



Right vs wrong, right vs right or wrong vs wrong?

The Concept and History of Nationalism in the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict.

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Preface

It is soon 5 years since I first got in contact with the Norwegian Defence Studies Centre at Bardufoss and heard about their offerings in terms of studies and education at a higher level. The master's programme on conflict, security and multicultural understanding seemed perfect for me and what I am interested in, both personally and at work. The programme's unique combination of political science and social anthropology is particularly relevant for me as an officer. When I deployed in Afghanistan the first 5 months of 2007, I felt the advantage of my studies in many ways, both as to what I had learned before, but especially the fact that I brought the semester's curriculum down with me and got first hand information on among other things the local power structures in Afghanistan, a theme on which I also wrote one of my term papers. In the process of identifying a theme for this thesis, I used some time in order to produce an interesting problem to be addressed. Now that I have found one, I think it has been very interesting to make an in-depth and exhaustive study of it, and I am of the opinion that my thesis covers the programme's main topics, which are conflict, security and multicultural understanding in a good way.

The road towards finishing this master's degree has at times been curved and challenging. It is not necessarily recommendable to combine such studies with a full time job as a company commander in the military with deployments abroad and a heavy workload at home. When adding that my little family has increased with two more family members since 2008, it goes without saying that I owe my lovely wife Anita huge thanks for her patience and understanding, as I for long spells of time have been mentally absent and in my own little academic sphere. I would also like to thank my teaching supervisor at the university, Bror Olsen, for a very good collaboration in the different semesters and in particular on the long way towards finishing this master.

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1. Introduction

Late in December 2008 Israel waged war on Palestine (West Bank) after being attacked by Hamas' rockets from the Palestinian side. Both Palestine and Hamas are by Norwegian authorities approved as legitimate democratic actors, on the same level as the state of Israel. The conflict is thereby in many ways a classic conventional war between two legitimate states, if we do not take into account the huge difference when it comes to armament, military and economic power. The conflict has been on most states' political agenda for years in the past and will probably be for years to come as well. This is not just another conventional war – the reason for this is very complex. In order to understand the tensions, the hate and the brutality in the region, it is vital to have a thorough knowledge of the region's history.

The establishment of the state of Israel in 1948, on the grounds of Palestine land, stands out as one of the last western imperialistic moves in the world. Today, over sixty years later, the region is becoming more and more tense and complex, and the search for a state solution is pushing harder and harder. The path towards a workable peace with a Palestinian state alongside Israel, both with internationally recognized borders, has long been well known. Palestinian and Israeli leaders have all been reluctant to take it due to doubt and mistrust from both sides. According to Norwegian politicians such as the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Gahr Støre, Israeli leaders should begin recognizing that Hamas must be engaged politically. Even Norwegian Chief Rabbi, Michael Melchior, argues that in the Middle East it is "right against right" as much as it is "right versus wrong" or even "wrong versus wrong". He is also in favour of inviting Hamas into peace negotiations as an independent part, a suggestion that has been rejected by the Palestinian leadership in Ramallah. This is again an example of the point of views not always corresponding with the expectations. Some kind of Palestinian unity

government must perhaps be accepted in order to see a future ceasefire and perhaps stability in the region? Or have the Israelis simply accepted a future of conflict?

An interesting and troubled past is also accompanied by dramatic changes in Egypt lately. Since Egypt's authoritarian president Hosni Mubarak was taken out of power by the people of Egypt, Israel no longer has a western flank to turn its back against. How can this development influence the ongoing conflict with Palestine?

I am hoping to get a broader understanding of the conflict by elaborating on the country's history, with a special emphasis on the nationalist movement responsible for acquiring the support necessary for establishing the state of Israel. The master program's main topics are conflict, security and multicultural understanding, a program in which I see a lot of parallels to what I will elaborate on later in this thesis. I am writing in English because I want to be able to reach more people, most of the literature I will use is in English, I am familiar with the language from school and it has been my working language both at the Norwegian Military Academy and at work in international military operations. Most of the literature in the program is also in English, and given the co-operation with the university's Peace Studies it feels natural to do this thesis in English.

1.1 Background

The Middle East area has been an area of conflict in the past century. The process that led to the somewhat controversial decision to establish a Jewish state in Palestine shows some of the international complexity still present in the conflict. Both Palestine and Uganda were British protectorates, and Britain undertook the task to decide which one the Jewish people were to have. Palestine was eventually chosen, but the scenario bears witness to the fact that the world was very different back then compared to what it is today, due to the influence and dominance of imperialism in the world. Imperialism in short, (derived from Latin *imperare* – to command), is when a state tries to gain political, cultural, economic or military power beyond own borders. It was an earlier power-struggle between superpowers in getting raw materials, cheap labour and taxes from natives elsewhere in the world. The connection between

imperialism and nationalism is clear as colonies abroad gave the people a desired status, symbol and colonialism was synonymous with pride amongst the population. The power of symbolism used as an important tool in gaining support for a movement or a cause will be elaborated on later in this thesis.

There are numerous approaches as to what to concentrate on in order to improve the understanding of what is happening in the Middle East region. In this thesis, I will focus on Israeli history, Jewish history and the nationalistic ideology of Zionism, for a foundation of a discussion on the mushrooming conflicts and the driving nationalist forces that are present in this area.

The biggest problem in this region is quite simple. We are facing an area where two different groups of people are both claiming their given right to the same areas of land. Both claim their exclusive right to the land, and neither one of them is willing to let it go. In my eyes some sort of compromise is standing out as the only solution if any. Is there a way to address this problem and perhaps solve it with help from nationalist ideologies such as Zionism?

This thesis primarily shows the Jewish/Israeli point of view. I am not writing in a balanced objective way, and my discussion deals primarily with the Israeli side of the story.

1.2 Problem to be addressed

According to Ernest Gellner¹, nationalism is primarily a political principle, which holds that the political and the national unit should be congruent. Consequently only one nation should live within the state borders. Nationalism involves a strong identification of a group of individuals, and as Ger Duijzings states, conflict is an extremely powerful tool when it comes to creating identity². Within nationalism, Kjetil Tronvoll is crystal clear when elaborating on how external armed conflicts create massive internal group solidarity. In a crisis or battle situation, old divisions are laid aside, and the nationalist dream of ethnic fraternity becomes a

¹ Ernest Gellner, *Nasjonalisme*, (Spartacus Forlag, Oslo 1998)

² Ger Duijzings, *Religion and the politics of identity in Kosovo*, (Hurst and Company. London, 2000) pp 32-34

momentary reality.³ I therefore see two diametrically opposite starting points for analyzing the conflict between Israel and Palestine. On the one side there is the unproblematic national group that works for civil rights in an area, and on the other side you have the battle for civil rights where enemies and adversaries are created as a necessity for maintaining national support and the identity of a group of people.

To what extent can specific nationalist ideologies contribute to pointing out possible solutions to a conflict? In this case, how has the nationalist ideology of Zionism evolved and how does it influence and possibly suggest solutions to the ongoing struggle between Israel and Palestine?

1.3 Assumption and method

When thinking about Israel and the Jewish people it is easy to be blinded by the horrible actions against Jews throughout WWII, and thereby think that it was a matter of justice when the UN Security Council voted for the proclamation of the establishment of Israel on 14 May 1948. The predominant feeling was that Jews had suffered too much in the holocaust actions. The Palestinians lost the land they had inhabited for years and they were driven out by the Israelis. These days Palestinians want to regain control over the Gaza Strip and the West Bank, ground that was seized in the 1967 war. The Israelis withdrew from Gaza in 2005, but the Jewish settlements on the West Bank remained. An agreement could mean that land belonging to the Arabs inside the state of Israel is given to Jews. Today the occupation of Palestine is in Palestinian eyes best theorized using prison images. Ronit Lentin argues that what we have today is a ghettoization of the Palestinians, and combined with the Israeli control on both the Gaza strip and the West Bank the Palestinians are unable to sustain themselves economically, and they have no sense of political sovereignty.⁴ A solution should give both parties a chance of succeeding in self sustainability.

³ Kjetil Tronvoll, *War & the Politics of Identity in Ethiopia*, (Great Britain, 2009), pp 7-8

⁴ Ronit Lentin, *Thinking Palestine*, (Zed Books, London 2008), pp 116-123

When Ariel Sharon in 2005 evacuated Gaza, it was a painful repetition of history for the religious settlers. Again, as after the war in 1967, the settlers had to see new areas being lost. The land had now shrunk to the narrowest definition of Abraham's land in the Bible: Galilee, Judea and Samaria. Political and strategic interests could in other words be winning over nationalism and Zionism? The Middle East area is of large interest in the world, and Israel has always been balancing on a knife's edge when it comes to securing proper international, and in particular U.S., support. Israel is a small country with heavy surrounding Arab pressure, and a country in need of western sympathy and support when withstanding a constant Arab pressure and maintaining an occupation of Palestinian land. According to associate professor Bjørn Olav Utvik at the Oslo University⁵, the newly experienced development in Egypt is important for the Palestinians in particular. If there will be a people's elected government in Egypt, we know from before that public opinion in Egypt is convinced that the establishment of the state of Israel happened through an encroachment against the people of Palestine. An injustice considered continuing through occupation and expansion of both the West Bank and Gaza. Israel could be losing a secure flank against Egypt.

According to Joseph Massad there is a failing of Zionism that goes unmentioned. He argues that it was not a result of nationalism that made Jews move to Israel in 1948. They were refugees and had no other place to go.⁶ This again triggers my interest as the situation seems very multifaceted and complex, a challenge in order to find the common denominators in my current problem.

Are thoughts concerning a two-state solution breaking with the old Zionist thought and movement? According to Lentin there was at no point any serious consideration of giving Palestinians civil rights and risking turning Israel into a bi-national state⁷. Further on the Oslo Accords and diplomacy towards Palestinian sovereignty could easily be looked upon as an Israeli opportunity to expand and gain more control over the area. I think that one problem with Zionism could be that there is very little room for compromise. I will also draw some

⁵ Bjørn Olav Utvik, quoted in an article at the website www.forskning.no "Nå må Israel tenke nytt" [Now Israel must think in a new way]

⁶ Joseph A Massad, *The Persistence of the Palestinian Question*, New York, (Routledge print 2006), p 162

⁷ Ronit Lentin, *Thinking Palestine*, (Zed Books, London 2008), p 120

parallels to other nationalist driven conflicts such as the comparison of Jewish supremacy, Nazism and the South African white supremacy and its outcome.

Has nationalist thought and influence in the world today changed compared to the situation in the world in 1948? I will examine these questions using an analytical framework shown by Kjetil Tronvoll dealing with the different layers of conflict, as seen in his work and analysis on the war between Ethiopia and the State of Eritrea⁸. I found his work and method for explaining the making of enemies and allies in the horn of Africa very logical and suited for what I am elaborating on. He starts his work by explaining the ethnography and history in the region in order to fully understand the people's attachment to the land. He then adds a new chapter where historical trajectories of wars and enemy images are presented. Further on he is presenting how discourses of identity and notion of self is constituted. In chapter 5 in his book⁹ he is elaborating and analysing the effect of war at the grassroots levels. In his final chapters he is among others exploring different layers of war in the Horn of Africa – bilateral conflicts, transnational interests in the conflicts and international engagements. By reading his work and follow his lecture¹⁰ on the theme I found a lot of parallels well suited when making my own standard outline for this thesis.

⁸ Kjetil Tronvoll, *War & the Politics of Identity in Ethiopia*, (Great Britain, 2009)

⁹ *Ibid*

¹⁰ Kjetil Tronvoll, lecture on "*How wars connect*", Norwegian Defence Studies Centre [Forsvarets Studiesenter], Bardufoss 16. April 2009

2. Does Israel have a navel?¹¹

In this chapter I will give a short introduction to what I believe is important developments and characteristics within Zionism and how it has adjusted towards nationalism. Thereafter I will discuss and elaborate on how necessary support, with different means, for nationalist thoughts gained strength in favour of Jews. Finally I will tie these elements together and discuss how symbolism and nationalism in the end contributed in the establishment of the state of Israel. The heading of this chapter is inspired by Ernest Gellner and his writings and debates on nationalism. Do states have a right to exist by law of nature, or are they made – and what factors contribute?

2.1 Zionism

The culmination point occurred with the establishment of the state of Israel in 1948, and concerning Zionism this was a tremendous victory for both the organization and the people. However, in other words this was also the beginning of another era of conflicts and instability in the Middle East area. This thesis will also address Zionism as a nationalist movement and how the organization influences following possible outcomes and agreements between Israel and Palestine, based on history, today's situation and the objectives of Zionists and Jews.

Jews have for centuries wanted and dreamed about an independent Jewish state, and I could have started much earlier when approaching Zionism. However, in my eyes significant changes appeared with Theodor Herzl and his studies on Zionism. Appalled by the anti-Semitism which accompanied the Dreyfus Affair in France, he abandoned the prevailing liberal ideas of Jewish assimilation, and in his 1896 pamphlet *Der Judenstaat* proposed a sovereign Jewish state as the guarantor of Jewish life and liberty.¹² In 1897 he organized the first World Zionist Congress, which settled on Palestine as the site for the Jewish state and established the World Zionist Organization. This represents an important start for what could be characterized as a huge nationalist wave that was set in motion.

¹¹ With reference to Ernest Gellner's work on Nationalism and Modernity, "Do nations have navels?"

¹² Alan Dieckhoff, *The Invention of a Nation*, (New York, Columbia University Press 2003), p 31

To unite the Jews of the Diaspora (Jews in exile) and settle them in Palestine, Zionism arose in the late 19th century and culminated in 1948 when the state of Israel was established.

“Zionism” derives from the name of Zion, which was the hill on which the Temple of Jerusalem was located and at a later stage came to symbolize Jerusalem itself. Nathan Birnbaum was the first person who applied the term Zionism to this movement in 1890.¹³

Zionism as an organized political movement first originated in the 19th century, but its roots go as far back as to the 6th century BC. When Jews were carried off to captivity in Babylon, their prophets encouraged them to believe that one day God would allow them to return to Palestine, or Eretz Israel (the Land of Israel). Jews in exile had for centuries believed that the coming of Messiah would mean that Jews would be allowed to return to their homeland, a Messiah sent from God. Jews nevertheless continued to migrate to Palestine, and joined the Jewish communities that were present in the country. But they still remained a small minority among a large Arab population.

2.2 Religious Zionism

As Butenschön argues, in the East European orthodox Jewish communities, the polarization in the views upon Zionism was emancipating early in the 19th century.¹⁴ Two basic attitudes were crystallized: On one side that Zionism is not only a God denying ideology, a reflection of the modern European cultural decadence, it also seeks to interfere in the relationship between Jews and their God. Zionism was seen as a legitimate child of the Enlightenment’s unbelievable arrogance of human nature. The Zionists were blasphemous when regarding themselves as redeemers of Eretz Israel, the historic motherland. Only by divine powers the land could be redeemed. Zionism was not only spiritually decadent, it was sinful and blasphemous, a false Messiahism.¹⁵ On the other hand people like Rabbi Cook¹⁶ were of another opinion. Cook has been regarded as the founder of the national-religious ideology

¹³ Alan Dieckhoff, *The Invention of a Nation*, (New York, Columbia University Press 2003), p 3

¹⁴ Nils A Butenschön, *Drømmen om Israel*, (Universitetsforlaget 1984), p 190

¹⁵ *Ibid*

¹⁶ *Ibid*

direction in Zionism. He tried to justify Zionism to Judaism by explaining human actions as a part of God's plan to give Jews salvation, in more or less the same way as Kalischer did in the 1860s. Zionism to Cook is a part of a predetermined cosmic order. War and disorder exists because Jews have not taken their place in the universal theological structure. He had high thoughts of what would happen when Zionism had made Eretz Israel happen.

Later, the unexpected Israeli victory in the Six-Day war in 1967 stood out as a sign from God that Jews were entitled to this area. This was a belief that was shared both by Zionists and many orthodox Jews. Rabbi Cook's theories got an even stronger foothold. If Jews fail in retaining Judea and Samaria the judgment will come as another annihilation of Jews. Based on Cook's ideas a group of rabbis together with both secular and religious Zionists established the organization Gush Emunim.¹⁷ The goal of this religious movement of settlers was and still is to strengthen strategic areas of the West Bank, in the same way as had been done earlier when Moshe Levinger in 1968 with a small group of militants occupied areas outside of Hebron and forced the MoD Shimon Peres to withdraw and surrender. Gush Emunim had become a powerful threat to the secular state, and Israel was facing another reality – the danger of civil war.¹⁸ Eitan Alimi describes this development and calls it a power deflation arising from the national-ideological conflict over the issue of the occupied territories, future status and not the least the Palestinian population still living inside them. Consequently, Israeli governments found it difficult to generate and implement collective goals or recover social control and legitimacy of the system. And also worth mentioning in this debate, the problem exists regardless of what specific ideological orientation the given administration has. Nationalism and the road towards success and unity was not a highway leading in one direction anymore. However there is a very strong ally on Jewish side when it comes to unity and nationalistic religious symbolism. E.g. in the USA, Christian Zionists represent a huge number of people able to shape the political agenda both inland and in the contested area in the Middle East. An Islamic victory in the Middle East will be the end of Christian holy places in the area. In particular the city of Jerusalem is vital to Judaism, Christianity and Islam. Israel is also regarded among Christians as the place and religious premise for Christ's second return. To jeopardize this, and let human actions decide and influence a divine

¹⁷ *Ibid*

¹⁸ *Aftenposten, Innsikt*, May 2008

prophecy is unthinkable for a huge number of believers. Harrison would describe this situation as a power struggle where wealth, prestige and legitimacy have been connected to a battle for important symbols.¹⁹

2.3 Adjustment in Zionism towards nationalism

Jewish life itself had to be secularized in order to make possible the rise of secular Zionism. This process began with the Hebrew language. The secularization of Hebrew, which till that time had been used essentially for producing religious works, gave Jews a new national language that could serve their needs of non-religious communication. This process started in the 18th century with the Haskalah, a movement inspired by the European Enlightenment and initiated by Moses Mendelssohn, a German philosopher. Hebrew had an ambivalent position, because it still had a mark of holiness as a result of its status as a sacred language. The emergence of Hebrew as a literary language created new possibilities for the emergence of Zionist nationalism by sowing the seeds of a modern Hebrew culture. This cultural unity through a common language was facing a lot of resistance among the Orthodoxes who wanted to keep Hebrew a sacred language. The achievement of political equality by European Jewry began in France in 1791 during the French Revolution and spread over most of Europe in the next few decades. Although Zionism was about to transform and reach new heights regarding supporters of their ideas, it is important to bear in mind the fact that a common view was that Jews were able to blend in as regular citizens in their respected home countries. This, however, changed dramatically later in the mid 20th century after WWII. As Dieckhoff states it was only by hard and patient ideological work the defenders of nationalistic Zionism were to succeed in inventing the modern Jewish nation.

¹⁹ Simon Harrison, *The Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute Vol 1, Four types of symbolic conflict*, (University of Ulster, 1995), p 255

2.4 Nationalism and support

In order to understand Herzl's²⁰ later motives and what is for instance characterized as a catalyst for Israeli nationalism, it is important to know the brief story of Alfred Dreyfus and his court martial. Dreyfus was a Jew who in 1894 was sentenced to life and sent to Devil's Island, accused of having sold military secrets to Germany and betrayed France. Violent anti-Semitism erupted in France as a result of this court martial. Dreyfus was, however, in 1899 acquitted as a result of new information in the case. The Dreyfus affair deeply affected Herzl. Jews were prominently implicated and there was a resurgence of Jewish persecution in France as well as in other European countries. Jewish topics began to preoccupy Herzl and appeared more and more frequently in his writings. Herzl did not say that the people with anti-Semitic ideas were wrong or acted in an unjust way. However, he was deeply worried about the Jewish image that was growing all over Europe, saying that a Jew was a bad man and a man that could not be trusted. Instead his writings were focused on the fact that Jews should be looked upon as a group that embody the characteristics of innocent men who had served long time prison sentences unjustly. After the Dreyfus affair he began abandoning his own ideas that said that assimilation of the Jews with the Christian peoples of Europe was the best solution to fight anti-Semitism. Jews had to get their own sovereignty and their own territory.

In order to implement his plan regarding a separate, independent Jewish state, Herzl called for a Zionist congress in 1897. This congress met in Basel, Switzerland. As a result of the congress Palestine was chosen as the site of a future Jewish state because of its associations with Jewish religion and history. The World Zionist Organisation was founded to help lay the economic foundation for the proposed state.

Joseph Chamberlain declared in 1903 that he was ready to hand over the territory of Uganda to Jews as a homeland. Chamberlain was not bothered by the fact that the East African country had no historical or religious significance to Jews. He was thrilled by the political recognition of the Jewish people, since Jews were called upon to organize themselves on a national basis with an autonomous administration. Certainly Herzl's acceptance of the British

²⁰ Herzl, Theodor (1860-1904), Jewish writer, journalist and founder of modern political Zionism, is regarded as one of the greatest influences in the movement that led to the creation of the state of Israel.

proposal was colored by his own impatience to see his life's work realized before his physical strength came to an end²¹. The 7th Zionist Congress in 1905²², however, rejected the East African scheme, because of the historical roots. Uganda was not suitable for Jewish colonization in the same way as Palestine. In nationalist thought Herzl believed that the state comes through the nation and it does not need to be localized in a fixed place, since the state alone will make the nation exist as a concrete reality.²³

2.5 Identity through conflict and violence

Duijzings says that conflict creates an unmistakable identity²⁴ and from that I see a clear link to how the Dreyfus affair resulted in unity amongst Jews against the others. Jews as a group seemed to be synonymous with e.g. betrayal and crime. Duijzings underlines the power of personalized violence, as seen with Dreyfus, and how it unifies the people, creating blank spaces in the mind and erasing old memories.²⁵ Such violence functions as a path to a new type of situation, new consciousness, new sense of loyalty and identity. Don Handelman shows how this type of mirror image of a common enemy can be created in the chapter "The collapse of Versailles and the Nation-in-arms".²⁶ In short, on a warm evening in 2001 a private Jewish wedding reception in Jerusalem turned into an ellipsis when the floor of the reception hall fell away from beneath the feet of the celebrants. Twenty-three people were killed, and hundreds injured in this tragic accident that simply was a result of too much weight on one floor. However, the collapse was perceived as an armed attack upon the state itself, and someone was to be blamed for this stab of terror. Bureaucracy and rhetoric soon united Jews against this common, but unknown, enemy of the state and Jews. All sorts of stories evolved on what had really happened and what danger Jews were facing. The floor-accident was also filmed and this gave the story a brutal insight into horror. These images

²¹ Herzl died on July 3, 1904, before he could see his dream of a Jewish homeland fulfilled. In 1949 his remains were transferred to a mountain west of Jerusalem that was named Mount Herzl; it is also the site of a memorial to the Jewish victims of World War II.

²² Alan Dieckhoff, *The Invention of a Nation*, (New York, Columbia University Press 2003), p 122

²³ *Ibid*, p 42

²⁴ Duijzings, Ger, *Religion and the Politics of Identity in Kosovo*, (Hurst & Company, London 2000)

²⁵ *Ibid*, p 33

²⁶ Handelman, Don, *Nationalism and the Israeli state*, (Berg, NY 2004), p 3

were soon found on every television station in the world, and the world could see how a group of Jews were suffering. Duijzings argues that war and conflict is the most effective way to bring changes, by blood, suffering and large sacrifices. It has an indelible effect on the collective memory. From that perspective in nationalist discourse violence and war are considered positive forces, as a means to regenerate and purify the nation. In many ways a hygienic loop in the society that must be kept alive in order to connect the people in what Duijzings metaphorically calls the never-ending Darwinian battle between the nations of the world – only the fittest will survive.²⁷ Joseph Massad, on the other side, shows how the Palestinians unite against the Israelis with use of symbols and nationalist thought. In the introduction to the Palestinian Nationalist Charter, the Zionist conquest of Palestine is presented as a rape of the land.²⁸ The Charter views the Palestinians as children of the land which symbolizes the mother. The Zionist adversary is seen as masculine and with a violent sexual nature. This view is linked to the early Zionist speeches that viewed the role of Zionists as fertilizing the virgin land.

I will also draw a parallel to another well known strong unifying situation that occurred in September 2001, in the attack on the Twin Towers in NY. This act of terror created an enormous need for protection among Americans and their interests. The message to the common enemy was that unity in the USA was strong and the enemy was facing proud and united strong nations. The day after the attack there was not one street corner in the country that did not sell flags and other items symbolizing the United States of America. The conflict became personal for all Americans. Again, conflict creates identity and unity, and as Menakhem Mendel claims in the Israeli/Palestinian conflict, “Nothing is more whole than a broken Jewish heart”.²⁹ With that I mean to tell that conflict and persecution is the story of the Jew and what makes a Jew.

In this chapter I have given a few examples on how national identity can be made up of a set of ideas and notions that are created and kept alive through actions, symbols and myths. The power of symbols is, according to Kjetil Tronvoll, that it brings meaning and understanding to a great variety of people in the same setting. Symbols enable people to express association

²⁷ Ger Duijzings, , *Religion and the Politics of Identity in Kosovo*, (Hurst & Company, London 2000), p 34

²⁸ Joseph A Massad, *The Persistence of the Palestinian Question*, (New York, Routledge, 2006), pp 152-153

²⁹ Ger Duijzings, , *Religion and the Politics of Identity in Kosovo*, (Hurst & Company, London 2000), p 12

with a group or state without compromising their own individuality. The same symbol will therefore have several interpretations and meanings. The effect of nationalism is that it renews culture in a way that it enables people to talk about their culture as though it was a constant, and therefore giving righteousness to the people of the state.³⁰

2.6 Understanding the settlers

In this section I will elaborate on what could be called the “settlers’ tactics” and the role the Jewish settlements have played in the Middle East areas concerning nationalism, both before and after the establishment of the state of Israel. According to Berry and Philo³¹ there are two major reasons for the creation of settlements. The first stressed the Israeli security value against the surrounding Arab community, making it more difficult for a potential Arab invasion. The other strand of thought justified the settlement-building and retention of occupied territory on the basis of divine rights.³² I will start with a short historic summary on how the settlers have advanced and then link this to nationalist theory.

There are different directions of Zionism within the left and the right in politics. Socialist Zionists tried to give a Marxist justification for Zionism. Jews needed a territory of their own in which to set up a normally stratified society, where they could then engage in class struggle and thus hasten the revolution, a revolution that would give them the land back to its original owners. Tactics employed to make Marxist theory were soon shown to be fruitless, and this forced the socialist Zionists to think in other terms for gaining foothold and support in the area. The focus had to be on creating agricultural settlements, instead of focusing on strengthening capitalism and making the proletariat grow. This way of thinking was new for Socialist Zionism and from the 1910s these agricultural settlements were to be known as the “kibbutzim”. The kibbutzim would later prove to be the backbone of the Yishuv³³, (Jewish population of Palestine), long before the State of Israel was established and for many years

³⁰ Kjetil Tronvoll, *War & the Politics of Identity in Ethiopia*, (Great Britain, 2009), pp 170-171

³¹ Mike Berry and Greg Philo, *Israel and Palestine – competing histories*, (Pluto Press, 2004)

³² *Ibid*, p 54

³³ Walter, Laqueur, *A History of Zionism*, (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1972), p 12

thereafter. Even today there are pockets of Jewish Yishuvs on both the West Bank and in Gaza.

Ernest Gellner is clear when stating that culture and organization are fundamental when defining nationalism³⁴. Culture and organization are universal and at all times present phenomena, states and nationalisms are not. Ernest Gellner has also in my eyes a very valid point when stating that there is not one clear general solution or answer in ethnic confrontations. Some solutions can be more unjust than others, but there exist no solutions that are all just.³⁵ Even today the strength of the Israeli settlers in Arab dominated areas is not to be neglected, as they in many ways are stopping development in Palestine. The most important element of Palestinian economy is agriculture. But in order for Israel to keep the settlers secure, Israel controls the water resources and they constantly take control over more land from the Palestinians. Palestinian agriculture is therefore decimated for Israeli security reasons. Arafat managed to hail the triumph of this settler colonialism as a just civilizing project in the PLO/Israeli agreement,³⁶ and according to Massad this is a vital step towards some kind of sustainable peace that with reference to Gellner only will be as just as possible. Gellner also writes about the deterritorialising of nationalism. As globalization has gained a foothold in the world, we all know that a state's power and prestige depends as much on its annual rate of growth and economic influence, as on how much of the map it is capable of covering with its own colour.³⁷ Gaining land as the settlers do is in other words not always synonymous with increased national power, as was the situation in the early imperial days of colonialism and nationalism.

Before the establishment of the state of Israel, Jews were used to living in exile. A life in exile is according to Gordon not a life and there is no common culture. Jews were according to Gordon a people [...] "hovering between life and death"³⁸, and if they had not yet vanished from the face of the earth it was only because "the body of the people of Israel existed in a mummified state."³⁹ The historic/biblical right to the land is very interesting, because both

³⁴ Ernest Gellner, *Nasjonalisme*, (Spartacus Forlag, Oslo, 1998), p 17

³⁵ *Ibid*, p 115

³⁶ Joseph A Massad, *The Persistence of the Palestinian Question*, (New York, Routledge, 2006), pp 115-120

³⁷ Ernest Gellner, *Nasjonalisme*, (Spartacus Forlag, Oslo, 1998), p 118

³⁸ Zeev, Sternhell, *The Founding Myths of Israel*, (Princeton University Press, 1998), p 48

³⁹ *Ibid*, p 48

Jews and the Arabs have solid historic proof of their right to the region. Who is right in this matter?

“We have a historical right to the land, which remains with us as long as another living and creative force does not wrest it from us. Our land, which in days gone by was “flowing with milk and honey” and which in any case was the seat of a high culture, has become poorer, desolate, and more abandoned than any other civilized country, and it is also almost uninhabited. This is a sort of confirmation of our [Jews ’] right to the land, a suggestion that the land awaits us.”⁴⁰

As the quotation shows, Israeli nationalists have a lot of symbols and old biblical sayings on their side and in favour of their cause when stating an ownership to the land. However, was it right to let the interests of the Palestinians yield, since Jews had been so badly mistreated? Or was this unjust to the Palestinians? If you have been exposed to something painful, does that mean that you have other rights compared to those who have not suffered from the same things? These difficult paradoxes have followed Israel’s existence since its establishment. At any time we have an Israeli state in an existential battle, continuously threatened by a massive and hostile Arab world. In addition Israel becomes victimized in Europe’s need for finding collective explanations that can contribute to finding factors that will free the European majority of any responsibilities in one of history’s worst genocides. Rita Abrahamsen⁴¹ puts her finger on an interesting dilemma in this discussion. Far more bloody conflicts in the world are unfolded without any form of public arousal, engagement and demonstrations. The war in Gaza cost the lives of 1500 people (1500 too many), and at the same time 20 000 people were killed in the northern areas on the island of Sri Lanka in the civil war. The term settlers is also quite interesting. In another setting the natural word would probably be “occupants”. To settle down somewhere brings back memories of uninhabited land where success came out of hard work. The real story in this case is settling down in an already crowded place, pushing Palestinians away. Symbolic rhetoric and semantics are powerful tools when shaping the opinion.

⁴⁰ *Ibid*, p 69

⁴¹ Chairman of the board in the Mosaic religious community in the city of Trondheim.

There can be very little doubt about the important role the Israeli settlers have played in this conflict, both for gaining support and securing Israeli interest, but also in that the fear of extinction grew among the Palestinians. Many Palestinians were captured in refugee camps as a result of settlers pushing them away. Eytan A Alimi is arguing how this situation makes the Palestinians suffer with little confidence in their identity, they have no framework for identification and they are alienated from their own people. This is in other words another set of factors that makes a path towards a workable solution between Israel and Palestine more curved and difficult to follow.

2.7 The Nazis and Israeli Apartheid

The Nazi horror in WWII is well known and common knowledge for most people, and in this section I will discuss how rules and guidelines concerning different identity-shaping processes are implemented in people's minds. I will also draw some parallels between how Jews were persecuted by the Germans and how Jews are persecuting the Palestinians.

According to Kayyali, Nazism is one of the most prominent racist ideologies of modern time. Nazism set itself the task of achieving world peace, "based on the victorious sword of a race of masters which shall put the world in the service of a superior civilization."⁴² The "Aryan" race was the master race and from then on Jews were considered a race apart, an oriental one. A digression worth noticing is that when Germany was making an alliance with Japan, it destroyed the biological determinism underlying the Nazi ideology. Result: the Japanese were reappointed as "honorary Aryans". This shows how German nationalists were able to create and develop unifying theories which the population believed in and followed. And again we see a very strong bureaucratic logic and rhetoric that is adjusted to fit the nationalist circumstances as elaborated on earlier.

In retrospect it is frequently asked how this madness was able to evolve. There are no clear-cut answers to this, but there can be no doubt that nationalist ideas can become an extremely

⁴² Abdul Wahnab, Kayyali, *Zionism, Imperialism and Racism*, (London, Croom Helm, 1979), pp 88/105 (Quote from Adolf Hitler in *Mein Kampf*, as quoted by D. Felman, *Twentieth Century op.cit.*, p 107)

dangerous and powerful political tool. Nazism and the industry around the “superior race” killed millions of Jews during WWII. Such a horrible crime towards mankind was condemned by the countries of the world in the aftermath of the war. Later, however, Israel has been accused of Nazi-style crimes in the context of Israeli massacres of Palestinians in 1948. Up till present time Israel has been accused of “Nazi actions”⁴³ such as gunning down 47 Palestinian men, women and children in Kafr Qasim in 1956, inscription of numbers on the arms of Palestinians and poison gas that led to miscarriage for many Palestinian women.⁴⁴ In defence of Zionism, Isaac Deutscher soberly asserted the innocence of Jews by stating, “People pursued by a monster and running to save their lives cannot help injuring those who are in the way and cannot help trampling over their property.”⁴⁵

Joseph Massad establishes a link between institutionalized white supremacy in the United States and South Africa (Apartheid regime), and how Israeli law determines “who is a Jew?” and what specific privileges and rights thus follow. White supremacy in the U.S. and South Africa ended when the costs of maintaining it became too high to bear in both countries.⁴⁶ Today the price of Jewish supremacy is paid by the Palestinians and in order to make the costs too high to bear for the Israelis, Palestinian resistance continues in Israel and the occupied territories. It can also be achieved by putting on international pressure, tourism boycotts, diplomatic isolation of the country and economic blockades. According to Massad it is only by hitting the Jewish supremacists hard in the comfort of their daily lives that a solution can be found. This solution may seem non-pragmatic in today’s international context, but it is perhaps not less pragmatic than the faltering peace processes that continue to be sold to the world. Jewish supremacy must perhaps be eliminated in order to start a process towards lasting peace in the area. Other solutions would only pursue oppression of the Palestinian people says Joseph Massad.⁴⁷

According to Uri Davis, both South Africa and Israel are in a sense intruded states. They were built by pioneers organizing abroad and settling in partially inhabited areas. Later South

⁴³ Ronit Lentin, *Thinking Palestine*, (Zed Books, London 2008), p 134

⁴⁴ *Ibid*

⁴⁵ *Ibid*, p 132

⁴⁶ Joseph A Massad, *The Persistence of the Palestinian Question*, (New York, Routledge print 2006), pp 152-153

⁴⁷ *Ibid*, p 153

Africa's Archbishop Desmond Tutu observed the Israelis treating Palestinians in the same way the apartheid South African government treated blacks. As a digression one could mention the ruling of the Israeli Supreme Court in the year 2000, stating that 93 per cent of the territory of the state of Israel is designated to settlement, cultivation and development for "Jews only". In South Africa on its apartheid-peak approximately 83 per cent of the territory of the Republic of South Africa was designated for "Whites only".⁴⁸ It is strange to see how brutality and the means for incorporating it shift in time. It would be common sense for the Israelis to never again be part of or encourage such acts of brutality as they had been victims of in WWII. The same with the paradoxical common saying after WWI – "Never Again". But in the end, it is the same powerful means of convictions, rhetoric and cornering of two people able to do whatever it takes to survive a common threat or reach a common goal.

Uri Davis argues that racism is not apartheid and apartheid is not racism.⁴⁹ Apartheid is a political system where racism is regulated in law through acts of parliament, not protected by the values of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. In an apartheid state, the state enforces racism through the legal system, criminalizes expressions of humanitarian concern and obligates the citizenry through acts of parliament to make racist choices and conform racist behavior. Israel is today some sort of a hidden apartheid which distinguishes between "Jews" and "non-Jews", at the same time advocating the values of liberal and political freedom. Uri Davis believes that the establishment of a democratic state over the entirety of Palestinian soil is the development that will secure to all the residents, Christians, Jews and Muslims, equality of rights and duties. His thesis indicates that the Palestinians do not fight for the love of war or for revenge, but rather for the liberation of land and man whatever their religion might be. Vengeance is negative and destructive, whereas liberation is positive and constructive.⁵⁰ Ilan Pappé is also of the same opinion as Davis, and cannot see how today's parliamentary ruling and discrimination in the state of Israel can continue in the future. In order to find a sensible way forward in the present deadlock, Ilan Pappé also sees a metaphoric road map based on civil rights, human dignity and international justice.⁵¹

⁴⁸ Uri Davis, *Apartheid Israel – possibilities for the struggle within*, (Zed Books 2003), pp 82-85

⁴⁹ *Ibid*, p 35

⁵⁰ *Ibid*, p 205

⁵¹ Ilan Pappé, *The Ethnic Cleansing of Palestine*, (Oneworld Publications Limited, 2006)

2.8 “The Promised Land”, symbolism and nationalism

The historical and biblical relations between Jews and the “The Promised Land” are many. Some of the issues are already dealt with in this thesis, but it is important to have some knowledge of this background in order to understand some of the different views on the establishment of the state of Israel.

The land of Israel is neither a fatherland nor a mother country, Israel is the land of which God had said that He would show it to Abraham and give it to his seed and everlasting heritage.⁵² In a more modern way of speaking, one could say that it is this myth that unites the people, and the country is anchored in the future more than in the past. The everlasting heritage means that the country belongs to Jews and every Jew that will follow in the future. Interesting, however, is the fact that this myth has survived all these years. From when the idea of a promised land was first conceived and adopted up to present time, the idea is as valid today as back then, even after two thousand years in exile. And this vitality represents an important historical factor and dynamic drive when Jews are returning to their homeland and for the support of the nationalist movement of Zionism.

Israel exists as a fact by right of history. Zionist demonstrators were protesting in 1939 against the White Paper of the British government carrying banners saying that the land belonged to Jews and not to the British authorities. This was based on biblical sayings.

On the other hand, others did not support the revealing new national movement. Many prominent Jews were arguing that a Jewish homeland was not needed. According to people such as the famous Jew and physicist Albert Einstein, Jews were perfectly able to live as regular citizens in the democratic countries of the West. Einstein feared the kind of nationalism that ideologies such as Zionism represented, nicely wrapped in the name of State and patriotism. He lamented “Heroism on command, senseless violence, and all the loathsome nonsense that goes by the name of patriotism – how passionately I hate them.”⁵³ Einstein stated:

⁵² Internet: <http://www.bridgesforpeace.com/publications/dispatch/lifeinisrael/Article-4.html>

⁵³ Internet: http://www.dissidentvoice.org/Articles4/Petersen_Einstein.htm

“My awareness of the essential nature of Judaism resists the idea of a Jewish state with borders, an army, and a measure of temporal power, no matter how modest. I am afraid of the inner damage Judaism will sustain – especially from the development of a narrow nationalism within our own ranks, against which we have already had to fight strongly, even without a Jewish state.”⁵⁴

I have chosen the quote above in order to show that the strong forces of nationalism are multifaceted and that there have always been fears of the strong forces that often evolve in such violent processes. Ronit Lentin argues that when the Israelis on one hand refer to the war of independence in 1948, the Palestinians have named it Nakba (expulsion of Palestinians)⁵⁵. Nakba is the Palestinian catastrophe where 800 000 Palestinians were expelled or escaped from their homes as the Israelis claimed the land, a number of refugees that today has increased to over 4 million after three generations. Ronit Lentin describes the situation as a “memory boom” where both parties’ narratives concerning the claim of land are strong. According to Lentin’s writings, the Zionist way of dealing with these vague memories is best done by valorization of certain memories over others.⁵⁶ The State of Israel has engaged in an active extinction of memories such as the Nakba. By establishing new Jewish settlements on the grounds of former destroyed Palestinian villages new memories are being built, and old Palestinian places, museums, sanctuaries and memories are slowly washed away. This is an example of how remembering and forgetting is constructed in collective memories, and also a good example of a long-term plan for Israeli and Zionistic survival in the area. The Israeli side has always stated that it was the Palestinians who ran away and aborted their land. However, as time goes by and documents are being downgraded there are evidences of previous ethnic cleansing in areas and an organized deprivation of Palestinians from their homes and land.

Symbolic wise, there has always been a connection between Jews and the land. While Jews were in exile, suffering from persecution and disgrace, the Promised Land was suffering as well. The land was at the time waste, waiting for the return of its predetermined owners and partners. What had been said in the biblical prophecy now seemed to bear out; “I will bring

⁵⁴ *Ibid*

⁵⁵ Nakba, the Arab name of the expulsion of the Palestinians.

⁵⁶ Ronit Lentin, *Thinking Palestine*, (Zed Books, London 2008), p 209

the land into desolation, and your enemies that dwell therein shall desolate as well.”⁵⁷ The area had been one of the most fertile areas of the ancient world, but now the area had become a wasteland struck by malaria. After the Turkish conquest in the 19th century, the destruction of the area had reached its peak and the population of Palestine dropped to less than half a million people.⁵⁸ It would be quite an achievement for Jews to make the area fertile again, it would be, even for secularists, a heroic and slightly miraculous achievement of the Zionist pioneers who settled down in the malarial swamps and started watering the desert waste. Like the Bible says,[..]”making her wilderness like Eden, and her desert like the garden of the Lord.”⁵⁹ I am mentioning this because within the area of nationalism, symbols and metaphors like those above are strong political capital. Simon Harrison underlines the significant importance of symbols in political competition for power, wealth and legitimacy. Struggles to control or even manipulate such symbols are vital.⁶⁰ The feeling of a homeland is above all very strong among Jews, pro Israeli state or not. A clear and simple example of a symbolic value is for example wherever a Jew is buried, a handful of dust or earth from the Holy Land is laid in his grave or coffin. After all, one wants to be buried “at home”.⁶¹

Political symbols have, according to Harrison, four characteristics to which they are linked: property, status makers, legitimacy and emotional connectivity, and he explains how symbols in their “life cycle” can rise and fall in value. The symbols may come into existence, they will always be interpreted to have different values, the symbols can migrate between groups and they can finally go out of value and cease to exist. I see these as central issues because in the Middle East area these thoughts are very much applicable to how symbols and righteousness to them are the same to both the Israelis and the Palestinians. To give up on one or more of these symbols and give the opponent the ownership to it, is in many ways unthinkable. Because as Harrison argues when investing emotionally in something it will feel like losing a part of one’s sense of self when giving it away.⁶²

⁵⁷ The Bible, Authorized Version, *Leviticus 26:32*, (Bible Society, Swindon, 1992), p 119

⁵⁸ Internet, <http://www.wzo.org.il> [World Zionist Organisation], *Israel: The People & The Land*.

⁵⁹ The Bible, Authorized Version, *Isaiah 51:3*, (Bible Society, Swindon, 1992), p 600

⁶⁰ Simon Harrison, *The Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute Vol 1, Four types of symbolic conflict*, (University of Ulster, 1995), p 255

⁶¹ Internet, <http://www.wzo.org.il> [World Zionist Organisation], *Israel: The People & The Land*.

⁶² *Ibid*, pp 269, 270

Other Jewish groups do not see the need for a Jewish state, with its own constitutional laws. Especially the ultra orthodox Jews emphasize that there is no need for other constitutional laws, other than the laws already existing in the Torah (first five books of the Bible). And by following these laws, you are a Jew. The declaration of independence says that Israel is established as a Jewish state, but the Declaration does not have constitutional status. There is no formally written constitution, and thus it follows that Judaism is not constitutionally defended as the official religion of the state of Israel. Instead there is a jungle of laws, including ordinary laws, which place Judaism in an unnaturally strong position and apply Jewish laws to many areas of Jewish daily life. It is important to remember that these laws can be changed in the Knesset if there is a political will to do so. But as Dan Rabinowitz argues the Palestinians do not have enough members, nor real power in the Knesset, to make a difference in voting. They are present in The Knesset more in the role of political being, and not so much political doing. They try at their best to achieve tangible objectives such as better distribution of resources and access to influence.⁶³ In other words, what we see in Israel is a large variety of religious (Jewish) and secular rules and guidelines as to what it is that makes society work. I am mentioning this because this present system is vulnerable and under constant pressure. In particular I find Ilan Pappé's writings interesting and sharp when he analyses the relationship between the Israelis and the suppressed Palestinians. In his book "The Ethnic Cleansing of Palestine"⁶⁴ he is, as a Jew, pinpointing several taboo subjects in the Palestinian/Israeli relationship. I will elaborate more on this later in this thesis in the chapter "Bilateral Conflicts", but he is predicting an end to Jewish apartheid regime and he argues that being the last European enclave in the Arab world, Israel has no choice but to transform one day into a civic and democratic state for both Israelis and Palestinians. Despite Apartheid-like ruling, the Jewish supremacy is not able to hold "Fortress Israel"⁶⁵ forever. One of many central issues in this debate is that admitting to the Palestinian assertion of being victims of an ongoing evil, it would undermine Jews' own victimhood. This will again, as Ilan Pappé

⁶³ Dan Rabinowitz, *Overlooking Nazareth – the ethnography of exclusion in Galilee*, (Cambridge University Press 2003), pp 148-150

⁶⁴ Ilan Pappé, *The Ethnic Cleansing of Palestine*, (Oneworld Publications Limited, 2006), pp 253 - 257

⁶⁵ *Ibid*

argues, mean that the Israeli Jews would have to recognize that they have become the mirror image of their own worst nightmare, like the persecution and the Holocaust in WWII.⁶⁶

When going back in history, Jews had to let go of their old life in order to return to the Promised Land. There had to be something besides the historic right that would make Jews come back. One of these seductive matters was the right to own land. Jews had through the centuries been deprived of the right to own land. These laws were gradually quashed, but they remained valid into the 20th century in some countries. For example, even in Norway these laws were not changed until the mid 19th century. In early days the right to own land was looked upon as very exclusive and only for the nobility. Jews were more or less forced into other branches of business and economy, where many also became very successful. Gerald Krefetz writes about the Jewish success on the money market and in other institutions, which caused a lot of jealousy among people.⁶⁷ Seeing that Jews were so successful made them easier to hate, as seen with the rise of Nazism from 1930. By 1933, Jews in Germany constituted more than 16 per cent of lawyers, 10 per cent of doctors and 5 per cent of editors and writers even though they in numbers amounted to less than 1 per cent of the population.⁶⁸ This jealousy⁶⁹ was also a main contributor for the Jewish wish of returning, “going home” and owning a piece of the land. In this more or less romantic vision of the Promised Land, the hard facts spoke for themselves. Many Jews feared a hard life, living as peasants in the wasteland of Palestine. Despite persecution, they were successful and lived a good life in Western countries. What would it take to give up this? Today, Ernest Gellner is clear when saying that nationalism has been deterritorialized and it is no longer dependent on number of square meters on a map. But, despite a short historic leap from the 1950s up till today the world has changed dramatically with among other things globalization. But again on the other hand, Israel is by square meters so small that the ground covered on the map is still extremely important to the Israelis. Yielding land in the area from one party to another is at best extremely difficult, but perhaps the only compromise possible?

⁶⁶ *Ibid*, p 246

⁶⁷ Gerald Krefetz, *Jews and Money: The Myths and the Reality*, (Book Sales, 1982), p 31

⁶⁸ Cohn-Sherbok, Dan, *Anti-Semitism: A History*, (Stroud, Sutton Publishing, 2002), p 283

⁶⁹ Gerald Krefetz, *Jews and Money: The Myths and the Reality*, (Book Sales, 1982), p 31

The Jewish rightful claim to the area and land of Israel is deeply rooted with the biblical Promised Land and the prophecies. Symbolic wise this is a gift package in other to rouse the people and claim the necessary support for the cause. Nevertheless, the nationalist support is never unanimous even within Jewish ranks. Firstly, to live under constant pressure and in constant conflict with the neighbouring states is challenging. Secondly, the slow eradication of Palestinians and their history deeply affect both the Israelis and of course the Palestinians themselves. If a solution is to be found, and with help from ideologies as Zionism, some sort of compromise is forcing its way forward. As long as both minorities are present in the area, they are likely to keep on fighting for their cause. An obvious thought would be a greater acceptance of one another's history and in the end perhaps a compromise proposal will be an end-state in the conflict? But this is probably much easier to state as a third party, witnessing from outside. This was also something that Rabinowitz was reminded of when he discussed the same issue with an Israeli Jew in Natzerat Illit. Although living alongside with Palestinians in the city, the man believed that full and perfect coexistence and harmony between Judaism, Israeli nationalism, the state and the territory and a linear "Israeli" or "Jewish" history is not only possible, but well worth living and even suffering for.⁷⁰

2.9 The establishment of the state of Israel

Israel owes its existence to a number of circumstances and the Balfour declaration in 1917 stands out as an important event. When Great Britain offered to create a National Home for Jews in Palestine it was just as important to suppress Turkey from becoming the major power in Middle East as it was to help Jews. The commitment was repeated in the League of Nations' Mandate of July 1922.⁷¹ The success of Zionism clearly was a danger to the Arab/Palestinian population in the area. They were losing influence in proportion with the increasing Jewish power in Palestine. From that time and up till the British mandate ended in

⁷⁰ Dan Rabinowitz, *Overlooking Nazareth – the ethnography of exclusion in Galilee*, (Cambridge University Press 2003), pp 188

⁷¹ Alain, Dieckhoff, *Zionist Thought and the Making of Modern Israel*, (NY, Columbia U. Press, 2003), p 7

1948, Palestinians and Jews were both trying to secure their foothold and influence in the area.

On May 14, 1948, at midnight, the British mandate over Palestine ended, and Jews declared their independence in the new state of Israel. Israel owed its existence to a number of unique circumstances:

- Western sympathy for Jewish suffering, especially connected to the Holocaust
- The political influence of American Jews in securing the support of President Harry S Truman.
- Britain's loss of will to continue its rule in Palestine
- And the Yishuv's and the settlers' determination to establish and hold on to their own state and ground.

One of the most towering and powerful political characters in Israel's history is David Ben Gurion (1886-1973) who founded the leftwing Zionist strategy in Palestine. He claimed that Judaism had adapted to the degradation in the course of the last 2000 years and that the religious leadership now resisted an active battle for liberation. Ben Gurion's two main political principles were that Zionism violates Jewish tradition and that a new Jewish people can only be formed by building a new Jewish working class based on an independent Jewish economy. This was the only way of making roots in the new country, and starting the march towards independence. Ben Gurion became Israel's first prime minister in 1948. The struggle for an independent nation was a secular liberation. The upcoming rightwing Zionists saw military power as a matter of necessity in order to gain power in Palestine. Combined with, among others, religious Zionism the organization was divided into several branches and beliefs. Herzl, at his time, feared this development because he believed that the only way to reach their goals was to stay united in one Jewish Zionist national strategy. Ben Gurion insisted that now that the Jewish state was in place, the sole purpose of Zionism had to be personal "aliya" (Hebrew, going up, or settling in Israel). I state this in order to show that Zionism itself has a lot of variables and branches, when later discussing its influence in the ongoing conflict.

3. Possible future state constellations

In this chapter I will discuss vital elements of International Law in the formation of states and different ideas that are predominant when discussing two possible solutions, in principle different, to the conflict between Israel and Palestine. I will also give a review on where Palestinian nationalism stands today in order to give a better understanding of how nationalist arguments often are to be found in a stalemate both ways.



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Considering the limited available land areas of Israel, the surrounding countries (Lebanon, Syria, Jordan and Egypt) may have to play a role, and yield some areas of land, in a possible establishment of a Palestine state alongside with Israel. However, I will not deal with these issues in this thesis other than to emphasize that Israel's 21 000 square kilometers (as a digression Sør-Trøndelag county in Norway is 19 000 square kilometers) is not much considering the approximately 7,7 million⁷³ inhabitants living in the partially dry uninhabitable desert land.

⁷² Picture from internet: <http://thekickinghorse.files.wordpress.com/2009/12/palestine1.jpg>

⁷³ Internet: http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/Society_&_Culture/newpop.html

3.1 International Law

It is difficult to say whether it is Israel or Palestine that is responsible for haltering the process of finding workable solutions to the long-lasting conflict. To establish a state is not done over night, and a Palestinian state is not established automatically with recognition from sympathizing states. International Law has four central terms that have to be fulfilled in order to make possible the establishment of a state. These are:

- The state must have a permanent population
- The state must have a clearly defined territory
- The state must have a government with authority over the whole area
- The state must have the ability to interact with other states and be able to comply with international contractual obligations⁷⁴

There are examples of states being established without fulfilling all terms (e.g. Kongo and Angola were established whilst in civil war). Israel itself was also in this situation as the government did not control the land areas of Israel as it was established. But Palestine was in this respect founded on quite insufficient grounds. The only thing Palestine has, is a more or less permanent population. I am of the opinion that one of the biggest problems with accepting a Palestinian state today has to do with setting the borders. Not even the Palestinians themselves agree on where to draw the lines on the map. Some want to go back to the partitioning plan from 1947, whereas others, such as Hamas, want a Palestine stretching from the Jordanian river to the sea.

International pressure and involvement is by many regarded as a necessity in designing the road map towards a solution. I will elaborate on two different solutions that are currently discussed politically. International engagement and law is therefore important elements one cannot choose to overlook.

⁷⁴ Internet: http://no.wikipedia.org/wiki/Stater#Folkerettslig_definisjon

3.2 The One-State solution

To divide a small area into two even smaller areas is problematic, and a search for a one-state solution where both minorities have the right to settle in all contested areas is tempting. There are several writers and opinions considering what are right or wrong with different state-solutions. However, with today's uprising in Libya and focus on Qaddafi, I have chosen to include some of his reasoning in this thesis both because I find some of his arguments well placed, and also because I found it a bit surprising as I came across his article. It is in other words not because I regard Qaddafi as an expert on the matter. Dan Rabinowitz also shares some of his arguments in his work "Overlooking Nazareth", arguments based on how Israelis and Palestinians co-exist for better or for worse in the town Natzerat Illit, a town which the Israelis built on formerly Palestinian land just outside the biblical town of Nazareth.

The disputed president (or dictator) of Libya, Muammar Qaddafi, wrote an unusual chronicle in the NY Times January 22, 2009, in favour of a one-state solution⁷⁵. In short his conclusion was that the return of Palestinian refugees would only be possible through a one-state solution, and at the same time this would keep both states secure as well as maintaining each land's ambitions. Qaddafi has named his state solution the land of 'Isratine', and he argues that assimilation between Jews and Palestinians is already in place. There are more than one million Muslim Arabs in Israel, they possess Israeli nationality and take part in political life with Jews, forming political parties. On the other hand, there are Israeli settlements in the West Bank. Israeli factories depend on Palestinian labour, and goods and services are exchanged. This successful assimilation, he argues, can be a model for future Isratine.⁷⁶

3.3 The Two-State solution

The path to a workable peace, one with a Palestinian state alongside Israel and both with internationally recognized borders, has been well known. Israel's leaders must then perhaps recognize that if Hamas cannot be beaten militarily, it must be engaged politically. One must

⁷⁵ Internet: <http://www.nytimes.com/2009/01/22/opinion/22qaddafi.html>

⁷⁶ *Ibid*

perhaps accept the idea of a Palestinian unity government? Three main areas can be well suited for further examination when talking about a two-state solution between Israel and Palestine, these are borders, Jerusalem and refugees.⁷⁷

When it comes to borders, the Palestinians want sovereignty over the Gaza Strip and the West Bank. Israel withdrew from Gaza in 2005, but Jewish settlements on the West Bank remained. A deal could include land swaps for Arab dominated areas inside Israel, because sovereignty is seen as difficult when two different peoples inhabit the same area.

Jerusalem is of vital interest, and both the Israelis and the Palestinians claim it as their capital. Muslim and Jewish holy places occupy the same space. Some people call for the city to be placed under a third party supervision. The city is vital for hundreds of millions of people, because of the sacred position it holds in Christianity as well as in Islam and Judaism.

Ever since Jews started to take over more and more land in the area, the refugee problem has become bigger and bigger. Palestinians say millions of displaced Arabs have the right to return to Israeli territory. Such a return would negate Israel's existence as a Jewish state, as the Israelis would be outnumbered. A compromise might involve allowing a token number to return and giving others compensation."⁷⁸ To extreme nationalists the national state is being poisoned if the state is not able to unite all of its inhabitants, and if it tolerates a larger number of non-members within the state's borders. Especially if these members are in positions of vital interests to the state, or can outnumber the original state members in a demographic way with higher birth-rates.⁷⁹ These thoughts on keeping the Jewish supremacy are in the eyes of Joseph Massad the key element as to why there is a constant stalemate between the Israelis and the Palestinians. A lot of blood has been shed in the name of justice on both sides in this region and a deeply rooted enemy image of the counterpart is keeping nationalist struggle alive today. Another interesting counter argument here is what Rabinowitz calls the trapped minority, and it pinpoints the dilemma of Palestinians living next to Israelis within the state of Israel. The Palestinian citizens of Israel are Arabs to the Israelis and they are Israelis to the Arabs elsewhere. They are basically trapped between their host state and their former absent

⁷⁷ TIME Magazine January 19, 2009

⁷⁸ Ibid, p 16 – based on U.N Office for the coordination of Humanitarian Affairs.

⁷⁹ Ernest Gellner, *Nasjonalisme*, (Spartacus Forlag, Oslo, 1998), pp 17, 18

scattered nation. And in order to make the picture even more complex, a lot of the Palestinians in Israel today live such good lives that they are happy with status quo and not necessarily in favour of change.⁸⁰ Simply because they know what they have now, but not what will be the case with changes. Would it be a better life for the Palestinians living in Israel today with Arab-ruling in the area? I will get back to these issues later in this thesis, because I see it as central in understanding nationalism, legitimacy and political support on both sides in the conflict.

3.4 Palestinian nationalism and development

As mentioned in the introduction, my discussion primarily deals with the Israeli side of the story. However, as Israeli nationalism is discussed I consider it necessary to give some connections to, and also discuss, developments in Palestinian nationalism. I will also use this in my analysis to see how the two sides' nationalist ideas connect.

In 1958 the movement Fatah (Movement for the National Liberation of Palestine) was implemented by the Palestinian nationalist Yassir Arafat, and six years later PLO (Palestine Liberation Organisation) was established. In the Six-Day war in 1967 Israel gained control over enormous new areas of land, including the West Bank and Gaza. This meant that thousands of Palestinian Arabs who had escaped from Israel in 1948, all of a sudden were part of Israeli rule.

In 1987 a Palestinian nationalist uprising on the Israeli occupied West Bank arose. Within a year Jordan waived a claim on this area and gave judicial power to PLO. In 1993 Israel finally accepted negotiations directly with the Palestinians and gave them autonomy, under massive Israeli supervision, to rule themselves in Gaza and parts of the West Bank. At the same time PLO recognized the state of Israel. But the road from autonomy to a well functioning system of government is long. Israel, with many settlements on the West Bank, does not accept the

⁸⁰ Dan Rabinowitz, *Overlooking Nazareth – the ethnography of exclusion in Galilee*, (Cambridge University Press 2003)

idea of letting Palestine control all of this area and demands the Palestinians to stop all terrorist activity before negotiations on a Palestinian state can take place.

In the 2006 election for a Palestinian legislative assembly, the party/organization Hamas⁸¹ was elected with 74 out of 132 representatives in the assembly.⁸² The election was looked upon as legitimate by many states, including Norway. However, the election was not recognized by Israel and the USA. Hamas wants Palestine to regain control over the West Bank and Gaza, and has set this as a term for further cooperation and negotiations. There is at the same time uncertainty as to whether or not the Palestinians themselves will settle with this agreement. Western peace efforts in the Middle East have always focused on reconciling two opposing peoples – the Israelis and the Palestinians. Jonathan Schanzer, on the other hand, argues that the Palestinian people have long been suffering from a divisive internal conflict. Today the battle continues between Fatah and Hamas over the role of Palestinian nationalism and Islamism on the West Bank and in Gaza.⁸³ According to Schanzer, the only ideology that can compete with Hamas's Islamist ideology⁸⁴ is secular Palestinian nationalism. This ideology is fueled by the legitimate and understandable desire of the Palestinian people to create a state with permanent and recognized borders.⁸⁵

Both the Israeli and the Palestinian nationalist ideologies are strong and with a lot of similarities. We are in other words talking about a collision of two nationalisms, each forced into exile. Two peoples, both with a militant wing, are claiming the same geographical area. Some think of it as a conflict between the first and the third world, others as a conflict between Islam and Judaism and some even regard the conflict as a battle between Islamism and the West. In the solid core of this conflict lie thousands of years of history and some of the world's famous sacred places. Places that are of tremendous value to Christianity, Islamism and Judaism. Again, strong forces of nationalism are reasons why the area is on the political agenda of almost every state in the region.

⁸¹ Hamas: Harakat al-Muqawamah al-Islamiyyah (Arabic for Islamic Resistance), is a Palestinian islamistic paramilitary and political organization. Hamas was founded in the first Intifada (Palestinian Rebellion against Israel from December 1987).

⁸² Internet; <http://no.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hamas#Historie>

⁸³ Jonathan Schanzer, *HAMAS vs FATAH The struggle for Palestine*, (USA, 2008)

⁸⁴ Islamist ideology: Radical interpretation of the Quran and shari'a (Islamic law) with a deep hatred for the principles upon which the West has built, including capitalism, egalitarianism, individualism and democracy.

⁸⁵ Jonathan Schanzer, *HAMAS vs FATAH The struggle for Palestine*, (USA, 2008), p 7

The latest development today is reconciliation between Hamas and Fatah, and mediations in Egypt in late April 2011 have led to an agreed ambition of a united Palestinian election within a year. Jørgen Jensehaugen at PRIO⁸⁶ is of the opinion that this reconciliation is a necessary positive development in the peace talks. The Palestinians are weaker when not united. There are not only two different parties at play, but also two different geographical areas as Hamas controls Gaza and Fatah/the Palestinian Authority the West Bank, and these two will probably benefit from being harmonized. Israel's Prime Minister, Benjamin Netanyahu, on the other hand, states that the Palestinian President and leader of Fatah, Mahmoud Abbas, must choose between peace with Hamas or peace with Israel. Netanyahu holds Hamas rule in Gaza responsible for all the rocket attacks that have been launched at Israel in the past few years.

It was also very interesting to see how the different world leaders responded to the killing of the leader of Al Qaida, Osama Bin Laden, on 2 May 2011. The newly reconciled Palestinian factions, Hamas and the Palestinian Authority, differed sharply in their reaction to the news of his death. Ismail Haniyeh, head of the Hamas administration in the Gaza Strip, condemned the killing, calling it a "continuation of the American oppression and shedding of blood of Muslims and Arabs." The Hamas leader emphasized his group's differences with al-Qaida, but called bin Laden an "Arabic warrior."⁸⁷

Meanwhile, a spokesman for the Palestinian Authority told reporters, "Getting rid of bin Laden is good for the cause of peace worldwide but what counts is to overcome the discourse and the methods -- the violent methods -- that were created and encouraged by bin Laden and others in the world."⁸⁸

What this split reaction will mean for the future of Palestinian unity is yet to be seen, but it highlights the stark differences between the Islamist Hamas and secular Fatah factions.⁸⁹

⁸⁶ PRIO = Peace Research Institute Oslo, quoted in an article in the Norwegian newspaper VG 27. April 2011

⁸⁷ Internet: http://www.salon.com/news/feature/2011/05/02/palestine_split_bin_laden_reaction

⁸⁸ *Ibid*

⁸⁹ *Ibid*

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4. Comparison

When elaborating on how the nationalist ideology of Zionism has evolved and how it influences the ongoing struggle between Israel and Palestine, the scenario is nuanced and both parties' interests are in different ways well anchored in the past. But when looking at how Israel came to be a reality, there are events and episodes that clearly have made a difference one way or another in the establishment - an establishment that was doomed to make a winner and a loser in the region. The Palestinians lost their homeland and has since that day tried to take back what they legitimately feel belongs to them. In this respect a rational solution at hand could be to split the land between the Israelis and the Palestinians in a two-state solution. Dan Rabinowitz argues that "the prospect of deterritorialization in Palestine/ Israel, where both sides perceive themselves as insecure and threatened, cannot come easily. Its strongest point is relative to the alternative: Oslo-style territorial separation may produce uneasy truces and ceasefires. The possibility that it will breed historic compromise and reconciliation looks very dim according to Rabinowitz."⁹⁰ As one can read from above there are numerous partners involved in the puzzle of making peace and agreements that will hopefully last.

Kjetil Tronvoll has been an inspiration when it comes to elaborating on whose interests are likely to gain favour where nationalism is present in conflicts. His analysis of the war between Eritrea and Ethiopia gave me many types of interesting directions in order to establish my framework and theoretical disposal for this thesis. In addition to this I find a lot of parallels in the two conflict areas. Dry deserted and previously abandoned areas of land become vital and precious after inhabitation and cultivation. The region of Eritrea and Ethiopia has been a theatre of war more or less continuously throughout the last centuries. Identities are shaped on historic events, local perceptions of identity, war and resistance are expressed in a number of different forms – oral and written – poetry – facts and fiction – coherent and rational.⁹¹ All of which is remarkably similar to the conflict in Israel / Palestine.

⁹⁰ Dan Rabinowitz, *Critical Inquiry - Postnational Palestine/Israel? Globalization, Diaspora, Transnationalism, and the Israeli- Palestinian Conflict*, (The University of Chicago Press, 2000), p 757

⁹¹ Kjetil Tronvoll, *War & the Politics of Identity in Ethiopia*, (Great Britain, 2009), p 62

His way of analyzing the conflict through different layers is applicable to what I want to elaborate on in this thesis. I will explore these layers of war and conflict in Israel/Palestine in order to get a better understanding of how the nationalist ideology of Zionism evolves and how it influences the ongoing struggle between Israel and Palestine. The different layers that I will explore are: bilateral conflicts, transnational interests in the conflicts and international engagements and the significance of the Middle East region.⁹²

4.1 Bilateral conflicts

With bilateral conflicts I mean conflicts among Jews in the world in general and also domestically in the geographical homeland within Israeli/Palestinian borders. Herzl was of an opinion that the anti-Semite people and nations would only make Jews consider their position in the countries where they lived. Thereby the hostility towards Jews would only contribute to the fact that Jews needed their own homeland, free of persecution. It is important to bear in mind the fact that Jews in the 1920s' were building institutional foundations for a Jewish state in Palestine, and that they were having a steady growth of population and raising funds to get these plans accomplished. At the same time the Palestinian Arab nationalism and resistance to Jewish immigration grew. This development could result in more blood being shed and more suffering for the Jewish people.

As mentioned earlier it was according to religious rabbis blasphemous to believe and state that anyone but the real Messiah could lead Jews out of exile. Jews' destiny was in the hands of God, and not something that could be created by human will and desires. These views were challenged by different branches and ways of interpreting Zionist goals. According to Ernest Gellner⁹³, the age of nationalism is also the age of secularism. Nationalists love their culture because they love their culture, not because it is the expression of their faith. They might worship their faith because it allegedly expresses the national culture or character. They also thank the Church for keeping the language alive in a period where it otherwise might have

⁹² Notes from Kjetil Tronvoll's lecture at Bardufoss on 16 April 2009, The complexities of war in the Horn of Africa.

⁹³ Ernest Gellner, *Nasjonalisme*, (Spartacus Forlag, Oslo, 1998), p 88

evaporated. Nationalists appreciate religion as a helper for building the society, and not so much for the sake of religion itself. However, in Israel this is a controversial statement, given the God-given right to the country and the very solid religious claim to the area. Nonetheless, Zionism was with Herzl organized as a secular national organization aiming for an independent state for Jews. Ernest Gellner links this to the same development seen in Poland when secular nationalists deliberately used religious arguments to fight communism.⁹⁴

Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin was trying to cut a deal in 1992⁹⁵ between Israel and PLO with their leader Yasser Arafat. One of the reasons for this development was the dissension and dangerous separation amongst Jews that was beginning to get a foothold as the tension within the Jewish communities arose. Extreme Jewish nationalist groups were often shouting traitor when names such as Shimon Peres or Rabin were mentioned. When Rabin on 4 November 1995 was assassinated by another Jew it revealed what kind of powers were about to ravage the country of Israel and the Jewish people, who no longer were united in their struggle for independence and a Jewish state and homeland.

The relationship between Zionism and Judaism, Jewish nationality and identity and the cultural battle among Jews are factors that are worsening the prospects for future existence. According to Butenschön, the unsolved questions among Jews are by many considered a bigger threat than the surrounding Arab states.⁹⁶ When these two paradigms exist side by side it is perhaps a result of reciprocal dependence. A breakdown could mean the end of the state of Israel, and thereby an interception of the possibilities of realizing Zionism in any form. However, some scholars, such as Ilan Pappé, regard the solution as simple. As the last postcolonial European enclave in the Arab world, Israel has no choice but willingly to transform itself one day into a civilised and democratic state.⁹⁷

A two-state solution is clearly a problem that goes beyond an agreement between Israel and Palestine on political levels. Strong forces amongst both Jews and Palestinians will probably not accept whatever solution appears. Sharing is not an option for parties on both sides.

⁹⁴ *Ibid*, p 89

⁹⁵ Dan Rabinowitz, *Overlooking Nazareth – the ethnography of exclusion in Galilee*, (Cambridge University Press 2003), p 187

⁹⁶ Nils A Butenschön, *Drømmen om Israel*, (Universitetsforlaget 1984), p 214

⁹⁷ Ilan Pappé, *The Ethnic Cleansing of Palestine*, (Oneworld Publications Limited, 2006), p 256

However, an agreement can perhaps be made where the opposing forces are in a minority, which will exclude another long-term development of terrorism and attacks from both sides.

A leading Israeli historian, J. L. Talmon describes himself as genuinely convinced that what is justice is in favour of Israel, but he also recognizes the Arabs' rights and demands. He sees the conflict as [a collision between rights, and a solution can only be found by seeking the one with the least injustice, because a solution with full justice does not exist.]⁹⁸

The western thought, also implacable in Israel, is elaborated on in respect of using religious arguments in gaining support for building a common nation, a nation that would be the protector of an already existing culture. Further east, the development differed significantly. The question and connection between faith, religion and culture had a radically different outcome than what was seen in Europe⁹⁹. It is God's future world, and not boorish wisdom that justifies the new culture. In Palestine this is important to bear in mind. The Arab world is deeply connected through Islam and the Arab community is connected beyond borderlines.

However, Palestinians cannot escape realizing that they are generally viewed as a problem in Israel. Once the state officially declares that they constitute a danger they know that emergency policies reminiscent of the time with British Mandate can be implemented. Houses could be demolished, newspapers shut down and people expelled or worse under such a regime. But this is on a macro-political level in Israel, and I am mentioning this because on micro level in the streets in Israel, against all odds, social relationships have been created between Palestinians and Jews. According to Ilan Pappé, we can put an end to the conflict in the torn land of Palestine. Those sections of Jewish society in Israel that have chosen to let themselves be shaped by human considerations rather than Zionist social engineering function very well. He also argues that peace should be within reach because of the fact that the Palestinians have not yet been de-humanised despite decades of brutal Israeli occupation. Despite years of expulsion and oppression, they are still hoping for reconciliation.¹⁰⁰

⁹⁸ Harris, Nathaniel, *Konflikten i Midtøsten*, (Libretto forlag, Oslo, 2000), p 20

⁹⁹ Ernest Gellner, *Nasjonalisme*, (Spartacus Forlag, Oslo, 1998), p 90, 94

¹⁰⁰ Ilan Pappé, *The Ethnic Cleansing of Palestine*, (Oneworld Publications Limited, 2006), p 256

4.2 Transnational interests in the conflict

As we have seen under state constellations and bilateral conflicts, the surrounding Arab world is most definitely present as an actor or party in the tense situation between Israel and Palestine. Although parts of the Arab world often stand on the barricades and proclaim their massive support to the Palestinians, and likewise show their contempt of Israeli policies, they are not especially willing to accept Palestinian refugees in their own homeland. E.g. Iran is pushing weapons to Gaza in support of Hamas and what the Israelis would call other terrorist organisations. A support probably partially in sympathy with the Palestinians, but just as much because Iran looks upon Israel as its close enemy and therefore uses the conflict for its own benefit in striking Israel.

In addition to this, Israel has from the beginning of been able to withstand numerous challenges from the neighbouring states in different wars and terrorist attacks, e.g. the Six-day war in 1967, Yom Kippur war in 1973, the Israeli invasion of Lebanon in 1982, the Intifada in 1987, Israel being attacked by Iraqi missiles in 1990, Israeli attacks on Lebanon in 2006 and attacks against Hamas on the Gaza strip in December 2008 and 2011. In other words one can easily state that the people living in the region consider a state of war as the natural way of living. A lot has changed since Herzl in his diary stated that “The anti-Semites will become our most loyal friends, the anti-Semite nations will become our allies.” With this statement Herzl saw the persecution as a help to his movement. Jews had for centuries been badgered, massacred and in general been mistreated on a large scale. In order to get his arguments forward, this was something that he would use for the benefit of Jews. Jews could no longer tolerate being treated the way they had been treated throughout history, sometimes as animals or worse. Israel could be losing the old persecution support when acting more aggressively and more brutally than ever. Others would be of the opinion that the country is only defending itself from a massive surrounding pressure.

With transnationality I also want to address some important myths that are present in this conflict. Myths that are widespread around the world, serving as a foundation for the common opinion in the conflict. Anne Hege Grung, a priest and former scholarship holder at

CULCOM¹⁰¹, is of the opinion that the myths on why this conflict is so special have to be revealed. She argues that both political and religious myths are mixed together on both sides of the conflict, and that this conflict cannot be solved on a mythological level. Fundamentalist Christians have their own mythology concerning Israel and based on biblical sayings about the Holy Land, this land often serves as the symbol of doomsday. At the same time Hamas also has a mythological ideology. I have earlier discussed the connection between organization and culture, with reference to the works of Ernest Gellner. What I have not discussed so much is an emotionally charged element in the nationalist behaviour. Not only does it define the unity's borders, but it also, according to Gellner, assumes that this unity has an institutional leadership manned by the national culture's members. To keep it simple, No foreigners will ever be allowed to rule over us.¹⁰² The very second a Hamas statement is broadcasted, with a theme of making all the world's Jews their common enemy, this also serves as a myth-producing element in the conflict. She believes that the "War on Terror" and the idea of Islam being the most aggressive religion, is the West's most damaging myth. She therefore comes with a few words of warning about using terms such as holy war and the war on terror, she warns about the veiling myths and not the least the myth saying that this area is doomed to remain in an eternal state of war. This is scary, because the myth saying that the conflict is unsolvable – also says that one of the parties has to be eliminated.¹⁰³

4.3 International engagement in Israel and the Middle East region

As depicted above there are reasons for the colossal interest in Israel. With international engagement I focus on the West's engagement and in particular the USA's interest in the region.

"A renewal of the Israeli-Palestinian quest for peace began at the end of the Cold War as the United States took the lead in international affairs. After the collapse of the Soviet Union,

¹⁰¹ CULCOM: Cultural Complexity – an interdisciplinary research project at University of Oslo, lead by Thomas Hylland Eriksen in the years 2004 – 2010.

¹⁰² Ernest Gellner, *Nasjonalisme*, (Spartacus Forlag, Oslo, 1998), pp 19-20

¹⁰³ Internet: <http://www.forskning.no/artikler/2009/januar/207195> [What will happen with Palestine?]

Western observers were optimistic”, as Francis Fukuyama wrote in an article, entitled "The End of History". “The hope was that the end of the Cold War heralded the beginning of a new international order. President George H. W. Bush, in a speech on 11 September 1990, spoke of a "rare opportunity" to move toward a "New world order" in which "the nations of the world, east and west, north and south, can prosper and live in harmony," adding that ‘today the new world is struggling to be born’.”¹⁰⁴ A prophecy that would turn out a lot harder to fulfil than one could predict. It is to me quite clear that both sides are locked by internal conflicts and in a stalemate due to strong groupings who are not necessarily seeking righteous peace. It also seems to me that these groupings are being allowed to operate in such a manner that they are determinative in political processes.

Jews suffered tremendously during the Second World War. That is perhaps one of the main reasons why they received strong international support when they subsequently wanted to establish a Jewish state. The Palestinians already living in the area had not been pursued during the war, and therefore they did not get the same international attention after the war. The Palestinians in Gaza today surely suffer under Israeli and Egyptian blockades, and the Palestinians on the West Bank under rigid restrictions and partly occupation. However, I am also of the opinion that they suffer from being pieces in the Arab and Muslim world’s “game”. As with the case of Iran, used with the intention of striking Israel, Palestinians are in many ways useful as lightning rods in conflicting issues in the Arab areas of the Middle East.

“Zionism is the belief in the existence of a common past and a common future for the Jewish people.”¹⁰⁵ The origins of Zionism are full of paradoxes. Some of them appear not as important as others in the unique light of the special character of Jewish history and the position of Jews in the nineteenth century European society. That Zionism came as a response to anti-Semitism is in many ways undebatable. But if it was not for the increase in tension and anti-Jewish persecution as the world witnessed in WWII, “Zionism might still have existed as a small literary-philosophical set of idealistic reformers”. Now, in 2011, it is clear that the area is of vital interest to many other states as to who is to have control in the Middle East region, a region currently in transformation with uprisings in several states.

¹⁰⁴ Internet; Wikipedia

¹⁰⁵ Walter, Laqueur, *A History of Zionism*, (Weidenfeld and Nicolson, London, 1972), p 589

Israel has for many years depended on U.S. support in order to maintain, among other things, their highly potent military defence¹⁰⁶. There are many reasons for this support, and it is also controversial and a pickle for U.S. politicians. Support for Israel interferes with for instance the American relations with the oil-producing nations in the Middle East. The Muslim consumers represent approximately 1.2 billion people world-wide, and discords concerning Israeli support removes much-needed money from domestic American requirements. Tax earnings that could be addressed to domestic needs are instead sent abroad to a system of discrimination that in many ways are anti ethical to American principles of equality and democracy.

Why does this cooperation and support continue? According to Keith Porter,¹⁰⁷ close examination of the history and current situation reveals that U.S. policies in the Middle East are rarely driven by U.S. interests. Rather, they are largely driven by two very different factors. The first is the special-interest lobbying of the sort that Washington is well known for. The only difference from typical lobby groups is that this lobbying is on behalf of a foreign government. Fortune Magazine rates one of the many lobby organizations working on behalf of Israel, AIPAC, as the second most powerful lobby in Washington.¹⁰⁸ In total, many experts rate the pro-Israel interest group as the most powerful lobby in Washington.¹⁰⁹ Secondly, the efforts of a growing number of individuals with close ties to Israel, who have attained key positions at high levels of the U.S. administration, State Department, and Pentagon, help Israel maintain its position in the Middle East.

¹⁰⁶ Ranked as the 11th strongest in the world – Internet: <http://www.globalfirepower.com/>

¹⁰⁷ Keith Porter has been involved in international affairs journalism for almost 25 years. He has reported from over 20 different countries and interviewed hundreds of world leaders and foreign policy experts.

¹⁰⁸ Internet: <http://www.jewishaz.com/jewishnews/971128/aipac.shtml>

¹⁰⁹ Internet: <http://usforeignpolicy.about.com/od/countryprofi3/p/usisraelprofile.htm>

5. Conclusion

When discussing how specific nationalist ideologies contribute in pointing out possible outcomes in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, many different issues and paradoxes are revealed. The State of Israel is in its very nature kept up by conflict, and must according to Butenschön continue being so in order to survive. The Zionists are forced into a conflict-filled dynamic which they never intended to be in, but which would be nearly impossible to avoid, given the actual setting in Palestine. Today the battle for the last Palestinian footholds continues in Gaza, the West Bank and in Galilee. In the solid core of the problem a macabre and scathing irony is found. Through the displacement of Palestinian society the Zionist movement and ideology has created another “Jewish problem”. We are seeing a stateless people with a traumatic collective knowledge who are abandoned and destined to live at the mercy of others.¹¹⁰

According to Ernest Gellner nationalists love their culture simply because they love their culture, not because it is the idiomatic expression of their beliefs.¹¹¹ They may thank the Church for keeping the national language alive in areas where it otherwise might have disappeared. But in the West, Gellner argues, nationalists appreciate religion as an adaption for social construction, and not so much in itself. On the other hand Gellner also addresses the diametrically opposite opinion of Islam, a religion which so far has proved to be absolutely incompatible with secularization as a result of industrialism in the world.¹¹² Interesting then, is how these two views crash in Jewish Israel and Islamic Palestine. Nationalism plays a vital role for Israel, but I find the Israeli concept of nationalism extremely paradoxical. Secular Zionism has impelled their secular cause and goals in an extreme religious environment, and with religious arguments and motives. Again, according to Gellner, religion serves as a helper in social construction.

What the outcome of the conflict in Israel and Palestine will look like is yet to be discovered, but that nationalist ideologies and groups will continue to play a vital role is in my eyes unquestionable.

¹¹⁰ Nils A Butenschön, *Drømmen om Israel*, (Universitetsforlaget 1984), p 301

¹¹¹ Ernest Gellner, *Nasjonalisme*, (Spartacus Forlag, Oslo, 1998), p 88

¹¹² *Ibid*, pp 94-95

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Clarifications / glossary

“*Jew*”: A person who is born by a Jewish mother and who has not given up Judaism. In addition, a person who has converted to Judaism.

“*Diaspora*”: The body of Jews or Jewish communities outside Palestine or modern Israel. A dispersion of a people from their original homeland.

“*Zion*”: The historic land of Israel as a symbol of the Jewish people. Since biblical times it is synonymous with the city of Jerusalem.

“*Yishuv*”: Literally, population, settlement; hence the Jewish community in Palestine before and after the creation of the state.

“*Jewish agency*”: The executive organ of the Zionist movement from 1920 to 1948.

“*Aliya*”: Hebrew; to “ascend”, “going up”, immigration of Jews to Israel.

“*Eretz Israel*”: The land of Israel and the usual name of the territories that were under Israelite control until the end of all Jewish sovereignty (second century).

“*Haskalah*”: Hebrew; enlightenment.

“*Kibbutz*”: Collective agricultural settlement

“*Gaza Strip*”: The disputed territory captured by Israel in the 1967 Six-Day War, bordering the Sinai Peninsula and the Mediterranean Sea.

“*Orthodox Judaism*”: Is the approach to Judaism which adheres to the traditional interpretation and application of the laws and ethics of the Torah as legislated in the Talmudic texts by the Sanhedrin ("Oral Torah")

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