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'Where Do We Go from Here?': Discourse in Louisiana Surrounding the Foundation of the State of Israel, May 1948

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‘Where Do We Go from Here?’: Discourse in Louisiana Surrounding the Foundation of the State
of Israel, May 1948

A Thesis

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the
University of New Orleans
in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts
in
History

by

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Abstract

A study of ten Louisiana newspapers during May 15-31, 1948 revealed a period in which articles varied in their coverage of the Arab-Israeli conflict and wider international relations. Discourse about Arabs and Israelis which became evident in newspapers in later years had emerged but was not fully developed. This coverage revealed a silence about the Holocaust and a subtext about the United Nations.

Keywords: Palestine, Israel, 1948 War, newspaper editorials, discourse, United Nations, Holocaust, United States, Russia, Britain

Introduction

In May 1948, two items in the *New Orleans States* demonstrated the discourse of Louisianans about the Arab-Israeli conflict. The first item is a political cartoon drawn by the New Orleans artist John Churchill Chase. The cartoon showed Uncle Sam sitting on a pro-Israeli hump and a British man sitting on a pro-Arab hump on a camel labeled Palestine. The camel asks, "Where do we go from here?" as the two men clearly want to go in opposite directions.¹ (Fig. 1) The British and American government had differing opinions on how to approach the new state of Israel. The governments disagreed on whether the state should be formally recognized, and how to stop the fighting between Arabs and Israelis. The second item, appearing a few days before the cartoon, is a front- page interview with a Palestinian family forced to flee to Louisiana by the outbreak of the 1948 Arab-Israeli War. Accompanied by a photo of Shukri Salameh, his wife, and his two children, including his new baby born in the United States, the emotional story humanized the Palestinians by describing wartime conditions, the desperation of a family, and the hope that comes with the birth of a child. In the article Shukri Salamah explained common misconceptions held by Americans about Palestinians. He pleaded with the newspaper's readers to understand that "nomads such as you have seen in your movies live in the interior of Saudi Arabia, about 2,500 miles from Palestine. The Arabs in Palestine are educated, cultured and a great proportion of them have university educations. They live according to the modern European way of life."²

¹"Where do we go from here?" Illustration. *New Orleans States* (New Orleans: Louisiana), May 25, 1948.

²"Arabian Family Fleeing Bombs in Palestine, Has Baby Born Here," *New Orleans States* (New Orleans: Louisiana), May 20, 1948.



Figure 1



Figure 2

These two items from the *New Orleans States* show how Louisiana newspapers began to explain the emerging Arab-Israeli conflict. The political cartoon shows how the relationship between the British and American government was important to readers in their understanding of the conflict and suggests the subtext of the debate occurring in the United Nations that existed in

many news articles in May 1948. The article about the Salameh family suggests a period in which Louisianans struggled to understand and began creating a discourse about the people involved in the Arab-Israeli conflict. Historians have studied later discourse in American newspapers in which Palestinians tended to be villainized and Israelis portrayed as on the defensive. In 1948 however, these sentiments may not have been fully formed as the article reflected empathy for the Palestinian family. Still, the article contained the germ of the Orientalist views of the time. The article highlights the negative stereotypes Mr. Salameh wished to discredit but also simultaneously counters them by portraying the Salameh's as western educated and Christian. In the photograph, Mr. Salameh wears a western style suit, and Mrs. Salameh wears her hair uncovered. Orientalist stereotypes probably would have prevented a Muslim refugee family the same news coverage.³

Background of the 1948 War

This thesis concentrates on the weeks following the proclamation of the founding of the state of Israel. On May 14, 1948, Israel declared itself independent. Truman shocked the United Nations and many American government officials when he recognized Israel as a state just minutes after it declared independence.⁴ Almost immediately after the British mandate ended, Arab armies composed of soldiers from Jordan, Syria, Lebanon, and Egypt attacked the new state of Israel. The Arab armies were disorganized, with most lacking training and equipment

³Edward Said's *Orientalism* offers a pivotal theory about the portrayal of Arabs in media and how that portrayal affected relations with Middle Eastern countries and the rest of the world. By associating "Orientals" with their stereotypes, Western powers legitimized their colonization and imperialism. These stereotypes are also how the average American may have perceived a Palestinian. Edward Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Vintage Books, 1979). Douglas Little studies American stereotypes in *American Orientalism* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2002).

⁴ Ritchie Ovendale, *The Origins of The Arab-Israeli Wars* (London: Longman Publishing, 1999).

available to the Israelis. The war continued through a series of cease-fire declarations from the U.N. until spring 1949 when the Israelis defeated the Arab armies and had won significantly more land for Israel than originally given in the partition plan.⁵

Argument

This thesis seeks to establish, in the American South, a beginning point for the later newspaper discourse historians have studied. Rather than look at the elite press, such as the *New York Times*, the *Washington Post* or the *Los Angeles Times*, this thesis will study papers throughout Louisiana, including outside of major population centers, to determine Louisiana's discourse about the formation of the state of Israel. Louisianans in May 1948 were still trying to figure out how to understand the deepening Arab-Israeli conflict. Although the United States officially recognized Israel, the country did not lift the arms embargo to the Middle East to sell weapons to the new state, which may have been to remain on the good side of the Arabs.⁶ The Arabs did invade Israel, a state that the US president recognized, and in the early days of the war in Louisiana newspapers Arab attacks were described as more brutal compared to the Israelis. However, the Israelis were not immune from editorial criticism and front-page articles which advertised their aggressive war tactics. This was a period in which despite Truman's proclamation, obvious support for one side was still unclear in Louisiana. Outside of direct discussion of Arabs and Israelis, there is also a silence in these newspapers about the Holocaust. The Jewish experience in WWII, fundamental to Zionism and the foundation of Israel, is rarely mentioned in articles discussing the creation of the new Jewish state. Additionally, Louisiana coverage contained a subtext about attitudes toward the United Nations suggesting some readers

⁵ Morris, *1948 A History of the First Arab-Israeli War*, (New Haven: Yale University, 2008), 132.

⁶"Not Paralysis, Rigor Mortis," *Morning Advocate* (Baton Rouge, Louisiana), May 24, 1948.

may have been more concerned about the role of the new international body and how the conflict would affect its fate than they were about the conflict's direct participants.

Roadmap

This thesis looks at attitudes towards the Arab-Israeli War in the post-World War II era through a survey of newspaper articles across Louisiana. This thesis analyzed over two hundred newspaper articles from these ten newspapers: The *Times Picayune*, the *New Orleans States*, the *Baton Rouge Morning Advocate*, the *Baton Rouge State-Times Advocate*, the *Monroe Morning World*, the *Shreveport Times*, the *Opelousas Daily World*, the *Alexandria Daily Town Talk*, the *Crowley Daily Signal* and the *Church Point News*.⁷ These papers represent different regions in Louisiana and covered the Arab-Israeli War the most thoroughly. The dates between May 14-31 have been studied to glean an assessment of initial reactions to Israel. An analysis of front-page headline articles, editorials, and political cartoons were used to understand the attitudes of Louisianans towards the news of the foundation of the state of Israel.

The first part of this thesis will briefly review a historiography of the Arab-Israeli conflict, existing approaches of public opinion in newspapers, and the role of the newspaper editor in 1948. This thesis then turns to a history of Jewish and Arab populations in Louisiana. Third, it examines discourse about both Arabs and Israelis generated by this period's headlines, editorials, and maps. Finally, this thesis studies the silence in newspapers about the genocide of Jewish people in WWII and highlights the United Nations subtext.

⁷Both Baton Rouge Advocate papers are from the same newsroom, the *State-Times* was published in the afternoon.

Historiography

In revisiting this period, this thesis draws on a changing historiography of the Arab-Israeli conflict. Historians, as well as descendants of those who fought and survived the war, still debate the existence of atrocities and whether the Israeli army forced Palestinians to leave their homes. Kenneth Stein's "A Historiographic Review of Literature on the Origins of the Arab-Israeli Conflict" is a thorough survey of the most influential histories of the conflict written in the twentieth century.⁸ Most historians of the 1950s to 1980s concluded that the Palestinians voluntarily left their homes, and therefore it was permissible for the Israeli government to prohibit those Palestinian's entry back into Israel. In the 1980s "new historians" in Israel challenged the conventional narrative of the Arab-Israeli conflict after the release of many Israeli government documents in 1978. New historian Avi Shlaim's *Collusion Across the Jordan* states, "violence was implicit in Zionism from the outset," and Ilan Pappé's *Britain and the Arab-Israeli Conflict*, and Benny Morris's *The Birth of the Palestinian Refugee Problem* suggests the Israelis forced Palestinians from their land rather than Palestinians voluntarily leaving.⁹ Still, comparatively less has been written about the 1948 war than the overall conflict. According to

⁸Kenneth Stein, "A Historiographic Review of Literature on the Origins of the Arab-Israeli Conflict," *American Historical Review* 96, no. 5 (Dec. 1991). When America and Israel's early relationship are studied, Truman's recognition of Israel is often central. John Snetsinger's *Truman, the Jewish Vote, and the Creation of Israel* (Stanford: Hoover Institution Press, 1974) said Truman recognized Israel because he understood the high Jewish population in important states during the election year. Several histories discuss lobbying by Jewish or Zionist organizations which influenced Truman like Zvi Ganin in *Truman, American Jewry, and Israel* (Teaneck, NJ: Holmes and Meier, 1978), and Peter Grose in *Israel in the Mind of America* (New York City: Alfred A. Knopf, 1983). Peter Hahn in *Caught in the Middle East: US Policy toward the Arab-Israeli Conflict* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004), Michael Cohen in *Truman in Israel* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990), and Douglas Little in *American Orientalism* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2002), write that Truman wanted to recognize the new state before the Soviet Union in case Israel were to become a Cold War ally.

⁹Avi Shlaim, *Collusion Across the Jordan: King Abdullah, the Zionist Movement, and the Partition of Palestine* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1988), 10. Ilan Pappé, *Britain and the Arab-Israeli Conflict 1948-1951* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1988). Benny Morris, *The Birth of the Palestinian Refugee Problem 1947-1949* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1987).

Kenneth Stein, between the late 1960s and 1980s “more than 90 percent of what was written about the evolution of the Arab-Israeli conflict focused on the period after 1950.”¹⁰ One of the difficulties facing historians of the conflict is that the Arab governments involved in the 1948 war have not opened their archives for research.

Since 2000 “neo-Zionist” historians have agreed that the Israelis were involved in the expulsion of the Arabs; however, these historians argue that it was necessary for the creation of the state. Ilan Pappé’s historiographic review states that the turning point towards neo-Zionism came after the 2000 intifada.

In the eyes of Jewish society and its political elite, Israel had done all it could to achieve peace but was met with extremism and intransigence, forcing the government to go from peace to war. The Palestinians had proved themselves to be enemies, thereby justifying the brutality of the Israeli response to the intifada and the closing of the public mind.¹¹

According to Pappé one of the most notable neo-Zionist histories is Alon Kadish’s *Israel’s War of Independence 1948-1949*.¹² Assaf Likhovski’s argues that Pappé’s fundamentalist neo-Zionist historians are not descriptive of all 21st century researchers. Likhovski calls recent Arab-Israeli history “post-post-Zionist” history. These are historians who study Israelis and Palestinians as individuals, and the power dynamics between them which shape the modern states of Israel and Palestine.¹³ Post-post-Zionist works focus more on culture, rather than the new historian’s focus on the military and economy.¹⁴

¹⁰Stein, “A Historiographic Review of Literature on the Origins of the Arab-Israeli Conflict,” 1451.

¹¹Ilan Pappé, “The Vicissitudes of the 1948 Historiography of Israel.” *Journal of Palestine Studies* 39, no. 1 (2009): 8.

¹²Alon Kadish, *Israel’s War of Independence 1948-1949* (Tel-Aviv: Israeli Ministry of Defense Publication, 2004).

¹³Titles of post-post-Zionist histories cited by Likhovski include *Duty and Love: Individualism and Collectivism in 1950’s Israel*, and “Health and Hegemony: Preventive Medicine, Immigrants and the Israeli Melting Pot.”

¹⁴Assah Likhovski, “Post-Post-Zionist Historiography,” *Israel Studies*, no. 2 (2010).

American public opinion is another popular subject of histories of the Palestine-Israel Conflict. Charles Stember's 1966 *Jews in the Mind of America* and Eytan Gilboa's 1987 *American Public Opinion Toward Israel and the Arab-Israeli Conflict* studied opinion polling to understand how American attitudes have changed.¹⁵ Other historians have used newspapers to measure public opinion regarding the Arab-Israeli conflict. Michael W. Suleiman's *The Arabs in the Mind of America* studies newspapers in the United States between July and December 1956, June 1967, and during the 1973 War. He looks at national papers like the *New York Times*, *Life*, and *Newsweek* and concludes that most of the papers in these years portrayed Arabs as the aggressors, and Israelis as peace-makers. Newspapers viewed Jewish people as modernizing the country, while the "nomadic Arabs" were living in an undeveloped desert.¹⁶ A similar study of editorials in newspapers from 1966 to 1974 by Robert Trice concludes that overall the "elite press" of America viewed Israel more favorably, though editorials sometimes condemned Israeli tactics.¹⁷ Charles Wagner's study of three major newspaper's editorials between 1967 and 1969 notes that although many of the editorials spoke in favor of Israel, the articles were mostly about Americans concerned about sending US troops to the Middle East.¹⁸ Janice Terry and Gordon Mendenhall analyze three major papers in 1973 and also conclude that while most articles were neutral, those that were not were in favor of Israel.¹⁹

¹⁵Charles Stember et al., *Jews in the Mind of America* (New York: Basic Books, 1966); Eytan Gilboa, *American Public Opinion Toward Israel and the Arab-Israeli Conflict* (Lexington: Lexington Books, 1987).

¹⁶Michael W. Suleiman, *The Arabs in the Mind of America* (Brattleboro, VT: Amana Books, 1988), 15-53. Suleiman also studies opinion polls in his book.

¹⁷Robert Trice, "The American Elite Press and the Arab Israeli Conflict," *Middle East Journal* 33, no. 3 (1979): 324.

¹⁸Charles Wagner, "Elite American Newspaper Opinion and the Middle East: Commitment versus Isolation," in *The Middle East Quest for an American Policy*, ed. Willard Beling (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1973), 317-318.

¹⁹Janice Terry and Gordon Menderhall, "1973 U.S. Press Coverage on the Middle East," *Journal of Palestine Studies* 4, no. 1 (Autumn 1974): 122.

Methodology

Polls are one method in understanding public discourse. Based on the limited polling from the late 1940s, many Americans were either apathetic to the Israeli state, or in favor of its creation. Historian Eytan Gilboa suggests Americans post-WWII were unwilling to accept an influx of Jewish refugees and saw a Jewish state as the best way to prevent this. In *Jews in the Mind of America*, Charles Stember's analysis of opinion polls also concludes that after WWII, "...the fact that most of the potential immigrants were Jewish seems to have strengthened the public's determination to keep the gates closed [in the United States]."²⁰ Polls overwhelmingly showed that the American people did not want to get militarily involved in the new Israeli state, and if the United States were to get militarily involved, support for Israel would drop dramatically.²¹ This anti-Semitism and fear of military involvement may help explain why discourse regarding both Arabs and Israelis was negative in May 1948. Peter Grose in *Israel in the Mind of America* wrote that a pro-Arab voice was almost non-existent in the United States press in the 1940s. In polls from 1947, almost half of those polled thought Palestine was already an independent country rather than a British mandate.²² While polls can be helpful in determining public opinion, Gilboa admits they have their own set of issues. Polling about Israel did not occur regularly until 1967, and not with great frequency until the late 1970s.²³

In the absence of public opinion polls, analyzing newspaper articles can help establish public opinion in the US. Although the national wire service distributed most newspaper stories on the Arab-Israeli War in Louisiana papers, several factors suggested local attitudes and

²⁰Stember, *Jews in the Mind of America*, 216.

²¹Gilboa, *American Public Opinion Toward Israel and the Arab-Israeli Conflict*.

²²Grose, *Israel in the Mind of America*, 213.

²³Gilboa, *American Public Opinion Toward Israel and the Arab-Israeli Conflict*, 305.

potential influence on readers. Editors chose the placement of a newspaper article, the headline, and how long a story would run. The role of the newspaper editor in creating public discourse cannot be overstated. As explained by David Manning White in 1950, news was not simply printed based on relative importance to the world or the city, but rather it was handpicked by newspaper editors who decided what was important and how news would be conveyed to their readers. A local newspaper editor sifted through hundreds of articles that entered a newspaper office through a wire service such as the Associated Press or United Press and decided which articles would be printed, where they would be placed, and what the headlines would be. Therefore, the body of articles could appear exactly the same across several newspapers, but with different headlines, or one article might run on the front page of a certain newspaper, while in a different paper the same article might be buried on page twelve.²⁴

In 1950, White studied one anonymous editor whom he saw as being typical of most editors in cities of over 100,000 people. The study showed how casually the editor might throw away a potential story based on whether he (generally a middle-aged white man) found the article, “not interesting,” or “B.S.” or “out of good taste.” Additionally, White noted that the editor knew that he must be keenly aware of his readership and would consider his audience when picking articles to publish.²⁵ Therefore, White argued, newspapers are reflections of the society in which they are printed. Of course, these generally wealthy, white male editors did not reflect all of their readership, but in a time before multiple news outlet options in television and online, newspaper editors had the power to shape much of the discourse surrounding major news.

²⁴David Manning White, “The ‘Gate Keeper’: A Case Study in the Selection of News,” *Journalism and Mass Communication Quarterly* 27, no. 4 (1950): 383-384.

²⁵ White, “The ‘Gate Keeper,’” 385-390.

In the 1942 article “The Role of the Weekly Newspaper,” Charles E. Rogers explained how the weekly local newspaper reflected its readership and the power of the editor. Small papers relied on local advertising from their towns, and therefore were wary of rocking the boat on major issues. These papers usually reported on birthdays, deaths, schools, or local crime. Rogers said “[the editor’s] paper literally personifies him. Whatever he prints, and especially that which he emphasizes in print, his readers take as bearing his approval.”²⁶ At the start of the twentieth century, small towns may have had four or five papers, but by the 1940s, competition and expenses had limited local papers to one or two. Rogers quoted several academics who concluded that the local newspaper was the main source of what he termed “trustworthy” information for residents. Since the paper depended on local advertising, it also was a place in which newspapers had to print articles that would be popular in the town to ensure continual funding.²⁷

Louisiana has three distinct cultures in the northern, central, and southern parts of the state. In the central and southwestern region of the state are the French Acadians- the Cajuns- who originally migrated from Canada in the eighteenth century. This group was largely Catholic.²⁸ The demographics of the northern part of the state reflect more typical Southern culture; people are Southern Baptist and live in rural areas. The southeastern area of Louisiana, where New Orleans is located, is more racially and ethnically diverse and urban. In 1948, the port city of New Orleans with its reputation as a haven for vice and luxury was one of the largest

²⁶Charles E. Rogers, “The Role of the Weekly Newspaper,” *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 219 (1942): 152.

²⁷Rogers, “The Role of the Weekly Newspaper,” 155-156.

²⁸Emily Ford and Barry Stiefel, *The Jews of New Orleans and the Mississippi Delta: A History of Life and Community Along the Bayou* (Charleston, SC: The History Press, 2012), 25. Joey Gray Taylor, *Louisiana: A History* (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 1984), 25.

cities in the South.²⁹ In May 1948, Louisiana elected governor Earl Long, brother of the controversial, Huey P. Long. The Long brothers were Democrats, but many white Louisianans in 1948 considered themselves “Dixiecrats” southern Democrats that advocated states rights and local control over racial integration policies.³⁰ Therefore, Louisiana was relatively isolated in its politics compared to the rest of the United States, especially from New York, Boston, or Chicago where many of the major national newspapers were published.

Many of the regional papers in this study included editorials from popular international journalists like Dewitt Mackenzie or James Reston whose articles also appear in major national publications. Additionally, these papers included editorials from the newspaper staff which allows for a localized understanding of opinions. In a study of public opinion of Zionism around the world, the British embassy issued a statement which said, “In the south [of the United States] the interest [in Palestine] is very small- there was, for example, no editorial on the subject in New Orleans newspapers over a period of eighteen months.” This shows that even government officials outside of the United States considered New Orleans newspapers to be worthy of study in regard to the Arab-Israeli conflict.³¹ Papers outside of cosmopolitan New Orleans need to be examined because it reveals how rural Louisianans understood complicated world issues. According to Alfred Hero Jr., “As in most fields of world affairs, the Southern public has from the beginning been less informed than the rest of the country on most aspects of the U.N. and its activities.”³² It is therefore crucial to understand the information Southerners did receive which can explain their attitudes. Studies of other states will need to be completed to fully understand

²⁹Joey Gray Taylor, *Louisiana: A History* (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 1984), 62-63.

³⁰*Ibid.*, 169.

³¹Quoted in Grose, *Israel in the Mind of America*, 213.

³²Alfred O. Hero Jr., *The Southerner and World Affairs* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1965): 224. Hero studied fifty newspapers in his book, four of which are in this thesis.

southern attitudes overall towards the Arab-Israeli conflict; however, Louisiana is an excellent starting point because it represented many different Southern ways of life.

History of Jewish and Arab Louisianans

In researching public discourse on the Arab-Israeli War, it is necessary to understand the history of both the Jewish and Arab population in Louisiana to determine their influence on their neighbor's opinions. New Orleans laws banned Judaism and all other religions other than Catholicism under the Code Noir of 1724 and later Spanish rule, although records show there may have been at least a few Jews doing business in the city, probably concealing their religion.³³ Once Louisiana became a part of the United States in 1812, Central European Jews, especially from German territories, sought to escape persecution in their home countries by fleeing to cities like New Orleans. In several European states, laws prohibited the Jewish population from owning land, so they did not have the agricultural skills of other immigrant groups. This was an advantage, because with slavery in Louisiana, agricultural labor was not in demand, and therefore the Jewish people who lived in New Orleans or Baton Rouge started businesses, usually begun through peddling.³⁴ By the mid-nineteenth century, there existed an established Jewish community and business area in the French Quarter, as well as several Jewish congregations.³⁵

Jews in the South in the nineteenth century experienced episodes of anti-Semitism. During the Confederate era, when a blockade by the North forced peddlers to raise prices, southerners blamed Jewish sellers. Confederate leaders in the government and army were vocally

³³Ford and Stiefel, *The Jews of New Orleans and the Mississippi Delta*, 16-22.

³⁴*Ibid.*, 26.

³⁵*Ibid.*, 52.

anti-Semitic and feared foreign Jews were not committed to the Confederacy.³⁶ In the early twentieth century, Jews in rural southern areas were victims of attacks by poor farmers who blamed Jewish businessmen and other minorities for the farmers impoverishment.³⁷ However, according to Peter Adams, despite these instances of anti-Semitism, most Southerners were welcoming of Jewish people especially because of their status as a “biblical people.”³⁸ The secretary of war during the Confederacy, Judah P. Benjamin, was a Jewish man who lived in New Orleans. Although he was never outspoken about his religion, his status shows that Southerners accepted a Jewish person in a position of power in their government.³⁹

In the late 1800’s, Sicily Island, Louisiana, had been a proposed destination for the Jewish homeland until settlers realized the potential for destruction by flooding from the Mississippi.⁴⁰ Lee Shai Weissbach wrote that Reform Jews tended to dominate the congregations in the southern states until around the 1900’s when more Orthodox Eastern European Jews began to increasingly immigrate into the United States, moving into small southern towns. For example, by 1927, the Jewish population of Monroe, Louisiana, jumped from 100 to 500 because of this Eastern European immigration. This is useful data because Eastern European immigrants tended to be Zionists, while their Central European Reform Jewish counterparts were less likely to be supporters of an Israeli state.⁴¹ Despite the Eastern European Jewish immigration, their

³⁶Peter Adams, *Politics, Faith, and the Making of American Judaism* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2014), 66-68.

³⁷Ford and Stiefel, *The Jews of New Orleans and the Mississippi Delta*, ” 86.

³⁸Adams, *Politics, Faith, and the Making of American Judaism*, 73.

³⁹Richard S. Tedlow, “Judah P. Benjamin,” in *Turn to the South: Essays on Southern Jewry*, eds. Nathan M. Kaganoff and Melvin I. Urofsky (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 1979), 44-54.

⁴⁰Eli N. Evans, *The Provincials: A Personal History of Jews in the South* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2005), 98.

⁴¹ Lee Shai Weissbach, “East European Immigrants and the Image of Jews in the Small-Town South,” *American Jewish History* 85, no. 3 (1997): 233-248.

influence on their southern cities did not last. Reform Temples opened their doors to Orthodox Jews, which led to the closure of Orthodox Temples that could not keep a full congregation. Families who were Orthodox found it too difficult to stay in small towns of the South, and those who stayed abandoned many of their practices within just one generation.⁴² Reform Judaism was especially strong in New Orleans. After WWII, the Reform congregations only allowed five Jewish refugee families to settle in New Orleans per month in order to maintain the assimilated status Jews had in the city. According to Lawrence Powell, "...this outward-looking community cared less for preserving a separate Jewish identity than achieving social acceptance in the wider world."⁴³

During the WWII years, non-Zionists in the Reform synagogues across the South began organizing under the philosophy "We dissent from all those related doctrines that stress the racialism, the nationalism, and theoretical homelessness of Jews."⁴⁴ Alfred Hero Jr. interviewed dozens of Jewish people in different southern states and concluded "A considerable minority of the Southern-born consultants apparently believed that the Israelis had not been candid on some of their policies and disagreements with the Arabs and that they had been partly responsible for border and other difficulties."⁴⁵ While Jewish people in the South debated whether Palestine should become an Israeli state, non-Jewish people were more likely to support Israeli statehood. Eli Evans speculates several reasons why many non-Jewish Southerners were so accepting of Israel. Perhaps it was the ideal of "toughness" that the Israelis exuded, or it was for religious

⁴²Weissbach, "East European Immigrants and the Image of Jews in the Small-Town South," 248-260.

⁴³Lawrence Powell, *Troubled Memory: Anne Levy, the Holocaust, and David Duke's Louisiana* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2000), 367.

⁴⁴Evans, *The Provincials: A Personal History of Jews in the South*, 99. Evans is not a historian, but wrote his book based on his life as a Jewish person involved in politics of the South.

⁴⁵Alfred O. Hero Jr., *The Southerner and World Affairs*, 477.

reasons because the Bible suggests that Christ will return to Earth after the Jews return to Israel. Or, Evans suggests, it was because Israel was a story of Jewish people defeating brown-skinned Arabs.⁴⁶ Peter Grose proposes that the larger the concentration of Jewish people in a city, the more likely it was that non-Jewish residents would be anti-Semitic. Therefore, he suggests cities with fewer Jewish people, like many in Louisiana, would be less hostile to Jewish populations.⁴⁷

According to the Jewish Yearbook of 1948-1949, Louisiana's Jewish population was similar to other southern states. Most states below the Mason Dixon line had fewer than five cities with a population of more than 1,000 Jews. This number is in contrast to states like New York, New Jersey, and Pennsylvania with more than eighteen cities with significant numbers of Jewish residents.⁴⁸ In 1948, Jewish people accounted for 1.5% of the New Orleans population. New Orleans and Shreveport were the only cities in Louisiana that had a population of more than 1,000 Jewish people.⁴⁹ In Louisiana, Jewish people tended to stay in cities for business and Baton Rouge was home to a large Jewish population as well.⁵⁰

Many Arabs in Louisiana in 1948 had immigrated years before the Arab-Israeli War. Before WWII, most Arabs who immigrated to the United States were Lebanese and Syrian Christians. These early immigrants might not have referred to themselves as Arabs, because, as Hatem Hussaini has argued, before early 1900s European intervention into the Middle East,

⁴⁶Evans, *The Provincials: A Personal History of Jews in the South*, 106. More about Jewish relations with African Americans which is also crucial in understanding Southern attitudes can be found in Chapter 19 of Evans' book.

⁴⁷Grose, *Israel in the Mind of America*, 214.

⁴⁸The American Jewish Committee, *American Jewish Year Book: 1948-1949*, The Jewish Publication Society of America (Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, 1949), 690.

⁴⁹Ford and Stiefel, *The Jews of New Orleans and the Mississippi Delta*, 100. The American Jewish Committee, *American Jewish Year Book: 1948-1949*, The Jewish Publication Society of America, (Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, 1949), 670.

⁵⁰ Ford and Stiefel, *The Jews of New Orleans and the Mississippi Delta*, 130.

“there was no such phenomenon as ‘Arab nationalism.’”⁵¹ Early twentieth century immigrants were poor peasants traveling to the United States for better jobs. If they were Muslim, they were more likely to face discrimination because Americans were little exposed to their religion.⁵² Like Jews in Louisiana, early Arab immigrants survived from peddling and making connections to open their own businesses. According to Alixa Naff, before 1948, most Americans had few prejudices against Arab immigrants, probably because such immigrants were widely dispersed.⁵³ These early immigrants stressed assimilation into American culture. Even in their small social organizations throughout the United States, they rarely discussed or joined together on Middle Eastern issues like the Arab-Israeli conflict.⁵⁴ Naff wrote, “If political and economic events had not reactivated Arab immigration [post 1967] and an interest in Arab culture, Syrian-Americans might have assimilated themselves out of existence.”⁵⁵

In the late nineteenth century many Syrian immigrants had entered the United States through New Orleans because it was a major port of entry typically cheaper than New York. However, those who entered through New Orleans later traveled to all corners of the country to settle down.⁵⁶ It is unclear why Louisiana became an eventual destination for Lebanese

⁵¹Hatem I. Hussaini, “The Impact of the Arab-Israeli Conflict on Arab Communities in the United States,” in *Settler Regimes in Africa and the Arab World: The Illusion of Endurance*, eds. Ibrahim Abu-Lughod and Baha Abu-Lughod (Wilmette, IL: The Medina University Press International, 1974), 202. After 1945 until the 1967 War, most immigrants were Muslim Palestinians fleeing the Arab-Israeli conflict.

⁵²Yvonne Haddad, “Arab Muslims and Islamic Institutions in America: Adaptation and Reform,” in *Arabs in the New World: Studies on Arab-American Communities*, eds. Sameer Y. Abraham and Nabeel Abraham (Detroit: Wayne State University Center for Urban Studies, 1983), 65.

⁵³Alix Naff, “Arabs in America: A Historical Overview,” in *Arabs in the New World: Studies on Arab-American Communities*, eds. Sameer Y. Abraham and Nabeel Abraham (Detroit: Wayne State University Center for Urban Studies, 1983), 18. In Birmingham, Alabama during the heyday of the KKK in the 1920’s Lebanese immigrants were targeted both for being “colored” and for being Catholic. See Alan Dehmer “The Politics of Survival,” in *Taking Root, Bearing Fruit: The Arab-American Experience*, ed. James Zogby (Washington: Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee, 1992), 37.

⁵⁴Hussaini, “The Impact of the Arab-Israeli Conflict on Arab Communities in the United States,” 204.

⁵⁵Alix Naff, *Becoming American: The Early Arab Immigrant Experience* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1985), 330.

⁵⁶Naff, *Becoming American*, 81.

immigrants who entered through New York. Historians have speculated one reason may be related to the French culture in southern Louisiana, as France had controlled Lebanon from 1920 to WWII and many immigrants spoke French along with Arabic. Another theory is that the southern states offered a climate similar to Lebanon.⁵⁷ According to Yvonne Nasser Saloom and I. Bruce Turner, large populations of Lebanese immigrants had settled in New Orleans, Baton Rouge, Opelousas, and Crowley. Another city popular with immigrants was Donaldsonville, in which its native residents were initially suspicious of their new Arab neighbors until they understood that they, too, were Christian.⁵⁸ Many Lebanese Christian immigrants changed their names to sound more European, and usually became fully assimilated into American culture.⁵⁹ Thus pre-WWII many of the Louisiana cities covered in this paper were not unexposed to a Middle Eastern population, though a Muslim population was less common. For the few Muslims who did immigrate in the early years, it was almost impossible to practice their religion in a conspicuous manner. Practically no mosques existed in the United States before 1948, so prayer and holidays would be in the home, perhaps with a small group of people. Usually though, with new jobs in factories or as peddlers constantly on the road, it was not feasible to pray as much as the Quran required or to fast for long periods of time.⁶⁰

Post-WWII Middle Eastern immigrants differed from their predecessors. They were relatively better educated, wealthier, and were more likely to know English and be familiar with

⁵⁷May Ahdab-Yehia, "The Lebanese Maronites: Patterns of Continuity and Change," in *Arabs in the New World: Studies on Arab-American Communities*, eds. Sameer Y. Abraham and Nabeel Abraham (Detroit: Wayne State University Center for Urban Studies, 1983): 154.

⁵⁸Yvonne Nasser Saloom and I. Bruce Turner, "Roots of the Cedar: The Lebanese Heritage in Louisiana," *Folklife in Louisiana: Louisiana's Living Traditions*, summer 1994, accessed October 18, 2018, http://www.louisianafolklife.org/LT/Articles_Essays/lebanese.html#tab4

⁵⁹May Ahdab-Yehia, "The Lebanese Maronites: Patterns of Continuity and Change," 157-158.

⁶⁰Naff, *Becoming American*, 299-300.

Western customs. These immigrants usually considered themselves to be Arabs and, for these Muslim immigrants, being able to practice their religion was important despite the discrimination they might face.⁶¹ Hussaini speculates that these later immigrants, who moved to the United States between 1945 and 1967, particularly avoided political involvement because they recognized the lack of representation in the American government. In their home countries they likely faced persecution for speaking out against the government and, unfamiliar with America's freedom of speech, they felt safer not being politically active.⁶²

A small Arab population in a city meant that the only exposure of a Louisiana community to Arab people and culture would be through popular culture. Films between the 1920s and 1950s depicted Arabs through a stereotypical and Orientalist lens as magical and exotic; women were veiled belly dancers, and men were bumbling criminals that the Western character must defeat.⁶³ Other movies showed Arabs attacking Christians and capturing American girls, which not only made Arabs seem cruel, but also promoted the myth that all Arabs are Muslims, and hate American values.⁶⁴ Jack Shaheen, author of *Reel Bad Arabs*, wrote that these stereotypical images of Arab people only intensified after the 1948 War.⁶⁵ Douglas Little explains how other popular media portrayed Palestinians as out of touch with modernity and radically obsessed with

⁶¹Haddad, "Arab Muslims and Islamic Institutions in America: Adaptation and Reform," 67, 76.

⁶²Hussaini, "The Impact of the Arab-Israeli Conflict on Arab Communities in the United States," 204. There are books which debate Israeli or Zionist influence in the United States government, including: John Mearsheimer and Stephen Walt, *The Israel Lobby and US Foreign Policy* (New York: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 2007), and Abraham H. Foxman, *The Deadliest Lies: The Israel Lobby and the Myth of Jewish Control* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2007).

⁶³Suliman Arti, "The Evolution of Hollywood's Arabs before 9/11: The Relationship Between Political Events and the Notion of 'Otherness,'" *Journal of the MeCCSA Postgraduate Network* 1 no. 2 (2007): 5-6.

⁶⁴Jack G. Shaheen. "Reel Bad Arabs: How Hollywood Vilifies a People," *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 558 (2003): 179.

⁶⁵Shaheen. "Reel Bad Arabs: How Hollywood Vilifies a People," 188. Shaheen speculated several reasons why this may be; the political agenda of the filmmaker, the State Department's role in green-lighting controversial films, or that orientalist stereotypes made conflicts like the Arab-Israeli War easier to understand for outsiders, like Americans.

Islam.⁶⁶ With so few Arabs living in the southern states, many American Southerners may have learned about the Middle East from these types of films and magazines, leading them to draw negative conclusions about the Palestinians who were fighting to keep their homes. These Orientalist sentiments were still superficial. Some newspapers editorials did describe Palestine as a backwards region which needed Jewish assistance in modernization. However, the newspapers did not completely vilify the Palestinians, and invited readers to question who had the rights to Palestine.

Unestablished Discourse

In May 14 to May 31, 1948 newspapers in Louisiana highlighted Palestinian attacks and used Orientalist descriptions to explain the Arabs' reasons for war. One editorial read "It [Palestine] is largely undeveloped, and progress must be achieved by sacrifice and sweat of the brow."⁶⁷ Another editorial said "The Arab armies so far have been little more than disorganized mobs with large components of bandits, adventurers, and totally untrained village volunteers."⁶⁸ A third explained, "The Arabs in Palestine, a more backwards people and on a lower cultural and political level, had neither organization, nor leadership."⁶⁹ As Shukri Salameh described in his *New Orleans States* interview, one predominant editorial narrative framed the Jews as a civilizing force in the area. Newspapers saw the Israelis as a part of modern Europe, while the Palestinians were a backward group stalling the progress of the state. One *New Orleans States*

⁶⁶Douglas Little, *American Orientalism* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004), 18-25. Little includes examples of Orientalism particularly in *National Geographic*.

⁶⁷Dewitt Mackenzie, "International Affairs," *State Times Advocate* (Baton Rouge, Louisiana), May 14, 1948.

⁶⁸"By Force of Arms," *Morning Advocate* (Baton Rouge, Louisiana), May 15, 1948.

⁶⁹The same article appeared in two papers. James Marlow, "The Nation Today: Jewish-Arab War," *Crowley Daily Signal* (Crowley, Louisiana), May 24, 1948 and James Marlow, "Events in Palestine War to Date Recapitulated," *Alexandria Daily Town Talk* (Alexandria, Louisiana), May 24, 1948.

article described the “sandy waste and malaria swampland” of Palestine that had been transformed by Jewish “pioneers” who had built schools, roads, and planted trees. The editorial claimed this was all possible without displacing any Arabs.⁷⁰ It was a common myth for Israelis to claim the Negev Desert was empty, and therefore no harm had been done when they moved into this area. However, 100,000 Bedouins had occupied the Negev and were almost all forcibly removed or fled their homes during the war.⁷¹ This misrepresentation is revealed in a map. An illustration (Fig. 3) of Israel that ran in the *New Orleans States* appears to be simply a map of the U.N. partition plan. Symbols dot the map to indicate large concentrations of either Jews or Arabs. This map highlights dense populations of Jews in areas near Tel-Aviv, Jerusalem, and Haifa. However, because the symbols only represent populations of 20,000 or larger, the map fails to accurately illustrate the dispersed population of Arabs throughout the state, even though the key to the left of the map shows how many more Arabs were in the area compared to Jews. Again, on the map, the Negev Desert is completely devoid of any symbols, which serves to promote the myth of an empty land waiting to be cultivated.⁷²

⁷⁰“Jews fighting to Hold on to New State of Israel,” *New Orleans States* (New Orleans: Louisiana), May 20, 1948.

⁷¹Gary Fields, “Chapter 7,” *Enclosure Palestinian Landscapes in a Historical Mirror* (Oakland: University of California Press, 2017).

⁷²“The Land of Israel,” *New Orleans States* (New Orleans: Louisiana), May 22, 1948.

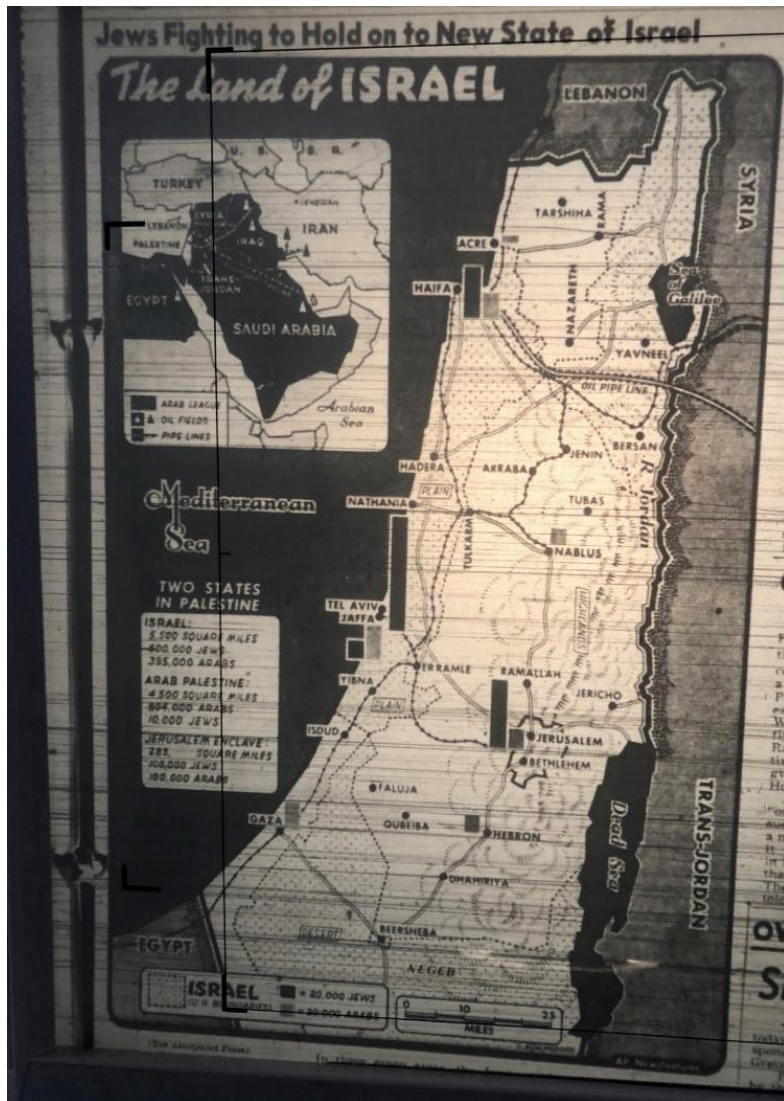


Figure 3

One editorial explained the differences between the Jewish and Arab armies in terms of their extremism. The editorial said “The armies on both sides will be made up of religious fanatics. The Arabs are indifferent to death- partly because of the lovely paradise they are promised after death.”⁷³ This sentence shows the Orientalist understanding of Middle Eastern culture that *Times Picayune* readers may have had. First, it implies all Arabs are Muslims, as one can assume the editorial author was referring to the paradise after death in some understandings

⁷³William McGaffin, “Feuds Stop Arab Army Unity,” *Times Picayune* (New Orleans, Louisiana), May 15, 1948.

of Islam. Second, it reinforces Orientalist attitudes, which implied that Muslims did not fear death because after death they would become martyrs and earn luxurious prizes in heaven. This helped to distance Muslims from the Christian Southerners who were reading the *Times Picayune*.

In a front-page article in the Baton Rouge *State Times Advocate*, the headline read “Arab Forces Pound at Jewish positions in Jerusalem Battle.”⁷⁴ While the headline only mentioned an Arab attack, half of the article was about Israeli attacks. For those readers only scanning headlines, this would have made it seem as if the Arabs were the only side attacking. Using the phrase “pound at Jewish positions” also makes the Israelis seem defenseless against the violent Arabs. Newspapers even blamed Arabs for events out of their control. On May 22, 1948, the *Monroe Morning World* stated that a member of an Arab army shot a United States peacemaker, and the Haganah, the Jewish defense force, was able to save his life. The *Shreveport Times* told this story a little differently. In the Shreveport paper, the story read that while the Jewish army claimed the shooter had been Arab, the shooter, whether Arab or Jewish, remained unidentified.⁷⁵ The *Monroe Morning World* ran the story with an Arab shooter, even though the nationality of the shooter had been unconfirmed. By claiming the shooter was Arab, it portrayed all Arabs as disrupting the peace-process. Juxtaposing the Arab shooter to the Jewish Haganah members that tried to save the peacemaker’s life reinforced the Israeli argument that the Arabs were the side who were halting the ability to make peace. The *Monroe Morning World* also tended to depict the Israelis as the underdogs in the conflict. The May 15, 1948, front page

⁷⁴“Arab Forces Pound at Jewish Positions in Jerusalem Battle,” *State Times Advocate* (Baton Rouge, Louisiana), May 27, 1948.

⁷⁵“Arabs Hem Jewish Jerusalem Forces,” *The Monroe Morning World* (Monroe, Louisiana), May 22, 1948. “US Consul Wounded in Jerusalem,” *The Shreveport Times* (Shreveport, Louisiana), May 23, 1948.

headline read, “Arabian Forces Converge Upon Tiny Zionist Land.”⁷⁶ In this way the paper created a helpless Israel deserving of American support.

Image captions also changed among papers and worked to diminish the legitimacy of the Arab armies. One example is an image of barbed wire that appeared in the first few pages of *The Shreveport Times*, *The Crowley Daily Signal*, and *The Times Picayune*. The description of the image is similar in all newspapers. All of the papers list the location of the image in internationally-held Jerusalem and the reason for the barbed wire, which was to keep Arabs and Jews apart after the mandate ended. However, a major difference is an additional sentence in the *Times Picayune*: “Today the old city of Jerusalem appears in imminent danger of being wrested from its Jewish defenders by King Abdullah’s desert legion.”⁷⁷ Thus the state of Israel is associated with the Biblical Jerusalem and ownership of the city by the Jews is justified. Abdullah’s Arab Legion is reduced to an Orientalist nickname associating them with the undeveloped desert, and the Arabs are made to be the aggressors.

Different newspapers also used front page space in different ways. On May 18 the *Times Picayune* featured the article “Jews Drown 500 Arabs in Attack” at the top of their front-page.⁷⁸ The same day the *Shreveport Times* also had a front-page article “Jews Trap 4,000 in Arab City.”⁷⁹ By comparing the size of the headlines, it is obvious the *Shreveport Times* found the Israeli attack to be more significant to its readers than the *Times Picayune* did. The Shreveport

⁷⁶“Arabian Forces Converge Upon Tiny Zionist Land,” *The Monroe Morning World* (Monroe, Louisiana), May 15, 1948.

⁷⁷“Barbed Wire Alley,” *The Crowley Daily Signal* (Crowley, Louisiana), May 20, 1948; “Barbed Wire Covers and Entire Roadway in Jerusalem,” *The Times Picayune* (New Orleans: Louisiana), May 20, 1948; “Barbed Wire Alley,” *The Shreveport Times* (Shreveport, Louisiana), May 21, 1948.

⁷⁸“Jews Drown 500 Arabs in Attack,” *Times Picayune* (New Orleans, Louisiana), May 18, 1948.

⁷⁹“Jews Trap 4,000 in Arab City,” *Shreveport Times* (Shreveport, Louisiana), May 18, 1948.

editors may have felt more comfortable condemning the Israelis. The *Alexandria Daily Town Talk* also ran a front-page article about the drowning and ensured readers understood the biblical connection, “The parallel between this incident and that recorded in the Bible when the Egyptians pursuing Moses were drowned in the Red Sea were not overlooked here.”⁸⁰ This affirms the Israelis right to have drowned the Arabs, because like the Egyptian enslavers, the Arab armies were preventing the Israelis from access to “their own” state. Moreover, the dam was hydroelectric, and Israelis controlled the technology of the dam, while the Arabs were its victims. This reinforces the perception that the Israelis were modern while the Arab Palestinians were not.

Journalists use emotion to connect with their readers. A front-page article in the *Baton Rouge Morning Advocate* on May 30, 1948 conveyed this. The article described the Arabs winning Jerusalem and how the Arab armies forced the Jewish residents to leave. “From midnight to dusk the old, the sick, and the weary trailed out of the Jewish quarter...Many cheeks were wet. Heads were bowed. Some of those in the dreary procession tripped over stones.... Only the property goes to the conqueror.”⁸¹ Such a gloomy passage was not typical of other front-page accounts. This article struck an emotional chord to encourage readers to feel sorrow for Israelis and anger towards the Arab armies.

⁸⁰“Jerusalem Besieged by Arabs; Jews Take Walled City of Acre,” *Alexandria Daily Town Talk* (Alexandria, Louisiana), May 18, 1948.

⁸¹“1000 Leave Walled City of Jerusalem,” *Morning Advocate* (Baton Rouge, Louisiana), May 30, 1948.



Figure 4

It was not only the Arabs who faced negative press. In an introduction to the state of affairs in the 1948 War, the *Church Point News* began with an opinion article on the background of world Jewry. The article began by citing historian Arnold Toynbee, who "...types the Jews as a fossilized remnant of an extinct civilization." The article continued,

He meant that because of their single-minded, faultless devotion to Moses and their strict adherence to ancestral customs, the Jews, descending through history as a compact group, have retained most of their original characteristics which marked them when they first emerged as part of the Syriac civilization thousands of years before Christ. They are recognized today as being in but not of the societies in which they appear on every portion of the globe. They almost invariably form a minority group, and as such they have been targets for endless persecution.⁸²

This description suggests that Jewish people were at fault for their persecution because of their refusal to assimilate to the dominant culture. This anti-Semitic rhetoric is similar to

⁸²Bill Schoentgen, "Impulse to Zion," *Church Point News* (Church Point, Louisiana), June 1, 1948. *Church Point News* was a weekly publication with only a small international section that barely mentioned Palestine or Israel in May 1948. I found it appropriate to include the June 1st issue in this thesis because it had such revealing articles.

Orientalist comments about Arab people. The Church Point article exemplifies why studying rural newspapers is crucial in understanding public discourse. The residents of the town were trying to make sense of a complicated situation involving groups of people unlike themselves. Newspaper editors turned to stereotypes to explain the situation of the Israelis, and this type of rhetoric became the discourse rural residents used to discuss the war. This is not meant to fault the residents of small towns like Church Point. Instead, it shows how newspaper editors in 1948 controlled public discourse and how limited choices in news sources can shape readers attitudes. The *Church Point Times* includes a note at the top of the international section which reinforces the role of the editor. The note says, “When opinions are expressed in these columns they are those of Western Newspaper Union’s news analysts and not necessarily of this paper.”⁸³ Not only does this mean that the article was spread to other papers, but the note also does not excuse the *Church Point* editor from his responsibility in publishing it. Church Point was a tiny town of only a few thousand outside of Lafayette in 1948, and may not reflect the attitudes of all Louisianans, especially those in the big cities. However, anti-Semitism existed in Louisiana and, although such direct language was not used in larger papers, there were other subtleties in those larger newspapers which showed Louisianans considered both the Jews of Israel and the Arabs of Palestine to be undesirable.

Similarly to articles which vilified Arab armies, some articles described the Jewish political leadership and military organization as terrorists. One *Opelousas Daily Signal* article read “The best [the] average American knows about the new country is that is was largely established by Jewish terrorist bands, and that it has recognized a famous terrorist group as the

⁸³*Church Point News* (Church Point, Louisiana), June 1, 1948.

nucleus of its standing army.”⁸⁴ A similar *Times Picayune* article title warned that “All of Palestine [is] Stern Gang Goal.”⁸⁵ The article explained that the Stern Gang was a terrorist organization, and they were coming out from underground to take over the Israeli government if the current politicians ended up being too weak. Associating the Israeli government with terrorist organizations made it seem violent and not to be trusted by American readers. Like the emotional article about Jews leaving Jerusalem, the *Morning Advocate* ran a front-page article about Arabs leaving northern border towns after the Israeli armies defeated the armies of Lebanon and Syria. The journalist Eliov Simon wrote “Indeed, I saw few Arab civilians. Most of them had fled, leaving their villages dotting the valley on the east and the mountains farther north intact.... It is a strange experience for a native Palestinian to see the landmarks and not the faces.”⁸⁶ Although less sensitive than the other May 30 *Morning Advocate* article, this passage acknowledged that the war affected both Jewish and Arab families, and that both sides had committed horrible acts.

Opinions of religious leaders that newspapers printed also may have contributed to the feelings of Louisianans towards Israel. The *Shreveport Times*, the *Monroe Morning Advocate*, the Baton Rouge *Morning Advocate*, and the New Orleans *Times Picayune* all printed the same or similar articles about the Southern Baptist Convention. The convention did not support Truman on his recognition of Israel.⁸⁷ One leader of the convention stated, “this resolution goes into a purely political matter which we had better let alone.”⁸⁸ Religion was important to most

⁸⁴“Israelis Give up Jerusalem,” *Opelousas Daily Signal* (Opelousas, Louisiana), May 28, 1948.

⁸⁵“All of Palestine Stern Gang Goal,” *Times Picayune* (New Orleans, Louisiana), May 16, 1948.

⁸⁶Eliov Simon, “Israeli Forces Win the First Stable Frontier,” *Morning Advocate* (Baton Rouge, Louisiana), May 30, 1948.

⁸⁷Baptist Meet Fails to Back Israel Stand,” *The Shreveport Times* (Shreveport, Louisiana), May 20, 1948; “Baptists Reject Vote for Truman,” *Monroe Morning World* (Monroe, Louisiana), May 20, 1948; “Southern Baptists Reject Move to Commend Truman,” *Morning Advocate* (Baton Rouge, Louisiana), May 20, 1948; “Baptists Again Frown on UMT,” *Times Picayune* (New Orleans, Louisiana), May 22, 1948.

⁸⁸“Southern Baptists Reject Move to Commend Truman,” *Morning Advocate* (Baton Rouge, Louisiana), May 20, 1948.

Louisianans in 1948, and it is significant that a major Christian religious organization did not officially support the new Jewish state. This may have caused readers to hesitate in their own support of the Israelis over the Arabs. While the 1948 Southern Baptist Convention was held in Memphis, Louisiana was no stranger to the convention having hosted it five times since its inception.⁸⁹ It is likely that many Louisianans would have taken the position of the 1948 Convention seriously, and it also shows that New Orleans was a population center which deserves to be studied in the context of public discourse of the Arab and Israeli conflict. These newspaper articles reveal that Louisiana papers had not staked out firm positions in favor of either the Israelis nor the Arabs in the early weeks of the war in 1948.

Silence of the Holocaust in Louisiana Newspapers

Discussion of World War II and the Holocaust itself, was not a strong theme in newspaper coverage of the Arab-Israeli conflict in 1948. Perhaps if more Louisianans were familiar with the Holocaust, their views about the Israeli state would have been firmer. By 1948 most Americans were aware of the deadly concentration camps that Nazis used during WWII. However, Americans did not distinguish two separate events with the Jewish Holocaust and WWII.⁹⁰ Peter Novick explains this and other complicated aspects of Holocaust memory in his book *The Holocaust in American Life*. Anti-Semitism existed in different forms and to different degrees in the United States, and news of Jewish persecution might not have rallied the American people to fight the Nazis. Instead, American media described the victims of the Nazi regime as political prisoners, and it was rarely written that Jews were the main target. Throughout the war, American newspapers struggled to get accurate information about what was

⁸⁹Southern Baptist Historical Library and Archives, 2016, accessed February 6, 2019, sbhla.org.

⁹⁰Peter Novick, *The Holocaust in American Life* (Boston: Mariner Books, 1999), 20-21.

happening in Nazi Germany. Most of the information came from Soviet sources, or escaped prisoners, and was rarely reported firsthand by journalists. When papers did print stories about the concentration camps, they were often decried so shocking that other newspapers accused them of exaggerating, and readers were unlikely to believe the articles.⁹¹ Articles about Nazis persecution of “political prisoners” were printed throughout the war, and while some of these articles headlined a paper, they were overshadowed in the following days by military matters.⁹²

An executive order made by President Truman in December 1945 made persons displaced by WWII the priority when filling the European immigrant quota. Jewish American groups were unable to provide much aid for Jewish victims of the Holocaust. This may have been because of fear of persecution in the United States, or because the war was so large that their help seemed worthless to victims.⁹³ Few Christian social organizations helped Jewish displaced persons. In 1948 Congress passed a bill allowing for more European immigration but included provisions that barred most Jews from entry. Most of the 40,000 Holocaust survivors that were allowed to enter the country were forced to seek employment for which they were often overqualified. Many stayed in New York or other areas with large Jewish populations to form bonds with others in their neighborhoods.⁹⁴

As a result, many American Jews and Gentiles alike underestimated the scope and severity of the Holocaust. The large immigration of Jewish people into the United States had happened forty years previous to WWII, so many Jewish immigrants already living in the US

⁹¹Ibid., 25.

⁹²Ibid., 21-29.

⁹³Ibid., 32-45.

⁹⁴Leonard Dinnerstein and David M. Reimers, *The World Comes to America: Immigration to the United States Since 1945* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014): 4-7.

were more concerned with assimilating into American culture than asserting a connection to their home country in Europe. In the postwar era most Americans considered Jews to be “white” which allowed Jewish immigrants to have access to better opportunities than other immigrant groups and made it easier to assimilate.⁹⁵ After the war ended, Holocaust survivors who immigrated to the United States had trouble talking about their experiences. For some it was too traumatic, but others could not find anyone willing to listen to their horrific accounts.⁹⁶ By the Cold War, the American media compared Stalin and Hitler as totalitarian rulers who threw their dissenters into concentration camps. In 1948 former Nazis were allowed in the United States if their country was under Soviet control, and it was not long before Americans became more concerned about fighting the Soviets than learning about the crimes of Hitler’s followers.⁹⁷

During WWII, the Jewish Agency, the government for the settlements in Palestine before May 1948, debated how much money should be spent to save Jewish prisoners in Nazi territory. The British had issued a white paper in 1939 which limited Jewish immigration into Palestine. Since the Jewish Agency received its authority from the British government during the mandate period, David Ben-Gurion, the head of the agency, was strictly against illegal immigration into Palestine.⁹⁸ According to Tom Segev in *The Seventh Million*, by 1942 the Jewish Agency described the Holocaust as if it happened years before. This allowed the Jewish Agency to focus on nation building for Israel, instead of concentrating on Europe’s Jews. As was the case in American newspapers, Palestinians did not immediately believe Hebrew language papers that

⁹⁵Barry Trachtenberg, *The United States and the Nazi Holocaust: Race, Refuge, and Remembrance* (New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2018), 108.

⁹⁶Novick, *The Holocaust in American Life*, 83. Barry Trachtenberg, *The United States and the Nazi Holocaust: Race, Refuge, and Remembrance*, 113-114.

⁹⁷Novick, *The Holocaust in American Life*, 89-90.

⁹⁸Tom Segev, *The Seventh Million: The Israelis and the Holocaust* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1993), 41.

published articles about the concentration camps. Even when the Jewish Agency confirmed reports, the articles did not stay major news for long.⁹⁹

After the war, earlier Jewish immigrants into Palestine sometimes expressed distrust for new Holocaust refugees. Stigma surrounded the survivors. Palestinians Jews resented refugees because they survived while a Palestinian Jew's family member did not. Jewish Agency envoys sent into displaced persons (DP) camps worried about sending DPs to Israel because survivors were so traumatized by their experience in the camps that it could destroy Zionism.¹⁰⁰ Like survivors living in America, refugees in Palestine battled depression, anxiety, and fear of triggered memories. Extreme guilt plagued survivors who witnessed so many people die and who were accused of exaggerating or lying. The United States and the Jewish Agency both encouraged moving forward and building a future, rather than dwelling on the past.¹⁰¹ It was not until a series of events in Israel including: the Eichmann Trials of 1962, the 1967 War, and the 1973 Yom Kippur War that connections between Israel and the Holocaust came to be discussed more publicly. After these events the Holocaust took a more prominent place in the Israeli foundational narrative in which Nazis targeted Jewish people as a race, and Israel was considered to be created to save Jewish people from further persecution.¹⁰²

In 1948 Americans and Palestinians had not yet understood the emotional and physical damage that the Holocaust had created in Europe and among the survivors, that would become well known twenty years later. There is considerable silence about the Holocaust and the Jewish

⁹⁹Segev, *The Seventh Million*, 73-76.

¹⁰⁰*Ibid.*, 117-120.

¹⁰¹*Ibid.*, 155-160.

¹⁰²The publication of Anne Frank's *The Diary of a Young Girl* also helped Americans to empathize with Holocaust survivors. Peter Novick, *The Holocaust in American Life*, 149. Alan Mintz, *Popular Culture and the Shaping of Holocaust Memory in America* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2001), 13-23.

experience of WWII by Louisiana newspapers in May 1948, which probably underscores the period of uncertainty in Louisianans understanding of the Arab-Israeli conflict and the creation of the Jewish state. In the weeks following the Israeli declaration of independence, Jewish persecution in WWII was rarely used as a reason for the necessity to create Israel. Instead, most newspapers described the 2,000-year dream of Jewish people returning to their homeland, making a religious argument for Israel rather than referencing WWII.¹⁰³ One editorial in the *Baton Rouge State Times* did connect the need for Israel with the persecution of Jewish people in the Holocaust. This journalist wrote, “Still the little country does provide refuge for thousands of Jews who have been rendered homeless and set adrift by Hitlerian aggression.”¹⁰⁴ Another article which directly discussed Jewish persecution by the Nazis was in the *Church Point News*, “Since the war with Nazi attempts to obliterate German Jews completely and subsequent displacement of millions of European Jews, Zionism has been given a tremendous impetus.”¹⁰⁵ Most other newspapers wrote about Jewish Germans still in DP camps as displaced from war rather than Nazi persecution, and wrote about Jews immigrating to Israel as soldiers, instead of refugees seeking haven in Israel. Opelousas had a single mention of DP camps in the headline “Jewish Help Pours from German Camps.”¹⁰⁶ A similar headline appeared in the *Baton Rouge Morning Advocate* on May 16, “German DPs May Soon Leave for Israel Fighting,” and May 24, “Jews

¹⁰³“Bitter Fighting On: Jewish State is Born Today,” *Opelousas Daily Signal* (Opelousas, Louisiana), May 13, 1948; “Jewish State Set up in Palestine Bitter Fight for Jerusalem is On,” *Alexandria Daily Town Talk* (Alexandria, Louisiana), May 14, 1948; “Jewish State is Founded as Mandate Ends,” *Shreveport Times* (Shreveport, Louisiana), May 15, 1948; “Israel Invasion Told by Haganah,” *Times Picayune* (New Orleans, Louisiana), May 16, 1948.

¹⁰⁴Dewitt Mackenzie, “International Affairs,” *State Times Advocate* (Baton Rouge, Louisiana), May 14, 1948.

¹⁰⁵Bill Schoentgen, “Impulse to Zion,” *Church Point News* (Church Point, Louisiana), June 1, 1948.

¹⁰⁶“Jewish Helps Pours from German Camps,” *Opelousas Daily Signal* (Opelousas, Louisiana), May 16, 1948.

Leave Germany for Israel Fighting” and on page 18 of the *Times Picayune* “Volunteers off to Assist Israel.”¹⁰⁷ The *Morning Advocate* mentioned the camps again on May 26, when Israeli president Chaim Weizmann asked for money to help move people out of the DP camps into Israel.¹⁰⁸ All of these articles were short, and did not explain the context of which the people were displaced.

The rare times Hitler was mentioned in the first weeks of Israeli independence, it was to vilify the Arabs. In the *New Orleans States* an editorial claimed that the Grand Mufti of Jerusalem was on the payroll of both Hitler and the King of Trans-Jordan.¹⁰⁹ This not only disparages all Arabs for the Grand Mufti’s mistake, but also relates Hitler and King Abdullah as equals. A *Morning Advocate* editorial similarly discussed how, “...the same Arab leaders now threatening Palestine connived with the Nazis during the war.”¹¹⁰ This silence in Louisiana newspapers about the Holocaust reinforces Novick’s and Segev’s theses which state in both the United States and Israel, understanding of the Holocaust were not fully manifested, and the creation of Israel and the Nazi persecution of Jewish people was not yet connected.

Relationships of the US, USSR, and Great Britain

The United States, Soviet Union, and Great Britain disagreed on how to solve the Arab-Israeli conflict and it led to unexpected alliances in the United Nations. The United States and the Soviet Union both voted in favor of the UN partition plan for Palestine in November 1947,

¹⁰⁷“German DPs May Soon Leave for Israel Fighting,” *Morning Advocate* (Baton Rouge, Louisiana), May 16, 1948; “Jews Leave Germany for Israel Fighting,” *Morning Advocate* (Baton Rouge, Louisiana), May 24, 1948; “Volunteers off to Assist Israel,” *Times Picayune* (New Orleans, Louisiana), May 24, 1948.

¹⁰⁸“Israel Chief Hopeful of Ban Lift,” *Morning Advocate* (Baton Rouge, Louisiana), May 26, 1948.

¹⁰⁹C.L. Sulzberger, “War Between Jews, Arabs Triumph for Grand Mufti,” *New Orleans States* (New Orleans: Louisiana), May 19, 1948.

¹¹⁰Drew Pearson, “The Washington Merry-Go-Round,” *Morning Advocate* (Baton Rouge, Louisiana), May 14, 1948.

while Britain abstained from the vote. In the weeks following the vote of support, Truman's State Department bombarded him with requests, begging him to understand that partition would start a war in which the Soviets were likely to be involved. This pressure intensified after a communist coup in Czechoslovakia in February 1948 and culminated in Truman backing out of the partition plan and instead supporting trusteeship. Zionist leaders condemned Truman for supporting the Arabs, and the United Nations felt that Truman's reversal was his vote of no confidence in the infant international organization.¹¹¹ While the United States extended unofficial *de facto* recognition to Israel, the Soviet Union was the first state to offer *de jure* recognition, meaning the USSR legally recognized Israel.¹¹²

Britain had a special relationship with Trans-Jordan since the Arab Revolt during WWI. Britain trained Trans-Jordan's Arab Legion army, and a British commander, John Glubb, led the Arab Legion as it attacked Israel on May 15, 1948.¹¹³ Britain refused to recognize Israel as quickly as the US and USSR did because the United Nations did not designate whether the Arabs or the Israelis were the aggressors in the war. After the Arabs refused to sign a cease fire in the early days of the 1948 war, the US and USSR demanded that the United Nations act with force in the region to stop the war. However, the British UN delegation continually shot down this proposal and insisted on mediation to solve the conflict.

Despite the budding Cold War rivalry with the Soviets, the weeks after Israel declared independence was a period of uncertainty in which Americans read newspaper articles about the

¹¹¹Bruce Evensen, "Truman, Palestine, and the Cold War," *Middle Eastern Studies* 28, no. 1 (1992): 119-137.

¹¹²Jerome Slater, "The Superpowers and an Arab-Israeli Political Settlement: The Cold War Years," *Political Science Quarterly* 105 no. 4 (Winter 1990-1991): 562-563.

¹¹³Benny Morris, *1948 A History of the First Arab-Israeli War* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2008), 208.

cooperation between the USSR and the US and the refusal of Britain to agree to their terms. These articles were in contrast to a Cold War narrative pushed by the American government in which the USSR was America's enemy and Britain was its strongest ally. Several editorials did question whether Truman's quick recognition of Israel was only to beat Russia to the punch. Considering the United States had done almost nothing tangible in their support of Israel in the early weeks, journalists wondered whether the recognition was simply a Cold War strategy. A Baton Rouge *Morning Advocate* exemplified this when an article said "The official silence [from the State Department about the recognition] increased fairly well-founded suspicion that the United States' speedy recognition of the new state of Israel- 20 minutes after it came into being- was prompted primarily by fears that the Soviet Union might do it first."¹¹⁴ Other editorials wrote that the Soviets involvement in Israel was also Cold War related. An editorial from Chicago foreign news correspondent Nat Barrows printed in the *Times Picayune* said of Russian and US cooperation "But it's a fascinating commentary on the strangeness of our times that Russia alone had given support to Warren Austin [American UN delegate] in this issue here." Barrows later concluded "There is no question, in Western eyes, but that the Kremlin seeks to embarrass Britain in the Middle East and make capital trouble there. Russian support of US is to be seen merely as opportunistic."¹¹⁵ There was also fear that the Soviets may take the place of the British in a United States alliance. A *New Orleans States* article warned "There is keen anxiety in Western Europe to bring the earliest possible halt to the Middle East chaos. Otherwise,

¹¹⁴"Demand Made for US to Lift Arms Embargo to Palestine," *Morning Advocate* (Baton Rouge, Louisiana), May 15, 1948. Similar arguments are found in these articles: "US Recognizes New Zion State in Unexpected Move," *Monroe Morning World* (Monroe, Louisiana), May 14, 1948; "The Next Step," *Morning Advocate* (Baton Rouge, Louisiana), May 20, 1948; "Palestine Puzzle," *Times Picayune* (New Orleans, Louisiana), May 17, 1948; "Surprise Recognition Stuns UN," *Times Picayune* (New Orleans, Louisiana), May 15, 1948.

¹¹⁵Nat A. Barrows, "Arab-Israeli War Strains UN" *The Times Picayune* (New Orleans, Louisiana), May 22, 1948.

it is reasoned, a dangerous vacuum will be created which might suck the USSR into that tense area.”¹¹⁶ A *Shreveport Times* editorial was less concerned with Cold War approaches and read “Russia simply does not want the United States to be the lone guiding influence in handling problems of Palestine- and Arabian oil sources.”¹¹⁷ Russia knew the importance of Middle Eastern oil reserves and may have seen Israeli recognition as a way to both control oil for themselves, and gain influence in American circles.

Discourse about the United Nations

As the British, Soviets, and Americans collided in the United Nations, journalists wondered whether the UN would be strong enough to solve the Israeli-Palestine conflict. The fate and legitimacy of the UN was uncertain in May 1948 as editorials and cartoons in Louisiana papers considered the 1948 War to be the first defining event which would determine if the United Nations would be a successful international body.¹¹⁸ One editorial in the Baton Rouge *Morning Advocate* predicted the demise of the UN for even allowing the war to begin. “A solution would have done much for the prestige and future of the UN. Failure has cost a great deal.”¹¹⁹ Other articles accused United Nations delegates of wasting time arguing rather than trying to stop the war.¹²⁰ In the *Church Point News*, an article in the opinion section of the paper stated “Like a little boy watching his father trying to get his kite out of a tree, the council looked

¹¹⁶C.L. Sulzberger, “Anglo American Strain Alarms Western Europe,” *New Orleans States* (New Orleans: Louisiana), May 25, 1948. Similar articles include James Reston, “Palestine Issue Divides United Nations as Well as United States and Britain,” *New Orleans States* (New Orleans: Louisiana), May 21, 1948 and Dewitt Mackenzie, “International Affairs,” *State Advocate* (Baton Rouge, Louisiana), May 25, 1948.

¹¹⁷“Arms in Palestine,” *Shreveport Times* (Shreveport, Louisiana), May 21, 1948.

¹¹⁸“War in Time of Peace,” *Shreveport Times* (Shreveport, Louisiana), May 22, 1948; “Not Paralysis, Rigor Mortis,” *Morning Advocate* (Baton Rouge, Louisiana), May 24, 1948; Dewitt Mackenzie, “International Affairs,” *State Times Advocate* (Baton Rouge, Louisiana), May 27, 1948; “UN and Israel,” *Alexandria Daily Town Talk* (Alexandria, Louisiana), May 27, 1948.

¹¹⁹“By Force of Arms,” *Morning Advocate* (Baton Rouge, Louisiana), May 15, 1948.

¹²⁰“Arabs and Americans in Sharp UN Clash,” *Shreveport Times* (Shreveport, Louisiana), May 19, 1948.

hopefully to Jerusalem where the Red Cross was doing its best to bring a halt to the fighting.”¹²¹ Still there were editorials which defended the United Nations. In the *Times Picayune*, a May 20 editorial began, “It is much too early to write off the United Nations as a failure in Palestine.”¹²² However they felt about the Arab-Israeli conflict, there is no doubt the UN’s involvement was the most interesting part of the war for Louisianans. The *Crowley Daily Signal* had a “United Nations in Brief” section on the front page, and between May 15-31 almost every day was devoted to updates of cease fires and negotiations regarding Palestine and Israel.

Despite the suspicion that the Russians and Americans were only cooperating with each other for Cold War gains, many newspaper articles pointed out the US-USSR UN proposal to use force to stop the Arab-Israeli War. The *Alexandria Daily Town Talk* wrote “The United States and Russia are in agreement today- a rare thing- that the United Nations should stop the war in Palestine.”¹²³ After several failed attempts at a cease fire, the Soviets and the American UN delegates demanded the UN stop trying to solve the conflict by meditation alone. Rather than fighting with the Russians, the American delegation was actively working with them to shoot down more British cease fires and instead convince the UN to act.¹²⁴ The *Crowley Daily Signal*

¹²¹Bill Schoentgen, “Jerusalem: *Confused*,” *Church Point News* (Church Point: Louisiana), May 18, 1948.

¹²²Walter Lippman, “UN Can Now Act on Palestine,” *Times Picayune* (New Orleans, Louisiana), May 20, 1948.

¹²³“US and Russia Agree UN Should Stop War,” *Alexandria Daily Town Talk* (Alexandria, Louisiana), May 18, 1948.

¹²⁴“UN Palestine Action Urged by Reds, US,” *Shreveport Times* (Shreveport, Louisiana), May 18, 1948; “UN Marking Time While War Rages,” *The Times Picayune* (New Orleans, Louisiana), May 19, 1948; “United Nations Curbs Austin’s Pleas for Action,” *Morning Advocate* (Baton Rouge, Louisiana), May 23, 1948; “Britain Asks UN Pacifying in Palestine,” *Morning Advocate* (Baton Rouge, Louisiana), May 28, 1948; “American Back Russian Demands to Stop Fighting,” *State Advocate* (Baton Rouge, Louisiana), May 28, 1948; “Britain Urges UN Work for Peace,” *The Times Picayune* (New Orleans, Louisiana), May 28, 1948; “UN Intervention in Palestine War Favored by US,” *Alexandria Daily Town Talk* (Alexandria, Louisiana), May 28, 1948; “US Calls for UN Palestine Force,” *The Times Picayune* (New Orleans, Louisiana), May 29, 1948; “UN Issues Plea for Cease Fire,” *The Times Picayune* (New Orleans, Louisiana), May 30, 1948; “UN Calls for 4-Week Truce in Palestine,” *Shreveport Times* (Shreveport, Louisiana), May 30, 1948.

offered a pessimistic view of the United Nations during these negotiations. “Futile peace talks went on in the United Nations. Neither the big powers nor the combatants could agree. Russia reintroduced a U.S. proposal demanding peace within 36 hours, or U.N. sanctions and an international force. The Jews liked that one. The Arabs didn’t.”¹²⁵

More often than praising the Russians, Louisiana newspapers blamed the British for the war because of their alliance with the Arabs and their failure to cooperate with the UN. The American UN delegation resented Britain for their camaraderie with the Arab nations during the 1948 War. Proposals which the US and Russia agreed upon, were blocked by the British delegation. This was a period of uncertainty where strong American allies, the British, were now clashing with the US, in a war in which “...there must always exist the danger that another world war may develop from it.”¹²⁶ A *New Orleans States* editorial written by *New York Times* journalist James Reston read, “There seems to be two fundamental differences between the US and the British in this case: The British are approaching the problem with their long-term relations with the Arab world in view; while they feel that the United States is thinking primarily of its domestic political relations with the Jews.”¹²⁷

After Truman’s recognition, the British government stated they would not recognize Israel until the aggressor of the war was determined.¹²⁸ This was controversial in Louisiana newspapers, articles criticized the British for preventing peace in the Middle East, or accused the

¹²⁵Max Boyd, “Arabs Win Battle for Ancient City,” *Crowley Daily Signal* (Crowley, Louisiana), May 28, 1948

¹²⁶Dewitt Mackenzie, “International Affairs,” *State Advocate* (Baton Rouge, Louisiana), May 15, 1948. The same article is printed in Dewitt Mackenzie, “Tragic War Between Arabs and Jews is Blamed Upon World Statesmanship,” *Alexandria Daily Town Talk* (Alexandria, Louisiana), May 15, 1948.

¹²⁷James Reston, “Palestine Issue Divides United Nations as Well as United States and Britain,” *New Orleans States* (New Orleans: Louisiana), May 21, 1948.

¹²⁸“Britain Pledges Continued Aid to Arab States,” *Alexandria Daily Town Talk* (Alexandria, Louisiana), May 19, 1948.

British of attacking the Israelis with Trans-Jordan as a British proxy.¹²⁹ The *Shreveport Times* wrote that the Soviets had said “Britain is attacking Israel through the Arab legion of Trans-Jordan.”¹³⁰ Similarly, the *Crowley Daily Signal* quoted Russian UN delegate Andrei Gromyko as saying “...King Abdullah of Trans-Jordan personal commander of the armies of five Arab states, is a Middle East Caesar, supported by Britain.”¹³¹ An editorial in Alexandria showed doubt in the UN and Britain, “...the United Nations must admit impotence and appeal to all the member states to supply Israel with arms to counteract the British supply to the Arabs.”¹³² In perhaps a criticism of a lack of support for Israel, one Opelousas article title read, "Britain will not Recognize Jews," when in fact it was the state itself, not the people of Israel that Britain refused to recognize.¹³³ Though the British government did scold the Arabs for not agreeing to UN cease fires, a *New Orleans States* editorial described the interaction as an empty gesture “What Britain has done is simply say to the Arabs, ‘Boys, please stop shooting, like the UN says. But if you don’t you can depend on us, your old friends, to back you up in defying the UN.’”¹³⁴ This editorial stance was common in Louisiana papers. Articles wrote that the British were being too easy on the Arabs, and it was for the benefit of the British to remain the sole purveyor of Arab oil. Papers also printed articles in which Americans wondered if Marshall Plan money sent to the British was then used to assist Trans-Jordan to fight Israel. In the Baton Rouge *Morning*

¹²⁹Michael Brenner, “Views of States Readers: Says British Policy Dominated by Oil,” *New Orleans States* (New Orleans, Louisiana), May 26, 1948; Dewitt Mackenzie, “Peace in Palestine Hinges on Unity among US, Britain, France, Russia,” *Alexandria Daily Town Talk* (Alexandria, Louisiana), May 27, 1948; “US Proposal on Palestine Rejected,” *Shreveport Times* (Shreveport, Louisiana), May 23, 1948.

¹³⁰“British Aiding Arab Attacks Russia Says,” *Shreveport Times* (Shreveport, Louisiana), May 21, 1948.

¹³¹“Jewish Soldiers Making Last Ditch Stand in Ancient City of Jerusalem in Arab Battle,” *Crowley Daily Signal* (Crowley, Louisiana), May 21, 1948.

¹³²George E. Sokolsky, “UN and Israel,” *Alexandria Daily Town Talk* (Alexandria, Louisiana), May 27, 1948.

¹³³ "Britain will not Recognize Jews," The *Opelousas Daily World* (Opelousas, Louisiana), May 16, 1948.

¹³⁴“The Arabs Aren’t Stupid,” *Morning Advocate* (Baton Rouge, Louisiana), May 31, 1948.

Advocate, “Bridges [a US senator] said it would be ‘very appropriate’ for the American congress to reduce Britain’s \$1,334,000,000 share of the European recovery program funds if it were discovered that American aid enabled Britain to help finance Arab military machines.”¹³⁵ A day later Alexandria’s *Daily Town Talk* offered a rebuttal,

Foreign office circles unofficially ridiculed a suggestion in the United States that Britain is using European recovery plan aid to help the Arab armies. They said Britain had not received any plan aid. Furthermore, they said, Britain gives Trans-Jordan only pounds sterling, with none of this country’s scare dollars going to the Arabs.¹³⁶

This shows that in just weeks after the Marshall Plan was signed, its status was uncertain for the British.

While Louisiana newspapers portrayed the British as comfortable allies of the Arabs, the British-Arab relationship was not as close as the American press made it seem. There were major attacks by Jewish organizations to force the British out of Palestine, but the Arabs were not happy that the British had left because it seemed as if the British were ceding the country to the Jews.¹³⁷ Louisianans understood the difficulty facing the British which is exemplified in a cartoon in which a battered lion representing Britain leaves Palestine saying, “What do they mean fighting will start after I leave?”¹³⁸ (Fig. 5) The British government was put in a difficult position after Israel was declared a state. They did not want to lose their friendship with the Arabs, however, because of Truman’s recognition the British government was pressured to take a firm stance against the Arab Legion that the British had created. Britain’s alliances were

¹³⁵“Bevin Calls for Anglo-American Peace Attempts,” *Morning Advocate* (Baton Rouge, Louisiana), May 23, 1948

¹³⁶“Probe Promised on Reported US help for Arabs,” *Alexandria Daily Town Talk* (Alexandria, Louisiana), May 25, 1948.

¹³⁷Herbert H. Matthews, “Britain won’t budge from Palestine Position Despite American Criticism,” *New Orleans States* (New Orleans: Louisiana), May 21, 1948.

¹³⁸“What do they mean fighting will start after I leave?” *New Orleans States* (New Orleans: Louisiana), May 21, 1948.

uncertain, and Louisianans watched as the British struggled to maintain their control in Palestine without sacrificing their status in the United Nations. The British UN delegation hoped a cease fire or mediation could help solve the conflict, rather than have UN forces enter the war. However, many Louisiana newspapers wondered if the British government would ever follow the rules of the UN. Was the UN able to offer any real consequences if the British refused to stop funding the Arabs?¹³⁹



Figure 5

Political cartoons also varied in their depictions of the UN. A cartoon in the *Crowley Daily Signal* on May 31, 1948 depicted Israel as too young to join the United Nations. A baby labeled Israel tries to climb onto the high chair of the UN.¹⁴⁰ This image portrayed the UN as a strong and established organization that Israel must work hard to join. (Fig. 6) Similarly, a Baton Rouge *State Times* cartoon showed Israel as new and inexperienced. A young scrawny boy

¹³⁹"The Arabs Aren't Stupid," *Morning Advocate* (Baton Rouge, Louisiana), May 31, 1948.

¹⁴⁰"The High Chair," *Crowley Daily Signal* (Crowley, Louisiana), May 31, 1948.

named Israel flees from a brutish man named war. Looking on, the world demands that the police officer, the United Nations, use force to stop the war. However, the police officer looks confused on who he is supposed to beat with his club. The officer's baton called the Chapter Charter #7 refers to the UN charter in which the aggressor of a war would be punished. (Fig. 7)¹⁴¹ However, since the aggressor had not yet been determined in the Arab-Israeli conflict, the UN was powerless to stop the war, even as Israel took a beating. The cartoon shows the power the world wanted the UN to have, versus what the UN was actually able to do. The cartoon also assumed that the reader of the paper would sympathize with the Israelis as newcomers to the United Nations, as well as their losses in war. However, the man labeled war is neither called an Arab nor is he stereotypically drawn like one. This reinforces the discourse written in Louisiana newspapers. Were the Arabs entirely to blame for the war, or was it war in general that destroyed Israel? A Baton Rouge *Morning Advocate* cartoon showed the UN as a scientist, afraid to drop his chemical solution into the Palestine problem. (Fig. 8)¹⁴² In contrast to Crowley's cartoon, the scientist represented the United Nations as a careless organization, willing to try anything to solve the conflict without really knowing what the side effects will be. The title "There He Goes Again" refers to the partition plans and cease fires that the UN tried but failed to complete. This shows that people were concerned about the United Nations ability to make good decisions.

Overall, when Louisiana newspapers discussed the Arab Israeli War, the subtext of the United Nations may have been what kept readers interested. The Arab Israeli War was a conflict between two groups of people many Louisianans had never met. It was in a place in the world most had only read about in the Bible, and it was fought in complicated circumstances reaching

¹⁴¹"Not a Very Nice Way to Welcome a Newcomer," *State Advocate* (Baton Rouge, Louisiana), May 24, 1948.

¹⁴²"There He Goes Again," *Morning Advocate* (Baton Rouge, Louisiana), May 26, 1948.

back several decades. However, the United Nations was a point of understanding for most Louisianans. Britain, the US, and the USSR were all big powers, and in the Cold War years this meant tensions were high with each country picking a side in the 1948 war. Just a few years before, Americans had seen the failure of the League of Nations in preventing WWII, and it may have seemed like the Arab Israeli War was the beginning of WWIII. While readers of these newspapers were still figuring out the discourse about the Palestinian Arabs and the Jewish Israelis, criticism and praise of the United Nations had already been established.

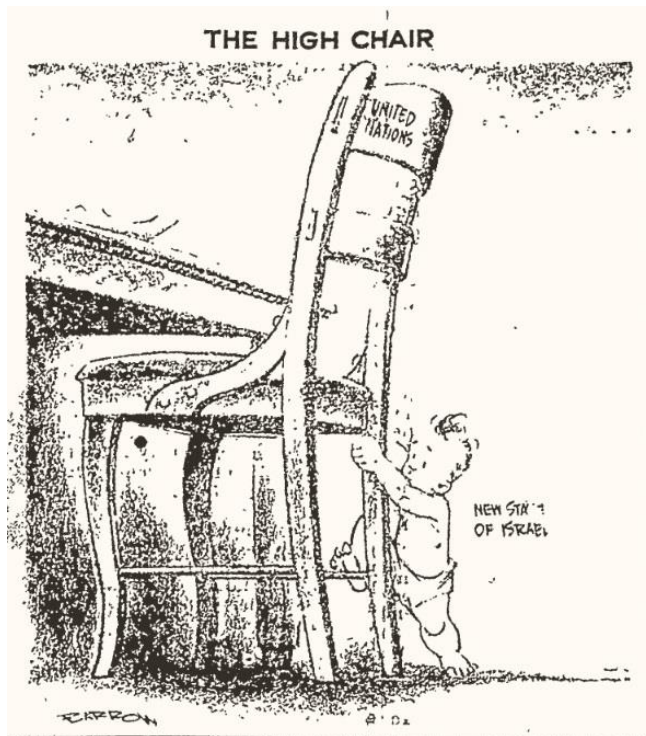


Figure 6



Figure 7

● There He Goes Again

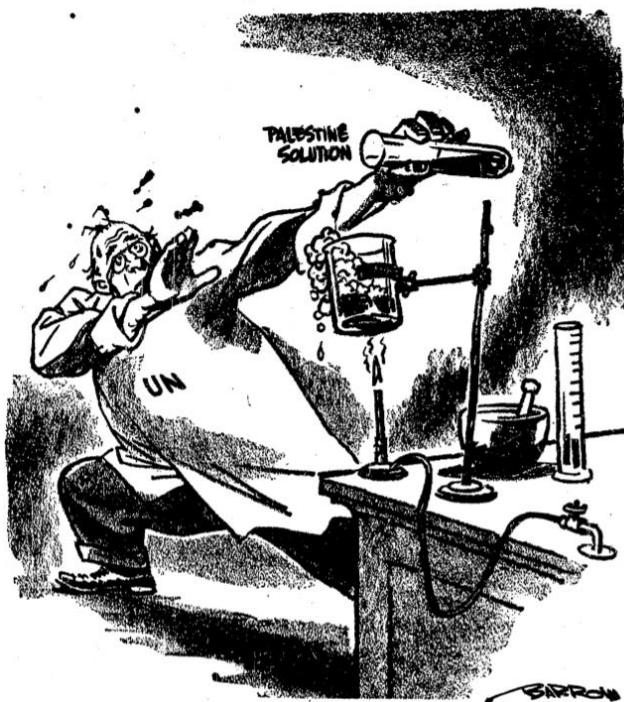


Figure 8

Conclusion

Before leaving Palestine in May 1948 Shukri Salameh, the Arab father featured on the front page of the *New Orleans States* was educated at the American University in Beirut and Jerusalem Law School, and was a successful government lawyer in Palestine.¹⁴³ According to his letter to the editor in the *New York Times* in 1988, and an account written by Salameh in 2000, his residence of Jaffa was under attack from the Irgun after the U.N. partition plan was proposed in November 1947. The Salameh family fled to Cairo after a night of bombings, and from there, Mr. Salameh, his very pregnant wife Yvonne, and their daughter took a plane to the United States. Mr. Salameh credited his education for his ability to avoid Palestinian refugee camps and make it to America.¹⁴⁴ Shukri Salameh and his family traveled to Honduras after New Orleans to stay with his wife's family. He obtained Syrian and Jordan citizenship and moved to New York where he worked as Assistant Secretary General for Personnel in the United Nations.¹⁴⁵ In 1948 Louisianans may have been concerned about the future of the UN, but it has proven itself to be a strong, lasting institution which continues to be involved in Israeli and Palestinian relations and in the lives of those affected by the 1948 War.

Much research has been done on American opinions about Israel, the Jews in the South, the Arab immigrant experience, and how newspapers shape public discourse. Yet, as this paper reveals, scholarship on America and Israel usually emphasizes the later years of the conflict, with only brief mentions of the Deep South. Most analyses of newspapers and public discourse center

¹⁴³“In Memoriam,” *The Main Gate: American University in Beirut Magazine*, Fall 2014, 64-65.

¹⁴⁴Shukri Salameh, “Cleansing Jaffa: A Detailed Eyewitness Account,” *Palestine Remembered*, November 29, 2000, accessed February 2, 2019; Shukri Salameh, “The Panic that Gripped Jaffa in April 1948,” *New York Times* (New York City: New York), September 23, 1988.

¹⁴⁵“Shukri,” UNForum, December 15, 2014, <http://www.unforum.com/UNinsiderDec14.htm>, accessed February 2, 2019.

on *The New York Times* or equivalently-sized newspapers. This paper showed that white, male, editors of newspapers in 1948 shaped the discourse that became common in other newspaper studies in the 1950s, 60s, and 70s. Headlines, images, and editorials from newspapers across the state reveal differences in the way the conflict was reported. There were several periods of uncertainty in relation to the 1948 Arab-Israeli War that can be examined in local newspapers. There was no clear support for either the Arabs nor the Israelis in the war. Newspapers published stereotypical descriptions of both groups, and invited readers to question the reasons for the war. The Holocaust and Jewish experience of WWII had not been considered by most Americans as a purpose for a Jewish state, and the silence in the newspapers reflect this. The relationship between the United States, Britain, and Russia was undetermined, and Louisiana newspapers showed the confusion many Americans had as each country vied for influence in the new Middle Eastern state. Finally, newspapers printed the hope and worry Americans felt in regard to the United Nations. The 1948 War could be their greatest accomplishment or the beginning of the end for the international organization.

This paper was drawn from over two hundred newspaper articles spanning a two-week period, a fraction of time in the course of the entire Arab-Israeli conflict and the 1948 War. To better understand the attitudes of citizens of Louisiana in 1948 dozens of other newspapers including religious newspapers, university newspapers, and Black newspapers need to be analyzed, which can offer even more subtle perspectives.¹⁴⁶ Despite the limited dates and small sample of newspapers, New Orleans, Baton Rouge, and Shreveport were the largest cities in Louisiana in 1948. Monroe, Alexandria, and Crowley were typical cities in their respective

¹⁴⁶Unfortunately, the *Louisiana Weekly* was the only Black newspaper in circulation in May 1948 in Louisiana, and the paper published almost no international news, which is why the viewpoint of Black Louisianans are missing in this paper.

regions, and the people from small towns like Opelousas and Church Point were less likely to have the scholarship written about them that they deserve. Louisianans read these newspapers and had their world view shaped by the pages. They used this information to make decisions at the political polls, and in their neighborhoods. Today, the media continues to affect how American's see their place in international relations but in 1948, American's news options were limited. Although local papers in only one state were studied, these newspapers still reflect what other historians have written about American public opinion in 1948. The results are a reminder that those outside of America's bustling cities in New York, Chicago, and California, need their experiences told and their discourse considered.

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