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THESIS

AN HISTORICAL SURVEY OF THE BRITISH MANDATE IN PALESTINE 1920-1948: POLICIES CONTRIBUTING TO THE JEWISH/ARAB CONFLICT

by

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December 2001

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This thesis analyzes the British Mandate in Palestine 1920-1948. It examines the significance the British placed on their continued involvement in the Middle East following World War I, and the inherent contradictions that were a result of three separate agreements, each initiated to distribute lands previously ruled by the Ottomans. The British inability to reconcile the promises they made to both the Zionists and the Arabs, combined with their Mandate administration policies, shaped the Jewish/Arab conflict that has continued until the present day. The influence of the Zionist lobby on British leadership resulted in policies that favorably biased the Jewish population in Palestine. Additionally, Arabs disadvantaged themselves by refusing to participate politically with Jews, while Jewish leaders embraced opportunities to establish political institutions. Arab standing was further disadvantaged by British reaction to political violence displayed in response to British policies. The Jewish leadership capitalized on every opportunity to consolidate power, while the Arabs missed opportunities by remaining politically fragmented and unwilling to compromise.

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AN HISTORICAL SURVEY OF THE BRITISH MANDATE IN PALESTINE 1920-1948: POLICIES CONTRIBUTING TO JEWISH/ARAB CONFLICT

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This thesis analyzes the British Mandate in Palestine. It examines the significance that continued involvement in the Middle East region posed for the British, and their attempt to reconcile the promises they made to other groups for control of the region, with their own interests. After the defeat of the Ottomans in World War I, the Ottoman lands were divided amongst the allied victors of the war. Britain wanted to maintain a sphere of influence in the region to temper the presence of the French, while simultaneously ensuring that they remained close to their interests in the emerging oil regions and their holdings in the Suez Canal zone.

The western power's divisions of the land caused more questions than they answered. Based on wartime correspondence with the British, the Arab population believed the land was supposed to revert to them for the creation of an independent Arab country. The Zionists, however, were told in the Balfour Declaration that Palestine would be developed as a homeland for the Jews, as a haven from persecution. Britain decided to rule the Palestinian Mandate directly hoping to reach a compromise solution that would fulfil both of these promises.

The Arabs were skeptical of the Mandate from its inception. They did not want to acknowledge the legitimacy of the British mission in Palestine because the Balfour Declaration, which first pledged British aid for the Jewish homeland, was included in the Mandate charter. During the Mandate, the British promulgated administrative policies intended to recognize the Jewish perspective, as well as the Arab position. While the Jews embraced the opportunities the British provided to participate in the government institutions, the Arabs boycotted any situation where Jews were given equal representation. The Arabs demanded proportional representation as they encompassed more than ninety percent of the population of Palestine when the Mandate began. Nevertheless, the pressure of the powerful Zionist lobby on the political leaders in London influenced the creation of policies that advantaged the Jews.

In addition to proportional representation, the immigration levels of Jews coming to Palestine and sales of Arab land to Jews were two of the topics that Arabs protested

most vehemently. In these areas, Arabs saw their influence and control of the region slipping to the Jews because of the British policies. As an expression of their dissatisfaction with these policies, the Arabs turned to the use of political violence. Their plan to raise awareness and concern for their feelings about these subjects backfired with the British and ultimately disadvantaged the Arab cause further.

Since the Arabs were the first group to use political violence, they assumed a reputation as the aggressors of the ensuing conflict. The Arab actions made British officials more sympathetic to Jewish pleas for security, so Jews were more readily included in police and security force training. Additionally, as the conflict continued, the British were somewhat more accepting of Jewish violence and retaliation was viewed almost as a form of self-defense. Throughout the conflict, British response to Arab violence was swifter and stronger than to Jewish acts of the same magnitude. The British blamed the religious and political leaders of the Arab movement for their role in the conflict, and most were forced into exile. Jewish leaders, however, were not denounced by the British and continued to participate in the Mandate government, consolidating political power and building institutions.

One of the Jewish group's greatest strengths was its ability to unite the Jewish people in a single effort to realize their goal of an independent country. The tribal structure of Arab culture disadvantaged the Arab cause and they were not able to achieve this success. The Arab clans were never able to get beyond their tribal rivalries and form alliances united in opposition to the Jewish presence. Abdullah, the ruler of TransJordan was no exception. Abdullah was obligated to the British for his position and for the continued security they provided him. Therefore, he had to balance his own expansionist desires with the British pro-Zionist policies he was expected to support. He entered into a scheme of collusion with both the British and the Jews, in separate agreements, to achieve his desire to enlarge his land holding, while sacrificing the greater Arab cause.

This thesis determines that British policies during the Mandate period favored the Jewish population. Immigration policies, land purchase rights and government positions afforded the Jews the opportunity to consolidate power in political institutions, which would form the basis of the government of the Israeli State. Additionally, Arab miscues,

political non-participation, and violence disadvantaged this group. It can be inferred that these policies denied them the rule of their own independent country, and is the basis for the current Jewish/Arab conflict in the Middle East.

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I. INTRODUCTION

A. PURPOSE

The declaration of independence for the State of Israel came more than fifty years ago, but the conflict between the inhabitants of the region has continued until the present day. Many of the issues Palestinian Arabs are still discontent with find their roots in the British Mandatory period and the British policies from that time. The purpose of this thesis is to provide an historical study of the Mandate period in Palestine and the policies issued by the British government during their rule. I will argue that British policy vis-à-vis the Zionists, as compared to their policy towards the Arabs, resulted in different forms of political violence. These actions further influenced the ability of each group to create viable institutions and consolidate political power. This study of the historical basis of the conflict will provide greater understanding for the current context of the conflict and may provide insight useful to students of the Middle East peace process.

B. MANDATE ADMINISTRATION POLICIES

After the defeat of the Ottoman Empire in World War I, British forces maintained a sphere of influence in the Middle East. The League of Nations Charter for the Mandate implied that the British were supposed to impartially aid in the development of Palestine, so that it might result in an independent country for the indigenous people of the region. However, influenced by the Zionist lobby, the policies the British promulgated for the administration of the Palestinian Mandate favorably biased the minority Jewish portion of the population.

The powerful lobbying by the World Zionist Organization kept pressure on western governments, especially Britain, to ensure that Palestine was developed as a national home for the Jews. Jewish immigration continued, despite Arab protests, and Jews were given disproportionate levels of representation in the local government and positions of political power.

Jewish leaders embraced the opportunities to participate in the government institutions, while Arab leaders boycotted working in any situation where Jews were given equal recognition. The British policies offered Jewish leaders continued political access, while the Arab leaders disadvantaged themselves of British recognition by

refusing to participate politically with the Jews. The British policies, and Arab reaction to them, directly influenced the Jewish/Arab conflict that has continued for over half of the last century.

C. BRITISH RESPONSE TO POLITICAL VIOLENCE

The Arabs were the first group to use political violence to express their dissatisfaction with British policies. Accordingly, they assumed a reputation as the aggressors of the ensuing conflict. Furthermore, British response to Arab political violence was swifter and stronger than their reaction to Jewish acts of the same magnitude. Early Arab violence directed toward the Jews made British Mandate officials sympathetic to Jewish pleas for increased security. Additionally, since the Arab forces were the first to use violence, the British governors were somewhat more accepting of Jewish violence, as the conflict continued, because it was seen as a form of self-defense.

The British more readily included Jewish personnel in police and security force training, and turned a blind eye to the weapons caches the Jews were accumulating. The British policies, either directly through training or indirectly by allowing weapons collection, predisposed the Jewish forces to be better prepared than the Arabs for political violence and the eventual war for independence.

When the conflict continued and even escalated over the years, the British often downplayed Jewish actions, even when they were committed without provocation. As the minority group in the region, the Jews had the "moral high ground" advantage of claiming that any violent act they committed was necessary for their very survival.

When the tide turned in the 1930s and Jewish forces were initiating political violence for their own motivations, the British did not show the same sympathy for Arab retributions. The religious and political leaders of the Arab faction lost favor with the British for their role in the disturbances, and were forced into exile, while their Jewish counterparts were still welcomed in the British government structure.

D. COLLUSION WITH ABDULLAH

The tribal structure of Arab culture disadvantaged them as well. Unlike the Jews, who were able to consolidate power for one united goal, the Arab clans were unable to form alliances and present a united front in opposition to the Jewish presence. Each

group, historically, was concerned with their own power base and survival. Abdullah, the Hashimite ruler of TransJordan, was no exception.

British government involvement in the Middle East established regimes that felt obligated to them for their existence, and afforded the British the ability to influence these new nations and their political positions vis-à-vis the situation in Palestine. In the case of TransJordan, the British artificially created the borders of that nation and were responsible for Abdullah's appointment. He was consequently motivated by his obligation to the British for his position, and their continued security that helped him retain that post. Abdullah had to balance his own desires to further his holdings in Palestine, with the British pro-Zionist policy.

As conflicts in the Palestinian Mandate intensified between the Jews and Arabs, the British colluded with Abdullah to support the Jewish aims, or rather, refrain from aiding the Arabs in their opposition to the Jews. Abdullah secretly agreed, in exchange for a larger portion of land in the Palestinian region. With British instigation, he embarked in a scheme of collusion with the Zionists based on his own self-interest and desires, rather than those of a greater Arab cause. His reaction to growing Jewish power and increasing Arab discontent was more in line with the British response than with that of other Arab nations.

In conclusion, the British government policies favored the Jewish population. Immigration policies, land purchase rights and government positions afforded the Jews the opportunity to consolidate their power in political institutions, which would form the basis of the government of the Israeli State. Additionally, Arab miscues, political non-participation, and violence disadvantaged this group. It can be inferred that these policies denied them the rule of their own independent county, and is the basis for the current Jewish/Arab conflict in the Middle East.

E. METHODOLOGY

This thesis will apply qualitative analysis to secondary source materials, some of which was compiled from recently declassified Israeli government files. The thesis is organized in the following manner: Chapter Two offers an historical interpretation of the British interest in Palestine and their decision to remain in the region, assuming

responsibility for the governance of the Mandate. Chapter Three reviews the British administrative policies. Chapter Four analyzes British response to political violence and examines the differences between their reactions to Jewish violence versus Arab violence. Chapter Five reveals the collusion that occurred between both the British and Jewish leaders, and Abdullah, ruler of TransJordan. Chapter Six offers conclusions.

II. HISTORICAL BASIS FOR THE CREATION OF THE MANDATE

This chapter offers an historical interpretation for initial British interest in Palestine and their decision to remain in the region, assuming responsibility for the governance of the Mandate. It considers the strategic benefits that the British hoped to exploit through their continued presence in the area, and the actions that they took in order to realize their sovereignty in the region. Further, it briefly introduces the frustrations that the Arabs felt because of policies that advantaged the Jews early in the establishment of the Mandate.

A. BRITISH HISTORICAL INTEREST IN THE MIDDLE EAST

During the nineteenth century, Britain's interests in the Middle East were best served by maintaining the integrity of the Ottoman Empire. The Ottomans effectively stopped Russia's imperial advances, thus ensuring a balance of European power between Russia and Britain. The symbiotic relationship between the Ottomans and Britain allowed Britain to enjoy unimpaired transit through the region, furthering its ability to provide security to the jewel of its empire, India.[1]

The eruption of World War I ended the period of quasi-peace that pervaded the Middle East over the past several decades. Ultimately, the Ottoman Empire entered the war as an ally of the Germans, primarily because of their long-standing feud with Russia over land in the Caucasus, despite attempts from the British to avoid this eventuality. The British, who had previously supported the Ottomans as a means to maintain a balance of power in the region, were now obligated to take actions against the Ottomans. The agreements the British initiated with her allies would result in dismembering the defeated Ottoman Empire at the conclusion of the war.

Sharif Husayn of Mecca used the opportunity of Britain's presence in Egypt to seek their aid in keeping the Ottomans out of the Hijaz so that he might retain a greater degree of autonomy. After being turned down by the British initially, Husayn was

[1] Matthew A. Fitzsimons, *Empire by Treaty: Britain and the Middle East in the Twentieth Century* (Notre Dame, Indiana: Notre Dame Press, 1964) p. 4.

involved in a series of exchanges with Henry McMahon, the High Commissioner in Cairo. The British correspondence promised the Arabs independent countries in Greater Syria and the Arabian Peninsula in exchange for Husayn's forces inspiring an Arab Revolt. The disruption would likely distract Ottoman troops, lessening their strength to fight the British at the Suez Canal. The British further led Husayn to believe that in exchange for his support they would advance a proclamation of an Arab caliphate, ostensibly from his familial line.

In separate negotiations, the groundwork for the Sykes-Picot Agreement occurred just after the time that McMahon was pledging his commitment to Husayn. The Sykes-Picot Agreement plan for the division of the Middle East is illustrated in Figure 1.

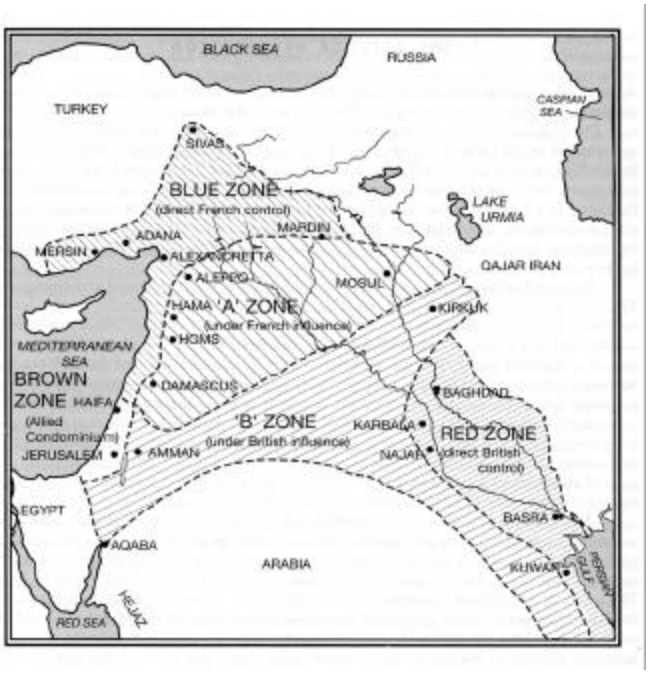

Figure 1.
Distribution of Ottoman Lands as Intended from the Sykes-Picot Agreement (From Ian J. Bickerton and Carla L. Klausner, *A Concise History of the Arab-Israeli Conflict, 3rd Edition* (Upper Saddle River, New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 1998) p. 39.)

Diplomats Georges Picot and Sir Mark Sykes reached an agreement to dissect and divide the land that was previously part of the Ottoman Empire between their countries, France and Britain respectively.[2] The British wanted to be sensitive to the imperial aims of their

[2] Sari J. Nasir, *The Arabs and the English, 2nd edition* (London: Longman Group, Ltd., 1979) p. 134.

ally and were willing to allow the creation of a French sphere of influence in the region. As an additional benefit, the British were able to establish a buffer zone between themselves and the Russians, a remnant of "nineteenth-century strategic principles, that Britain should never share a frontier with the Russians."[3]

In a third proclamation, the British issued the Balfour Declaration calling for the creation of a national home for the Jews in Palestine. According to speculation from some historians, Balfour directed his letter to Lord Rothschild to elicit support from Bolshevik Jews, thus ensuring that Russia remained in the war against Germany. Additionally, Balfour hoped that American Jews would "encourage President Woodrow Wilson to enter the war on the side of the Entente."[4] The language used in each of the three agreements negotiated by the British in the war period was purposefully vague in order to manipulate each of the parties involved.

At the conclusion of the war, the British were able to use the vague language of the McMahon letters to recant many of the promises made to the Sharif.[5] The Husayn-McMahon correspondence varied at times from "oversight and incompetence" to sections of evasiveness amounting to complete deceit by the British of their intentions and commitments to others, specifically the French.[6] The British supposedly thought the "incorrigible [Arab] children could easily be lied to and could be put off by a few apt political promises."[7] In hindsight, the contradictions in promises made to the French, Zionists and Arabs are apparent, but the British were able to mislead Husayn regarding the level of involvement that the French would have in Syria and Lebanon. "Misinterpretation" of regional borders and creative translations of their intentions allowed the British to fulfill the promises made to its French ally, and to continue advocating their pledge for the Zionist agenda in Palestine, while simultaneously claiming that obligations to the Arabs had been met.

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[3] Charles D. Smith, *Palestine and the Arab-Israeli Conflict, 3rd edition* (Boston: St. Martin's Press, Inc., 1996) p. 48.

[4] Ibid, p. 50.

[5] John Bagot Glubb, Britain and the Arabs: A Study of Fifty Years, 1908-1958 (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1959) p. 134.

[6] Smith, p. 47.

[7] Nasir, p. 134.

B. CONTINUED INVOLVEMENT IN PALESTINE

After World War I, the British wanted to maintain a presence in Palestine because the widespread discovery of oil, and its potential for economic exploitation, added to the British desires for their interests in the region to remain secure. They wanted to remain close to their own holdings, while tempering the influence of the French in the region. However, the debate over who were to be the rightful rulers of the region began almost immediately. Questions arose surrounding the rule of Syria, Lebanon and Palestine. The British briefly attempted to undermine the Sykes-Picot agreement by a fait accompli when they allowed Husayn's son, Faisal, to establish himself in Damascus. Ultimately, the British were obligated to uphold the promise to their western ally because solidarity in Europe was deemed too important to jeopardize over Arab affairs.[8] In the aftermath of the war, the western powers negotiated at the San Remo Conference and definitively carved the plentiful lands once belonging to the defeated Ottomans into several colonial districts. The conference asserted Mandatory rights in Syria and Lebanon to the French, while Iraq (including the Mosul region) and Palestine were awarded to the British, as noted in Figure 2.

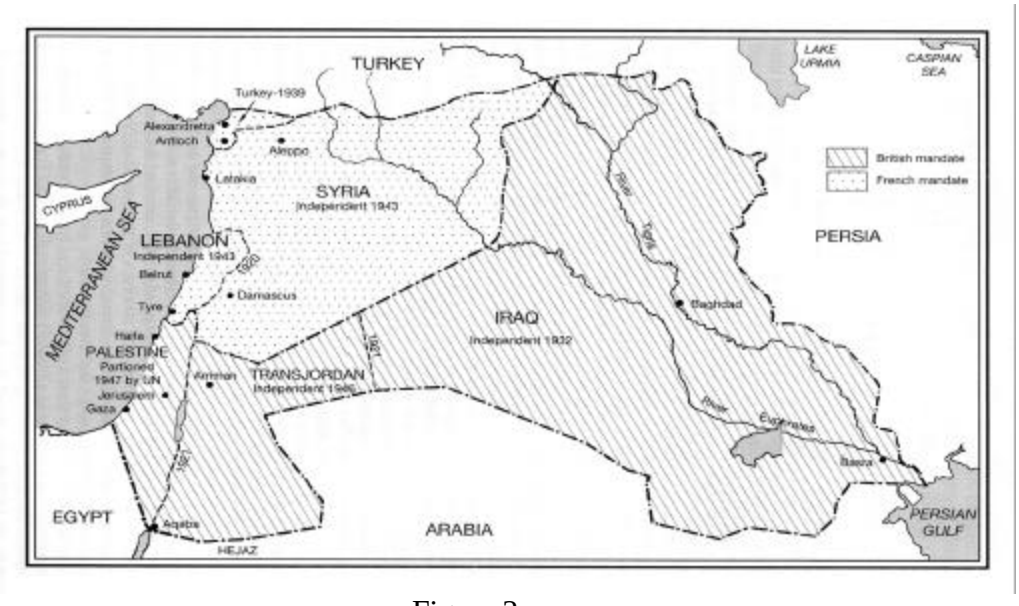

Figure 2.
The British and French Mandates in Syria, Iraq and Palestine as Determined by the San Remo Conference (From Bickerton and Klausner, p. 44.)

[8] Mary C. Wilson, *King Abdullah, Britain and the Making of Jordan* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), p. 40.

While the French chose to rule its colonies directly, the British preferred to rule through intermediary local notables. Consequently, in these areas, the British selected rulers based on their acceptability to the indigenous population, but more importantly for their amenability and loyalty to the Crown. The British sacrificed Faisal's independent Arab Syria in favor of conciliation to the French, and the future of Palestine was left uncertain due to the Balfour Declaration's intention to establish a Jewish home.[9] However, to calm the rising rebellion building in the Arab Middle East, the British stationed Faisal in Iraq. His elder brother Abdullah, who was initially supposed to take the Iraqi post, was granted the eastern section of Palestine, henceforth known as TransJordan. The British then employed their military and financial superiority to influence these newly established governments and ensure that British political desires received their full support.

In order to gain local support for their direct control of Palestine, the British attempted to establish ties with the indigenous Jewish and Arab people. British leaders spoke to Arabs, stating their approval of an appointment for a "son of the King of the Hijaz" to a position as ruler of the independent part of Syria. [10] The British reputation as the liberators of the Arabs from the Ottomans, coupled with this rather mild declaration for partial Arab independence, tacitly secured the approval of the Arabs. Simultaneously, they wanted to do nothing to prejudice the Zionist movement and asked for Jewish support of the British Mandate, to strengthen their position further.

C. ESTABLISHMENT OF THE BRITISH MANDATE

Long before the British government officially assumed responsibility of the Mandate in Palestine in 1920, Zionist leaders concluded that their relations with the British would directly influence the realization of their goal to create a Jewish State. The World Zionist Organization (WZO) was created as a powerful lobby group that raised funds and awareness for Jewish issues worldwide. They also kept political pressure on the western governments, particularly Britain, to ensure the creation of a Palestinian national home for the Jews. The WZO supplied the Jewish population in Palestine with

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[9] Smith, p. 62.

[10] Elizabeth Monroe, *Britain's Moment in the Middle East: 1914-1956* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins Press, 1963) p. 42.

strong financial and political support in order to strengthen their position in the region socially, politically and militarily.

Despite Arab protests and the recommendations of the Mandate governors in the region, the official British government position gave the Jews disproportionate representation in the administration and supported high immigration levels for Jewish people into the region. The Arab population requests for proportional representation were denied and Jewish integration into government posts continued. Jewish leaders benefited from opportunities to work in positions of political and military power, while Arab leaders did a disservice to themselves when they boycotted working in any setting where Jews received equal representation. The British policies therefore advantaged and empowered Jewish leaders and afforded them continued governmental access to political and military institutions, while Arab leaders denied themselves recognition in the Mandatory Administration by refusing to participate politically with Jews.

Even before Britain replaced their military government in Palestine with a civil administration, the Palestinian Arabs were unhappy with the British pro-Zionist policies. Unfortunately, their political structure was fragmented such that they could not effectively present their issues to the British in a manner that would cause the government to respect their desires for the administration and assess the decision making accordingly.

With no institutionally viable alternative to display their frustrations, the Arabs turned to violence. They believed that their outbursts would raise awareness of their issues and require the British to negotiate with them. This was not the case. In fact, early Arab violence directed toward the Jews made the British Mandate officials more inclined to grant Jewish claims of increased security needs. Furthermore, since the Arabs were the first to use political violence, they were labeled as the aggressors in the conflict, and Jewish violence became considered as a defensive response by the British. Consequently, the British included Jewish personnel in armed defense training, and denied knowledge of the weapons caches the Jews were accumulating. The British policies, either directly through training for the police and security forces or indirectly by

allowing weapons collection, prepared the Jewish forces better than the Arabs for a violent conflict and the eventual war for independence.

As the conflict intensified in the second decade of the Mandate, British reaction to Arab violence was routinely swifter and stronger than to Jewish actions, even when Jewish incidents were offensive acts. As the numerically inferior group in the region, the Jews were justified in claiming that the violent acts they perpetrated were necessary to save their population from likely decimation at the hands of unchecked Arabs. After the great Arab Revolt of the mid-1930s, Jewish forces were initiating political violence to realize their own objectives, but the British did not show the same sympathy for Arab retributions. The religious and political leaders of the Arabs were denounced by the British for failing to quell the unrest and were forced to flee in exile. Meanwhile, leaders of the Jewish movement were embraced by the British Mandate Administration, and were encouraged to continue to develop the political institutions that would be necessary for the consolidation of power and the preparation for their claim of independence.

Initially, when the British came to Palestine, they liberated the Arabs from the oppressive rule of the Ottomans. Ironically, during their rule, the Arabs were unable to realize independence. Rather, they were once again subjugated to follow the policies of an outside power. The British, influenced by the Zionists, and eager to fulfill their pledge to establish a Jewish national home in Palestine, issued policies that advantaged the Jews. Arab cries for decreased Jewish immigration and proportional representation were dismissed, and their use of violence to voice their disapproval of conditions in Palestine further alienated them from influential government positions. By the end of the British Mandate, the Arabs would have less autonomy than they had under the Ottomans and would be even farther from achieving and independent Arab country.

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II. THE BRITISH MANDATORY GOVERNMENT IN PALESTINE

This chapter reviews the British administrative policies in the Mandate. Specifically, it looks at whether these policies indirectly advantaged the Jews in their quest to consolidate political power in Palestine. Additionally, background information is given on the Zionist interest to establish a home in Palestine and the British support for this proposal. Finally, there is discussion of Arab disapproval of the British pro-Zionist policies and their non-cooperation with the Mandate government.

A. BACKGROUND

Following the French Revolution, the concept of citizenship replaced the ruler-subject relationships across Europe, with all people seen as equals and deserving of equal rights. However, the Dreyfus Affair scandal in France, the symbolic center of nationalism, led Jews around Europe to re-examine their political standing and the levels of acceptance they enjoyed in their respective countries. Theodor Herzl, a Viennese journalist, wrote *Der Judenstaat* (The Jewish State) to express his beliefs that the only ways Jews could expect to be treated as more than second-class citizens was to have a country of their own, where they would comprise a majority of the population. He advocated establishing a haven for those who suffered from persecution and oppression. Herzl's writings led to the formation of the Zionist movement, and the rationale for the eventual creation of a Jewish State.

The first wave of immigration to Palestine, or aliyah, began in 1882, because of the anti-Semitism of Czarist Russia, and was mostly comprised of deeply religious members of an organization called the Lovers of Zion.[11] These poor, young colonists came to the land of their forebears mostly as pious pilgrims attempting to escape the religious persecution they were subjected to in their native Russia, and lived largely separate lives from the predominantly Muslim population. The second aliyah, from 1905-1914, saw the first wave of immigrants influenced by the Zionist message. This group, mostly young men in their early twenties, had a dream to create a socialist utopia

[11] Smith, p. 28.

where exploitation, materialism and anti-Semitism would not exist in the society. The social institutions created by the immigrants of the second aliyah would become the organizational backbone for the Jewish community in the Palestinian Mandate and eventually the independent Jewish State.

Jewish immigration to Palestine was quelled during World War I. In fact, many of the Jews of the first and second aliyahs left because of poor economic conditions in the area. Additionally, the Ottomans, who had sided with the Central Powers during the war, deported many others who had immigrated from Allied countries.[12] At the conclusion of the war, the British were the occupying power in Palestine, and Jewish immigration resumed. The third aliyah began with the encouragement of the Balfour Declaration.

In an attempt to establish a haven from the Jewish persecution occurring throughout Europe, the World Zionist Organization tried to garner backing for their plan to develop an autonomous Jewish region in Palestine. By 1917, after meeting influential Zionist leader Chaim Weizmann, many top officials in the British government supported the Zionist agenda, including Sir Mark Sykes and Prime Minister Lloyd George. The Balfour Declaration, given on November 2, 1917, was actually a letter written from Foreign Secretary Lord Balfour to Lord Rothschild stating:

> His Majesty's Government view with favour the establishment in Palestine of a national home for the Jewish People, and will use their best endeavours to facilitate the achievement of that object, it being understood that nothing shall be done which may prejudice the civil and religious rights of non-Jewish communities in Palestine, or the rights and political status enjoyed by the Jews in any other country. [13]

The press did not remark on the letter when it was published in *The Times* one week later and it "created a mere ripple of public interest."[14] Yet, over the next three decades, this single sentence would generate outcry from both Zionists and Arab Palestinians. The purposefully vague language in Balfour's letter would have both groups calling for

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[12] Congressional Quarterly, *The Middle East, 9th edition* (Washington, D.C.: CQ Press, 2000) p. 14.

[13] Leonard Stein, *The Balfour Declaration*, London 1961. Quoted in Bernard Wasserstein, *The British in Palestine: The Mandatory Government and the Arab-Jewish Conflict 1917-1929* (London: Royal Historical Society, 1978) p. 2.

[14] Monroe, p. 43.

alternately stricter and weaker interpretations of British policy. In hindsight, to the British government, the Balfour Declaration was a statement made during a time of war, "without sufficient consideration of its implications, or the prior claims of the Arabs."[15]

In the 1917 declaration, Balfour had expressed sympathy on behalf of the British government for the Jewish goal to establish a homeland in Palestine. Clearly, the Jews were the point of reference in his statement, since they were specifically mentioned by name, yet the Arab inhabitants of the region, who constituted 93 percent of the population, were referred to as merely "existing non-Jewish communities in Palestine."[16] (The same semantic references and omissions are evident again in the text of the League of Nations' Mandate charter.) The British position is not surprising since "the plight of the existing inhabitants, the Palestinian people, was not on the agenda of Western powers. This largely peasant society was looked at with indifference or contempt…"[17]

In fact, the British had already betrayed the Arabs once, dismissing the promises made to the Hashimites in the Husayn-McMahon Correspondence in favor of placating the French, their western ally, with the Sykes-Picot Agreement. Zionism was primarily a European movement and the British, it seemed, could more easily identify with that than the fragmented, tribal structure common to the "backward" Arab people. Additionally, the Zionist agenda, was in the odd position to receive support from both ends of the spectrum: from the Zionist supporters who favored the plan to establish a homeland in Palestine, and from the anti-Semites who were eager to support any plan which would reduce the number of Jews in their proximity.

B. THE EARLY MANDATE PERIOD

The British occupied Palestine as a military administration from 1917-1920, but the Mandate of Palestine did not officially begin until after the San Remo Conference in April 1920. The ruler of Palestine had already caused some debate. The Husayn-McMahon correspondence had led Arab leaders to believe that Palestine was included in land specified as Arab. However, the Balfour Declaration mirrored a memorandum by

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[15] Seton-Williams, M. V., *Britain and the Arab States: A Survey of Anglo-Arab Relations, 1920-1948* (Westport, Connecticut: Hyperion Press, Inc., 1948) p. 123.

[16] Glubb, p. 140.

[17] CQ, p. 15.

the Zionist organization ear-marking Palestine as a home for the Jews, and the Sykes-Picot agreement further confused the situation. The unclear British policy resulted in political difficulty for the newly created Mandate, "that of reconciling an unwilling Arab majority to the implementation of the British government's policy of favoring Zionism."[18]

After World War I, the British requested the administration of the Mandate for Palestine from the League of Nations. There were several factors that influenced their desire to maintain their rule over the region, only one of which was their sponsorship of the Zionist enterprise.[19] The British were interested in maintaining their influence in the Middle East as a strategic base from which they could remain close to their interests in the Suez Canal zone and the emerging oil regions in the Mosul valley of Iraq. They also wanted to ensure that they continued to temper the influence of their unpredictable ally, the French, in the region, and create a buffer zone between their position and the Russians.[20] However, the biggest influence on the decision to remain in Palestine was the unfettered land route access they would have to India, the spotlight of the imperial holdings.

Palestine itself held no financial benefit for the British. In fact, the maintenance of the administration was such a financial burden, that the British often considered pulling out of the country.[21] Furthermore, the strategic benefit that was anticipated to be gained from Palestine was often overshadowed by the political problems that arose, with no solution in sight. The Holy Land had an undeterminable emotional draw to the Christians. Although many top military officers warned the political leaders that nothing was to be gained from Palestine, the British officials wanted to redeem their honor by following through on their promise to the Zionists. “The British government had still not defined its objectives in the Middle East; its intention was to “muddle through” and satisfy everyone.”[22] Besides, the government would not embarrass itself by admitting to

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[18] Wasserstein, p. 2.

[19] Tom Segev, *One Palestine, Complete: Jews and Arabs Under the British Mandate* (Metropolitan Books: New York, 2000) p. 5.

[20] Smith, p. 50.

[21] Segev, p. 4.

[22] Ibid, p. 45.

the League of Nations the reality that they no longer wanted the responsibility of the Mandate. They "decided to hope for the best and let things drift. Perhaps something would turn up – the British had a reputation for muddling through."[23]

C. TESTING THE WATERS

The actual beginning of the British administrative Mandate came after three years of military rule, during which the British tried to revive the seriously underdeveloped region. Under Ottoman rule, Palestine had been neglected and the British were tasked with improving the health conditions, water and supply lines and government infrastructure. When General Allenby's army marched into Jerusalem in December 1917 to liberate the area from the Turks, he was met with the popular enthusiasm from both Jews and Arabs. Mayor al-Husayni of Jerusalem was so anxious to surrender to the British that he had to attempt the gesture some seven times before it was accepted by Allenby - in a full ceremony, complete with a moving-picture camera to document the event.[24] Sadly, the optimism that the Arabs had for rule under British control would be short lived.

The Arabs were not the only ones who were having second thoughts about the benefits of the administration. During this period, the officers of the military administration were inclined to view Zionism as a nuisance, and felt that the government's support of the movement would hinder their ability to rule Palestine with "benevolent neutrality."[25] However, the Zionist lobby had campaigned diligently in London during the war for support and the British concluded that promoting the Zionist movement would positively serve its interests in the Middle East. The British accepted the Zionist proposal to send an advisory delegation to Palestine, but the Zionist Congress quickly began functioning essentially as the first Zionist government, and was often engaged in a power struggle with the military administration.[26] The military officials understood what London was unable to see: the Zionist Commission would likely antagonize the Arabs.

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[23] Glubb, p. 141-2.

[24] Segev, p. 52-5.

[25] Ibid, p. 86.

[26] Ibid, p. 64.

The Palestinian Arabs, who had been ruled for centuries by the Ottomans, were left with a weak and fragmented tradition of independent political organization.[27] They did not have any political institutions on par with the Zionist Commission to campaign for their interests. Additionally, the Zionists had at their disposal a powerful lobby, which was able to raise substantial funds for their disposal. They created programs to develop jobs, aided farmers, purchased land on which to found settlements and provided loans to individuals. At one point, the Zionists were successful in demanding that all administration announcements be made in Hebrew, as well as English and Arabic. The military administrators realized that attempts to remain out of local politics could not be avoided. Even though they did not give the Zionists everything they wanted, they realized that continuing the British government policy to advance the Zionist agenda was, in and of itself, giving the Zionists preferential treatment, and likely to cause Arab unrest.[28]

By 1919 the Jewish population amounted to 58,000, which was significant even though the Arab population was nearly ten times that figure.[29] The continuing immigration added to Arab fears of the significance of the growing Jewish presence. Almost immediately after the Mandate became official, disturbances broke out in Palestine. Arabs attacked Jews, killing five, in protest for the non-fulfillment of wartime promises of an independent Arab region and to voice their belief that the establishment of a Jewish home would lead to Arab subjugation. "From the beginning of the Mandate, representative Arab leaders in Palestine refused to recognize the validity of the Mandate or the right of Britain to enforce the Balfour Declaration and demanded independence."[30] Over the years, Arab hostility would shift direction to include British officials of the Palestinian Administration, not just the Jews.

After discussions with the Arab Delegation and Zionists, Winston Churchill, then Secretary of State of the Colonies, published a statement of British policy in Palestine. His terms reaffirmed the Balfour Declaration but claimed that Britain did not have any

[27] CQ, p. 15.

[28] Segev, p. 93.

[29] Seton-Williams, p. 121.

[30] Ibid, p. 126.

aim to see Palestine become "Jewish, as England is English." This declaration was just one of several statements of policy issued by the British and a Legislative Assembly was developed to address further issues. The Zionist organization readily accepted the stated policy, but the Arab Delegation in London refused to concur and boycotted participation in elections to the Assembly unless a clear majority of Arabs was represented. A later suggestion to develop an Arab Agency, as a counterpart to the Jewish Agency, was also rejected. As the President of the Executive of the Arab Congress wrote to High Commissioner Sir Herbert Samuel,

> The object of the Arab inhabitants of Palestine is not an Arab Agency analogous to the Zionist Agency. Their sole objective is independence. The Arab owners of the country cannot see their way to accept a proposal which tends to place them on an equal footing with the alien Jews.[31]

Following the anti-Jewish Easter Riots of 1921, and the breakdown of every attempt to introduce self-government in Palestine by the Jews and Arabs together, the British government voiced doubts about the practicality of an eventual independent Palestine. First High Commissioner of the Mandate, Samuel, a Zionist supporter, feared that the region had "a recipe for a second Ireland" and began to encourage separate communal institutions.[32] The result was a trend of internal partition that, in the end, drove Jews and Arabs even further apart.

The years between the Easter Riots in 1921 and 1929 were relatively peaceful in Palestine. The British continued the policy of direct rule in the Mandate government. It did very little to modify its political outlook with respect to the Balfour Declaration because there were concerns that the Jews were still too weak to run the country and the factionalized Arabs were "too backward."[33] The primary consideration was strategic: that if the British did not continue to rule Palestine, a power vacuum would occur, leaving the area vulnerable to a takeover by France, Italy or Turkey. Any other power in the region threatened the connection to the rest of England's empire through the Suez. A secondary factor was associated with British policy: the assumption by British leaders in

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[31] Ibid, p. 128.

[32] Wasserstein, p. 16.

[33] Ibid, p. 15.

London that British presence in Palestine related to the support for Zionism. Conversely, officials in Palestine found that ardent support for Zionism was one of the strongest obstacles to a successful administration causing a deeper rift with Arab community. However, the Palestinian officials recognized that a "commitment to the Zionists could not be ignored" without a loss of consistency, self-respect and honor.[34]

In Palestine, the Jews continued to live with a sense of common purpose. They conducted general elections for an Elected Assembly, and appointed a National Council, which the British recognized, to preside over local civil matters. Once they established "legally sanctioned institutions," the Zionist groups, especially the Labor Federation, Histadrut, dedicated themselves to improving working conditions and providing work and services to its members.[35] The Jews continued to amass political power throughout the first half of the decade and marveled at their increasing immigration figures, especially in 1924 and 1925, when the United States put a quota on its immigration redirecting many Jews to Palestine. However, nearly one quarter of Jewish immigrants coming into Palestine did not stay and due to the economic depression sweeping the area. In 1927 emigration actually surpassed immigration. [36] Even though the numbers of immigrants were relatively low, the Arabs voiced their displeasure with the policy. The Arabs were not afforded any position in the negotiations for immigrant permits. The British worked with the Zionist Executive, the administrative cabinet that would head the Jewish Agency, to determine the quota limits. "On the whole, the Zionists worked in tandem with the government and with its consent."[37]

The reduced immigration in 1927 quieted some of the concerns voiced by Arabs in preceding years. The British naively believed that the rest of the grievances could be negotiated, but hopes for peace were dashed after disputes broke out in Jerusalem at the Wailing Wall in September 1928.[38] The pattern of peace over the previous several years had convinced the British to withdraw their Cavalry Regiments in favor of a locally

[34] Ibid.

[35] Segev, p. 208.

[36] Monroe, p. 79.

[37] Segev, p. 228.

[38] Seton-Williams, p. 129.

comprised TransJordan Frontier Force. The riots at the Wailing Wall took the Mandate Administration completely by surprise and left the Jews defenseless when Arab policemen were hesitant to fire upon the mob.[39] It became obvious through the incident at the Wailing Wall that ethnic favoritism outweighed appropriate action commensurate to the government position. During the course of the riots, more than 130 Jews, and at least 115 Arabs, were killed. Unfortunately, the British attributed the severity of the rebellion to an insufficient garrison, and did not see the deeper causes. The British and the Permanent Mandates Commission ordered inquiries dispatched to form recommendations for the maintenance of order in Palestine. An additional outcome of the riots was increased British training of Jews for the police and defense forces.

The Arab demands of the Mandate were clear. First, they called for a cessation of Jewish immigration. Palestinian Arabs held a substantial majority, but they did not want Jewish numbers to increase any further, reducing their proportional significance. Second, they wanted a declaration that Arab lands were unalienable. The powerful World Zionist Organization raised enormous sums of money worldwide for the Jewish cause in Palestine. Much of that money financed Jewish immigration and land purchases. The Palestinian Arabs wanted to prohibit absentee landlords from making Arab rented lands available to Jewish purchase. Finally, they wanted a democratic government established with popular representation, which would ensure that Arab majority views dominated.[40] However, the riots of 1929 essentially backfired for the Arabs. Rather than spark British interest in their concerns, the violence actually reinforced British bonds to the Zionist policies.

Chaim Weizmann spoke for the Zionists, demanding the safeguard of Jewish property, incorporation of Jews into the defense forces, and increased immigration. When the British responded that the Arab demands were incompatible with the requirements of the Mandate, bolstering the Jewish cause, the Permanent Mandates Commission countered. It issued a sharp reply criticizing the British for not preparing the Arabs for changes expected with Jewish immigration. Additionally, there was a lack

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[39] Naomi Shepherd, "Iron Gloves," *Ploughing Sand: British Rule in Palestine 1917-1948* (New Brunswick, New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 1999) p. 181.

[40] Seton-Williams, p. 130.

of consensus between London and Palestine within the British government over Zionist claims. This factor coupled with world developments in the 1930s, where Nazi persecution of Jews added to the desperation for asylum in a Jewish state, and threats of German or Italian challenges to Britain, ultimately led to confusion in British policy.[41] Britain began to sway between the plan to partition Palestine and a plan to cut immigration. Because of their inability to remain true to one course of action, the British lost control of the situation in Palestine, and the two communities became more unruly and stubbornly defiant than ever before.[42] The desired end state for each group was polarizing, resulting in little remaining common ground.

D. NON-COOPERATION

The inquiries of the commissions resulted in an order to examine land settlement and immigration. The Hope-Simpson Commission report was issued accompanied by the Passfield White Paper, which stated that there was not enough cultivable land in Palestine with the current population. It proposed that immigration should cease until better irrigation and cultivation methods were in place. The White Paper continued, pointing out that the Jewish Agency policy of only employing Jews was a violation of Article 6 of the Mandate, which ensured that "the rights and positions of other sections of the population are not prejudiced."[43] The report caused a storm of protest from Zionist groups. Weizmann immediately used his contacts to meet with Prime Minister MacDonald where he played on the Prime Minister's insecurity as a minority government, and his fears that Weizmann could pressure the American government to "bring economic sanctions against Great Britain."[44] MacDonald capitulated to Weizmann's threats and issued a letter repudiating the White Paper. Arabs referred to MacDonald's letter as the "Black Letter" because it would become the basis for policy in Palestine. The British reversed policy rather than side against the Zionists to enforce it.[45]

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[41] Fitzsimons, p. 34.

[42] Monroe, p. 80-81.

[43] Seton-Williams, p. 132.

[44] Smith, p. 92.

[45] Monroe, p. 81.

Sir Arthur Wauchope, the High Commissioner on the ground in Palestine since 1931, tried to create a legislative council acceptable to both Arabs and Jews, but met with little success. The Prime Minister's assurance to the Zionists of parity countered his proposals for a proportionally represented structure. Attempts to progress politically stagnated. By 1932, the Arabs refused to cooperate with the Jews in every field, resigning from official posts and founding political parties of their own, such as the Muslim Congress.[46] Arab nationalism grew and for the first time, their newly formed political parties united to present their grievances to the High Commissioner. The Arab leaders attempted to make a conciliatory gesture and did not reject a proposal for a new legislative council, but Jews denounced it.

The largest affront to the Arabs came when Weizmann announced to Wauchope that the Colonial Office would open TransJordan for Jewish settlement and grant additional immigration certificates for German refugees.[47] Even the Palestinian officials were unaware of the impending policy announcement, demonstrating the level of contact between the Zionists and ranking officials in London. In January 1936, the Colonial Office, responding to Arab demands from the previous autumn, acknowledged that a new constitution was a "practical step towards democratic government." However, when the British Houses of Lords and Commons debated the proposals the next month, Jewish members of both houses argued against the demands, while the Arab position was never presented. "It was obvious that the project had again been killed by the Jewish opposition."[48]

Up to this point, the ranking Muslim leader, Haj Amin a-Husayni, the Mufti of Jerusalem, had promoted a civil relationship with the British, and their pro-Zionist stance. The British thought of him as loyal and willing to cooperate with the government.[49] Yet, even his calls to maintain the peace could not contain Arab outrage. The Supreme Arab Strike Committee (later known as the Arab Higher Committee) was formed within days,

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[46] Seton-Williams, p. 137.

[47] Shepherd, p. 186.

[48] Seton-Williams, p. 139.

[49] Philip Mattar, “The Mufti of Jerusalem and the Politics of Palestine,” The Middle East Journal 42:2 (Spring 1998) p. 234.

renewing the Arab demands for a halt to immigration, a stop to Jewish land purchases and self-government. The Mufti begrudgingly assumed the leadership position of the movement. The strike threatened to paralyze the country, removing all Arab officials from government service, transportation posts and many trades.[50] Wauchope, who tried to maintain a diplomatic dialogue with both Jews and leading Arabs, had to act against those who called for the strike. Official British policy was pro-Zionist, but division among local British governors brought the issue to public view. Arab anger with the administration over immigration issues turned violent and for the first time, the Arabs were directing their anger at the government, not just the Jews.

For his role as the figurehead of the Arab movement, the Mufti lost favor with the British government. He was stripped of his office and forced to flee from Palestine when threatened with arrest.[51] The British lost one of their biggest supporters in the Muslim community, but the government refused to suspend immigration, and actually called for an increase to the normal quota over the next six months. Although, in an attempt to smooth the blow, the British announced that they would appoint a Royal Commission to investigate grievances once there was a restoration of order. Yet, order was not restored, primarily because from 1922 to 1939, the percentage of Jews in the Palestinian population rose from 11 to 29 percent. Arabs feared that the progression of Jewish immigration would never stop with the current British policy.[52] The High Commissioner reinforced the military in response to the unrest and although reluctant to use force, enacted Emergency Regulations, which frequently squashed civil rights and used collective punishment against Arab communities. In the port of Jaffa, Wauchope ordered the demolition of 250 houses near where suspected Arab snipers were operating.[53]

The arrival of additional British military reinforcements and the intervention of inter-Arab diplomacy ended the strike. The strike dissolved in time for the harvest season, despite the fact that it failed to achieve its objectives; but the general revolt

[50] Shepherd, p. 187.

[51] Mattar, p. 236.

[52] Monroe, p. 86.

[53] Shepherd, p. 187.

continued.[54] The Royal Commission (Peel) Report admitted that the causes of the current disturbances were essentially the same as those that caused the riots in 1921-1922 and 1933. Repeatedly, the desire for Arab independence, and the fear that intense Zionist lobbying would lead to a Jewish state, caused civil unrest.

In Arab views, the Jews benefited from unequal access to the British government. They were afforded representation in greater numbers than their proportion of the population would warrant, and they received military/police training. Additionally, the WZO raised considerable funds to finance their land purchases and immigration, and it was able to use its lobby power for direct access to London for policy issues. Peel admitted, for the first time, that promises made to the Jews and Arabs were "irreconcilable" and recommended partitioning Palestine.[55] The British statement of response agreed with the Peel Report findings, but Arab leaders viewed it as just another reversal of rhetoric and were more interested in the terms of the proposed Jewish state.

The turning point of the revolt came in September 1937, when a high-ranking Mandate official was murdered. The British responded with force. Lewis Andrews, who was responsible for brokering land deals between Jews and Arabs, was the first British official killed in the conflicts.[56] His death was symbolic of the Arab disapproval of abundant land sales to Jews. In the aftermath of the murder, the Arab Higher Committee was declared illegal and the Arabs' most significant institution of political unity was destroyed. The officers of the Committee were arrested or exiled because they supposedly instigated the violence in the community, and the leadership of the Arab movement was effectively silenced. The recognition they hoped for as leaders in the community gave way to a reputation of violent extremists. Martial law resulted in Palestine with military courts whose sentences could not be appealed. The British civil administration had lost control of the villages and the insurrection spread across the countryside.[57] The resistance movement now had the support of the entire Arab population and it continued despite the absence of its leaders.

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[54] Seton-Williams, p. 141.

[55] Ibid, p. 142.

[56] Shepherd, p. 191.

[57] Ibid, p. 194.

Before the great Arab strike and ensuing revolt, Jewish Palestinians were almost completely reliant on the British police forces for protection. The Jewish militia, the Haganah, formed in 1921, was a small defensive force that protected Jewish settlements and sections of towns. Over the years since its formation, Jews accused the Mandate government of failing to protect them from Arab attacks. Therefore, the British ignored the formation of Haganah, which was officially illegal. The Jews also used their positions in the gendarmerie to gain military training and steal weapons, which they took back to their towns to fortify the Haganah. The increase of Arab attacks on Jews during the revolt resulted in Jewish retaliation.[58] Further, Arab insurgency actions directed at the Mandatory government influenced the British to side with the Jews. While publicly against the actions of Haganah, the British military used the Jews to collect intelligence on Arab strongholds and planned raids. The British Army trained Jewish units in night fighting and surprise attacks, and provided Haganah with information of Arab rebel plans, in exchange for intelligence on activities of the Arab Higher Committee. Again, the Arab actions against the British and the pro-Zionist attitudes of ranking British officers provided the Jews with the advantage of public support and access to resources.

In 1938, the British government again reversed positions. The approval of the partition plan delineated in the Peel Report was rescinded when both Jews and Arabs voiced opposition to it and a second Royal Commission found that it would be impossible to implement.[59] As the Arab rebellion continued, the British postponed the decision on partition until one more conference could be held to try to reach a compromise with the Jewish and Arab participants. Leaders from several Arab countries, the Palestinian Arabs and the Jewish Agency traveled to London for the Round Table Conference in February 1939. Talks broke down almost immediately when "Arabs refused to sit at the same conference table as the Jewish delegation."[60]

At the conclusion of the fruitless conference in early 1939, Britain issued the latest in their succession of White Papers, containing new government proposals. The

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[58] Ibid, p. 202.

[59] Monroe, p. 87.

[60] Seton-Williams, p. 145.

document set "unprecedented" limits on immigration and land sales to Jews, and discussed an independent Palestinian State.

> [This was the] first official British attempt to [reconcile] the two halves of the Balfour Declaration – the half which gave British blessing to a Jewish National home, and the second half that said 'it being clearly understood that nothing shall be done which may prejudice the civil and religious rights of existing non-Jewish communities in Palestine.'[61]

For both groups concerned, the White Paper was a disappointment. The Arabs were not entirely against the proposal, but ultimately rejected it because it did not immediately cease all immigration, as they demanded. It was affective, in that "it helped secure enough Arab compliance to tide Great Britain over the war years."[62] For the Jews, the reaction was stronger. They saw the White Paper as a "severe, almost mortal blow."[63] They took the statement as an act of betrayal from the British of their obligation and rejected it

> on the grounds that it constituted a violation of international law, namely the League of Nations mandate, which they believed obligated the British to use its authority on behalf of Zionist goals.[64]

The Zionists immediately called on their contacts in America to put pressure on the British to reverse the policy. They had successfully secured reversals to British policy in the past, so they believed it would be possible in this instance as well. In the meantime, "the restrictions on Jewish immigration into Palestine at a time of extreme anti-Semitism in Nazi-dominated Europe led the Haganah to facilitate illegal immigration."[65] In the last year before the war, nearly 35,000 Jews arrived in Palestine illegally. This figure represented three times the number legally permitted, but even when they were discovered, illegal immigrants were rarely deported.[66] The Jewish leaders called on the British to rescind the White Paper.

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[61] Monroe, p. 88.

[62] Ibid, p. 89.

[63] Segev, p. 440.

[64] CQ, p. 21.

[65] Ibid, p. 25.

[66] Glubb, p. 159.

E. TEMPORARY TRUCE

In mid-1939, the Permanent Mandates Commission met to discuss the recent British policy statements. "By a vote of four to three it was decided that these [policy statements] appeared to be inconsistent with the text of the Mandate." [67] However, before any action could be taken to reconsider the proposal, Britain was swept into the war in Europe. The war absorbed the interest of the world, and for a time, the Jews and Arab leaders alike called for a truce with the British. The British knew that their policies in the 1939 White Paper angered the Zionists, while failing to appease the Arabs. However, they were willing to accept the long-term ramifications of this, in exchange for being able to temporarily stabilize their position in the Arab world and refocus their attention to the war effort.[68]

Jewish leaders around the world united behind the British attempt to defeat the Nazis, but they were also determined to change the latest British policy for Palestine. At the outbreak of the war, the Jewish slogan was "fight the White Paper as if there were no war, and the war as if there were no White Paper."[69] Eager to participate in a useful way, and fearing a possible invasion of Palestine by the Germans, Haganah forces volunteered for service with the British Army. The British provided them with weapons and training, and used them for intelligence gathering in Vichy French ruled Syria.[70] They were also trained in bomb making and sabotage work behind enemy lines, to be used in case of a German invasion. Again, the symbiotic relationship that had flourished between the Jews and the British for so many years in Palestine reemerged. The British provided the Jews with tangible benefits in exchange for their participation, and more importantly, their lack of disruption.

The mutually beneficial arrangement would not survive through the course of the war, however. The British would not bend on the immigration restrictions. Illegal immigrants were getting into the country, but the British did what they could to prevent ships with illegals on board from landing. In February 1942, the *Struma* sank at sea and

[67] Seton-Williams, p. 147.

[68] Smith, p. 108.

[69] Monroe, p. 93.

[70] Shepherd, p. 215-6.

all of its nearly 800 passengers drowned.[71] The Jews were furious and blamed the British for the loss of lives. By the next year, when the threat of invasion by Rommel's army was quelled, and revelations of the atrocities being committed on the Jews of Europe were spread, the Jewish community "turned on the British, and blamed them."[72] The wartime truce between Britain and the Jews of Palestine was, for all intents and purposes, over.

In May 1942, the Zionists sponsored a conference in New York. The "Biltmore Programme" resolved that Palestine should be established as a Jewish Commonwealth, with unlimited immigration in the control of the Jewish Agency and the creation of a Jewish Army. The Zionist devotion to securing a Jewish state hindered the British war effort and further strained the relations between Jewish groups and the Palestinian government.[73] Additionally, the British discovered that Haganah members trained by the British Army were training others in the use of explosives and sabotage equipment. The wartime truce had ended and the Jews were "prepared to use all the opportunities that the war and Britain's necessities gave them."[74]

F. POST WAR DEVELOPMENTS

By the time the war ended, the pro-Zionist Labor Party was in power in Britain, and the Zionist lobby established a strong sentiment in America that supported Palestine as a Jewish state. The Zionists in the United States waged a highly effective propaganda campaign against the British, claiming that they were reneging on promises made to the Jews. American leaders in both political parties announced support for unlimited Jewish immigration into Palestine and ultimately a democratic Jewish Commonwealth. Based on the United States' interest, Britain suggested that an Anglo-American Committee form to create recommendations for the disposition of Palestine. They agreed that the "political aspirations of the two communities in Palestine were irreconcilable, [and] there

[71] Segev, p. 459.

[72] Monroe, p. 93.

[73] Seton-Williams, p. 148.

[74] Fitzsimons, p. 35.

was little hope of establishing a unitary government." Therefore, they renewed the endorsement for partition.[75]

After the war, British power in the Middle East declined, leaving the British to question its next move in Palestine, now that it was clear that the issue would likely have to conclude with force. The British dependence on Arab controlled oil and their commitment to a Jewish homeland created a paradox in their policy actions. While the British wavered in support of the American proposal to admit 100,000 additional Jews to Palestine, right wing Jewish political groups, such as Irgun and the Stern Gang called for open rebellion against the Mandate government. They carried out indiscriminate bombings, killed soldiers, and kidnapped British officers. The already sour relations between the Mandate and the Jews deepened to open hostility after Irgun blew up the British administrative offices in the King David Hotel in Jerusalem, killing ninety-one people.[76] Even the Jewish Agency condemned Irgun's actions.

In February 1947, the London Conference met with representatives of the Arab States and Jewish Agency and dissolved without reaching any agreements. When the Jewish delegation refused to participate, it was "clear that no solution could be reached that would be acceptable to both parties." The British government felt that it had done all it could, and decided to submit the issue to the United Nations for resolution.[77] In fact, the British never took a strong stand against the Jewish terrorism because they could never amass good intelligence of the Jewish actions and they were not willing to bring their military power to bear on the Jews, for fear of images of comparison to the Nazis.

The British Colonial Secretary announced that if the Jews and Arabs could not reach a settlement agreement then British forces would withdraw from the Mandate.[78] They hoped for a renewed authority from the UN to continue the presence in Palestine, but the UN appointed a Special Committee of Inquiry to give advice instead. The committee was pleased to find Jewish Agency representatives willing to compromise, and

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[75] Seton-Williams, p. 150-152.

[76] Shepherd, p. 225.

[77] Seton-Williams, p. 156.

[78] Fitzsimons, p. 64.

straying from the Biltmore Programme claims to all of Mandatory Palestine.[79] The Special Committee members ultimately called for the end of the Mandate and the internationalization of Jerusalem. The final component of the recommendation, the partition plan, caused the most debate. [80] Plans for the two states also required a ten-year economic union intended to raise the fiscal and cultural level of the Arabs to equal that of the Jews.[81]

The UN committee did not address any method of implementation for its plan. In general, their proposal was as vague in its language as the British had been in many of their "White Papers." The reactions from the parties involved to the UN decision were not especially positive. The Jewish portion of the population had the most favorable response to the committee actions, but even they did not approve of the plan for economic union. The Arab Higher Committee announced that they rejected the partition report entirely.[82] The British shirked at the partition solution each time it surfaced because of the problems envisioned with enforcing it. They pointed out that they were not prepared to enact a UN decision, which was not acceptable to either side, by force. Since there was no provision for enforcement of the UN proposal, the British decided that the Mandatory government would end before the withdrawal of forces. [83]

The date for the end of the Mandate was set as May 15, 1948. From this period, the situation in Palestine deteriorated rapidly. The UN had underestimated Arab opposition to the plan and the Jews adopted an aggressive scheme to defend the area planned as a Jewish state. Any semblance of law and order disintegrated. The British concentrated the bulk of their military to protect the Mandatory officials withdrawing from Palestine. Looting, rioting and killing were rampant as Palestine entered a virtual civil war. The Arabs, who lacked unity and organization, were just concentrating their efforts on attacks of the Jews, but the Jewish community had a larger focus - that of state

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79 Ilan Pappe, *The Making of the Arab-Israeli Conflict, 1947-1951* (London: I. B. Tauris and Co., Ltd., 1994) p. 24.

80 Ibid, p. 31.

81 William Roger Louis, *The British Empire in the Middle East, 1945-1951: Arab Nationalism, The United States, and Post-War Imperialism* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1984) p. 414.

82 Pappe, p. 33.

83 Seton-Williams, p. 161.

building. The Jewish Agency transferred to London and a "transitional government and a parliament" were formed.[84] The Jewish community had a carefully thought out plan to transition from a community under the Mandate to their own Jewish state. The Jewish "Plan D" contained plans to step into government institutions and services, and raise funds worldwide. The morale and motivation of the Jewish community were monitored as well. The Jews in Palestine were prepared and ready to declare their independence on May 15, 1948. "More importantly, [they] benefited from the absence of similar preparations on the Palestinian and the Arab side."[85]

G. CONCLUSIONS

When David Ben Gurion announced the creation of the Independent State of Israel, the United States immediately recognized it. This proclamation was the culminating moment of years of preparation by the Jewish community in Palestine and the Zionist organization worldwide. The external Zionist lobby, under the direction of Chaim Weizmann, worked diligently, especially in England and the United States to garner support for the Zionist dream of a national home for the Jews in Palestine.[86] They raised huge sums of money to finance the immigration of Jews to Palestine, and purchased land to ensure their settlement. Additionally, the support they raised within high levels of British government influenced the Mandatory policies in Palestine. The Jews benefited from British acceptance of their inclusion in government posts and the specific military training and access to weapons that were later beneficial to their armed struggle against the Arabs. The British Mandate policy laid the foundation for the outcomes in Palestine. The amount of immigration allowed under British rule increased Jewish percentages of the population, thereby decreasing Arab representative influence proportionally. The British protected Zionist interests during their most vulnerable period, the 1920s and 30s, which provided the Jews with an opportunity to establish a political structure of their own within the structure of the Mandate government. The

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[84] Pappe, p. 54.

[85] Ibid, p. 56.

[86] Joel S. Migdal, "Laying the Basis for a Strong State: The British and Zionists in Palestine," *Strong Societies and Weak States: State-Society Relations and State Capabilities in the Third World*, Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1988, p. 152.

internal labor movement and the creation of the Histadrut then bound individual Jewish reliance on the Jewish community structure and united their population.

The successful outcome of independence for the Jews was a blow to the Palestinian Arabs, who just three decades earlier had a clear dominance, socially and politically, in the region. The Arab actions under Mandatory rule were detrimental to their perceived ability to manage government and political organization. When the British tried to involve the Jews and Arabs in their political system, the Arabs routinely refused. The Arabs could not come to a consensus on their position for a desired end state and had no significant organized leadership, especially after the Mufti was exiled. The economic and psychological differences of the Arabs did not fit into the structure set up by the British. They showed no interest in accepting the Jewish minority and incorporating them in the Arab structure. This attitude was contrary to that of the international community, specifically the US and Europe's interest in a home for the Jews. Therefore, their reputation suffered in western eyes. Further, the Arabs had no lobby group to represent them, unlike the Jews, who had the World Zionist Organization and others.

The Arabs were never united in their outlook on the Jewish problem. Their internal strife divided their efforts, and after the suppression of the Arab Revolt, the rebellion was never the same. They had no effective military preparation for the discord that they faced, with the Jews and very few international resources, either in the form of pledged support or money for weapons. They viewed the conflict as a local issue, but the Jews saw it as vital to their international survival. The Jews were willing to risk everything, including their lives, for the opportunity to have their own state.

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IV. LOW INTENSITY VIOLENCE IN THE PALESTINIAN MANDATE

This chapter analyzes British response to political violence and examines the differences between their reactions to Jewish violence versus Arab violence. It considers the reputation that the Arabs assumed as the aggressors of the Jewish/Arab conflict because they were the first group to use political violence. It presents the British as sympathetic to Jewish use of violence as a form of self-defense and biased in their punishment of Arab actions.

A. ROUND ONE

Just as the military government was about to be replaced by a civil administration, Palestine erupted in its first major display of Arab dissatisfaction with the Zionists. This was not the first sign for the British that there was a widening rift between the Zionist aims and the indigenous Arab population. On the first anniversary of the Balfour Declaration, in November 1918, there had been clashes between Arabs and Jews on a smaller scale. The disturbances prompted a petition to be sent to the British outlining the Arab disapproval of "Zionist immigration and the idea that Palestine was to belong to the Jews and not to the Arab population."[87]

Thus began a pattern of political actions that would pervade throughout the Mandate administration for the duration of the 1920s. British politicians in London, sympathetic to Jewish needs and political considerations instructed the Mandate government officials to back policies benefiting the Zionists. The officials in Palestine, however, were often sympathetic to the Arabs' position because they witnessed the aggressive and contentious demands of the Zionists, who threatened to appeal to London if they were not fully appeased. Nevertheless, the local governors were obligated to follow the policies delineated by London. The Arabs, then, would voice their disapproval of the policies, either diplomatically or violently, and then the pattern would repeat.

The first Sunday in April 1920 simultaneously marked religious holidays for each of the religions of the Book. The Orthodox Easter, Passover and Nebi Musa, the

[87] Smith, p. 69.

"Muslim procession to a shrine associated with Moses," all occurred in the same week and brought masses of people to Jerusalem for the events.[88] The Zionist Commission warned the British that they had reason to believe that there would be Arab attacks on Jews following the celebration. However, the same concerns had been raised to the British just before the 1919 Nebi Musa, and the date passed without incident. The British, therefore, were not overly alarmed and felt that they had enough forces on hand to be prepared for any outbursts that might occur. They were wrong.

The events occurring in the Middle East in the weeks just prior to Nebi Musa may have further instigated the hostilities. An Arab terrorist group called the Black Hand was conducting random attacks on Jews to discourage their settlement in Palestine. Additionally, Faisal had been crowned king of an independent Arab country in Syria, and the passions of Arab nationalism had been growing.[89] When a minor disturbance broke out it quickly escalated into a full-scale riot, which would continue for three days. The British had underestimated the level of dissatisfaction the Arabs had been feeling, and overestimated their own power to control the region.

Although they had plenty of warning, the British were, nonetheless, unprepared to quash the rioting. Looting, vandalism, rapes and murders occurred even after martial law was declared. The Revisionist leader Ze'ev Jabotinsky, who had been publicly training Jews in self-defense measure for the past several weeks, wanted to use his defense group. The British ultimately decided to swear his men in as deputies, but the violence calmed before this action was necessary. In the end, five Jews and four Arabs were dead, nearly 250 people were injured, and the ego of the British military governor was bruised because the leader of the Zionist Commission insisted on referring to the unfortunate event as a pogrom.[90]

After the disturbances, a Military Commission investigated the cause of the outbreak. It found that the Arabs were disappointed in what they felt was the "non-fulfillment of war promises of independence," and the fear that the Balfour Declaration

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[88] Segev, p. 127.

[89] Ibid, p. 132.

[90] Ibid, p. 134-7.

pledge to establish "a Jewish home would lead to Arab subjection."[91] These factors, in addition to the growth of Arab nationalism since the war, resulted in the emotional outbursts that were displayed in the riots. The Arab complaints were not a revelation to the British. Their concerns had been voiced before, and Arabs often quit their jobs in the British administration as a sign of protest, but the degree to which their hostility was shown in this situation surprised the British. In time, their attitude of resentment would be directed at the British as well, and would foreshadow the anti-government action that would occur in the 1936 rebellion.

The British reacted quickly to thwart the violence, but according to the Zionists, not quickly enough. Many Zionist blamed the British for the events, if not directly, then at least for the degree to which they continued. The British attempted to bring justice to Palestine for the attacks through judicial means, but by then, their actions were met with disdain more than appreciation. Some 200 people were ordered to stand trial for their roles in the Nebi Musa violence, including 39 Jews.

There was no parity in the sentences, however. The Arabs were clearly seen as the aggressors in the situation and Jewish militants, like Jabotinsky, who were arrested for weapons possession and disturbing the peace, became symbols of the injustice Jews had to withstand. In fact, Jabotinsky received significantly better treatment than any of his Arab prisoner counterparts. Governor Ronald Storrs personally went to check that Jabotinsky was being properly treated and brought clothing and other items to him in jail. Meanwhile, Haj Amin al-Husayni and Aref al-Aref, leaders in the Arab cause, were forced to flee before they were each sentenced to ten year terms for inciting the riots.[92] Furthermore, Governor Storrs dismissed Jerusalem's mayor, Musa Kazim al-Husayni, for his role in the events and appointed his rival, Raghib al-Nashshashibi, as his relief.[93] While the change in office was largely symbolic, it did cause a further fragmentation of the nationalist and political activity of the Arab cause.

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[91] Seton-Williams, p. 126.

[92] Segev, p. 139.

[93] Smith, p. 71.

The court of inquiry appointed to investigate and report on the riots found that the "overconfidence" Governor Storrs had of the police force's ability to preserve order was responsible for the resulting violence. By the time the report was signed, however, the military administration had been summarily dismissed and replaced by a civil administration. The hope in London was that "the civil administration would be more effective and less inflammatory than the military forces."[94] When the Zionists learned that Herbert Samuel was appointed as the first High Commissioner of the civilian administration on July 1, 1920, Chaim Weizmann, the leader of the World Zionist Organization, told his wife that, "our trials have come to an end." Later that same month, the French ejected Faisal's government in Syria and Arab hopes of an independent country encompassing Palestine dimmed. The Arabs were left with British rule determined to fulfill its promises to the Zionists. One British military official astutely observed, "All faith in British honesty and justice has gone from the Arabs of the Near East."[95]

B. IN WITH BOTH FEET

Herbert Samuel came to Palestine as both a British official and a Jew. He understood his obligation to address Arab grievances, but he was also a supporter of the Zionist movement and he wanted to ensure that British policy fulfilled its obligation to assist Zionist goals.[96] His first order of business was to attempt to be pleasant to all sides. He visited Arab villages, Christian communities and Zionist settlements frequently. He saw to the immediate release of Jabotinsky, and pardoned two senior Arab figures. Later, when asked by local Arabs in TransJordan, he rescinded the convictions of Haj Amin al-Husayni and Aref al-Aref as well.[97] He hoped to gain Arab participation in the Mandate government and to preserve their rights while convincing them of the benefits of a pro-Zionist policy. As a measure of good faith, he agreed to allow the appointment of Haj Amin al-Husayni as the Mufti of Jerusalem. The Husaynis

[94] Segev, p. 141.

[95] Ibid, p. 143, 147.

[96] Smith, p. 71.

[97] Segev, p. 156.

were a prominent notable family known for their cooperation with the British and he hoped that this appointment would result in better relations with the Arabs.[98]

Samuel believed that he could institute conditions under which the Zionists could flourish. Yet, he would have to exercise patience, because as the War Office was quick to point out, "Palestine [was] of no military value from an imperial point of view," and the crown had no intention of footing the bill for the Mandate."[99] The Zionists understood that the speed of their development would depend on their ability to raise the funds needed to support their goals. Samuel, for his part, was willing to provide as many immigration permits to the Zionists as they were able to use. Several of the enthusiastic, young workers of the third aliyah had already begun to arrive in Palestine, eager to help build the Zionist community.

The penniless workers of this new wave of immigration had socialist ideals that were often at odds with other workers. In May 1921, workers parading for a Soviet Palestine clashed with the labor party workers. The inter-Jewish discord spread to neighboring Arab communities and Arab-Jewish clashes were immediately renewed. The disturbances dissipated briefly, only to begin with the Nebi Musa celebration again. Between the two outbursts, 90 Jews and 62 Arabs were killed and over 300 were wounded.[100] The administration declared a state of emergency and the suspension of immigration. In the past the Zionists had "always taken the position that Arabs and Jews could live together peaceably in Palestine."[101] While they tried to profess that these events were isolated clashes and their claim was still true in principle, Samuel suspected otherwise.

As an attempt to voice their disapproval of the Zionist agenda, the Arabs once more turned to violence. Again, as was the case after the Nebi Musa riots the previous year, this tactic failed. In 1920, the Arabs called for the Balfour Declaration to be revoked. However, the outbreak of disturbances only resulted in furthering the British resolve, and the Declaration was included in the text of the Mandate charter. After this

[98] Mattar, p. 228.

[99] Segev, p. 157.

[100] Smith, p. 72.

most recent round of violence, the reaction to the Arabs demands resulted in political losses for the Arabs. Because of the events in Jaffa, the Jewish districts and neighboring Tel Aviv were not restricted in any way. Just the opposite occurred, Tel Aviv received municipal autonomy.[102] The Jews were now able to make their own decisions in Tel Aviv. It was the first step towards achieving their goal of autonomy throughout Palestine.

Haj Amin al-Husayni, now the Mufti of Jerusalem, recognized that violence did little to further the Arab cause. Once an advocate of the use of terror against Zionism, he took a more moderate stance against violence and worked to prevent future rioting. The Mufti was "an avid nationalist," but he was also "a moderate man" who wanted to defend the political status quo.[103] While Musa Kazim al-Husayni, the former mayor of Jerusalem, managed political affairs for the Palestinian Arab Executive, the Mufti focused his efforts to maintain the peace in Palestine throughout the 1920s.

The Mufti, like Kazim, opposed both the Advisory Council and the Legislative Council Samuel had hoped to establish. Samuel wanted to create a legislative body that would represent and take into consideration the views of different segments of the population in Palestine. The second council proposed favored the Muslims slightly more than the first, but it was still not proportionally representative. The councils significantly underrepresented the Muslim community and were barred from discussing British obligations to the Zionists.[104] A later proposal by the British to create an Arab Agency was met with little enthusiasm. The Arab Agency members would be appointed by the High Commissioner and would not be allowed to discuss Zionist policies, which was the greatest item of interest for the Arab community. The Arabs could not support such an organization, and the British were tired of trying to bring the Arabs into an administrative government that they would not support. This would be the last major effort the British would make to include Arab leaders in the Mandate government.

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[101] Segev, p. 180.

[102] Ibid, p. 183.

[103] Mattar, p. 230.

[104] Smith, p. 73.

Out of principle, the Arabs would not participate with the Mandate government. To do so would mean giving official recognition to the authority of the Mandate, the charter of which recognized the Balfour Declaration and the rights of the Jews to immigrate to Palestine. The Arabs' disagreement with the premise of the Balfour Declaration was the basis for their political non-participation. Unfortunately, by taking this position, the Arabs disadvantaged themselves from the one arena in which they might have their views heard. The Arabs had the support of the British military, but they needed the backing of the policy makers in Palestine. A good rapport with the local administrators may have been their only real chance to counteract the influence the Zionists had with the British government in London.

Chaim Weizmann the leader of the World Zionist Organization, now based in London, worked tirelessly to raise awareness and funds for the Zionist cause. He developed a unique ability to be granted private audiences with some of the most influential members of the British government, and found himself in a position to influence policy and ask for the government's consideration of various issues. For example, after the most recent violent episode, several rioters were brought to trial. One Arab was sentenced to 15 years in jail, but when three Jews were convicted of participating in the murder of Arabs, the Jewish community objected. Because of his political influence with the government on behalf of the Zionists, the case was forwarded to the Supreme Court, where the men were acquitted on appeal, on the grounds of self-defense.[105]

The Arabs were angry about the preferential treatment the Jews were given, and were equally as unhappy with Jewish land purchases as they were with Jewish immigration. Organizations like the Jewish National Fund and the American Zionist Commonwealth purchased as much land as they could to establish Jewish settlements in Palestine. Legally, they had done nothing wrong, but their purchases further aggravated the already tense situation in the region. The problem stemmed from an historical distrust the Arabs had of registering ownership of their land. When the Ottomans began a process of modernization in the last century, reformers borrowed several concepts from

[105] Segev, p. 194, 188-9.

the West. One such policy was legal titles to property for landholders. The Arabs were very skeptical of the policy because they thought it was a ploy; registering their families would lead to conscription of their sons into the Ottoman army.[106] Consequently, few landholders were registered with titles to their lands.

Often absentee, wealthy urban Arabs "owned" the land, while the farmers had to pay "rent" on the land they cultivated. The landlords, with no personal ties to the land, saw land ownership as a business. They had the power to sell the land as they chose, often to the highest bidder. In selling to the Jewish groups, many Arab tenant farmers were evicted from the land their families had worked for generations. In the al-Fula village "only one quarter of the one hundred Arab families who had lived in the area left of their own free will."[107] The Supreme Muslim Council tried to stop the sale to the Jews, and even offered to purchase the land for the same price the Jews had offered, but the sale went through as planned.

When the Jews went to occupy their newly acquired land, the British were there to defend them. The Arab farmers threw stones at the Jews to show their resentment of the outcome, but then a Jew shot at the protesters and an Arab was killed. The Jews were arrested, charged with murder and convicted. However, as was becoming common in Jewish convictions, their sentences were overturned on appeal. The Arabs saw no justice, but rather irony, in what was happening to them. "The Jews, after centuries of persecution, wanted to live in a land of their own, where they could be free from fear and develop under their own institutions. Unfortunately, the land to which they wished to move was already fully populated by another race. As a result, the Zionists invaded Palestine and drove the Arabs from their homes and country."[108] The Palestinian Arabs disapproved of the increased Jewish immigration and land purchases, but they were powerless to prevent it. They knew that the Jews had the support of the British, and the administration policies were drafted accordingly.

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[106] Glubb, p. 148.

[107] Segev, p. 242.

[108] Glubb, p. 149.

C. ROUND TWO

During the bulk of the 1920s, Arab politics were relatively quiet. Of course, minor conflicts occurred, but years passed since the widespread riots that followed Nebi Musa in 1920 and 1921. In this decade, the British effectively implemented a "divide and rule strategy" vis-à-vis the Arabs. They helped perpetuate tribal-familial rivalries by ensuring that neither the Husayni nor Nashshashibi families had unchecked power in the Arab community. The Jews, meanwhile, continued to develop organizations to continue immigration and land purchases. The British, therefore, were optimistic that the Mandate would be successful and that they could resolve the incompatibility between Arab demands and Zionist aspirations. Their positive outlook continued because

> Arab refusal to consider anything short of Arab dominion over a Jewish minority was written off as local non-cooperation, and never seen as a manifestation of the wider kind of Arab nationalism [such as was seen in Syria].[109]

The unyielding demands for Arab supremacy, without building the institutions to realize this goal, would work against the Arabs over the course of the Mandate and leave them with even less than they were willing to concede to the Zionists.

Conditions in the Mandate were going so smoothly that the British reduced the number of troops they had in the region by a considerable amount. The Arabs, moreover, appeared ready to embrace the government because they had petitioned for an elected Parliament in 1928 and 1929.[110] The Zionists grew ever more confident and began to publicly display their political power. They took greater steps to show their national and religious pride, too, by bringing more accompaniments with them for prayer sessions at the Western Wall. The wall, a religious relic from Herod's temple, was a holy site for the Jews, but it also marked the perimeter of the third holiest site in Islam, with religious significance of its own.[111]

For generations the wall was maintained by a Muslim religious foundation, which took no issue with Jews praying at the wall. However, they did not approve of the

[109] Monroe, p. 79.

[110] Seton-Williams, p. 129.

[111] Smith, p. 87.

alterations the Jews were making to the site, such as bringing chairs for the elderly and screens to separate male and female worshipers. The Muslim's true concern was not for the additions, but rather the fear that any concessions they made to the status quo would only amount to demands for more concessions. As far as the Muslims were concerned, the Jews crossed the line on Yom Kippur 1928. They brought a screen to the wall that was so large that it blocked a nearby alley the Arabs routinely used. The Arabs protested to the British immediately. The British informed the Jews that they could keep the screen for the rest of the holiday, but it would have to be removed by the following day. When it remained in place the next day, further Arab complaints caused the British to go and forcibly remove the screen. Jewish rhetoric swiftly protested the action of the British and denounced the Muslims as people akin to the Russians of the pogroms.

Muslim response to the disparaging remarks and Jewish demands for control of the wall came when the Mufti, now head of the Supreme Muslim Council, called the Muslim community to be alerted to the threat to the wall. "The incident sparked a series of protests on the part of the Arabs, including proclamations, telegrams to the League of Nations, and a one hour general strike."[112] The Mufti also began to assert Muslim authority over the wall by undertaking some minor building projects. Yet, when Muslims took physical moves to stop the activities at the wall, the British did not see their justification. Two young Arabs that harassed a Jewish cleric as he was putting out chairs at the wall were imprisoned after an unusually speedy trial.

The verbal bickering continued throughout the next year, but in July 1929, when the Mufti began another building project, Zionist fury could not be suppressed. A Revisionist youth group "marched to the wall, raised the Zionist flag and sang the Zionist anthem." The next day, after Muslim Sabbath prayers, thousands of Arabs went to the wall and burned the prayers inserted into it.[113] By the following Friday, there were rumors that the Jews were going to attack the mosque. The Mufti urged the crowd to remain calm and return to their villages, but apparently, his presence only further incited the assembly.[114] Increasing Arab fears of Jewish intentions sparked a major outbreak of

[112] Segev, p. 305.

[113] Smith, p. 89.

[114] Mattar, p. 231.

violence. Arabs swarmed into Jewish quarters and began attacking any Jew in their paths. The British police were all but helpless to prevent the bloodbath. The military had been reduced in numbers and the British naively thought the mostly Arab police force would act in accordance with their job requirements above their personal, religious affiliations.

The unrest continued for nearly a week; it spread from Jerusalem to other towns, most significantly Hebron, where over 60 mostly unarmed Orthodox Jews were killed. The British police force was too weak to prevent the violence so they called in reinforcements from Egypt and TransJordan. Nonetheless, despite the additional troops, the atrocities continued until they had run their course. Not all of the country's Arabs had participated in the attacks. In fact, the majority of Hebron's Jews had been spared because their Arab neighbors hid them in their homes. The attacks were based on Muslim fears that the Jews were going to "violate the sanctity of Islam."[115] To a degree, this fear proved to be true. Some Jews were found to have gone beyond the limits of self-defense and vandalized mosques, burning sacred books.

When the riots finally subsided, 133 Jews and 116 Arabs were dead; 571 others were injured.[116] In the aftermath, High Commissioner Sir John Chancellor ordered trials for persons suspected of committing murder, both Jews and Arabs. He demanded that the "courts maintain at least the appearance of holding Jews and Arabs equally culpable."[117] The Chief Justice of Palestine, Sir Michael McDonnell, was willing to follow through with the tasking but questioned the bias of the Jewish, and Zionist supporting, Attorney General, Norman Bentwich. When the Attorney General did not want to resign, the Arabs got rid of him the old fashioned way; a young Arab man was sent to shoot him in the knee. He had to return to England for treatment and never returned.

> Some 700 Arabs were put on trial for violence and looting. Of these, 124 were accused of murder, 55 were convicted and 25 were sentenced to death. About 160 Jews were also put on trial; 70 were accused of murder and 2 were convicted and sentenced to death. Their sentences were

[115] Segev, p. 326.

[116] Seton-Williams, p. 129.

[117] Segev, p. 329.

commuted to life imprisonment. [118]

Due to legal technicalities, the most heinous murderers, one Arab and one Jew, did not receive the death penalty. With this in mind, the High Commissioner had to consider whether any death sentences were justified. He knew any decision would be bad from a political point of view and decided to commute the majority of the sentences to life in prison. Ultimately, three Arabs were hanged.

Reacting to the events, the Jews were inclined to blame the British for their lack of preparation, which led to the magnitude of the violence. The British, meanwhile, appointed a commission to investigate the causes of the riots and propose policies to prevent their recurrence. The report from the commission chairman, Sir Walter Shaw, identified Jewish immigration and land purchases as direct causes of the unrest. He recommended that

> the British Government should issue a clear statement of policy defining the meaning it attached to the passage in the Mandate concerning the rights of non-Jewish communities [and that] non-Jewish interests should be given some voice in the discussions on immigration. [119]

The High Commissioner, from his perspective, agreed that increasing landlessness was a source of Arab resentment. The Shaw Report called into question immigration policies with respect to the absorptive capacity of Palestine and the amount of cultivable land it contained.

The resulting White Paper commended the Jews for consistent land development, but noted that the policy of only employing Jews on any land acquired potentially caused Arab unemployment. Further, the land purchases in and around Tel Aviv were virtually strangling the Arab community owned pasture and grazing lands outside of Jaffa. This was in violation of the Mandate charter, which ensured that "the rights and positions of other sections of the population are not prejudiced."[120] The tone of the White Paper upset many Jewish leaders but, after discussions with Zionists, Prime Minister MacDonald published a letter of his interpretation of the White Paper. His letter was

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[118] Ibid.

[119] Seton-Williams, p. 129.

[120] Ibid, p. 132.

considerably more pro-Jewish, prompting Arabs to refer to it as the "Black Letter," and supporting their belief of the power that Zionists had on the British government.

After the public split between the London government and the High Commissioner, Palestine received new leadership under the control of Sir Arthur Wauchope. A career military man and not a diplomat, he attempted to establish various forms of self-government. He supported proportional representation, but Prime Minister MacDonald wanted parity. By 1932, a disgusted Arab community refused to cooperate with the Jews in any area and many resigned their government posts.[121] Wauchope tried to be sympathetic to Arab issues but he could not disobey the stated government policies, especially regarding immigration.

Jewish immigration continued, undaunted by Arab protests. The British were not in a position to slow the influx because the immigrants of this fifth aliyah brought considerable wealth with them. These settlers, unlike those of earlier waves, "included large numbers of stable middle-class families headed by men who had made their mark in business and in the professions."[122] The majority of them were escaping the rise of Nazism in Germany and Poland. This was little consolation for the Arabs who felt that they were being persecuted in their own land. The Nazi's staunch anti-Jewish policies "struck at the British in the Middle East… It dispelled for good their hope of muddling through in Palestine. It caused them to double the authorized rate of Jewish immigration between 1932 and 1933."[123]

D. INTENSIFICATION OF CONFLICTS

Since the riots of 1929, political terrorism was becoming more commonplace. Arab violence was primarily directed against Jewish farmers, but in July 1932, a British official was targeted for the first time. The Arab national movement was gaining momentum and disapproval of the British was growing.[124] The Mufti of Jerusalem emerged as the de facto leader of the nationalist movement. After the riots, the Mufti changed his attitude of accommodation to a position where he actively attempted to

[121] Ibid, p. 137.

[122] CQ, p. 14.

[123] Monroe, p. 85.

[124] Segev, p. 350.

change British policy while still cooperating with the Mandate government.[125] He had the precarious job of balancing the expectations of the authorities with the increasingly hostile demands of his followers.

In 1933, the British tripled the immigration quotas out of compassion for the plight of the European Jews. Arab demonstrations were scheduled in cities across Palestine for October to protest the immigration policies, which were steadily increasing. While the Mufti was out of the country, tempers flared and the demonstrations turned into rioting and a general strike. For the first time, there was widespread violence directed at the British administration, as well as Jewish groups, primarily because of the despair from the increasing unemployment rates.[126] They were tired of British policies favoring the Jews. When the Jews disapproved of British actions, they had contacts to leverage and a voice to get the policies reversed or turned in their favor. The Arabs had no such influential backing. They never enjoyed the "unmediated access to British leaders that characterized the Zionist movement."[127] They could only fend for themselves with the sole means available to them: violence.

The Mufti realized he had to choose between loyalty to the British and his militant nationalist public. He fought off a challenge from an emerging, militant political party, led by Izz al-Din al-Qassam, but he could not defeat the radical tone that remained. When al-Qassam was killed in a skirmish with British police in November 1935, his loss was grieved throughout Palestine Arab groups. He was seen as a martyr that offered the Muslims a drastic alternative to the political solutions that had failed thus far. He advocated revolution.[128]

High Commissioner Wauchope knew that the increasing landlessness, unemployment, and nationalism of the Arabs, coupled with the threat of strikes made for a volatile situation in Palestine. He believed that a Legislative Council, established to give the Arabs a voice in government, would satisfy their grievances. Arab leaders supported the plan, but the Jews rejected it. The Colonial Office then made several

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[125] Mattar, p. 231.

[126] Seton-Williams, p. 139.

[127] Segev, p. 398.

[128] Mattar, p. 235.

proposals to incorporate Arab demands in a new constitution, specifically addressing Jewish immigration and land purchases. When Parliament debated the proposals in March and April, Jewish members of both Houses presented the Zionist perspective for defeat of the measures. "The Arab case was never put forward."[129] It was obvious that the Jewish political backing had crushed the Arab hopes for influence over Palestinian policies. "It should have been realized in government circles how bitterly the Arabs felt when they saw their hopes of securing any self-governing institutions being swept away."[130]

E. THE LAST STRAW

Just before al-Qassam's death, a Jewish arms smuggling operation was discovered at the Jaffa port. Further investigation discovered that the Jews were stockpiling weapons and ammunition "sufficient to arm an army of ten thousand, according to an official British estimate."[131] Arabs acted out in small guerrilla-like terrorist bands, with some regional, but no national structure. "On April 15, 1936, Arab bandits held up some cars on the road between Nablus and Tulkarm. A number of Arab and European travelers were robbed, but two Jewish travelers were murdered. The following night, two Arabs living near a Jewish settlement were murdered by Jews, presumably in retaliation. A whole series of mutual reprisals ensued."[132] The violence flared for ten days before the Mufti assumed the leadership of the Supreme Arab Committee (now known as the Arab Higher Committee), called for a general strike, and assumed the leadership of the resistance movement.

The political violence, British repression, and increasing death and destruction forced the Mufti to abandon his arrangement of cooperation with the British.[133] He again appealed to the High Commissioner for the prohibition of immigration and land sales to Jews, and some form of democratic government. However, citing Nazi persecution of Jews, the British government actually increased immigration slightly above the normal

[129] Seton-Williams, p. 139.

[130] Ibid, p. 140.

[131] Smith, p. 96.

[132] Glubb, p. 150.

[133] Mattar, p. 235.

quota. In an attempt to quell the obvious negative repercussions this action would cause in the Arab community, the British announced that a Royal Commission would be appointed when order was restored. Order would take some time to restore. The general strike would last for six months and the revolt would stretch on for some three years.

When the British finally realized the depths of the rebellion occurring in Palestine, and their inability to put it down, they enacted emergency measures and called for military reinforcements from England. After several months of the strike with no real progress being made, the rulers of several of the neighboring Arab countries appealed to the Arab Higher Committee to call off the strike. The beginning of the citrus season gave the Committee the incentive they needed to call off the strike, and end the restlessness of the Muslim people.[134] The strike did not accomplish any of the objectives as the Arabs had hoped. While they went back to work, the rebellion continued, spreading from the cities to the countryside.

In many ways, the Arabs disadvantaged themselves with the strike. Arab workers in Jewish businesses were simply replaced with any one of the newly arrived Jewish immigrants who needed a job. Even when Arab strike efforts were successful, as in the case of closing the Jaffa port, Jewish groups turned the event to their advantage. The Jewish Agency triumphed by getting the development of a port approved for Tel Aviv.[135] The strike did hurt the Jews in many ways, but it also weakened the Arabs, especially their already tenuous relationship with the British. Because of the rebellion, the Jewish Agency and the administration worked closer together than before, united in their effort to suppress the uprising. The Arab community wanted independence more than ever. They saw the British and Zionists as an interconnected entity and thought that the departure of the British would facilitate the removal of the Jews.[136]

Arab anger with the British administration had already erupted into violence on several occasions. Citing the Emergency Regulations, Wauchope authorized the razing of nearly 250 houses near the Jaffa port after snipers were found to have hidden in the

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[134] Seton-Williams, p. 141.

[135] Smith, p. 97.

[136] Segev, p. 370.

region. The legal system was becoming more repressive as well. Arab civil rights were routinely violated, men were jailed for extended periods of time without a trial, and collective punishment practices were used frequently, especially on Arab villages. A good number of personnel in the British administration, especially those in the military, were sympathetic to the Arab situation but they were discouraged from questioning the authority of the government. The Chief Justice of the court was forced to leave his post because he publicly voiced his disagreements with British policy. [137] A young British soldier saw the reality of the situation. "The British had been sent to Palestine to keep the peace and punish terrorists, Arabs and Jews. In practice, the authorities discriminated in favor of the Jews, never punishing Jewish terrorists with the severity they used on Arabs." He knew this was not right and thought that, "the Arabs always seem to get a raw deal."[138]

On the same day the Royal Commission was to arrive in Palestine in November 1936, the British made a concession to the Jews for additional immigration permits. The British had become "obsessed with this policy of balancing its favours between the two sides."[139] Initially the Arabs were going to boycott the Commission because they saw this as a deliberate act of hostility, but the Arab leaders of Saudi Arabia and Iraq convinced the Arab Higher Committee to present the Arab grievances. The Commission's report, published in July 1937, known as the Peel Report, acknowledged that causes of the recent rebellion were the same as the causes of the disorders of 1920, 1921, 1929 and 1933.[140] The Arabs wanted independence. However, there was no possibility of creating a single country that would encompass both the Jewish and Arab groups because neither side wanted it. Peel reached the same conclusion that Wauchope had. The country had to be divided. The Peel Partition Plan is evident in Figure 3.

[137] Shepherd, p. 187-9.

[138] Segev, p. 365.

[139] Glubb, p. 151.

[140] Seton-Williams, p. 141.

Figure 3.
The Peel Commission Partition Plan. (From Bickerton and Klausner, p. 55.)

The Jews response to the partition plan was primarily favorable, but Arab opposition to it was swift. Although they were allotted more than 80 percent of Palestine in the proposal, the most fertile lands were given to the Jews. Additionally, in the Jewish portion, the population was nearly split between numbers of Jews and Arabs. Yet, in the Arab section, Arabs comprised over 90 percent of the population. This plan would require nearly 250,000 Arabs of the Galilee to either be forced to evacuate or agree to live under Jewish rule.[141] The Arabs were unable to live with a plan that relinquished a

[141] Smith, p. 98.

part of their country to Jewish sovereignty. The resulting tensions led to the second, and more violent stage of the revolt.

In September 1937, the first British Mandate official was assassinated. Lewis Andrews was the acting district commissioner for the Galilee, and the official who monitored land sale deals between Arabs and Jews. At the time, Wauchope was vacationing out of the country and the acting High Commissioner ruled as he thought appropriate. "The Arab Higher Committee was declared illegal and its leaders, including the Mufti, [were] arrested or deported."[142] Arab attacks on Jews continued, but now, the Jews retaliated with more skill than the Arabs expected. The Jews had a better organizational structure to their defense forces than the Arabs did. They had better training and more weapons at their disposal.

For years, the British knew about the Jewish self-defense groups, and implicitly supported them by allowing them to exist. Jabotinsky offered the use of his men to quell the Nebi Musa riots in 1920, and later, Jews were trained to augment the dwindling size of the British police forces. Furthermore, the British were aware that the Jews had been accumulating weapons for many years. After the 1921 Nebi Musa riots, Weizmann told Winston Churchill, then Colonial Secretary, that rifles were being smuggled into Palestine. Churchill responded: "We don't mind, but don't speak of it."[143] Later, when the Arab attacks turned against the British in the great revolt, the British worked closely with the Jewish defense organization, Haganah, to combat the Arab threat. "Arab terrorism helped the Jewish Agency make the point that the Zionists movement and the British movement were standing shoulder to shoulder against a common enemy, in a war in which they had common goals. The British administration was now inclined to realize this."[144] The British and Jews had a reciprocal arrangement to provide each other intelligence about rebel Arab identities and plans.[145] Arab violence early in the conflict and the violence directed at the British, decreased the British support for their cause and resulted in a lack of resources made available to the Arabs. The Jews used their training

[142] Shepherd, p. 191.

[143] Segev, p. 194.

[144] Ibid, p. 426.

[145] Shepherd, p. 202.

effectively, and with the leaders of the Arab cause politically alienated from participation in any negotiations, the violence continued.

In late 1938, the rebellion continued, albeit somewhat diminished in intensity. High Commissioner Wauchope, a broken man as a result of his failure to stop the violence, retired. Sir Harold MacMichael relieved him and immediately established military courts, in addition to the martial law, which was still in force.[146] Arab suspects were tried for their suspected offenses swiftly and over 9,000 served some prison time in 1939 alone. "From the beginning of 1938 to the end of 1939 more than one hundred Arabs were sentenced to death – an average of one a week – and more than thirty were executed, or more than one a month."[147] Additionally, the collective punishment practice was in full effect. Entire neighborhoods or villages were held responsible for crimes suspected to be committed by one member of the community. The thought process amongst British law enforcement was that everyone was potentially guilty until proven otherwise. The hope was that by putting the responsibility for damages on the entire community, the leaders of the community would assume the responsibility for keeping peace in the community.[148]

Given the lack of popular support, the partition plan suggested in The Peel Report "sunk into oblivion," just as the population transfer plan had before it, when the British determined that it would be too difficult to implement. Both the Arabs and the Jews were intent on realizing their goals completely; neither side had any intention of compromising.[149] The British, however, were becoming less interested in the disturbances of Palestine, as war in Europe became an increasingly real possibility. Britain knew that to increase their strategic holdings in the Middle East, they would have to adopt a position that would not continue to alienate the Arabs, and drive them to the Nazis as their potential liberators.[150] As the war loomed, the Jewish power of influence weakened and they were unable to stop the Nazis as they destroyed the German Jewish

[146] Ibid, p. 192.

[147] Segev, p. 417.

[148] Shepherd, p. 197.

[149] Segev, p. 413.

[150] CQ, p. 21.

center. The British finally recognized that allowing as many German Jewish refugees as they did to immigrate had contributed to the Arab rebellion.

F. EXIT STRATEGY

The British weighed their options in Palestine and concluded that "the Jews had no alternative other than to support Britain; the Arabs in contrast, would chose to support the Germans." This was not an acceptable outcome. "Thus, to secure the Arabs' allegiance [Colonial Secretary Malcolm] MacDonald proposed halting all Jewish immigration for the entire period of the war."[151] The British made one last attempt to facilitate an understanding between the Arabs and the Jews. They called for a Round Table Conference to commence in London in February 1939. However, even as they were supposedly reaching out an olive branch for one final attempt at peace, the British refused to allow those they regarded as responsible for the violence in Palestine to attend the Conference. Under these qualifications, the Mufti was not permitted to attend the talks.[152] As nearly all the influential Arab leaders were in exile, there were few representatives available to confer with for the Arab perspective. Those that did attend the conference were not able to present one united Arab position and exemplified the fragmentation that was a persistent disadvantage for the Arab cause.

In May 1939, the British issued a White Paper on their intentions for the future of Palestine. It is perhaps the most controversial paper issued on the subject, an even more stunning reversal of policy than the 1930 Passfield White Paper, since that declaration was quickly superceded by the Prime Minister's "Black Letter." The White Paper stated, "His Majesty's Government had never contemplated the subordination of the Arabic population, language or culture in Palestine." [153] Furthermore, it called for severe restrictions on immigration for the next five years, and future immigration only with Arab approval, and implied the guarantee of an independent Arab government in Palestine within ten years.

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[151] Segev, p. 437.

[152] Seton-Williams, p. 144.

[153] Glubb, p. 159.

Arabs were disappointed with the declaration because they felt that the language was too vague to believe that the creation of an Arab state would actually occur. The Jewish reaction was stronger. They were completely opposed to the proposed reduction in immigration and saw their hopes for independence evaporating.[154] After three years of open rebellion, the British were still deluded in their hope for a compromise.

The Permanent Mandates Commission ruled that the new White Paper did not comply with the terms of the Mandate, but the outbreak of the Second World War in September 1939 prevented any further determination or action on those judgments.[155] The White Paper served one major purpose for the British. It helped ensure enough compliance from the Arabs to allow Britain to get through the war years without having to divert additional troops to Palestine. The Zionists wanted to oppose the restrictions on Jewish immigration publicly but decided instead to use the opportunity to quietly position themselves to achieve a Jewish state.

The threat to Jewish survival from a German invasion of the Middle East prompted the Jews to offer the British assistance, despite their opposition to the White Paper. Britain decided to accept the Jewish aid and did not impound arms from Haganah. The British Army provided money, arms and training for an elite group of Haganah volunteers (who would later become the nucleus of the Israeli Army).[156] The Jews eagerly accepted training in bomb making, explosive use and sabotage work for use behind German lines. Haganah agents at the disposal of the British secret service prepared for intelligence collecting in Syria, while others volunteered to parachute into the Balkans to bolster the resistance. However, when the threat of a German invasion had passed, and news of the mass murders taking place in Nazi war camps spread, the Jewish community turned their aggressions toward the British and blamed them for failing "somehow to organize a rescue."[157] The Jewish attitude changed thereafter. Acts of resistance toward the government increased, including the promotion of illegal immigration, gunrunning, theft and murder.

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[154] Seton-Williams, p. 147.

[155] Fitzsimons, p. 35.

[156] Shepherd, p. 215.

[157] Monroe, p. 93.

G. CONCLUSIONS

As the war drew to a close, Britain was nearly bankrupt. The British had neither the capacity nor the interest to maintain their rule in Palestine. The Arab rebellion made the British realize the impossibility of ever resolving the issue of compromise between the Arabs and the Jews. They considered taking steps to get out then, but the war delayed their decision. They had been fighting against the Arabs for the better part of a decade, and now the Jews were attacking them as well. The Mandatory government had to focus most of its efforts on security and protecting its personnel, rather than on the maintenance of the regime.[158] The British did not want to stay in Palestine anymore. Their fateful decision to seek deportation for illegal immigrants, many of whom were Holocaust survivors, lost Britain international support, especially in the United States. The furor over their treatment of these people and the ensuing public criticisms prompted the decision to turn the Palestinian Mandate over to the United Nations for resolution.

Britain's abrupt announcement of plans to leave Palestine caught the Arabs and the Jews, off guard. The Arabs were more politically fragmented than ever. The rivalries between the Husaynis and the Nashshashibis had never been mended and the few leaders that had emerged in the Arab national movement were either killed or exiled, which further reduced their effectiveness. The friendly and positive relationship the British had with the Zionist leaders for most of their two decades of rule had all but disappeared since the war began. They were battling the Jews now, almost more than they were fighting the Arabs. The Jews were ready to be free of the British, the Arabs, however were not sure they were prepared for independence.

The Jewish community in Palestine had taken full advantage of the opportunities presented to them by the British. They eagerly accepted British protection under the Mandate when they were weak structurally, and used their powers of influence to pressure Britain to continue, and even increase, their policies benefiting the Jews over the course of the Mandate. "It was British policy […] that was primarily responsible for providing the Yishuv time to grow, through immigration and land purchases, and time to

[158] Segev, p. 479.

establish quasi-governmental and military institutions."[159] The Arabs, conversely, were never able to take advantage of the British presence in Palestine.

The predominantly tribal and agrarian structure of the Arab society in Palestine often led to internal divisions. This fragmentation caused critical disadvantages for the Arab position at times during the Mandate when they needed to speak in one voice. They were not willing to make any compromises with the Zionists and turned to violence to express their displeasure with British policies, only further alienating them from the positions of authority in the administration. Taking the position of aggressor in their conflict with the Zionists actually left the Arabs weaker because their use of violence undermined their influence with the administration. The Arabs never possessed the political power the Zionists did. They were no match for the Zionists, who originally had the British behind them, and later were strong enough in their own right to challenge the Arabs for predominance in Palestine.

By the time the Zionists and Palestinian Arabs fought their war for independence, the Jewish leaders had used the fragmented nature of Arab political leaders to their advantage. They brokered deals with specific Arab leaders, capitalizing on the aspirations of a few Arab leaders at the expense of the entire Palestinian Arab community. The collusion with the Hashimite rule of TransJordan was one such arrangement. The Palestinian Arabs' "power to influence the destiny of Palestine was secondary to that of the other three parties with strategic and territorial interests in Palestine; the British, the Zionists and the Hashimites."[160] With so many outside influences competing for control of the region, the Palestinian Arabs barely had any chance at all.

[159] Mattar, p. 240.

[160] Ibid.

V. COLLUSION FOR THE DISPOSITION OF ARAB PALESTINIAN LANDS

This chapter reveals the collusion that occurred between both the British and Jewish leaders, and Abdullah, the ruler of TransJordan. It explains the politically fragmented, tribal structure of the Arabs, and Abdullah's interest in furthering his own power base and land holdings, regardless of the effect this action would have on the greater Arab cause. This is important because it shows that rather than seek a compromise solution amongst the Arabs that were his historic tribal rivals, Abdullah preferred to negotiate with the Zionists. Furthermore, his obligation to the British for his position and security was so strong that he could not act against their wishes vis-à-vis the Zionists even if he had wanted to.

A. LITTLE MAN WITH BIG AMBITIONS

Abdullah, as Emir of TransJordan, ruled the most artificial of the artificial nations created by the British in the Middle East. The land he controlled had no natural borders and lacked any kind of an established sedentary population, let alone the ability to maintain itself financially. The substantial subsidy upon which his budget was dependant and the presence of British advisors, constantly reminded him that British views were expected to be his views, at least publicly. Abdullah was happy to maintain an alliance with the British, but he made no secret about his desire to expand the land he controlled to include more of the land historically encompassed in "Greater Syria." However, because the British had an agreement with the French, and because of his obligation to the British, he did not actively pursue physical steps to obtain that desire. Initially, he was forced to accept the small portion of land he was granted and owed thanks to the British for the ability to maintain that much. When the British needed an ally in the Middle East to champion the Jewish state that was likely going to emerge in Palestine, they boked to him. Abdullah, even to the consternation of other Arab states, gave a measure of support to the plan out of his obligation to advocate the British position. He also saw the potential opportunity to finally achieve the realization of his dream: to enlarge the area of land he controlled.

Abdullah, the second of Sharif Husayn's four sons, was known as a well-educated and politically ambitious schemer.[161] He was the son that most enthusiastically strove to accomplish Husayn's interests and believed, like his father, that the Hashimite family was destined to rule the Arab world. Accordingly, Husayn chose the astute Abdullah to travel to Cairo when he made his initial proposal to the British to oust the Ottomans from the Arabian Peninsula.[162] It was Abdullah's conception and planning of the Arab Revolt that inspired Husayn's grandiose ambitions to gain supremacy of the entire Arab Middle East.[163] Conversely, the physically picturesque Faisal gained the greatest respect from the British. He built a reputation as a noble warrior in battle, which coincided with the stereotypical picture they had formed of Arabs; Abdullah was better suited as a political advisor.

When the French arrived in Damascus to claim their mandatory authority, Faisal was banished from his position in Syria. Abdullah, still smarting from his defeat to Ibn Saud's Wahabi forces at Turaba, needed a military victory to improve his image. He recognized the importance of fighting to reclaim the crown of Syria for his brother as a virtuous opportunity to reassert himself as a force to be reckoned with, thus earning the redemption of British graces. Ambitiously, Abdullah moved a small force of troops to Amman, where he intended to raise a larger force and prepared to invade Syria on Faisal's behalf. His actions, however, threatened to disrupt the British plans in the Middle East and upset their already "suspicious" French allies.[164]

The British, as a kind of compensation for the loss of Syria, offered Faisal the crown of Iraq, thus rendering Abdullah's desires for that post obsolete. Abdullah was jealous and bitter that his brother was succeeding in the British eyes where he had not. He felt especially scorned because he had intervened on the British behalf to his father whenever possible.[165] The British then assessed the situation and concluded that

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[161] Avi Shlaim, *Collusion Across the Jordan: King Abdullah, the Zionist Movement, and the Partition of Palestine* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1988) p. 20.

[162] Smith, p. 42.

[163] Louis, p. 350.

[164] Shlaim, p. 27.

[165] Wilson, p. 44.

Abdullah's arrival in Amman could actually be used to their benefit. They determined that TransJordan was included in the British zone of influence according to Sykes-Picot, rather than attached to the Damascus controlled district. Additionally, control of the region would offer a continuous land link between western Palestine and Iraq. The British surmised that, by appointing Abdullah as the representative of the British government in TransJordan, the Arab hostilities against the French could be obverted. Furthermore, the French would be contained in Syria, halting their ability to extend their influence south toward the Suez Canal.

Appointing Abdullah to the position of emir served several purposes. First, Abdullah would have to renounce his claim to the throne in Iraq, which pleased the British officials in Baghdad who supported Faisal's appointment. Second, Churchill viewed the selection of Abdullah as a positive move for his "Sharifian" policy to secure the goodwill of Husayn, with whom relations had deteriorated. Finally, it was readily acknowledged that Abdullah was more ambitious than his brothers, causing concern that he would not be content as a mere figurehead. However, the British were confident that they could count on his loyalty because he "relied on His Majesty's Government for the retention of his office."[166] Abdullah relished in his good fortune of having avoided a battle with the French and gaining an appointment to an administration of his own. While he knew he owed this accomplishment solely to the British power, he longed for more.

B. WALKING SOFTLY

Since his initial appointment, Abdullah had to consciously check his ambitious views with the British policy that he was expected to conform to. He maintained that TransJordan was essentially the southern part of Syria and that a united Arab state could still result in the region of Greater Syria (TransJordan, Palestine, Lebanon and Syria). He saw his current position as merely a precursor to the achievement of his goal in its entirety. With the defeat of the Hashimites to Ibn Saud in the Hijaz and the death of his brother Faisal in 1933, Abdullah saw himself as the natural remaining choice to rule the

[166] Shlaim, p. 28.

Arabs. He worked tirelessly to champion the cause of Arab national politics, but he knew that his ambitions must be tempered with patience and self-discipline.

Over time, Abdullah's claims for Arab unity, united under his leadership, came to antagonize the other Arab states. The Iraqis thought that they were the best candidates to lead a united Arab world, while the Lebanese did not want to be part of a Muslim state and the Syrians were quite content with their newly achieved independence. Finally, the Saudis and the Egyptians, by extension, would hinder any plan where a Hashimite would achieve an additional position of power.[167] Abdullah was persistent, though, and he was open-minded to the multiple options available to achieve his intention to rule additional land in Greater Syria. Gaining control over Palestine became known as another possible means by which he could achieve his larger objective.

Abdullah recognized that he could not gain any additional power in the region without Britain's approval, and if he tried to take it forcibly, he would not maintain the power he had for very long. In fact, when he met Churchill to accept the administration of TransJordan, he asked to be given control over Palestine as well. Churchill declined his suggestion, but Abdullah remained hopeful that he could convince the British of his suitability for the post based on the political and economic ties historically linking Palestine and TransJordan. He believed that if he used his diplomatic skills to maintain good relations with the British, Palestinian Arabs, and the Jews that the British might reconsider their stand on the subject of Palestine.

C. CARRYING A BIG STICK

Churchill, as he liked to brag, created the emirate of TransJordan by the stroke of a pen on a Sunday afternoon.[168] It was a land determined completely for British interests and by British design, and they made a point of making sure Abdullah was well aware of this fact. The control and influence over TransJordan they maintained was indirect, but firm, nonetheless. Abdullah was granted power over internal state affairs, but was kept in check by the British Resident in Amman for all foreign relations matters.[169] The

[167] Louis, p. 352.

[168] Shlaim, p. 28.

[169] Seton-Williams, p. 172.

constitutional government gave Abdullah the appearance as a ruler of an area with its own power base, when in actuality, he was a subordinate of the British. Abdullah was aware of his role in relation to the British but remained loyal to them because he felt that his Arab interests could be best achieved through cooperation with the British.[170] The British, he acknowledged, supported TransJordan politically, economically and militarily. Abdullah saw participation in a symbiotic relationship with the British as the most productive way to gain cooperation for, or at least avoid a challenge of his aims.

In an attempt to foster relations with any group that he could, and to gain patronage for his expansionist goals, he maintained close contact with many of the Syrian nationalists that had been in Faisal's administration in Damascus. Abdullah employed many Palestinians in high-ranking positions in his government. The Palestinian administrators brought him much needed technical aid and served to improve his image with the Palestinian people. Among the most influential families in Palestine to back Abdullah, the Nashshashibis urged for reunification with TransJordan. The Husayni family, led by the Mufti of Jerusalem, Haj Amin, formed the core of the movement in opposition to reunification and objected to any compromise with the Zionists.[171] The Husayni-backed Palestinian nationalist movement would be directed, in time, against the British as well, and would cause a power struggle for the control of Palestine.

D. FRIEND OR FOE?

Despite, or perhaps partly because of the hostility that Haj Amin had for the Jewish immigrants, Abdullah took a more amicable stance in his relations with the Zionists. He was perceptive enough to realize the consequences of not supporting the British. Abdullah's father, Sharif Husayn had bitterly refused to recognize the Mandate government, and the Balfour Declaration at its core, because of what he regarded as the British betrayal of the promises made to him in the Husayn-McMahon correspondence.[172] Although, it is interesting to note that his refusal to accept the Balfour Declaration was not based on significant anti-Semitic feelings. Regardless, as a result of his actions, the British discontinued their financial subsidy and military

[170] Shlaim, p. 38.

[171] Ibid, p. 6.

[172] Ibid, p. 29.

protection of Husayn. Within a year Ibn Saud's forces had conquered the entire Hijaz and forced Husayn into exile, ending the dream of a Hashimite empire spanning from the Hijaz through Greater Syria. Therefore, Abdullah, concerned about maintaining British approval and consequently his own office, recognized the Mandate and the Balfour Declaration.

Palestine represented to Abdullah more than just a British station to favor. For him, it was a vital source of capital markets and an outlet to the Mediterranean. He wanted to control the land, but in the interim until he had the British approval to do so, he set out to win over the population. Abdullah believed that he could incorporate the Jewish communities of Palestine as semi-autonomous regions within his sovereignty as a part of Greater Syria.[173] He thought the Jewish groups could occupy places in his Muslim kingdom the way Christian groups had in the Ottoman Empire. It was under this pretext that he made his request to Churchill to administer Palestine as well as TransJordan, and for this reason that he initially approached the Zionists.

Positive public opinion, especially British opinion, was an integral aspect of Abdullah's strategy for acceptance of his expansionist goals. He knew that the only way he would be granted all of Palestine would be through Jewish acceptance, or at least acquiescence, to his rule. Abdullah valued the power of the Jewish people because of their wealth, talent, drive and the alleged vast connections they had with influential members of the international community.[174] His respect for the Jews was based on the teachings of the Koran and was actually a Hashimite tradition that his father and brother Faisal recognized as well. In fact, Faisal was the first Hashimite to meet with a Zionist leader openly. His introduction to Chaim Weizmann was arranged by the British to discuss the possibility of cooperation and emphasized the alliance that both sides had with Britain.

In Abdullah's own meeting with Weizmann in 1922, he offered to support Zionist demands to implement the Balfour Declaration in exchange for their support of him as emir of Palestine. Further, he required the use of Zionist influence on the British to

[173] Louis, p. 351.

[174] Shlaim, p. 43.

"procure this appointment for him."[175] While it is not likely that the Zionists ever considered an option for anything less than an independent Jewish state, they did view their relationship with the Hashimites as a potential deterrent to any opponents they might encounter in the region. Both Abdullah and the Zionists were flexible to find ways of cooperating, but each side hoped that their idyllic suggestion would be realized.

E. LOVE THY NEIGHBOR

In several meetings throughout the 1920s, Frederick Kisch, chairman of the Palestine Zionist Executive, traveled to Amman to speak with Abdullah and his father about relations between Jews and Arabs. Abdullah replied that he would always do what he could to maintain friendly relations between the two groups. He wanted to gain what he could of Jewish financial and technical resources to advance the development of TransJordan; the Zionists wanted to establish goodwill.

The meetings continued between Abdullah and the Zionists into the 1930s, including one in which Abdullah offered to lease some of his own land to Jewish capitalists willing to develop it. However, word of the deal caused outrage in the Palestinian press. British official reaction was not supportive of the agreement, either, because of unspoken fear that Arab-Zionist collaboration would reduce British control over the actors in the region. Consequently, Abdullah publicly renounced the agreement, but secretly he renewed the Jewish option on the land.[176] Despite British and Palestinian opposition to the pact, Abdullah was willing to explore any avenue that would result in greater economic stability for TransJordan.

The British were not about to let the issue die without a fight so they passed the Nationality Law to prevent leasing of land to non-citizens. [177] Abdullah's efforts for cooperation could not be deterred though, and he looked for other ways to remain actively involved with Palestinian issues. Meetings between Abdullah and high-ranking Zionists occurred more frequently and took on a more political nature after the British

[175] Ibid, p. 45.

[176] Ibid, p. 51.

[177] Ibid, p. 53.

thwarted plans for economic cooperation. The British desire to keep Abdullah and the Zionists had backfired.

Abdullah used his meetings with the Zionists as an audience to whom he could promote his plan to unite Palestine under his rule. He hoped to convince the Jews of his benevolence and get them to influence the British to accept him as the ruler of Palestine. However, Abdullah's effort to secure rule of Palestine for himself was much to the consternation of Haj Amin al-Husayni, who led the nationalist movement in Palestine. Haj Amin denounced Abdullah as a puppet of British imperialism and shifted his loyalty to Ibn Saud, the enemy of the Hashimites.[178] Abdullah's relationship with the Zionists caused some concern among nationalist Arabs, but overall, he maintained his reputation.

The general strike in Palestine, declared by the Arab Higher Committee in 1936, threatened to spread to other Arab states in the region. The Arabs were angered to the boiling point about unchecked immigration and land sales to Jews. Abdullah, whose predictions about impending violence were sadly realized, was approached by the British to use his influence to end the strike. He tried to persuade the Arab leaders that negotiations and airing grievances to the commission of inquiry were the best solutions to resolve the conflict. Abdullah had to balance his rhetoric cautiously to "preserve his credibility simultaneously as a loyal ally of Britain, a sincere friend of the Jews and an Arab patriot defending the rights of his Palestinian brothers."[179]

After the Peel Commission report recommended the partition of Palestine, and later when World War II eroded French authority in Syria and Lebanon, Abdullah thought his plans for a Greater Syria appeared more within the realm of possibility.[180] The British quietly supported Abdullah to rule the Arab portion of Palestine, only because the Mufti vehemently opposed partition of any kind.[181] Although, the British made it clear that they would not endorse Abdullah's entire ambitious scheme because they did not want to antagonize the Egyptians or Saudi Arabians. Ibn Saud had vowed

[178] Louis, p. 346.

[179] Shlaim, p. 56.

[180] Louis, p. 350.

[181] Shlaim, p. 59.

revenge if any Hashimite ever attempted to amass a power base in Greater Syria, and the British were not willing to risk antagonizing him by showing support for Abdullah.

The Zionist policy of privately accepting, but publicly criticizing the partition plan had been self-defeating and the plan failed ratification in the British parliament.[182] With hostilities running high in Palestine, the Jews were looking to establish an understanding with the Arabs. Since there was, obviously, no possibility of reaching an accord with the Palestinian Arabs, they approached Abdullah, whose previous initiations to form a friendship had not been forgotten. Abdullah gave new life to the plan for partition in his proposal to the Woodhead Commission and took a new round of criticisms from Palestinian Arabs. The Jews, conversely, were interested in discussing his plan in greater depth and replied with a counter-proposal.

In a final move to curtail Arab violence in Palestine, Britain issued the 1939 White Paper. The document conceded many of the Arab demands. It reduced immigration allowance, halted land sales to Jews and offered the Arabs an independent state after ten years. This was the greatest reversal of policy supporting the Balfour Declaration in two decades.[183] Unfortunately, the outbreak of World War II put implementation of any plan on hold. During the war years, the Middle East engaged in what amounted to a temporary truce, but it would not last long after the war ended.

F. WAR IN EUROPE BUT COOPERATION CLOSE TO HOME

While Britain was busy fighting the war in Europe, Abdullah was attempting to further his own hold in Palestine. His vocal support of Britain's war effort helped ease him back into the good graces of the Arab world, and the exile of the Mufti before the war left a power vacuum amongst the Palestinian Arabs that he tried to fill. Throughout the course of the war, Abdullah met with Jewish leaders to discuss their opinions of his views for the future of Palestine. He met with Moshe Sharrett and Elias Sasson in November 1942 and again in January 1944 to delineate the federation status he

[182] Ibid, p. 64.

[183] Smith, p. 69.

envisioned for Palestine, and agreed to negotiate the question of Jewish immigration in exchange for financial assistance.[184]

The end of the war in Europe brought Abdullah great rewards for his loyalty to the British. TransJordan was given formal independence and Abdullah was elevated to the crown of the Hashimite Kingdom of Jordan.[185] Speculation persists that the enthronement was an attempt to appease Abdullah after the British informed him that they would not support his Greater Syria plan due to the problems it could cause in the Arab League. With this notification, Abdullah turned the focus his priorities on gaining control of Palestine.

Abdullah sent his deputy Prime Minister, Muhammad al-Unsi, to conduct several ground-laying meetings with the Jewish Agency representative, Elias Sasson. After Unsi's death in 1946, Sasson began meeting with Abdullah personally.[186] The two men agreed to a plan where the Zionists would give Abdullah nearly £P40, 000 to effect the results of the elections in Syria and the Arab Higher Committee, bringing pro-Zionist candidates to power. Additional meetings continued to take place, both with Abdullah directly, and through intermediaries. In each instance, pledges of support were reasserted and monetary assistance was presented to Abdullah. Abdullah and the Zionists did not always agree with each other in every detail, but they did have compatible big picture goals. "Abdullah agreed to support a Jewish state in Palestine if the Jews would support the Greater Syria idea."[187]

G. THE END OF THE MANDATE

The British power base in the Middle East had been in decline since the end of the war. It had become more than apparent that the political aspirations of the Jews and Arabs in Palestine were irreconcilable, and the British feared that the issue would have to be concluded by force. They wavered in their commitment to a Jewish homeland when they came to realize their dependence on Arab controlled oil. Finally, the bombings, killings and kidnappings of mandatory administrators by disgruntled right-wing Jewish

[184] Shlaim, p. 71.

[185] Louis, p. 352.

[186] Shlaim, p. 74.

[187] Ibid, p. 86.

political groups caused the British to submit the issue to the United Nations for resolution. They announced that if an agreement could not be reached between Jews and Arabs, they would withdraw from the Mandate.

Abdullah met with the UN committee privately to express his proposed solution. He stated that he would like to control all of Palestine, giving citizenship rights to the Jews that were there. Later, he claimed that he would be willing to assume control of any region in Palestine that was not granted as an independent Jewish state. The public announcements by Abdullah were most often made to dispel rumors and quiet any suspicions from other Arab groups that felt his actions were pro-Zionist and to the detriment of the Palestinian Arabs. Unfortunately, Abdullah's public recants of pledges to support the Jews left them confused as to his genuine intentions.

As the British were preparing to abandon the Mandate, they concluded that "a greater TransJordan would not be against Britain's interest, so [...there was] no reason why they should put obstacles in TransJordan's way."[188] Abdullah, for his part, set out to facilitate an arrangement with the Jews to divide Palestine between them, thereby enlarging his kingdom at the expense of the Mufti. The Zionist interest in this proposal was to avoid having to face the Arab Legion in battle. Formed, trained and led by British military officers, Jordan's Arab Legion could present the greatest threat to any adversary.

To fully ascertain Abdullah's stand on matters of Jewish independence, Golda Meir was sent to represent the Political Department of the Jewish Agency in a meeting with the king. Abdullah repeated his preference to have a Jewish republic, as an entity within the Jordanian monarchy. Furthermore, he wanted to hear the results of the UN resolution before he would discuss how he would react to a Jewish state. However, he did express his understanding for Jewish desire of that result, and concluded the meeting with plans to confer again after the UN decision had been published. The Jewish leadership was pleased with the result of the meeting, which amounted to a non-aggression pact with the only Arab state in possession of an army capable of doing serious harm to the Jews.[189]

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[188] Ibid, p. 103.

[189] Ibid, p. 116.

Before any action was taken in Palestine, Abdullah wanted to ensure he had some kind of endorsement from the British. He instructed the British Minister to Jordan, Alec Kirkbride, to pressure his government for a reaction to the Jordanian proposal to avoid taking part in a conflict in Palestine. By the beginning of 1948, the British acknowledged that the best solution for them would be to allow Jordan to annex Arab Palestine.[190] In this solution, Abdullah would achieve his goal to expand his land holdings and gain the strategic bonus of obtaining access to the Mediterranean. The British, meanwhile, would maintain their influence over the region through the financial subsidies they paid to Jordan.

Britain had, once again, used "artfully contrived" ambiguity to convey their encouragement of the Hashimite proposal.[191] In short, the British wanted to strengthen their relationship with the Arab states, assured Abdullah that they would continue to have troops stationed in Jordan, and promised to continue supplying the Arab Legion with equipment and training. However, they clearly admonished the king not to permit the Arab Legion into the areas allotted for the Jewish state.[192] A delicate balance would have to be achieved between the UN provisions for the Jewish state and the wishes of the other Arab states. Similar to the position Abdullah took, Britain publicly opposed partition, while it secretly encouraged it. Consequently, "Britain now became a party to an attempt to frustrate the UN partition plan and divide up Palestine instead between Abdullah and the Jews."[193]

Despite the fact that Abdullah and Golda Meir did not meet again personally, as planned, messages were transmitted between them. Meir was concerned that Abdullah would uphold his promise, and he attempted to assure her that he was a man of honor. The Jewish leaders were skeptical, though, and not understanding of the role of honor in Arab politics, continued to fear that Abdullah would betray them. In an additional misunderstanding, the Jews erroneously believed that the British had set aside Abdullah's

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[190] Louis, p. 369.

[191] Shlaim, p. 132.

[192] Louis, p. 372.

[193] Shlaim, p. 139.

proposal and were focusing on a solution relying on Syria.[194] In fact, the British and Jews had few, if any ties left at this point. "No tripartite collusion was possible and the triangle had only two arms, one linking Abdullah to Britain and the other to the Jewish Agency."[195] Abdullah was the essential factor in the collusion. He was the glue between the Jews and the British that held the deal together.

The Syrian Arab Liberation Army joined Abdullah's Arab Legion in the anti-Husayni program. Fawzi al-Qawukji, the Syrian leader, believed that a solution could have been found for the problems in Palestine, had it not been for the Mufti and his ambition. He, too, was willing to join Abdullah's secret agreement with the Jews. During a pivotal battle at Kastel, the Mufti's cousin, his most able and charismatic military commander, was killed because Qawukji denied him a large supply of arms to defend against the Jewish offensive. The death of this commander caused the collapse of Haj Amin's forces in Palestine and turned the tide in the Jewish favor.[196]

The Jewish victories in battle, coupled with their fear of Abdullah retreating from his promises, caused them to consider expanding to areas greater than the UN partition had originally intended. The Arab Legion, Abdullah proclaimed, had no choice but to take steps to protect the Arab Palestinians from the Jewish attacks, especially after the raid on the village of Deir Yassin. Public statements made by Abdullah to increase his credibility as an Arab nationalist further fueled the Jewish fears. Abdullah was caught in a dilemma. He wanted to maintain goodwill with the Jews and benefit from their materiel support, but to do so publicly would cause him to be denounced as a traitor to the Arab world. Therefore, he could not divulge his actual intentions, even to many high-ranking members of his own administration.[197]

As the situation in Palestine deteriorated into war, the Jewish forces stepped up raids against Arabs. In the end, the Arab Legion only attacked the area allotted to the Jews once, and British officers on the scene claimed that it was a misunderstanding.[198]

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[194] Ibid, p. 154.

[195] Ibid, p. 141.

[196] Ibid, p. 159.

[197] Louis, p. 376.

[198] Shlaim, p. 178.

Abdullah did what he could to avoid conflict between the Jewish forces and his Arab Legion in all the confusion of the end of the administration. However, when the Mandate ended without a truce accepted by either side, the conflict continued for several more months. When the Haganah made preemptive strikes against the Arabs, Abdullah was compelled to take an active role in the fighting out of solidarity to his Arab brethren. Nevertheless, he always remained true to his pledge to avoid bloodshed with the Jews, if at all possible.

H. CONCLUSIONS

Despite confusion, mistrust and intrigue on the part of every player involved in the conflict, the 1948 Arab-Israeli war eventually ended with a cease-fire. Ironically, the result after months of fighting by combined Arab forces was that the Jews controlled more land than was originally allotted to them in any of the partition plans. Figure 4 illustrates the disposition of Palestinian land following the war of Israeli independence. Jordan annexed the majority of the remaining portion of Palestine, in the land now referred to as the West Bank. Abdullah's dream to expand his land holdings had finally been realized, but at what cost?

Ever since the days before the First World War when Sharif Husayn longed for greater autonomy under Ottoman rule, his son Abdullah envisioned a Hashimite empire stretching across the Arab world. Abdullah planned to represent the family in Iraq, but relinquished that claim in favor of his brother and settled for the emirate of TransJordan. While happy to have received the appointment, Abdullah always longed for more, and he made no secret of that desire. His plans to expand north and rejoin the regions of Greater Syria were disapproved of by the British because of the impact such a move might have on relations with their French ally. Abdullah capitulated to the British wishes because of the financial subsidy and military protection upon which he relied.

Figure 4.
Israeli Territory 1949: Area of Jewish State as Proposed by the UN and Additional Area Conquered by Israel (From Bickerton and Klausner, p. 92.)

Abdullah never entirely gave up hope on the Greater Syria plan, but he shifted his focus to attaining Palestine once the partition plans were suggested. The Zionists had the ear of the British, as he was well aware. Therefore, Abdullah concluded that positive relations with them could only strengthen his efforts to gain control of the land and could influence the British to approve of his intention. He knew that acting without the approval of the British could have dire consequences for his survival in the position that he held. He did not want to do anything that could cause the British to withdraw their monetary aid or military support.

Abdullah faced opposition to his dealings with the Zionists from several of the neighboring Arab states. Ibn Saud and the Egyptians did not want to see the Hashimite enlarge his sphere of control. The Mufti of Jerusalem, speaking for the Palestinian Arabs, as well as, the Syrians also disapproved because of their belief that Palestine should become an independent Arab state, not one ruled by Abdullah. Therefore, Abdullah tried to keep any meetings he had with the Zionist leaders strictly confidential. He did not want to anger or disappoint his Arab brothers, but he could not resist the opportunity to take the necessary actions to realize his own goals. The mere rumors about his meetings were enough to spawn accusations by Arab leaders that he was a traitor to their cause. At its base, the claim may have been true. Abdullah was willing to betray the Palestinian Arab cause for independence in order to achieve what he felt was his destiny, rule over as much of Greater Syria as possible.

Because of his dependence on the British patronage, Abdullah had to placate them when they required him to avoid a confrontation with the French administration in Syria. Abdullah relented with respect to Syria, but only because he saw a new avenue for expansion opening in Palestine and he thought he could pursue Syria at a later date. When the British announced that they would be abandoning the Mandate in Palestine, Abdullah saw his opportunity. Additionally, he was given a measure of British support of his plan as long as he did not encroach on the land that was designated for the Jews.

With this approval, Abdullah engaged in discussions with the Jews for the partition of Palestine between their two groups. Ultimately, Abdullah paid the highest price for his grandiose ambitions. He was assassinated just two years after the cease-fire was reached for the Arab-Israeli war. Arab nationalists could never accept that he had likely conspired with the Jewish enemy for the advancement of his own aims. Given what was known about Abdullah from those that knew him and from his own proclamations, it is surprising that anyone would think that he would ever do otherwise.

VI. CONCLUSION

This thesis has analyzed the British Mandate in Palestine. It examined the factors that afforded the Jews, a minority group in Palestine, the ability to amass enough political power, both internally and in the international community, to successfully declare Israel as an independent country following the end of the British Mandate. The lobbying of the World Zionist Organization, and Chaim Weizmann in particular, kept pressure on the British political leaders in London to ensure that Palestine was developed as a national home for the Jews.

Based on Zionist influence, the Balfour Declaration was included in the text of the Mandate Charter, thus providing a legally recognized mission to establish the Jewish homeland. This statement enraged the Arab population and resulted in the basis for their political non-participation. Furthermore, the policies London promulgated for the rule of Palestine privileged and advantaged the Jews. Despite Arab protests, Jewish immigration continued in record numbers and Jews were granted disproportionate levels of representation in the local government and positions of political power. Jewish leaders embraced the opportunities they were given to participate in government institutions because they saw them as chances to consolidate power. The Arab leaders, however, boycotted working in situations where Jews were given equal recognition, consequently reducing their effectiveness in British government positions.

The Arabs did not see any institutionally viable alternatives to display their dissatisfaction with the British policies, so they resorted to political violence. However, their violent actions rarely benefited them politically. The British refused to concede to Arabs demands for changes to policy following episodes of violence. Conversely, public disturbances often resolved the British to support the Jewish cause with greater tenacity. The Arabs became labeled as the aggressors of the conflict, while Jews benefited from increased security force training and the implicit permission of the British to stockpile weapons. In the later years of the Mandate when Jews were conducting unprovoked, offensive raids on Arabs, the British response was not as swift or strong as it had been against the Arabs. Additionally, many Arab leaders were exiled for their perceived role

in instigating the violent actions committed by their people, further reducing Arab political effectiveness. The relationship between the British and Jewish leaders remained cordial for a much longer period, until just before the outbreak of World War II.

The significant positions Jewish leaders held in the Mandate government gave them the ability to unite their people to the cause of independence and develop the political institutions that would be necessary to achieve that goal. The unity of effort in the Jewish population of Palestine was, perhaps, its greatest strength. Alternately, the tribal rivalries that plagued the Arab groups were often just as damaging to their cause as the British policies that worked against them. They were never able to form alliances that would unite in opposition to the Jewish presence.

Abdullah, the ruler of TransJordan, was concerned with the ability to realize his own interests, rather than those of the greater Arab cause. He had to balance his expansionist desires with the British policies he was expected to support because he was obligated to them for his position and continued security. Therefore, he never attempted to occupy the Mandate territory until the British withdrew. However, when the opportunity presented itself to obtain a greater portion of Palestinian land, Abdullah preferred to negotiate with the Zionists rather than his historic rival Arab brothers. He entered into a scheme of collusion to divide the land of the Palestinian Mandate between the Zionists and himself, ignoring the desires of the Palestinian Arabs for independence.

In summary, this thesis has determined that the Jews, the minority group in Palestine, were able to amass enough political power to successfully declare the independence of Israel. Several factor contributed to their ability to achieve this goal. First, British policies tacitly favored the Jewish population. Immigration policies, land purchase rights and government positions allowed the Jews to consolidate power in political institutions. Second, Arab miscues in their response to the British policies, their political non-participation, and their decision to use political violence as a means to voice their dissatisfaction with those policies, disadvantaged this group. Finally, the historic tribal rivalries amongst the various Arab groups inspired Abdullah to enter into a compromise agreement with the Zionist leaders rather than unite with the other Arabs groups in opposition to them.

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