Palestine, and creates religious and national contradictions in Palestine, In order to wait for their own opportunity to intervene in the implementation of the rule, the French name out of Palestine. Britain wanted Palestine and the Zionists wanted to build a country there. The interests of the two countries had something in common at that time. Since the Zionist movement had to rely on a certain big country in the world, they held a pro British position, and Britain could support their demands. [8] The Zionist movement is providing a source of support for Britain's intention of seizing Palestine with other forces. Therefore, for this coveted important place, Britain plays with the plot of "divide and rule", fosters and uses Zionism, supports their demands for the restoration of Palestine, and creates religious and national contradictions in Palestine, In order to wait for their own opportunity to intervene in the implementation of the rule, the French name out of Palestine. Britain wanted Palestine and the Zionists wanted to build a country there. The interests of the two countries had something in common at that time. Since the Zionist movement had to rely on a certain big country in the world, they held a pro British position, and Britain could support their demands.

1.1.3. The Jewish Society for Promoting the Balfour Declaration

Among the Jews, the Zionists are a force that can not be ignored. They have made a lot of preparations for the declaration. The Zionists advocated the return of Jews to their homeland, Palestine, and the establishment of a State, which was basically consistent with the ideas of the later Balfour Declaration. Prior to the outbreak of World War I, the development of the Zionist movement was stagnant. After the outbreak of World War I, some Zionists saw the opportunity to think that Jews should stand on the side of the allies and try to win the support of the great powers. They first wanted British support and hoped that Britain would issue a declaration in support of the return of Jews to Palestine. To win British support, it is necessary to mobilize British Jewish society to exert influence on Britain.

On the eve of World War I, the major British Jewish community organizations were the British Jewish Representative Committee and the British Jewish Association, Then the two organizations merged, A Joint Commission was established in 1878, Chief leader was Lucien Wolf, The committee is known as the "Foreign Office" of the British Jewish community, It has very close ties to the British diplomatic service, And advocate the return of Jews to Palestine, For the plight of Eastern European Jews. The leading body of the British Zionist movement is the "Executive Committee in Support of British Zionist", The organization is based in London, Established on 23 January 1916, The main members are Sokolov, Gast, Weizmann, Joseph

Cowen, Clanov and Bentwich. Nahum Sokolov is a member of the World Zionist Organization, The organization is headquartered in Berlin.

In November 1914, the United States Joint Distribution Commission was established to provide relief and support to Jews in distress and destruction of war, emphasizing that all Jews should be responsible for each other, that is, to help all Jews. Since 1915, the Joint Distribution Commission has invested billions of dollars in Europe and the Middle East to maintain Jewish communities there. In 1916, the American Zionists held a preparatory meeting, calling for equal rights for Eastern European Jews and guaranteeing the rights of Palestinian Jews, a policy publicly proclaimed by all American Jewish organizations. [12]

In the course of the Balfour Declaration, the leader of the Zionist movement in the United States played a very important role. The outbreak of World War I put Palestinian Jewish communities in trouble, most of whom often relied on donations from foreign Jewish communities. After the war, donations were interrupted, exacerbating the economic difficulties of Palestinian Jews. The Zionist Organization of the United States immediately established an emergency foundation to send remittances to Palestine. "In order to be a good citizen of the United States, we must be good Jews," said Louise Brandes, leader of the Zionist movement. To be good Jews, we must be Zionists." [11] Brandeis was elected Chairman of the Zionist Provisional Executive Committee for General Affairs after the start of the war. The committee is committed to helping coordinate the rescue of Palestinian Jews.

1.1.4. Power Game during World War I

This is also a reflection of the power game in the first World War. Britain tried to strive for more allies or adjust the relationship between allies. First of all, at the end of October and the beginning of November 1917, Russia was on the eve of the October Socialist Revolution, and its domestic political crisis was serious. Once the provisional government collapsed, Russia would withdraw from the war, which would make the treaty group lose an important pillar, directly affect the war between the treaty countries and the Allies where Britain was, and endanger Britain. At this time, Britain issued the "Balfour Declaration" in order to improve the status of Russian Jews, especially the prominent Jews in various political factions, so that they can exert influence on "the country in the throes of revolution, stabilize it and continue to participate in the war." [7] Secondly, by the second half of 1917, World War I had been in progress for more than three years. Although the United States government had declared to participate in the war in October, it did not actively invest in it. The Balfour Declaration would have a positive effect on the change of attitudes affecting Jews and the active participation of the United States government in the war. Finally, it is also to win the support of Jews and weaken the mass base of German participation in the war.

It can be said that the Balfour Declaration, like many secret treaties, is a means for Britain to achieve its own political goals. Just as Asquith, the prime minister at that time, said when he evaluated Lloyd George's motives for agreeing with Samuel's Memorandum on the Palestinian issue: "Lloyd George is not concerned about the Jews, but that Palestine will not fall into the hands of others." [1]

1.2. The Impacts of the Balfour Declaration

The publication of "Balfour Declaration" had a great impact on the Palestinian Jews and the Arab world. With the support and encouragement of the British government, the scale of Jewish immigration to Palestine expanded rapidly after the Balfour Declaration was published. In the Arab world, around the end of World War I, some Arab leaders always thought that they had the support of Britain, so the release of the Balfour Declaration shocked them greatly. Since the founding of Israel, Arab nationalists have always regarded the Balfour Declaration as the root of the Arab national disaster. [6] The white paper of 1939 became a catalyst for the founding of Israel and laid a hidden danger for the Middle East issue. During World War II, the United States

strongly supported Zionism, excluded Britain, and supported the resolution and Declaration of unlimited immigration in Palestine and the establishment of a Jewish state, which further deepened the Arab Jewish conflict.

The Zionist movement in the late 18th century, after the Balfour Declaration was published in the early 19th century, has been greatly promoted. On the eve of the outbreak of the Second World War, Britain's attitude towards Zionists began to grow colder because of its own strategic interests in the Middle East, but at that time, Zionists were basically full-fledged. Therefore, it can be said that the Balfour Declaration played a special role in the whole process of the emergence, development and growth of the Zionist movement. It injected an effective stimulant into the Zionist movement and made it develop rapidly. Finally, it became a "disciplined, increasingly prosperous country with a population of 700000." [13]

With the decline of Britain in World War II, Zionists turned to seek the support of the United States and gained more impetus. At last, shortly after the end of World War II, they realized the long-standing aspiration of the establishment of the state of Israel. The support of the United States is a most important one of the causes why Israel prevailed in the second phase of the 1948 war (May 1948 to June 1949). After the war, American Jews, with their strong strength, provided timely and powerful support and assistance to Zionists in political, economic and military fields. Without the support of American Jews, it is unknown whether the Jews can achieve the separation of government in Palestine, whether they can establish their country as scheduled according to the plan of separation of government and whether the new Israel state can survive the first Middle East war. The American Jewish organizations have launched a series of public movements to create public opinion for the Jewish nation building. The American Zionist leaders and some Jewish elites have lobbied the American government for this purpose. Meanwhile, American Jews used their votes to exert pressure on President Truman, which made American policy turn to Zionism; Economically, American Jews provided huge financial assistance for Israel to establish a nation and defeat Arab countries; In military, American Jews provided Israel with a large number of arms, laying the foundation for Jews to win the first Middle East war.

In summary, the development of the Israeli movement of establishment has been accompanied by the political interference of the great powers such as the United Kingdom and the United States. The Balfour Declaration, which buried the root cause of the Palestinian problem, laid a preliminary foundation for the later Palestinian nation building. Then, the assistance of the United States in the 1948 war was also the most important reason for Israel to win and build a state.

2. Israel's Victory in the Second Phase of the 1948 War

From the beginning of 1948 to July 1949, the war between Israel and the Arab army experienced two stages. From May 1948 to July 1949, Israel won a comprehensive victory in the second stage of the war. There are many reasons for Israel's victory, including the timely and accurate strategic change of Israel in the first stage of the war in April 1948, and the strategic, tactical and military changes of Israel in the second stage. The degree of internal unity is the absolute advantage of the Arab army and the support and assistance of the United States, the Soviet Union and other international political forces.

Convening of the first special session of the United Nations in April 1947, Establishment of the Special Committee on Palestine, Responsible for investigating all matters relating to the question of Palestine and proposing solutions, Upon completion of its investigations, Agreement was reached on ending the mandate and on how the United Nations should function. Eventually, Resolution 181(II) adopted by the United Nations General Assembly, Having adopted the partition plan supported by the two major powers, 14 May 1948, On the basis of

resolution 181, Name Israel. On the same day, The United States declared its recognition of Israel. The Arab States have rejected the resolution, Without establishing the Arab States in the areas specified in the resolution, And declared war on Israel on 15 May 1948, Israel occupied most of the Arab territories provided for in resolution 181; Jordan occupied 4800 square kilometers of land in the West Bank; Egypt occupied 258 square kilometers of land in the Gaza Strip. The release of this resolution is of great significance and advantage to all the newly established Jewish people and army in Israel.

2.1. Israel's Strategic and Tactical Advantages

2.1.1. The Adjustment of Strategy and the Integration of Military Forces

The adjustment of strategy and the integration of military forces play a decisive role in Israel's victory.

As is illustrated in *Righteous Victims*, the first Arab-Israeli war was to have two distinct stages: a civil war, starting at the end of November 1947 and ending in mid-May 1948, largely characterized by a guerrilla struggle between the Yishuv and the Palestinian Arab community; and a conventional war, from May 15, 1948 until early 1949, between the newly founded State of Israel and the armies of Syria, Jordan, Egypt, Lebanon, and Iraq, and small expeditionary forces from a number of other Arab countries, including Yemen and Saudi Arabia. [5]

First of all, Israel's strategic adjustment and operational experience before the end of the first phase of the war laid an important foundation for its subsequent operations and victories. From April to May 1948, when Israel adjusted its mode of operation, turned to attack and launched large-scale, highly organized and sustained operations. The five-month militia campaign in the first stage has also enabled the Israeli army to accumulate combat experience and become more competitive when facing the unexperienced Arab army in the second stage. As is put by Morris, During the period of the invasion and the truce, the Haganah quickly made the transformation from a semilegal underground/militia into a fullfledged army—the IDF was formally established on the basis of the Haganah on May 31—and by the start of the truce the Haganah was far stronger in terms of command and control, manpower, and weaponry than it had been on May 15. [5]

2.1.2. High Military Quality

In addition, in terms of military quality, Israel is also better than the Arab army. Jewish army enjoyed basic advantages over the Palestinian Arabs in all other indices of strength—"national" organization for war, trained manpower, weaponry, weapons production, morale and motivation, and, above all, command and control. Moreover, they enjoyed a demographic advantage in army-age males, resulting in part from the deliberate policy during the previous years of bringing in as many young male immigrants as possible. [5] Moreover, Haganah enjoys advantages in the quality and quantity of civil military unity under his command. The communication line is relatively short, which is convenient for supply and rapid transfer of troops. Moreover, the Israeli army is more familiar with the terrain. Compared with the Arab army, they are fighting in and for their own home to protect their relatives. Therefore, their morale is also greatly encouraged.

2.2. The Influence of International Political Forces

During the war, the United States and the Soviet Union played a huge role in helping Israel.

On the one hand, the United States and the Soviet Union provided direct military assistance to the Israeli army. The Soviet Union made Czechoslovakia a donor. As early as March 5, 1948, the Czechoslovak Government signed an arms agreement with the Zionists. Some Jewish organizations even set up regular arms airlift lines between the Czech Republic and Israel from May 20, 1948 to August 10. An Israeli military investigation report, commenting on the airlift, said: "this airlift played a vital role during the war of independence." [9]

On the other hand, the United States and the Soviet Union also provided political support for Israel in the international community. In response to Israel's request in the Security Council, the United States facilitated the first cease-fire, giving Israel an extremely valuable breathing space. He also turned a blind eye to Israel's encroachment on Arab land in violation of the UN General Assembly resolution on partition. Only when Israel occupied part of Sinai did it stop with Britain. British scholar George Kirk even said: "this new country (referring to Israel - the author's note) - only as far as its birth is attributed to the role of power politics - can be said that it was born in New York." [4]

Finally, the Jews in the world also contributed to the war: The Yishuv also enjoyed the well-organized backing of the World Zionist Organization, with powerful branches in the United States and Britain that could, at crucial junctures, tap the resources of the Jewish communities. Theoretically the Palestinian Arabs had the whole Arab world to fall back on, but that world, less organized and less generous than Jewry, gave them little in their hour of need, in money and arms. [5]

2.3. Contradictions and Disintegration of Power in Arab Countries

2.3.1. Contradictions Among Arab Countries

There is no unity within the Arab States. The interests of the Arab countries involved in this war are not consistent. They were drawn into the war because the plan of partition between Palestine and Israel was much better for Israel than for Palestine. However, in terms of the real purpose of the exhibition, the Arab countries participating in the exhibition can be said to have different dreams. They have their own interests. Therefore, within the Arab army, they are not united and have not formed a unified organization. Morris also mentioned that the Arab countries have not reached a political consensus on the objectives of war, have no unified military command, unified military objectives or operational procedures, tasks and timetables. Apart from the Arab legions, no Arab army is really ready for war. The latter includes the fact that during the war, the Arabs did not carry out proper planning and intelligence work, and the logistics was chaotic. At the same time, there was no good order or cooperation between the Arab forces, and there was even a bad situation that "Jordanians watched the IDF wounded Egyptians". [5]

2.3.2. Tactical Failure and Collapse of Force

Tactically, the Arab army is also hard to compliment. One of them is Morris's point out in the book "A key feature of the Arabs' plans was the complete marginalization of the Palestinians." [5] The Arab army has not effectively mobilized the Palestinian people. The Arab groups in Palestine do not have their own independent and complete armed forces, and the Arab leadership is in chaos, and there is no clear operational deployment, which makes the Arab people in Palestine helpless in front of the Israeli army. Therefore, the Jewish army's policy of breaking up one by one has achieved great results.

The collapse of military force became more and more fatal in the later stage of the war. Facing the serious shortage of weapons and ammunition, Arab countries had no other sources. Since July, their army has suffered a severe shortage of weapons, ammunition and spare parts. At the same time, thousands of trained Jewish and foreign volunteers poured into the Jewish army from abroad, which made the Arab army difficult. Even if Egypt launched an air raid, "there are few excellent pilots or ground crew, and there is a serious shortage of spare parts."

To sum up, Israel's victory in the first Middle East War was inseparable from the leader's own military strategy. At the same time, it was also influenced by the United States and other international political forces. Finally, the internal conflicts and military failures of Arab countries also provided an opportunity for Israel's victory and subsequent negotiations.

2.4. Israel Won but Did Not Win Peace

In the face of political pressure from the United States and Britain, coupled with the apparent separation of the Arab coalition forces, the Egyptian government finally agreed to armistice negotiations with Israel. On 24 February 1949, Egypt and Israel signed an armistice agreement, which became the main symbol of the end of the Palestinian war. The agreement provides that the line of actual control of the forces of both parties is the ceasefire line. Since then, Israel has signed armistice agreements with Jordan and Lebanon, and Iraq has refused to negotiate with Israel. In the first Middle East war, the Arab army killed 15000 people and the Israeli army killed about 6000 people. After the baptism of blood and fire, Israel consolidated the new state and occupied four fifths of Palestinian land, more than 20,000 square kilometers, more than the United Nations partition resolution more than 6000 square kilometers.

Israel had expelled Palestinians from the occupied territories, and nearly a million Palestinians had to flee their homes and become refugees. In the land occupied by Israel, a number of Palestinians remained, and they continued to engage with the Jews with rudimentary weapons, becoming the earliest armed elements of the Palestine Liberation Organization. The hatred that has been left behind by the bloodshed has been flowing from generation to generation, and the war between Jews and Muslims has continued, which is a difficult problem that is entangled in history, religion, territory, survival, and even God can not solve.

3. Conclusion

The essence of Balfour Declaration put forward by Britain is that it does not want to offend the Arabs completely, but also gives some support to the Zionist movement, so as to realize its own demands in the Middle East strategy and international situation. Since then, Balfour Declaration has become the root of the conflict between Arabs and Jews in the Palestinian area. After World War II, Israel won the 1948 war, which is also inseparable from the involvement of international forces. In addition to the superior strategies and tactics of the Jews themselves, the help of the United States and the Soviet Union is also never underestimated.

References

- [1] Asquith, Memories and Reflection, 1852-1927, vol II, Boston.
- [2] Hua Tao: The Palestine Issues. World History, 1983. CNKI: SUN:HIST.0.1983-04-006.
- [3] Klaus J. Herrmann. Political Response to the Balfour Declaration in Imperial Germany: German Judaism. Middle East Journal, 1965, 19(3).
- [4] Krik George. (1954). The Middle East, 1945-1950. New York: Oxford University Press.
- [5] Morris, B. (2001). Righteous Victims. RANDOM HOUSE.
- [6] Qianhong, Z. (2017, 3). A retrospect to the Balfour Declaration on its 100th Anniversary. World Review, pp. 45-47.
- [7] Safran, N. (1981). Israel: The Embattled Ally. An Imprint of HarperCollins Publishers.
- [8] Stein Leonard. (1988). Balfour Declaration. ACLS History E-Book Project.
- [9] The world after WWI. (1978). Shanghai: Shanghai Renmin Press .
- [10] W.W. Gottlieb. Studies in Secret Diplomacy during the First World War, London, 1957, p66.
- [11] J. Dejas: Louis Denbiz Brandes, New York Press, 1929, pp. 207-210.
- [12] Janowski. Jewish and Minority Rights. New York Press, 1933, p.184.
- [13] Simha Flap An. Zionism and the Palestinians, London: Croom Helm, 1979, p84.