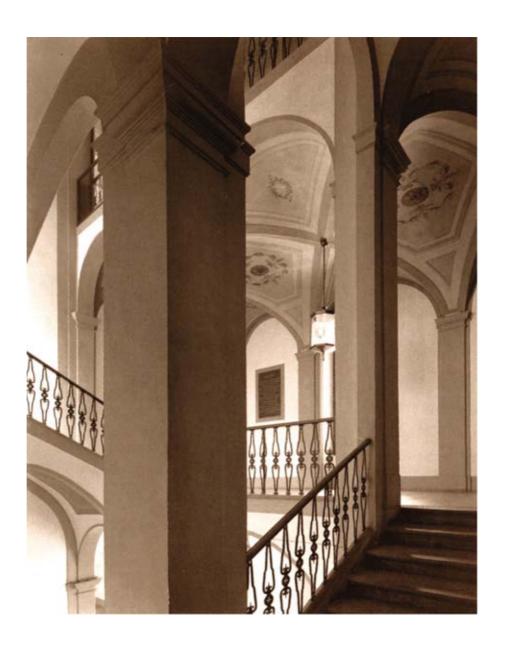
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## **Geopolitical Genesis and Prospect of Zionism**

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### **Geopolitical Genesis and Prospect of Zionism**

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#### **Abstract**

Zionism and its supporters take for granted and teach three central claims: (1) Zionism is a "national liberation movement" of the Jews, by the Jews, and for the Jews, (2) the Jews are a special "Semitic people" with an exclusive inheritance "right" over the territory of Palestine and the heritage of the Biblical Israelites, and (3) the State of Israel should and will remain an exclusively "Jewish state." This paper raises critical questions about these claims and envisions the prospect of a non-Zionist Palestine.

Keywords: Zionism, Palestine, Israel, Geopolitics, Jews

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#### The Non-Jewish Origin of Zionism

According to the "national liberation" claim, Vienna (Austria) was the birthplace of Zionism, Hungarian

<sup>1</sup> In this paper, the term "Zionism" refers to the international colonial movement designed to make Palestine an extraterritorial nation-state for world Jewry. The term "Zionists" refers to the Jewish and non-Jewish supporters of this movement. It should be

noted that critical studies of Zionism have often been tabooed and

considered polemical and/or anti-Semitic in mainstream U.S. media, politics, and culture. For example, the unabridged version of the Webster's Third New International Dictionary of the English Language (1986 Edition) has gone as far as defining anti-Semitism as any "opposition to Zionism" and/or "sympathy with opponents of the State of Israel."

Theodor Herzl was the founding father of Zionism, and the publication of Herzl's booklet, The Jewish State, in 1896 was the beginning of the history of Zionism (Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2004). This claim is supported by Zionist scholars who continue to deny linkages between Zionism and imperialism and present the State of Israel as an anti-imperialist creation (Penslar, 2003:84; Peretz, 1997:8). But a closer look at the genesis of Zionism shows that it was not a national liberation movement of the Jews, by the Jews, and for the Jews. As the following brief analysis shows (more details are found in Ould-Mey, 2002), Zionism was much more the child of European geopolitics than European Jewry.

Plans to settle European Jews in Palestine were developed by non-Jews long before Theodor Herzl was born and were not aimed at the liberation of the Jewish Pale of Settlement where the bulk of world Jewry lived for over a millennium. Zionism was initially rooted in the Reformation and Counter-Reformation conflict. The Protestants stressed Jerusalem and the Palestinian origins of Christianity in order to demarcate themselves from the Catholics. win European Jews on their side, and undermine Rome and Roman Catholicism. In this context came German Martin Luther's Jewish-friendly booklet "That Jesus Christ Was Born a Jew" (1523) in which he explained his scheme to "win some Jews to the Christian faith" and sarcastically begged his "dear papists" to denounce him "as a Jew" (Luther, 1971:200-1). In this context came also English Oliver Cromwell's readmission of the Jews to England in 1655, French Napoleon's Jewish Proclamation of 1799 and the Paris Great Sanhadrin of 1807, and the establishment of the London-based Society for Promoting Christianity among the Jews in 1809. With the Eastern Question (which power will occupy which part of the declining Ottoman Empire) and Jewish Question (Jews living among non-Jews), European powers were competing to use European Jews as a fig-leaf for the colonization of



the Holy Land in the heart of the decaying Ottoman Empire and the emerging Arab world (Ould-Mey, 2002).

After the defeat of Napoleon in 1814, British policymakers began to adopt Napoleon's Zionism for "the maintenance" of the British Empire (Crawford, 1838:188-90). For a long time the British had viewed the Catholic and Orthodox Christians as archenemies of British Zionism and as disparagers of the Old Testament in preference of the New Testament (Crawford, 1838). In this context, an anonymous memorandum on the "Restoration" of the Jews was widely circulated by British Zionists and was discussed by Lord Palmerston and Queen Victoria in 1839 (Restoration of the Jews, 1840). By the 1840s the British had appointed a vice-consul to Jerusalem and assigned Colonel George Gawler to develop the nuts and bolts of a plan to settle Jews in Palestine. His plan was entitled "Tranquillization of Syria and the East through the Establishment of Jewish Colonies in Palestine." He suggested that the tranquillization of Syria amounts to the colonization of Palestine. He noted that since "we" [the British] cannot force the Jews into colonization as we did with our convicts in Australia, we must "carefully consult their feelings as well as our own desires" (Gawler 1845, 8-9). Obviously all of this took place before the alleged founder of Zionism (Theodor Herzl) was born in 1860, and well before anti-Semitism encouraged as a propelling machine for Zionism in the aftermath of the assassination of the Russian Czar in 1881 (for which Russian Jews were blamed) and the rise of the Nazis in the 1930s in Germany (Ould-Mey, 2002).

Because most Jews lived in Russian and Eastern Europe, Anglo-Russian competition over the Jews intensified when the Bolsheviks came to power in Russia (October 1917) and when the British made public the Balfour Declaration (November 1917) which promised Palestine as "a National Home for the Jewish people." In response, the Soviets began to encourage the Jews to stay home or re-settle within the new Soviet Union. They worked to promote Yiddish as the native and national language of the Jews in opposition to British support for Hebrew. Chaim Weizmann reported how his family was split along this Anglo-Russian geopolitical struggle. Chaim supported the British; his brother Shemuel supported the Russians; their mother supported both of them (Weizmann, 1966:13). Finally the Stalin-led Soviet government decided in 1928 to settle the Jews in Birobidzhan on the Soviet border with China, and in 1934 the area became officially (and remained to this day) the Jewish Autonomous Region (Ambijan Committee, 1936:8,25; Gitelman, 1998). The above geopolitical gestation of Zionism was entwined with the identity movement (known as British Israelism) and its claim of a "Semitic" ancestry for the British and the Jews, before other claimants got on the line.

## The Non-Semitic Origins of Contemporary Jews

The Jewish Semitic claim made by the Zionists in the name of contemporary Jews is a social construct drawing largely on the global dissemination of the Bible, the confusion about the origins contemporary Jews, and the assumed non-Arabian origins of the Israelites. Its construction was rooted in European geopolitics and the Eastern and Jewish questions, while its racial tone was partly related to French-backed Prussian Jew Moses Hess' obsession with "race struggle" and British baptised Jew Benjamin Disraeli's popularization of the new racial term "Caucasians." American Jewish writer Lenni Brenner argues further that the Zionist claim over [Semitic] "blood" and [Palestinian] "soil" rooted in the German National Socialist dogma of "blut und boden" (Brenner, 1983). The Semitic claim has also roots in the Biblical conquest narrative of the Chosen People-Promised Land paradigm (Deuteronomy 7:6,16; 20:10-18 and Joshua 6:20-21; 10:28-32) as well as in the various social and spatial constructs of Darwinism and their justification of colonialism.<sup>2</sup> British Israelism claimed a Semitic ancestry for the English elite (including Queen Victoria) before the proliferation of "Semitic" claimants came to include the Jewish Zionists, the Mormons' Latter-Day Saints, the Black Hebrews from Chicago, the Dutch Afrikaners of South Africa, and some White separatist groups in the United States (Beit-Hallahmi, 1993).

However, the Jewish Semitic claim remains unsubstantiated in history (where there is no solid historical documentation for it), archaeology (where no trace of the Israelites was found in Palestine), linguistics (where Yiddish and Modern Hebrew were tracked down to a Slavo-Turkic origin, whereas Biblical Hebrew was traced back to Arabia), and genetics (where research had pointed to a non-Semitic origins of contemporary Jews). This has been strongly argued in Arthur Koestler's "The Thirteenth Tribe: The Khazar Empire and its Heritage;" Michael Bradley's "Chosen People from Caucasus: Jewish Origins, Delusions, Deceptions and Historical Role in the Slave Trade, Genocide and Cultural Colonization;" and Paul Wexler's three books: (1) "The Ashkenazic Jews: A Slavo-Turkic People in Search of a Jewish Identity;" (2) "The Non-Jewish Origins of the Sephardic

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> For example, Arthur Comte de Gobineau's "Inequality of Human Races;" Herbert Spencer's "Survival of the Fittest," Friedrich Ratzel's "Living Space," Theodor Herzl's "Might Makes Right," Karl Haushofer's "Geopolitik," Halford Mackinder's "Geographical Pivot of History," French "Civilizing Mission," English "White Man's Burden," and American "Manifest Destiny."

Jews;" and (3) "Two-tiered Relexification in Yiddish: Jews, Sorbs, Khazars, and the Kiev-Polessian Dialect" (Kostler, 1970; Bradley, 1992; Wexler, 1993; 1996; 2002).

The Jewish Semitic claim was encouraged by the misconception of "Semitism" itself and the assumed "non-Arabian" origins of the Israelites. August Ludwig Schlözer's phrase "Semitic languages" (coined in 1781) was incorrect because Genesis 10 lists the Canaanites as Hamitic whereas their languages (including Hebrew) are Semitic, according to modern linguistics and the Bible (spt kn'n, Isaiah 19:18). The Semitic concept is further misleading because the various peoples who came out of Arabia in the course of the past 4000 years never described themselves as "Semitic" or "Semites." A more accurate label for them would be "Arabian" or "Arabians" or "Arabs" since they all came from Arabia (whether they were called Akkadians, Babylonians, Assyrians, Canaanites, Chaldeans, Phoenicians, Carthaginians, Nabateans, Umayyads, and Abbasids, the latter two are the only ones regarded as Arabs or Arabians).

The centrality of Arabia to the origin and history of "Arabian" peoples and languages has been overlooked by Western scholarship, even though Herodotus has opened his great history by the Phoenicians (the Canaanites) and their Arabian origin. The Phoenician alphabet and Carthage (813-146 BC) are perhaps their most tangible footprints. The Bible stresses that "King Solomon's wealth" has a lot to do with the wealth of Arabian kings (1 King 10:15 and 2 Chronicle 9:14). Saint Paul became an apostle only after his trip to Arabia (Galatians 1:11-24). Josephus speaks proudly of the "Arabian nation" and could not have sealed his religious education without a three-year seminary in the "wilderness" of Arabia (Schürer, 1891; Josephus's Ant. 1. 221). Prophet Mohammed's message was centred on the restoration of "millet Ibraheem," the old religion of Arabia (Quran 2:130,135; 3:95; 4:125; 6:161; 16:123; 22:78). The Arabs had elaborate pilgrim rituals centred on Abraham's sacred sites in and around Mecca well before Islam. Modern Biblical research in Arabia began with works such as Reinhart Dozy's "Les Israelites à la Mecque" and culminated a century later with Kamal Salibi's "The Bible Came from Arabia" and "The Historicity of Biblical Israel" (Goeje, 1883; Salibi, 1985, 1998).

While the above claims about the "Jewishness" of Zionism and the "Semitism" of the Jews are clearly weak, they have nonetheless served to strengthen and cement a wide Western and Jewish support for the ideology and the practice of Zionism. The British wanted Palestine for imperial and religious motives and used the Jews as willing proxies. The Americans have since followed the footsteps of the British. Meanwhile most Jews (even the leftist ones) have shown a great deal of support for the central

tenets of Zionism since very few of them had ever publicly and officially renounced their illegitimate "rights" under the Israeli Law of Return (notwithstanding the 44 signatories of the *Guardian*'s letter of 8 August 2002). Isaac Deutscher who describes himself as "a Marxist of Jewish origin, whose next-of-kin perished in Auschwitz and whose relatives live in Israel" cited the saying "scratch a Jewish left-winger and you find only a Zionist" (Ali, 2002:330-332). But can really such wide Western and Jewish support save Zionism and Israel?

#### The Non-Zionist Future of Palestine

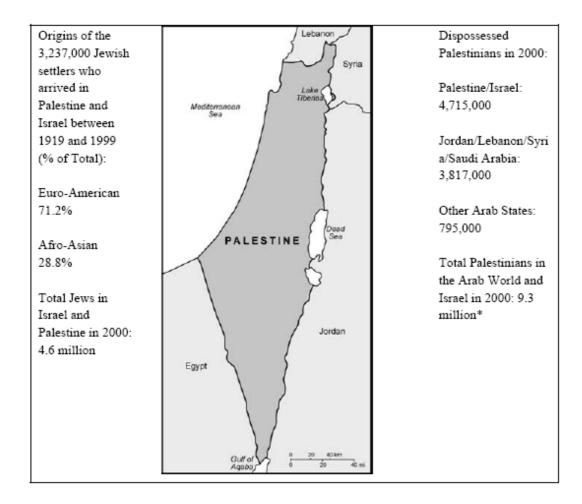
Today Zionism is riding on the War on Terrorism as it did on the Cold War. It continues to draw on the "financial Israel" (the United States) and the "demographic Israel" (Russia) (Samara, 1998). It continues to educate millions of Americans about supporting the State of Israel by rehearsing a fast-food and controversial biblical history and heretical eschatology (see also Halsell, 2003). It continues to present what is known to many as the "Nazi Holocaust" against the Jews in Europe as the historical explanation and the moral justification for what is considered by many as the "Zionist Holocaust" against the Palestinians in Asia (see also Finkelstein, 2000).

But Zionism is far from declaring victory when it comes to solving the Jewish Question, achieving normalcy for the State of Israel, or erasing Palestine from the map. Editor-in-Chief and Chairman of the New Republic Martin Peretz (summing up the conclusions of a symposium of enthusiast Zionist leaders and scholars trying to assess a century of political Zionism) acknowledges that Zionism did not save European Jewry and was not successful at either achieving normalcy or providing a sensible and stable basis for the future of the State of Israel (Peretz, 1997). Haifa University Professor Benjamin Beit-Hallahmi views Zionism as an unfortunate detour from Jewish assimilation into humanity and considers Israel an international problem in the Arab world as was the Jewish Question in Europe (Beit-Hallahmi, 1993). Above all, Zionism remains a "colonial, racist movement" (Perry, 1985:7), which systematically legalizes discrimination between Jews and non-Jews. Under the Israeli Law of "Return," anyone in the world who claims to be "Jewish" or converts to Judaism has an automatic right to "return" to Palestine and become a full Israeli citizen. In the meantime millions of expelled or displaced Palestinians have been denied the right of return to their homes in Palestine, whereas the current Israeli Law of "Return" can give U.S. 2004 Presidential Candidate John Kerry and his family the right to "return" to Palestine and become Israeli nationals simply because Kerry's grandfather was a Czech Jew named Fritz Kohn who changed his name to Frederick Kerry before emigrating from Budapest to

the United States in 1905 (Kranish, 2003; Benn, 2004).

Currently the Jews are a minority inside historic Palestine (Barkat, 2005). Moreover, the Palestinians inside and outside Palestine outnumber Israeli Jews 2 to 1 (see Figure 1). They are fighting back the Israeli occupation as seen in the ongoing Intifada war. An uneven war in which stone-throwing children, women, lone gunmen, and *istishhadiyin* or suicide bombers face the might of the Israeli Defence Forces (IDF) with its U.S.-made and paidfor advanced tanks, bombs, missiles, attack helicopters, and jet fighters. In one military operation (April 2002), it was reported that four IDF

divisions were deployed against a few hundred Palestinian gunmen, many of them living for fifty years in refugee camps (such as Jenin) a few miles from their Jewish-occupied homes in the so-called Israel proper (Pilger, 2002). In nearly five years (between 29 September 2000 and 17 August 2005) of fighting between the Israeli occupation army and the Palestinian resistance movement some 3,659 Palestinians were killed (including 686 children) and 29,040 injured (in addition to 8,043 Palestinian homes demolished) compared to 1,063 Israelis killed (including 123 children) and 7,376 injured (If Americans Knew, 2005).



**Figure 1**The Israeli Law of Return and the Dispossession of the Palestinians

Source: Goldscheider, C. Israel's Changing Society: Population, Ethnicity, and Development. Second Edition. Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press, 2002, page 51. De Blij, H. J. and P. O. Muller. Geography: Realms, Regions, and Concepts. 10th Edition. New York: John Wiley & Sons, 2002, page 314. Central Intelligence Agency (CIA). The World Factbook 2001. http://www.odci.gov/cia/publications/

\* The figure excludes hundred of thousands of Palestinians living outside the Arab World and Israel. The Statistical Abstract of Palestine No. 5 (released in 2004) estimates the total number of Palestinians at 9.6 million, of which 3.7 million in

the Palestinian Territories, 1.1 million in Israel, and 4.8 million outside Palestine/Israel.

Even with a death ratio more than three times higher for the Palestinians than the Israelis, the U.S. government continues to condemn Palestinian

resistance and violence as "terrorism" and Israeli occupation and violence as "self-defence" and continues to veto sending international observers to help protect the Palestinian civilian population. Over the years, every American president and every American Congress "has reiterated loyal, unconditional support" for Israel's security, but none has made reference "to the need of Palestinians for security" (Findley, 2003:368). Such imbalance of power and injustice are making Arab and Muslim peoples angry at U.S. foreign policy, driving a wedge between America and its closest allies in Europe and the Muslim world, and breeding hate and terrorism against America as seen in 9/11. A panel appointed by the Bush administration has found that "hostility toward America" among Muslims and Arabs abroad "has reached shocking (Weisman, 2003). Will mainstream Americans have to choose one day between America's true interests and Israel?

Israel's rejection of de-Zionization à la South Africa, opposition to assimilation within the Arab world, and refusal to give the Palestinians complete independence or full citizenship and right of return, are likely to lead her to repeat the history of European settlers in Palestine during the Roman and Crusade eras and in modern Algeria, Kenya, Zimbabwe, and South Africa. The mainstream Israelis' election of Ariel Sharon (considered a war criminal in the Arab world) could indicate that they have now entered the final die-hard stage which had distinctly marked the end of previous racist settler colonial movements such as in Algeria and South Africa. Israel's catch 22 is that it must remain racist in order to continue to exist. Once it becomes genuinely democratic, it will automatically seize to be Jewish. In the face of declining world Jewry (around 13 million), the Israeli government continues to bring in settlers from all over the globe (including poor Peruvian Indians, see Livneh, 2002), convert them to Judaism, change their names, teach them a new language, and have them settle more Palestinian land under the Law of "Return," while the original Muslim and Christian people of the Holy Land languish in besieged refugee camps stripped of their right to return in violation of UN General Assembly Resolution 194 of December 11, 1948.

Last but not least, Zionism continues to face the same old chronic crisis of identity; a delicate situation captured by the famous saying *Israel is in* 

the Middle East but not from it. Some argue that Israel is facing a deepening crisis of geographical and cultural identity where the civic Israelis and ethnic Jews are drifting in opposite directions amidst a geopolitical schizophrenia between the Middle East, Europe, the United States, and the Jewish Diaspora (Urian and Karsh, 1999; Newman, 2000; Ram, 2003). After nearly a century of claiming a Semitic/Israelite ancestry, adopting Hebrew names, and impersonating and appropriating the identity and cultural heritage of the Palestinians (including Jesus), contemporary Jews are increasingly learning more and more about their non-Semitic origins as well as about their own Khazar and Slavo-Turkic heritage and ancestry (Dunlop, 1954; Koestler, 1976; Patai, 1975; Shakir, 1981; Salibi, 1985; Bradley, 1992; Wexler, 1993, 1996, 2002; Rice, 1994). At the same time the costly efforts by European, American, and Israeli biblical archaeologists have found no trace of the Israelites in Palestine, whereas the Arabian origins of the Israelites and the Hebrew Bible have been indicated or confirmed by many sources (2 Chronicles 9:14, 14:8-9, 21:16; Quran 2:144, 3:67, 3:96-97; Tabari, 838-923; Margoliouth, 1924; Durant, 1935; Salibi, 1985:25; 1988a; 1988b; Rice, 1994:114; Dib, 1988a; 1988b; 1994; 1995; 1998; Herzog, 1999; Dever, 2003:227).

With successive failures and frustrations to produce satisfactory evidence for the Semitic claim within the traditional fields of history, archaeology, toponymy, numismatics, or linguistics, the Zionists are now taking a new turn to a new "racial science" based on genetics (Diamond, 1993; Lucotte et al, 1996; Nevo et al, 1996; Lucotte and Smets, 1999; Halkin, 2000; Hammer et al, 2000; Wade, 2002, 2003; Wexler, 2002; Relethford, 2003). But there are indications that this is not working either. One study by the Hebrew University in Jerusalem published in the American Journal of Human Genetics and reported in the Israeli daily Haaretz concludes that the "Jews were found to be more closely related" to the Kurds, Turks, and Armenians than to their Arab neighbors (Nebel et al, 2001). Another study published in the same journal and reported in The New York Times pointed to a "Central Asian genetic signature" in more than fifty percent of Ashkenazic Jewish Levites (Behar et al, 2003). Such disappointments may explain Hebrew University historian Yehoshua Porath's statement "You can't build a cultural heritage on a lie" (Fletcher, 1995:16).

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