New York and the Rest: The Impact of Regional Public Opinion Preceding the 1948 Election on Truman’s Decision to Recognize Israel
On May 14, 1948 at 6:11 PM, eleven minutes after the British mandate for Palestine expired, the United States under President Harry Truman extended de facto recognition to the new state of Israel in a decision that would cause conflict in the Middle East for years to come. At the time of recognition, accusations rung out amongst members of the press that Truman’s decision was the epitome of domestic politics overstepping its bounds and shaping international affairs. Years later these accusations, particularly that Truman’s decision was motivated by winning Jewish votes in the 1948 election, persist amongst historians.

In *Truman, the Jewish Vote, and the Creation of Israel*, John Snetsinger makes the argument that Truman’s policies were influenced by the 1948 election by demonstrating how, although the U.S. Jewish population was only 5,600,000, it was concentrated in New York, Pennsylvania, and Illinois, states which represented 110 electoral votes critical to winning the presidential campaign. Snetsinger also discusses the importance of Clark Clifford, a lawyer and political advisor to Truman who argued a winning political strategy involved recognition of Israel. While Truman lost New York to Dewey, Snetsinger argues his appeal to Jewish votes still may have swung the election in his favor by shifting votes from Dewey to Truman in Ohio, California, and Illinois.¹ On the opposing side of the debate lies Michael Benson who argues in *Harry S. Truman and the Founding of Israel* that Truman’s decision was grounded in humanitarianism.² In “For all the Wrong Reasons?” David McBride attempts to strike a middle ground between Snetsinger and Benson, adding to the debate the discussion of nativism and anti-Semitism and suggesting domestic factors were not the lone factor in Truman’s decision.³ Ian J. Bickerton is yet another historian who views Truman’s decision as above domestic influence and

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³ David McBride, "For All the Wrong Reasons? Re-evaluating Truman, Domestic Influences, and the Palestine Question," *DOMES: Digest of Middle East Studies* 14, no. 2 (Fall 2005).
was based on creating a “bastion of democracy in the Middle East,” but as Michael Cohen points out, Bickerton’s argument relies heavily on documents from the Truman archives and interviews with biased individuals such as Truman’s friends and associates.\(^4\) Cohen aligns with Snetsinger in “Truman and the State Department: The Palestine Trusteeship Proposal,” emphasizing the importance of the election and Clark Clifford’s influence and utilizing sources such as a confidential memorandum in which Clifford describes the importance of the Jewish vote to New York and the importance of New York to the election.\(^5\) In addition, a cultural historian, Michelle Mart, is relevant to this debate. In *Eyes on Israel* Mart puts forth the argument that in the 1940s, the discourse around Jews shifted from marking them as outsiders to lauding them as insiders. Through utilizing images such as the underdog, the fighter, and the pioneer, Mart argues Americans created Jews in their own image and thus a culture receptive to Jews and prejudiced against Arabs.\(^6\)

In reading the historiography, arguments that domestic politics played a role in Truman’s decision are far more compelling that those that claim he was motivated mainly by humanitarian reasons. It is impossible to overestimate the impact of Clark Clifford, Truman’s advisor who both presented the case for the recognition of Israel and also devised Truman’s 1948 campaign strategy. Historian Henry Fetter creates the most compelling case for domestic influences by detailing the shifts in Clifford’s election strategy. Initially, Clifford proposed forgoing the big states and carrying the south and west, but, as Fetter explains, this plan became a fantasy when the Democratic Party added a civil rights plank to its platform, thereby alienating the south. On

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August 17, 1947, Clifford proposed a new strategy focusing on 17 “critical states” where seventy percent of the nation’s Jews resided. Fetter notes that all of the cities selected by Clifford as locations for major speeches were home to large Jewish populations. New York, of course, had the largest population where with 2,200,000 Jews residing within its borders. Other Jewish populous cities included Philadelphia with 271,000, Boston with 120,000, Cleveland with 80,000, and Milwaukee with 27,000 Jews. 7

Proponents of the humanitarian argument may point to how, twenty-seven years later, Clifford recounted the decision to recognize Israel, emphasizing that electoral strategy played no part in the decision, but this statement cannot be taken at face value. Politicians desire their own place in history, telling the tale that immortalizes them as a selfless leader. Truman may have written in his Memoirs that, “The fate of the Jewish victims of Hilterism was a matter of deep personal concern to me,” 8 but in a 1947 diary entry he wrote, “The Jews, I find, are very selfish. They care not how many Estonians, Latvians, Finns, Poles, Yugoslavs or Greeks get murdered or mistreated as D[isplaced] P[ersons] as long as the Jews get special treatment. Yet when they have power, physical, financial or political neither Hitler nor Stalin has anything on them for cruelty or mistreatment to the underdog.” 9

The existing historiography clearly shows that under the influence of Clifford and in order to win the election, Truman implemented the policy in line with his perception of public opinion. Much of the historiography makes this argument by demonstrating the impact of the opinions of ardent Zionists Jews based in New York, but New York was not the only state with a

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8 Harry S. Truman, 1946-1952 Years of Trial and Hope Memoirs by Harry S. Truman (New York, NY: Time, 1965), II.
significant Jewish population. In addition, public opinion is an impressionistic term which overlooks the variety of voices joining in the debate on Palestine in the 1940s. This paper will contribute to existing historiography by providing a deeper investigation of the relationship between regional public opinion and Truman’s decision on Palestine. Through an analysis of congressional records and regional newspapers, often through the cultural lens provided by Michelle Mart, a pattern will be established in which a public with nuanced opinions became condensed into a monolithic, oversimplified public opinion as a result of ardent Zionists and uninformed masses. Though Congressmen may have been aware of the diversity of opinion, congressional records show they chose to submit to the record only articles that supported their own views and, unsurprisingly, Congressmen who supported Zionism were the most vocal. It is this pattern of oversimplification of public opinion that not only affected Congressmen but also Truman himself. Through consumption of Zionist media and correspondences with ardent Zionist Congressmen such as Emmanuel Celler, Truman perceived a monolithic public opinion which informed and influenced his decision to recognize Israel on the eve of May 14th, 1948.10

Public Opinion

In a speech at Soldier Field, Chicago on July 19, 1949, Truman proclaimed the importance of having domestic support of decisions with an international scope. “Foreign policy is not made by the decision of a few,” Truman said. “It is the result of the democratic process and represents the collective judgement of the people.”11 Truman practiced what he preached, invoking public opinion in a letter to British Prime Minister Attlee on November 13, 1945, regarding Jewish Immigration to Palestine. “The American people, as a whole, firmly believe

that immigration to Palestine should not be closed and that a reasonable number of Europe’s persecuted Jews should, in accordance with their wishes, be permitted to resettle there,” Truman said.12 For Truman, the opinion of the American public was reason enough to support a policy with an international impact.

While Truman believed in the importance of decisions backed by the public, he also believed he could sway public opinion through the press. In an interview with New York Times Magazine in 1945, Truman defined leadership, saying, “If they had not been able to make others see as they did, they would not have been leaders.”13 It is hard to believe the president of the United States saw himself as anything but a leader, and as such he most likely viewed in himself the leadership quality of having the ability to sway others. Furthermore, at a meeting with the American Society of Newspaper Editors in 1947, Truman addressed the press as if they were his coconspirators in gaining popular support in favor of foreign policy initiatives. “Whenever a President is in office everybody has a right to throw mudballs at him if they want to,” Truman said, “but in the foreign policy it is necessary that this country present a solid front to the world on the policy which we want to pursue.”14 Truman’s interview and remarks to the press are evidence he saw the role of the president as one of a public opinion shaper and the press as his means of achieving his desired end.

But there is also evidence Truman was not the steadfast shaper of public opinion he aspired to be and was instead pulled along by what he perceived as the public opinion towards Palestine. In an oral history interview, Loy Henderson, a Foreign Service Officer, recalled the domestic influences on Truman’s decision making process. “I had the impression that he realized

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13 Landecker, The President.
that the Congress, the press, the Democratic Party, and aroused American public opinion in general, would turn against him if he should withdraw his support for the Zionist cause…” Henderson said. “He was almost desperately hoping, I thought, that the Department of State would tell him that the setting up in Palestine of Arab and Jewish States as proposed by the U.N. Commission would be in the interest of the United States.” Thus, when deciding to recognize Israel, it appears Truman was all too aware that only one choice would win the favor of public opinion.

Truman was swayed not only by public opinion but also by Zionists who wielded a disproportionate influence on his perception of public opinion. One of the ways Zionists exerted an inflated influence was through the realization that Truman was left malleable by his desire to win the 1948 election. Henry Fetter notes that Eliahu Epstein, Israel’s special representative to the U.S., stated “Nothing could be more harmful to our cause than a ‘bipartisan policy.’” In other words, Epstein recognized Truman’s desire to appeal to the public and realized the president could be manipulated through partisanship, specifically his opponent, Thomas Dewey. Epstein’s assessment proved accurate as it wasn’t until Dean Alfange, chairman of the American Christian Palestine Committee of New York, applied pressure to Dewey, urging him to make a statement in favor of Zionism, that Truman spoke out on October 28, 1948 in a speech at Madison Square Gardens, pledging his commitment to the Democratic Party’s plank regarding Israel. “I wished to keep foreign policy bi-partisan by keeping it out of the campaign altogether.” Truman lamented in his Memoirs in an attempt to place the blame on Thomas

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Dewey. But the fact that Truman was so easily swayed by Dewey’s pronouncement is evidence he recognized the importance of placating public opinion in order to win the election.

Truman’s perception of public opinion was also influenced by the media he consumed due to his penchant for The New York Times, a publication heavily influenced by Zionist views. In a 1969 interview, W. McNeil Lowry, Chief of the Washington Bureau of the James M. Cox newspapers, described the emphasis Truman placed on the publication as a gauge of measuring public opinion. “…whatever was in The New York Times,” Lowry said. “If you send a clipping in from the Dayton Daily News or the Atlanta Journal or whatever, the President of the United States isn't going to say, ‘Well, O.K., you read all this so-and-so, but here's what I read in the Atlanta Journal.’ He’s not going to do that.” Because Truman regarded the editorials and articles of The New York Times as superior to those of other regional publications and placed a high premium on receiving a positive portrayal by the press, Zionists once again wielded a disproportionate influence in his perception of public opinion.

**East Coast: New York**

In the years leading up to 1948, The New York Times was undeniably pro-Israel. Bruce Evensen captured the spirit of the publication when he noted it covered Israel for fifty days without interruption after the United Nations voted to partition Palestine – on every day but three, the paper ran three or more stories on the issue. The New York Times’ bias towards Zionism is evident in an article on December 24, 1945 titled “Aid to Jews Held Needed for Peace” in which the only perspectives are those of Zionists including Senator Allen Barkley, Dr.

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20 In “The Limits of Presidential Leadership: Truman at War with Zionists, the Press, Public Opinion and His Own State Department over Palestine,” Evensen notes that Truman grew very frustrated when portrayed in a negative light, calling the press “sabotage press.”
Stephen Wise, and Louis Lipsky. One day after the recognition of Israel, “U.S. Moves Quickly,” reveals the publication’s position that the decision was ideal for international relations. “By acting promptly, President Truman anticipated recognition by other countries, including Russia,” Bertram D. Hulens wrote. Two days after Truman’s recognition, an article titled “State of Israel” reveals an undeniable bias in the language used to describe “The New Nation” of Israel and “The Arab League.” While Israel is described as “this little land, wedged in a vast Arab world,” and the “highly trained Haganah” are said to have “put to rout the Palestine Arab fighters,” language used to depict Arabs stands out in stark contrast – “Most are poor and live a primitive and harsh life” and “The rulers of the Arab League states are deeply suspicious of each other.” The language employed to describe Jews fits with the pioneering underdog imagery Michelle Mart argues was integral to incorporating imagery of Jews into the American image, and the language used to describe Arabs captures them as primitive others.

An analysis of congressional records reveals New York Congressman, including Emmanuel Celler, Eugene Keogh, and Jacob Javitz were among the most outspoken in the years leading up to recognition and utilized a tone similar to that of The New York Times. On May 14, 1948, Celler addressed the House, urging them to recognize Israel upon independence being declared that evening. Celler employed similar language of Jews as fighters declaring, “Like the Maccabees of old, the Jews valiantly fought off all foes.” Celler strengthened the tie of the Jews to the Americans, a practice Mart identified as marking Jews as cultural insiders, throughout his speech: “To give American recognition would be within true American tradition. How can the

United States of America which jealously has guarded its independence for 175 years deny it to the Jews who have sought it for 2,000 years?”

An extension of remarks by Celler reveals a connection between politics, the press, and the question of Palestine reminiscent of Truman’s views. On May 19, 1948, Celler submitted an editorial by T.O. Thackrey, editor of the New York Post, to the record, which called for “unconditional support of the only Middle East democracy.” Along with the editorial Celler wrote: “Mr. Speaker, one of the potent factors in developing American public opinion receptive to the Jewish state was the indefatigable efforts of T.O. Thackrey, publisher and editor of the New York Post; Charles Van Devander, editor of the Washington Memo – a feature of the New York Post – and his associates […] They developed much of the climate favorable to President Truman’s declaration of the reorganization of Israel.”

Celler’s submission to the appendix reveals a politician who, like Truman, saw the press as a means of shaping public opinion around a desired policy. In this case the cause was Zionism and, according to Celler, the press was successful in steering the public towards Israel.

East Coast: Boston

In comparison to The New York Times, the Boston based Christian Science Monitor, a secular publication despite the name, stands out in its style of portraying the Israeli and Palestinian side and refusing to privilege one over the other. The October 8, 1945 article, “Palestine ‘Pros and Cons’ Reach High Pitch in U.S.” captures both sides of the debate and employs far less biased language than that of The New York Times. Rather, the article lists “For the Jewish case” followed by three points, including that Arab threats are not substantial, and if

the Arab world has already accepted 600,000 Jews to stay, it should also accept the Jewish state. Meanwhile, the Arab case is followed by four points that portray the Arabs as logically minded individuals with concerns that Zionists’ ultimate goal centers on a Jewish majority and the suggestion by Arab spokesmen that other nations should admit Jewish refugees as a solution to the immigration crisis. “Certainly the Zionist leadership could make better efforts to understand and get along with the Arabs of Palestine,” William Stringer wrote. “Certainly the United States and Britain would prefer to see Jew and Arab bury the hatchet and work together to build a bi-lingual bi-racial Palestine.” Without choosing a side, Stringer concludes that, “Whatever the decision taken, it should be bold and firm and unequivocal and final, so that both Jew and Arab will know where they stand. The time for half-measures, which have continued ever since the Balfour Declaration, is past.” In employing a staff correspondent who traveled to “both Jewish settlements and Arab schools in Palestine, and talked with leaders of the opposite camps,” The Christian Science Monitor saw its mission as presenting all sides of the debate to the public.

This commitment to reporting both perspectives was not unique to Stringer, as articles by other Staff Correspondents such as Joseph G. Harrison reveal a similar tone. However, not all Boston based publications stayed the middle ground. The editor of the Zions Herald, a Boston based Methodist publication founded in 1823, wrote an editorial on May 19, 1948, decrying how “the Gildersleeve-Kermit Roosevelt committee has revealed itself as a diabolical attempt to turn Christian support away from their Jewish brethren and give tacit support for the ex-allies of

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27 Joseph G. Harrison, "New Storm Clouds Darken Future of British-Arab-Jew Relations," Christian Science Monitor (Boston, MA), March 6, 1944. In “New Storm Clouds Darken Future of British-Arab-Jew Relations” published on March 6, 1944 in The Christian Science Monitor, Harrison attributes the situation in Palestine to a “deepening split within the ranks of the Jews themselves rather than to any greatly aggravated hostility between the Jews and Arabs.” Not only is Harrison willing to criticize the Jews, he devotes a third of the article to the Pan-Arab movement, and predictions that a crisis in the Arab land could cause leading Arab chiefs to participate in the union of all Arab speaking countries.
Hitler, the Arab League.” Public opinion is comprised of a plethora of opinion, and such an editorial provides a window into the opinion of Methodists – that they felt not only a special connection to their “Jewish brethren” but also a moral obligation as Christians to a Jewish state. “Surely Christian consciences will not allow this tragic distortion of justice to take place,” Emory Stevens Bucke, editor of the Zions Herald wrote.28

On May 14, 1948, Congressman John McCormack of Massachusetts spoke in favor of the Jewish state, declaring, “As chairman of the Democratic Committee on Platform and Resolutions in the last convention, I think I can point with pride to the fact that I played an important part in including in the platform the position of the Democratic Party which stood for a free and independent Jewish commonwealth in Palestine.” In his speech, McCormack addressed reasons Israel should be recognized including that, “This state has been set up by one of the least warlike peoples in the world,” using language that portrayed the Jews as civilized, setting them off against their Arab counterparts.29 Thus, despite the state of Massachusetts’s being home to a prominent publication which attempted to inform the public through a discussion of the Arab side, its most vocal Congressman employed rhetoric representing the public opinion induced by Zionism.

Midwest: Wisconsin and Ohio

Congressman Lawrence Smith of Ohio provides a rare case study: he is also a congressman who cherry picks press accounts to support his views, but unlike the vast majority of congressmen, he is staunchly anti-Zionist. Whether using a statement by the Washington Chapter of the Council for Judaism declaring its separation from the state of Israel or an article

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28 Cong. Rec. (May 19, 1948) (statement of Rep. Smith). This editorial can be found in the Appendix to the Congressional Record and was submitted by Congressman Lawrence Smith of Wisconsin who found the editorial to be “anything but factual.”
by the *Washington Star* detailing how the United States policy in Palestine was disrupting the aims of the Marshall plan, Smith was determined to provide a platform to those voices suppressed by his fellow congressmen.\(^{30}\) Even more intriguing is that Lawrence Smith represented Wisconsin’s 1st Congressional District, home to the city of Milwaukee, a city selected by Clark Clifford as a location for a major campaign speech and one of the cities Evensen outlined as having a significant Jewish population. But that is not all. Milwaukee was also home to a strongly Zionist publication: *The Jewish Chronicle*.

In “Blood Bank for Milwaukee” *The Jewish Chronicle* demonstrated its Zionist agenda by calling for a blood bank similar to the one being established in New York which would allow not only for donations to Jewish forces fighting in Palestine, but also for the donor to have “a sense of sharing in their fight.” “Wouldn’t it be more appropriate if we in America gave our blood freely instead of making the fighting Palestinians pay for what is rightfully their due?” the unsigned editorial asked.\(^{31}\) In the days leading up to recognition, the publication also ran photo editorials to arouse support among Milwaukee residents for the Milwaukee Jewish Welfare Fund. “Waiting – Just Waiting,” read the caption for the image of a Jewish mother holding her child. The caption on the photo instructs the reader to “See the far-away look in the mother’s eyes as she half-dreams of a better day to come.”\(^{32}\) Less than a month later the image is yet again of a mother and her child. This time the mother holds her child in the air and the caption reads “Find Joy in New Palestinian Life.” According to those at *The Wisconsin Jewish Chronicle*, this mother and child are happy because “they have freed themselves from the shackles of European

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oppression and are shown giving vent to their unrestrained joy.”33 Thus *The Wisconsin Jewish Chronicle* fits the mold of publications that sought to inform and shape public opinion. However, this opinion did not find its way into the speeches and submissions of Lawrence Smith whose anti-Zionist views were so strong, not even his constituency could alter them.

Cleveland, with a Jewish population of 80,000, was another city selected by Clifford as a location for a major campaign speech and in fact, during his address, Truman attacked Republicans for passing a displaced persons bill that discriminated against both Jews and Catholics.34 Cleveland bears another similarity to Milwaukee and that is the presence of a minority group publication with strong Zionist sentiments. This publication is *The Cleveland Call and Post*, an African American publication whose support for Zionism arose for reasons unique to African Americans.

An article on the Palestine Partition which ran in the December 13, 1947 issue of the publication reveals a bias in reporting which rivals that of *The New York Times*. “To get the facts,” Slween Booker wrote, “we arranged an interview with Dr. John Brickner.” Dr. John Brickner was a Zionist Rabbi, the only source the publication sought to consult, and, according to the writer, “a silver-haired, smooth-voiced leader.” This publication is far from unbiased in its language, using all too familiar discourse to distinguish the civilized Jews from their uncivilized Arab counterparts: “The presence of the Jewish in Palestine has brought sanitation, education, and western technologies of civilization, Dr. Brickner explained. Now instead of desert land, many parts of Palestine are in bloom with vegetation.” The article also reveals the publication’s belief that African Americans should empathize with the plight of the Jews because of their

34 Truman S. Harry, "Address in the Cleveland Municipal Auditorium," October 26, 1948, https://www.trumanlibrary.org/publicpapers/index.php?pid=2009&st=&st1=. While Truman made stops in several other stops in Ohio cities, he only made informal remarks. Cleveland was the only Ohio location where he delivered an address.
shared status as a fellow minority group.35 “Here is how Negroes could help the Jews: (Support
the Stratton Bill and take a calm understanding viewpoint on Palestine, not becoming emotional
about “racial angle”)” reads the last line of the article.

Ohio publications for a wider audience also reveal sympathies for the Jews. The
Chronicle-Telegram’s headline, “Weeping Jewish Refugees Fight Vainly with Fists Against
British Soldiers,” does not beat around the bush in painting the Jews as the victims and seems to
have a clear goal of arousing sympathies.36 However, The Cincinnati Enquirer columnist
William H. Hessler who wrote on foreign affairs, offered a far different view of the conflict and
an even cynical take on American policy. “The Jews are not entitled to any monopoly of the
world’s humanitarian feelings,” Hessler wrote. “Arabs are people too. On the other hand,
strategic considerations do not work solely on the side of the Arabs.” Hessler’s column, a call for
Washington and London, to work together to compel a truce between Arabs and Jews contains a
claim that Clark Clifford would later try to refute: “The United States, never able for long to
keep domestic politics and foreign policy separate, has wavered between pro-Arab and pro-
Jewish policies.”37

Unlike the case of Wisconsin, the Congressional Record reflects multiple Ohio
congressmen speaking on the Palestine issue and in support of a Jewish state. In the October 16,
1945 session, Representative George Bender addressed the floor, lauding the Jewish
commonwealth as a “lighthouse in the Middle East,” and utilizing the pioneering metaphors
identified by Mart, stating, “We are the descendants of pioneers who came to this country

35 Slweon Booker, “Palestine Partition Brings Jubilation to Cleveland,” Cleveland Call and Post, December 13,
1947 “We wanted to know how we as members of another minority group could aid the Jewish people,” Slweon
Booker wrote in “Palestine Partition Brings Jubilation to Cleveland” in the December 13, 1947 issue of the
Cleveland Call and Post.
36 “Weeping Jewish Refugees Fight Vainly with Fists against British Soldiers,” The Chronicle-Telegram (Elyria,
OH), August 13, 1946.
Cincinnati Enquirer (Cincinnati, OH), June 6, 1948.
seeking a refuge from religious persecution. We cannot say to those who seek the same salvation today that America has forgotten."\textsuperscript{38} Ohio representatives Michael Feighan, Walter Huber, and Earl Lewis also spoke, urging support for Jews in need of a homeland through comparisons between the Jews and the founding of the United States, thereby marking them as cultural insiders.\textsuperscript{39} Thus Ohio and Wisconsin reveal many publications including minority groups supporting Israel, but also deviations from this trend. Another trend, however, remains: that of congressmen presenting staunchly one sided views on the floor and in the appendix.

\textbf{West: California and Arizona}

In the years just before and after the recognition of Israel, the \textit{Los Angeles Times} ran articles designed to showcase a range of perspectives and editorials urging readers to understand the history of the conflict. “Propaganda has so confused the issue that most Americans are unable to make a fair appraisal of it,” read an unsigned editorial on October 14, 1947. “Terms have been so curiously abused in the heat of the controversy that a person who ventures to discover some merit in the Arab position may be accused of being anti-Semitic.” Such an editorial identifies the editorial board of the \textit{Los Angeles Times} as attempting to reshape public opinion. The writers are stating their belief that public opinion has drifted so far to the side of the Jews that those who may want to understand the Arab side have been shamed into silence. In reaction to such an atmosphere, the \textit{Los Angeles Times} editorial delves into the history of the conflict, discussing the Arab belief that Jews hope to take over their land through the creation of Jewish majority through unrestricted immigration.\textsuperscript{40} In addition, articles such as “Leaders of Two Groups Split

\textsuperscript{39} Cong. Rec. (Oct. 16, 1945) (statement of Rep. Huber.). “We know that the United States could not endure half-slave and half-free. Neither can this now small world endure half-slave and half-free. If nations can be forced into slavery why can they not be encouraged into freedom?” – Walter Huber, October 16, 1945, speaking on Palestine
\textsuperscript{40} “Palestine Partition for Peace,” \textit{Los Angeles Times} (Los Angeles, CA), October 14, 1947. “The Arabs pointed out, and still point out, that they have been in possession of Palestine since the eighth century and that it is the Zionist
on Palestine as Jewish State” highlights Jewish leaders with differing viewpoints including the president of the American Council for Judaism who believed the resolution urging Britain to drop its ban on immigration into Palestine was “no longer designed to serve a solely humanitarian purpose.”

While the Los Angeles Times reminded readers to be open to other perspectives, editorials of the Arizona Daily Star didn’t just introduce the Arab perspective, but sided with it. An editorial on May 16th, 1948 on the recognition of Israel listed the implications of the decision, one of the most serious being that the decision “recognizes the validity of the racial principle in creating a national sovereignty.” The editorial foreshadowed a future where Arabs were discriminated against so that their votes would not be heard. A unique feature of this editorial is that it flipped the rhetoric employed by so many Zionists on its head. Instead of relating the Jews to the Americans, the editorial placed Americans in the position of the Palestinians. “The Jews claim the right as one dating back to the days of Moses,” the editorial reads. “Here we are in Arizona which 100 years ago belonged to Mexico.” Lastly, the editorial made an intriguing observation: “We have set the precedent that an articulate tiny minority of a racial minority in our own country can, by their organized political influence, successfully intimidate the President of the United States and two Republican candidates for President – Dewey and Taft – into approving a policy that will involve the lives of the entire nation in supporting unsound, fateful ambitions in a dispute directly involving only 500,000 people of that particular minority.” Like the Los Angeles Times, the Arizona Daily Star recognized public opinion had been shaped by a

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41 "Leaders of Two Groups Split on Palestine as Jewish State," The Los Angeles Times (Los Angeles, CA), February 9, 1944. The other Jewish leader featured in the article was Dr. Israel Goldstein, president of the Zionist Organization of America. Goldstein urged the adopting of the resolution because it would “lift the hopes of the surviving remnant of European Jewry.”
small but powerful group, and the editorial reads as a warning to the public. A second editorial by the *Arizona Daily Star* carries a similar tone when it states, “Surely the American people should be cautioned about what they are getting into,” and “anyone who will take the time to investigate, as the Star has done, will see that the Arab opposition originates not merely with the Arab teachers […] but surprisingly enough in American political philosophy.”43 Once again, the publication inverted the rhetoric espoused by the majority of Congressmen and Zionist publications, relating Americans not to the Jews but to the Arabs.

Neither publication would have approved of California Congressman Chet Holifield’s address to the House on May 14, 1948, urging the United States to recognize Israel. In his speech, Holifield returned to the tried and true rhetoric of the bond between Americans and Jews with Jews representing the Middle East’s only hope of democracy. As opposed to the *Arizona Daily Star* which wrote that those who learned more would understand the Arab cause, Chet Holifield declares “even people who know very little about that crucially important area of the world know that thus far there is only one vanguard of progress and modernization in the Middle East, and that is the Jewish state in Palestine.”44 Public opinion seems to be predicated upon “people who know very little,” as evidenced by the 1946 Gallup poll in which only 50 percent of individuals had heard of the issue of Jewish immigration and yet 78 percent thought the admission of 100,000 Jews into Palestine was a “Good Idea.”45 Such a poll reveals that appeals to tried and true cultural metaphors (and prejudices against Arabs) were far more effective than analyses of the Arab perspective. Thus, while publications such as the *Los Angeles* times worked
to inform and counteract the majority view which they saw as a result of misinformation, Holifield fits the general trend of ignoring nuanced opinions, instead espousing the views of “people who know very little” which, comfortingly, coincided with his own views.

**South: Texas, South Carolina, and Kansas**

Searching through the microfilm collection of the *Houston Chronicle* reveals an intense interest in the conflict in Palestine. On the reel containing issues beginning with April 25th, 1948, the May 7th issue was the first in which the front page did not feature an article related to fighting in Palestine. Often the front page articles on the conflict were also the headline including “Six Arab Armies Invade Holy Land” on May 1st, 1948 and “Palestine Jews Mobilize for ‘Zero Hour’ on May 11th, 1948.46 As these headlines suggest, the *Houston Chronicle*’s coverage of Palestine revolved around fighting, with each story a report on the most recent attacks and death tolls. The *Houston Chronicle* remained objective in its reporting of the violence, headlines doing no more than stating the fact and showing a hesitancy to accept Jewish reports at face value. On May 2nd, 1948, the headline “Jews Claim Arab Forces Are Beaten” carried no trace of celebrating a Jewish victory and also lacked a vilification of the British seen in papers with a more Zionist slant.47 A May 3rd title, “Jews Insist Invasion ‘On,’ Arabs Deny It,” once again reveals the paper’s unwillingness to accept the words of the Jews at face value and contrasts with *The New York Times* article, “Aid for Jews Needed for Peace.”48

While the *Houston Chronicle* presents a rare case of a paper that is all facts, no opinions, a South Carolina publication, *The Greenville News*, criticized both the Jews who “clearly are

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46 “Six Arab Armies Invade Holy Land,” *Houston Chronicle* (Houston, TX), May 1, 1948. “Palestine Jews Mobilize for ‘Zero Hour,’” *Houston Chronicle* (Houston, TX), May 11, 1948.
47 Jews Claim Arab Forces Are Beaten,” *Houston Chronicle* (Houston, TX), May 2, 1948. The following showcases a snippet of the Chronicle’s objective style: “British army headquarters announced that its troops Friday night killed 0 Jewish members of the Irgun Zval Leumi in a burst of fighting that broke the truce in the Jaffa-Tel Aviv area on the coast.”
48 “Jews Insist Invasion ‘On,’ Arabs Deny It,” *Houston Chronicle* (Houston, TX), May 2, 1948.
inflexibly determined to maintain their status as a state, and can only be prevented from doing so by overwhelming military force,” and the Herald Tribune’s views on the Bernadotte plan. “Yet the New York paper thinks something has been gained in that reiteration of the recognition of an independent Jewish state is the core of Bernadotte’s suggestions,” the unsigned editorial reads. “And if the Arabs are not yet willing to concede the existence of Israel, it says, they are virtually alone in that attitude.” Here is evidence of another paper seeking to counteract what it saw as a public opinion so influenced by Zionists that an alternate viewpoint in favor of the Arab’s did not exist. Finally, The Catholic Advance, a publication based in Kansas, offers insight into the Catholic stance which was far more concerned with the protection of holy sites in Jerusalem than in either the Arabs or Jews. “If the warfare between the Arabs and Jews becomes a major military campaign, the most sacred ground in Christendom may be thrown open as a battleground and many shrines might become eventually a part of “no-man’s land,” the May 14th, 1948 article reads and then goes on to list every location under threat and its religious significance. An editorial a week later titled “Israel Promises Safeguards to Holy Places of All Faiths” once again shows where the concerns of Catholics at The Catholic Advance lie. While the Methodist Zions Herald invoked religion to promote the Jewish side, The Catholic Advance is concerned with the protection of places sacred to all faiths.

None of these southern states had representatives that were vocal in congress, but during the December 18, 1947 session, Congressman Ed Gossett spoke to ask Lawrence Smith a question. During his question Ed Gossett read a quote from a Washington Post article which stated that domestic politics influenced by Zionists rather than the best interests of the United States were the reason for events unfolding in favor of the Jews at the United Nations. As it turns

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49 “More War for Palestine?,” The Greenville News (Greenville, SC), July 6, 1948.
51 Israel Promises Safeguards to Holy Places of All Faiths,” The Catholic Advance (Wichita, KS), May 21, 1948.
out, Gossett’s question was not so much a question but more a rare showing of support for Lawrence Smith. “[Mr. Drew Pearson] seems to corroborate the proposition that the gentleman is making that we were playing domestic politics with an international issue fraught with dynamite,” Gossett said. Shortly after Gossett spoke, Congressman Javitz of New York engaged Lawrence in a heated debate. That Gossett remained silent on the issue for many records but then spoke in support of Lawrence reveals the atmosphere noted by editorials in the *Los Angeles Times*, of a public where individuals were scared to discuss the Arab side. Smith stood alone, advocating for the Arabs and Gossett showed his agreement not by making statements himself, but indirectly, through invoking the opinion of a journalist. Thus selections from the south reveal publications with opinions ranging from *The Catholic Advance*, which concerned itself with holy sites, to *The Greensville News*, which criticized the *Herald Tribune* for its Zionist slant. However, such publications were not a part of the public opinion perceived by Truman which caused him to make his decision on May 14th, and except for Gossett’s brief comment, such nuanced views never found their ways from the region to the congressional record.

**Conclusion**

An analysis of regional publications in 1940s reveals newspapers viewed themselves as informants and influencers of public opinion. Walter Lippman, a prominent journalist articulated the position journalists perceived themselves to hold when he declared, “If the country is to be governed with the consent of the governed then the governed must arrive at opinions about what their governors what them to consent to. How do they do this? They do it by hearing on the radio and reading in the newspapers what the corps of correspondents tell them is going on in

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Washington, and in the country at large, and in the world…We do what every sovereign citizen is supposed to do but has not the time or interest to do for himself.”53

While certain publications saw their role as bringing the unheard perspective of Arabs to the nation, other publications were unabashed in their support of the Zionist cause. In addition to nuanced opinion, certain regional publications were not afraid to challenge more popular metaphors, which marked Jews as American cultural insiders. At the end of the day however, journalists with a mission to inform could not succeed unless their publications were read. Congressional records reveal the majority of congressmen such as Emmanuel Celler read selectively, only submitting to the record articles which coincided with their views, a practice followed by Truman who prioritized The New York Times. In addition, congressmen rarely expressed any inversions of popular discourse, instead touting cultural insider images of Jews as pioneers of democracy. Because those who favored Zionism spoke most often and submitted larger numbers of articles to the record, Zionist voices rang the loudest in congress, drowning out the debate occurring amongst publications at regional level and creating the illusion of an irrefutable argument for Israel.

Such a pattern reveals how Truman, who made his decision to recognize Israel by appealing to public opinion, came to feel he had no choice, lest he risk losing the election. Not only did Zionists shout the loudest, the rhetoric employed by Zionists aligned with the cultural spirit of pioneering, fighting Jews against the uncivilized Arabs. Such discourses carried the uninformed masses far more successfully than lengthy articles written by William Stringer, correspondent for the Christian Science Monitor. This explains how in the 1946 Gallup poll, only fifty percent of those asked had heard of Jewish immigration into Palestine and yet 78

percent believed it to be a “Good Idea.” Thus Truman was surrounded by politicians representing their regions in an oversimplified manner, making recognition appear desired by the entire nation. With an election impending Truman could not risk alienating public support and so, in making his decision to recognize Israel, he yielded to a minority group which had managed to inflate its influence by capitalizing on the disconnect between opinions scattered across the nation and those in the nation’s capital.