ABSTRACT

Zionism is still an on-going movement. Its militancy is on the increase and its expansionism has not yet been contained. The Palestinian people are still victims of the worst kind of oppression emanating from a state which is overtly theocratic in nature. It is an anathema that the so-called civilized world should tolerate the worst kind of tyranny and violation of human rights. The present day behaviour of Zionists and of the major world powers can be understood only if one sees the phenomena in retrospect. The Russian pogroms of 1880s seem to set in motion a process which led ultimately to the UN debates, a prelude to the formation of Israel.

An attempt has been made here to discuss Zionist activities directed towards the establishment of a Jewish state. The focus is on the first half of the twentieth century. During this period Zionists organised and developed strategic contacts with key figures in Great Britain, the United States and the Soviet Union - the powers which were most important in deciding the issue. The concerted effort of the Zionists to promote the cause of Israel in these countries and finally in the United Nations General Assembly, proved to be highly successful. The U.N. Partition Resolution of 1947 marks the culmination of this process.
"The word 'Zionism' appeared at the end of the nineteenth century to designate a cluster of different movements, the common element of which was the project of giving world Jewry a spiritual, territorial or state centre, usually located in Palestine." Naturally the Zionist idea took many forms particularly in its formative period, and it is not surprising that sometimes its strands negated each other.

'Zionism' as a concept or ideology has been understood from many angles. For some it is a permanent national calling of all Jewry. Therefore it is justified and beneficial. For others, it is subservient to universal values, and whether these values are taken from Judaism, liberal humanism or from international proletarianism. For those who believe in universal human values and international proletariatism, Zionism is harmful and they consider it to be capitalism in its imperialist stage.

The western thinking and efforts lent a helping hand to the growth of Zionism. Two European developments in the second half of the nineteenth century created a congenial atmosphere for the imperialist conceived Zionist idea. The first was direct and indirect impact of the intellectual and political growth of European chauvinist nationalism. The
pogroms in Russia in 1881 were the second European development which provided impetus to the Zionist idea. On account of these pogroms there was a mass exodus of Jews to other countries of Eastern and Western Europe. This was a vital reason for the failure of Haskalah (Assimilationist) movement. It was substituted by the movement of "Lovers of Zion" which was inspired by Leo Pinsky's pamphlet, 'Auto Emancipation'. Societies were formed in Jewish centres to chalk out a programme for the settlement of Jews in Palestine and to revive the Hebrew language.

If it was in Eastern Europe that conditions were ripe for Zionist movement and it was the 'Pale of Settlement that continuously provided the membership of the movement, it was only in Western Europe that conditions were congenial for a strategic political concept of Jewish nationalism. The concept of political Zionism evolved in Vienna, Theodor Herzl, provided the political and organisational leadership of the new movement. Herzl was the most important and chief dispenser of the Jewish political and social ideas. It has been rightly said that Zionism as a true political movement and as an international force was to all intents and purposes Herzl's intention and creation.

The fundamental concepts regarding Herzl's thought and Zionist outlook are in his Der Judenstaat. The very first
sentence of Judenstaat reads, "The idea which I have developed in this pamphlet is a very old one: It is the restoration of the Jewish state". Herzl has enumerated his plan in this thirty page pamphlet. He says: "My plan is simple in design but complicated in execution". The plan consisted of two parts: Assumption of responsibility for Jewish national officers by a political body to be called "the Society of Jews", and management of both the exodus of the Jews and their resettlement by a technical body to be called the Jewish Company. The first was to contact the relevant governments and seek to obtain their consent for the attainment of Jewish sovereignty over a neutral piece of land, and then administer the territory as a provisional government. The second was to take form of a chartered company established in London under English law. The company would have to be provided with handsome working capital and would provide land, housing and employment in the new country.

Herzl had indeed pondered over Erez Israel as the most adequate land for Jews to settle. He mentioned, "It is more and more to the interest of the civilized nations and of civilizations in general that a cultural station be established on the shortest route to Asia Palestine is this station and we Jews are the bearers of culture who are ready
to give our property and our lives to bring about this creation".

Herzl justified the choice of Palestine on the vague and spurious historical claim. He wrote, "Palestine is our - memorable historic home. The very name of Palestine would attract our people with a force of marvelous potency".

However, the primary purpose of Der Judenstaat was tactical to make the issue public and to draw new allies. After the publication of the pamphlet he wrote:

The Essay I have published has gained me the greatest of hatreds and the warmest of friendships... the discussion is now open and, it seems, will soon reach the parliament.

The idea of calling a general assembly of Zionists was a second major step taken up by Herzl. On March 7, 1897, a decision to convene a Zionist Congress was taken during a two day conference of a group of lovers of Zion from Berlin. Herzl was there with his associates from Austria to chalk out a plan for a cooperative working relationship with the Berlin circle.

The first Zionist Congress held at Bal Basle was an unprecedented event. The Congress opened on Sunday morning, 24 August 1897 and continued for three days, after which it
constituted a number of organisations to promote its aims and objectives. The key provision of the Congress states, "The aim of Zionism is to create for the Jewish people a home in Palestine secured by Public Law". A reading of Herzl's diaries reveal that the term "public law" refers to nothing but the patronage of the imperialist powers. He envisaged that the European powers would back Zionism for one of the three main motives:

1. Imperialist self interest;
2. Ridding themselves of Jews and antisemitism (in west European case avoiding the influx of Jewish immigrants from Eastern Europe), and
3. Using organised Jewish influence to combat revolutionary movements and other internal factors.

Four means were adopted to obtain this objective:

(i) The programmatic encouragement of the settlement of Palestine with Jewish agricultural workers, labourers and artisans.

(ii) The unification and organisation of all Jewry into local and general groups in accordance with the laws of respective country.

(iii) The strengthening of Jewish self-awareness and national consciousness.
(iv) The preparation of activity for obtaining the consent of the various governments, necessary for the fulfilment of the aims of Zionism.

The first president of the Zionist Congress Theodor Herzl started translating the programmes of Basle Congress into action. However Zionism did not gain any recognition at the beginning of the World War I.

The great conception of Herzl, the gigantic enthusiasm of the Basle Congress and the untiring efforts of the founder of political Zionism appeared to have fizzled out by the beginning of the World War I. It appears that if the war had not taken place with all its schemes on the part of the Allied Powers, and the situation created during and after the war, political Zionism would have died out. The War, the intensified imperialist drive in West Asia and the winning over of the West European Jews and many others, who were reluctant at the beginning, brought a new batch of East European Jewish leaders, less imaginative but more pragmatic than Herzl, to the forefront. They furthered the idea of Herzl and through a long, concerted and internationally orchestrated propaganda and effort, ultimately achieved Israel, which appeared to be an impossible proposition at the beginning.
The diplomatic initiative, administrative preparation and right use of money power provide the historical explanation of the creation of Israel. Three leaders played the most crucial role. Weizmann was a past master as far as sophisticated manipulation was concerned. Ben Gurion was a genius at mass conversion to Zionism and settlement, and Jabontinsk, of expansionist design and armed strategy. These three pragmatic approaches lay at the root of evolution of Zionism. Weizmann resorted to the technique of "gradualism" and developed it into a political technique. For Weizmann the Balfour Declaration was only a beginning. From 1917 onwards he attempted ceaselessly to circumvent its restrictive clauses but never openly challenged them. He maintained the same strategy towards Churchill White Paper. In the same way he accepted the partition plan, its limited territorial concessions which could be expanded in time.

David Bin Gurion attached great importance to the concept of "ingathering". Gurion insisted that Zionism demanded immigration to Israel and allegiance to a single Jewish nationality, this reflected a horizon too limited for the Jews of the world. His narrow thinking that Zionists in the diaspora were under obligation to assist the state of Israel unconditionally was said to be reactionary.
To an emancipated Jew and the modern man the premise of "ingathering" was retrogressive.

Nevertheless the Zionist like Weizmann, Ben Gurion, Juda Magnes and Abba Hillel Silver, who happened to be the pivotal actors on behalf of Zionism, activated other actors, whom we may call the secondary actors, particularly U.K., U.S.A. and the U.S.S.R. and ultimately through them reached the United Nations.

The struggle over Palestine had already emerged during World War I. On account of the exigencies of War the British calculated that a public expression of support for the principle of a Jewish national home in Palestine would prompt the World Zionist Organization to mobilize American Jews in support of the United States' entry into the war on the side of the Allied powers. The second reason was, the German Jews might shift their allegiance. The third reason was that the Russian Jews might persuade Russia not to abandon the conflict. There was another contradictory pledge given to the Arabs. Sir Henry McMahon had been authorized to conduct a correspondence with Sharif Hussein encouraging him to revolt against the Turks which would be later rewarded in Arab independence.
After World War I Great Britain became the mandatory power over Palestine. The Palestine Mandate was doomed to failure from its very inception. The British never succeeded in rallying to their support either the Jews or the Arabs. The latter never recognized the Balfour Declaration, or Britain's rights to impose it on Palestine. The Jews' cooperation when given was conditional on a "Zionist" interpretation of that declaration, and their support was withdrawn in 1939, when in their view the British reneged on their international obligations to the Jewish people. By 1945, with both parties to the conflict determined to implement their own blueprint for Palestine in the world order, the Mandate had indeed become intractable.

The foreign secretary, Earnest Bevin, pursued the solution of a "binational state" in the hope that concerted action with the United States might guarantee Jewish minority, alienating the Arab majority, thereby allowing Britain to remain on good terms with the Arab World generally. The Anglo-American Committee of Inquiry of 1946 was such an attempt by Britain to convince the Americans of the inequity of creating a white settler minority in Palestine. However, the Zionist influence in the United States and the American suspicion of British imperialism, frustrated Bevin's objective. The British were unable to
persuade the Americans to check expansionist Zionist aims that appeared to jeopardize Britain's position in the Middle East.

The policy of the United States centered on the perspective of its President. The whole American political system is dominated by the President. The President can ignore the advice of his secretaries and other experts in the context of his domestic politics. On the crucial issue of Palestine the domestic compulsions proved to be more compelling for the President than the almost objective advice of the Secretaries of State and Defense. This situation was ably exploited by the Zionists who through their influence mechanism and electoral weight could mould President's thinking and have the decision in their favour. While the American foreign policy experts were closer to their British colleagues in opposing Zionist aspirations, the President repeatedly overruled their diplomatic advisors.

Roosevelt was apparently moved by a naive belief that the Balfour Declaration had "promised" Palestine to the Jews, and that the Arabs had to be bought off. Far more significant were Truman's decisions. There has been erratic shifts in United States policies on Palestine, particularly
after the question was placed on the agenda of the United Nations General Assembly. The State Department and the White House were both writing the policies, each with a different constituency in mind. State was responding chiefly to pressures of the cold war as it also bore upon the Middle East, and the White House, chiefly to domestic pressures built up by the American Zionists. So long as the president did not personally intervene State went its own way. Thus the American position before the General Assembly's Ad hoc Committee on Palestine in the fall of 1947 was developed essentially by State, and the pressures on friendly delegations before the final vote in the plenary Assembly by the White House which virtually worked on the dictates of the Zionist lobby. Furthermore, the way United States policy towards Palestine was forced through the United Nations in 1947, not only denigrated the status of United Nations but also United States lost face in its dealings with the United Nations.

The Soviet policies towards Palestine were determined by an interplay between an internal "Jewish factor" and the perceived requirements of the Soviet interests in the Middle East as a whole in the context of the super power struggle.

After the Jewish diaspora of 70 A.D. Russia had been the largest home of the Jews. Among the Russian Jewry
Zionism as an idea and as a movement predates Herzl's Judenstaat and the emergence of the World Zionist Organisation. The Christian Czars hated the Jews and the incipient Zionism alike. With the commencement of Revolution in 1917, Zionism was declared as an reactionary ideology. The British support to the Jewish National Home in Palestine through the Balfour Declaration provided added impetus to Communist anathema towards Zionism. The Declaration was aimed to deflect or subvert the support of the Jews for the revolution at a critical moment, but was also considered a vehicle of British imperialism and as a means to keep in check the revolutionary Arab masses.

However, with the advent of the World War II Stalin started to cultivate the Jews and the Zionists alike. Arab, especially the Palestinian leadership fell from grace. Moreover, Kremlin, before it could commit itself openly to the Zionists, had to outmaneuver Anglo-American moves to exclude Moscow from attempts to resolve the Palestinian problem. Kremlin in 1946-47 retaliated by insisting that any change in "the status of dependent territories" should be decided by the United Nations. Stalin's persistence paid off in February 1947 when the British Government expressed it inability to mediate the Arab-Jewish dispute referred the Palestine problem to the U.N. In the meantime Soviet ability
to influence events in Palestine had considerably increased. The Jewish population had swollen on account of large scale immigration of East European Jews. The situation in Palestine was deteriorating fast since the Jews and Arab Palestinians were locked in incessant conflagration with the British. This offered a unique opportunity to U.S.S.R. to influence events by supporting Zionist aspirations for an independent Jewish state.

The Kremlin welcomed the submission of the Palestine Question to the U.N. Andrei Gromyko Deputy Foreign Minister declared on May 8, 1947, that the U.S.S.R. was prepared to take upon itself, together with the United Nations as a whole, the responsibility not only for the final decisions that may be taken by our organisation on the Palestine problem, but also for the preparation of the decision.

Nonetheless, given the traditional Soviet hostility towards Zionism, it came as a surprise when in the fall of 1947 Soviet spokesmen in the U.N. declared their support for the idea of partition and the creation of independent Jewish and Arab states in Palestine. Ideology was relegated to a second position while political expediency ruled the roost.

Moscow had the realization that Britain was firmly rooted in the Arab World that the Soviet Union would not be
able to gain any pro-Arab position. The Soviets had many other pragmatic considerations too. The Soviets were angry with the fact that Arab nationalist movements had taken a pro-axis orientation e.g. in Palestine it was led by the Mufti of Jerusalem Haj Amin Al-Husseini and in Egypt by Aziz Al-Masri. There is another argument advanced by some writers that Stalin approved of the partition of Palestine in a fit of absent-mindedness. Soviets also visualised that only the majority proposal, which was the partition of Palestine, had the chance of commanding the necessary two third majority. This was therefore the only proposal that promised to bring the end of the British rule in Palestine.

The signal achievement of the Zionist diplomacy was the U.N. partition resolution of November 29, 1947. The Zionists for the first time in the history of their movement got an international sanction for the establishment of their own state. The origins of the November resolution lay in the UNSCOP, which at the end of August 1947 recommended British evacuation and termination of the Mandate.

The resolution for the partition was adopted by the General Assembly of the United Nations on 29 November 1947. At that date Jews made up 32 per cent of Palestine's population and owned 5.6 per cent of the land. The Zionist state were allotted 56 per cent of the territory, with the most fertile land.
The voting of this partition plan was the occasion of some sordid maneuvers on behalf of Zionism. On 18 December 1947 a member of the United States House of Representatives, Lawrence H. Smith, reminded Congress of what had gone on:

Let's take a look at the record, Mr Speaker, and see what happened in the United Nations' Assembly meeting prior to the vote on partition. A two third vote was required to pass the resolution. On two occasions the Assembly was to vote and twice it was postponed.... In the meantime it is reliably reported that intense pressure was applied to the delegates of three small nations by the United States member and also by officials at the highest level in Washington... The decisive votes for partition were cast by Haiti, Liberia and the Philippines. These votes were sufficient to make the two-thirds majority. Previously, these countries opposed the move.... The pressure by our delegates, by our officials and by the private citizens of the United States constitutes reprehensible conduct against them and against us.

President Truman put unprecedented pressure on the State Department. Summer Welles, the Under-Secretary of state wrote, "By direct order of the White House, every form of pressure, direct and indirect, was brought to bear by American officials.... to make sure that the necessary majority would at length be secured". The Secretary for
Defence at that time James Forrestal, confirms this: "The methods that had been used by people outside of the Executive branch of the government to bring coercion and duress on other nations in the General Assembly bordered closely onto scandal".

In 1948, before the wave of "decolonization", the United Nations Organisation was largely dominated by the Western powers. It violated its own Charter by refusing to the Arabs, who at that time made up two-thirds of Palestine's population, the right to decide their own fate.

The partition Resolution also raised many juridical questions. The decision in favour of partition was taken by the General Assembly and not by the Security Council. It thus had the weight only of a recommendation and not that of a decision to be put into effect. The Palestinians, moreover, were not alone in rejecting this partition. Begin’s Irgun declared at the time that such a partition was illegal and would never be accepted.

The U.N. partition plan did not survive the Arab-Israeli war it provoked. The borders of Israel, as determined by the cease-fire agreements of 1949, in their turn lasted little more than eighteen years and the search for a viable political settlement that still continues.