

GEOPOLITICAL ANALYSIS OF THE GREAT GAME AS A PRECURSOR TO THE CREATION OF THE ISRAELI STATE

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Abstract: The narrative of religious conflicts and divisions has long been present in the interpretations of events in Palestine during the 20th century, but the geopolitical component that led to them, actively recognised from the resettlement of Jews to the establishment of their state - Israel, cannot be ignored. In the analysis, the author dealt with the geopolitical aspect of the “Great Game” as a term for the mutual struggle of great powers to achieve their interests. Thru the relationships of political actors (great powers) toward the Middle East region in the 19th century and towards the Jewish question in the first half of the 20th century, the author sought to identify the influence of these relations on the emergence of the state of Israel. The United Kingdom of Great Britain and (Northern) Ireland, during its involvement in these areas, transitioned from actively interfering in the sovereignty of states, thru dividing and participating in the administration of newly formed (liberated) territories, and supporting Jewish immigration to Palestine, to finally supporting the Arabs in their conflicts in the same land. The United Nations, as the successor to the League of Nations, became involved in resolving the Arab-Israeli conflict from its very inception, attempting to diplomatically resolve the escalating intensity of the conflict, but proved inadequate. Through a sort of game the historical legacy of the conflict on Palestinian soil, which started in the 19th century as part of a larger conflict between emerging great powers in a broader geographical area (the Middle East and Southeast Asia), persisted into the 20th and 21st centuries. For centuries, there has been a tangle of historical battles involving land, state, nation, and religion.

Keywords: *Jews, Palestine, Middle East, Great Powers, Israel.*

Field: Social Sciences and Humanities

1. INTRODUCTION

Geographical area of the Middle East represents an area where the full complexity of international political relations can be seen. Until World War II, the term Middle East was commonly used to refer to the eastern coast of the Mediterranean Sea to the Persian Gulf, i.e., the area from Egypt in North Africa to Iran in Southwest Asia. The term “East” was assigned by the French and British in the 19th century in relation to the region’s position from their home countries, while the “Middle East” was primarily considered the Asian part of the Ottoman Empire between British colonial possessions in Asia and Africa. Geographically speaking, the territories of the following modern countries could be said to belong to the present-day Middle East (or Western Asia according to American terminology): Egypt, Iraq, Iran, Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, Syria, and Turkey. To these states should be added the Palestinian Authority, which is not an internationally recognised state, but is geographically and historically a constituent part of the Middle East, and is most often referred to as the Palestinian Authority, the West Bank, and the Gaza Strip. (Janković, 2007: 268). Its centre is Jerusalem, as the religious site of the three largest living religions - Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. According to religious texts, Jerusalem represents the City of the Temple for Jews, the Jewish capital; for Christians, it is the place where Jesus Christ was crucified and resurrected; and for Muslims, it is the city from which Muhammad ascended to Heaven (Janković, 2007: 270). Although in the first century almost all Jews in Jerusalem were killed or expelled by the Romans, the idea of a promised Messiah never left them (The concept of the Messiah in Jewish eschatology refers to a leader anointed by God, specifically the future king of Israel, a descendant of the line of David, who will unite all the Jewish tribes and liberate them from foreign rule. The arrival of the Messiah, or the Messianic Age, will herald an era of universal peace, harmony, and justice (Havel, 2013: 25)). Persecuted by all, they wandered Europe, condemned to be strangers, and only in the 15th and 16th centuries did they begin to return and settle in the “four holy cities” (Jerusalem, Tiberias, Hebron, and Safed) in Palestine, then part of the Ottoman Empire (got its name from Ottoman I who established the dynasty - sometimes translated as Osman, hence the term Osman Empire is also used)). In the following period, their position, along with that of Christians, was extremely difficult. While European powers competed to protect the rights of Christians (Catholics and Orthodox) within the Empire, there was no one to protect the Jews. Exposed to persecution and reprisals, Jews gradually immigrated to Jerusalem where there was some kind of Jewish community, and by the 1840s, they became the majority population of the city (Black, 2017: 43).

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Crimean War (1853 – 1856) marked a turning point in the lives of the subjects of the Ottoman Empire. The main cause of the war was try the Allied powers - France, Great Britain, the Ottoman Empire, Austria, Prussia, and Piedmont - to limit Russian geopolitical influence in the Black Sea and secure several key strategic positions to restrict the actions of the Russian Empire (Hopkirk, 1990). In response to the changed political circumstances after the Congress of Paris 1856, the Porte (name used in diplomatic circles for the government of the Ottoman Empire) was forced to expand the rights and privileges of non-Muslims, that is, to provide tolerance and greater security for their lives and property. Freedom of movement in the Ottoman Empire, as well as the opening of the Suez Canal (created as a result of international cooperation between France and Egypt, or Britain and Egypt, when the English bought out the French (majority) shareholding in 1875 (Petrović, Marković i Prokić, 1979: 48-50)), encouraged Jewish belief in the coming Messianic Age, leading to the emergence of more and more Jewish settlements outside of Jerusalem. Before the 1860's, the first Jewish settlement outside Jerusalem arose on a hill opposite Mount Zion. British banker and philanthropist Moses Montefiore purchased these buildings in 1860 from the Governor of Jerusalem with money from the American magnate of Jewish origin, Judah Touro, who organised fundraising in the USA for Christians suffering persecution in Jerusalem. Since the area around Jerusalem was exposed to the attacks and looting by Bedouins, the Jews from the overcrowded houses in the city were not enthusiastic about the idea of moving there. Only after a stone wall with gates that were locked at night was built around the estate did the settlement come to life. By the end of the following year (1861) about 2,500 Jews settled there, and the neighbourhood was named Mishkenot Sha'ananim (or Hebrew משכנות שאננים). After the first, in addition to Jerusalem, Jews also established other settlements: in 1870 Mikveh Israel (or Hebrew מִקְוֵה יִשְׂרָאֵל) was founded, and the Petah Tikva (or Hebrew פְּתַח תִּקְוָה) in 1878. In the 1880s, the mass immigration of Jews from all over the world to Palestine, or the so-called Aliyah ("repatriation to Israel") (Хавел, 2013: 591) or Hebrew העלייה הראשונה, began. The FIRST ALIYAH from 1881 until 1903 brought between twenty-five and thirty-five thousand Jews from Europe, mostly farmers and craftsmen, to the inhospitable desert soil (Black, 2017: 43). French banker Abraham Edmond Benjamin James de Rothschild begins buying land in Palestine and financing Jewish agricultural settlements and industrial enterprises, and thus in 1882. the settlement of Rishon LeZion (or Hebrew רִשׁוֹן לְצִיּוֹן) was founded, and in gratitude to Rothschild, the settlement of Jacob's Tomb (or Hebrew זְכָרֵי יַעֲקֹב) was established in 1890 in memory of his father (Black, 2017: 44). The SECOND ALIYAH began in 1903 in response to rumours of a pogrom against Jews in Kishinev (then Russia) and would last until 1914, during which approximately forty thousand Jews, mainly from Russia, immigrated to Palestine, but more than half of them would leave before the start of World War I. It is characteristic that immigrants form kibbutzim (hebr. קִיבוּץ) - agricultural cooperatives in which everything is collectively owned (Havel, 2013: 592). Russia-withdrew from the War in 1917. However, in 1919, bloody internal conflicts initiated the launch of the THIRD ALIYAH, in which by 1923 another forty thousand Jews immigrated to Palestine (Black, 2017: 48). The FOURTH Jewish Aliyah began in 1924 and until 1928 approximately eighty-two thousand Jews immigrated to Palestine, mainly as a result of the economic crisis, anti-Jewish policies in Poland, and strict US immigration policies (Black, 2017: 65). In the period from 1932 until 1939 the FIFTH (and final) Aliyah took place, during which another two hundred and fifty thousand Jews immigrated as a result of the anti-Jewish policies of Germany and countries within its sphere of influence (Černicki, 2020: 26).

Political actions to establish a Jewish state began alongside the Aliyah. A young student Nathan Birnbaum in Vienna in 1883 founded Kadimah - a Jewish organisation which, in its newspaper Self-Emancipation (or german Selbstemanzipation!), first mentioned the terms "Zionist", "Zionism", and "political Zionism". They take a term "Zionism" from Mount Zion, the biblical site of the First Jewish Temple, and is synonymous with Jerusalem (according to Kabbalah, Jerusalem is merely the external manifestation of Zion). After the French Dreyfus affair (a French captain of Jewish descent who was accused and convicted of allegedly leaking French military secrets to Germany), which left a painful impression on all Jews in the world in 1896, the Austrian Jewish journalist Theodor Herzl published the book *Der Judenstaat* (or english *The Jewish State*) in Vienna, in which he proposed that Jews must have their own state in order to preserve their religion and culture. Herzl saw the solution to the "Jewish Question" only in an independent state that would be established either in Palestine (then under Ottoman rule) or Argentina, depending on which the Jewish people themselves choose. Herzl did not tie the "Jewish Question" solely to European Jews because he believed it was present wherever Jews lived in the world. His ideas were not supported by either liberal Jews, who believed there was no need for a separate state, or Orthodox Jews, who were waiting for the Messiah to lead them to the Promised Land (Black, 2017: 46, and Černicki, 2020: 23-24).

The 29th of August 1897 is the date of the establishment of the official Jewish political organization, in memory of the First Zionist Congress held in Basel, where the World Zionist Organisation was founded with the aim of establishing a Jewish homeland (Black, 2017: 47). Herzl was elected as its president, and

in that capacity, he travelled and in the following years met some rulers (German Kaiser Wilhelm II and Ottoman Sultan Abdul Hamid II), and in 1903 he managed to obtain the permission from Britain for the Jewish settlement in East Africa (in Rwanda), but the divided Jews did not accept this (Černicki, 2020: 25).

The role of the Ottoman Empire as the ruler over diverse territories shifted from unifying to openly hostile, and politically fueled Turkish-Arab conflicts accelerated its disintegration and the takeover of its territories by the Great Powers. However, these conflicts could not be stopped until the agents themselves declared their new, common enemy - the Jews and Israel. In the lull between the two World Wars, and after the decomposition of the Ottoman Empire (capitulated on the 30th of October 1918, and on the 10th August 1922 it signed the Treaty of Sèvres, by which the Turkish authorities renounced all non-Turkish territories) and the disappearance of the Russian Empire (on the 17th of March 1917 the Russian Republic was proclaimed), the first Jewish-Arab conflicts began on the soil of Palestine, over which “guardianship” was granted to the United Kingdom. The Turkish War of Independence after the Treaty of Sèvres forced the Western European powers back to the negotiating table on the 24th of July 1923 when they signed the Treaty of Lausanne, which divided its territories into British, French, and Turkish zones, effectively creating the Arab countries of the Arabian Peninsula and de facto legalising its disintegration (League of Nations, 1920). The period is characterised by the inability of the British civil administration to fulfill the promises it made to the members of both communities during the previous war. The frequent immigration of Jews increased their numbers relative to the native Arab population, leading to proposals for the equal division of Palestine or the formation of a single state jointly governed by Jews and Arabs on a proportional basis. Both British offers were rejected (Black, 2017: 52 - 57).

During World War II, the Jews decided to independently form their own state, and the post-war period led to open conflicts with the British administration. There is an internationally supported opinion emerging that Jews deserve their own state in Palestine. Unable to cope with the escalating problems on their own and prevent further escalation of the Jewish-Arab conflicts, the British administration decided to bring the issue before the United Nations in 1947.

2. THE GEOPOLITICAL ANALYSIS OF THE “GREAT GAME” AND ITS ECHOES IN PALESTINE

Geopolitics or international politics can be interpreted as the analysis of geographical influences on the relations between centres of power in an international context. In its broader meaning, it can be treated as any connection between the concepts of geography and politics, or in a narrower sense as a deterministic understanding according to which geography determines politics (for more, see in: Redakcija Vojne enciklopedije, 1972). Based on that, geopolitical analysis can be determined as a systematic approach to studying the influence of geographical characteristics on international political processes and strategies, with the aim of understanding and predicting international events and decisions. The term “Great Game” referred to the political and diplomatic confrontation that existed in the 19th and early 20th centuries between the British Empire and the Russian Empire on the territory of present-day Afghanistan and surrounding areas in Central and South Asia, and had direct consequences in Persia and British India. Otherwise, the term itself is associated with the British diplomat Arthur Conolly, who used it in 1840, or even Rudyard Kipling in the 1901 novel *Kim* (Hopkirk, 1990). The Great Game is used in geopolitics as a term for the mutual struggle of great powers to achieve their interests.

The United Kingdom's interests on the territory of the Ottoman Empire emerged at the beginning of the 19th century. The wealth of the Indian subcontinent as the richest colony created a need to protect land routes, and increased Russian activity in Persia and French activity in Egypt signalled to the British that they should begin a more intensive cooperation with the Ottoman Empire and the Central Asian khanates on Persian soil. After the Congress of Vienna in 1815, the United Kingdom emerged as a member of the Holy Alliance (along with Austria, Russia, and Prussia), which would essentially impose its interests on the rest of Europe for the next fifty years. Through territorial expansion at the congress itself (Malta, Mauritius, Ceylon, Helgoland, and the Cape of Good Hope), Britain positioned itself as a maritime power. The United Kingdom, now a world power, was keenly interested in its naval supremacy as it possessed significant overseas territories (Đuković Kovačević, 1975: 170). From this perspective, it considers itself called upon to preserve the territorial integrity of the Ottoman Empire as a land barrier to Russia's access to the Mediterranean Sea, i.e. to establish a buffer state in Persia that would cut it off from the Indian Ocean.

It was on these grounds that the aforementioned “Great Game” began, which was “played” between the United Kingdom and Russia in the 19th century, and which became a suitable term in the 20th century as it gradually included other powers interested in dominance in the central and southwestern Asian regions (a part of the Asian continent located between the Mediterranean and Red Seas to the west,

Pakistan to the east, the Black Sea, the Caucasus, the Caspian Sea, the Persian Gulf, the Turan Plain, and the Pamir mountain range to the north, and the western part of the Indian Ocean to the south - as a subregion of Asia, it partially overlaps with the traditional European Near and Middle East (Janković, 2007: 268)). What began as a conflict over the Russian expansion southwards (the 1813 Russo-Persian Treaty) and the British establishment of trade routes across Southwest Asia (in the 1830s), in the first half of the century escalated into the Crimean War in 1853 - 1856 between Russia and the coalition of the United Kingdom, France, the Ottoman Empire, and the Kingdom of Piedmont, i.e. in the Russo-Turkish War of 1877, or through a series of smaller wars waged by the United Kingdom (the First Anglo-Afghan War of 1838, the First (1845) and Second (1848) Anglo-Sikh Wars, as well as the Second Anglo-Afghan War of 1878), and it concluded with the signing of the Anglo-Russian Convention in 1907. The echoes of this conflict also spread to the Middle East, a border region that the British highlighted as their sphere of influence, where they held a certain level of cultural, economic, military, or political exclusivity.

In that context, the British influence on the Ottoman Empire should also be considered and understood, as well as the delicacy of the relationship between them and the United Kingdom. British politicians protected the Turkish rule in Europe out of fear of strengthening Russian influence. For that reason, in 1854, they declared war on Russia as a result of its attack on the border Turkish provinces of Wallachia and Moldavia a year earlier, i.e., at the first sign of the threat to Constantinople. And at the Berlin Congress of 1878, the United Kingdom concluded special agreements with Russia and the Ottoman Empire - with Russia regarding the Russo-Turkish War of 1875/76, the United Kingdom would “remain neutral if three geographical points essential to England’s maintenance of its empire were respected: the Suez Canal, the Dardanelles, and Constantinople” (Moroa, 1953: 220), namely, the Ottoman cession of Cyprus in exchange for the formation of a Turkish-British defense alliance (Moroa, 1953: 226).

Concerned about its interests from the very beginning of World War I, the United Kingdom spared no effort to protect the navigability of waterways to its colonies. The British, during the war, and especially after the failure of the Gallipoli (a joint British and French amphibious) operation in 1916., took new actions to establish and protect their interests in the event of the decomposition of the Ottoman Empire. Even during the military action, they were emphasising diplomatic activities with their allies (France, Russia, and Italy), as well as with the Arabs in the Ottoman Empire. Through a series of agreements (The Treaty of Constantinople in the period March-April 1915 between Russia, France, and Britain, and Italy later joining; British-Arab negotiations in July 1915 - March 1916, and the Treaty of Asia Minor in September 1915 - May 1916 between Britain and France (Đuković Kovačević, 1975: 186-189)), the United Kingdom effectively divided the still-existing Empire. The most famous is the Treaty of Asia Minor so-called Treaty of Sèvres (or even Sykes-Picot Agreement), which proposed the division of the Middle East into French and British zones of interest and control. Southern Iraq from Baghdad to the Persian Gulf (with Haifa and Acre in Palestine) would go to Britain, Syria and Cilicia to France, and the remaining Arab territories would be divided between Britain and France or a confederation of Arab states would be created. Palestine would be internationalised, meaning it was to be governed by an international condominium composed of the British, French and Russians. The British sphere of influence was considered to include Palestine, while respecting relevant French, Russian and Islamic interests in Jerusalem and the Holy Places (Black, 2017: 52 – 53, and Matanić, 2021: 26).

In Palestine itself, Britain was also taking direct steps that would lead to the downfall of the Ottomans. First, via their intelligence officer Thomas Lawrence (also known as Lawrence of Arabia) in 1916, they supported the establishment of a unified Arab state that would encompass a large area of the Middle East in exchange for Arab support for the British during the war. Simultaneously, they were also negotiating with the Sharif of Mecca, Hussein bin Ali, the then-national Arab leader, promising that his family would rule over a large territory in the region in exchange for supporting the Arab revolt against the Ottoman Empire (Janković, 2007: 270). The Arab Revolt of Ibn Ali and his sons Abdullah (Abd Allāh ibn al-Husayn) and Faysal (Faysal ibn Husayn), which was partly orchestrated by Lawrence, resulted in victory over the Ottomans. In the so-called The United Kingdom’s Sinai and Palestine Campaign of 1917, with the support of Arab nationalists, Palestine and Syria were occupied and would be governed by the British until the end of the war.

Inspired by these events, the World Zionist Organization, through its member Chaim Azriel Weimann, sent a letter to the Prime Minister of the United Kingdom proposing the de facto establishment of a Jewish community in Palestine. In response to this, His Majesty’s Government’s Foreign Secretary, Arthur James Balfour, on the 2nd of November 1917 recognised the need to create a “Jewish national home” in Palestine. His letter, addressed to Lord Walter Rothschild, at that time the representative of the English Zionist Federation, is also known as the Balfour Declaration. The Declaration states the following obligations: 1) Britain will help Jews establish their homeland in Palestine, 2) Jews will not endanger the

civil and religious rights of non-Jews living in Palestine, and 3) Jews living around the world will not be discriminated against (Vekarić, 1983: 36 – 38, Chomsky, 1999: 3, Janković, 2007: 271, and Matanić, 2021: 23).

Simultaneously, the following year (1917), the Jewish Legion was established within the British Army as (they calculated that the support from Jews would mobilise influential Jews in the US to join the war, and also due to the number of Jews in Russia). The year before, Britain took Jerusalem from Turkey, and the following year, the Ottoman Empire capitulated after being defeated in Syria. With the end of World War I and the Treaty of Versailles, an independent Arab state was created on the Arabian Peninsula. At the San Remo conference in January 1920, the United Kingdom continued to implement the policy from the Treaty of Sèvres (a peace conference between Turkey, a member of the defeated Central Powers, and the victors, members of the Allied Powers) and proposed further division of the Ottoman Empire. Since the League of Nations was created after the war and aimed to resolve political and national issues diplomatically, Britain could not simply declare Palestine its colony, but it also could not relinquish its dominant position in this essential region. Thus, a solution was found to seemingly separate parts of the Ottoman Empire that were of interest to the victorious powers of World War I and to determine their administration until conditions for independence were met. To this end, Britain proposed its Mandate for Palestine with the task of ensuring the creation of a Jewish state and securing the rights of the non-Jewish population (as it had committed to in the Balfour Declaration), while France proposed the Mandate for Syria and Lebanon (Janković, 2007: 271). The difference between a mandate and a colony was interpreted by the fact that Palestine was not an ordinary Crown colony and did not belong to the British Empire and that its inhabitants were the citizens of Palestine, not the United Kingdom (Janković, 2007: 272).

Even then (immediately after the end of the peace conference), conflicts and disagreements between the great powers and local communities began. The first Arab attacks on Jews in Jerusalem occurred on the 4th of May 1920 (Black, 2017: 63), and to protect the Jews, they founded the organisation Hagana (English: Defense or in Hebrew הגנה) that same year. Previously, in the Ottoman Empire, Arabs readily sold land to Jews, but this led to a large number of landless Arabs migrating to cities and, with their poverty, putting pressure on the already unfavorable situation that arose after the Empire's collapse. Based on this, Islamic religious organisations emerged as a substitute for the promised Arab independence that the British had directed them toward in their resistance against the Ottomans.

The League of Nations, held in May 1922, recognised the mandates over Palestine and Syria for the United Kingdom and France (League of Nations, 1922), and in support of Jewish efforts, it provided for the establishment of the Jewish Agency for Israel. The previous year, the French army entered Damascus (Britain subsequently and on its own initiative assigned the Golan Heights to the French mandate), while the British already controlled Palestine and Mesopotamia (Black, 2017: 58 - 59). The remaining territories of the Middle East (excluding Iran, Turkey, and the desert regions of the Arabian Peninsula) were divided between Britain and France, or Italy (Libya). From the above, it can be seen that the British, in reality, treated the territories under their mandate as if they had been colonies.

With such actions, the United Kingdom sought to satisfy the growing appetites of the Arabs, which is why the idea of a new Jewish state was unfeasible for them. The increase in the number of Jews as a result of their persistent immigration to Palestine only created a collision between them and the Arabs, and harmed the existing situation. With the proclamation of the Republic of Turkey, the Turkish interests were somewhat satisfied, but a number of Arab states remained in the region. The conflicting Arabs and Turks realised that Britain skillfully used their conflicts to serve its own interests, so their conflicts soon ceased, with anger directed toward the Jews and the British. So, the “unbelievers” conquered Islamic lands, including one of the three holiest cities in Islam - Jerusalem, and used Muslims against each other (Arabs against Turks) (Janković, 2007: 271).

Arab-Jewish conflicts intensified in 1929 due to the violation of the status of the holy site (the Western Wall) in Jerusalem (Black, 2017: 67). To satisfy Arab demands and bound by previous treaties, the British were trying to prevent further Jewish immigration to Palestine. The Arab revolt against the Jews (and also against British rule) in Palestine broke out in 1936 (Black, 2017: 85). The United Kingdom government formed a special commission (the Peel Commission, named after the commission's chairman, Lord Robert Peel) which concluded that the only logical solution to the conflicting aspirations of Jews and Arabs was to divide Palestine into separate Jewish and Arab states (see Map 1 in the Appendix). The Arabs rejected the proposal because it would have forced them, by accepting a Jewish state, to have a portion of Palestinians living under “Jewish domination”. The Zionists rejected the proposed borders because they would have gained little more than a ghetto of 5,000 out of 26,700 km² of Palestine. However, it is important to note that the Zionists agreed to negotiate the proposal with the British, while

the Arabs refused to consider any compromises (UN GA Resolution 181, 1947). The British took another step toward resolving the conflict in Palestine in 1939 when they released the so-called White Papers that abandon the half-and-half division and propose the formation of a single state ruled by Jews and Arabs in proportion to their populations, with Jewish immigration limited to 75,000 over the next five years. In support of this, they strictly enforced a naval blockade aimed at preventing Jewish immigration to the Palestine region, but Jews bypass the ban through illegal immigration channels (Black, 2017: 86, 98 - 101).

During World War II, persecuted by the Germans, Jews found ways to immigrate to Palestine illegally. Based on these experiences, in 1942, the Zionists changed their plan: instead of an undefined Jewish homeland, they sought a Jewish Republic, and in 1944 proclaimed the so-called One Million Plan (the idea of bringing a million Jews to the Jewish Republic), which soon became official Zionist policy.

After the war ended, the British continued to block Jewish immigration to Palestine (although the US President had requested that 100,000 be allowed to enter). In order to align their positions, on the 4th of January 1946 the British and Americans formed, a joint committee (the Anglo-American Research Committee). The committee was tasked with examining the political, economic, and social conditions in Mandatory Palestine and the well-being of the people currently living there; consulting with representatives of Arabs and Jews; and making other recommendations - as “necessary” for the ad hoc resolution of these problems, as well as for their permanent solution. The report titled Report of the Anglo-American Committee of Inquiry Regarding the Problems of European Jewry and Palestine, was published in Lausanne on the 20th of April 1946 (see Map 2 in the Appendix). It was rejected again (Black, 2017: 114).

After the Anglo-American Committee published its report, a new committee was formed to determine how the Anglo-American proposals would be implemented. It was led by British Minister Herbert Morrison and American Ambassador Henry Grady. In July 1946, they proposed the Morrison-Grady Plan for a unitary federal trusteeship in Palestine (see Map 3 in the Appendix). Jewish and Arab provinces would have self-government under the British supervision, while Jerusalem and the Negev Desert would remain under direct British control. The plan became the starting point for the Palestinian conference convened by the British on the 1st of October 1946. However, the Arabs rejected the plan on the grounds that it would lead to division, while the Jews refused to attend. Instead, the Arabs proposed an independent unitary state.

The British government and military also believed that neither Jews nor Arabs would accept the committee’s recommendations. British Prime Minister Clement Attlee therefore appointed a group of senior officials to coordinate with the chiefs of staff in preparing an analysis of the committee’s recommendations. They concluded that the Jews would accept nothing but partition, and not only would the guerrilla attacks by the paramilitary groups Irgun and Lehi (formed from the Haganah) continue, but the Haganah could react by launching widespread attacks. In addition, the report concludes that a general Arab uprising in Palestine is likely, with financial and material support from the neighbouring Arab states. As the confirmation of this, on the 22th of July 1946, the Jewish terrorist organisation Irgun blew up the King David Hotel, which was the headquarters of the British authorities in Palestine. Radical Jews employed guerrilla and insurgent tactics against the British, believing they had betrayed Zionist goals. The consequence of this will be that in the coming period, the United Kingdom will support the Arabs but also announce its withdrawal (Black, 2017: 111 - 114).

At a later meeting of the Palestinian Conference in February 1947, Britain proposed a plan known as the so-called Bevin’s Plan for a five-year British trusteeship (according to the proposer – Ernest Bevin). The guardianship was supposed to lead to a permanent settlement that all parties would agree on. When both the Arab and Jewish sides rejected the plan, Britain decided to refer the problem to the United Nations (Black, 2017: 115).

The period of direct British influence in the wider Middle East region, specifically on the territory of Palestine, emerged as a logical extension of British-Russian conflicts in Central and South Asia, namely the naval control of the Mediterranean Sea and the retention of, first, land routes to India, and then, oil reserves in the Middle East. As an instance of significant influence for the initial period, we can take the Congress of Vienna in 1815 (which brought Britain onto the world political stage as a world power), whose power lasted until 1946 when the British Empire, pressured by the demands of its colonies, was leaning toward a reduction in power and influence. The importance of the Suez Canal, as a direct maritime and trade route, in the third quarter of the 19th century, and the prevention of German expansion eastward in the first half of the 20th century, necessitated a permanent British presence, reflected in the maintenance of the Ottoman Empire, and after its demise, direct influence or support for conflicts aimed at creating an artificial need for the United Kingdom to intervene in its elevated civilising role as a peacemaker. The policy of apparent concessions by the Ottomans to Jews and Arabs worked as long as the Ottoman

Empire extended over the entire region, but with its decomposition, the existing regions - its successors - could not fit into the existing international relations, nor did they have enough strength for independent life.

3. THE ROLE OF THE UNITED NATIONS IN THE FORMATION OF ISRAEL

With the end of World War II, the world became aware of the horrific Holocaust (in Greek *holókaustos*: *ολόκαυστος*; in English: completely burned) committed against the Jews, and the problem of resolving their national issue emerged onto the political stage. The waves of immigration to Jerusalem and Palestine have sparked hope that the time has come to declare their own state. The growing Jewish emigration (around 600,000) to Palestine in the mid-1940s was met with the fact that about 1.2 million Arabs, who did not view their plans for independence favourably, inhabited two-thirds of the territory. Unable to control the situation regarding the conflict between the two peoples, as well as the immigration of Jews from all over the world, the United Kingdom wanted to withdraw from Palestine and therefore, in February 1947, it proposed that the question of its division be considered at the next session of the United Nations General Assembly (Rudolf, 1968: 228 and Black, 2017:115).

At the General Assembly session dedicated to the formation of the Committee on Palestine on the 28th of April 1947, five Arab countries - Egypt, Iraq, Lebanon, Saudi Arabia, and Syria - attempted, but unsuccessfully, to include in the discussion a plan related to “the termination of the Mandate over Palestine and the declaration of its independence”. The proposal was rejected, and the General Assembly, as a Solomon-like solution, formed the United Nations Special Committee on Palestine (UNSCOP) with the task of “investigating all relevant issues of the Palestine problem and proposing a solution” for the Assembly to consider at its regular session in September 1947. Representatives from Australia, Czechoslovakia, Guatemala, India, Iran, Yugoslavia, Canada, the Netherlands, Peru, Sweden, and Uruguay were elected to the Committee, which began its work on the 15th of May 1947. The members of the Committee decided to hear both sides (Jewish and Arab) and for this purpose travelled to Palestine, Lebanon, Syria, and Transjordan, as well as to the displaced persons camps in Austria and Germany. The two main proposals in the presentations were: the division of Palestine into a Jewish and an Arab state with a shared capital in Jerusalem under international administration, and a single Palestinian state with its capital in Jerusalem. The Jewish side was represented in the talks by the Jewish Agency for Israel, while the Palestinian Arabs were represented by the Arab Higher Committee (Rudolf, 1968: 228).

The Arab Higher Committee was founded in 1936 during the Arab rebellion against British rule in Palestine. It was founded in Cairo and presented itself as the central political body and the sole official representative of all Arabs in Palestine. The British outlawed it in 1937, but it continued to exist. The Arab Higher Committee practically did not participate in the work of the Committee, stating that “by refusing to consider the independence of Palestine, the UN began to pay more attention to the issue of Jewish refugees than to the issue of an independent state” (Rudolf, 1968: 228). They also considered the natural rights of Palestinian Arabs to be self-evident and recognised, and therefore not subject to examination. The Jewish leadership argued before the Committee that the issues of a Jewish state in Palestine and unlimited immigration were inextricably intertwined. During the talks, the Jews advocated for their own state in Palestine but were willing to compromise, while the Arabs refused any agreements regarding the division of the state. It is important to note that the Committee members themselves could not reach a consensus on how to solve the problem (the partition was voted for by: Canada, Czechoslovakia, Guatemala, Netherlands, Peru, Sweden and Uruguay, while a unified Arab state was voted for by: India, Iran, and Yugoslavia, but Australia was restrained), and thus the final proposals in the report to the General Assembly from the 31st of August, they were named in relation to the number of members who supported a certain proposal. The committee made two proposals: a majority proposal and a minority proposal. The majority plan involved dividing Palestine into two states with Jerusalem as the capital under special international administration, while the minority plan proposed the establishment of a single state (Rudolf, 1968: 228 - 229).

The Committee submitted its report to the General Assembly on the 3rd of September 1947. The report supported the end of the British mandate in Palestine and contained a majority proposal for a two-state partition plan with an economic union (Chapter VI) and a minority proposal for a single federal union plan with Jerusalem as its capital (Chapter VII). After the report was submitted, UN members considered the proposal, and the General Assembly on the 29th of November 1947, put the proposals to a vote: 33 member states voted in favour of partitioning Palestine, 13 for a unified state, and 10 abstained (Black, 2017: 115).

Accordingly, General Assembly Resolution 181 (UN SG Res. 181, 1947) was adopted, i.e. the Plan for the Partition of Palestine (see Map 4 in the Appendix) was drawn up. The plan included: the creation of

an Arab and a Jewish state by no later than the 1st of October 1948, and the division of Palestine into eight parts (three were assigned to the Arab state, and three to the Jewish state, the city of Jaffa, which formed an Arab enclave within Jewish territory, and the city of Jerusalem which would be administered by the UN Trusteeship Council). The plan also outlined the steps to be taken before independence. This concerned the issues of citizenship, transit, economic union, and the declaration that the provisional government of each proposed state would issue regarding access to holy places, namely religious and minority rights. By Resolution 181, the Assembly also established the United Nations Palestine Commission (composed of representatives from: Bolivia, Czechoslovakia, Denmark, Panama, and the Philippines) to implement its recommendations and requested the Security Council to take the necessary measures to implement the said Partition Plan (Rudolf, 1968: 230).

The adoption of the resolution was followed by an outbreak of violence in Palestine. As the situation worsened, the Security Council called on the UN General Assembly for a special session which met from the 16th of April to the 14th of May 1948. The Security Council on the 17th of April called for a cessation of all military and paramilitary activities in Palestine, and on the 23rd of April, established the Commission for Monitoring and Assisting in the Establishment of the Armistice. For its part, the General Assembly relieved the Palestine Committee of its responsibilities and decided to appoint a mediator responsible for promoting a peaceful solution in cooperation with the Truce Commission. On the 20th of May, Count Folke Bernadotte of Wisborg, president of the Swedish Red Cross, was chosen as the UN mediator (Rudolf, 1968: 231).

The proclamation further states that Israel will “be faithful to the principles of the UN Charter” and that it will be “ready to cooperate with the organs and representatives of the UN in implementing the General Assembly’s decision of the 29th November 1947” (Rudolf, 1968: 232).

4. CONCLUDING REMARKS

From a geopolitical perspective, the case is interesting because it is viewed from the perspective of the people, not the state. If we primarily associate the concept of geopolitics with the existence of a state (territory) and its policies, then what is characteristic of Israel’s case is that, figuratively speaking, the policy of the people led to the creation of the state. Although Jewish political organisations had considered ways to resolve the national issue since their inception, only the Balfour Declaration provided a real possibility for the establishment of that state in Palestine. The overlap of religious and political beliefs that Jerusalem represents the foundation of the Jewish state, Jewish immigration, and the possession of Palestinian territories provided a real opportunity for, during World War II, instead of seeking an undefined Jewish homeland, the seeking of a Jewish republic.

Geopolitics needs a strategy to realize its assumed goals. In the case of the “Great Game” in Southeast Asia, specifically the Middle East and particularly Palestine, a characteristic feature is the gradual “fragmentation” – both of the strategy and the territory where it is implemented. Great Britain anticipated potential areas where the influence of the Russian Empire could challenge its ability to realize its primarily economic plans, and accordingly took offensive political and military actions. As previously stated, the conflict between the two empires in this region can be traced throughout the 19th century (from the establishment of the Russo-Persian treaty in 1813, thru efforts to protect British trade interests in the 1830s, direct military conflict in the Crimean War 1853-1856, periods of political confrontation at peace congresses in Paris in 1856 and Berlin in 1878, up to the signing of the Anglo-Russian Convention in 1907), but from the second half of the same century, there was also direct British conflict with the local population (the First Anglo-Afghan War of 1838, the First (1845) and Second (1848) Anglo-Sikh Wars, as well as the Second Anglo-Afghan War of 1878, which provided the British with a pretext to continue their “interference” in the internal affairs of the Ottoman Empire (first to ensure its survival, and then, thru direct conflict, to actively participate in the division of its territory), and finally to formal presence in the region after World War I. The period of direct British rule between the two wars, and the struggle and efforts to maintain the administration after World War II, led to the need for international “de-escalation” and arbitration in the seemingly irreconcilable world of Jews and Arabs.

From the perspective of strategy, meaning the use of state power instruments by individual actors (defined as “the resources and means that the state uses to achieve its national goals” (Pavić, Berisha, and Stajković, 2025: 25), it can be observed that in Southeast Asia, Great Britain used the so-called “hard” power aspect (military engagement) was more in the area of the Persian and Indian peninsulas, while in the territory of the Ottoman Empire (the Middle East), it initially used “soft” power (diplomacy thru promoting the cultural attractiveness and values of the “Western world”), but in the First, and especially the Second, World War, it switched to using “hard” power to directly protect its interests. This doesn’t

mean the empire only used one aspect – “parallel” diplomacy – during World War I they, simultaneously, promised the territory of Palestine to both Arabs and Jews, but also sought to retain it for itself (the Treaty of Constantinople between Russia, France, and Britain, later joined by Italy; British-Arab negotiations and the Agreement on Asia Minor between Britain and France, as well as the Balfour Declaration to the leader of the World Zionist Movement).

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