

## **UNSC (In-)Action in a Time of Crisis: An Analysis of American and British Interests in the Partition of Palestine (1947-1948)**

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### **Abstract**

Utilizing extensive primary and secondary resources, this manuscript examines the failure of the United Nations (UN) to implement the Partition Plan in Palestine. When the British announced in September 1947 that they would withdraw from Mandate Palestine by May 1948, the issue of who would control the territory was turned over to the UN. The result was *A/RES/181(II) on the Future government of Palestine* (“Resolution 181”). This manuscript argues that decisions regarding the implementation of Resolution 181 were often guided by the self-interests of UN Member States, rather than their desire to support the mandate of the UN as a whole. In particular, it looks at how the United States and Britain tried to prevent the establishment of an international force to implement Res. 181 due to two main geopolitical factors: firstly, a strong desire to contain Soviet Union Communist expansion and secondly, a desire to maintain relations with the Arab state leaders to support their military strategies in the Middle East and protect military interests. The United States in particular sought to push the discourse away from an international force by proposing an alternative Trusteeship Plan which would serve to divert attention away from the original Partition Plan.

**keywords:** Palestine; Great Britain; United States; Partition of Palestine; Resolution 181, United Nations Security Council

When Britain announced in September 1947 that it would withdraw from Mandate Palestine by May 1948, the issue of who would control Palestine was turned over to the United Nations (UN), the newly founded international institution created to prevent conflict and ensure world peace.<sup>59</sup> The result was *A/RES/181(II) on the Future government of Palestine* (“Resolution 181”), a resolution adopted on November 29, 1947 to form the basis of the United Nations Partition Plan for Palestine. As part of the Partition Plan, unequal portions of land were to be divided between two new Arab and Jewish states,<sup>60</sup> whereas Jerusalem was to remain under the protection of a UN Trusteeship Council.<sup>61</sup> Partition was not favored by Jewish nor Arab communities. It escalated existing intercommunal tensions and threatened to turn the situation on the ground into an all-out war between neighboring Arab states (Jordan, Syria and Egypt) and the Jewish people of Palestine.<sup>62</sup> Although the UN recommended that the international community investigate the feasibility of sending a joint military force to implement the Partition Plan, the notion of an international force was never fully supported by Member States of the United Nations Security Council (UNSC).

Drawing on an extensive list of primary sources, including government archives, UN documentation, and media articles, this manuscript argues that decisions regarding the implementation of Resolution 181 were often guided by the self-interests of UNSC Member States, rather than their desire to support the mandate of the UN. It builds on previous scholarship on the partition of Palestine—and in particular that of William Lewis, Benny Morris, and Avi Shlaim.<sup>63</sup> It shows how the United States and Britain tried to prevent the establishment of an international force to implement Resolution 181 due to two main geopolitical factors: first, to contain Soviet Union

communist expansion, and second, to protect their own relationships with Arab states, thereby ensuring access to military bases and oil supplies. Britain responded to the implementation of the Partition Plan by maintaining neutrality—this meant abstaining from the partition vote and simply refusing to participate in an international force. The United States, however, took a more active role in hindering the coalescing of an international force, pushing UNSC discussions away from the topic by proposing an alternative last-minute Trusteeship Plan. As violence on the ground escalated in the months leading up to partition, the UNSC at large also became increasingly preoccupied with crafting a resolution for a truce rather than concentrating efforts on organizing a UN security force.

### **Background: From Mandate to Partition**

At the end of WWI, the Allied States granted Britain mandatory powers in Palestine. The preamble of the Mandate for Palestine, adopted by the League of Nations in the summer of 1922, stipulated that “nothing be done which might prejudice the civil and religious rights of existing non-Jewish communities in Palestine.”<sup>64</sup> Further, it also stated that “recognition be given to the historical connection of the Jewish people with Palestine and to the grounds for reconstituting their national home in that country.”<sup>65</sup> This notion of ‘homeland’ was exacerbated by the Balfour Declaration of 1917, drafted by then Foreign Secretary Arthur Balfour, who wrote that the British government favored the establishment of a national home for the Jewish people in Palestine.<sup>66</sup> Under the Mandate, the British had full powers of legislation and administration with a responsibility to support the Jewish vision to create a national home and protect non-Jewish communities.

The Mandate Period was mired with intercommunal conflict, marked by riots, general strikes, and civil war. To maintain their authority, Britain implemented divisive policies which exacerbated rivalries in a “divide-and-conquer” strategy.<sup>67</sup> Intercommunal tensions were fueled by an increasing rate of Jewish immigration, initially of primarily Ashkenazi communities from Europe.<sup>68</sup> By the end of 1946, there was a two-to-one ratio of Arabs to Jewish peoples in Palestine, at an estimated 1,269,000 Arabs in Palestine and 608,000 Jews.<sup>69</sup> Following World War II, the rate of immigration grew with an international campaign to provide a homeland for the survivors of the Holocaust. While the creation of a Jewish homeland in Palestine was championed by Zionist groups, Arab leaders and Arab Palestinian residents, fearful of being driven out of their land, were adamant that further immigration to Palestine should be prohibited.

After WWII, Britain’s coffers were drained, and it could no longer afford the financial cost to maintain security in the event of an outbreak of war in Palestine.<sup>70</sup> Moreover, the security situation was steadily worsening for British Military personnel, who had been subject to a series of Zionist militia attacks, such as in July 1946 when the King David Hotel was bombed.<sup>71</sup> The hotel housed the British Mandate Secretariat and military headquarters. In September 1947, the British announced that they would withdraw from Mandate Palestine by May 1948. The question of who had the right to claim the land was contested among Arab leaders and the Jewish Palestinian community. At this point, Jews in Palestine were still a minority.<sup>72</sup> Thus, Britain turned the matter of governance over to the UN, who formed the United Nations Special Committee on Palestine (UNSCOP) to identify the best schema for dividing the land among Palestinian Arabs and steadily-growing Jewish population.<sup>73</sup>

In August 1947, the UNSCOP voted in favor of submitting a report, *United Nations Partition Plan for Palestine* to the UN, recommending the creation of an independent Jewish State and an independent Arab State, with the City of Jerusalem placed under the international protection of a UN Trusteeship Council.<sup>74</sup> The boundaries were established with the intent to separate political divisions and create economic unity. The plan was supported by the Jewish Agency (the political representative for the Palestinian Jewish community) but opposed by the Arab leaders both due to the nature of statehood and division of land.<sup>75</sup> The debate in the UN General Assembly lasted from September to November 1947. As the assembly came closer to voting on the Plan, it was still uncertain whether the resolution would be approved; many believe that non-European countries would side with the Arabs, as would the Soviet Union and its allies.<sup>76</sup> President Truman, influenced by Jewish lobbying groups in the United States, was adamant in ensuring that the Partition Plan would pass by the General Assembly. As such, he leveraged the US economic support to several UN Member States, and made it clear that this support would only be continued if these states voted “yes” on the resolution.<sup>77</sup> The Partition Plan from the UNSCOP resolution was eventually brought forth for a vote, and in November 29, 1947, 33 Member States, including the Soviet Union, voted in favor of Resolution 181, officially A/RES/181(II), thereby approving the Partition Plan.<sup>78</sup>

As soon as the UN adopted Resolution 181, Arab states and Jewish militia groups opposing the Partition Plan escalated their strategies to occupy Palestinian territory. Zionist militia groups, including the Haganah, the Stern Gang, and the Lehigh, were starting to organize for war, a war they had planned years earlier.<sup>79</sup> David Ben-Gurion, Chairman of the Jewish Agency

ordered the Haganah to design a military plan to overtake Mandate Palestine when Britain withdrew.<sup>80</sup> Palestinian Arab leaders were also planning for war supported by neighboring states; military recruitment centers were established from Egypt to Iraq.<sup>81</sup> Large swaths of the Arab population believed that Palestinian land rightfully belonged to Arabs and were suspicious that the British would expel Palestinian Arabs from their land. Their mistrust was due to a broken agreement between British Official McMahon and Sharif Husayn of Mecca in October 1915, when Britain had failed to recognize Arab areas of independence, the latter Ottoman Lands, after WWI.<sup>82</sup> Nevertheless, there was division among the Arab states over who should govern Palestine. On one side was the Hashemite block, consisting of Jordan and Iraq, while on the other side was Egypt and Saudi Arabia. In addition, other Arab leaders had their own schemes: the Syrian President Quwatli had a desire to become the region's hegemon, whereas Jordan's King Abdullah had his own grand designs for the territory.<sup>83</sup> For many, however, the Arab right to self-determination in Palestine was viewed as a larger Pan-Arab battle, in which the territory belonged to Arab communities transcending national and religious boundaries.<sup>84</sup>

In anticipation of a greater conflict following Britain's withdrawal, the UN and Member States were searching for ways to maintain security in the territory under Partition. One of the main solutions proposed was that of an international force. Initially, the idea had been passed by several Member States prior to the Resolution 181 vote on November 29, 1947. In October 1947, United States President Harry S. Truman had proposed the idea of forming an international volunteer police force to oversee Partition, but it was shut down by Congress.<sup>85</sup> Similarly, in early November 1947, Canada's Prime Minister Lester B. Pearson proposed a

security plan to the UN General Assembly that would involve a military drawn from smaller powers.<sup>86</sup> In February 1948, however, the idea was launched on a UN level, when the Palestine Commission—a new body created under Resolution 181 to ensure the implementation of the Partition Plan and act as the Provisional Government of Palestine—declared that escalating Arab and Jewish tensions meant that it was critical for an international force to be established to oversee the Partition.<sup>87</sup> In response to this statement, the *New York Times* reported that UN members from headquarters viewed the warning as an ultimatum—either expedite an international force or abandon the Partition Plan.<sup>88</sup>

### **Anglo-American Geopolitical Interests**

Although the Palestine Commission was created by the General Assembly to oversee partition, the decision whether to heed the commission's recommendation to implement a force fell under the mandate of the UNSC. Under the UN Charter, the UNSC was required to assess whether they had the jurisdiction to implement such a force, and if failing to do so would result in a threat to world peace.<sup>89</sup> Despite the growing momentum among the global community towards an international security force, UNSC Member States were reluctant to take measures ensuring that an international force would be on the ground by the partition date. This was in part due to an unsettled debate on whether or not they had the authority to do so, given that both Jewish and Arab Palestinians had a claim to self-determination over the land, and in part because the question of an international force in Palestine was also a logistical issue. When the idea was introduced by the Palestine Commission in February 1948, an over-arching UN security force had yet to be created. The UN Military

Staff Committee was still deliberating on the scope and allocation of military resources that each Member State was willing to contribute.<sup>90</sup> In the absence of an overarching UN security force, UNSC members were permitted to use their own militaries for the Palestine force under Article 106 of the UN Charter.<sup>91</sup> However, UNSC Members were hesitant to commit UNSC militaries to an international force. Although this was partly due to domestic interests in limiting spending on additional military personnel, it was first and foremost due to geopolitical concerns.

#### *Fears of Soviet Expansionism*

In the eyes of the United States and Britain, UNSC participation in an international force in Palestine posed a critical liability to both states because of burgeoning Cold War tensions. In the immediate post-war period, Western governments viewed the Soviet Union as belligerent in its expansionist campaign to spread communism across the world, and therefore sought to contain any Soviet attempts at gaining influence in the Middle East. A Central Intelligence Agency report from February 1948 considered the various models a police force in Palestine could assume, including a “Great Powers Police Force” comprised of the five great powers (China, US, Soviet Union, France and Britain) or a “Medium Powers Police Force” made up of medium powers.<sup>92</sup> In both of these configurations, state officials were concerned that a force would enable the Soviet Union to access Palestinian territory.<sup>93</sup>

Should the Soviet Union gain free access to the Palestinian territory by way of a UN Security Force in Palestine, US officials believed that they would gain the foothold they needed to establish communist rule in the region, forcing western states to respond.<sup>94</sup> For instance, the United States Director of Office of European Affairs wrote on April 12, 1948 that

wherever soviet military occupation has occurred, it has consistently been accompanied by political reorganization along Communist lines of the Soviet occupied Zone. It is therefore axiomatic that if a Soviet contingent were permitted to participate in a UN Security force in Palestine, the same pattern of Communist control might be expected to emerge within the area occupied by Soviet troops.<sup>95</sup>

Similarly, British officials believed that permitting the Soviet Union military to enter the Middle Eastern region could have major consequences. According to William Louis, Foreign Secretary Bevin was sharply aware of Soviet Union leader Joseph Stalin’s desire to exploit Arab relations in order to capitalize on his expansionist campaign.<sup>96</sup> Bevin wrote of Stalin to his Minister of State: “You will learn that he would have no compunction at all in exploiting these nationalities to achieve his object by means of a whole series which Russia could control.”<sup>97</sup>

As of February 1948, the Soviet Union had yet to take an official position on whether or not they would support an international force.<sup>98</sup> The British and the United States viewed the Soviet Union as unpredictable, untrustworthy, and ambitious, ready to aid whoever suited their needs. In April 1948, the New York Times published a story that cited a report released by the International Committee for the Study of European Questions, a privately funded organization, in which they found that the Soviet Union had been sending arms to the Arabs, while simultaneously aiding Jewish Polish and Romanian emigration to Palestine.<sup>99</sup> The fact that the Soviet Union was careful to walk the fence between both the Palestinian Jewish and Arab communities fueled the existing mistrust that the United States and Britain had about their intentions. Ultimately, Britain and the United States believed that the Soviet Union troops would “goad the Arab population into greater violence” in order to gain control and influence with Arab leaders in the region.<sup>100</sup>

This influence was likely to have global implications, and the possibility of atomic warfare in the Middle East weighed heavily on the minds of both the British and American governments.<sup>101</sup> The White House staff viewed the situation in the Middle East as a ticking “time bomb,” where any conflict that involved the Soviet Union could lead to World War III.<sup>102</sup>

*Relationship and Access to Arab Territories*

In addition to concerns over Soviet influence, the United States and Britain were also worried about the potential effects that a UNSC led international force would have on their own influence in the region. Following the end of World War I, the Allied States had scrambled to assert their dominance over the area which had previously belonged to the Ottoman Empire: Syria and Lebanon were handed over to France, and Palestine, Transjordan and Iraq to Britain.<sup>103</sup> By the end of WWII, however, Palestine was the only remaining territory in the region under Western mandate. As a result of Britain’s pending exit from Palestine, Western governments felt a growing need to maintain strong Arab relations to access Arab territory for their economic and military strategies. In this context, United States and Britain were concerned about the consequences that their participation in an international force would have on their relationship with Arab leaders. If the British or the United States were to enact any force against the Arabs, their ability to maintain relations with Middle Eastern governments would be compromised, resulting in loss of their ability to keep troops in the region and thus enable the Soviet Union to gain political leverage.<sup>104</sup> A top-secret report produced by the United States Director of the Policy Planning Staff in January 1948 stated that if the United States were to send troops to Palestine or support a volunteer police force, they would have to

rethink their entire political position in the Mediterranean and the Middle East.<sup>105</sup>

As of October 1947, the British had two air bases in Iraq that they needed to protect, whereas the United States military still did not have any bases in the Middle East.<sup>106</sup> In the post-war environment, expanding one’s military access to the region was critical to both countries, not least because a presence in the region enabled the United States and Britain’s access to the Eastern Mediterranean region, where both states were providing support to the government against the communist opposition army in the Greek Civil War (1946-1949).<sup>107</sup> In this context, a memo written in October 1947 by Loy W. Henderson, the United States Head of Near Eastern and African Affairs, expressed his concern that Arab hostilities were already exacerbated and further damage to relations could endanger the United States position in Greece, Turkey and Iran—areas vulnerable to Soviet Union influence.<sup>108</sup>

In addition, American and British interests in the region were increasingly influenced by the growing global importance of oil, which had become a crucial geopolitical factor in the late 1940s.<sup>109</sup> A memo circulated by Bevin to the British Cabinet in February 1948 emphasized that the Marshall Plan depended on the uninterrupted flow of oil from the Middle East to Western Europe and Britain.<sup>110</sup> Should Arab states limit access to oil, the United States economic incentive plan would be threatened, which would prevent their ability to provide financial aid to countries that were supported by the Plan. Saudi Arabia also supplied the United States’ Navy with oil.<sup>111</sup> --Ibn Saud, Monarch of Saudi Arabia financed the Arab League military which supported the Palestinians, and their dissention towards the Partition plan.<sup>112</sup> Further, the British government believed that Iraqi and Syrian governments were highly

likely to fight against a UN security force. Should western governments draw ire from Arab leaders, Iraqi oil might cease to flow to Tripoli, and pipeline projects for piping Arab and Persian Gulf oil to the Mediterranean could be suspended.<sup>113</sup> There was also a fear that permitting the Soviet Union to enter the Middle East would leave oil fields in the Persian Gulf vulnerable to air strikes.<sup>114</sup>

Anglo-American speculations that supporting an international force endangered their access to oil and military outposts were soon confirmed by Arab states. In February 1948, the Arab League Secretary General declared that no military bases or access to pipelines would be permitted nor would economic priority be given to any country who favored implementing the Partition Plan.<sup>115</sup>

### **Stalling Partition and An International Force**

Due to its concerns over the ramifications of implementing an international force, Britain adopted a policy of non-intervention. It had already abstained from the vote on Resolution 181 in the General Assembly and now simply refused to accept any plan that would involve the presence of military forces in Palestine before their exit date. A British memorandum circulated to British Cabinet members in February 1948 stressed the necessity for the British UN Delegate to abstain on UNSC motions pertaining to an UN security force for geopolitical reasons.<sup>116</sup>

As discussed above, the United States policy on the Middle East was comparable to the British in many regards. Although President Truman had initially supported Partition, by being vocal about the need to both support Palestinians and create an independent Jewish state, he was faced with growing uneasiness from the State Department. While Truman had championed

Partition, State Department officials believed that United States support of the plan would endanger its relationship with Arab leaders. This concern became a critical factor in the months leading up to Partition, and eventually pushed the President to take more proactive measures to stall an international force.<sup>117</sup>

With less than two months left until Partition, the United States, seeking to appease the Arab states and prevent the Soviet Union from gaining access to the Middle East, proposed an alternative “Trusteeship Plan.”<sup>118</sup> The plan would replace Partition, and instead make the UN a temporary trustee. Effectively, the decision to send an international force was put on the back burner, as the debate instead turned to the new Trusteeship Plan. Warren Austin, the United States Delegate to the UN at the time, brought forth three trusteeship proposals to the UNSC on March 19, 1948. Under the trusteeship plan, the UN would assume the role as the new mandate power until the Arab Palestinians and Jewish Palestinians could agree on a resolution to share the land. The plan would still require an international force; one that relied on Britain’s cooperation and contribution.<sup>119</sup> However, Britain was adamant about remaining neutral. On April 16, 1948, the United States Ambassador to the United Kingdom recounted a meeting with Bevin, who said that the plan would be unacceptable to the Cabinet and House of Commons.<sup>120</sup> An earlier memo by the Ambassador spoke about the British government impetus to “get the boy’s home from Palestine.”<sup>121</sup> Equally, the Jewish Agency did not support a UN trusteeship—they believed that the proposed plan was unrealistic and nothing more than the United States strategy to kill Partition.<sup>122</sup>

The US Consul General of Jerusalem reported that the Arab states were glad that the US had decided to abandon Partition but were still determined to “crush Zionism.”<sup>123</sup>

A memo by United States Foreign Affairs bureaucrat Robert C. McClintock affirms that disposing of Partition was indeed the strategy of the United States to revisit the issue of whether or not a conflict in Palestine was a threat to world security; a decision that would legally permit the UNSC to implement a security force.<sup>124</sup> By this point, maintaining arm's length from an international force in Palestine was the best strategy for the United States in order to avoid a confrontation with the Soviet Union. A brief written by the Joint Chiefs of Staff for the United States reported that a conflict between Arabs and Jewish was inevitable and would require substantial US forces, numbers that would deplete personnel stationed in other parts of the Middle East.<sup>125</sup> Further, the Secretary of Defense wrote to the Secretary of State on April 19, 1948 that should the United States support an international force, it would be necessary to review US policy regarding Italy, Iran, Greece, China and Turkey: "The United States position on Palestine may render these policies meaningless."<sup>126</sup> To further curb the possibility of the participation of western governments—or the Soviet Union for that matter—in an international force, the United States suggested that an force be formed from neutral states such as Brazil, the Netherlands and Sweden.<sup>127</sup> Although these nations voted in favor of the original Partition Plan, these Member States were not willing to actively participate in such a force, nor support an alternative trusteeship. Like the British and the US, they were concerned that they would incur ire from Arab state leaders by supporting partition.<sup>128</sup>

While the United States was campaigning their new plans for a trusteeship among Member States, escalating violence and tensions in Palestine further diverted focus away from implementing Resolution 181 towards the negotiation of a truce between the Jewish Agency and the Arab Higher Committee. In the spring of 1948,

violence in Palestine reached an unprecedented level. On April 13, 1948, the United States Consul at Jerusalem reported the horrific events that occurred in the Arab village Deir Yasin, in which Jewish militia groups—the Irgun and Stern Gang—killed over 250 peaceful citizens, more than half were women and children. He believed that as a result, Arabs would want to avenge Deir Yasin and a cease-fire was remote.<sup>129</sup> Jewish and Arab Palestinian communities were determined to establish their own states with or without UN support. At a special UN General Assembly session on April 1, 1948, the Jewish Agency submission made it clear that a provisional Jewish government would be instituted in accordance with Resolution 181 once Mandate Palestine ended. Similarly, representatives of the Arab Higher Committee stated that if the plan failed, they would establish a Palestinian government under the same international laws that enabled Britain to administer the territory.<sup>130</sup>

As a response to the situation on the ground, the UNSC took measures to adopt Resolution 46 on April 17, 1948, calling on all governments to take steps to assist in the implementation of measures to bring about the cessation of acts of violence in Palestine and to establish conditions of peace.<sup>131</sup> The motion called on Arab and Jewish groups to cease all military activities and cease providing aid to militia groups, but did not mention the provision of a UN security force.<sup>132</sup> Instead, a Truce Commission was established in which UNSC members attempted to broker peace with Arab leaders and the Jewish Agency.<sup>133</sup> The question of permitting more Jews to enter Palestinian territory proved to be a major issue of contention that prevented either side from agreeing to a truce. A memo from Warren Austin written on April 29, 1948 notes that the Egyptian, Saudi Arabian, Syrian, and Lebanese delegations would not sign any document that would "permit the entry of a

single Jew in Palestine.”<sup>134</sup> Similarly, in a diary entry written on April 4, 1948 by the United States Secretary of Defense, James Forrestal recounts a meeting with Dean Rusk, Director of the Office of United Nations Affairs and the Joint Chiefs of Staff. He writes that members from the Joint Chiefs of Staff believed that a completely effective truce was impossible, and they could not assure the end of violence.<sup>135</sup>

In spite of the increase of intercommunal violence, and the growing infeasibility of both a trusteeship and a truce, an international force to implement the original Partition Plan was still not brought to the UNSC for serious consideration. At midnight, seconds before the end of the British Mandate, May 14, 1948, Ben Gurion declared the State of Israel, and hours later, Arab states: Syria, Jordan and Egypt invaded. By July 1948, UNSC invoked charter VII (“Action with Respect to Threats to the Peace, Breaches of the Peace, and Acts of Aggression”), which permitted UNSC Members to enforce a cease fire. However, a UN security force was never sent to Palestine and the UNSC disregarded the UN Mediator’s recommendation to impose economic and political sanctions for non-compliance of a cease fire. Once the Arab-Israeli War eventually came to an end in 1949, thousands of lives had been lost, and over 750,000 Arabs forced to flee their homes.<sup>136</sup>

## Conclusion

This article has looked at the ways in which UNSC Member States, and particularly the United States and Britain, responded to the direction from the UN General Assembly to ensure peace in Palestine once Mandate Palestine ended. This included deliberating the coalescing of a UN security force in an emerging Cold War era. It has asserted that

Britain and the United States were caught between honoring the UN Mandate, maintaining peace between the West and Soviet Union, and sustaining their relationships with Arab states. In this context, Britain and the United States became a driving force in the decisions that led to inactivity of the UNSC to send an UN security force, made clear in the conversations and media articles drawn out in this paper. In mapping out the (in)actions of the UNSC between 1947 and 1948, this manuscript highlights the structural inadequacies of the UNSC; one of which decision-making power of the UN as a whole is contingent upon a select group of UN Member States. As the case of the partition of Palestine shows, Member States have a duty first to their country, and then to the UN. While this becomes particularly clear in the case of the UNSC, it is also applicable to Member States in general; for instance, so-called “Middle Power” members also did not want to participate in a non-UNSC international force, largely out of fear of weakening relations with the Arabs.

Secretary General Trygve Lie’s autobiography emphasizes the very tensions that existed between UNSC Member States’ duties to their own people, and their duties to the United Nations. When Lie learned in March 1948 of the US decision to withdraw support for Partition in favour of a Trusteeship plan, he said:

the American reversal was a blow to the United Nations and showed a profoundly disheartening disregard for its effectiveness and standing.<sup>137</sup>

Further, he suggested to the United States UN delegate Warren Austin that they both

resign as a means of arousing popular opinion to the realization of the danger in which the whole structure of the United Nations has been placed.<sup>138</sup>

Although neither did actually resign, Dean Rusk recounts the events that occurred on the day that the United States recognized Israel in the General Assembly session on May 14, 1948: Austin, who had been instructed to promote Partition and then Trusteeship, dramatically left the floor upon learning this news.<sup>139</sup> He made a poignant decision not to

return to the session, aware that the decision was a snub to members of the UN. These anecdotes illustrate the argument made by this article, that UN accountability mechanisms to enact peace efforts are highly infeasible, predicated on the unstable, and often-changing, political will of individual Member States.

<sup>59</sup> Ellen Jenny Ravndal, "Exit Britain: British Withdrawal from the Palestine Mandate in the Early Cold War, 1947-1948," *Diplomacy & Statecraft* 21, no. 3 (2010), 417-418

<sup>60</sup> The term Jewish is used to denote the Jewish community in Palestine, rather than Zionist. Although Zionism was a popular term utilized in the media during this period, this term is attached to a political ideology about the return of the Jews to their rightful land. Whereas not all Jewish peoples who fled to Palestine subscribed to the Zionist ideology.

<sup>61</sup> The United Nations, "The Plan of Partition and the End of the British Mandate," *The Question of Palestine and the United Nations* (United Nations, 2008), <http://www.un.org/Depts/dpi/palestine/ch2.pdf>, 1-4

<sup>62</sup> United Nations Palestine Commission, "First Special Report to the Security Council: The Problem of Security in Palestine" (New York, NY: United Nations General Assembly 1948).

<sup>63</sup> William Roger Louis, *The British Empire in the Middle East, 1945-1951: Arab Nationalism, the United States, and Postwar Imperialism* (New York/Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1984), 383-396, 483

<sup>64</sup> "Annexes: The Palestine Mandate Preamble," *League of Nations Official Journal* 3, no. 8-Part II (1922), 1007

<sup>65</sup> Ibid.

<sup>66</sup> Charles D. Smith, "The Mandate for Palestine," in *Palestine and the Arab-Israeli Conflict* (New York: Bedford/St. Martin's, 2013), 100, 101

<sup>67</sup> Benny Morris, *1948: A History of the First Arab-Israeli War* (New Haven, United States Yale University Press, 2008), 12-16

<sup>68</sup> Oren Yiftachel, "Nation-building and the Division of Space: Ashkenazi Domination in the Israeli 'Ethnocracy'," *Nationalism and Ethnic Politics* 4, no. 3 (1998), 39.

<sup>69</sup> Charles Smith, "The End of the Mandate and the Creation of Israel (1945-1949)," in *Palestine and the Arab-Israeli Conflict* (New York: Bedford/St. Martin's, 2013), 188

<sup>70</sup> "Transfer of Power in Palestine," *The Times*, December 13, 1947.

<sup>71</sup> Smith, "The End of the Mandate and the Creation of Israel (1945-1949).", 185

<sup>72</sup> Ibid.

<sup>73</sup> Ibid., 136.

<sup>74</sup> Unispal.Un.Org, "A/364 of September 3 1947," ed. United Nations Special Committee on Palestine (General Assembly 1947).

<sup>75</sup> See Smith, 138.

<sup>76</sup> Ibid., 138.

<sup>77</sup> Ibid., 139.

<sup>78</sup> William L. Cleveland and Martin P. Bunton, *A History of the Modern Middle East*, Fifth ed. (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, a member of the Perseus Books Group, 2013), 192, 244

<sup>79</sup> "Transfer of Power in Palestine."

<sup>80</sup> Walid Khalidi, "The Hebrew Reconquista of Palestine: From the 1947 United Nations Partition Resolution to the First Zionist Congress of 1897 (Article)," *Journal of Palestine Studies* 39, no. 1 (2009), 27

<sup>81</sup> Smith, "The End of the Mandate and the Creation of Israel (1945-1949).", 193; and Gene Currihan, "Arab State Chiefs End Crucial Talk," *New York Times (1923-Current file)* 1947.

<sup>82</sup> Charles D. Smith, "Britain, the Arabs, and the Husayn-McMahon Correspondence 1915-1916," in *Palestine and the Arab-Israeli Conflict* (Boston, MA: Bedford/St. Martin's, 2013), 54-63

<sup>83</sup> Avi Shlaim, "Israel and the Arab Coalition in 1948," in *The War for Palestine: Rewriting the History of 1948*, ed. E.L. Rogan and A. Shlaim (Cambridge University Press, 2007), 177

<sup>84</sup> Ibid., 482

<sup>85</sup> James Reston, "President Warned on Palestine Force: Vandenberg and U.S. Military Chiefs Opposed to Sending Regular Army Troops" *New York Times* October 13, 1947.

<sup>86</sup> "Two Plans for Palestine," *The Times*, November 5 1947.

<sup>87</sup> United Nations, "Political and Security Questions: The Palestine Question," (Lake Success, New York: Department of Public Information, UN, 1949), <https://www.unmultimedia.org/searchers/yearbook/pa>

ge.jsp?bookpage=404&volume=1947-48.; United Nations Palestine Commission, "First Special Report to the Security Council: The Problem of Security in Palestine " (New York, NY: United Nations General Assembly 1948).

<sup>88</sup>Mallory Browne, "A Challenge Seen: Group Tells Security Council It Must Move to Avert Bloodshed " *New York Times* February 17, 1948. Here it should be noted that from the beginning Canadian and Filipino UN representatives were vocal about the need to send an international force to Palestine. Canadian UN delegate Pearson believed that the binational proposal should include an international force provision under Charter VII . Prior to the partition vote on November 29, 1947, the United States had vocalized the notion of a volunteer international police force, but quickly withdrew this idea weeks before the partition vote.

<sup>89</sup> United Nations, "Political and Security Questions: The Palestine Question.", 405-407

<sup>90</sup> Thomas J. Hamilton, "U.S. Makes Offer on Force of U.N.," *New York Times* December 22, 1947.

<sup>91</sup>James Reston, "President Warned on Palestine Force: Vandenberg and U.S. Military Chiefs Opposed to Sending Regular Army Troops " *ibid.*, October 13, 1947.

<sup>92</sup> Given the uncertainty of whether key states such as the United States, Britain, and Soviet Union would participate, UN Secretary General Lie had explored other options to form a force by asking smaller nations to supply troops. There was no desire among Member States to participate because of the lack of support among Arab state leaders of the partition plan. See Edwin L. James, "Palestine Task Harder as U.N. Body Begins Job: Continuing Disorders Bring Revival of Idea of Sending International Force to Watch over Partition " *ibid.*, January 11, 1948.

<sup>93</sup> Bureau of Public Affairs Office of the Historian, "Report by the Central Intelligence, Agency ", ed. Paul Claussen Herbert A. Fine, vol. V, Part 2, *The Near East, South Asia, and Africa (Foreign Relations of the United States), 1948* (Washington, USA: United States Government Printing Office, 2018)., 5166-5360

<sup>94</sup> "Memorandum by the Director of the Office of near Eastern and African Affairs (Henderson) to the Secretary of State. ", ed. Herbert A. Fine John G. Reid, vol. VIII, *The British Commonwealth; Europe (Foreign Relations of the United States), 1947* (Washington, USA: United States Government Printing Office, 2018)., 29209-29319

<sup>95</sup> "Draft Memorandum by the Director of the Office of European Affairs (Hickerson) to the under Secretary of State (Lovett)," ed. William Slany Rogers P. Churchill, Herbert A. Fine, vol. IV, *Eastern Europe; The Soviet Union (Foreign Relations of the*

*United States), 1948*, (Washington United States Government Printing Office, 2018)., 21769-21790

<sup>96</sup> William Roger Louis and Robert W. Stookey, "The End of the Palestine Mandate," (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1986)., 23

<sup>97</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>98</sup> "Soviet Stalling Heightens Un Partition Mix-Up," *Toronto Daily Star* March 2, 1948. The *New York Times* reported that UN Soviet Union Representative, Andrei Gromkyo inferred at a UN meeting in March 1948 that he would defer from disclosing the Soviet Union's position on the Palestine issue at the UNSC meeting. It was a move that was believed by UN observers to "capitalise on the United States fence straddling position on partition".

<sup>99</sup> "Soviet Arms Go to Arabs, Says International Body," *New York Times* April 11, 1948.

<sup>100</sup> Secretary of State for the Colonies, "Memorandum -Palestine: Attitude of His Majesty's Government to Implementation of United Nations Plan.," ed. Cabinet (Richmond, England: National Archives, 1948). The memo expressed that it would be "exceedingly dangerous" to allow Soviet Union troops or their satellites in the region.

<sup>101</sup> Louis, *The British Empire in the Middle East, 1945-1951: Arab Nationalism, the United States, and Postwar Imperialism.*, 478-481

<sup>102</sup> *Ibid.*, 497

<sup>103</sup> Fromkin, *A Peace to End All Peace* (1989), pp. 49–50.

<sup>104</sup> Bureau of Public Affairs Office of the Historian, "The Secretary of State to the United States Representative at the United Nations (Austin)," ed. Herbert A. Fine John G. Reid, vol. V, *The Near East and Africa (Foreign Relations), 1947* (Washington United States Government Printing Office, 2018 ),, 31790

<sup>105</sup> "Memorandum by the Policy Planning Staff," ed. Herbert A. Fine John G. Reid, vol. V, Part 2, *The Near East, South Asia, and Africa (Foreign Relations of the United States), 1948* (Washington, USA: United States Government Printing Office, 2018)., 4154

<sup>106</sup> "Suggested Remarks by the Acting Secretary at the Opening of the Us–Uk Talks on the Middle East," ed. Herbert A. Fine John G. Reid, vol. V, *The Near East and Africa (Foreign Relations of the United States), 1947* (Washington, USA: United States Government Printing Office, 2018)., 14479-14527

<sup>107</sup> "Memorandum of Conversation, by Mr. Paul H. Alling, Adviser to the United States Delegation at the General Assembly," ed. Herbert A. Fine John G. Reid, vol. V, *The Near East and Africa (Foreign Relations of the United States), 1947* (Washington, USA: United States Government Printing Office, 2018)., 1490-

14573, 2932; and "Cold War at U.N.," *New York Times* October 3, 1948.

<sup>108</sup> "Memorandum by the Director of the Office of Near Eastern and African Affairs (Henderson) to the Secretary of State.", 15491-15492

<sup>109</sup> Louis, *The British Empire in the Middle East, 1945-1951: Arab Nationalism, the United States, and Postwar Imperialism.*, 46, 480

<sup>110</sup> "Memorandum by the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs and the Secretary of State for the Colonies." Under the Marshall Plan (1948) the United States sought to contain Communism by providing economic aid to countries that they believed were vulnerable to Soviet Union manipulation.

<sup>111</sup> Robert H. Ferrell, *Harry S. Truman and the Cold War Revisionists* (Columbia, UNITED STATES: University of Missouri Press, 2006)., 48

<sup>112</sup> Madawi Al-Rasheed, "Saudi Arabia and the 1948 Palestine War: Beyond Official History", ed. Eugene L. Rogan and Avi Shlaim, in *The War for Palestine: Rewriting the History of 1948*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 2007)., 3956

<sup>113</sup> "Memorandum by the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs and the Secretary of State for the Colonies."

<sup>114</sup> "Hold in Palestine for Soviet Feared: U.S. Military Observers Say Russia Might Offer to Send Troops in Case of War," *ibid.* 1947.

<sup>115</sup> Gene Currian, "Arab States Plan 'Liberation Army'," *New York Times* February 23, 1948.

<sup>116</sup> Office of the Historian, "Report by the Central Intelligence Agency", 5166

<sup>117</sup> Louis, *The British Empire in the Middle East, 1945-1951: Arab Nationalism, the United States, and Postwar Imperialism.*, 478-481

<sup>118</sup> Thomas J. Hamilton, "Future of U.N. Depending on Role of the U.S: Its Ability to Help Preserve Peace Hinges on the Action We Take," *ibid.*

<sup>119</sup> Bureau of Public Affairs Office of the Historian, "Statement Made by the United States Representative at the United Nations (Austin) before the Security Council on March 19, 1948," ed. Fine John G. Reid Herbert A., vol. V, Part 2, *The Near East, South Asia, and Africa (Foreign Relations of the United States), 1948*, (Washington, USA: United States Government Printing Office, 1971, 1948)., 6889-6920

<sup>120</sup> "The Ambassador in the United Kingdom (Douglas) to the Secretary of State, April 16, 1948," ed. Herbert A. Fine John G. Reid, vol. V, Part 2 *The Near East, South Asia, and Africa (Foreign Relations of the United States), 1948* (Washington, USA: United States Government Printing Office 2018)., 8922-8941

<sup>121</sup> "The Chargé in the United Kingdom (Gallman) to the Secretary of State," ed. Herbert A. Fine John G. Reid, vol. V, Part 2, *The Near East, South Asia, and Africa (Foreign Relations of the United States), 1948* (Washington, USA: United States Government Printing Office 2018)., 7304

<sup>122</sup> Bureau of Public Affairs Office of the Historian, "Draft Report Prepared by the Staff of the National Security Council", ed. Herbert A. Fine John G. Reid, vol. V, Part 2, *The Near East, South Asia, and Africa (Foreign Relations of the United States), 1948* (Washington, USA: United States Government Printing Office, 1971), <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1947v05.4337-4367>; Thomas J. Hamilton, "U.N. Sets Special Assembly on Palestine for April 16 to Reconsider Partition," *New York Times (1923-Current file)* 1948.

In April 1948, the UNSC called a special General Assembly to reconsider the partition vote.

<sup>123</sup> Bureau of Public Affairs Office of the Historian, "The Consul General at Jerusalem (Macatee) to the Secretary of State", ed. Herbert A. Fine John G. Reid, vol. V, *The Near East and Africa (Foreign Relations of the United States), 1947* (Washington, USA: United States Government Printing Office, 2018), <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1947v05.4337-4367>

<sup>124</sup> "Memorandum by Mr. Robert M. McClintock to the Director of the Executive Secretariat (Humelsine)," ed. Herbert A. Fine John G. Reid, vol. V, Part 2 *The Near East, South Asia, and Africa (Foreign Relations of the United States), 1948*, (Washington, USA: United States Government Printing Office, 2018)., 5875-5897

<sup>125</sup> "Memorandum by the Joint Chiefs Staff to President Truman, April 4th 1948," ed. Herbert A. Fine John G. Reid, vol. V, Part 2, *The Near East, South Asia, and Africa (Foreign Relations of the United States)* (Washington, USA: United States Government Printing Office 2018)., 8329

<sup>126</sup> "The Secretary of Defense (Forrestal) to the Secretary of State," ed. Paul Claussen Herbert A. Fine, vol. V, Part 2, *The Near East, South Asia, and Africa (Foreign Relations of the United States), 1948* (Washington, USA: United States Government Printing Office, 2018)., 9114

<sup>127</sup> "Report by the Central Intelligence Agency" *ibid.*, 5298

<sup>128</sup> Thomas J. Hamilton, "U.S. Hopes to Find Palestine Guards: Thinks Brazil, Scandinavian and Low Countries May Agree to Supply Troops," *New York Times* April 11, 1948.

<sup>129</sup> Bureau of Public Affairs Office of the Historian, "The Consul at Jerusalem (Wasson) to the Secretary of State," ed. Herbert A. Fine John G. Reid, vol. V, Part Two, *The Near East, South Asia, and Africa (Foreign Relations of the United States), 1948* (Washington, USA: United States Government Printing Office, 1971, 2018), 8699-8711

<sup>130</sup> UN Department of Public Information, "Trusteeship and Non-Self Governing Territories: The Question of Palestine," *The Yearbook of the United Nations 1947-1948* (Lake Success, New York: United Nations, 1949), [http://cdn.un.org/unyearbook/yun/chapter\\_pdf/1947-48YUN/1947-48\\_P1\\_SEC2.pdf](http://cdn.un.org/unyearbook/yun/chapter_pdf/1947-48YUN/1947-48_P1_SEC2.pdf), 262-263

<sup>131</sup> Security Council Resolution 46 of 1948, available from [https://undocs.org/S/RES/46\(1948\)](https://undocs.org/S/RES/46(1948))

<sup>132</sup> Bureau of Public Affairs Office of the Historian, "Resolution 46 (1948) Adopted by the Security Council on April 17, 1948," ed. Reid Herbert A Fine John G., vol. V, Part 2, *The Near East, South Asia, and Africa (Foreign Relations of the United States), 1948*, (Washington, United States United States Government Printing Office, 1971, 1948), 8950-8977

<sup>133</sup> UN Department of Public Information, "Trusteeship and Non-Self Governing Territories: The Question of Palestine.", 415-416

<sup>134</sup> Bureau of Public Affairs Office of the Historian, "Draft Memorandum by the Director of the Office of

United Nations Affairs (Rusk) to the under Secretary of State (Lovett)," ed. Fine John G. Reid Herbert A., vol. V, Part 2, *The Near East, South Asia, and Africa (Foreign Relations of the United States), 1948* (United States Government Printing Office, 1971: Washington, USA, 2018), 10616

<sup>135</sup> "Draft Diary Entry for April 4, 1948, by the Secretary of Defense (Forrestal)," ed. Fine John G. Reid Herbert A., vol. V, Part 2, *The Near East, South Asia, and Africa (Foreign Relations of the United States)* (Washington, USA: United States Government Printing Office, 1971, 1948), 8198-8236

<sup>136</sup> Shulamit Carmi and Henry Rosenfeld, "The Time When the Majority in the Israeli 'Cabinet' Decided 'Not to Block the Possibility of the Return of the Arab Refugees' and How and Why This Policy was Defeated," in Michael Saltman (ed.), *Land and Territoriality* (London: Routledge, 2002),

<sup>137</sup> Trygve Lie, *In the Cause of Peace: Seven Years with the United Nations* (New York: Macmillan, 1954), 170.

<sup>138</sup> *Ibid.*, 170-171.

<sup>139</sup> Bureau of Public Affairs Office of the Historian, "Resolution 186 (S-2) Adopted by the General Assembly on May 14 1948 - Editorial Note," ed. Reid Herbert A Fine John G., vol. 5, Part 2, *The Near East, South Asia, and Africa (Foreign Relations of the United States), 1948* (Washington, USA United States Government Printing Office 2018).