Arab-Israeli Conflict
Introduction

The Arab-Israeli conflict preceded the establishment of the State of Israel in 1948. This might seem redundant, but much of the factors that affect the Arab-Israeli conflict are rooted in the history before 1948.

It entailed three different stages: These three are divided as pre-1948, 1948-1993, and 1993-the present.

Each theoretical approach provides insight on certain phenomena yet the imperial legacy behind the conflict is recurrent in all discussions.
Salient Theories

- International Anarchy
- Lebensraum
- Dependency Theory
Realism and Hegemony

- International System in Anarchy
- States compete for hegemonic roles
- Hegemony is relative
Why Realism? - Why Near East?

- Strategic Location: Suez Canal
- Natural Resources: Oil from Iran goes through Suez Canal
- Competition from USSR: USSR supports both sides, first Israel, then Arab States as Cold War begins.
Lebensraum

- Population Growth
- Preponderance of Expansion
- Dogmatic Entitlement (Nationalism)
Jewish Immigration

- Approximately 70,000 Jews immigrate during Ottoman Empire’s control of region

- Approximately 500,000 between 1918-1940 immigrate to Palestine in successive waves

- These immigrants bring with them capital from Europe including technical experience in various technologies from Europe.
Dependency Theory

- Special interests frame world systems

- Israel integrated into the system of developed nations different from weaker Arab states.

- Israel’s interests become paramount because it guarantees interests of wealthy states (and some special interests within them).
Israel’s dependence since independence

- Dependent on Western support since 1948

- Since 1948 the US government has spent on average $3.6 billion annually, this is inclusive of military support and at certain times economic assistance. (Congressional Research Service, 2014 - http://www.fas.org/sgp/crs/mideast/RL33222.pdf)

- Both aid from US government and donations
Brief Timeline

- Zionist ideology gains prominence in 19th century
- 1914 the proposal of a homeland for European Jews in Ottoman Syria
- 1916 Arab Revolt against Ottoman Empire
- 1918 Ottoman Syria divided between Britain and France
- 1918-1940 increased Jewish immigration to Palestine
- 1930-36 Arabs protest Jewish immigration
- 1939 Britain imposes immigration quota on European Jewry
- 1940-44 Zionist paramilitaries attack British offices in Palestine
- 1947 British announce withdrawal from Palestine
- 1948 Jewish Agency announces the establishment of Israel
1918

- It’s the end of World War 1, and the Ottoman Empire breaks apart
- British make contradictory promises
Sykes-Picot Agreement

Red: British Empire
Blue: France
Green: Russian Empire

Officially known as the 1916 Asia-Minor Agreement, it was leaked after the Bolshevik revolution in Russia.
British Mandate of Palestine

- Balancing zionist and pan-arab nationalists
- Opposed by both sides in essence

- “Fighting dispossession... The fear is not of losing land, but of losing the homeland of the Arab people, which others want to turn into the homeland of the Jewish people” - Ben-Gurion
Nationalism in context

- Ideology of entitlement
- Utilized hegemonic institutions for discourse: meaning each group used the political structures provided by the British to garner legitimacy in the face of increasing competition.
- Opposed continuation of Mandate
Britain’s Decline

- Strategic Overreach: Britain’s Empire was too large for its economic industry to maintain

- World War II: The War costs overwhelmed Britain, only paying its debt to the US in 2006

- Contradictions: World War 1 promises to various groups are contradictory leaving Britain in a difficult position to playing the mediator
1948

- UN partition plan rejected by Arab States
- Evenly matched manpower between Jews and Arabs in Palestine in terms of war capabilities.
- Unevenly matched weaponry and technical experience, Haganah out-powered Palestinian groups.
Arab-Israeli Conflict in Cold War Context 1948-1993

- Wallerstein’s Capitalist World Systems May Apply...
- Conflict between native Palestinians and Israelis was characterized by the involvement of hegemonic powers. First Israel was managed by the British Mandate, and later it was manipulated by the US and the SU.
Economic and Political Advantages of Supporting Israel, or Otherwise Being Involved in Regional Conflict

- Potential Control of Suez Canal
- Potential Domino Effect/Containment Policy
- Greater Influence In Regional Politics
- In sum, Israel had a lot of strategic value for both the US and the SU, and later Israel’s conflict with Arab states was (a) the swivel around which Cold War politics turned.
- Israel looks a lot like Vietnam, or Korea, or Afghanistan, except more strategically valuable.
- What if Israel was founded in Argentina?
Interesting Facts Regarding Outside Involvement In Israel

- “Influenced by both socialism and romantic, back-to-the-land ideas that were then popular in Germany, the new immigrants established agricultural settlements, including collective farms (moshavot, sing.: moshav) and communal farms (kibbutzim, sing.: kibbutz). They organized a labor federation (the Histadrut), which established schools and hospitals and which provided a variety of social and welfare services for the immigrant community” (Gelvin 206). Easy to see how this would be attractive to Stalin.
- In 1948, after Israel announced its statehood, it was recognized immediately by both the US and the SU.
- A 1954 National Security Council document titled “United States Objectives and Policies with Respect to the Near East” under the heading “Objectives” reads “Availability to the United States and its allies of the resources, the strategic position, and the passage rights of the area and the denial of such resources and strategic positions to the Soviet bloc” (Gelvin 258).
Weapons Sales to the Middle East

- “The Soviet Union's first major breakthrough into the Western monopoly of arms supplies to the Middle East came with the 1955 Egyptian deal” (Hurewitz 31-32). This deal was immediately followed by the Suez crisis, in which Nasser nationalized the Suez Canal, which Britain, France, and Israel tried to take back forcibly. However, the UN passed a resolution to return Israeli troops and undo the occupation of the Sinai, returning some stability to the conflict.
- After the Six-Day war of 1967, in which Israel seized the Golan Heights, the West Bank, the Gaza Strip, and the Sinai Peninsula, the SU resupplied Egypt and Syria with $1 billion of weapons.
- In 1974 the US supplied Israel with a $2.5 billion military aid loan after the Yom Kippur war (in which Israel was forced to yield their occupation of the Sinai Peninsula, which contains the Suez Canal and the Straits of Tiran).
And So...

- Though Capitalist World System/International Anarchy theories may not totally explain the cause of war, it appears that the involvement of hegemonic powers in the Israeli-Arab conflict contributed to and enabled increasing tensions.

- To say that the conflict was caused by a Cold War struggle for global political and economic influence would perhaps be an overstatement, as it would ignore the fact that the conflict existed even before Israel was a state, or before the SU or US were involved. At best, this is a partial explanation. However, if we consider Israel’s foundation as the trigger of war, and Israeli statehood a condition of a world system dominated by capitalist powers (i.e. Britain and France, and later the US and the SU), then Wallerstein’s Capitalist World System Theory may make more sense.
1993-Present Timeline

- **1993**- The Oslo Accords
- **1994**- Israel & Jordan Sign a Peace Treaty
- **2000**- The Camp David Summit
  - The Second Intifada
- **2002**- Israel Begins Constructing a Security Barrier
  - Arab Peace Initiative is Proposed
- **2003**- Roadmap for Peace is Proposed
- **2005**- Israel Disengages from Gaza
- **2006**- Hamas Is Elected
  - 2006 Lebanon War
- **2007**- The Battle of Gaza
  - Annapolis Conference
- **2008**- The Gaza War
- **2010**- Gaza Flotilla Incident
- **2011**- The Arab Spring
So with this...

Crises such as these, even if they do not lead to war, may motivate a state to take great measures to prepare for war doing things such as mobilizing, purchasing arms, moving troops towards the border etc, etc. All of these things are happening today in this conflict. Decisions are not being reached, compromise is not occurring which is causing both sides to react with suicide bombing and other terrorist attacks. There has been a large power shift, where the Israelites are seen as a threat as they expand their military and gain more technologically advanced weapons given their aid from the United States. On one side we have a well equipped, modern, conventional Israeli Army and on the other we have a modern, not so well equipped but innovative Muslim terrorist army known as the Hamas. Both sides have had many military and civilian deaths due to how ruthless they can be. It can be seen that Israel is where it is today only due to outsider nations and the UN, not the self determination of the people.
Israel & Palestinian Territories

1993
The Oslo accords provide for limited Palestinian autonomy in Gaza and the West Bank, but Israel’s settlement building programme continues apace.
Next »

2011
The area on which the Palestinian state is expected to be founded is hemmed in by the Israeli security barrier, crisscrossed with Israeli settlements, divided politically and geographically from Gaza.
Start »
PLO & Hamas

- **PLO (Palestine Liberation Organization)** - Created in 1964 and considered a terrorist organization by the US and Israel in its earlier stages. In 1993, they accepted Israel’s right to exist in peace and turned away from violence and terrorism. They became the Representative of the Palestinian people.

- **Hamas** - They want an Islamic Palestinian state in place of Israel and rejects all agreements made between the PLO and Israel. More recently, HAMAS has publicly expressed a willingness to accept a long-term cessation of hostilities if Israel agrees to a Palestinian state based on the 1967 borders with Jerusalem as its capital. Currently seen as a terrorist group.
In this theory, the world is seen as hierarchical as opposed to anarchical. There is a high potential for conflicts when a challenger is dissatisfied with the status quo. The strongest state in the system, known as the dominant state, creates the rules and order of the system referred to as the *status quo* that all subordinate states must recognize. Powerful, satisfied states do not start wars as the status quo benefits them; challengers do.
So...

Two states are dissatisfied at this point which could predict that war could be coming soon if nothing changes. Both states have the mentality that Israel belongs to them and so borders and space is not being respected. I do not believe that Israel would be where they are today without outside influence but I do still believe that they would be in conflict due to their religion and belief that they inherit a piece of land. Until they can both learn to compromise, and the continued interference from the U.S or larger nations picking sides, this crisis will continue and there will never be peace and with continued interference from the U.S or larger nations picking sides.
Other Causes

- **Psychohistorical Causes**: There is some weight to the idea that the individual characteristics of State leaders may have caused the conflict. For example, Ben Gurion was instrumental in the formation of Israel as a state, and Nasser was crucial to the development of pan-Arab nationalism, two forces which were antipathetic to each other. Later, Sadat officially recognized Israel and made some diplomatic progress, somewhat changing the nature of the conflict.
  - However, it is unlikely that individuals would have changed the overall timbre of the conflict. At its core (and from the very beginning), so many people on both sides feel that they have been wronged that the conflict probably had too much momentum to have changed much.

- **Lateral Pressure/Lebenstraum**: It is possible that a rapidly expanding Jewish majority in Palestine put enough pressure on the region to start a war.
  - However, while Jewish immigration leading up the Israel’s statehood was rapid, there is no reason to believe that the Jewish population could not coexist with Arabs, or that there was not enough land to do so. Immigration, as well as exclusive ethnic nationalism, put these two peoples at odds.
Sources

Questions to Consider

1. Which theories of war could be applied on the Arab-Israeli conflict to uncover its possible cause(s)?

2. What is Zionism?

3. Why did France and Britain support Israel in the war of 1956? Comment on that reason. What does it tell you about the nature of politics and war? Which theory of war could use this fact as an argument?

4. What were the consequences of the Six-Day War in 1967 for both, the Israelis and the Arabs?

5. What did the war of 1973-74 lead to? What was the role of the US in the region after that war? How did Arabs manage to exert pressure on the West in this war?

6. The partition of India and Pakistan and the partition of Israel and Palestine seem to have some common denominators. What are they? Or in other words, could these two conflicts have the same cause? Explain your rationale?

7. Many scholars claim that special interest groups have influenced the U.S. foreign policy toward Israel from its nascence on. What does Stoessinger say in that regard?