

2007

## **Towards Nakba: the failure of the British mandate of Palestine, 1922-1939**

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TOWARDS NAKBA: THE FAILURE OF THE BRITISH MANDATE OF  
PALESTINE, 1922-1939

A Thesis

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the  
Louisiana State University and  
Agricultural and Mechanical College  
in partial fulfillment of the  
requirements for the degree of  
Master of Arts

in

The Department of History

by  
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B.A., Louisiana State University, 2005  
August 2007

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## **Abstract**

In 1922, with the issuance of the Churchill White Paper, the British government committed itself to assuming the responsibilities of the Balfour Declaration and create a bi-national state in the Mandated territory of Palestine. By 1939, the British, represented by the Mandatory Authority, found themselves trapped between a Palestinian-based Zionist movement, itself torn between two competing factions, and a Palestinian Arab nationalist movement whose leadership had collapsed. The internal split between Revisionist Zionism under Ze'ev Jabotinsky and Mainstream Zionism under Chaim Weizmann and, later, David Ben-Gurion prevented the British government from negotiating with a cohesive Zionist organization. The collapse of the highly centralized Palestinian Arab nationalist resistance, led by the Grand Mufti of Jerusalem Hajj Amin al-Husseini, in 1937 deprived the British government of a cohesive Arab movement with which they could negotiate. This thesis argues that the factional differences within the broader Arab-Zionist conflict caused the British to fail in accomplishing their goal of a bi-national state in Palestine.

## Introduction

The purpose of this thesis is to illuminate the role that the British played in fomenting the current state of hostilities in the modern Middle East. From 1920 to 1939, the expressed purpose of the British Mandate of Palestine was to create a bi-national state, Arab and Jewish, in Palestine.<sup>1</sup> This thesis asserts that the British failed to achieve their goal because of 1) the fracturing of the Zionist Organization by 1925 and 2) the collapse of Arab nationalist leadership by 1937. Simply stated, there was no one with whom the British could negotiate peace.

Naomi Shepard, Bernard Wasserstein, Bernard Joseph, and A.W. Kayyali assert that the British Mandate failed because the British were unable to reconcile Jewish and Arab nationalism; this assertion is true, to a point.<sup>2</sup> I argue that the failure of the Mandate is more complex than the clash of nationalisms and that there were deeper divisions within the Jewish and Arab nationalist movements that must be explored. The evidence suggests that there existed throughout the Mandate period within Zionism a deep and crippling divide; this division is evident from the writings of the head of the Jewish agency in Palestine and influential Zionist Chaim Weizmann, as well as those of Ze'ev Jabotinsky and David Ben-Gurion. I have used the evidence presented by Zvi Elpeleg, Phillip Mattar, Yehuda Taggar, Bernard Lewis, and Muhammad Muslih, as well as my own research into the British Mandatory Government papers and the writings of Chaim

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<sup>1</sup> See: The Churchill White Paper, July 1, 1922 courtesy of <http://www.yale.edu/lawweb/avalon/mideast/brwh1922.htm>; Correspondence with the Palestine Arab Delegation and the Zionist Organization. (London: His Majesty's Stationary Office, 1922), p. 31 item 4.

<sup>2</sup> Naomi Shepherd, *Ploughing Sand: British Rule in Palestine, 1917-1948* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1999); Bernard Wasserstein, *The British in Palestine* (London: Royal Historical Society, 1978); Bernard Joseph, *British Rule in Palestine* (Washington D.C.: Public Affairs Press, 1948); A.W. Kayyali, *Palestine: A Modern History* (London: Croom Helm, 1978).

Weizmann to sketch a portrait of the powerful Palestinian Arab nationalist movement that collapsed after the exile of the Grand Mufti of Jerusalem Hajj Amin al-Husseini in 1937.<sup>3</sup>

It is paramount to note that the British Empire was a collection of colonial administrations. Like all empires, the British had individual administrations in charge of colonial oversight. It cannot be said that the British Empire itself did anything; rather, the colonial governments were the British actors in a given territory. Rule in the British Empire varied in method and degree from territory to territory. In dominions like Canada, British direct rule was virtually non-existent while in territories like the Gold Coast, British rule was absolute. In regards to Palestine, the British actor was the Mandate government itself.

The first chapter of this thesis explains the wider context in which British policy toward Jewish and Arab nationalism evolved. The second chapter focuses on the rise of Pan-Arab nationalism and the rule of the Grand Mufti of Jerusalem. The third focuses primarily on the formation of Zionism from its roots in the ghettos of Europe through Theodore Herzl's political Zionism to the internal split under Chaim Weizmann and Ze'ev Jabotinsky and the rise of David Ben-Gurion. The fourth chapter examines the clashes between Jewish and Arab nationalists and the way in which the British Mandate government attempted, and failed, to create a single Palestinian state.

What differentiated Palestine from the rest of Britain's colonies can be summed up in one word: Jerusalem. Palestine was and continues to remain one of the most

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<sup>3</sup> Zvi Elpeleg, *The Grand Mufti: Hajj Amin al-Hussaini, Founder of the Palestinian National Movement* (Portland: Frank Cass, 1993); Philip Mattar, *The Mufti of Jerusalem: Al-Hajj Amin al-Husayni and the Palestinian National Movement* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1988); Muhammad Muslih, *The Origins of Palestinian Nationalism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1988); Yehuda Taggar, *The Mufti of Jerusalem and Palestine Arab Politics, 1930-1937* (New York: Garland, 1986); Bernard Lewis, *From Babel to Dragomans: Interpreting the Middle East* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004).



important pieces of territory in the world. Palestine is a symbol within the Muslim, Christian, and Jewish discourses. Whoever controls Jerusalem, guards the holy places. The Mandate period of Palestine is a story with multiple factions. The Palestinian Arab nationalists, who were cut off from their ideological center in Syria by the Sykes-Picot agreement, wanted to create their own state free from foreign rule. The many Zionist factions all wanted to create a Jewish homeland but all had their own designs for how that homeland would be built. In this atmosphere of competing nationalist interests sat the British Mandate government who was charged by the League of Nations and the Lloyd-George government to create a bi-national state in Palestine.

## **Chapter 1: The Middle East before the Mandate: The British Empire and the Nationalist Challenge**

The subject of this chapter is the British Empire before the establishment of the Mandate of Palestine. I use the works of Bernard Porter, Ronald Hyam, Bernard Lewis, and Daniel Yergin to set the context in which the British Empire enters the Middle East. The first section examines Orientalism and how it influenced the British, Arab, and Zionist perceptions of themselves and each other. The second section examines the expansion of the British Empire after 1858, the impact of the First World War, and the establishment of the Mandate system under the League of Nations.

Porter, Hyam, Lewis, and Yergin assert that the same theme of economic and military security against foreign competition that spurred the expansion and consolidation of the British Empire underscored British expansion in the Middle East.<sup>4</sup> On the most basic level, the pursuit of empire was about securing what the British needed to maintain their economic and military superiority over their European and American competitors. By the First World War, the British needed oil and the biggest supply was located in the Middle East.

### **Orientalism, British Imperialism, and Zionism**

Orientalism, with its assumptions of the “otherness” of the East, was a vital component of British imperialism. So too, was what Rudyard Kipling famously called “the White Man’s Burden.” In his call to Americans to “take up the white man’s burden” in the Philippines, Kipling expressed the British ideal of the civilizing mission: that

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<sup>4</sup> See: Bernard Porter, *The Lion’s Share: A Short History of British Imperialism, 1850-1995*, 4th edition (New York: Longman, 1996); Ronald Hyam, *Britain’s Imperial Century, 1815-1914* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2002); Bernard Lewis, *From Babel to Dragomans: Interpreting the Middle East* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004) Ch. 16; Daniel Yergin, *The Prize: The Epic Quest for Oil, Money, and Power* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1991).

imperial rule actually served the needs of the subjected people. In Kipling's formulation, imperial officials worked not for their own personal or even for national gain but rather to elevate the less developed peoples to modernity. Imperialism was not about markets, territory, or glory but about civilization- to save the non-European people from their own degrading backwardness and give them order and peace. The civilizing mission was a European undertaking that dictated that the Europeans must civilize the rest of the world: to elevate the darker races from eastern mysticism and heathenry into the morality and rationality of western culture. Ronald Hyam writes, "British cultural arrogance was accompanied by a brash cultural aggression inspired with a passion to 'improve' other peoples."<sup>5</sup> The civilizing mission was inherently paternalistic. The British colonial officials embraced the civilizing mission whole-heartedly.

In 1900, the British saw the East through the lenses of Orientalism. Edward Said describes Orientalism as "a way of coming to terms with the Orient that is based on the Orient's special place in European Western experience."<sup>6</sup> The West has been pre-occupied with the East for centuries. Said explains: "The Orient is not only adjacent to Europe; it is also the place of Europe's greatest and richest and oldest colonies, the source of its civilizations and languages, its cultural contestant, and one of its deepest and most recurring images of the Other."<sup>7</sup> The Orientalist paradigm is based on comparisons between eastern and western cultures. In literature, art and both scientific and historical studies, Europeans portrayed the East as despotic, mystic, and barbaric while in European accounts the West is modern, rational, and the embodiment of civilization. Clearly, Orientalism rests on the assumption of the superiority of western culture and institutions

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<sup>5</sup> Hyam, p. 75.

<sup>6</sup> Edward Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Vintage, 1979), p. 1.

<sup>7</sup> Said, p. 1.

over their eastern counterparts. What and who comprises the Orient (and the Occident), however, changes over time. In the period covered in this thesis, the mid-nineteenth century through the early decades of the twentieth century, the “Orient” began at Constantinople.

Orientalism both demonized and romanticized the Arab-speaking people of the Middle East. As early as the first crusade the Arab was seen as the primary threat to European civilization. The Western imagination conjured all sorts of images of the Arab as a sexually perverse creature who would abduct Christian (i.e. European) women to enslave them in the harems of the sultans and take the prettiest boys to be their sex slaves or eunuchs in gold laden places. The reality was radically different. “Arab” covered many different societies, cultures, ethnicities, and religions. Ruling elites, largely western-educated, lived in urban areas like Medina, Damascus, Jaffa, and Baghdad. Most Arabs, however, lived in small villages. Many Arabs still lived in Bedouin caravans constantly crisscrossing the deserts; others were doctors, diplomats, and scientists, living in urban and industrial centers. The realities of “the Arab” were far from the fearsome desert warriors feared in Europe.

In the Middle East, Arab nationalism was a response not only to European encroachment, but also to the rapid westernizing of the Ottomans who had begun to identify themselves linguistically as Turks by the middle of the nineteenth century. Exposed to European nationalism, Ottoman ruling elites began to abandon their traditional form of government in favor of western style reforms. For example, they adopted a French style civil and criminal code and adopted a formal flag and national

anthem. The Sultanate created a parliamentary body and established secular universities. The Ottomans also allowed non-Muslims to serve in the Ottoman army.<sup>8</sup>

Within the Arab paradigm European Jews were regarded as Europeans rather than being an indigenous people in Diaspora. In the Orientalist paradigm, however, European Jews, even though they lived in the west and spoke western languages, were an eastern people. This view of Jews as “eastern” was largely due to intersection of Christianity and Judaism in the Bible at Judea. Anyone who could read a Bible knew that the Jews did not come from Europe.

Western attitudes towards Jews and Jewishness became more complex in the nineteenth century, when European Jews experienced unprecedented social and economic change. Albert Lindemann writes, “The material comfort and social success of Jews, the emergence of a numerous Jewish bourgeoisie in western Europe and the United States by the late nineteenth century, were part of a remarkable ascendance of the Jews since the late eighteenth century.”<sup>9</sup> European Jews began to leave the ghettos that they had traditionally been confined to and assimilate into society. The upward social mobility of Jews caused a backlash in Europe and the United States and a reworking of anti-Semitic rhetoric. A new aspect of racial hatred was added to the traditionally religious hatred of Jews. Significantly, the term “anti-Semitic” was coined in 1870.<sup>10</sup>

This backlash created a nationalist sentiment within Jewish communities, especially in central and eastern Europe. Not unlike the south Slavic or Irish nationalistic movements of the late nineteenth century, Jewish nationalists focused on the creation of an ideal Jewish identity based on Jewish history and Semitic roots. Just like the south

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<sup>8</sup> Philip Hitti, *The Near East in History* (Princeton: D. Van Nostrand Company, 1961), pp. 357-360.

<sup>9</sup> Albert Lindemann, *The Jew Accused* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. 1991), p.10.

<sup>10</sup> Lindemann, p. 16.

Slavs and the Irish focused on Yugoslavia and Ireland, respectively, these nationalistic Jews emphasized the return to the land that their religious books, the Tanak, told was theirs: Zion, the Biblical land of Israel, nineteenth century Palestine. With Jewish emancipation and the resurgence of anti-Semitism, Zionism was born.

The British role in the Zionist narrative is paramount. In 1848, Lionel de Rothschild became the first Jew to be elected to Parliament. As debates over Jewish emancipation raged in Parliament, the fundamental question was, could British national identity embrace Jewishness? David Feldman writes, “It meant that they were not merely acquiring as individuals the same rights as other citizens, it also meant they were being allowed access to a positive community- the nation.”<sup>11</sup> By the 1870’s, British Jews enjoyed the ability to move throughout British society and wield political power; many became highly assimilated. The starkest example of this was Prime Minister Benjamin Disraeli who was from a *Bene Roma*, or Italian Jewish, background. Prime Minister from February to December 1868 and again in 1874, Benjamin Disraeli was one of the architects of the British Empire. He was one of the major proponents of the 1876 declaration making Queen Victoria empress of India and under his administration the British took control of the Suez Canal. Disraeli also successfully campaigned at the Congress of Berlin in 1878 to block Russian expansion in the Balkans.

Disraeli was an Anglican but identified himself as an ethnic Jew. His political opponents often used his Jewishness against him. Disraeli never hesitated to defend the Jewish people. He wrote

The Saxon, the Sclave, and the Celt, have adopted most of the laws and many of the customs of these Arabian tribes, all their literature and all their religion. They are therefore indebted to them for much that regulates

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<sup>11</sup> David Feldman, *Englishmen and Jews* (New Haven: Yale University Press. 1994 ), p. 46.

much that charms, and much that solaces existence. The toiling multitude rest every seventh day by virtue of a Jewish law; they are perpetually reading, for their example, the records of Jewish history and signing the odes and elegies of Jewish poets; and they daily acknowledge on their knees, with reverent gratitude, that the only medium of communication between the creator and themselves is the Jewish race.<sup>12</sup>

Disraeli attacked anti-Semitism on the basis that Christian Europeans took all of their religious traditions from the Jewish religion. He pointed out that Jesus was a Jew from Galilee. Disraeli, in fact, considered anti-Semitism to be rooted in a Christian inferiority complex.

The British Jewish community was highly assimilated by the 1880's. While there was a clear current of anti-Semitism running through British society, it did not pose a threat to Jewish upward social mobility and was a peripheral ideology. Jews who immigrated to Britain found a society that, taken as a whole, allowed them to practice their religion in peace and was open to them. Nevertheless, most British considered the Jews, despite the large numbers of British Jews who had assimilated into mainstream British culture, to be a Semitic people who had African origins rather than being western (i.e. white). For example, the former British Commissioner and Consul-General Sir Harry H. Johnston wrote in his address to the First Races Congress in 1911,

In the Jew, as in the Egyptians and the Moor, there is a varying but still discernible element of the Negro, derived in the case of the Jew from the strong infusion of Elamite blood, and in the case of the Moor, from the obvious connection with Negro Africa [sic]<sup>13</sup>

The British experience with their own indigenous Jews and assimilated immigrants shaped their policy toward Jewish settlement in Palestine. This proved problematic as the vast majority of Jewish immigrants to Palestine came directly from

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<sup>12</sup>Benjamin Disraeli, *Lord George Bentinck* (1852; London: Colburn and Company, 1969), pp. 482-483.

<sup>13</sup>Sixth Session of the Universal Races Congress *Papers on Inter-Racial Problems communicated to the First Universal Races Congress*, Ed. G. Spiller (London: Orchard House, 1911), pp. 329-330.

eastern Europe. The British imperialist ministers, as is evident from British actions in India, practiced collectivism; meaning they grouped people into large religious groups rather than particular ethnic groups.<sup>14</sup> They disregarded, or were not aware of, the deep-seated lines of ethnic division such as language and region and preferred to group their colonial subjects along lines that amounted to the least common denominator. Yet all Jews were not alike, as the fracturing of Jewish nationalism was to show.

### **The Empire and the Impact of the First World War**

Before 1858, the British Empire was not the globe-spanning entity it was by 1900. In the first half of the nineteenth century, the British did not take over territories to elevate Britain's status. British imperial expansion was done in the name of necessity rather than grandeur. The British Empire was an informal empire based on the principle of free trade.<sup>15</sup> The United Kingdom was a trade-based economy. The British only seized territory perceived as integral to the preservation of trade and the protection of British economic interests. Most British colonies were situated along trade routes and served as safe harbor for British merchant ships. The colonies also maintained naval fleets so that the British could maintain a strong presence in a given region.

The phase of informal empire ended in the 1880's. Bernard Porter writes, "The frontiers of Britain's 'informal' empire were shrinking, and as they did so the frontiers of her 'formal' empire expanded to meet them."<sup>16</sup> Industrially, other European nations had caught up to the British and began to create their own empires. In response to European encroachment in regions where they had previously held primacy, the British

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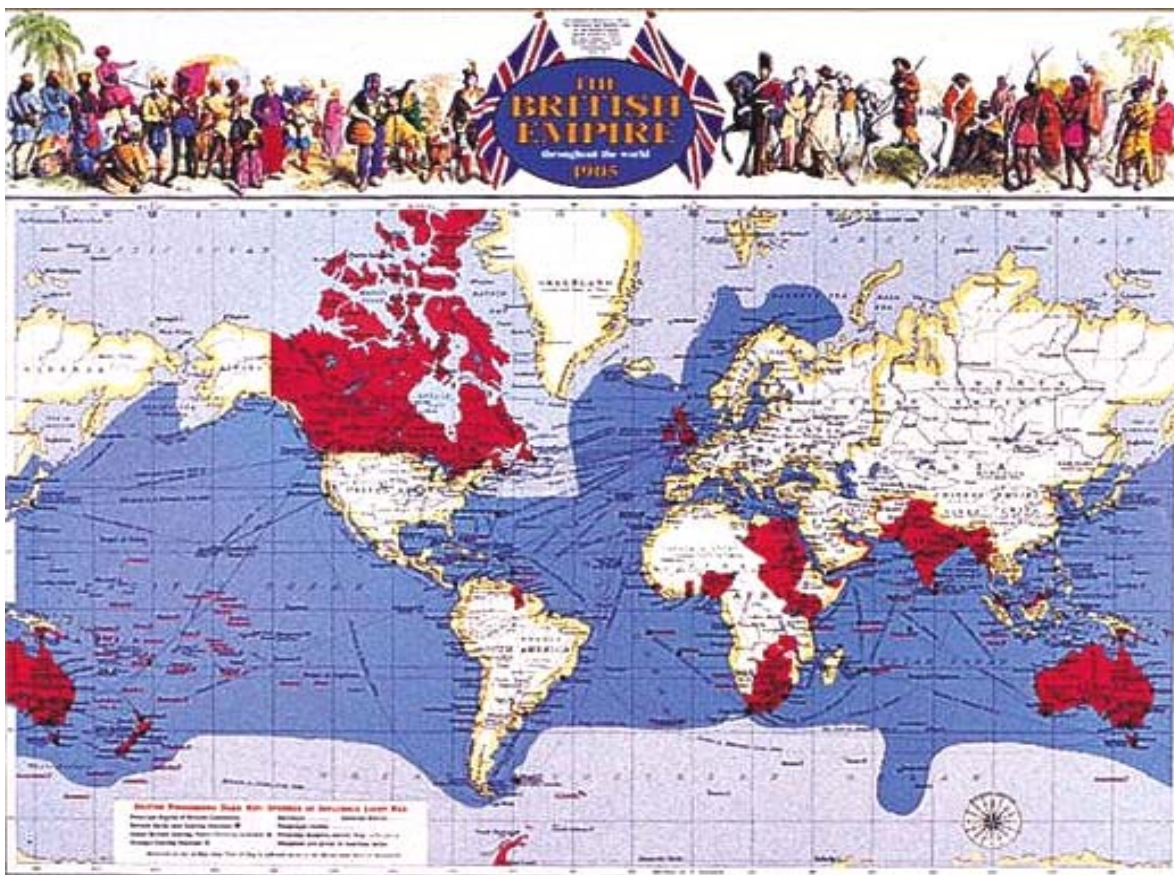
<sup>14</sup> See Bernard Cohn, *Colonialism and Its Forms of Knowledge* (Princeton; Princeton University Press, 1996), pp. 106-162.

<sup>15</sup> Porter, p. 15.

<sup>16</sup> Porter, p.122



consolidated their territory and expanded as was necessary. The British formally occupied Egypt in 1882 and expanded into the Sudan and parts of Somalia. In 1884, German chancellor Otto von Bismarck organized the Berlin Conference. The purpose of the conference was to regulate European expansion into Africa. The Conference gave the British sovereignty over Kenya and Uganda. By 1900, the British also claimed a protectorate over Nigeria on the west coast of Africa. On the east coast of Africa, British territory stretched from Egypt to South Africa. London became the center of the diamond trade. The British also established “White Rule” colonies in Rhodesia, South Africa, and Kenya. Map 1 shows the extent of British control by 1905:



Map 1: The British Empire, 1905.<sup>17</sup>

<sup>17</sup> Courtesy of [http://www.mapsworldwide.com/itm\\_img/1873590156.jpg](http://www.mapsworldwide.com/itm_img/1873590156.jpg).

By 1905, the British Empire was the largest land empire in human history. Between 1870 and 1914, the Britain added an estimated nine million square miles. The “crown jewel” of the British Empire was India. The British Empire recognized Canada, Australia, New Zealand, Newfoundland, and South Africa as self-rule colonies by 1910. Spanning the entire globe with an estimated sixth of the world’s population subject to its crown, the British Empire had what Porter describes as “the most colonial flesh on her” and, thus, the most to lose in an imperialist war.<sup>18</sup>

The Great War caused immense strain on the British Empire. Soldiers previously stationed in places like India were redeployed to Europe. Eventually, the British brought in regiments made up of colonial subjects from India to fight in the Ottoman theater of war. Seven hundred forty five thousand British men were killed in the Great War along with an estimated 1,600,000 wounded.<sup>19</sup> In addition to the British casualties, 49,200 Indians, 59,000 Australians, and 57,000 Canadians were killed in action.<sup>20</sup> Arthur Marwick writes, “There is no exact measure of the quantity of personal agony concealed behind these figures, but society, in later years, exhibited all the stings of have suffered a deep mental wound, of having undergone a traumatic experience.”<sup>21</sup>

To win the war, the British government started making promises that would come back to haunt it.<sup>22</sup> In India, for example, the British promised to all South Asians participation in the British colonial administration and move towards Indian self-rule if they volunteered to fight in the British army.<sup>23</sup> The British made the same promises in

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<sup>18</sup> Porter, p. 227.

<sup>19</sup> Arthur Marwick, *The Deluge* (New York: Norton, 1965 ), p. 290.

<sup>20</sup> Martin Gilbert, *The Routledge Atlas of the First World War*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (London: Routledge, 1994), pp 129-130.

<sup>21</sup> Marwick, p. 290.

<sup>22</sup> Porter, p. 232.

<sup>23</sup> Porter, p. 233.

Egypt. The British situation in Egypt had been ill defined. For the previous thirty years before Egypt was an independent state in title, but the British controlled the Egyptian government and the Suez Canal.<sup>24</sup> The British also maintained a strong military presence in Egypt. Following the outbreak of war, the British Empire assumed a formal protectorate over Egypt, deposed Abbas II, and installed Hussein Kamil as the sultan of Egypt. The British promised the Egyptians independence if they fought against the Ottomans.

The British government also made promises to a third, rather surprising party: the Zionist Congress. The foreign secretary Lord Arthur Balfour was familiar with the nationalist movement and its leader Dr. Chaim Weizmann. British officials thought that appealing to the Zionists would undermine the Central Power's war effort and, more importantly, garner American and Russian Jewry's support and influence on their respective governments.<sup>25</sup> British politicians believed that "the world Jewry was a powerful force which could affect the fortunes of war [...] and that most Jews were active supporters of Zionism."<sup>26</sup> Conversation between the British government and the World Zionist Organization resulted in the endorsement of a national Jewish homeland.

The entry of the Ottoman Empire into the Great War gave Britain a legitimate reason to go into the Arab peninsula and Mesopotamia. This did not mean that the British had sought war with the Ottoman Empire. Bernard Lewis writes, "At the outbreak of war in 1914, the Prime Minister Mr. Asquith, in a speech at the Guildhall, informed his audience with deep and obvious regret that the Ottoman Empire had chosen to enter the

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<sup>24</sup> Porter, p. 235.

<sup>25</sup> Porter, p. 237.

<sup>26</sup> Shepherd, p. 8.

war on the other[Central Powers'] side."<sup>27</sup> Before the war, it had been British foreign policy to sustain the Ottoman Empire because it blocked Russian expansion into Persia, which posed a threat to British rule in India, and the Mediterranean Sea. With the outbreak of war, British interest in the Middle East was threefold: to maintain Britain's role as the dominant power in the Mediterranean Sea, to secure the Suez Canal, and to gain access to Middle Eastern oil fields.

Access to Middle Eastern oil was a primary concern for the British before the outbreak of war. Oil was first discovered in Persia in 1908. In 1909, the Anglo-Persian Oil Company formed to harvest, refine, and ship petroleum back to Britain. Oil gained strategic concern in 1911 when then First Lord of the Admiralty Winston Churchill ordered the British Navy to use oil rather than coal as its primary fuel source. The strategic decision to convert to oil was based on two factors. First, oil was a superior fuel to coal. Oil could be stockpiled because it did not decay like coal. Ships that ran off oil were faster and fuel reserves took up less space, which in turn could be used for carrying extra materials such as gunpowder.<sup>28</sup> The second reason was that both Germany and the United States had begun to convert their navies to oil and this posed a direct threat to the British Empire. Daniel Yergin writes, "Naval supremacy was central to England's conception of its world role and to the security of the British Empire."<sup>29</sup> In order to protect its wide network of territories, the British had to maintain a mobile and cost-efficient navy. The conversion to oil met both of those needs.

To win the war against the Ottomans, the British exploited nationalist divisions that had emerged within the Ottoman Empire before 1914. The British established

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<sup>27</sup> Lewis, p.152.

<sup>28</sup> Yergin, p. 155.

<sup>29</sup> Yergin, p. 152.

military alliances with the Arab dynasties of the House of Sa'ud and the Hashemite Sharif of Mecca in order to exacerbate the internal instability within the Ottoman Empire. This policy and its arrangements will be covered in greater detail in chapter 2.

With the devastation caused by the Great War, the victorious powers were determined to ensure that such a war would not occur again. To that end, they created the League of Nations in 1919 at the Paris Peace Conference. The League's purpose was to prevent another global war through disarmament, collective security, diplomacy, and the promotion of welfare. One of the first decisions made by the League was what to do with the colonies of the German and the Ottoman Empires. The League invented a system of "Mandates" through which selected the former colonies would develop the necessary, meaning western style, governmental infrastructures to govern themselves.

The League created a three-tiered classification system for the Mandates. "A"-class Mandates were territories seized from the Ottoman Empire. These territories were deemed to "have reached a stage of development where their existence as independent nations can be provisionally recognized subject to the rendering of administrative advice and assistance by a Mandatory until such time as they are able to stand alone."<sup>30</sup> Class "A" Mandates included Iraq, Syria, Lebanon, and Palestine (later divided into Palestine and the Transjordan). The League of Nations gave the Class A Mandatory power responsibility for:

the administration of the territory under conditions which will guarantee freedom of conscience and religion, subject only to the maintenance of public order and morals, the prohibition of abuses such as the slave trade, the arms traffic and the liquor traffic, and the prevention of the establishment of fortifications or military and naval bases and of military

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<sup>30</sup> Covenant of the League of Nations Article 22. Courtesy of the Avalon Project at <http://www.yale.edu/lawweb/avalon/leagcov.htm>.

training of the natives for other than police purposes and the defense of territory, and will also secure equal opportunities for the trade and commerce of other Members of the League.<sup>31</sup>

Class “B”- Mandates were territories thought to be lacking the necessary institutions to function as independent states, so the Mandatory powers in question were given wider authority to govern and protect the Mandates. The class “B” Mandates included the French and British Cameroons, Rwanda-Urundi, Tanganyika, and French and British Togoland. Classes “C”- Mandates were former German colonies in South-West Africa, and certain islands in the South Pacific. The League deemed that these territories had to be ruled in all aspects by their mandatory powers. Article 22 also stated that “the degree of authority, control, or administration to be exercised by the Mandatory shall, if not previously agreed upon by the Members of the League, be explicitly defined in each case by the Council.”<sup>32</sup> The Mandatory powers were forbidden from constructing fortifications or raising armies in their mandated territory. However, this did little to stop the Mandatory powers from doing exactly that. France and Britain treated their mandated territories as *de facto* colonies.

The strategic importance of Palestine was not lost on the British government. It created a buffer between the Suez Canal and the French in Syria and Lebanon and any Arab attacks coming from the Arab Peninsula. Any shipment going up the Red Sea was flanked by British territories of British Somalia, the Sudan, and Egypt. The Lloyd George government incorporated the coastal plain extending to the Jordan and the area east of the Jordan River into the Mandate of Palestine. British territory arched from the Persian Gulf

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<sup>31</sup> Covenant of the League of Nations Article 22.

<sup>32</sup> Covenant of the League of Nations Article 22.

to the Mediterranean Sea. Map 2 shows the position of British territory in the Middle East:



Map 2: British Territory in the Middle East after World War One.<sup>33</sup>

In addition to its proximity to the Suez Canal, Palestine was important to British oil interests in the Middle East. British investors had established the Turkish Petroleum Company in 1912 to locate and develop new oil fields in Iraq. Following the First World War, the British government acquired rights to Turkish Petroleum Company and reached an agreement with King Faisal to begin drilling in 1925. In 1927 at Baba Gurgur, six miles north of Kirkuk, a massive oil field was discovered which produced 95,000 barrels

<sup>33</sup> Courtesy of <http://www.Britishempiremaps.co.uk>.

a day.<sup>34</sup> By 1929, the British had constructed a pipeline that ran from Kirkuk to the Palestinian port of Haifa.

The Mandate Government consisted of officials brought in from India, Egypt, and the Sudan who were familiar with Muslim– but not Ottoman and Arabic– culture. They were charged with creating a bi-national state in Palestine consisting of Arabs and European Jews. Bernard Wasserstein writes, “The political structure of mandatory Palestine was founded on the illusion that Britain could somehow discover a method of reconciling Zionist and Arab national interests.”<sup>35</sup> Neither Winston Churchill, who ran the Colonial Office through which Mandate policy was created, nor the Lloyd George Government as a whole, understood the nuances of European Jewry or the fervor of Arab nationalism in Palestine.

At the top of the Mandate political structure sat the High Commissioner through whom all final decisions in regards to the implementation of British policy ran. The first High Commissioner of Palestine was Herbert Samuel, who became the first practicing Jew appointed to a British cabinet in 1910. Samuel’s primary role was to mediate between Zionist and Arab demands. Samuel was very familiar with Zionism. He noted in his report to Parliament, “Zionism takes on many forms, and its individual adherents, like the adherents of any other political creed, hold various views as to its proper aims.”<sup>36</sup> Samuel acknowledged that an extreme element existed within Zionism that wanted to displace the indigenous Arab population. Zionism also included a segment who wanted to live in cooperation with the Arabs; Samuel sided with the latter. From Samuel’s

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<sup>34</sup> Yergin, p. 204.

<sup>35</sup> Wasserstein, p. 237.

<sup>36</sup> Herbert Samuel, *An Interim Report on the Civil Administration of Palestine 1 July 1920- 30 June 1921* (London: His Majesty’s Stationery Office, 1921), p.7.



perspective, any other Zionist aims for Palestine would not be compatible with British aspirations there.

The Zionists were represented by the Jewish Agency under the direction of Chaim Weizmann, who was appointed by the Zionist Organization. The purpose of the Jewish Agency was to facilitate the absorption of Jewish immigrants and to consult with the Mandate government in Jewish affairs. To represent the Muslim majority, the Mandate government created the Supreme Muslim Council in 1922. The Council chose the Grand Mufti of Jerusalem, Hajj Mohammad Amin al-Husseini, to be its president. To British policy makers, Zionist and Arab national interests were not irreconcilable. Unfortunately events in the Middle East and Europe and within Palestine itself made the establishment of a bi-national state more problematic than had been anticipated.

## Chapter 2: The Making of Palestinian Arab Nationalism

The subject of this chapter is Arab nationalism. The first section covers the origins of Arab nationalism in response to Pan-Turkish nationalism before the First World War and the rise of Hussein bin Ali, the Sharif of Mecca, and Ibn Sa'ud, the leader of the Sa'ud family. The second section examines the influence of Faisal bin Hussein on Arab nationalism during his two-year reign in the independent Arab-ruled Syria. The chapter concludes with an examination of the rise of the Grand Mufti of Jerusalem Hajj Amin al-Husseini as the leader of a new Palestine-centered Arab nationalism.

C. Ernest Dawn, Youssef Choueiri, Eliezer Tauber, Albert Hourani, and Basheer Nafi argue that the Arab nationalist movement involved many different factions.<sup>37</sup> Arab nationalism was not limited to a single city or region nor was it limited to Muslims only. Yet despite their diversity, Arab nationalists all pursued the same goal: elevation of the global status of Arab people whom they argued had become weak militarily and institutionally and lacked cultural pride.

Shepherd and Joseph assert that Palestinian nationalism was a reaction to Zionist encroachment and was highly disorganized. Both of those assertions are incorrect. While there was a reactionary element in Palestinian nationalism, the fight against Zionism became the focus of Arab nationalism only in the wake of the wider Arab failure in creating an independent state centered in Damascus. Moreover, the Palestinian nationalist movement was not disorganized. Muhammad Muslih, Yehuda Taggar, and Zvi Elpeleg have shown that although the nationalists had no structure that paralleled the World

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<sup>37</sup> See: C. Ernest Dawn, *From Ottomanism to Arabism* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1973); Youssef Choueiri, *Arab Nationalism* (Oxford: Blackwell publishers, 2000); Eliezer Tauber, *The Arab Movements in World War One* (London: Frank Cass, 1993); Albert Hourani, *A History of the Arab Peoples* (Cambridge: The Belknap Press, 1991); Basheer Nafi, *Arabism, Islamism, and the Palestine Question 1908-1941* (Reading: Ithaca Press, 1998).

Zionist Organization and its subsidiary in Palestine, the Jewish Agency, a centralized group of Arab nationalists did exist for the first seventeen years of the Mandate.<sup>38</sup>

### **Arab Nationalism and the First World War**

Arab nationalism has its origins in the nineteenth century. Western educated Arabs who were heavily influenced by German theories of culturally sensitive nationalism introduced the idea of nationalism in the Arab world. The ideology itself was a linguistic and historical nationalism. Arab nationalism dictated that an “Arab” was anyone whose native language was Arabic. It had no racial or religious connotations attached to it. It is imperative to note that Arab nationalism at this time did not equate to pan-Islamism.

Nationalism within Arab communities was influenced by three factors. The first was Arab pride in their history. Nationalist writers lauded Arab contributions to the Ottoman Empire and Europe. The second factor was the concept of “fatherland” introduced by the Sultanate during the Tanzimat between 1839 and 1876. Ottoman Arabs were expected to be loyal to the Sultan as well as to the region they hailed from. This notion transformed Syria and the Shiite, Sunni, and Kurdish regions of al-Iraq from geographic regions to cultural spheres within a larger Arab framework.<sup>39</sup> While a pan-Arabism, the idea of a single Arab state, existed within the nationalist discourse, the idea of the fatherland was dominant.

The third factor that shaped Arab nationalism was the ascendancy of the West. Arab nationalists recognized that the Ottoman Empire was lagging behind the Western

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<sup>38</sup> See: Muhammad Muslih, *The Origins of Palestinian Nationalism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1988); Yehuda Taggar, *The Mufti of Jerusalem and Palestine Politics 1930-1937* (New York: Garland, 1986); Zvi Elpeleg, *The Grand Mufti: Haj Amin Al-Hussaini, Founder of the Palestinian National Movement* (Portland: Frank Cass, 1993), Section 1.

<sup>39</sup> Al-Iraq was the Ottoman province that became the British mandate of Iraq.

European nations in institutional and military terms. Institutionally, Arab nationalists wanted to build a university system that taught western languages and sciences. Militarily, they wanted to emulate western armies whose battle techniques had far surpassed that of the Ottomans. This did not mean that these nationalists wanted to imitate the West. Dawn writes about Arabism and Ottomanism, “Both were defenses against the West, not against Christianity alone. Both were justifications of a civilization, the East, the worth and adequacy of which had been questioned by the progress of the West.”<sup>40</sup> This defense did not close the Arab-speaking world to Western philosophies and invocations. Many of the nationalists were open to a genuine intellectual exchange with the West but maintained the superiority of the East.

Arab nationalism began with Ottomanism and out of that emerged Arabism. Ottomanism was akin to the American civil rights movement and adhered to the concept that all of the ethnic groups within the Ottoman Empire should be equal under the law. Within this discourse, Arab nationalists wanted to elevate the Arabs’ status within the Ottoman Empire. This “elevation” entailed the inclusion of Arabic in university instruction and in governmental affairs in the Arabic-speaking provinces of Asia, which by 1890 constituted the vast majority of Ottoman territory. Arabism emerged from Ottomanism as early as the 1860’s but was subordinate to it until 1914 and the outbreak of the First World War. Arabists argued that the Arabs had become weak because they had been ruled by non-Arab people for so much of their history. If Arabs were to reclaim their rightful place in the world, Arabists argued, they had to reclaim their language and heritage. Arabists did not, however, advocate independence from the Ottoman Empire until after the outbreak of the First World War.

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<sup>40</sup> Dawn, p. 146.

Many of Arab nationalism's most famous and influential writers were Christians from Syria. One of the most influential Arab nationalists was Ibrahim al-Yaziji, an early proponent of Arabism in the 1860's. He argued that the Arabs were the most remarkable of the nations of the world because they rose to power and created a vibrant influential culture quickly. According to al-Yaziji, Europeans had achieved intellectual and military progress because of their exposure to Arab culture. Al-Yaziji also advocated a secular society which gave equality to all people regardless of religion. Most Ottomanists rejected this idea. Mohammad Abduh and Mohammad Rashid Rida, the leading Muslim Ottomanists contemporaries of al-Yaziji, would not entertain the idea of Arab nationalism being dominated by Christians. In turn, Christian nationalists had to acknowledge the primacy of Islam in Arab culture and Arab ascendancy. Although al-Yaziji's secular ideals found few adherents in Ottomanism, they heavily influenced the burgeoning Arabist movement and helped shape post-First World War Arab nationalism.<sup>41</sup>

Many of the most influential nationalist writers were not politicians; rather, they were academics, essayists, and poets. One of the most famous and influential early nationalists was Amin al-Rihani, a Maronite Christian from Lebanon. In 1888, al-Rihani was sent to live in the United States. In 1897, he returned to Lebanon where he taught English and in 1905 took a position as a lecturer at the American University of Beirut. Following the Young Turk revolution and the failure of the 1913 Paris Conference, he endorsed Syrian independence from the Ottoman Empire. He advocated an Arab state ruled by a secular government with a secular educational system. In his model, there would be no distinctions between religious or ethnic groups; all would be equal citizens.

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<sup>41</sup> See: Dawn, pp 132, 140-141.

Rather than appealing to the ruling Arab families, he addressed the masses, theorizing that the rulers would follow suit.<sup>42</sup>

In 1908, the Committee of Union and Progress, commonly known as the Young Turks, took control of the Ottoman Empire. The Young Turks consisted of western-educated Turkish politicians who felt that the Ottoman Empire was lagging behind the European powers because it was too Oriental. The Young Turks implemented many western-style reforms in the Ottoman Empire. They promoted industrialization, western-style education, and a single secular law code for all citizens. The Young Turks were also vehemently nationalistic. They wanted to create an Ottoman Empire united by a single culture. Whereas Arabists focused on the elevation of Arab culture, the Young Turks focused on the elevation of Turkish culture. In their discourse, Ottoman culture equaled Turkish culture. This presented a monumental problem in that the majority of Ottoman subjects were Arab as opposed to the Turkish-speaking ruling class found in Asia Minor. Under the Young Turks, discrimination against non-Turks became commonplace.

The imposition of Turkish culture stirred up great resentment in the non-Turkish population. Hitti wrote, “The immediate result was the stimulation of the separatist movements and the encouragement of nationalist loyalties among their Greek, Arab, Armenian, and other subjects.”<sup>43</sup> In Damascus, the Society of the Young Arab Nation, known popularly as al-Fatat, emerged as the most powerful Arab nationalist group in the Ottoman Empire along with al-‘Ahd, which advocated the creation of a dual Turkish-Arab Ottoman Empire based on model of the Austro-Hungarian Empire.<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>42</sup> See: Tauber, p. 226.

<sup>43</sup> Hitti, p.363.

<sup>44</sup> For more on al-Fatat and al-‘Ahd see: Tauber pp 2-3, 7-8, 10, 20, 26, 29, 31, 53-57, 55 and Dawn pp 27-29, 110, 105-152.

In June of 1913, twenty-one Arab delegates convened in Paris to discuss the state of Turkish-Arab relations, focusing on Syria in particular. The congress demanded the declaration of Arabic as the official language of Syria and greater authority for the local government centered in Beirut. The Ottoman government consented to the demands. This consent, however, was only on paper and the demands were never met. The aftermath of the Paris conference marked the break between Syrian nationalists and the Ottoman government. The failure of the Paris conference turned the broader Arab nationalist movement against the Ottoman government because of Syria's role as the dominant intellectual center of Arab nationalism.

In 1914, when the Ottoman Empire entered the First World War on behalf of the Central Powers, the majority of its subjects opposed the war. Many Arab nationalists thought, rightly so, that the Ottoman Empire's entry into the First World War invited Europeans to colonize the Middle East as they had the Ottomans' north African territories like Algeria in 1830, Egypt in 1882, and Libya in 1911. To suppress anti-war sentiment, the Young Turks arrested and executed pacifists and Arab nationalists. They also reestablished the Hejaz railway system, which extended deep into Arab territories, for military transport. The Hejaz rail system allowed the Ottoman military to project power into Medina, Mecca, and the deep desert of the Arabian Peninsula.

In light of the actions of the Young Turks, the Arab tribal leader Sharif Hussein bin Ali of Mecca decided to support the British Empire in the war against the Ottomans.<sup>45</sup> Youssef Choueiri argues that the Sherif rebelled out of a sense of Arab brotherhood. Dawn and Tauber assert that the Sharif's motives were more personal.

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<sup>45</sup> Hussein belonged to the Hashemite clan. This clan ruled Mecca from the 7<sup>th</sup> century CE to 1925. According to the Hashemites, they are the direct descendents of the prophet Mohammed. "The Official Site of his Royal Highness Prince Hamzah bin al-Hussein," <http://www.princehamzah.jo/english>

Dawn points out that although Hussein bin Ali was a lower-tier Ottoman official and thus subordinate to both the Sultan and Caliph, he had in fact enjoyed a degree of autonomy because of the distance between Constantinople and the Hejaz. The construction of the Hejaz railway system, however, meant that the Ottoman government would be able to exert more control over the Sharif. He was prompted to revolt against the Ottomans to preserve his own power and was anointed the “leader” of the Arab world by the Asquith-led British government, particularly the war minister Lord Kitchener.

Hussein did not embrace the idea of an Arab state until 1915, when he was approached by both al-Fatat and al-‘Ahd.<sup>46</sup> British military intelligence officers realized that with Arab support and assistance they could destabilize the Ottoman Empire from within. The British sent T.E. Lawrence, popularly known as Lawrence of Arabia, as the military liaison to the army of the Sharif Hussein and to help co-ordinate attacks on the Ottoman army. To gain Arab support in 1915, the British government promised to support an Arab state in the Middle East. In a letter to Hussein, Sir Henry McMahon, the British High Commissioner in Egypt, proposed Arab self-rule within the Middle East. McMahon promised to Hussein that, excepting “the two districts of Mersina and Alexandretta and portions of Syria lying to the west of the districts of Damascus, Homs, Hama, and Aleppo, areas which could not be said to be purely Arab...Great Britain is prepared to recognize and support the independence of the Arabs in all the regions within the limits demanded by the Sharif of Mecca.”<sup>47</sup> Hussein wanted Great Britain to recognize his rule of an independent Arab state that encompassed all lands between

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<sup>46</sup> See: Tauber, pp 10-34; Dawn, Ch. 1; Nafi, Ch. 2.

<sup>47</sup> The McMahon Letter, October 24, 1915. Courtesy of <http://domino.un.org/UNISPAL.NSF/9a798adbf322aff38525617b006d88d7/eb39ca1bfead52dd852570c00079484e!OpenDocument>.



Egypt and Persia and below Turkey. McMahon agreed to recognize Hashemite rule in the Middle East with the exception of the coastal plain of Lebanon, which would be under European rule. McMahon further proposed that “Great Britain will guarantee the Holy Places against all external aggression and will recognize their inviolability.”<sup>48</sup> McMahon guaranteed Hussein that the British would not under any circumstances enter Mecca or establish a military presence in Medina and Jerusalem. McMahon also stated that Britain would assist the new Arab state in establishing an internal system of governance that would centralize Hashemite rule, saying that “when the situation admits, Great Britain will give to the Arabs her advice and will assist them to establish what may appear to be the most suitable forms of government those various territories.”<sup>49</sup>

McMahon attempted to preclude other European powers from encroaching upon any Hashemite lands, stating his understanding that “the Arabs have decided to seek the advice and guidance of Great Britain only, and that such European advisers and officials as may be required for the formation of a sound form of administration will be British.”<sup>50</sup> This article stated that Great Britain would be the new Arab state’s principal ally in Europe. McMahon concluded his letter, “With regard to the *vilayets* of Baghdad and Basra, the Arabs will recognize that the established position and interests of Great Britain necessitate special administrative arrangements in order to secure these territories from foreign aggression, to promote the welfare of the local populations and to safeguard our mutual economic interests.”<sup>51</sup> In 1915, geological indicators pointed to the existence of vast oil deposits in the vilayets of Baghdad and Basra. The British thus were demanding

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<sup>48</sup> The McMahon Letter, October 24, 1915.

<sup>49</sup> The McMahon Letter, October 24, 1915.

<sup>50</sup> The McMahon Letter, October 24, 1915.

<sup>51</sup> The McMahon Letter, October 24, 1915.

exclusive access to the Mesopotamian oil fields and the right to maintain a decisive, meaning military, presence in the region. The British government wanted to, and later did, construct a pipeline that ran from the Baghdad area to Basra, where oil would be shipped around the Arabian Peninsula, up the Red Sea, through the Suez Canal, and to Britain via the Mediterranean Sea.

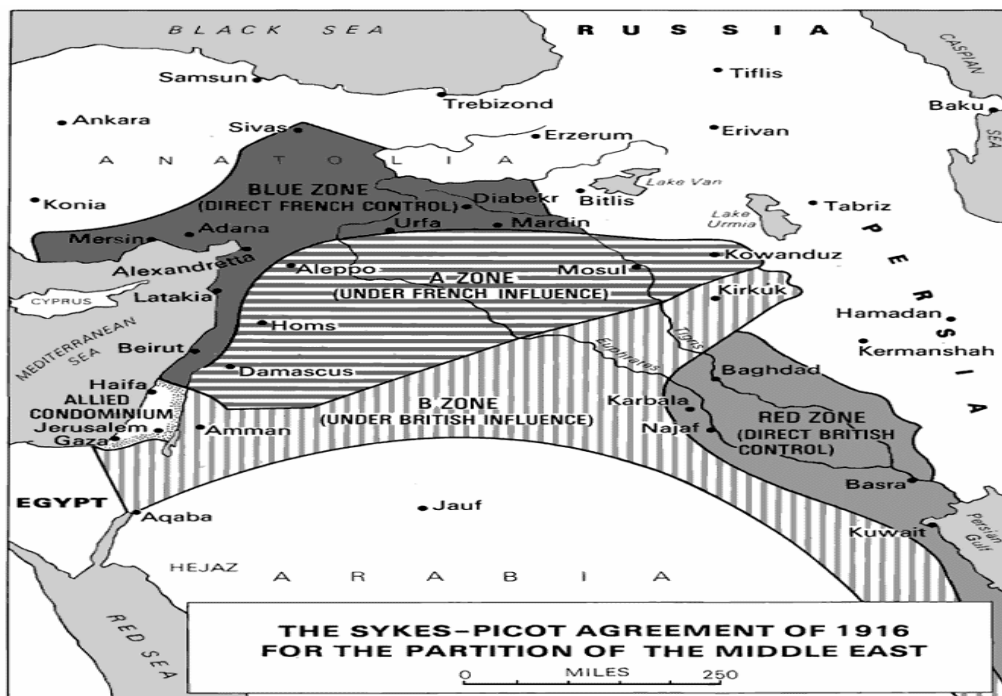
Sharif Hussein agreed to the stipulations presented in McMahon's letter. Arab nationalists, including Hussein, interpreted this letter to mean that the Arab state would gain its independence at the conclusion of the war. In Hussein's opinion, all land below what is modern day Turkey was to be included in the Arab -his- territory. Hussein consented to allow the British to maintain a presence in what would become Iraq. He also agreed that Britain would be the only European nation consulted by the Arab state.

The McMahon-Hussein agreement brought Arab troops into the war on Britain's side. The British government also entered into an alliance with Ibn Sa'ud, the leader of the rivals of the Hashemites, to support the Arab revolt against the Turks.<sup>52</sup> Lawrence's strategy was to attack the Hejaz railway, which extended from Damascus to Medina, therefore stranding Ottoman soldiers far away from the front lines of the war in Asia Minor and Iraq. The strategy was successful. The Ottoman Empire was unable to fight a war on two fronts against the British military in Iraq and Egypt. By 1917, the British military had captured Jerusalem and by 1918 the Ottoman Empire was dismembered. The stage seemed to be set for the establishment of an independent Arab state under Hussein's rule. Unbeknownst to the Sharif of Mecca and the various leaders in Damascus and Baghdad, however, the British and French governments had reached an agreement

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<sup>52</sup> Founded by local emir Muhammed Ibn Sa'ud, the al-Sa'ud clan rose to prominence in the 1700s. In 1902, the Sa'ud clan established their center of power in Riyadh. "A Chronology: The House of Sa'ud." <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/saud/chron/>.

between themselves over claims to dismembered Ottoman territories in 1916. Under the orders of the Secretary of War Lord Kitchener, Lieutenant Colonel Mark Sykes, Under-Secretary of the War Cabinet concerned with Near Eastern affairs, and French diplomat Georges Picot agreed the British and French Empire would divide the Middle East into respective spheres of control and influences.<sup>53</sup> The following map shows the divisions agreed upon by the French and British governments:



Map 3: Sykes-Picot Agreement.<sup>54</sup>

The Sykes-Picot Agreement stated that:

France and Great Britain are prepared to recognize and protect an independent Arab states or a confederation of Arab states (a) and (b) marked on the annexed map, under the suzerainty of an Arab chief. That in area (a) France, and in area (b) Great Britain, shall have priority of right of enterprise and local loans. That in area (a) France, and in area (b) Great

<sup>53</sup> See Shane Leslie, *Mark Sykes: His Life and Letters* (London: Cassel and Company, 1923), p. 20.

<sup>54</sup> Courtesy of [http://www.ece.neu.edu/~smolloy/courses/docs/islam/sykes\\_picot\\_agreement\\_1916.gif](http://www.ece.neu.edu/~smolloy/courses/docs/islam/sykes_picot_agreement_1916.gif)

Britain, shall alone supply advisers or foreign functionaries at the request of the Arab state or confederation of Arab states.<sup>55</sup>

As map 3 shows, Britain and France divided all the territory north of the Arabian Peninsula between themselves. In the areas designated “A” and “B”, the French and British would recognize whatever Arab government established itself as the dominant power, whether it was a centralized state or a coalition government. The British and French governments would exert influence on the states that emerged in these zones.

The Sykes-Picot Agreement also stipulated that “in the blue area France, and in the red area Great Britain, shall be allowed to establish such direct or indirect administration or control as they desire and as they may think fit to arrange with the Arab state or confederation of Arab states.”<sup>56</sup> This clause meant that areas stretching from Baghdad to Basra, the mouth of the Tigris and Euphrates River, would be under direct British control. The area encompassing the southern coastal plain of modern-day Turkey and Lebanon, including Beirut, along with the interior plains of Northern Syria, would be under direct French control. Both of these territories would be, for all intents and purposes, colonies. The French wanted to claim the fertile region in Northern Syria in order to export cereal and cotton, the chief agricultural products of the region, to France from the ports of Beirut. The British wanted to secure the right to identify and develop the oil fields of modern Iraq for themselves.

The Sykes-Picot Agreement further stipulated that the British and French governments, as the protectors of the Arab state, would not “themselves acquire and will not consent to a third power acquiring territorial possessions in the Arabian peninsula,

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<sup>55</sup>Sykes-Picot Agreement. May 16 1916 courtesy of <http://domino.un.org/UNISPAL.NSF/3d14c9e5cdad296d85256cbf005aa3eb/232358bacbeb7b55852571100078477c!OpenDocument>.

<sup>56</sup> Sykes-Picot Agreement, May 16 1916.

nor consent to a third power installing a naval base either on the east coast, or on the islands, of the Red Sea.”<sup>57</sup> This meant that no other European nation would be allowed to establish a presence in the Middle East. This prohibition extended to territories not included in the territory divided in the Sykes-Picot Agreement such as the Hejaz on the east coast of the Arab Peninsula. In addition, France and Britain asserted themselves as protectors of the Arab states, meaning that they would have to maintain a military presence in their regions of influence.

The Sykes-Picot agreement included a number of provisions to ensure absolute Anglo-French supremacy in the region. For example, according to the Agreement, “the negotiations with the Arabs as to the boundaries of the Arab states shall be continued through the same channel as heretofore on behalf of the two powers.”<sup>58</sup> This meant that all of the states that developed in the Middle East would have their borders drawn by both Britain and France. Similarly, the final accord of the Sykes-Picot Agreement stated, “it is agreed that measures to control the importation of arms into the Arab territories will be considered by the two governments.”<sup>59</sup> This stipulation gave France and Britain the right to control the flow of arms, as well as the right to equip the armies of independent Arab states with a standard of weapons that they deemed fit. They would outfit the Arab armies with outdated weapons to ensure the easy suppression of any rebellion.

Together, the British and French governments created the map of the modern Middle East. The spheres of dominance and influence first drawn by Sykes and Picot were reaffirmed in 1920 with the creation of the League of Nations and the establishment of the Mandate System. Out of the French territory, the nations of Lebanon and Syria

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<sup>57</sup> Sykes-Picot Agreement, May 16 1916.

<sup>58</sup> Sykes-Picot Agreement, May 16 1916.

<sup>59</sup> Sykes-Picot Agreement, May 16 1916.

emerged. Out of the British territory, the nations of Palestine, Iraq, and the Transjordan emerged.

The Mandate system undermined any potential for a Hashemite-ruled Middle East. In the Arabian Peninsula, the collapse of Ottoman dominance and the establishment of the Mandates exacerbated the long-standing rivalry between the Hashemite family, who controlled Medina and Mecca, and the Bedouin Sa'ud family. Despite Sharif Hussein bin Ali's claims to be the king of all Arabs and to the office of the Caliphate, his power was not absolute. In 1924, Hussein was driven out of the Hejaz by the armies of Ibn Sa'ud. He fled to TransJordan where the British had established his son Abdullah as King. Ibn Sa'ud established himself as king of Arabia, a role his descendants continue to play today.

Arab demands for statehood did not diminish after the implementation of the Mandate system but they did change. The Arabs themselves were divided by localities; Damascus, Beirut, Jerusalem, and Medina all had their own political leaders who did not want to cede their authority to either Hussein or Ibn Saud. Arab nationalist activity concentrated within the Mandate states of Palestine, Transjordan (after 1922), Syria, Lebanon, and Iraq. The next phase of Arab nationalism centered on another son of the deposed Hussein, Faisal bin Hussein, and his dream of creating an independent Arab state in Syria.

### **Faisal, Greater Syria, and Palestine**

During the Ottoman period, Palestine did not exist as a political unit. It was part of the region known as *Surya al-Janubiyya*, southern Syria.<sup>60</sup> The region encapsulated what would become the Mandate states of Syria, Lebanon, Palestine, and Transjordan.

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<sup>60</sup> Muslih, p.11.

The Arabs living in the region geographically described to be Palestine identified themselves as Syrians.

Following the First World War, the Syrian countryside was devastated. Farmers had abandoned their property to avoid the fighting between the Ottoman and British armies, so crops remained un-harvested. These displaced masses flooded into Damascus to find employment. Economically, Syria was shattered. The war disrupted exports of grain, cotton, and wool. This was the economic and social situation that Faisal bin Hussein claimed.

Faisal bin Hussein was the third son of the Sharif of Mecca Hussein bin Ali. In 1913, he served in the Ottoman parliament as a representative of the city of Jeddah. In 1918, Faisal moved to Damascus where he quickly rose to political dominance. He sought to establish an independent state called Greater Syria that included Palestine, Syria, Lebanon, and the Transjordan. Many Arab nationalists, including al-Fatat, rallied around Faisal. It is important to note that this was not done out of loyalty to Faisal but rather because the Syrian nationalists knew that the British were propping up the Hashemites and might support the sovereignty of a state ruled, as a figure head, by one of Hussein's sons. Unfortunately for the Syrian nationalists, Syria was within France's sphere of influence and the French government had no relations with the Hashemites and respected no Arab demands for a state.

Unlike the majority of the Arab nationalists, Faisal was not opposed to a European presence in the Middle East. His reason was practical. The Arabs did not have the financial or the military capabilities to resist French and British advances. The majority of Arab nationalists, however, rejected his conciliatory approach and so

compromised his goal for an independent Arab state. Muslih writes, “Despite their knowledge that Faisal had an Anglo-French noose around his neck, the Arab nationalist groups were not willing to appreciate his position of weakness in dealing with the two imperial powers.”<sup>61</sup> Some of the nationalist groups, such as al- Fatat, believed the Arabs could defeat both France and Britain in a war. More extreme groups like the al-Ahd turned against Faisal altogether. Nationalist writer Muhammad al-Qadib wrote, “I pledge to God that I will not work with anyone who thinks of working with them [the Hashemites]. I believe that he who works with any of them, trusting that with their help he can save the country and its people is either their accomplice, or is ignorant of their past deeds.”<sup>62</sup> The past deeds that al-Qadib referred to included Hashemite assistance to the British army in the war against the Ottoman Empire.

In 1919, the same year France was given the Syrian Mandate, Faisal called the First General Congress in Damascus. The British general Edmund Allenby, who captured Jerusalem in 1919, warned Faisal against convening the Congress because it would strain Faisal’s relations with France. Despite his warnings, Faisal called the congress together in June 1919. Ninety delegates representing Damascus, Aleppo, Hama, Hima, Dayr al-Zur, Hawran, the Druze Mountain, al-Karak, Antioch, Latakia, Beirut, Tripoli, Mount Lebanon, and Palestine all attended.<sup>63</sup> Three Syrian political factions dominated the Congress: first, the Arab nationalists in al- Fatat who rejected the Mandate system and viewed Britain and France as an imperialist threat to Arab independence; second, Faisal loyalists who rejected France as a mandatory power and favored the British; third, Arab

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<sup>61</sup> Muslih, p.123.

<sup>62</sup> Muslih, p. 123.

<sup>63</sup> Muslih, p. 127.



nationalists who wanted the United States to have the Mandate over Syria because of President Woodrow Wilson's insistence on national self-determination.

The Congress concluded in March 1920. Muslih writes, "At the end...the congress proved to a great embarrassment to Faisal and a blow to his hopes to bring the Arab nationalists in line with his moderate policies."<sup>64</sup> The Congress declared Syria an independent state that included the territories of both Lebanon and Palestine. The Congress also did not recognize any Mandate authority over Syria, rejected the British policy of creating a Jewish national home in Palestine, demanded the withdrawal of French and British armies from the Middle East, and declared Faisal king.

Faisal became the victim of both the nationalist movement he had sought to control and French designs on Syria. In July 1920, the French army under General Henri Gouraud marched on Damascus. King Faisal fled Syria for Haifa and then London. In 1921, the British Government installed him as king of Iraq. His followers scattered to Egypt, Iraq, and Palestine.

The collapse of Greater Syria had a devastating impact on Arab nationalists in Palestine. Muslih writes, "In the eyes of Arab nationalists from Palestine, Faisal's government [Syria] represented a crucial step for the realization of the dream of Arab independence."<sup>65</sup> Palestinian Arab nationalists in Faisal's government, such as his foreign secretary Sa'id al-Husseini, thought that a strong Arab government in Damascus would support their resistance movement against Zionism. They resented British efforts to establish Jewish settlements in Palestine. During Ottoman rule, the Sultanate, too, had allowed European Jews to purchase land and immigrate in restricted numbers but the

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<sup>64</sup> Muslih, p. 128 .

<sup>65</sup> Muslih, p. 119.

British went much further when they declared their intention to establish a Jewish national homeland in Palestine.

The failure of Greater Syria did not kill Arab nationalism in Palestine; rather, it only redirected it. With Faisal's flight from Damascus, Palestinian nationalists focused their attention on establishing an independent Arab state in Palestine itself. In this tense political situation, a nationalist named Hajj Mohammad Amin al-Husseini emerged as a decisive figure and leader.

Hajj Mohammad Amin al-Husseini was born in Jerusalem in 1885 to the prominent Husseini family. He served in the Ottoman military during the First World War. In 1918, Hajj Amin joined Faisal's army, which brought him to Damascus as an assistant to Director of Syrian security Gabriel Hadda'ad. Zvi Elpeleg writes, "Hajj Amin became involved in nationalist groups centered on Faisal, and took an active role in the organization of the Pan-Syrian Congress held in Damascus in 1919. He was especially active in organizing the participation of Palestinian representatives."<sup>66</sup> In 1919, Hajj Amin returned to Jerusalem where he became a partner in the Rawdat al-Mar'arif school, one of the educational centers for Arab nationalism. In 1920, Hajj Amin was arrested for inciting violence at anti-Zionist demonstrations in Jerusalem.

Hajj Amin's elevation to the position of Grand Mufti began with the appointment of Herbert Samuel as the first High Commissioner of the Mandate of Palestine in 1920. The Colonial Office under Churchill established that in regards to the Arab population of Palestine, all Ottoman laws were to be respected. Following the Ottoman defeat, the High Commissioner had "inherited the authority of the Mutasarrif of Jerusalem."<sup>67</sup> One of the

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<sup>66</sup> Elpeleg, p. 4.

<sup>67</sup> Elpeleg, p. 8.

responsibilities of the Mutasarrif [governor] was to appoint the new Grand Mufti of Jerusalem after Hajj Amin's brother Kamil al-Husseini died in 1921. During the Ottoman period, the office of the Grand Mufti was subordinate to the Ottoman Sheik ul-Islam, but in the post-World War One era, the Mufti held preeminence in Palestine. The Husseini family, which had traditionally controlled the office of the Mufti, was eager to expand its power and so nominated Hajj Amin to be the Grand Mufti. The Husseini family, however, faced a strong rival: the Nashashibis. In 1920, Ragib Nashashbi replaced Musa Kazim Husseini as the mayor of Jerusalem. One year later, the Nashashibi family leapt at the chance to claim another Husseini-held office for themselves.

Ottoman custom dictated that the Mutasarrif had to select the new Mufti from a list provided by the ulama. When the ulama selected its candidates, Hajj Amin was not on the list. His family launched a campaign to appeal to High Commissioner Samuel to appoint Hajj Amin anyway. Eager to maintain the balance of power between the Husseini and the Nashashibi families, Samuel acquiesced to the Husseini demands and in 1921, Hajj Amin was installed as the Grand Mufti of Jerusalem. The Nashashibi launched a massive campaign directed to Samuel, who refused to remove Hajj Amin. In exchange for his installation, Hajj Amin promised to co-operate with the Samuel-led Mandate government.

Hajj Amin, however, was not a British puppet. He recognized that the British were not pouring into Palestine establishing cantonments. The Zionists, on the other hand, were immigrating to Palestine by the thousands and purchasing land on which to build villages. As Philip Mattar explains, "Amin's public view was that the Palestinians should not revolt against the British rule, which was too strong and, in any case,

ephemeral; instead, they should concentrate on opposing the Zionists, who were the main threat to the Palestinian nationalists.”<sup>68</sup>

Amin quickly expanded his power base. In 1922, the Mandate government created the Supreme Muslim Council to serve as a representative body for the Muslim population of Palestine. As Mattar notes, “Important as the office of the Mufti was, it did not compare to the power of the president of the Supreme Muslim Council.”<sup>69</sup> The Supreme Muslim Council controlled religious schools, religious courts, orphanages, mosques, and community finances. The Supreme Muslim Council elected Hajj Amin as its president in 1922. The presidency gave him the power to hire and dismiss judges in the religious courts. Hajj Amin particularly focused on the Haram, which he believed the Zionists wanted to claim. He also commissioned the construction of a museum and a library within the Haram al-Sharif as well as the construction of orphanages and schools. He imported 50,000 trees to plant on Muslim owned land. His most impressive undertaking was the renovation of the al-Asqua mosque and the Dome of the Rock. All of these initiatives endeared Hajj Amin to the Palestinian Arabs, and according to Mattar, “stimulated an Islamic revival throughout Palestine.”<sup>70</sup>

The collective effect of all the public works and anti-Zionist rhetoric was international recognition of the Grand Mufti as the leader of the Palestinian Arab nationalism. Mattar argues, “The effort focused Arab and Muslim concern for Palestine, especially since the Mufti and his colleagues appealed to fellow Muslims to defend Palestine against the Zionists.”<sup>71</sup> Within Palestine, Hajj Amin installed fellow nationalists

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<sup>68</sup> Mattar, p. 26.

<sup>69</sup> Mattar, p. 27.

<sup>70</sup> Mattar, p. 29.

<sup>71</sup> Mattar, pp. 29-30.

as imams, khatibs, and qadis who supported his policies. Aside from his focus on Palestinian nationalism and religious issues, the Grand Mufti rarely entered the internal political arena of the Palestinian Arab community.

Hajj Amin's power was not absolute. The Mayor of Jerusalem Ragib al-Nashashibi headed the opposition to Hajj Amin. He derided Hajj Amin as a collaborator with the British. Tension between the Nashashibi and Husseini families increased because of the dynamic of a Nashashibi mayor of Jerusalem and a Husseini Mufti. The Nashashibi faction, however, never garnered a significant following outside of Jerusalem because "its members were suspected of collaborating and land selling to Jews."<sup>72</sup> By 1928, increases in Jewish immigration and the expansion of Zionist power in Palestine had firmly committed the majority of the Arab Palestinians to support Hajj Amin.

By 1929, Hajj Amin had consolidated his power within the Arab community and exerted his influence in politics. He maintained his open attacks on Zionism but never directly attacked British policy. He never appeared at nor organized anti-Zionist demonstrations. The Mandate government under Herbert Samuel considered Hajj Amin to be a moderate. Nevertheless, Hajj Amin led a campaign against the Colonial Office's policy established under the Lloyd George government in 1922 that affirmed the establishment of a national Jewish home land in Palestine. Hajj Amin sent a delegation to London to plead the Arab case against Zionism to Churchill. The Palestinian Arab delegation was led by former mayor of Jerusalem Mussa Kazim al-Husseini, who was from the same family of the Grand Mufti and one of his staunchest supporters.

In correspondence with Churchill's office, Husseini stated, "In the preamble to the Palestine Order in Council 'the declaration of November 2<sup>nd</sup>, 1917, in favor of the

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<sup>72</sup> Mattar, p.31.

establishment in Palestine of a national home for the Jewish people' is made a basis for this order; the people of Palestine cannot accept this declaration as a basis for discussion."<sup>73</sup> The British Colonial Office responded, "Mr. Churchill regrets to observe that his personal explanations have apparently failed to convince your delegation that His Majesty's Government have no intention of repudiating the obligations into which they entered towards the Jewish People."<sup>74</sup> The Arab delegation asserted that the British had no right to establish a homeland in Palestine for a people from Europe and that the Colonial Office had to rescind its policy of facilitating Jewish immigration. Churchill would not change Colonial Office policy in regards to the establishment of the Jewish national homeland and reminded the Arab delegation that they were not recognized as the political representatives of the Arab community of Palestine.<sup>75</sup>

British officials and Palestinian Arab nationalists disputed the proper interpretation and implementation of the Mandatory agreements. The Arab delegation argued that the British Government was bound by treaties it had made with the Hashemite and Saudi dynasties and by League of Nations Mandate to elevate Palestine to statehood. Husseini charged that in the British view,

Palestine is considered as a colony of the lowest order, whereas according to paragraph 4 of article 22 of the Covenant of the League of Nations, Palestine comes under Grade A, where certain communities formerly belonging to the Turkish Empire have reached a stage of development where their existence as independent nations can be provisionally recognized subject to the rendering of administrative advice and assistances by a Mandatory until such time as they are able to stand alone.<sup>76</sup>

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<sup>73</sup> *Correspondence with the Palestine Arab Delegation and the Zionist Organization* (London: His Majesty's Stationery Office, 1922), p. 2.

<sup>74</sup> *Palestine Correspondence*, p. 5.

<sup>75</sup> *Palestine Correspondence*, p. 5.

<sup>76</sup> *Palestine Correspondence*, pp 2-3.

Al-Husseini argued that not only was Palestine designated a class “A” Mandate, meaning it was in fact independent although still subject to the advice and assistance of the mandatory power, but that the British treated them like a lesser colony. Al-Husseini was well aware of the mechanisms of colonialism and he equated British consent to Zionist immigration as the first step in the creation of a settler state. Churchill responded to the Arab claim by stating, “Syria and Iraq are explicitly referred to in Article 94 of that Treaty of Sèvres (1920) as having been provisionally recognized as Independent States, in accordance with the fourth paragraph of article 22 of the League of Nations. Article 95, on the other hand, makes no such reference to Palestine.”<sup>77</sup> The Colonial Office argued that it had fulfilled its promises both to the Hashemite dynasty by recognizing its claim to the throne of Iraq and to the Sa’ud dynasty by recognizing its claim to the Arab peninsula under semi-autonomous governments. The region designated as Palestine was not mentioned in the Treaty of Sèvres and, therefore, fell under direct British control.

The main point of contention between the Arab delegation and the British government was over Jewish immigration. The delegation, which appointed itself as representative of the entire population of Palestine regardless of religion, was offended by the notion put forward by the British Government and the Zionist Organization that European Jews had historical rights to re-establish a presence in Palestine:

Whilst the position in Palestine is, as it stands today, with the British Government holding authority by an occupying force, and using that authority to impose upon the people against their wishes a great immigration of alien Jews, many of them of a Bolshevik revolutionary type, no constitution which would fall short of giving the people of Palestine full control over their own affairs could be acceptable.<sup>78</sup>

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<sup>77</sup> *Palestine Correspondence*, p. 5.

<sup>78</sup> *Palestine Correspondence*, p. 2.

The term “alien Jews” revealed how the Arabs in Palestine saw the Jewish immigrants. The British viewed the Jews as an Oriental people, but the Arabs of Palestine regarded them as European invaders and as a communist threat.

The Lloyd George government recognized Hebrew along with Arabic and English as the national languages of Palestine. The Palestinian Arab delegation scoffed at the inclusion of Hebrew:

The Hebrew language is not universally used by the (Jewish) community as a vernacular, and business is transacted mostly in Arabic and Yiddish. The religious and social life of the community is that same as in all countries where contemporary Jews live, and cannot be looked upon as distinctive to Palestine. When we protested against the recognition of Hebrew as an official language in the state, we were told it was harmless; now we see that our fears have been realized and that this very recognition is used as an argument to establish “a right.”<sup>79</sup>

In al- Husseini’s opinion, the recognition of Hebrew was a political tactic organized by the Zionists to re-enforce their already weak claim to Palestine.

The Arab delegation also scoffed at the lynchpin of Zionist claims: that Jews had a historical right to regard Palestine as their national homeland. The delegation called “the right of return”, the idea that Jews from all over possessed the right to settle in Palestine, “a line of reasoning which no people, let alone Arabs, would accept if applied to itself.”<sup>80</sup> Husseini points to both the past and the present to assert Arab ownership of the land:

We have shown over and over again that the supposed historic connection of the Jews with Palestine rests upon very slender historical data. The historic rights of the Arabs are far stronger than those of the Jews...The Arabs...have been settled on the land for more that 1,500 years, and are the present owners of the soil.

Al-Husseini also argued against the Zionist religious claims to Palestine:

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<sup>79</sup> *Palestine Correspondence*, p. 24.

<sup>80</sup> *Palestine Correspondence*, p. 24.



Further, Christians as well as Muslims look upon Palestine as a sacred land, and make yearly pilgrimages to it in a spirit of devotion and prayer. Any religious sentiment, therefore, which the Jews might cherish for Palestine is exceeded by Christian and Moslem sentiment for that country.<sup>81</sup>

Fear of mass Jewish immigration, combined with their interpretation of the League of Nations Mandate pertaining to Palestine, emboldened the Arabs to demand self-rule. Resentment of British rule, which would rise within Zionism later, was prevalent within the Arab community at the very outset of the Mandate period, as the riots of 1920 and 1921 demonstrated. Hajj Amin focused on what he perceived to be the most immediate danger to Arab security and possible statehood: Zionist immigration.

With Faisal's flight to Damascus, the Arab nationalists' dream of an independent and modern Middle East collapsed in 1922. The British and the French, who understood little about the Arab world outside of what the Orientalist school of thought had taught them, replaced the Turks as rulers of Arab Asia. Rather than include the nationalist leaders in governing their newly acquired Mandates, the British and French governments installed friendly rulers, such as the Hashemite dynasty, who allowed them to pursue their own agendas. In this context, Palestine proved to be unique. Palestinian Arab nationalism emerged from the debacle of 1922 as a united and centralized movement. Hajj Amin, a product of the Damascus nationalist circles, wielded a great amount of power and influence in Palestine after 1922. Hajj Amin was also faced with a unique problem: the influx of Zionists, viewed by Hajj Amine and his followers as "European invaders." The British Mandatory Government thus found itself in the middle of a struggle between

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<sup>81</sup> *Palestine Correspondence*, p. 24.

Arab nationalists led by the Grand Mufti of Jerusalem, and Jewish nationalists from Europe.

### Chapter 3: Ha Zion'im

The subject of this chapter is the rise and fracture of Zionism. Shepherd, Wasserstein, Joseph, and Kayyali depict a Zionist movement that is, for all intents and purposes, monolithic<sup>82</sup>. They assert that there were political differences between differing Zionist groups, but that as a whole, the movement worked towards a single goal: they all wanted a Jewish state. This is true but the meaning of “the Jewish state” varied greatly from group to group. Internal Zionist divisions were never merely political. Different Zionist thinkers, like Herzl and Ha'am, had contradictory opinions on what it meant to be Jewish. During the Mandate period, the Zionist movement fractured into two antagonistic camps: mainstream and revisionist Zionism. Shepherd, Wasserstein, Joseph, and Kayyali do not address this splintering of Zionism.

The first section of this chapter examines of the origins of Zionism and the rise of its first intellectual leaders Theodor Herzl and Achad Ha'am. The second section examines the rise of Chaim Weizmann and Ze'ev Jabotinsky and the creation of the Mandate of Palestine. The chapter concludes with an examination of the internal split of Zionism caused by the difference between Weizmann and Jabotinsky following the partition of Transjordan from Palestine in 1922 and the rise of David Ben-Gurion.

Charles Smith and Shabtai Teveth juxtapose Ze'ev Jabotinsky's Revisionist Zionism and David Ben-Gurion's Labour Zionism against each other.<sup>83</sup> This is not an inaccurate picture. By 1930, Labour Zionism had become the mainstream of Zionist

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<sup>82</sup> See: Naomi Shepherd, *Ploughing Sand: British Rule in Palestine, 1917-1948* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1999); Bernard Wasserstein, *The British in Palestine: the Mandatory Government and the Arab-Jewish Conflict* (London: Royal Historical Society, 1978); A.W. Kayyali, *Palestine: A Modern History* (London: Croom Helm, 1978)

<sup>83</sup> Shabtai Teveth, *Ben-Gurion and the Palestinian Arabs* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985); *Ben-Gurion: The Burning Ground 1886-1948* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1987).

thought while the Revisionists became the opposition. The rivalry between Labour or mainstream Zionism and Revisionist Zionism formed the poles of Zionist thought and, after 1948, Israeli politics. Chaim Weizmann's writings and the research of Gideon Shimoni and Joseph Schectman make clear that Ze'ev Jabotinsky opposed anyone who did not agree with his worldview; his long list of opponents included David Ben-Gurion but was most ferociously directed at Weizmann himself.<sup>84</sup>

### **Early Zionism**

Zionism originated with Ashkenazi Jews. The Ashkenazi spoke the Hebrew-German derived language of Yiddish and were divided into two geographic locations: western Europe and eastern Europe. During the nineteenth century, Ashkenazim in eastern Europe underwent a period of upward social mobility and integration. Both the German and Austro-Hungarian empires endorsed fidelity to the crown over ethnic identity. In cities like Vienna and Berlin, Jewish communities prospered and were spared from anti-Semitic violence. Eastern European Jews, however, had no avenues by which to assimilate into their host societies.<sup>85</sup> The slur "wandering Jew" is based in the reality of the Ashkenazi condition in eastern Europe. In Russia, Jews were allowed establish towns, called *shtetls*, in the western border known as the Pale. The Pale of Russia contained parts of modern-day Poland, Belarus, Lithuania, and Ukraine. Periodically, as the Tsarist government needed land for farming, the Jews would be expelled. Jews found a safe haven in the German and Austro-Hungarian empires. Despite the poor living

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<sup>84</sup> See: Gideon Shimoni, *The Zionist Ideology* (Hanover: Brandeis University Press, 1995), Ch 6; Joseph Schectman, *The Vladimir Jabotinsky Story* ( New York: Thomas Yoseloff, 1956), Vol. 1, Ch 20; Vol. 2, Chs. 8-9.

<sup>85</sup> Lindemann, pp. 26-29.

conditions and outbreaks of anti-Semitic violence, the Pale of Russia remained the center of Eastern European Ashkenazim until the end of the Second World War.

Not surprisingly, Zionism arose as a potent political movement first in the major cities of the East like Warsaw and Kiev. The earliest proponents of Zionism were highly educated, assimilated Jews who rejected their elders' outlook on the world and wanted to leave Europe for a land that they could call their own. Zionism, an Ashkenazi nationalist movement, marked a transition in the internal Jewish dialogue from an emphasis on the Messiah to re-establishment of the Jewish nation. At the end of the Passover Seder, the phrase "this year here, next year in Jerusalem" is said with a degree of emphasis. This is the intellectual seed at the root of Zionism.

The Dreyfus Affair of 1894 served as the catalyst for the rise of popular Zionism. French artillery officer Captain Alfred Dreyfus was accused of attempting to sell military secrets to Germany. Dreyfus himself was religiously and ethnically but assimilated Ashkenazim and came from an old and wealthy Jewish family. Upon his conviction, Dreyfus was publicly stripped of his medals and his saber broken in front of him. He was sentenced to life imprisonment. His sentence was reduced in 1899 to ten years, and in 1906 Dreyfus was fully pardoned. The Dreyfus Affair created a major scandal for the Third Republic. The French state was based on the equality of all men as stated in the *Declaration of the Rights of Man*. The Dreyfus Affair challenged the French self-image as being the most democratic people in the world. The scandal split the French intelligentsia, with the left believing that the Dreyfus was convicted because he was a Jew. The right argued that Dreyfus as a Jew had no place in France.

French Jewry had been the envy of other European Jewish communities because France was the first nation in Europe to award Jews full citizenship and French Jews were far more assimilated than other Ashkenazim. At the same time, however, there was a palpable current of anti-Semitism streaming through France. French journalist Edouard Drumont, who founded the anti-Semitic League of France in 1889, wrote, “Jews, vomited from the ghettos of Europe, are now installed as the masters of historic houses that evoke the most glorious moments of ancient France... Jews are the most powerful agents of disorder the world has ever seen.”<sup>86</sup> The Dreyfus Affair shocked the assimilated Jewish communities of Europe. If a nation like France, with its expressed egalitarian ideals, still harbored anti-Semitic sentiments, then what hope could there be for Jews in Russia, Poland, and Hungary? Assimilation had long been seen by Jews as a means of escaping persecution. The Dreyfus Affair convinced many assimilated Jews that there was no true way for them to integrate.

Theodore Herzl was a journalist covering the Dreyfus Affair when he came to the realization that Jews could never assimilate into European society because it would always repel them. There was no way for Ashkenazim to escape the ghettos. Pogroms were not a thing of the past but were always one incident away from engulfing the Ashkenazim. Despite all the technological and scientific contributions to European culture that the Ashkenazim had given, they could not gain entry into their respective nations’ societies. The Jew, no matter how well he spoke English, French, or German, or how Continental he dressed and thought, could ever be anything but a Jew. Herzl realized that as long as the Jew remained in Europe, he would always be the leper and the only way to protect the Jewish people was to have a state where Jews were the majority.

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<sup>86</sup> Lindeman, p. 57.

Herzl's rhetoric was firmly in the eastern European paradigm of nationalism that started with the retreat of the Ottoman Empire and was bolstered during the Greek War of Independence in 1831. In order to survive, Jews had to have a land of their own; they had to have their own *Zion*. Theodor Herzl did not invent the concept of Zionism, as it had always been an underlying idea in Judaism, but he did bring it into modern intellectual discourse. The shape of this Jewish state and its location were to be matters of some contention amongst the Jewish leadership and intelligentsia.

The earliest debate in the Zionist movement was over the culture of the Jewish state. This was an explosive argument because it raised the question, "Who is a Jew?" Was the Jewish state to be simply an Ashkenazi refuge governed by Ashkenazim and steeped in Ashkenazi culture, or was the Jewish state supposed to become the center of a Jewish cultural revival, a place where Jews could shed their European ways and return to their Middle Eastern origins? The debate created two strands of Zionism: practical Zionism and cultural Zionism.

Practical Zionism, advocated by Herzl himself, aimed to establish a modern European Jewish state in Palestine. The cities, such as Tel Aviv, would be modeled on European cities. The legal system would be secular, with a distinct separation between the Rabbinate and the State. German, not Hebrew or Yiddish, would be the national language. Herzl's aim, then, was to create a German Jewish state in Palestine. It is evident from his journals in 1895 that he viewed the establishment of a Jewish state as a means of gaining acceptance as a German by Germans. Herzl wrote in his diary on June 15, 1895, that "I am a German Jew from Hungary and can never be anything but a

German. At present I am not recognized as a German. But that will come once we are over there.”<sup>87</sup>

The other end of the pole of the early Zionist movement was led by Achad Ha'am. Ha'am was the pen-name of Asher Hirsch Ginsberg, born in Ukraine in 1856. He advocated the settlement of Jews in Palestine, organized the first European Jewish settlement in Ottoman-ruled Palestine beginning in 1882, and openly opposed Herzl. Zionists from Ha'am's school of thought regarded Herzl as a lukewarm Jew. Ha'am's cultural Zionism stood in stark contrast to Herzl's practical Zionism. Herzl and his followers advocated abandoning European ways and resurrecting a “Jewish identity.”

Unlike Herzl, Ha'am was staunchly anti-assimilationist. In his essay “The Jewish State and Jewish Problem” he wrote,

In Eastern countries [the Jews] trouble is material: they have a constant struggle to satisfy the most elementary physical needs, to win a crust of bread and a breath of air -- things which are denied them because they are Jews. In the West, in lands of emancipation, their material condition is not particularly bad, but the moral trouble is serious: They want to take full advantage of their rights, and cannot.<sup>88</sup>

To Ha'am's, the eastern Jews, by which he meant Jews in Russia, were more Jewish than their western counterparts. They were never able to assimilate into mainstream life because the barriers posed by the severity of their oppression. The western Jews, according to Ha'am, had lost their “Jewishness.” Their material needs had been met and some Jews exerted a great deal of influence, but their full integration into western society was blocked. Assimilation equaled imitation in Ha'am's perception. Imitation was born out of shame. Western Jews believed their Gentile neighbor's rhetoric of equality and

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<sup>87</sup> Theodor Herzl, *Complete Diaries* (New York: Herzl press, 1960), June 15, 1895.

<sup>88</sup> Achad Ha'am, “The Jewish State and Jewish Problem” 1897, translated from the Hebrew by Leon Simon, Jewish Publication Society of America, 1912.  
<http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/Zionism/haam2.html>



democracy so ardently that they were willing to abandon their indigenous culture.

Because of assimilation, the western Jew could not relate to his Russian counterpart and even resented the eastern Ashkenazim. Through Zionism, Ha'am sought to convert the self-loathing Jew. Zionism sought to reverse the internalization of inferiority that plagued Jewish self-identity.<sup>89</sup>

Herzl and Ha'am's different aims and assumptions crystallized in the debate over language. Herzl wrote, "Let everyone keep his acquired nationality and speak the language which has become the beloved homeland of his thoughts,"<sup>90</sup> He continued, "German will be [the new state's] principal language." Herzl could not divorce himself from his desire to be German. Like many assimilated Jews, Herzl saw the world through what W.E.B. Dubois called "double consciousness": through the eyes of a Jew, which he was, and through the eyes of a German, which he longed to be. Because most Ashkenazim spoke Yiddish as their first tongue, Herzl proposed to promote the speech of German by purging the specific words and phrases that distinguished Yiddish from pure German. Achad Ha'am found Herzl's desire to cleanse the Jewish language reprehensible. Ha'am, however, did not want Yiddish to be the language of the Jewish homeland. For Ha'am and his followers, the first step in the establishment of a Jewish identity involved the resurrection of spoken Hebrew, the language of ancient Israel. In the Diaspora, Hebrew had been relegated to a scholarly language only understood by rabbis. There had been efforts to revitalize Hebrew as a spoken language mainly in Russia, but it had not spread west. Even by the establishment of the Mandate of Palestine, most Ashkenazim immigrants to Palestine did not speak Hebrew.

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<sup>89</sup> See Shimoni, pp 4, 104-112.

<sup>90</sup> Herzl, June 15, 1895.

Herzl and Ha'am debated even more fiercely over the process of establishing a Jewish homeland. Herzl advocated the establishment of a Jewish state. His notion of the Jewish state was rooted in what he called "the Society of Jews." Herzl wrote that Jews,

need, above all things a *gestor*. This *gestor* cannot, of course, be a single individual. Such a one would either make himself ridiculous, or -- seeing that he would appear to be working for his own interests -- contemptible. The *gestor* of the Jews must therefore be a body corporate. And that is the Society of Jews."<sup>91</sup>

The gestor is what would become the World Zionist Congress. Herzl's hope was that the gathering of the best Jewish intellectuals would produce a viable plan for the creation of the Jewish state. He described this process: "These men will have three tasks to perform: (1) An accurate, scientific investigation of all natural resources of the country; (2) the organization of a strictly centralized administration; (3) the distribution of land. These tasks intersect one another, and will all be carried out in conformity with the now familiar object in view."<sup>92</sup> For Herzl, the establishment of a Jewish State was a very methodical process. Moreover, while he acknowledged the importance and symbolism of Palestine for the Jewish people, Herzl did not demand that the Jewish State be established there.

In 1903, Theodore Herzl appealed to the British Government for the creation of a Jewish homeland. Colonial Secretary Joseph Chamberlain offered the Zionists land in the highlands along the borders of modern day southern Kenya and northern Uganda. British motivations here were both benign and economic. Arthur Balfour's government sympathized with the plight of the Jews after the Kishinev pogrom in 1903. Moreover, the Imperial British East Africa Company needed European settlers to farm the fertile Kenyan highlands. Herzl recorded in his journal, "I have seen a land for you in my

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<sup>91</sup> Theodor Herzl, *Der Judenstaat*, Chapter 5, section 1, 1896; found at <http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/Zionism/herzl2e.html>

<sup>92</sup> Herzl, Chapter 5, section 3, 1896.

travels' said the great Chamberlain, 'and that's Uganda. It's hot on the coast, but farther inland the climate becomes excellent, even for Europeans. You can raise sugar and cotton there. And I thought to myself, that would be a land for Dr. Herzl. But of course he wants to go only to Palestine or its vicinity.'"<sup>93</sup> Herzl brought the Uganda proposal before the Sixth Zionist Congress the same year and the Congress voted to send a delegation to investigate the region. The Seventh Zionist Congress in 1905 rejected the proposal because the delegation found the land and the indigenous people inhospitable. The Uganda proposal, while rejected, marked the beginning of the relationship between Zionism and the British government. The British were open to the idea of helping to establish a Jewish homeland.

In contrast to Herzl, Ha'am favored founding a Jewish culture in Palestine rather than the rapid creation of a Jewish state. He saw Herzl's idea of a Jewish state as flawed because it was based in assimilationist thought. He derided the state idea because it only addressed the material problem of the Jews in Europe. He wrote,

We may, by natural means, establish a Jewish State one day, and the Jews may increase and multiply in it until the country will hold no more: but even then the greater part of the people will remain scattered in strange lands. To gather our scattered ones from the four corners of the earth (in the words of the Prayer Book) is impossible. Only religion, with its belief in a miraculous redemption, can promise that consummation.<sup>94</sup>

For Ha'am, the establishment of the Jewish state must be preceded by the establishment of a pan-Jewish culture rooted in a revival of Judaism, based in the Jews' ancient homeland.

Theodore Herzl was an assimilated Jewish nationalist while Achad Ha'am was a pan-Jewish thinker. Together they formed the two pillars on which the early Zionist

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<sup>93</sup> Herzl, April 24, 1903.

<sup>94</sup> Achad Ha'am, "The Jewish State and Jewish Problem," 1897.

discourse rested. Theodor Herzl died in 1904 never having set foot in the Jewish state he pictured in his mind. Ha'am died in 1927 in Tel Aviv. Ha'am lived long enough to see the beginning of Herzl's "Judenstaat" and the synthesis of both of their ideas by the succeeding generation of Zionists in the Mandate of Palestine. Herzl's idea of the Jewish State became the goal of the Zionism project while Ha'am's cultural Zionism provided the paradigm of Jewish self-actualization.

### **The Zionist Project: Weizmann and Jabotinsky**

The coming of the First World War saw the rise of the next two dominant Zionist thinkers: Chaim Azriel Weizmann and Ze'ev Jabotinsky. Zionism itself moved from the ghettos and meeting halls of central and Eastern Europe into the corridors of power in the British Empire. Zionism changed, intellectually, from being a fringe political ideology to being a major nationalist movement. From World War One on, Zionists focused their settlement efforts on the only land, in their perception, that appealed to the Jewish people, "Aretz Yisrael," or Palestine.

Within the historiography on the British Mandate of Palestine, Chaim Weizmann is unanimously considered to be the person directly responsible for the establishment of the national Jewish home specifically in Palestine. Weizmann was one of Theodore Herzl's earliest followers, yet was also a friend of Achad Ha'am. In many ways in twentieth-century Zionism, Weizmann embodied the merging of Herzl and Ha'am's ideas. Weizmann's Zionism was a centrist ideology, borrowing from both Herzl and Ha'am and from both the left and the right. He advocated a grassroots Zionism within the small communities in Europe. He also argued that if the Zionist project were to work, it

would have to be backed by a major European power. To Weizmann, this power was the British Empire.

Weizmann, an Ashkenazi from modern-day Belarus, then part of the Russian Empire, received a doctorate in chemistry in 1899 from the University of Freiburg in Switzerland and became a British citizen in 1910. During the First World War, Weizmann was in charge of the British naval laboratories. He invented the process of industrial fermentation which provided the British with a cheap source of gun powder for its naval vessels. From his position he began to make contacts in the upper echelons of the British government, including Lord Arthur Balfour and David Lloyd George, and advocated the Zionist cause.

Weizmann was firmly committed to the idea of *Eretz Israel*, Hebrew for the land of Israel, and re-establishing a Jewish presence there. In a letter to Lord Maurice Hankey, then secretary of the British War Council, Weizmann emphasized the *re-establishment* of a Jewish presence versus the *establishment* of a Jewish presence. He wrote, “Instead of ‘establishment’, would it not be more desirable to use the word ‘re-establishment’? By this small alteration the historical connection with the ancient tradition would be indicated and the whole matter put in its true light.”<sup>95</sup> The “true light” Weizmann is referring to is legitimacy. He did not wish for the Jewish presence in Palestine to be seen simply as another incursion of Europeans into a land in which they did not belong. Weizmann wanted the Jewish settlements in Palestine to be perceived as the repatriation of the Jewish people to their homeland.

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<sup>95</sup> Chaim Weizmann, *The Letters and Papers of Chaim Weizmann Series A, Volume 7* (Jerusalem: Israel University Press, 1984), p. 534.

Weizmann was aware of the potential threat the establishment of a Jewish national home posed to Jews living abroad. It could, potentially, threaten the legal status of Jews in Europe. He did not want Palestine to become the destination for forced Jewish immigration. In the same letter to Secretary Hankey, Weizmann wrote:

The last lines of the declaration could easily be interpreted by ill-wishers as implying the idea that, with the re-establishment of the Jewish national home, only those Jews will have a right to claim full citizenship in the country of their birth who in addition to being loyal and law-abiding citizens would also totally disassociate themselves from the Jewish national home, showing no interest in, or sympathy with, its successful development. This unnatural demand is surely not in the mind of H.M Government, and in order to avoid any misunderstanding I respectfully suggest that the part of the declaration in question be replaced by the words: 'The rights and political status enjoyed by Jews in other countries of which they are loyal citizens.'<sup>96</sup>

Weizmann also differentiated between the concept of the Jewish nation and a Jewish race. He defined the Jewish nation as comprising various ethnic groups separated by language and historical experiences but unified by common ancestry and religion. He did not believe in the concept of the Jewish race, which implied a biological qualifier. In the last suggestion to Secretary Hankey, Weizmann writes "May I also suggest 'Jewish people' instead of 'Jewish race'."

While Weizmann was seen by most British policy makers as the leader of the Zionist movement, many Zionists themselves pledged their allegiance not to Weizmann but to his rival Vladimir Ze'ev Jabotinsky. The historiography put forward Shepherd, Wasserstein, and Kayyali relegate Jabotinsky's influence to a peripheral concern in the great framework of Zionism while Joseph fails to mention him at all.<sup>97</sup> The facts of Jabotinsky's accomplishments in creating the Revisionist Movement and in fathering the

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<sup>96</sup> Ibid

<sup>97</sup> See: Shepherd *Ploughing Sand*, Wasserstein pp 43, 44, 46, 49, 63-4, 76, 91-2, 137, 227; Kayyali p. 77

Irgun, which is examined later, do not support this assertion. Ze'ev Jabotinsky's impact on Zionism, and on the state of Israel, resonates to this day.<sup>98</sup>

Jabotinsky was born in Odessa in modern-day Ukraine. He was a journalist by trade and spoke fluent English, Yiddish, Hebrew, and Russian. One of the major events that helped shape Jabotinsky into an influential Zionist was the Kishinev Pogrom of 1903. The Pogrom was the first government-sanctioned action against the Jews in the twentieth century. Following the discovery of a dead Russian child in a Jewish neighborhood in the town north of Kishinev called Dubarsari, anti-Semitic news papers accused the Jews of killing the child. Once the violence started, the Russian police stood by as mobs murdered Jews in the streets of Kishinev. The pogrom lasted three days. The pogrom both convinced Jabotinsky to join the Zionist movement and fostered within him a sense of militancy. He challenged the Jewish people in a fiery speech entitled "Instead of excessive apology." He wrote,

We constantly and very loudly apologize... Instead of turning our backs to the accusers, as there is nothing to apologize for, and nobody to apologize to, we swear again and again that it is not our fault. Isn't it long overdue to respond to all these and all future accusations, reproaches, suspicions, slanders and denunciations by simply folding our arms and loudly, clearly, coldly and calmly answer with the only argument that is understandable and accessible to this public: 'Go to Hell!'?... We do not have to account to anybody, we are not to sit for anybody's examination and nobody is old enough to call on us to answer. We came before them and will leave after them. We are what we are, we are good for ourselves, we will not change and we do not want to.<sup>99</sup>

Jabotinsky felt that the Jewish people were beyond the scrutiny and reproach of non-Jews and he reviled Jewish submission as a survival tactic. He asserted that Jews, because of

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<sup>98</sup> See Schetchtman, Vol. 2, pp. 405-577.

<sup>99</sup> Ze'ev Jabotinsky, "Instead of excessive apology," 1911; <http://www.csuohio.edu/tagar/boris.htm>

their long history and contributions to European culture, had the right to be proud. Jews had no reason to deny their heritage.

In 1914, Ze'ev Jabotinsky put forth the idea, which was backed by Chaim Weizmann, of the creation of a Jewish volunteer corps to serve with the British military in the Ottoman theater of the First World War. By 1915, 500 Jews had joined. In 1917, the Jewish Legion was officially designated the 38<sup>th</sup> and 39<sup>th</sup> divisions of the Royal Fusiliers; it comprised Ashkenazim from the United States, Britain, Russia, and Canada. The division served in the Jordan Valley and notably participated in the Battle of Megiddo in 1918.

The legacy of the Jewish Legion was profound. Jewish participation in the British military campaigns in the Jordan Valley tightened the relationship between the World Zionist Congress and the British government. The Jewish Legion also enhanced Jabotinsky's personal credibility. Many Jews, especially in Eastern Europe, were drawn to Zionism because Jabotinsky was lauded as a man of both words and actions. Finally, the Jewish Legion introduced militancy into the Zionist movement. Trained Jewish soldiers formed the first armed defense of Jewish settlements in Palestine. Zionists increasingly concluded that they had the right, responsibility, and ability to defend themselves and the Jewish communities from attack.

### **The Balfour Declaration**

The British government recognized the growing strength of the global Zionist movement and as we saw in Chapter 1 endorsed the settlement of Jews in Palestine to undermine the German, Austro-Hungarian, and Ottoman war effort. The British government turned to Chaim Weizmann and his friend Lord Walter Rothschild to assist



them in drafting the policies that would provide the legal framework for Jewish immigration. Weizmann wrote in a letter to Lord Balfour:

We have submitted the text of the Declaration on behalf of an Organization which claims to represent the national will of a great and ancient, although scattered people. We have submitted it after three years negotiations and conversations with prominent representatives of the British Government and of the British Nation. We have, with the knowledge and approval of the Government, carried out an extensive propaganda for a Jewish Palestine. We, therefore, humbly pray that this declaration may be granted to us. This would enable us still further to counteract the demoralizing influence with the enemy press is endeavoring to exercise by holding out vague promises to the Jews and finally make the necessary preparations for the constructive work which would have to begin as soon as Palestine is liberated.<sup>100</sup>

The Balfour Declaration, the product of Zionist and British negotiation, was issued on November 2, 1917, and actually addressed one of Weizmann's confidants Lord Rothschild:

Dear Lord Rothschild,  
I have much pleasure in conveying to you, on behalf of His Majesty's Government, the following declaration of sympathy with Jewish Zionist aspirations which has been submitted to, and approved by, the Cabinet:  
"His Majesty's Government view with favor the establishment in Palestine of a national home for the Jewish people, and will use their best endeavors to facilitate the achievement of this object, it being clearly understood that nothing shall be done which may prejudice the civil and religious rights of existing non-Jewish communities in Palestine, or the rights and political status enjoyed by Jews in any other country."  
I should be grateful if you would bring this declaration to the knowledge of the Zionist Federation.  
Yours sincerely,  
Arthur James Balfour<sup>101</sup>

With this declaration, the British Government made public its endorsement of the idea of Jewish settlement in Palestine.

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<sup>100</sup> Weizmann, *Letters, Series A, Volume 7*, p. 522.

<sup>101</sup> Complete Text of The Balfour Declaration, November 2, 1917;  
<http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsourc/History/balfour.html>.

The news of the British endorsement of a Jewish settlement in Palestine elated members of the Zionist movement. In a letter to his Egyptian colleague Alexander Aaronsohn Weizmann wrote, “We are doing our utmost to secure a Jewish Palestine under British auspices. Your heroic sufferings are the greatest incentive in our difficult work. Our hopes are great. *Chazak We’ematz* (Hebrew: Be strong and of good courage) until *Eretz Israel* is liberated.”<sup>102</sup>

Weizmann viewed his and global Zionism’s efforts to settle in Palestine as a form of both national and regional liberation. From a Zionist perspective, under Ottoman ruled Palestine had declined from a center of Semitic culture and religious life into a rustic, derelict backwater. Jewish settlement, according to Weizmann, would elevate Palestine culturally and economically. The Zionists argued that they would build western-style universities and hospitals and establish large scale industry in Palestine that would raise the Arab population from poverty and rescue the inhabitants from illiteracy.

Britain’s Mandate of Palestine officially began in 1920, although the League of Nations did not formally recognize the British Mandate governing over Palestine and Transjordan under class A status until 1922. The first step in the Zionist program had been achieved: international sanction of Jewish settlement of Palestine. In July 1922, the Lloyd George Government issued a White Paper, which stated British policy in the new Mandate of Palestine. Winston Churchill, then Secretary of State for the Colonies, sent a telegraph to the administering government of Palestine:

His Majesty’s Government to affirm Declaration of November 1917, which is not susceptible of change. A national Jewish Home will be founded in Palestine. The Jewish people will be in Palestine as of right and not on sufferance.

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<sup>102</sup> Weizmann, p. 523.

Churchill thus explicitly affirmed the wartime promises of both the Balfour Declaration. But as the next section of his telegram makes clear, he recognized that the British could not negotiate with the Zionists alone:

But His Majesty's Government have no such aim in view that Palestine should become as Jewish as England is English. Nor do His Majesty's Government contemplate the disappearance or subordination of Arab population, language, or culture. Status of all citizens of Palestine will be Palestinian. No section of population will have any other status in the eyes of the law.<sup>103</sup>

The goal of the Mandate of Palestine, according to Churchill in 1922, was the establishment of a single Palestinian state comprising both Jewish and Arab peoples. The remainder of Churchill's telegram made it clear, however, that the British, not the Jews nor the Arabs, were in charge and would stay in charge for the foreseeable future:

His Majesty's Government intend to foster establishment of full measure of self-government in Palestine, and as the next step a Legislative Council with a majority of elected members will be set up immediately. Special position of Zionist Executive does not entitle it to share in any degree in government of country. Immigration will not exceed economic capacity at the time to absorb new arrivals. Committee of elected members of Legislative Council will confer with administration upon matters relating to regulation of immigration. Any differences of opinion will be referred to His Majesty's Government. Any religious community of considerable section of population claiming that terms of Mandate are not being fulfilled will have right of appeal to League of Nations.<sup>104</sup>

The "legislative council" to which Churchill referred, was to consist of representatives from the Christian, Muslim, and Jewish communities. The legislative body would consist of a board of four Muslim, three Christian, and three Jewish officials appointed by the

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<sup>103</sup> *Palestine Correspondence with the Palestine Arab Delegation and the Zionist Organization* (London: His Majesty's Stationary Office, 1922), p. 31.

<sup>104</sup> *Palestine Correspondence*, pp. 30-31.

High Commissioner and a board made up of six Muslim, two Christian, and two Jewish officials elected by their respective communities.

The World Zionist Congress accepted the terms Churchill dictated. In correspondence with the Colonial Office, Weizmann quoted the organization's official resolution: "The executive of the Zionist Organization, having taken note of the statement relative to British policy in Palestine, transmitted to them by the Colonial Office under date June 3<sup>rd</sup>, 1922, assure His Majesty's Government that the activities of the Zionist Organization will be conducted in conformity with the policy therein set forth."<sup>105</sup> Weizmann also explicitly asserted that the Zionists wanted to co-exist with the Arabs in Palestine: "The Zionist organization has at all times been sincerely desirous of proceeding in harmonious co-operation with all sections of the people of Palestine."<sup>106</sup>

"Harmonious co-operation," however, proved difficult. Arab nationalists strongly opposed the growing Zionist presence in Palestine and the Zionist aim of a Jewish homeland in the territory. Moreover, not all Zionists agreed with Weizmann's pledge of "co-operation." Jabotinsky, moreover, advocated a different concept. In his speech "The Iron Wall" given in 1923, he stated that

We may tell them whatever we like about the innocence of our aims, watering them down and sweetening them with honeyed words to make them palatable, but they know what we want, as well as we know what they do not want... Zionist colonization must either stop, or else proceed regardless of the native population. Which means that it can proceed and develop only under the protection of a power that is independent of the native population – behind an iron wall, which the native population cannot breach. That is our Arab policy; not what we should be, but what it actually is, whether we admit it or not. What need, otherwise, of the Balfour Declaration? Or of the Mandate? Their value to us is that an outside Power has undertaken to create in the country such conditions of

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<sup>105</sup> *Palestine Correspondence*, pp 28-29.

<sup>106</sup> *Palestine Correspondence*, p. 29.

administration and security that if the native population should desire to hinder our work, they will find it impossible.<sup>107</sup>

Jabotinsky saw harmonious co-operation as impossible. The Arabs were bound to resist foreign encroachment. The Jews must act as colonizer and the Zionist settlement of Palestine was a colonial endeavor.<sup>108</sup> “Zionist colonization”, in Jabotinsky’s mind, assumed the use of force to guarantee Jewish settlement. The only way to ensure the survival of a Jewish Palestine was to create one dominated by Jews and backed by British military might.

Arab riots over Jewish immigration to Palestine broke out in 1920 and 1921. To protect themselves, Jews living in Palestine formed armed defense units led by veterans of the Jewish Legion. They called themselves *Haganah*, which is Hebrew for “the defense.” The role of the Haganah was to protect Jewish settlements and farming colonies from Arab attacks. The Haganah lacked a central command structure and consisted of local volunteers, but, despite being lightly armed, proved effective. The Haganah proved to be the first mechanism in establishing a lasting Jewish presence in Palestine independent of British interference, contrary to Jabotinsky’s wishes.

### **The Impact of Partition: Zionism Divided**

On May 15, 1923, the British Government officially recognized the Emirate of Transjordan as an independent state under the Mandate system. The British installed Emir Abdullah, the eldest son of their Hashemite ally Sharif Hussein as the new king of Transjordan. With Hashemite power declining in the Arabian Peninsula in relation to the Saud dynasty, the British government decided to create a buffer between Saudi’s Bedouin

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<sup>107</sup> Vladimir Jabotinsky, “The Iron Wall” Originally published in Russian under the title *O Zheleznoi Stene* in **Rassvyet**, 4 November 1923; published in English in 1937; <http://www.jabotinsky.org/Jaboworld/docs/Iron%20Wall.doc>.

<sup>108</sup> See Simha Flapan, *Zionism and the Palestinians* (London: Croom Helm, 1979), ch. 2.

armies fighting against the Hashemites and the British oil pipeline that ran from Iraq, through Transjordan, to the Palestinian port of Haifa. The emirate of Transjordan was allotted 600,000 dunams<sup>109</sup> out of the 900,000 dunams that constituted the original Mandate of Palestine. British policy towards Transjordan was stated plainly, “His Britannic Majesty is the mandatory for Transjordan to which the terms of the Mandate for Palestine, with the exception of the provisions dealing with the establishment of a national home for the Jewish people, are applicable.”<sup>110</sup>

Because of his role as head of the Jewish Agency in Palestine, Chaim Weizmann was privy to British intentions in Transjordan. He warned the Colonial Office on 15 February 1923 that

it is very doubtful whether the Emir carries any weight in Palestine or even in Transjordania itself, and whether his promises and guarantees do represent a political asset of any real value. Jewish public opinion in Palestine and in the world generally as far as it can be ascertained would no doubt resent the consummation of such a project.<sup>111</sup>

The Colonial Office ignored Weizmann and proceeded with the Partition. Jewish immigration east of the Jordan River was prohibited. The British government confined the Jewish national home to the area west of the Jordan River.

If any single event can be labeled as the catalyst for the process that ultimately led to the failure of the British Mandate of Palestine, the partition of Transjordan would be that event. It marks the beginning of a major fracture within Zionism. The traditional right-wing and left-wing, but co-operative, factions within Zionism split into antagonistic

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<sup>109</sup> 1 dunam = half an acre

<sup>110</sup> *Report by His Britannic Majesty's Government on the Administration under Mandate of Palestine and Transjordan for the Year 1924*. (London: His Majesty's Stationary Office, 1925), p. 65.

<sup>111</sup> Chaim Weizmann, *Letters, Series B, Volume 1*, p 370.

groups. This fissure, which the British Mandate Government was unable to heal, created two Jewish Palestines.

Weizmann did not approve of the partition but the Zionist Organization executive acquiesced to the policy. Bernard Joseph asserts that the Zionist Organization accepted the partition because “the Mandate for Palestine had not at the time been finally confirmed. The Jewish representatives were anxious to have the future position and the rights of the Jewish people therein finally defined by an internationally binding instrument and there was ground for apprehension that non-acceptance of the 1922 statement of policy by the Jews might delay the final settlement of the Palestine question.”<sup>112</sup> In short, the Zionist Organization feared that the Lloyd George government might renege on the promises in the Balfour Declaration. Weizmann certainly did not approve of every British decision regarding Palestine. He possessed a very clear sense of British policy in the Middle East and how the Jews fit into it. Weizmann knew that the British government’s primary concern in Palestine was the oil pipeline and securing the Suez Canal. In a communication to the Zionist Congress, he wrote about the Zionist leadership who accepted the partition of Transjordan, “It is asserted that the British Government is building a strategic position for itself in Palestine without our receiving any equivalent...one is wont to say, ‘The British Empire cannot exist without us. England needs us in material sense for her strategic position. And therefore you are stupid for having sold us for a mess of pottage’.”<sup>113</sup> Weizmann, from the beginning of the Mandate, wanted to exploit the position of Palestine as a buffer between the French Mandates of

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<sup>112</sup> Bernard Joseph, *British Rule in Palestine* (Washington, D.C; Public Affairs Press: 1948), pp. 122-123.

<sup>113</sup> Weizmann, *Letters, Series B, Volume 1*, p. 461.

Lebanon and Syria and the Suez Canal. He was never able to convince the Zionist executive to result to such base means of justification for the national home.

Despite Weizmann's strong position against the partition of Transjordan, he accepted the British government's decision rather than risking the British reneging their endorsement of the Jewish state. He was determined to hold on to the remaining 300,000 dunams and establish a national home rather than just another British colony. He argued that Jewish immigration into this much smaller area had to be scaled back in order to avoid over-population. Jabotinsky, on the other hand, refused to accept the partition of Transjordan as he felt "Palestine" included all lands on both sides of the Jordan River.<sup>114</sup> This issue became the main point of contention between Weizmann and his supporters and Jabotinsky's faction.

In 1925, Jabotinsky's faction, who had taken the name Ha Zohar<sup>115</sup> as its title, made its own platform for the settlement of Palestine public. It rested on Jabotinsky's interpretation of the Balfour Declaration as the British adopting the creation of a Jewish state as the dominant aim in its Middle Eastern policy. His first point supported "mass immigration into Eretz Israel, as a means of solving the Jewish plight in the Diaspora and the creation of a Jewish majority in Eretz Israel."<sup>116</sup> This meant that the Jews in Palestine had to be the numerical majority in order for the Jewish state to establish itself. His second point was

the establishment of a British colonization regime in Eretz Israel, with as its practical corollaries: the nationalization of all available uncultivated lands in Eretz Israel (including Transjordan) for the purpose of Jewish settlement with suitable compensation to be paid to their present owners; land grants to Jews( and Palestinian Arabs) on equal terms; a reform of the

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<sup>115</sup> Hebrew: the Splendor.

<sup>116</sup> See: Schetchtman, Vol 2, pp. 25- 85; Shavit, pp. 192-193.



tax and excise system in Eretz Israel in order to facilitate immigrant absorption and to stimulate local industrial production.”<sup>117</sup>

Integral to his plan for the Jewish state was the expansion of Jewish settlement into the Transjordan, which had been prohibited by the 1922 partition and the subsequent establishment of the Hashemite Kingdom. All Jewish taxes would go to setting up homes for immigrants and the stimulation of the Jewish economy only. His third point was “The formation of the Jewish Legion as a permanent part of the British garrison in Israel.”<sup>118</sup> The purpose of the establishment of a Jewish legion as part of the British military was twofold. First, the Jewish Legion would have access to the best weaponry the British military had to offer. Second, this would commit the Jewish state to the British Empire

The Revisionist platform envisioned the Zionist organization as a partner with the British in the government of Palestine. Jabotinsky’s fourth point was “The election of a British high commissioner, and the allocation of senior appointments in the mandatory administration in consultation with the Zionist Organization.”<sup>119</sup> This point was obviously aimed at British High Commissioner Herbert Samuel. Samuel was Jewish, but Jabotinsky felt he did not support the Zionist aims for Palestine. With point four, however, Jabotinsky was also seeking a governmental role for the Zionist Organization- in direct opposition to Churchill’s telegram of July 1922, which explicitly denied the Zionists any role in the government of Palestine. Jabotinsky’s fifth point also sought to expand the Zionist role in the government: “The transfer of decision about the rate of

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<sup>117</sup> Shavit, pp 192-193.

<sup>118</sup> Shavit, pp 192-193.

<sup>119</sup> Shavit, pp 192-193.

Jewish immigration to the Zionist organization, and the removal of the mandatory limitations of Jewish immigration.”<sup>120</sup>

Jabotinsky’s most controversial point was his sixth: “The establishment of representative institutions in Eretz Israel on the exclusive basis of the numerical ratio between Jews and Arabs, this ratio to be based on the Jewish population world wide and the local, Palestinian Arab population.”<sup>121</sup> This method of calculation, in Jabotinsky’s hypothetical state, guaranteed Jewish legal domination regardless of any drastic shifts in population that placed Palestinian Jews in the minority. It also assumed that every Jew, everywhere, was to be regarded as a citizen of the Jewish state- regardless of individuals’ preferences or allegiances.

Jabotinsky’s entire platform rested on the reacquisition of Transjordan and appropriation of empty lands for Jewish settlement. In 1924, the British government estimated the population of Transjordan to be 200,000, with most of the land unsettled. In Jabotinsky’s plan all settled Arab lands would be left alone but by settling the vast emptiness of Transjordan, Jabotinsky hoped, a Jewish majority could be achieved. He demanded the removal of the quotas for Jewish immigration, which would open the door for mass Jewish evacuations from places like Poland and Latvia to Palestine. Jabotinsky also demanded that the World Zionist Congress raise “a national Jewish loan, guaranteed by a land fund.” The land fund would be used to purchase land from Arabs.

Jabotinsky used the platform not only to articulate his vision of “Eretz Israel” but also to attack Weizmann. He demanded “The election of the member of the Jewish Agency Executive by the Zionist congress, and the expansion of the right of election to the

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<sup>120</sup> Shavit, pp 192-193.

<sup>121</sup> Shavit, pp 192-193.

congress by the entire Jewish population of Eretz Israel, all contributors to Zionist funds, and the members of all Jewish Societies engaged in the building up of Zionism.”<sup>122</sup>

Jabotinsky believed that Weizmann and the Zionist Organization were far too insular. He sought to shift both the composition and the policies of the organization by broadening its electorate. Various Jewish communities would elect delegates to attend the Zionist Conferences; the delegates would then elect a president from within their own ranks.

Weizmann’s response to Jabotinsky’s plan and his politics was harsh. He wrote,

I need not pay Jabotinsky any compliments, and he does not want them...What he says might have very well been applied to a land like Rhodesia. Rhodesia was an empty country which had no population, it is not a land burdened with a great tradition. It is not a land which is in the center of great historical movements... (the Zionist Congress) must recognize that Palestine is not Rhodesia, but that 600,000 Arabs are there who, in the eyes of international justice, have just as much right to their life in Palestine as we do to our national home.<sup>123</sup>

Weizmann ended his response to Jabotinsky’s proposed plan with the statement “We must take Palestine as it is, with the sand dunes and the rocks, with the Arabs and the Jews as they come. That is our work. Everything else is make-believe.”<sup>124</sup>

Weizmann and Jabotinsky represented the poles of Zionist thought in the 1920’s. Weizmann argued for Jewish settlement on the 300,000 dunams of Palestine with respect to Arab rights and a Jewish Agency politically independent of the British government. His goal was a Jewish state in which Arabs would play an active role. Jabotinsky argued for Jewish settlement involving the whole of Palestine and Transjordan. He envisioned a Jewish State in which the Jews ruled by numerical superiority. The gulf between the two men was so great the Jabotinsky left the Zionist Organization in 1923 and established the

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<sup>122</sup> Shavit, pp. 192- 193.

<sup>123</sup> Weizmann, *Letters, Series B, Volume 1*, pp. 462-466.

<sup>124</sup> Weizmann, *Letters, Series B, Volume 1*, p. 466.

Revisionist Party. He then founded the right-wing Revisionist Zionist Alliance within the Zionist Congress in 1925.

In addition to the fracture between Weizmann's faction and Jabotinsky's Revisionist Zionists, a third group arose to challenge the power of both: Labour Zionism. Ideologically, Labour Zionism was based on socialist principles such as collectivism and the importance of trade unions. The chief philosophers of Labour Zionism were Moses Hess, Ber Borochov, and Nayhum Syrkin. Hess was a contemporary of Karl Marx and advocate of the Marxist principle of religion as an opiate of the masses. Later, Hess would become a Jewish nationalist and claim that socialism was the method that would lead Jews to auto-emancipate themselves; he first theorized the combination of Jewish nationalism and socialist ideals that would become the foundation of Labour Zionism. Ber Borochov and Nayhum Syrkin were contemporaries in the early phases of Zionism. Syrkin first advocated that Jewish immigrants to Palestine should live in collective settlements, which was the precursor to Kibbutzim. Ber Borochov founded the Poale Zion party in 1906 aimed at uniting Zionist workers and the creation of a socialist Jewish state. Labour Zionism remained on the fringes of the Zionist movement until the arrival of David Ben-Gurion, who moved it from the periphery of Zionism to the mainstream and from Europe to Palestine.<sup>125</sup>

David Ben-Gurion was born David Grun in Poland in 1888. He was a second generation Zionist. In 1906, Ben-Gurion immigrated to Ottoman held Palestine. He studied law at Istanbul University and in 1915 was expelled from Palestine by the Ottoman authorities because of his avowedly Zionist leanings. After fleeing to the United

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<sup>125</sup> For more on Hess, Syrkin, and Borochov, see Shimoni, pp. 55- 60, 166-232; Flapan, pp. 178-79; Teveth, *Ben Gurion and the Palestinian Arabs*, p. 41.

States, Ben-Gurion returned to Palestine in 1918 with the Jewish Legion and settled with his family there at the conclusion of the First World War.

In Palestine, Poale Zion members boycotted Jewish businesses that employed Arabs because they undermined the goal of creating a self-sufficient Jewish state. Labour Zionists emphasized the construction of Kibbutzim, which became their stronghold of power within Palestine. In addition to Kibbutzim, Labour Zionism was very popular in cities like Tel Aviv and Haifa.

Before 1920, there were two Labour Zionist parties in Palestine. David Ben-Gurion belonged to the Poale Zion, which focused on urban working class Jews. The other party was the Hapoel Hatzair, which focused on Jews living in the Kibbutzim. In 1920, Poale Zion and Hapoel Hatzair created a single union called the Histadrut, over which Ben-Gurion quickly took control.<sup>126</sup>

Politically, Ben-Gurion opposed Weizmann on two points. First, Ben-Gurion argued that immigration was vital to the establishment of a Jewish state. In Ben-Gurion's perception, if Jews were not a numerical majority, the Zionist project would ultimately fail. Ben-Gurion's second point was that Weizmann's success in recruiting non-Zionists into the Jewish Agency was counterproductive to the goal of Zionism. The majority of the non-Zionist members were wealthy capitalists who would seek employees outside of the Histadrut's authority. This undermined the socialist principles on which the Histadrut was founded. Weizmann and Ben-Gurion did agree on the importance of industry and the construction of Jewish settlements.

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<sup>126</sup> See: Smith, pp. 120-122; Teveth, *Burning Ground*, pp 181-182.

The relationship between Ben-Gurion's Labour Zionists and Jabotinsky's Revisionists was hostile.<sup>127</sup> Jabotinsky felt that the establishment of a Jewish state in Palestine rested on the immigration of the middle class and private investment.<sup>128</sup> Jabotinsky detested Labour Zionism and the Histadrut's emphasis on socialism because he felt that collectivity hindered Jewish ascendancy. Teveth argues that Ben-Gurion viewed the Revisionists as a threat to the Zionist goal of creating a Jewish state because they were unwilling to work with the British and sought out confrontation with the Arabs. As Labour Zionism became the mainstream of Zionist thought, revisionists sought to undermine the Histadrut's efforts to encourage Jews to employ union workers. Revisionists sponsored strikebreaking practices such as supplying Revisionist workers when Histadrut members went on strike.<sup>129</sup> Jabotinsky called the Histadrut "a gross cancer in the body of the Yishuv, growing ever more malignant."<sup>130</sup> He vowed that the Revisionists would "wage the war against this malignant growth until the end."<sup>131</sup>

Ben-Gurion refrained from making public comments against Jabotinsky until 1930 when he compared Jabotinsky to Hitler. He said, "I read...Hitler's organ, and it seemed to me that I was reading Jabotinsky in *Doar ha-Yom*. Same words, same style, same spirit."<sup>132</sup> Ben-Gurion went as far to dub Jabotinsky "Vladimir Hitler" in public speeches. The rift that existed between Ben-Gurion and Jabotinsky never healed. During the late 1920's and 1930's Palestinian Zionism comprised two totally independent and

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<sup>127</sup> See Schechtman, Vol. 2, pp. 189, 215, 226, 230, and Ch. 13.

<sup>128</sup> Smith, pp. 122-24.

<sup>129</sup> Smith, pp. 122-24

<sup>130</sup> Shabtai Teveth, *The Burning Ground*, p. 412.

<sup>131</sup> Teveth, *Burning Ground*, p. 412.

<sup>132</sup> Teveth, *Burning Ground*, p. 414.

ideologically incompatible groups that far overshadowed the earlier split between Weizmann and Jabotinsky.

With regard to the Arabs of Palestine, Ben-Gurion had a unique stand. He argued that any agreements with Palestinian Arabs had to be contingent on Arab acquiescence to Zionist rule. In Ben Gurion's perception, the Arabs had to accept that the Zionists were economically and militarily stronger than they were and that the Zionists had to reinforce that impression as much as they could. Ben-Gurion supported Arab independence, but Palestine belonged to the Jews.

Ben-Gurion's attitude towards the Arabs evolved as the Zionists gained more power.<sup>133</sup> Early in his career, Ben-Gurion had argued that the Arabs in Palestine had the right to view Palestine as their homeland. By 1918, however, Ben-Gurion's opinions had changed. He still recognized an Ara' right to remain in Palestine but he felt that the Arabs were incapable of developing industry in Palestine and because of that they had no right to stop Zionist expansion, which he argued would bring industrial progress and economic prosperity. In 1924, Ben-Gurion stated that "We do not recognize the rights of Arabs to rule the country, since Palestine is undeveloped and awaits its builders."<sup>134</sup> In 1928, Ben-Gurion argued that the Arabs had no rights to the Negev Desert because it was uninhabited and in 1930 he argued that the Arabs had no rights to the Jordan River.<sup>135</sup> Ben-Gurion argued that the only things to which the Arabs had rights was their homes and what they had built; the Zionists had claim to everything else.

Ben-Gurion's policies towards the Arabs highlight one of the contradictions of Labour Zionism. Shabtai Teveth argues that the contradiction lay in the irreconcilable

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<sup>133</sup> See Teveth, *Ben-Gurion*, p. 38.

<sup>134</sup> Teveth, *Ben-Gurion*, p. 38.

<sup>135</sup> Teveth, *Ben- Gurion*, p. 38

nature of Socialism and Zionism. Socialism dictates that all materials and resources are divided among the people equally. If applied in Palestine, this policy would have allocated the majority of existing land and resources to the Arabs who vastly outnumbered the Jews. Zionism dictated that Jewish rights and considerations in Palestine held precedence over all other considerations. Ben-Gurion did not hide the fact that he did not care how the Arabs felt about what his and the other Zionist factions were doing. The Arabs were weak, while the Zionists were strong.

By 1930, the Ahdut Ha'Avodah, formerly the Poale Zion, and the Hapoel Hatzair merged to form the Mapai. The consolidation of Labour Zionism into a single party marked the beginning of a shift in the center of Zionist power from Europe to Palestine. Weizmann's faction unified with the Labour Zionists to create a mainstream of Zionist thought centered on the creation of Jewish state in Palestine but willing to work with the British. Because of the existing rivalries between Weizmann's faction, Labour Zionism, and Revisionist Zionism, the split between the new mainstream Zionism and Revisionist Zionism crystallized. This split formed the poles of modern Israeli politics with the mainstream holding power until 1977 and the victory of the direct descendants of the Revisionist Zionism, the Likud Party.



## Chapter 4: The Downward Spiral

In the previous chapters, we have examined the establishment of Palestinian Arab nationalism and the fracturing of the Zionist movement within Palestine. Despite continued anti-Zionist rhetoric from Hajj Amin and his nationalists, and pro-colonial Jewish expansionist rhetoric by Ze'ev Jabotinsky and his followers, the period was relatively peaceful. This peace came to an end at the Haram in 1929. By 1939, Jabotinsky had been expelled from Palestine, David Ben-Gurion's Labour Zionism had become the mainstream, the Zionist split had taken on frightening military proportions, and the Arab nationalists led by Hajj Amin had collapsed. There is unanimous agreement among historians of the Mandate period that the Kotel riots in 1929 and the Arab revolt from 1936 to 1939 were the major factors that led to the failure of the British Mandate of Palestine.

This chapter examines that failure. The first section outlines the 1929 riots and the coalescence of the Haganah and Irgun. The second section examines the origin, outbreak, and aftermath of the Arab Revolt of 1936. The third section explains the British response to the violence put in the form of the Peel Commission and the MacDonald White Paper.

Shepherd, Wasserstein, Joseph, and Kayyali assert that the Zionists were superior to their Arab counterparts militarily and economically.<sup>136</sup> This argument, while correct, neglects the biggest advantage that the Zionists had over the Arabs. The Zionists, as Charles Smith asserts, held positions in the Mandate government and had access to the British authorities. This access to the Mandate government and to British policymakers

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<sup>136</sup> See: Shepherd *Ploughing Sand*, pp.126- 244; Wasserstein, *The British in Palestine 1917-1929*; Kayyali, *Palestine: a Modern History*, pp. 228-231; Joseph, *British Rule in Palestine*, Ch 10-11.

gave the Zionists the freedom they need to create an independent economy and the war machine that would later crush the Arab armies in 1948.

### **The 1929 Riots**

The *Kotel*, or the Wailing Wall, is both the remnant of the Second Jewish Temple and part of the *Al-Haram al-Qudsi al-Sharif*, which contains the Dome of the Rock. Ottoman law had forbidden Jews from erecting any decorations on their religious holidays as the Dome of the Rock held dominance over the site. The Mandate government decided that Ottoman law was to be observed in regards to the Wailing Wall. In 1928, however, immigrant religious Jews erected a screen to separate male from female worshipers celebrating Yom Kippur at the wall. This action heightened tensions in Palestine over Jewish immigration as rumors, propagated by Hajj Amin, circulated about Jews planning to take over the Temple Mount. This was all cast against the backdrop of expanding Jewish landownership in Palestine, especially in the area around the western end of Jerusalem. In Arab culture, a person can purchase land but that does not entitle him to anything that sits on the land such as orchards and buildings. This was the opposite of the Zionist understanding of land acquisition, in which the land and everything in it belonged to the owner.

While Arab fears over Jewish seizure of the Temple Mount bordered on the paranoid, their fear over increasing Jewish immigration was rooted firmly in fact. As table 1 shows, Jewish immigration totaled 69,878 between 1924 and 1929:

Table 1: Provenance of Jewish Immigrants into Palestine 1.1.1924-31.12.1929

Austria	940
Belgium	116
Bulgaria	1266
Czechoslovakia	415

(Table Continued)

Danzig	133
Denmark	1
Estonia	28
Finland	6
France	274
Germany	2140
Greece	858
Hungary	242
Italy	159
Latvia	870
Lithuania	3376
Netherlands	70
Norway	3
Poland	33389
Portugal	3
Rhodes	20
Rumania	4239
Russia	12071
Spain	15
Sweden	2
Switzerland	63
Turkey	1709
United Kingdom and Irish Free State	554
Yugoslavia	87
Afghanistan	91
Bukharah	29
China	38
Cyprus	51
India	57
Iraq	943
Kuwait	15
Persia	515
Syria	210
Yemen and Aden	2017
Abyssinia	11
Algeria	16
Egypt and Sudan	404
Morocco	49
Rhodesia	2
South Africa	107
Tripoli	1
Tunis	29
Canada	100
British West Indies	1

(Table Continued)

United States of America	1880
South and Central America	235
Australia	22
New Zealand	4
Unspecified	2
Grand total	69,878

<sup>137</sup>

As Table 1 indicates, the majority of Jewish immigrants came from eastern Europe, with Poland accounting for approximately 48 percent of total Jewish immigration. Eastern European Jews had more immediate reasons to immigrate to Palestine because of government-sanctioned persecutions and pervasive anti-Semitism. Eastern European Ashkenazim had no frame of reference or any respect for Ottoman law. Because of this, many of the immigrants challenged long-established religious taboos. American and British immigrants were more likely to be ardent Zionists but respectful of local custom and tradition. About the origins of the 1929 Riots, the Mandate government stated

The conflict of claims, Jewish and Arab, as to the right at the Wailing Wall continued to afford opportunity for disorder. On the Arab side there is suspicion of any Jewish act in the vicinity of the wall, coupled with resentment of the provincial regulations issued by the high commissioner, which are interpreted by certain Moslems as giving authority for Jewish devotions of congregational character which, in the Moslem view, have no sanction. On the Jewish side resentment is caused by acts of Moslems which are not within the ambit of the provisional regulations of the high commissioner and which tend to make devotions, either private or public, impossible to fulfill.<sup>138</sup>

In August of 1929, Polish members of *Betar*, the Revisionist Zionist youth organization, demonstrating at the Kotel, claimed that the Wall belonged to the Jews; this event sparked the riots. During the course of the riots, Arab militias attacked the Jewish community in the city of Hebron. The Jewish community in Hebron was one of the oldest

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<sup>137</sup> *Report by His Britannic Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland to the Council of the League of Nations on the Administration on the Administration of Palestine and Transjordan for the Year 1929* (London: His Majesty's Stationary Office, 1930), p. 131.

<sup>138</sup> *Report for 1929*, pp. 4-5.

in Palestine and consisted of Sephardic Jews. Even though the Jews of Hebron were not Zionists, the Haganah offered assistance to the Jewish community. This assistance was declined, however, because the old Sephardic community there felt the Arabs would protect them. The Hebron “pogrom”, as it was called by the Zionists, caused sixty-seven Jewish deaths and forced the remaining Jewish community to flee. Rumors of the murder of children and rapes circulated among the Zionists. In the wake of this violence, the Sephardic community, called the old *Yishuv*, integrated with the Zionist enclaves. They brought their knowledge of Arab customs and language, as well as the topography of the surrounding country, to the Zionist discourse.

For the Arab community, the Hebron massacre had a devastating effect. First, they hardened the Zionist community against the idea of co-existence. The Arabs had often pointed to the existing Jewish communities and the rights they had as an example of Arab toleration. After the pogrom, the Zionist community segregated itself from the Arab. Zionists boycotted businesses that employed Arabs.<sup>139</sup> The establishment of Zionist institutions accelerated to give Jews an economic advantage in the looming conflict.

Weizmann stated his ideas clearly in a protest rally in September 1929. He said:

As our strength in Palestine grows, there comes a corresponding immunity from the repetition of such assaults. Two things have encouraged the Arabs; the first is the conviction that the Jewish national home is now only a beginning, and the second is the belief that we are still weak enough to make it possible for them to destroy us. By our own efforts we must do everything in our power to render such a state of mind impossible. We must not only make it abundantly clear that the national home is actually in being, but, by solid, concrete achievement, by the ever increasing acceleration of our efforts, we must render ourselves too strong to invite further attacks.<sup>140</sup>

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<sup>139</sup> *Report ... 1929*, p. 8.

<sup>140</sup> Weizmann, *Letters, Series B, Volume 1*, p. 566.

Weizmann promoted the acceleration of institution building. In his conception, Jewish settlements were not enough to ensure a permanent Jewish state in Palestine. Jews needed to establish sustainable industries independent of Arab or British control. One example was the construction of a port in the Jewish city of Tel Aviv; this removed Jewish dependence on the Arab ports in Jaffa.

The second way the Hebron violence negatively affected the Arab community was that it poisoned its relationship with the British Mandatory government. While the Mandate government under Sir John Chancellor did not explicitly blame the Arab population for the riots or the massacre at Hebron, the military did collectively punish the Arab communities. Officials arrested large numbers of people and demolished Arab homes. The British documents on the 1929 riots stated that “the collective punishments ordinances were applied to the towns and villages whose inhabitants were guilty of participation in the concerted attacks on Jews at Hebron, Safad, Motza, Artuf, Beer Tuvia, and heavy fines were inflicted.”<sup>141</sup>

Ben-Gurion placed the blame on the British, who he felt were hindering Jewish expansion. He argued that the legal situation in regards to Ottoman prohibitions of Jewish rights at the wall was a deliberate attempt by the Mandate government to get the Zionists and Arabs to fight one another. He also feared Arab violence against Zionist settlements. In the wake of the Hebron massacres Ben-Gurion used the threat of Arab violence against Jews to begin expanding Zionist defense capabilities and reorganizing the Haganah.

Following the 1929 riots, the Mandate government under John Chancellor<sup>142</sup> deemed Jabotinsky a dangerous political agitator. His rhetoric about Jewish self-defense

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<sup>141</sup> *Report ... 1929*, p 7.

<sup>142</sup> High Commissioner of Palestine from 1928-1931.

and the colonization of Palestine and Transjordan earned him a reputation as a militant. After Jabotinsky left for a speaking tour of Europe and South Africa, the British Government prevented him from returning to Palestine. This decision proved to be short sighted. So long as Jabotinsky remained in Palestine, the British were safe from Revisionist attacks. By exiling Jabotinsky, the British removed any restraints that kept the extremists within Revisionist Zionism, like later Nobel Prize winner Menachem Begin, in check. After 1929, Revisionist anger began to focus on the British themselves as obstructions to the Jewish state.

### **After 1929: Haganah and Irgun**

The Haganah, established following the First World War as a loosely aligned paramilitary group designed for Jewish self-defense, changed relatively little between 1920 and 1929. The riots of 1929, however, brought drastic changes. The Haganah was firmly under the control of Ben-Gurion and the Histadrut. Ben-Gurion argued that if the Zionists were to protect themselves from Arab attacks, they must organize their military wing. Following the riots, membership expanded exponentially. Whereas prior to 1929, membership was limited to war veterans and farmers, after the Hebron massacre all Jewish teenagers and adults, both men and women, from the Kibbutzim were encouraged to enlist in the Haganah. This recruitment campaign met with great success. Several thousand people from the major cities such as Tel Aviv and Haifa joined as well. To train these large numbers of recruits, the Haganah adopted British military programs and created an officers' corps. The most drastic change to the Haganah was the quality of its arms. Most kibbutzim established armories for light arms. The weapons themselves streamed in from Jewish communities in Europe, who were outraged by the events in

Hebron. The Haganah also established an underground weapons manufacturing complex to replace weapons confiscated by the British. By 1931, the Haganah was an army in almost every sense of the word. Nevertheless, the Haganah adopted a policy of restraint, *Havlagah* in Hebrew, for dealing with Arab attacks. In short, the purpose of the Haganah, as the name suggests, was to defend, not attack.

A splinter group broke away from the Haganah and formed the *Irgun Zeva'i Le'umi*, or “the national military organization.” Founded in 1931 by Commander Avraham Tehomi, most members of the Irgun, including Tehomi, were ideological disciples of Jabotinsky’s Revisionist Zionism. The Irgun was the militant manifestation of the extreme elements of Revisionist Zionism. These extremists believed that the Jews’ right to establish themselves in Palestine held precedence over any and all Arab rights or claims. Following the 1929 riots, Irgun members concluded that only armed resistance against the Arabs and the British would ensure a Jewish state. The Irgun not only rejected the Haganah policy of restraint against Arab attacks, it also blamed the British for failing to prevent the massacre in Hebron. It is important to note that Jabotinsky himself did not support the idea of attacking the British military, although he did reject the policy of self-restraint for dealing with Arab attacks.

While the ideological split between the Haganah and the Irgun was wide, there was a great deal of co-operation between the two groups.<sup>143</sup> They served two different functions for the common goal of Jewish security. The Haganah was capable of protecting the large settlements from large-scale Arab attacks. The Irgun was created for rapid response attacks against Arabs and later the British. The Irgun had a terrorist wing, which later became known as *Lehi*. Together, the Irgun and the Haganah gave the Jewish

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<sup>143</sup> For more on the ideological split between the Haganah and the Irgun, see Schechtman, ch. 24.



community an institution that gave them a decided advantage over their Arab neighbors.

The Jews had both a professional military and a covert paramilitary squad. The Jewish population, both male and female, possessed a basic level of military training.

As the Jewish population was becoming more militant, it was also growing in numbers. The rise of the Nazi Party and Hitler's ascension to the German Chancellorship in 1933 gave the Zionist movement new impetus. Weizmann joined with Ben-Gurion in advocating an increase in Jewish immigration. For the Jewish Agency, the rescue of Jews from Nazi control became paramount. What followed was the rapid increase in the number of Jewish immigrants from Europe. Table 2 shows the increase in German Jewish numbers relative to other European states:

Table 2: The British Tables of Immigration from Europe in 1934

Country of origin	Total	Jews	Christians	Muslims
Austria	943	923	15	0
Belgium	76	73	3	0
Bulgaria	184	183	1	0
Czechoslovakia	872	860	12	0
Danzig	61	60	1	0
Denmark	2	1	1	
Estonia	31	31	0	0
Finland	15	15	0	0
France	154	79	74	
Germany	7004	6941	153	0
Great Britain	817	376	438	3
Greece	1632	1598	34	0
Hungary	289	280	9	0
Italy	292	163	129	0
Latvia	739	739	0	0
Lithuania	1126	1124	2	0
Netherlands	134	126	8	0
Norway	8	4	4	0
Poland	18028	18028	0	0
Portugal	3	3	0	0
Romania	2038	2031	7	0
Russia	844	827	17	0

(Table Continued)

Spain	68	33	28	7
Sweden	7	7	0	0
Switzerland	50	43	7	0
Yugoslavia	153	147	6	0
Total	35660	34700	949	11

<sup>144</sup>

Although Poland continued to be the place of origin for the majority of immigrants, German immigrants now comprised the second largest group. German immigrants as a whole were not ardent Zionists; rather, they were fleeing a rapidly declining political situation. Many of them were doctors, lawyers, and academics. By 1938, Germany had replaced Poland as the primary country of origin with 4,223 immigrants compared to 3,269 Polish Jews. A total of 12,868 Jews immigrated into Palestine in 1938 with 12,056 coming from Europe. The Mandate Government stated that “towards the close of the Year illicit immigration of Jews from countries of Central and Eastern Europe appeared to be on the increase, doubtless as a result of the further deterioration in the political, social, and economic situations of Jews in those countries.”<sup>145</sup>

The rising number of Jewish immigrants sparked the Arab riots of 1936, a turning point in the history of the Mandate. In April 1936, Hajj Amin al-Husseini called for a general strike to protest Jewish immigration. The Grand Mufti also demanded Arab self-rule under a national Arab government, led by the “Arab Higher Committee<sup>146</sup>” which formed in August of the same year, and the banning of the sale of Arab land to Jews. The Grand Mufti’s fear was that the Arabs would be a minority in the future Palestinian state.

<sup>144</sup> *Report by His Britannic Majesty’s Government in the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland to the Council of the League of Nations on the Administration on the Administration of Palestine and Transjordan for the Year 1934* (London: His Majesty’s Stationary Office, 1935), p. 36.

<sup>145</sup> *Report by His Britannic Majesty’s Government in the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland to the Council of the League of Nations on the Administration on the Administration of Palestine and Transjordan for the Year 1938* (London: His Majesty’s Stationary Office, 1939), p. 29.

<sup>146</sup> Consisting of Jamal Effendi al- Husseini, Ahmad Hilmi Pasha, Fuad Effendi Saba, Yacoub Effendi Ghusseini, the Mayor of Jerusalem Dr. Hussein Fakhri Effendi al Khalidi, and Hajj Rashid Effendi Ibrahim.

Calling Arabs to strike was both a protest against that possibility and a tactic to head off more violent factions. According to Weizmann, the Grand Mufti and the mayor of Jerusalem set aside their differences and believed that “they could exercise a moderating influence on their more violent colleagues.”<sup>147</sup> They were wrong. Despite the power that Hajj Amin held within the Arab community in Palestine, once reports of violence began to circulate in the countryside, he was unable to control the strike.

Unlike in 1929, Ben-Gurion was unworried about Arab violence. He argued that the Haganah would prevent the Arabs from destroying any Zionist settlements. During the revolt, the number of Kibbutzim expanded, as the Arabs were unable to resist the Haganah and the Irgun. For Zionists, Arab violence and resistance as chief concerns had been replaced by the advance of anti-Semitism in eastern Europe. With Jews fleeing Eastern Europe and the United States tightening its quotas on Jewish immigration, Palestine became a safe haven. Ben-Gurion and Chaim Weizmann focused their attention on increasing the quota of Jews who could enter Palestine; all the while, the Arab revolt continued.

Within three months, the strike threatened British control of Palestine. In July, the British government reported that “seven attacks were made on the Iraq Petroleum Company’s pipeline in the plain of Jezreel and the Beisan valley.”<sup>148</sup> The pipeline ran from Kirkuk in Iraq to Haifa, where the oil was loaded onto carriers for shipment throughout the British Empire. Strategically speaking, Palestine was the most important junction of the pipeline because it was the loading depot. Any attack required the shutting

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<sup>147</sup> Weizmann, *The Letters and papers of Chaim Weizmann Series B*, p. 89.

<sup>148</sup> *Report by His Britannic Majesty’s Government in the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland to the Council of the League of Nations on the Administration on the Administration of Palestine and Transjordan for the Year 1936* ( London: His Majesty’s Stationary Office, 1937), p.15.

down of the pipeline in Iraq, which subsequently disrupted British petrol reserves.

Attacks on the pipeline thus posed a major threat to British interests in the Middle East.

Hajj Amin called the end of the strike in October 1936 but the violence continued. In June of 1937, Arab militants attempted to assassinate the inspector-general of the Palestine police force R.G.B. Spicer. In September of the same year, Galilee District Commissioner L.Y. Andrews and British Constable P.R. McEwen were assassinated by Arab militiamen. The Mandate government blamed the Arab Higher Committee for the riots and the murders of British officials. The British Mandatory papers record that the members of the Arab Higher Committee were arrested and deported from Palestine.<sup>149</sup> The Grand Mufti of Jerusalem Hajj Amin al- Husseini fled to Lebanon; he never returned to Palestine. The Mandate government under Arthur Grenfell Wauchope banned the Arab Higher Committee. The principal militant leaders also began to disappear, were killed, or lost influence. Aref Abdul Razeq, for example, fled to Syria, while Abu Durra was captured by the Arab Legion of Transjordan.<sup>150</sup> Without the leadership of Arab Higher Committee and the rebel leaders, organized Arab nationalist resistance in Palestine collapsed. The remaining Arab nationalists splintered into various militias and continued to attack Jewish settlements through 1939.

### **The Peel Commission and its Aftermath**

In 1936, Stanley Baldwin's government appointed a Royal Commission of Inquiry under Earl Peel, former secretary of India, to investigate the causes of the Arab

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<sup>149</sup> *Report by His Britannic Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland to the Council of the League of Nations on the Administration on the Administration of Palestine and Transjordan for the Year 1937* (London: His Majesty's Stationary Office, 1938), p. 21. Ahmed Hilmi Pasha, Dr. Hussein Khalidi, Faud Effendi Saba, Hajj Rashid Effendi Ibrahim, and Yacoub Effendi Ghousein were arrested and deported to the Seychelles Islands in October of 1937; Jamal Effendi al-Husseini fled to Syria.

<sup>150</sup> A.W. Kayyali, *Palestine: A Modern History* (London: Croom Helm; 1978 ), p. 223.

revolt in Palestine and to recommend changes in policy. Against the backdrop of intermittent Arab violence and Jewish reprisal, the Peel Commission delivered its recommendations for Palestine in 1937. The Peel Commission attributed to the revolt to two primary and six subsidiary causes:

The underlying causes of the disturbances of 1936 were--

- (1) The desire of the Arabs for national independence;
  - (2) their hatred and fear of the establishment of the Jewish National Home.
- These two causes were the same as those of all the previous outbreaks and have always been inextricably linked together. Of several subsidiary factors, the more important were--
- (1) the advance of Arab nationalism outside Palestine;
  - (2) the increased immigration of Jews since 1933;
  - (3) the opportunity enjoyed by the Jews for influencing public opinion in Britain;
  - (4) Arab distrust in the sincerity of the British Government;
  - (5) Arab alarm at the continued Jewish purchase of land;
  - (6) the general uncertainty as to the ultimate intentions of the Mandatory Power.<sup>151</sup>

About the state of the Jewish project, the Commission stated:

The Jewish National Home is no longer an experiment. The growth of its population has been accompanied by political, social and economic developments along the lines laid down at the outset. The chief novelty is the urban and industrial development. The contrast between the modern democratic and primarily European character of the National Home and that of the Arab world around it is striking. The temper of the Home is strongly nationalist. There can be no question of fusion or assimilation between Jewish and Arab cultures. The National Home cannot be half-national. Crown Colony government is not suitable for such a highly educated, democratic community as the National Home and fosters an unhealthy irresponsibility.<sup>152</sup>

The Peel Commission noted the disparity between Jewish and Arab infrastructure. By 1937 the Zionists had established Hebrew University and had begun construction on the Hadassah Medical Center in Jerusalem. Economically, Jewish businesses flourished in

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<sup>151</sup> Report of the Royal Palestine Commission 1937[ Peel Commission Report], Ch. 4, <http://domino.un.org/unispal.nsf/0/08e38a718201458b052565700072b358?OpenDocument>

<sup>152</sup> Peel Commission Report, Ch. 5.

Tel Aviv and Haifa. In short, the Jewish community was completely self-sufficient. Arab communities, on the other hand, had not prospered, in part because of the selling of land to the Zionists, which financially benefited only the landowners. The Arabs were also heavily dependent on Jewish medical services.

The Peel Commission acknowledged that the problem in Palestine was the strength of both Jewish and Arab nationalism. Anti-Semitism in Europe was encouraging Jewish immigration into Palestine, which the Palestinian Jews felt obligated to absorb. The Commission placed some blame on Arab landowners for the expansion of Jewish-owned land. Despite edicts from the Grand Mufti not to sell their land, they did anyway. The report also stated that the Arabs themselves had benefited from the Jewish social services such as hospitals and universities.

The Peel Commission asserted that the Arabs and the Jews in Palestine could not be reconciled. The report therefore recommended the partition of Palestine:

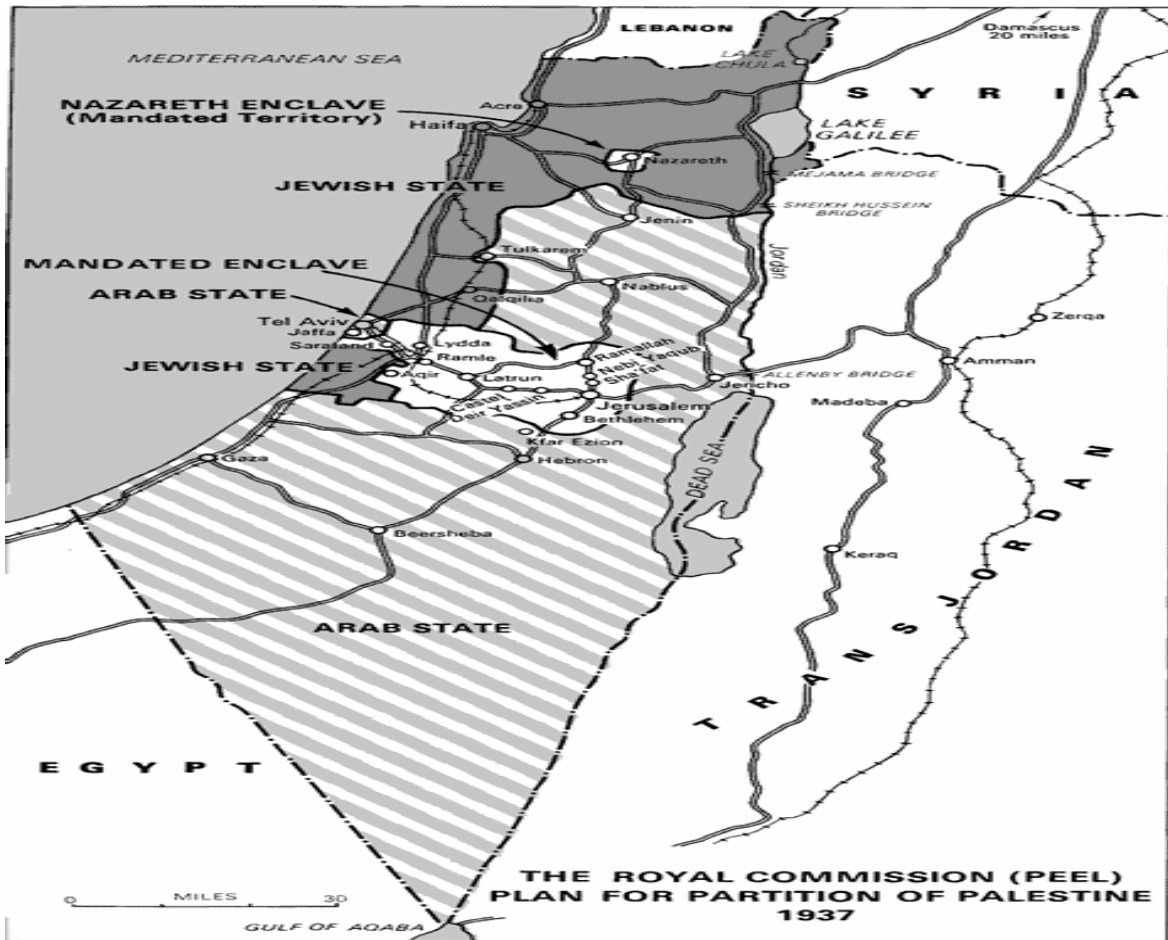
The natural principle for the Partition of Palestine is to separate land and settled from the areas in which the Jews have acquired land and settled from those which are wholly or mainly occupied by Arabs. This offers a fair and practicable basis for Partition, provided that in accordance with the spirit of British obligations, (1) a reasonable allowance is made within the boundaries of the Jewish State for the growth of population and colonization, and (2) reasonable compensation is given to the Arab State for the loss of land and revenue.<sup>153</sup>

The Commission went on to recommend the exchange of populations between the Jewish territory and the Arab territory: “If Partition is to be effective in promoting a final settlement it must mean more than drawing a frontier and establishing two States. Sooner or later there should be a transfer of land and, as far as possible, an exchange of

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<sup>153</sup> The Peel Commission Report, Ch. 22 section 3.

population.”<sup>154</sup> The Commission envisioned a population exchange of approximately 225,000 Arabs and 1,250 Jews. Map 4 shows the proposed partition:



Map 4: Peel Commission Plan for Partition of Palestine (1937).<sup>155</sup>

The Commission asserted that partition would benefit the Arabs because it would grant them their independence, free them from the fear of Jewish domination, guarantee the protection of the Muslim holy places, and prevent their own impoverishment. The benefit

<sup>154</sup> The Peel Commission Report, Ch. 22, section 10.

<sup>155</sup> Map courtesy of

[http://www.passia.org/palestine\\_facts/MAPS/Royal\\_Commission\\_plan\\_for\\_the\\_partition\\_of\\_Palestine\\_1937.htm](http://www.passia.org/palestine_facts/MAPS/Royal_Commission_plan_for_the_partition_of_Palestine_1937.htm)

for the Jews was that partition established a Jewish state free from Arab domination in which Jews constituted the majority, and with no restrictions on immigration.

The Peel Commission report admitted that the Mandatory government had failed in its original aim, to establish a bi-national state in Palestine, because of the competing national interests of the Jews and the Arabs. The British government under Neville Chamberlain accepted the Peel Commission's recommendations. All that was left was to salvage the Mandate by creating two states that would exist on good terms with the British Government, ensuring the protection of the Suez Canal and the Iraqi pipeline.

This plan also failed. The Supreme Muslim Council rejected the plan immediately. There would be no concession to the Jews. Palestine was Arab land and the Jews were colonizers who were unwelcome. The Zionist response was divided at first, as the Commission's plan brought the World Zionist Organization closer than ever before to obtaining a Jewish State. Both Weizmann and Ben-Gurion were willing to accept the partition in principle; more Jews were fleeing central and eastern Europe. In the end, however, both the mainstream and revisionist Zionists rejected the partition plan because the territory allotted to it, containing Haifa, Tel Aviv, and the surrounding coastal plain, was too small.

The Arab revolt puttered to a conclusion in 1939. The Chamberlain Government was burdened with a Mandate in which the two largest ethnic groups who were increasingly at each other's throat. Chamberlain charged Colonial Secretary Malcolm MacDonald with redefining British policy in Palestine. All the while, Jewish immigrants continued to pour in from Europe and war with Germany loomed on the horizon. With



the current state of hostilities in Palestine firmly in the mind, the British government issued the MacDonald White Paper of 1939 and made a bad situation worse.

The MacDonald White Paper stated that in the view of the British Government, the obligation of creating a national Jewish homeland in Palestine had been met. By 1939, 306,049 Jews had immigrated into Palestine. The total Jewish population was estimated to be 450,000 or roughly a third of the total population of Palestine. The White Paper read:

The objective of His Majesty's Government is the establishment within ten years of an independent Palestine State in such treaty relations with the United Kingdom as will provide satisfactorily for the commercial and strategic requirements of both countries in the future. The proposal for the establishment of the independent State would involve consultation with the Council of the League of Nations with a view to the termination of the Mandate. The independent State should be one in which Arabs and Jews share government in such a way as to ensure that the essential interests of each community are safeguarded.<sup>156</sup>

Neville Chamberlain's government was prepared to recognize the independence of Palestine by 1947. Whereas the Peel Commission had recommended partition, the MacDonald White Paper returned to the original British policy of creating a single bi-national state in Palestine. The new Palestinian state would be ruled by a coalition government made up of both Jews and Arabs.

In regards to immigration, the White Paper of 1939 endorsed the polar opposite of the Peel Commission's recommendation for unrestricted Jewish immigration into the Jewish part of Palestine. The White Paper stated that:

Jewish immigration during the next five years will be at a rate which, if economic absorptive capacity permits, will bring the Jewish population up to approximately one third of the total population of the country. Taking into account the expected natural increase of the Arab and Jewish

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<sup>156</sup> *The White Paper of 1939*, Section 1, paragraph 9,  
<http://www.yale.edu/lawweb/avalon/mideast/brwh1939.htm>

populations, and the number of illegal Jewish immigrants now in the country, this would allow of the admission, as from the beginning of April this year, of some 75,000 immigrants over the next five years.<sup>157</sup>

The White Paper allowed for an extra 25,000 Jews to immigrate because of the refugee problem caused by rapidly expanded Nazi influence in Europe. The section on immigration concluded with the statement “After the period of five years, no further Jewish immigration will be permitted unless the Arabs of Palestine are prepared to acquiesce in it.”<sup>158</sup>

The Supreme Muslim Council rejected the White Paper. They argued that regardless of the Arab numerical majority, the Jewish population, represented by the Jewish Agency, could stall all aspects of legislation by refusing to participate in the government. Moreover, the existence of the Haganah and Irgun ensured that any legislation passed by an Arab-dominated government passed could not be enforced. The Arabs demanded an immediate cessation of all Jewish immigration and the renunciation of a Jewish national home policy by the British Government in London.

The Jewish Agency also flatly rejected the White Paper of 1939. In the aftermath of the riots of 1936, the Irgun had begun to attack Arab villages. In the wake of the White Paper, the Irgun no longer restrained from attacking the British. Now, the British policy in regards to immigration poisoned Jewish perceptions of British government. The pressure of the Nazi persecution of Jews in Europe added to the resentment the Zionists held towards the British government. No longer did the Jews feel that the British supported their aims or cared about their fate. Only the outbreak of the Second World War diverted Jewish animosity from the British government.

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<sup>157</sup> Ibid, Section 2, paragraph 6.

<sup>158</sup> *The White Paper of 1939*. Section 2, paragraph 7.

## **Epilogue: Nakba**

Many Jews from both the Haganah and the Igun fought for the British Army in North Africa. The Arab community was divided on whom to support. Many Arabs joined the British army but a significant portion, including the exiled Grand Mufti Hajj Amin, supported Nazi Germany. By 1943, the Axis army in North Africa had surrendered.

By 1942, David Ben-Gurion had completed his rise to power. Ben-Gurion was determined to establish Palestine itself as the center of global Zionism with himself as its leader. Ben-Gurion felt that Weizmann was too dependant on British policymakers and diplomacy for achieving Zionist goals. He challenged Weizmann's authority by claiming that any policies that he advocated had to be approved by Ben-Gurion. Weizmann resented Ben-Gurion's overt assertion of power but there was little he could do; Ben-Gurion controlled Hisadrut and the Hagannah. With the internal Zionist discourse moving towards the declaration of a Jewish state and Jabotinsky dead in 1940, Weizmann was the only obstacle left in Ben-Gurion's way. In Ben-Gurion's perception, Weizmann could not be allowed to negotiate the terms for the Jewish state because he would concede too much to the British and Arabs.

In 1944, the mainstream Zionist Haganah and the Revisionist Irgun began to fight each other. Following the assassination of Lord Walter Edward Guinness in Egypt, the leadership of the Haganah decided to clamp down on Irgun activities in Palestine. Nearly 1,000 Irgun members were arrested and deported by the British authorities to Cyprus. The mainstream-dominated Jewish Agency seized the opportunity to have Revisionists not affiliated with the Irgun arrested and deported. Despite the serious harm caused to the Irgun by the Haganah, the Irgun was not destroyed; later, it took its revenge on the

British. The Irgun, however, never retaliated against the Haganah or the mainstream Zionist leaders.

During the war, the British did not allow any Jews fleeing Europe to immigrate into Palestine. The Mandate government continued to adhere to the policy set forth with the MacDonald White Paper of 1939. By 1945, the Irgun and the Haganah had set aside their differences to resist British rule in Palestine. The same year the Haganah seized Camp Atlit on the Palestinian coast, where the British held Holocaust survivors who attempted to illegally enter Palestine. In 1946, members of Lehi, the terrorist wing of Irgun, bombed the center of the Mandate government at the King David Hotel in Jerusalem. It was the first major attack by the Zionists against the British government. Seeing that they could no longer control the Zionists in Palestine, Clement Attlee's Labour government decided to abandon the Mandate.

The Palestinian nationalists were never able to recover from the exile of Hajj Amin and the original members of the Arab Higher Committee. Jamal al-Husseini, from the same prestigious family as Hajj Amin, reconstituted the Committee in 1946 but it never garnered massive support. Arab armed resistance against the Zionists continued to be unorganized. The most decisive, and telling, clash between the Zionists and the Palestinian Arabs came in 1948 in the city of Jaffa, home to over 55,000 Arabs. The Irgun and elements of the Haganah engaged the Arab militias. The Arabs were crushed and the city was incorporated into Tel Aviv; most of the Arabs fled to the Gaza Strip, under Egyptian rule at the time.

The British mandate officially ended on May 14, 1948 with the establishment of the state of Israel. For the Zionists it was the achievement of Theodor Herzl's dream.

Chaim Weizmann served as the nation's first president with his associate David Ben-Gurion as the Prime Minister. For the Arabs the declaration of the state of Israel was *Nakba*, the Arabic word for catastrophe. The Palestinian nationalist movement had failed to stop the Zionists from establishing a Jewish state. In 1967, the Zionists achieved Hajj Amin's nightmare and claimed Jerusalem.

The current Israeli-Palestinian conflict has its roots in the British mandate period of 1922-1939, but particularly in the conflicts between the Zionists and Arab nationalists during the turbulent years between the 1929 riots and the 1936 Arab revolt. The fracture between the mainstream and Revisionist Zionists created the Haganah and the Irgun that later constituted the Zionist war machine that crushed the combined forces of Iraq, Syria, Jordan, and Egypt. The removal of Hajj Amin and his associates gutted the Arab nationalist movement. In retrospect, the decisive advantage that the Zionists had over the Arab nationalists was stratification: as the case of Jabotinsky demonstrates, removing the leader did not stop the movement. In contrast, the Arab nationalists had a central authority based on traditional family hierarchy and prestige. During the mandate period, Hajj Amin was the center of Palestinian Arab nationalism; without him, it did not hold together.

What of the British experience in Palestine? It would be easy to say that British were the evil imperialists who completely destroyed the Middle East. This assertion would be false. British policy in Palestine was part of a wider collective of interests in the Middle East and beyond. No decision made by any Prime Minister, Colonial Secretary, or High Commissioner was simple; there was always another territory or commitment to factor in. The British governments from Asquith through Attlee and the colonial offices

from Winston Churchill through Arthur Creech Jones did not understand who the Zionists and Arabs were. Because of this lack of understanding, the mandate failed.

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