Israel – from victim to perpetrator to victim – a back and forth for 80 years – Part 2

Born in fire - from the proclamation of the State of Israel to the Suez Crisis. The basis for understanding today's situation.

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Sat 11 Nov 2023

Introduction

The history of the State of Israel is a history of wars interrupted by periods of its absence, not peace. The periods of absence of war were and are to this day always associated with the certainty that its causes have not been eliminated. Thus, those times of apparent peace have always been and still are times of preparation for a new round of hostilities. Even today.

May 14, 1948: David Ben Gurion proclaims the State of Israel under a portrait of Theodor Herzl.

1948 – the war of independence

A movement created its own state

With the creation of the State of Israel on 15 May 1948, the main goal of the founding congress of the World Zionist Organization in Basel in 1897 was achieved.

The fact that the first president to be elected was the leading Zionist Chaim Weizmann has a symbolism that cannot be ignored. Chaim Weizmann, a British citizen and one of the leading representatives of the World Zionist Organization, together with the British Foreign Secretary Arthur Balfour, delivered the eponymous declaration to Lord Walter Rothschild in November 1917 on behalf of the British government so that he could deliver it to the World Zionist Organization.

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"Times of apparent peace have always been times of preparation for a new armed conflict. Until today."

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Part 1 of the series concluded by stating that the unilateral proclamation of the State of Israel violated UN Resolution 181, which provided for a two-state solution.

The proclamation of the State of Israel also laid the foundations for the conflict that continues to this day: The Palestinians were deprived of their right to their own state as granted by the UN; the West sat back and watched.

War one day after Israel's proclamation

As early as the night of May 14-15, 1948, Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Transjordan, Lebanon, Iraq and Syria declared war on this new state on the soil of Palestine.

The war that followed is referred to in the literature as the "War of Independence". In a war of independence, the population of a country tries to shake off foreign rule by another power by force and achieve sovereignty. The term therefore does not fit, because the Palestinians did not have any power to shake off. They became victims of the proclamation of Israel as a state and the great flight from their homeland began.

Here are two maps: the map with the UN's territorial partition plan under Resolution 181 (left) and the result of the first Middle East war involving the state of Israel (right). The red arrows show the refugee movements of the Palestinian population. Blue: Israeli-controlled territory; green: Palestinian territories.
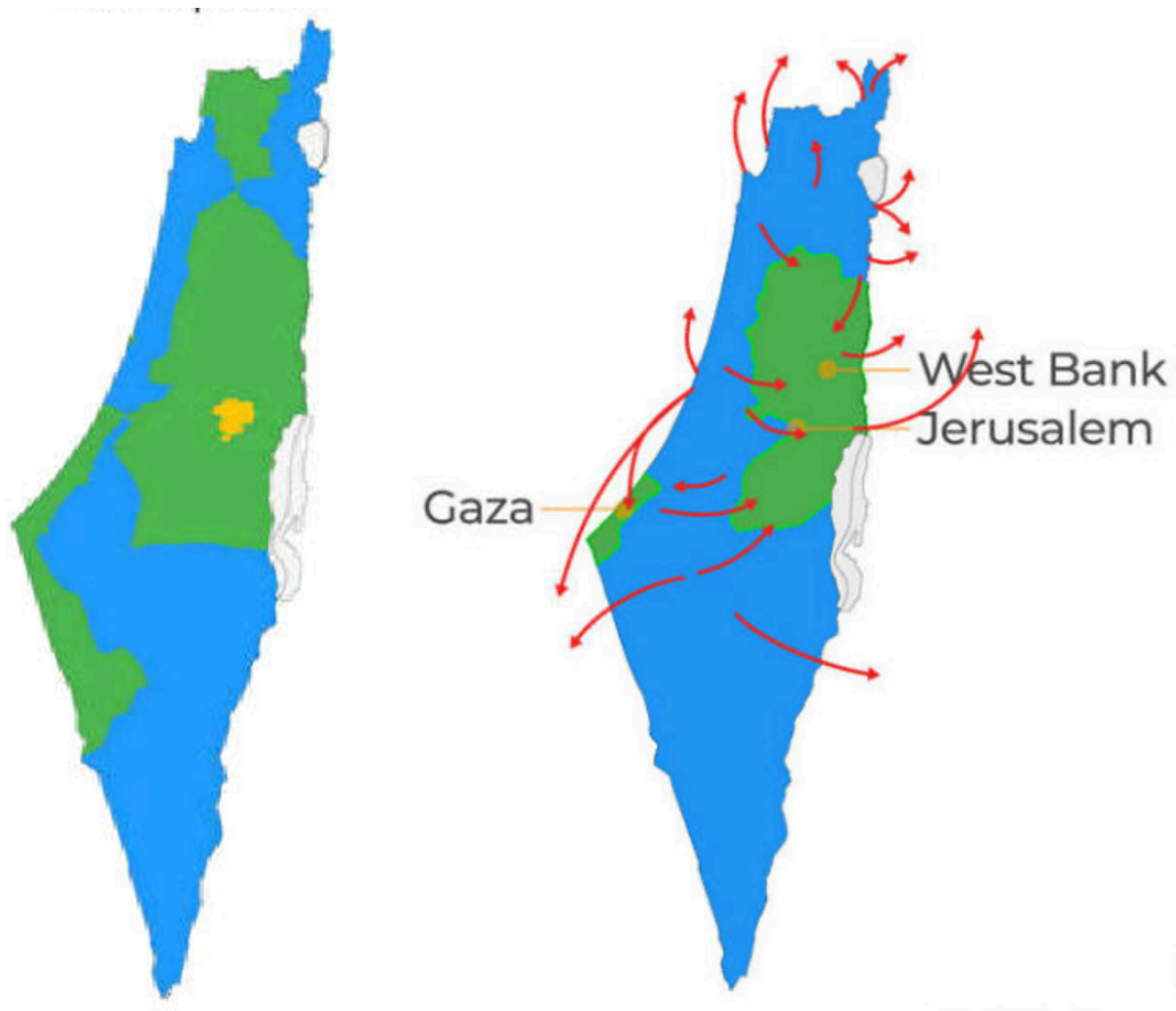
Source: Palästinaportal

Even before the war, it was difficult to imagine how the territorial patchwork intended for a future Palestinian state would function as a sovereign state, but the result of the war was more than sobering for the Palestinians.

The aim of the Arab states involved in this conflict was to prevent an Israeli state, which was proclaimed by Ben Gurion without any legal basis. This was because UN Resolution 181 included a two-state solution and not the separate creation of a single state with no consideration for the non-Jewish population.

The statement that Israel was simply attacked as a peaceful state therefore contradicts the facts. It is difficult to assess whether Israel was expecting an attack. However, the facts allow the conclusion that Israel had to expect an attack.

If one considers the events that led to the war, it can be objectively stated that Israel can in no way claim that it did not provoke this war.

Major military success for Israel

The war lasted until the beginning of 1949, after which Israel concluded separate ceasefire agreements with the parties to the conflict.

In military terms, the war was a complete success for the Israelis. The war objective of the Arab states - to prevent the Jewish state from coming into existence in the first place - was not achieved; they had obviously not been aware that Israel had made meticulous military preparations.

At the end of the war, Israel controlled 78% of the territory of historical Palestine (excluding Transjordan). This meant that Israel had increased its territory by 23% compared to the UN partition plan. Probably even more important was the fact that, as a result of the expansion and expulsions, Jews have since made up the majority of the population in Israel. As a result, 850,000 Palestinians fled their homeland.

1956 - last stand of a declining world power - Suez crisis

Introduction

No other Middle East war made the role assigned to Israel by the West as obvious as the Suez Crisis of 1956, although its core had nothing to do with Israel to begin with. Israel was simply used by a world power to achieve its goals, giving Israel a role from which it hoped to gain much. Later in our series we will see that this is still the case today. Today it is simply a different world power.

The war that year was the military culmination of a political development that began in the early 1950s.

Causes - superficial and less obvious

In the West, the beginning of the Suez Crisis is associated with the nationalization of the British-French Suez Canal Company. This was carried out in June 1956 by the Egyptian government under Gamal Abdel Nasser.

However, the causes go back to 1950, when Egypt began to use diplomatic means to rid itself of the British yoke.

Parliamentary elections were held in Egypt in January 1950, the last under King Farouk I. The new government began negotiations with Great Britain on amendments to the treaty of alliance concluded between the two states in 1936. According to this treaty, negotiations on amendments were possible: by mutual agreement at the earliest 10 years after the treaty was concluded and unilaterally after 20 years.
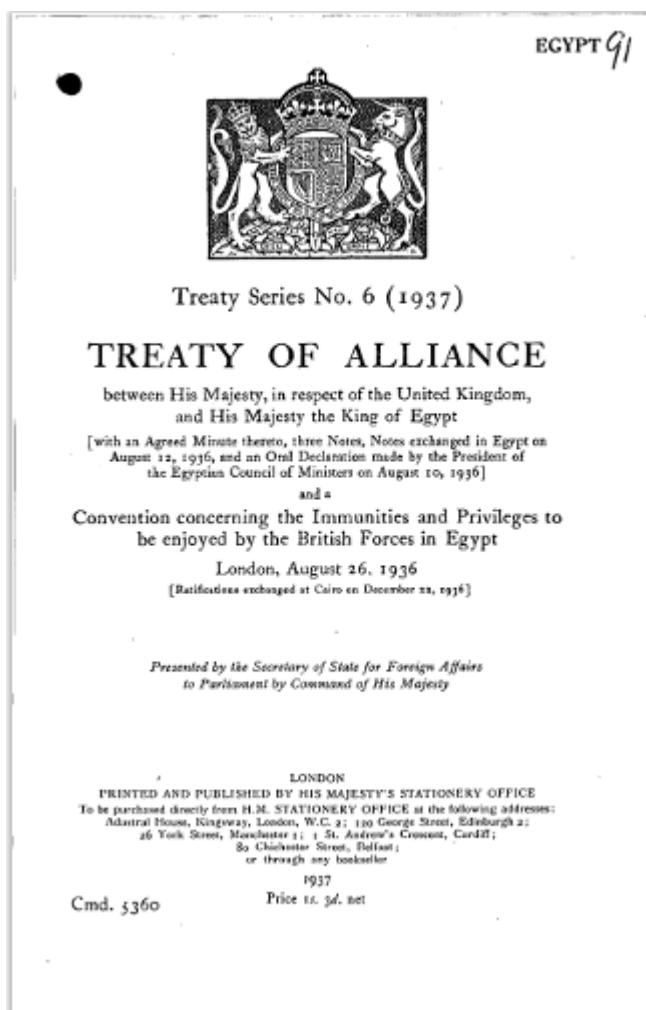
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The negotiations did not lead to an amicable outcome. As a result, Egypt unilaterally terminated the treaty in October 1951. Although this action by the Egyptians contradicted the wording of the treaty, the war was over and therefore, from Egypt's point of view, the most important basis of this agreement no longer applied; an argument that makes perfect legal sense.

The British did not react immediately to the termination. However, a look at the geopolitical map helps to understand why the alarm bells were ringing in London.

After India, which had been lost to the British just a year earlier, Egypt was now also on the verge of going its own way. Although Egypt had no oil reserves, it was the country with the world's most important sea connection. On the one hand, the Suez Canal guaranteed the owners enormous and long-term revenues, but above all it enabled them to control a strategic transport route and the raw materials transported along it.

The treaty of alliance stipulated, among other things, that the Suez Canal would be recognized as an integral part of Egypt and that Great Britain would be granted the right to station 10,000 soldiers and 400 pilots with support personnel in the Suez Canal Zone in peacetime, although these numbers could increase in times of war.

The treaty also stipulated that all existing agreements that were incompatible with this treaty would be revoked. That British forces would enjoy immunity from civil or criminal proceedings by Egyptian courts in respect of acts deemed to be part of their duty and that British military bases on Egyptian territory would be inviolable.

Furthermore, the British Air Force would have the right to use Egyptian airspace and to use Royal Egyptian Air Force aircraft.

In the event of war, the Egyptian government would be obliged to make all facilities available to the British armed forces.

For a sovereign state - and Egypt saw itself as such - these were difficult conditions to accept.

Egypt proceeded wisely when it cut the cord: It first terminated the treaty of alliance, which guaranteed Britain virtually unlimited power and great privileges in the country. However, Great Britain refused to withdraw its troops.

In 1952, there was a change of power: the republic was proclaimed in Egypt following a coup. After another one in the fall of 1952, Gamal Abdel Nasser came to power.

If Great Britain had expected the new Egyptian leadership to be amenable, its hopes were dashed. Egypt's demands that Britain terminate the treaty of alliance remained in place.

In 1953, Egypt and Great Britain agreed on a withdrawal of British troops. However, Great Britain did not implement the agreement. On the contrary. While the treaty of alliance terminated by Egypt limited the number of British troops to 10,000 in peacetime, Great Britain now stationed 80,000 troops there, which effectively amounted to a partial invasion.

This happened at exactly the same time as Great Britain and the USA took joint action to overthrow Iran's democratically elected Prime Minister Mohammad Mossadegh by force in 1953 and bring the Shah back to power. The dying empire and the new hegemon thus secured renewed access to Iran's oil. A very large part of it went to Europe and the USA - through the Suez Canal. We already reported on this CIA-MI6 coup in our article "War without Peace", where we analyzed the USA as a permanent party to the war.

Nevertheless, Britain withdrew its troops by June 1956.

In July 1956, Egypt nationalized the Suez Canal. In this case too, Egypt tried to find an acceptable solution and compensated the shareholders of the Suez Company. Egypt intended to use the income from the Suez Canal to finance the construction of the Aswan Dam. This in turn provided the basis for Egypt to at least lift the population out of extreme poverty.

Beginning of the invasion

Understanding ends with money and influence. Great Britain forged an offensive alliance with France and Israel to restore their positions of power.

The war aims were different, but complemented each other perfectly from a power-political point of view. While Britain and France aimed to overthrow Nasser and restore British and French rule over the Suez Canal, Israel had the Gaza Strip and the Sinai Peninsula in its crosshairs as a buffer to Egypt; Israel also wanted to take control of the Strait of Tiran, which connected the Gulf of Aqaba with the Red Sea.

On October 29, 1956, the invasion began with an attack by Israel: occupation of the Gaza Strip and a march through to the Suez Canal. Egypt was presented with an ultimate list of demands, which it could only reject. Great Britain and France then used this rejection as a reason for the military intervention of their troops.

The USA - to the surprise of its two NATO partners - had no interest in a Middle East war and put pressure on Great Britain and Israel in particular. They stopped providing aid to Israel and threatened Britain with the sale of its currency reserves. The consequences for the empire, which was already in economic crisis and in decline, would have been serious.

In addition, the USA saw its good relations with the countries of the Middle East at risk and also feared a conflict with the Soviet Union.

At the same time, there were open threats from the USSR against France and Great Britain.

The USA and the Soviet Union acted in rare unity at the UN. On November 2, 1956, the UN General Assembly declared the attacks illegal under international law and demanded that Israel stop the fighting.

On November 5, 1956, the head of the USSR government, Bulganin, addressed Israel directly:

> *"As the executor of a foreign will and on behalf of others, the government of Israel is playing a criminal and irresponsible game with the fate of the world, with the fate of its own people. It is sowing hatred among the peoples of the East that must affect Israel's future and call into question its very existence as a state... We expect the government of Israel to change its mind before it is too late and stop its military operations against Egypt."*
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> SOURCE: JOHANNES GLASNECK, ANGELIKA TIMM: *ISRAEL: DIE GESCHICHTE DES STAATES SEIT SEINER GRÜNDUNG.* BONN/BERLIN 1992, ISBN 3-416-02349-8, S. 132 F.

Time seems to have stood still politically since then.

The end of the Suez crisis

On November 6, Great Britain and France concluded a ceasefire with Egypt. On December 22, 1956, Great Britain, France and Israel began to evacuate their positions. The last Israeli troops left Egypt on March 7, 1957.

For Great Britain, the Suez War was the last attempt to exert an independent influence on world politics. It ended in a geopolitical catastrophe for the former empire.

Egypt suffered a military defeat, but politically the country and Nasser in particular gained massive prestige in the world. The Suez Canal remained under Egyptian control. Egypt drew closer to the USSR, which also manifested itself in the joint construction of the Aswan Dam, which was strategically important for Egypt.

The USSR entered the geopolitical stage in the Middle East. It continued to support Egypt and Syria politically, militarily and economically. This was the beginning of systemic competition in the Middle East, as the future would show.

The USA's behavior at the time may not be easy to understand from today's perspective. However, in Dwight D. Eisenhower they had a president who did not want a conflict with the USSR and was critical of certain political tendencies in the USA, particularly the military-industrial complex.

And Israel? Israel was abused by Great Britain as a military cudgel, which severely strained its relations with the states in the region. From this point onwards, Israel was finally perceived as part of the Western power structures in the Middle East. As a result, the country itself oriented its foreign policy towards the USA.

Conclusion

The founding of the state of Israel contradicted the wishes of the world's population, which were reflected in UN Resolution 181 and unequivocally called for a two-state solution.

The new state thus laid the foundation for the chaos that has been going on for almost 80 years with the Palestinian population, which is fighting for its own state with every right.

The Suez Crisis showed that Israel was willing to be drawn in, first by Great Britain and later by the USA, if it recognized a geopolitical advantage for itself.

The next article, which we are interspersing between this series, will deal with the reappraisal of the Holocaust, the cynical behavior of the West at the beginning of the Cold War and terms such as Judaism, Zionism and Israel, whose constant and deliberate confusion makes a necessary analysis impossible. We make this discussion possible through our analysis.

ARTICLE TAGS:

Analysis   Article Series   Gurion, Ben   Iraq   Israel   Syria   US   Lebanon   Palestine

World Zionist Organisation   War of Independence (Israel)   Eisenhower, Dwight D.

Mossadegh, Mohammad   NATO