The Role of Agricultural and Land Policies in the Failure of the British Mandate for Palestine

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THE ROLE OF AGRICULTURAL AND LAND POLICIES IN THE FAILURE OF THE BRITISH MANDATE FOR PALESTINE

by

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ABSTRACT

THE ROLE OF AGRICULTURAL AND LAND POLICIES IN THE FAILURE OF THE BRITISH MANDATE FOR PALESTINE

Beth Ann Lynk
Old Dominion University, 2014
Director: Dr. Anna Mirkova

This study follows the thread of chronic land loss for small and subsistence Arab farmers in Palestine and the key solution repeatedly advocated by the British of intensive agriculture and how it routinely failed only to fuel increased tensions and violence between Arabs and Jews contributing to the reversal of the goal of a unified Palestine under the Mandate. A variety of primary and secondary sources were used to identify the main social patterns and laws during the Ottoman Empire which set up the dynamic of agricultural debt leading to land sales to Jewish immigrants. This pattern is then traced over two decades under the British administration of Palestine using government reports, policy statements, communications, memoirs, and secondary sources. With the political interaction between Jews, Arabs, and the British as a dramatic and influential background, this study looks at how the British evaluated the connection between their obligation to Arabs and Jews in Palestine and the problem of landless Arabs and the tension and violence it fueled. A series of investigations by commissions repeatedly resulted in recommendations of intensive agriculture as the solution to this problem. Alternative solutions of government backed agricultural loans were routinely rejected as too risky. Primary and secondary sources reveal how the intensive agriculture policy repeatedly failed allowing the land loss issue to grow...
contributing to the tension which erupted in the revolt starting in 1936. This violence forced the British to reverse their Mandate goal of a unified Palestine in favor of a partitioned Palestine between the Arabs and Jews.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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Land is the essential component for a homeland or nation. It is necessary for food, security, and as a place for people to thrive, create a culture, and put down roots for future generations to carry on a people’s legacy. A specific area of land can have significance to more than one group of people. For these reasons, and more, people fight for control over land in a variety of different ways. One of the most contested areas of land in the early twentieth-century was Palestine.

At the turn of the century this stretch of land along the Mediterranean was under the control of the Ottoman Empire and was an agricultural region producing primarily grains, citrus, and olives, with herds of various livestock. Before World War I the agricultural output was enough to support its own population and export products throughout the Mediterranean region. Throughout the War agricultural production was severely impacted by the fighting and the burden of supplying Ottoman soldiers. As the British took possession of Palestine in 1917 they inherited the bleak agricultural situation as well as a chaotic land ownership system.

Britain wanted control over Palestine for several strategic reasons, primarily protecting the Suez Canal, the oil fields in Mesopotamia, and its tactical location between Egypt and India for transportation, trade, and communications. They advocated for and were awarded the League of Nations’ Mandate for Palestine. Through the Mandate the British had the conflicting dual obligation first stated in the Balfour
Declaration to assist the Jews in the creation of a national homeland in Palestine while protecting the rights of the non-Jewish inhabitants of Palestine in one unified, independent state. At the time of the first census under the British in 1922 the non-Jewish population, the Muslim and Christian Arabs, was about 89 percent and the Jewish population was about 11 percent. Therefore, achieving the goal of a unified independent Jewish national homeland would require significant and unwanted changes for the majority Arab population. Land sales to the increasing number of Jewish immigrants represented a threat to the Arabs, specifically the peasant farmers. From the beginning of the British occupation the conflicting dual obligation generated chronic tension between Arabs and Jews that would periodically result in outbursts of violence. To try to address underlying causes of the tension Britain used agricultural and related land policies to try to ease the tension while meeting the dual obligation. Agriculture was a good “tool” to use in this situation because the Arabs, Jews, and British all had important historical and contemporary connections to agriculture and, for the Arabs and Jews, it was part of their specific attachment to the land of Palestine.

For the Arabs, Palestine had been their homeland for centuries and they were sustained using traditional agricultural methods and nomadic herding for both subsistence and export. The vast majority of the population was engaged in some facet of agriculture making it the predominant economic sector. An important aspect of agriculture that would have a serious impact under the Mandate was the agricultural

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debt cycle. In agriculture, farmers often borrowed money to buy seeds to plant the crop, or to invest in other necessities such as tools or livestock, then repaid the loan with profits from the crop. But this debt cycle became complicated and more challenging when crop yields were small, the markets were low, taxes and tithes were increased, when payment shifted from in-kind to cash, market prices dropped, and whenever there were unscrupulous tithe collectors or moneylenders charging exorbitant interest rates involved in the process. All of these factors confronted the Arab farmer in the late 1800s through mid-1900s. In some cases, when faced with the prospect of either losing the land to a creditor and going to jail for unpaid debts or selling the land, or part of it, to pay the debt, the farmer chose the desperate option to sell the land. In the late 1800s, the buyers tended to be either larger landholding Arabs, some of whom were absentee landowners, or Jews immigrating to Palestine to establish their own agricultural settlements. At this point, this was not perceived as a serious threat because land sales were on a small scale and the landless Arabs could usually find work on another farm. Under the Mandate the situation would change dramatically and become a significant source of tension.

For the Jews around the world Palestine had once been the center of the Hebrew world prior to their expulsion by the Romans in the first century and it was land to which they hoped to return. After centuries of enduring systemic and increasing discrimination and persecution, Jews began to focus on creating their own homeland. Zionism was the political movement whose goal was resettlement of Jews in Palestine in order to create their own nation of Israel. Zionist leader Chaim Weizmann explained
that “whenever they...got a chance...they returned,” and slowly built up settlements, communities, and towns. In the late 1800s, small groups of Jews did return to Palestine using agriculture to support themselves and the colonies they established. While agriculture had once been a large part of the Hebrew culture, the number of Jews engaged in agriculture decreased over the centuries and a specific effort was made to teach agricultural skills and train large numbers of immigrants in order to make the colonies and early settlements in Palestine successful.

For the British, the Mandate for Palestine was an opportunity to once again use agriculture as part of its strategy to manage a new territorial possession. Britain’s use of agriculture has a long history and was seen in the early settlements of the New World. The British believed that building a house, planting a garden, cultivating a field or erecting a livestock pen established possession and a legal claim to ownership of the land. There were clear distinction between wild plants and cultivated plants which “signified a critical difference between savage (uncontrolled) and civilized” and fences were used to keep them separated. They were also seen as an indication of an intention to stay or permanence. The absence of these markers of cultivation and


5 Seed, Ceremonies of Possession, 28.

6 Seed, Ceremonies of Possession, 31.
improvements meant the land was uncivilized and unclaimed, open and awaiting British possession. These ideas shaped the British perspective of the Arab farmers in Palestine, their traditional agricultural practices, and lack of modern improvements to the land.

Contributing to the British perspective, especially when viewing the Middle East and North Africa, was a desire to re-create the “supposed agricultural productivity” of the Roman period. What they saw of the region in the late 1800s and early 1900s was far from the imagined Roman agricultural production. Instead, the British saw the natural environment as “abnormal” and in need of normalizing. Regardless of the fact that “the people of the Middle East...lived and thrived for millennia, successfully coping with the common environmental conditions of high temperatures and low rainfall of their arid and semiarid environments,” the British still looked upon the Arabs as poor stewards of the land and blamed them for what the British perceived as neglect of the land, lack of irrigation, and deforestation. Importantly, this was also how Zionists and Jews perceived the Arab inhabitants of Palestine, as neglectful caretakers of the land who lost their right to the land through neglect and abuse. Because the Zionists restored

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7 Seed, Ceremonies of Possession, 39.


the fertility of the land to greater productivity through modern agricultural practices, it justified Jewish settlement in Palestine and gave them another right to claim the land.\(^{11}\)

It was easier and advantageous for the British to construct their own image of the place and the people and conclude that the land was neglected and the people were uncivilized and in need of British intervention to civilize them and properly cultivate the land. This type of negatively biased view is what Timothy Mitchell described as “environmental orientalism.”\(^{12}\) This separation between the reality of the situation and the convenient or expedient misperception of the situation was a factor in the policies developed by the British.\(^{13}\) Working under such misperceptions the British took actions that would protect their own interests rather than resolve the actual problems confronting them.\(^{14}\) This will be seen in Palestine as agricultural programs were repeatedly implemented yet underfunded, because of budgetary constraints and resistance to burden the British taxpayer, and then repeatedly failed. Kenneth Stein, one the authorities on land issues in Palestine during this period, points out that because the British were not willing to financially invest in solving the agricultural debt issue they were merely “treating the effect and not the causes” of the problem.\(^{15}\)

\(^{11}\) Davis, “Introduction,” 12.

\(^{12}\) Mitchell, “Environmental Imaginaries Culturally Constructed,” 266.


As the Mandate progressed the tension and stress increased. Population growth, both through Jewish immigration and a post-war recovery of the Arab population, and competition from imported agricultural products from other countries put pressure on agricultural production as it struggled to get back on track. The Arab farmers, especially the small subsistence farmer, endured repeated losses. This led to increased debt which resulted in more land sales to other Arabs and Jews. What was different now, under the Mandate, was the proclaimed intention that Palestine was to become a Jewish state and land sales to Jews and Jewish organizations took on much greater significance. Multiple issues of Jewish immigration, market competition, land sales, Arab landlessness and unemployment, and the belief that the British were not upholding both sides of the dual obligation led to a series of violent outbursts which took British military forces to end. After each major outburst of violence the British would investigate and issue a report on the causes of the violence and make recommendations to address those causes. This happened three times and created three cycles which can clearly be seen in the phases of a build-up of tensions, eruption of violence, investigation and recommendations, implementation of recommendation, failure of recommendations, and then a build-up of tensions again. In each cycle one of the chief causes repeatedly identified was the loss of agricultural land through debt and land sales to Jews and repeatedly one of the strongest recommendations to solve this was to increase Arab agricultural production through modernization. The theory was if the Arabs just followed the British example of intensive agriculture they would produce more, sell more, stay out of debt, and then could enjoy and participate in the economic benefits of the developing Palestine. This, in
theory, would result in the Arab acceptance of the Mandate goals. However, the reality was the highly ambitious agricultural programs did not take into consideration the actual conditions and sophistication of the majority of subsistence farmers and the programs were insufficiently funded. As a consequence, they failed to solve the debt and land sale problem.

Over the course of approximately fifteen years these failing programs were touted as the means to fulfill the British obligation to the Arabs. All the while, the situation grew worse as Jewish immigration and demand for land continued, more land was sold, the numbers of landless Arabs increased, and the position of Arab farmers grew more precarious. This was especially important for the average Palestinian Arab because of the realization that they were methodically losing the land of their country and that sparked nationalist goals among them. In the mid-1930s, Arab and Jewish political groups were more active and gained financial and moral support from outside sources in order to prepare for both a political and physical fight for Palestine. This erupted into the influential Great Revolt which caused the British to rethink the Mandate and promises of the Balfour Declaration. After almost twenty years of backing the plan for a unified independent Palestine as a Jewish state for both the Jews and Arabs, Britain determined it was impossible to achieve and presented a new plan where Palestine would be partitioned into two states, one for Arabs and one for Jews. This thesis will examine the roots of the political, agricultural, and land issues which contributed to the chronic loss of land for small and subsistence Arab farmers in Palestine and the how the remedial policies of intensive agriculture and other land
legislation implemented by the British repeatedly failed allowing tensions between Arabs and Jews to escalate into the violence that caused the reversal of the goal of a unified Palestine under the Mandate.

OVERVIEW OF CHAPTERS

Chapter 1 looks at the roots of the agriculture and land issues that were formed while Palestine was part of Greater Syria under the Ottoman Empire specifically through the Ottoman Land Code and how people owned, leased, and used land for agriculture. The societal structure and role of village leaders and elites in relation to small farmers and farm laborers is reviewed especially in the context of agricultural debt. While Jewish immigration into the area was low, Jewish agricultural colonies were being established and awareness of the Zionist goals to return to the Jerusalem area became known.

Chapter 2 tracks the British interest and involvement in the area prior to and after World War I, all the political maneuverings behind promises to the Arabs and to the Jews, and Britain's push to obtain the Mandate for Palestine in order to protect strategic British interests. Chapter 3 reviews the early British occupation of Palestine and the early land and agricultural policies. In response to the events of the first cycle of violence, the Haycraft Commission Report identified the Arab loss of land and British land ordinances as contributors to the tensions which caused the violence. Chapter 4 traces the slowly building tensions which erupted with the Western Wall incident of 1928 and subsequent violence through 1929. This resulted in a series of investigatory commissions and reports including the Shaw, Johnson-Crosbie, and Hope-Simpson
Reports which explained how and why the British came to believe that intense agriculture would play an essential part is the success of the Mandate. Chapter 5 follows the efforts in the 1930s to increase the agricultural production of Arab farmers and address the landless Arab issue. At the same time, the world economy, trade policies, and the sharp increase in Jewish population due to events in Germany and Eastern Europe compounded escalating tensions which erupted in the pivotal Great Revolt. The Peel Commission Report finally acknowledged the goals of the Mandate were unattainable and moved to partition Palestine. The final years of the Mandate where a violent series of twists and turns and, as the British left, the State of Israel was proclaimed. While this thesis will follow the development of the intensive agriculture and land policies along with the “cycles” theme through the Mandate period, there were other influential factors, such as immigration, political struggles, and political influence, which also contributed to the tensions and eventual failure of the Mandate and will be briefly discussed throughout.

SELECTED LITERATURE

There is an abundance of material on the history of the modern Middle East and there is limited, but rich, material focused specifically on land and agricultural policy during the Mandate period. This is partially because certain records were never kept and many of the ones that were kept were destroyed or unreliable. However, when the British came into Palestine the flow of records and reports began providing a documentary history of land and agricultural policy in Palestine during the Mandate.
Overviews and Background

In looking at this period and topic in Palestine, it was important to look back to land reforms of the Ottoman Empire which established land systems and debt relationships that carried forward into the Mandate. Caroline Finkel’s *Osman’s Dream: The History of the Ottoman Empire*\(^{16}\) and Gudrun Krämer’s *A History of Palestine: From the Ottoman Conquest to the Founding of the State of Israel*\(^{17}\) provided that background. Primary sources included the Ottoman Land Code of 1858 and commentary on the Code produced early in the Mandate and discussed below.

Taking a broader look at the entire Middle East in the late 1800s and early 1900s also provided important background. There are multiple secondary sources available but James L. Gelvin’s *The Modern Middle East: A History, 3\textsuperscript{rd} Edition*\(^{18}\) and William L. Cleveland and Martin Bunton’s *A History of the Modern Middle East, 5\textsuperscript{th} Edition*\(^{19}\) were the two main secondary sources consulted. The authors are noted scholars in this area of study and have produced other important works. Other insightful secondary sources included Michele U. Campos’s *Ottoman Brothers: Muslims, Christians, and Jews in Early*


Twentieth-Century Palestine\textsuperscript{20} and Mark Tessler’s broad coverage in his A History of the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict, 2\textsuperscript{nd} Edition.\textsuperscript{21}

Mandate Period

The development of British policy before and during the British Mandate can be traced through the numerous agreements, correspondence, reports, and policy statements, many of which are discussed herein. They are all important and all contribute to the examination of this period and topic because they show the development of and changes to important ideas and policies. Often, later documents refer back to earlier documents making them important for a full understanding of the meaning of the later document. However, five pivotal documents can be identified and singled out. They include the Husayn – McMahon Correspondence, because it promised Palestine to the Arabs for an independent Arab state, and the Balfour Declaration, because it promised Palestine to the Jews for a national homeland. These competing promises were one of the main sources of tensions between Arabs and Jews. Another was the actual Mandate for Palestine, an international document to guide the administration of Palestine, which incorporated the Balfour Declaration and its tension generating dual obligation to develop Palestine as a unified national homeland for the Jews while also protecting the civil and religious rights of the non-Jewish inhabitants.


\textsuperscript{21} Mark Tessler, A History of the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict, 2\textsuperscript{nd} ed. (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2009).
which included Muslim and Christian Arabs. Moving forward in time, the raw
agricultural and economic data collected in the Johnson-Crosbie Report makes this a key
document because other reports and policies were anchored in this information. Finally,
the Peel Commission Report is critical because it concluded that the goal of a unified
state for Jews and Arabs was impossible to achieve and proclaimed a new policy to
partition Palestine into two separate states.

Review of the events surrounding the creation of the British Mandate for
Palestine and policy during the Mandate relied on numerous primary source documents
accessed through online databanks or reproduced in published document collections.
The essential databanks include “Parliamentary Papers,”22 a subscription-based
electronic archive of full and official documents presented in the British Parliament and
an important source for essential Command Papers, Commission Reports, and White
Papers. Through these papers events are documented in detail, data from investigations
are reproduced, and policy discussions and conclusion are presented. Another is “The
Avalon Project,”23 an internet public access databank of unedited historical documents
throughout world history. Other published sources often contain extended quotes from
official British administrative and colonial documents, memorandums, and letters that
were not easily accessible otherwise, along with informative commentary from the

22 ProQuest House of Commons Parliamentary Papers Online.

23 The Avalon Project: Documents in Law, History and Diplomacy, Yale University. http://
avalon.law.yale.edu.
editor. Doreen Ingram's *Palestine Papers 1917 – 1922: Seeds of Conflict*\(^{24}\) and J.C. Hurewitz's *Diplomacy in the Near and Middle East: A Documentary Record: 1914 – 1956, Vol. II*\(^{25}\) together provided a broad and insightful selection of excerpts. Two memoirs of importance were Ronald Storrs's *Memoirs of Sir Ronald Storrs*\(^{26}\) and Edward Keith-Roach's *Pasha of Jerusalem*\(^{27}\) as both men were British officials and involved with key events before and during the Mandate and offer unique insight.

Secondary resources on this period are ample and the two most relied upon were James L. Gelvin’s *The Israel-Palestine Conflict: One Hundred Years of War, 2nd Edition*\(^{28}\) and Charles D. Smith’s *Palestine and the Arab-Israeli Conflict: A History with Documents, 8th Edition*.\(^{29}\) Both works are contemporary and reflect a broader, multi-point of view review of the events, issues, and positions which created the tensions that existed throughout this period.

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Land and Agricultural Issues

The most important collection of unedited government documents related to land policy was *Land Legislation in Mandate Palestine*. This is a nine volume set compiled by Martin Bunton comprised of copies of out of print books, reports, letters, and other documents on the topic. As one of the leading authorities on the topic, Bunton’s selection of documents are essential for primary source research and his introduction to the set gives insight into the importance of the field.

The British had to work with the old Ottoman Land Code of 1858 and that need produced two reference books to ease that task. The first was from Sir Richard Clifford Tute, who was president of the Land Court in Jerusalem for several years, who published *The Ottoman Land Laws with a Commentary on the Ottoman Land Code of 7th Ramadan 1274* in 1927. It is a reproduction of the Code with his commentary making it a valuable version of the Land Code of 1858. It can be found online as well in Bunton’s *Land Legislation in Mandate Palestine* set Volume 1, which includes an index not available in the online version. The second was *The Land Law of Palestine* by Frederick M. Goadby and Moses J. Doukhan published in 1935. Both attorneys and government officials, they prepared this comprehensive treatise on the land law of Palestine to assist law students, lawyers, and judges in understanding the complex new laws they were

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faced with during the Mandate. The text of the Code is not included. Few copies are available in the United States but Bunton’s *Land Legislation in Mandate Palestine* set includes a complete copy of the book in Volume 2.

Essential land policy secondary sources included the first book to look closely at the topic of land policy and legislation, Kenneth W. Stein’s *The Land Question in Palestine, 1917 – 1939*.33 After discovering boxes of old British documents left behind after the end of the Mandate in the Jewish Archives, he used that material, and other records, to examine how the Zionists were able to accumulate enough land to form the nucleus of the new Jewish state. He views the information from the Zionist’s perspective as evidenced by his claim that the “land issue” did not come into existence until the 1930s when the Zionist mounted a more aggressive effort to stop British plans to implement protective polities for poor Arab farmers to keep them on their land. Stein described the Zionists as having skilfully “manipulated the British bureaucracy in Palestine,” the British as paternalistic and frugal when they chose legislative solutions over essential financial solutions, the elite Palestinian Arabs as only interested in their own gain, and the peasant Palestinian Arabs as uneducated and unable to control their own destinies.34 While he acknowledges the plight of the peasant farmers, he viewed it as the fault of Arab land brokers who sold land to Jewish interests for personal gain.


34 Stein, *The Land Question*, 220.
Martin Bunton’s Colonial Land Policies in Palestine, 1917 – 1936\(^{35}\) presents a topical view of how different economic forces impacted land and land policy. An excellent compilation of a variety of articles, edited and introduced by Roger Owen, is New Perspectives on Property and Land in the Middle East.\(^{36}\)

Resources for information on agricultural policy came primarily from British reports and journal articles by Roza I.M. El-Eini who wrote “The Implementation of British Agricultural Policy in Palestine in the 1930s”\(^{37}\) and “British Agricultural-Educational Institutions in Mandate Palestine and Their Impress on the Rural Landscape.”\(^{38}\) American geographer and geologist George Hubbard’s 1951 article “Agriculture in Palestine,” written between 1946 and 1948, discussed Jewish agricultural history and explained that its success in Palestine was due to commitment and funding.

This thesis fits in between these other secondary sources as it narrowly focuses on and traces the effects of land reforms under the Ottoman Empire and the impact they had on small and subsistence Arab farmers. It then follows that situation into the British Mandate where, with the addition of the tense context of the dual obligation to Jews and Arabs, the British struggled with agricultural and land policies to address the


very same issues but failed to manage them which contributed to the failure of the goals of the Mandate. There are many other sources which provided background, insight, duplicate information, and information that was fascinating but not included in order to maintain focus and a reasonable length. Many of these sources are included in the bibliography.

NOTES

All British and Canadian spellings of common words have been replaced with American spellings. For Arabic names, the spellings used by James L. Gelvin have been adopted.
CHAPTER 2

CHALLENGES THE BRITISH WOULD INHERIT

The British inherited several deeply rooted problems from the Ottoman Empire that challenged their ability to achieve the goals of the Mandate for Palestine. This chapter will examine issues related to land ownership and agricultural debt with special focus on the land reforms in the mid-1800s which transformed land into a commodity and put the subsistence and small farmer into a precarious economic position. Other issues included a mistrust of government, local political power and influence, land sales to pay off agricultural debt, and the beginning of tense relations between Arabs and Jews. The late 1800s saw these interrelated and tangled issues gain momentum under the Ottoman Empire and would continue forward through World War I into the British Mandate where they would contribute to the failure to achieve the objectives of the Mandate.

GREATER SYRIA UNDER THE OTTOMAN EMPIRE

The Ottoman Empire expanded westward in 1516 from Thrace and Anatolia and conquered the Mamluk territories of Greater Syria and Egypt, which included the province of Palestine and town of Jerusalem.¹ Specific benefits to the empire included agricultural lands, men for soldiers, control of valuable trade routes, and control of the

¹ Finkel, _Osman’s Dream_, 109 – 110.
holy sites of Islam, Christianity, Judaism and the Muslim pilgrimage routes. The great
distance between Istanbul and Greater Syria made the administration and enforcement of
government policies difficult. The imperial government also had to deal with the
Arabs, their new subjects “whose culture and traditions were older than and very
different from those of the Ottomans.” To keep a certain level of peace and stability in
the area, the Ottoman Empire used administrative strategies and land to generate
loyalty and cooperation from the locals, ensure food production for the benefit of all,
and develop revenues sources for the government.

**Administrative Strategies and Land Incentives**

The great geographic distance between Istanbul and Palestine created a
relationship between the imperial government and the Arabs of Palestine that was
highly dependent on local intermediaries in official and unofficial capacities. Governors
may have been sent from Istanbul but most of the other officials were local influential
people who received their appointments to inspire loyalty to and cooperation with the
empire as well as to capitalize on their established credibility in the community. A
significant role was played by notables in the community. The notables were respected
men, most often merchants, landholding elites, village sheikhs, clan leaders, and tribal
chiefs who acted as intermediaries between the people and the government. They often

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mediated disputes which helped other people but ensured their own heightened status in the community. A patron-client relationship could develop between people and notables and the notables could acquire a great deal of influence in local issues.\(^5\)

In reality, even with the imperial government, many local leaders and tribal chiefs were able to maintain a certain amount of control, even independence.\(^6\) Whatever administrative structures or procedures were initially established by the government, over time things were modified to work with the local situation, especially in areas far removed from Istanbul.\(^7\) If the imperial government received its revenues, soldiers, and everything was peaceful, it was content to let locals continue to handle matters. If a local management situation went too far astray, the imperial government stepped in and reasserted control through new laws, breaking up power structures by re-drawing province boundaries, and removing, and in some cases executing, local leaders who acted against the interests of the empire.\(^8\) Krämer states that modern scholars now view this “flexibility and adaptability to local conditions” as a strength of Ottoman rule.\(^9\)

Land figured into the empire’s strategy to secure loyalty. Under an ancient land system, the land was “the possession of the ruling dynasty” and the “peasants who lived

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\(^5\) Krämer, History of Palestine, 54 and 93 – 94.

\(^6\) Finkel, Osman’s Dream, 358.

\(^7\) Krämer, History of Palestine, 53 – 54.

\(^8\) Finkel, Osman’s Dream, 358 – 360.

\(^9\) Krämer, History of Palestine, 39.
on the land enjoyed a number of freedoms.\textsuperscript{10} Peasants had the right to work, live on, and profit from their labors on parcels of land which they did not own while they gave part of what they produced to the dynasty as a payment of taxes.\textsuperscript{11} Up until the reforms in the mid-1800s, each plot of state land in the Ottoman Empire carried multiple rights which the imperial government or local agents, as representatives of the government, would parcel out as grants to people in order to gain influence or reward desired actions. For example, the government could grant the rights to revenues from whatever was produced on the land, just the right to use the land, or rights of full ownership.\textsuperscript{12} Throughout the Ottoman Empire grants were given to men who enlisted in the army as well as military, political, and religious leaders to inspire cooperation with and loyalty to the imperial government.\textsuperscript{13} A fee had to be paid to the government to obtain legal proof of the rights conveyed in the grant in a document called a berat.\textsuperscript{14} These grants were a small facet of a larger, complex system of land ownership, rights, and obligations.

\textbf{Land Rights and Responsibilities Before the Reforms}

The classification of land was important because it determined which law applied, who had control over the land, what rights and responsibilities were applicable,

\footnote{10 Gelvin, \textit{Modern Middle East}, 3\textsuperscript{rd} ed., 26.}
\footnote{11 Gelvin, \textit{Modern Middle East}, 3\textsuperscript{rd} ed., 26.}
\footnote{12 Goadby and Doukhan, \textit{Land Law of Palestine}, 3.}
\footnote{13 Finkel, \textit{Osman’s Dream}, 119 – 120, 210 and 358; Islamoglu, “Contested Domain,” 15.}
\footnote{14 Islamoglu, “Contested Domain,” 18.}
and what could be done with the land. According to Goadby and Doukhan, Ottoman land law came out of Islamic religious, or Sharia, law and laws issued by the Sultan. Sultanic law applied to land owned by the state (miri) and land privately owned (mulk). Sharia law applied to land owned by Islamic religious endowments (waqf). The ultimate legal ownership (raqaba) for state land was held by the treasury on behalf of the Sultan, for religious land it was held by the Ministry of Awqaf, and private owners held their own. Privately owned land was typically “inside of villages and towns, as well as [land] for orchards and vineyards in their immediate vicinity” and not agricultural land primarily used for the cultivation of grains.

It was possible to change the category of land. State and private land could be bought, sold, or donated. State land that was vacant could also be changed into private land simply by occupation or use. Donations to religious institutions would result in a change of classification from private to religious. Two important features of religious

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18 Tute, *Ottoman Land Laws*, 1 and 7, Article 3.

19 Tute, *Ottoman Land Laws*, 10, Article 4. *Awqaf* is plural of *waqf*.


21 Krämer, *History of Palestine*, 47.

land were that it could not be seized by the state and the taxes were lower than other classifications of land.\textsuperscript{23}

One unique status of land was \textit{musha}, land that was jointly owned and farmed. One plot of land belonged to multiple owners and sub-sections of the plot would periodically be reallocated among the owners based upon the needs and abilities of each cultivator and his or her family.\textsuperscript{24} In the future, the \textit{musha} category frustrated both the imperial government in their efforts to reform the land code and the British agricultural policies because no single person was responsible for taxes, tithes, and the care and improvement of the land. Krämer points out \textit{musha} was a practice which scholars are still deliberating over whether it was collective, or communal, in nature or simply joint farming of individuals grants.\textsuperscript{25}

For agriculture in the early 1800s, having a right to use the land was more important than ownership of the land.\textsuperscript{26} The rights to use the land, known as a usufruct rights, were grants from the government or local agents to a person or family to use state land and required the payment of fees to obtain the legal documentation of the right. These usufruct rights included the right to plant and harvest field crops, plant and harvest trees, build structures on land in order to facilitate any agricultural activity including a dwelling for the cultivators, seasonal or year-long grazing rights, and access

\textsuperscript{23} Krämer, \textit{History of Palestine}, 48.

\textsuperscript{24} Krämer, \textit{History of Palestine}, 49.

\textsuperscript{25} Krämer, \textit{History of Palestine}, 48 – 49.

\textsuperscript{26} Krämer, \textit{History of Palestine}, 46.
to water. Critically important was the fact these rights were heritable. This ensured that
the cultivator and his heirs would have their own food supply and means to make a
subsistence living. To further protect cultivators there were restrictions on selling or
subdividing land, especially if it was land used for subsistence agriculture.  

Cultivators were required to pay taxes and tithes to local notables, religious
leaders, and the state and payment could be in kind, cash, or labor. Another
responsibility was the payment of grants, which could be held by any number of
different people as a means to influence or reward them, and typically came from
agricultural revenues. Extortion of the cultivators by anyone with a right to claim
revenue from the land was prohibited, however, this happened frequently.  

An equally important responsibility was to continue cultivation. The government
ensured heritable rights to cultivators in order to keep cultivators on state land
producing food and revenues. Cultivators were limited in their freedom to move away
and the laws “discourage migration because land without people to work it did not
contribute to state revenues.” To ensure continued production, holders of usufruct
rights had a legal obligation to keep the land under cultivation. If they failed to cultivate

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31 Finkel, Osman’s Dream, 357.
the land for three years they could lose their rights and it could be given to another person who paid the fee and taxes.  

While there was more complexity to the land system, this was the basic system of ownership, usufruct rights, obligations, and grants of revenues that were managed by local agents that the imperial government of the Ottoman Empire used to secure a level of stability in Palestine.

Agriculture in the Early 1800s

Agriculture was the way of life in Palestine as it was the primary occupation and contributor to the local economy. The most important crops were grains, olives, and grapes with citrus fruits, almonds, cotton, and tobacco being counted as significant contributors to the economy. For the early 1800s, the estimation of the amount of land suitable to grow crops varies with a geologist indicating approximately 18 percent and a historian indicating about one-third, or approximately 33 percent, of the land could be cultivated. Either way, it was not an extensive amount of land, but then the population was not large, and it was sufficient to support the population. Traditional, dry farming methods were used and would depend on natural rainfall with the assistance of available animals to plow. Emerging agricultural practices of crop rotation and irrigation or using specialized seeds for drought conditions were not widely used, if

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32 Goadby and Doukhan, Land Law of Palestine, 3.
33 Hubbard, "Agriculture in Palestine," 250.
34 Krämer, History of Palestine, 45.
at all. However, even with these traditional methods, overall production was sufficient to meet local needs and to have surplus products that were traded in other regional markets.

**Outside Influences**

The 1800s saw the influence of the modern world pressing into the Ottoman Empire through increased interaction with Britain and Europe. It came in the form of free trade, trade agreements, loans, foreign financial investments in the empire, and the introduction of new technology. In the area of agriculture, the empire tried to develop cash crops of cotton, tobacco, and opium but in order to get the product out to the world market, the empire needed an improved infrastructure of railroads, roads, telegraphs, and ports. Also, the imperial government wanted to develop manufacturing facilities which also required new infrastructure. They did not have the capital to build this infrastructure. The empire turned to foreign companies to build the infrastructure and loans from foreign governments to fund these efforts. With the loans came the condition of access to the Ottoman markets where foreign goods competed with local goods. Britain was especially involved in 1840 when the imperial

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36 Finkel, *Osman’s Dream*, 446.

37 Gelvin, *Modern Middle East, 3rd ed.*, 44.


government needed British assistance to push a rebel faction out of Greater Syria back into Egypt. In exchange for this assistance the British not only wanted access to the Ottoman markets, but the elimination of Ottoman monopolies and reduced trade tariffs.\textsuperscript{40} These changes and loans would increase the national debt.

Due to a growing national debt the Ottoman Empire started to evaluate how it could increase its revenues and two solutions were to increase agricultural output and develop a more efficient way to tax and collect the tax on agricultural products. This would raise more revenue for the state because of cultivation taxes and tithes and it would put cultivators in position for higher profits by participating in a larger market.\textsuperscript{41} Increased interaction with Europe introduced newer farming techniques and equipment which made some improvement in agricultural output in Palestine by the middle of the 1800s. For example, citrus groves had improved output to the point they were exporting larger quantities to Europe. However, competition with European products, inside and outside of the empire, also increased and began to challenge empire produced goods. But even as production continued to increase, the empire became aware that the revenues expected for the state did not materialize.\textsuperscript{42}

The government looked to tighten control over tax collection as a means of increasing revenue with a plan to eliminate the tax farmers from the tax collection process. A tax farmer paid a fee to the government for the right to collect the tax

\textsuperscript{40} Gelvin, \textit{Modern Middle East}, 3\textsuperscript{rd} ed., 75.

\textsuperscript{41} Gelvin, \textit{Modern Middle East}, 3\textsuperscript{rd} ed., 72.

\textsuperscript{42} Krämer, \textit{History of Palestine}, 80; Smith, \textit{Arab-Israeli Conflict}, 8\textsuperscript{th} ed., 22 – 23.
revenue from land owners and cultivators. Tax farmers were often local merchants, civil servants, or notables.\textsuperscript{43} The tax farmer system could benefit the government by having representatives in remote areas of the empire, such as Palestine, who knew the local situation and became invested in the administration of the government. But it could harm both the cultivator and the government when the tax farmer collected money in excess of the actual tax due. The cultivator was exploited and the government did not receive the appropriate revenues it was due leaving the tax farmer enriched through such corrupt practices. Tax farmer corruption was a chronic problem.\textsuperscript{44} The government wanted to protect their interests and removed the tax farmers and other intermediaries and established salaried government agents to collect taxes to better serve the interests of the empire.\textsuperscript{45}

There were specific land practices the central government wanted to end to increase its control over the land. One elaborate scheme was the easy conversion of state land into privately owned land and then the subsequent donation of that land to a religious endowment, changing it into religious land. The easy conversion of state land to private land could be accomplished by simply planting a crop on the land or building a structure on the land. Once the land was in private ownership the owner could negotiate the donation of the land to a religious endowment where the donor would still retain all usufruct rights and the heritability of those rights. With the land then held

\textsuperscript{43} Gelvin, \textit{Modern Middle East}, 3\textsuperscript{rd} ed., 29 – 30.

\textsuperscript{44} Gelvin, \textit{Modern Middle East}, 3\textsuperscript{rd} ed., 30.

by the religious endowment, taxes and exposure to land seizure by the government were avoided because the legal owner was now the religious endowment.\textsuperscript{46} Because of such transfers of ownership, the empire was losing valuable tax revenue on the converted land.

The Ottoman government took other actions to centralize and gain more control over land and revenue. It passed sweeping new legislation and restructured the land law as just one part of the broad and far-reaching reforms that were part of the reorganization of the government, military, and society known as the \textit{Tanzimat}.

\textbf{THE TANZIMAT AND THE EFFORT TO MODERNIZE}

On November 3, 1839, Sultan Abdülmecid I released the Gülhane Edict which introduced broad and sweeping reforms. In her book \textit{Osman's Dream: The History of the Ottoman Empire}, Caroline Finkel describes the Gülhane Edict as heralding the start of the \textit{Tanzimat}, or “re-ordering,” as “a public pronouncement that the old ways had failed to fit the empire for the modern age, and also an unequivocal statement of the ideological framework that underlay the legal and administrative changes of the recent past and would guide those of the future.”\textsuperscript{47} As Michelle Campos states in her book \textit{Ottoman Brothers: Muslims, Christians and Jews in Early Twentieth-Century Palestine}, “the reforms aimed at overhauling the empire through centralization and

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\textsuperscript{46} Tute, \textit{Ottoman Land Laws}, 2.

\textsuperscript{47} Finkel, \textit{Osman's Dream}, 447.
modernization...[brought]...changes in the Ottoman military, judiciary, provincial rule, taxation, and land reform."\(^{48}\)

Subsequent edicts were promulgated in order to bring about the changes. The Reform Edict of 1856 provided more specific detail of the goals of the Gülhane Edict, especially related to land and agriculture. For example, it contained the elimination of the tax farming system and the implementation of direct taxation on agriculture.\(^{49}\) From this Edict a land survey was initiated to assess the potential for agriculture and "resulted in the publication in 1858 of an agrarian code which dealt with such matters as private property in the countryside, tax relief on income from certain crops such as tobacco and cotton whose cultivation was to be encouraged, and the improvements of communications in rural areas."\(^{50}\) A Commission for Agriculture was also established.

During this reform period, the Ottoman government developed two sets of land laws. The first was the Land Code of 1858 which only regulated state land and governed the user’s rights and responsibilities. The users of state land were typically engaged in some sort of agricultural activity: farming, herding, vine or tree crops such as grapes, citrus, olives, and nuts. The second was the Mejelle, a codification and revision in 1869 of prior civil law and it only dealt with private property.\(^{51}\) At this point, the authority over land had three sources and was structured in this way: the Land Code of 1858

\(^{48}\) Campos, *Ottoman Brothers*, 23.

\(^{49}\) Finkel, *Osman’s Dream*, 458.

\(^{50}\) Finkel, *Osman’s Dream*, 463.

governed state land, the *Mejelle*, or civil code, governed privately owned land, and Sharia Law governed the land held by religious endowments.52

The Land Code of 1858

One of the key tools the imperial government used to gain more control over state land was the Land Code of 1858. The three main objectives of the Code, according to Gelvin, were "to increase accountability for taxation, expand agricultural production, and end tax farming."53 In general, the Code accomplished this when it combined the rights to ownership, use, and revenue into one "singular and absolute claim over land" and identify an individual responsible owner.54 Accountability would come in the form of land registries and in the years following the Code, laws were passed to require registration of land.

The Code allowed peasants who held usufruct rights to a piece of state land to register it in their own name by paying a registration fee, completing the registration process and paying taxes on the land turning it into privately owned property.55 A theory as to why the imperial government would essentially be giving state land away was that ownership would generate pride in ownership that would lead to investment in the land and greater productivity. Eventually, that would lead to greater tax revenues


54 Islamoglu, "Contested Domain," 27.

for the state thereby contributing to its economic goals.\textsuperscript{56} For the peasants, doing this would mean the peasant was identified as the person obligated to pay the taxes as the land owner and risk conscription, something many wanted to avoid.\textsuperscript{57}

The requirement to register state land came about in two separate laws in 1859 and 1860 and the requirement to register private land came in 1874.\textsuperscript{58} The main purpose of registration was to identify who held the rights to the land in order to know who to tax. Other details were recorded such as a description of the location and quality of the land but a map was seldom included to show an exact location and boundaries.\textsuperscript{59} Many cultivators did not register the land they owned or used because they feared the government tax, and consequences for not paying it, as well as the possibility of military conscription because the empire used the land registries to identify men for military service. The link between an apparent gift of land from the empire and this administrative process that held potentially detrimental consequences contributed to the Arab cultivator’s mistrust of the government.\textsuperscript{60} The government was seeking to make formal and standardized a system that had long been informal and mediated. The new process would bring to light and threaten locally established hierarchies and ways of navigating land issues. The solution for small and subsistence farmers was to have

\textsuperscript{56} Islamoglu, "Contested Domain," 40.

\textsuperscript{57} Gelvin, Modern Middle East, 3\textsuperscript{rd} ed., 73.

\textsuperscript{58} Goadby and Doukhan, Land Law of Palestine, 294 – 296.

\textsuperscript{59} Krämer, History of Palestine, 82.

\textsuperscript{60} Gelvin, Modern Middle East, 3\textsuperscript{rd} ed., 73.
local notables and leaders register the land in their own names while allowing the
cultivators to remain on and work the land as tenants. Krämer explains that some
cultivators were “simply not aware” that registration “under a different name would
change existing practices in any way.” Tragically, this action would have long-term and
wide-spread ramifications as it legally gave away the cultivators right to own or use the
land and all the heritable rights to the person registering the land and left the cultivators
unprotected as mere laborers working on another person’s land. This also increased the
land holdings of local notables and elites, another fact that would have serious
consequence in the future. Finally, this created an official land record that was often
incomplete and gave an inaccurate perception of the number of land owners,
cultivators, and taxpayers. During the Mandate, these factors would result in serious
consequences.

Lands with jointly held rights to use, or musha, created a problem under the
Code. Tute explains that “the intention of the Land Code was that each cultivator should
be given a separate piece of land on a separate title deed;” however, the Code had to
deal with land already held in common or jointly. There was no uniform solution as
some areas listed all the co-owners with proportional shares and others listed a head of
the family only in situations where the other members of the family were co-owners.
The practice of commonly held land clashed with the Code’s objective of accountability

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61 Krämer, History of Palestine, 82.

62 Krämer, History of Palestine, 82.

63 Tute, Ottoman Land Laws, 9.
through individual ownership and would continue to complicate administration of policies and create inconsistent solutions.\textsuperscript{64}

A tenancy had similar rights and responsibilities as the usufruct grant held previously. The rights included using the land, provided the holder paid the proper fees, taxes, and tithe, and kept the land under cultivation with no gap longer than three years. The tenancy was transferable and could be used as collateral in a mortgage.\textsuperscript{65} For the subsistence farmer this was how they often obtained a loan for money in order to plant a crop and would be expected to repay the loan when the crop was harvested. But this was also the way peasants lost their tenancy, or land if they held private land, because if unable to repay the loan they would lose the tenancy or have to sell part or all of their land.

The Land Code of 1858 endeavored to tighten control over the loss of vacant state land, the uncultivated land considered wasteland, that was typically outside villages. Under the Code unused land could be transformed into other classifications of land only at the government's discretion. Prior to the Land Code, a person cultivating unused state land could transform it into privately owned land which, Tute explains, was "one of the main objectives of the Land Code was to put a stop to this process."\textsuperscript{66} Under the Code, the government could elect to sell that land. And once it was in private ownership there was no requirement to keep it under cultivation. This, according to

\textsuperscript{64} Tute, \textit{Ottoman Land Laws}, 18–19.

\textsuperscript{65} Tute, \textit{Ottoman Land Laws}, 8.

\textsuperscript{66} Tute, \textit{Ottoman Land Laws}, 2.
Kramer, was how “land could...be acquired solely on paper, without the new owner being present on the land itself” which gave rise to the absentee landlord.\(^\text{67}\) This was a critically important change which would allow Arab absentee land owners to accumulate large land holdings over time and would eventually allow Zionists outside of Palestine to start purchasing land in Palestine and contribute to multiple issues for the British during the Mandate.

Another way the Code sought to create greater accountability and efficiency of the tax system was the creation of a direct relationship between the imperial government and the cultivator. It clearly defined the rights and responsibilities for both parties and a formal structure to regulate state land and revenues. Before, land owners and cultivators had a “buffer zone” in the form of local notables, tax farmers, and other intermediaries between them and the full weight of the government who could take specific circumstances into consideration in the management of the area.\(^\text{68}\) While this lead to corruption and exploitation, it also allowed for discretion in granting extensions and assistance where it was needed. With the Code, a systematic and uniform approach was planned in an effort to modernize and improve land management and revenue collection. Direct accountability to the state was created as well as limitations on how taxes could be paid. A salaried government agent would collect the tithe and taxes directly from the land owner in cash.\(^\text{69}\) Before, in kind payments could be worked out

\(^{67}\) Kramer, History of Palestine, 81.

\(^{68}\) Kramer, History of Palestine, 92 – 95.

\(^{69}\) Shaw, “Ottoman Tax Reforms,” 422.
with the intermediaries and local authorities, but with the Code, payments were expected in cash. While there may have been times when the cash requirement was waived, it was one reason peasants had to seek loans in order to pay the taxes in cash. This new plan also meant that local notables lost power and influence giving them motive to resist the changes and contribute to their failure. However, in reality, just like previous laws of the empire, the geographic distance of Palestine from Istanbul made it difficult for the government to have direct control and influence. Local intermediaries and local variations, the exact thing the new reforms intended to eliminate, were back. Because of this, the full weight and effect of the Land Code was sporadic throughout the distant regions of the empire and specifically Palestine.

The Code required additional government expenditures for registries and traveling tax agents and the costs for these were transferred back to the farmers through higher cultivation taxes. Of all the various taxes the imperial government imposed, the largest source of revenue under the reformed system was through the cultivation tax. This would continue into the early 1900s when approximately 90 percent of the “state’s direct income came from agriculture.” The burden to create revenue for the imperial government was clearly on the farmers. For the subsistence and small land holders, the fact that economic pressures were increasing in a commercial environment which was increasingly cash based put them in a position

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70 Gelvin, Modern Middle East, 3rd ed., 79.
72 Stein, The Land Question, 16.
where they had to borrow money. Land now had the characteristics of a commodity and could be used as collateral for these loans. When a default on the loan occurred, the farmer was at risk of losing land, personal property, and their livelihood.\textsuperscript{73}

Tute points out that the Land Code of 1858 states that it repealed "all previous legislation which its provisions replaced, or with which they are inconsistent. This leaves a great deal of the earlier law on the subject untouched. It has to be sought for in the *Mejelle.*"\textsuperscript{74} Therefore, access to both the Land Code and the *Mejelle* were necessary for those working on land issues and the lack of easy access to both would frustrate the British as they assumed responsibility for Palestine.

**Local Intermediaries Remain**

The practical reality of the Land Code and other land reforms was different from what the imperial government had envisioned. It was attempting to revamp a land system that had been in place for centuries and this created significant tensions across the empire in all sectors. What happened on a local level was that a certain amount of negotiation was needed to simply make things work and usually that involved local intermediaries. Solutions would be reached by a reinterpretation of a word, a slight change in a procedure, a change in the sequence of events or requirements, or any number of other methods.\textsuperscript{75} Practical reality also impacted the tax collecting

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\item \textsuperscript{73} Islamoglu, "Contested Domain," 35.
\item \textsuperscript{74} Tute, *Ottoman Land Laws*, 10.
\item \textsuperscript{75} Islamoglu, "Contested Domain," 3, 8, and 11.
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government agents. It was not long before the imperial government abandoned the
government agents because they lacked the local knowledge of people and places, the
area to cover was just too vast, the work was tedious, and there were not enough
people interested in the job. When the tax revenues “fell badly” the government
reassessed the value of the tax farmer and reinstated them.\textsuperscript{76} In the case of Palestine,
the central government in Istanbul was far enough away that their compliance with the
Code and reforms was not under close scrutiny. Therefore, the need for notables and
intermediaries remained and the direct relationship between the government and the
land users and owners was diluted and the uniform, administrative process the
government wanted was varied throughout the empire.

\textbf{Land Sales to Foreigners}

In 1867 the imperial government began to allow foreigners to buy land in their
own name with the obligation to pay the taxes related to the property. Before,
foreigners were not allowed to buy land in the empire because foreigners were exempt
from tax under the Capitulation policy which had given foreign residents in the Ottoman
Empire special status and privileges. However, another reform of the \textit{Tanzimat} was to
try to end the Capitulation policy. While foreign land sales and ownership opened up a
new source of tax revenue for the government it also opened the door for increased
land sales to foreign interests. This provision, coupled with the possibility for absentee

\footnote{Shaw, \textit{"Ottoman Tax Reform,"} 422.}
landlords, would be critical for future land sales to buyers outside of the empire and
essential to future Jewish colonization.

EARLY JEWISH COLONIZATION

As a result of extreme discrimination and attacks in the late 1800s, Jews of Eastern Europe started an exodus which stimulated the Zionist idea of returning to the biblical land of Israel, *Eretz Israel*, to create a new home. The first Zionist congress met in 1897 and set the course of action squarely toward making Palestine the Jewish homeland. The Zionist movement was solidified as the World Zionist Organization and their mission statement in the Basel Program clearly laid out their objectives:

Zionism seeks to establish a home for the Jewish people in *Eretz Israel* secured under public law. The Congress contemplates the following means to the attainment of this end:

1. The promotion by appropriate means of the settlement in *Eretz Israel* of Jewish farmers, artisans, and manufacturers.
2. The organization and uniting of the whole of Jewry by means of appropriate institutions, both local and international, in accordance with the laws of each country.
3. The strengthening and fostering of Jewish national sentiment and national consciousness.
4. Preparatory steps toward obtaining the consent of governments, where necessary, in order to reach the goals of Zionism.

The land reforms of the Ottoman Empire created the opening for sales to foreigners and absentee landlords. However, this excluded land sales to Jews in

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Palestine because of the large population of Jews in Russia, an enemy of the Ottoman Empire, and concern over potential Russian intervention should there be a large number of Russian-Jewish immigrants in Palestine. Early Zionist colonizers were able to evade the ban by having other individuals or groups purchase land from government authorities or individual owners on their behalf in order to establish agricultural colonies in Palestine. The fact that borders were not clearly defined and Jews could purchase land outside of Palestine contributed to the acquisition of land.

Jewish immigration into Palestine has been divided into five waves each called *aliyah* to distinguish the different characteristics of the immigrants. For example, where they came from, where they settled, their ideology, and other commonalities set one *aliyah* apart from another. This Hebrew word means “to ascend” and is representative of the ascent out of the diaspora to “be reborn in Palestine.”

The First *Aliyah* was from 1882 – 1904 and the Jewish immigrants came primarily for religious reasons from Yemen, Kurdistan, the Maghreb of Northern Africa, Europe, and Russia. Those from Russia were fleeing anti-Jewish pogroms. Not all the immigrants were Zionist or socialists but of the approximately 25,000 immigrants, about

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81 Krämer, *History of Palestine*, 121.


5,500 of them settled in the rural colonies. There they worked with fellow Arab cultivators, bought provisions, learnt local agricultural methods, and hired Arab labor. The relationship between Arabs and Jews at this time was unique and would change as social and political aspirations became a larger part of the motive for immigrating.

These early colonies had mixed success with a considerable number of immigrants leaving after experiencing rigors of agricultural life. Regardless, these early colonies were extremely important because they were the beginning of a foundation of the modern Jewish presence in Palestine that would shape the future of Palestine.

An essential actor for the early colonies was Baron Edmond James de Rothschild, a wealthy businessman and supporter of Jewish causes who established, organized, and financed the first of three early colonies in 1882. Rothschild was an absentee landlord with a team of administrators at each colony. His administrators in Palestine coordinated land purchases and secured permits for improvements on the land. Because of the ban on land sales to foreign Jews, they used a variety of methods to accomplish their goals which included bribery, working with Ottoman Jews or Arabs willing to sell their land, registering “the land in the name of an acceptable Ottoman citizen,” or contesting certain issues in local courts. In one case in 1886, Rothschild

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86 Krämer, History of Palestine, 106.

87 Krämer, History of Palestine, 106; Gelvin, Israeli-Palestinian Conflict, 2nd ed., 63.


89 Ran Aaronsohn, Rothschild and Early Jewish Colonization (Jerusalem: The Hebrew University Magnes Press: 2000), 55.

90 Aaronsohn, Rothschild and Jewish Colonization, 73 – 74.
hired a local Muslim "holy man" to mediate land disputes. Further, Rothschild required the colonists to take Ottoman citizenship to lessen any antagonism with authorities who worried about foreigners seeking special privileges and to expedite land registration.

Significantly, Rothschild consulted with experts in agriculture to find the best ways to make the colonies profitable and when the time was right he expanded to other crops or business enterprises to continue to sustain the colonies. These colonies also hired a substantial number of Arab laborers during this period. By 1900, his colonies expanded to three and a half times the land he started with when he sold his holdings to the Jewish Colonization Association. As time progressed, these early colonies became an important model of plantation style commercial agriculture, producing primarily for the market and profit.

The Arabs were not oblivious to the early Jewish land purchases but were not overly concerned because the purchases were small in number and impact was on an individual scale. Typically, those displaced could find other land to rent or work elsewhere, even at the Jewish settlements. Early Jewish colonists brought European

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91 Aaronsohn, Rothschild and Jewish Colonization, 161 – 162.
92 Aaronsohn, Rothschild and Jewish Colonization, 74; Campos, Ottoman Brothers, 204.
93 Aaronsohn, Rothschild and Jewish Colonization, 296 – 299.
94 Gelvin, Israeli-Palestinian Conflict, 2nd ed., 63.
95 Aaronsohn, Rothschild and Jewish Colonization, 276, Table 8; Krämer, History of Palestine, 114.
96 Krämer, History of Palestine, 114.
97 Krämer, History of Palestine, 122.
agricultural knowledge and technology with them and it yielded impressive results, especially in areas of the unwanted wastelands. Their extra production made them competitors, to varying degrees, in the local and regional market place. Starting off small, these factors were not a concern but as more Jewish immigrants came into Palestine, the impact was greater, and the concern grew and would become a source of great tension.

The Second Aliyah was between 1904 and 1914 and approximately 40,000 immigrants came with a socialist mission that set them apart from the First Aliyah.98 They were mostly young, unmarried men who came from Russia to Palestine with “a pioneering spirit, modest lifestyle, high esteem for manual labor (especially agricultural labor), self-defense, self-reliance, and a future-oriented outlook.”99 Two key objectives were the redemption of the land, to make the desert bloom as a symbol of rebirth, and the conquest of labor, to “negate exile” and regain self-determination.100 They wanted a radical departure from the dependence they experienced in the diaspora and to create a society that was both self-sufficient and self-contained.101 As a result, the cooperative relationships between Jews and Arabs seen in the First Aliyah faded. “Zionist settlers

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made the conscious decision to sever their economy from their neighbors,” although Arab labor would still be employed.\textsuperscript{102}

By the early 1900s, four dozen agricultural settlements had been established accommodating approximately 10,000 Jewish immigrants at a time when the population of Palestine was approximately 700,000.\textsuperscript{103} When the Zionist objective of making Palestine a homeland for Jews became clear to the Arabs, they were concerned that “Palestine was being bought out from under them.”\textsuperscript{104} At this time, the Zionists differed regarding their objectives of a homeland of either an independent state or living as separate Jewish communities in Palestine as Ottoman citizens. Regardless, the land purchases still continued and tensions between Jewish colonists and Arabs began to increase.\textsuperscript{105} Contributing to the Arab’s growing lack of trust of the Jews was the emerging Zionist policy that the colonists should keep themselves separate from the local communities and not integrate but establish their own internal governing structures complete with services and taxes.\textsuperscript{106} Additionally, as land sales increased and the impact became harmful, there was a sense of betrayal in the Muslim community as other Muslim landowners were selling land which resulted in displaced cultivators and lost agricultural jobs.

\textsuperscript{102} Gelvin, \textit{Israeli-Palestinian Conflict}, 2\textsuperscript{nd} ed., 63.

\textsuperscript{103} Campos, \textit{Ottoman Brothers}, 12 – 14.

\textsuperscript{104} Campos, \textit{Ottoman Brothers}, 224.

\textsuperscript{105} Campos, \textit{Ottoman Brothers}, 213 – 215.

\textsuperscript{106} Krämer, \textit{History of Palestine}, 114.
Before the beginning of World War I, Jewish organizations had purchased over 1,682,000 acres of land and tensions continued to increase. In her book *Ottoman Brothers: Muslims, Christians, and Jews in Early Twentieth-Century Palestine*, Michelle Campos reviewed the escalation of newspaper editorial debates with one ominously highlighting the prediction of future tensions: “Today, the peasant defends himself with words, but tomorrow, he can move from words to deeds, and then that will be a great sorrow not only to the Jews of Palestine but also to all Syria and maybe even the whole empire.” In 1908, Governor of Jerusalem, Ekrem Bey warned the imperial government “that the Russian Jewish immigrants in Palestine were a ‘dangerous element,’ and that Jewish immigration overall was a threat to the empire.” Krämer adds that the concerns of the Ottoman government were focused on the fact the Jewish immigrants were from Russia, the empire’s enemy, and they represented an influx of outsiders into the empire and could lead to even more meddling in the internal affairs of the empire by European powers. By this point, Arab cultivators and laborers were negatively feeling the presence of Jewish colonists through displacement off of land, lost work, and increase market competition.

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107 Campos, *Ottoman Brothers*, 303, note 1. 420,587 dunams of land equals approximately 1,682,000 acres of land.


THE LAST YEARS OF OTTOMAN RULE

The last years of the Ottoman Empire saw the problems of the Arab cultivator continue, especially for the small and subsistence cultivators. The reforms of the Land Code of 1858 put the subsistence and small cultivator in an increasingly precarious position. The years during World War I saw increased hardship and famine for most of Palestine. When the Ottoman forces were pushed out of Palestine and the British captured Jerusalem, it marked a new chapter for Palestine and for Britain. The British wanted to have control over Palestine to protect its various strategic interests in the region and they invested a substantial amount of political energy before, during, and after the War to gain that control. However, with that control came the inherited challenges of dealing with the lingering issues of agricultural production and debt, loss of land, mistrust of government, and increasing tensions between Arabs and Jews.
CHAPTER 3

PROMISES AND NEGOTIATIONS SHAPED THE FUTURE OF PALESTINE

The modern Middle East was the result of war, territorial ambitions, secret agreements, conferences, and resolutions during and after World War I which carved individual nations out of the once whole region of the non-Turkish area of the Ottoman Empire.¹ This chapter will trace the development of British policy for Palestine through these documents. Some of these agreements were essential and carefully negotiated while others were simply expedient and used for self-interested gain or propaganda purposes. While each one contributed to the large scale transformation of the region they also influenced the smaller scale land issues. Broader factors such as Britain’s desire for a friendly ally in Palestine in order to secure the Suez Canal, the Zionist’s desire for a homeland in Palestine, and the presence of the Arab population in Palestine who wanted, and were promised, an independent state would have a local impact on issues such as immigration, land sales, agricultural policies, and changing relations between the British, Jews and Arabs in Palestine.

Between the start of World War I and the official start of the British Mandate for Palestine there were numerous diplomatic agreements. These agreements provide insight to the motives and priorities of the various actors in the region and how they would influence local policies. An attempt to review the key agreements in a chronological fashion in this chapter is confounded by the fact that multiple events and

¹ Hurewitz, *Diplomacy*, 2: xvi.
negotiations were happening at one time. Further, there often were delays between the actual agreement and effective dates where the details of the agreement were made public causing reaction and preparation for implementation. These circumstances contributed to the frustration of the actors and people subjected to the agreements as well as the modern reader. The following chronology of key events and agreements show how these agreements were shaped and influenced the political and geographic transformation of this region.

THE BRITISH PROTECT THEIR INTERESTS IN THE EARLY AGREEMENTS

The start of World War I on July 28, 1914 marked “the turning point in the relations between Europe and the Middle East.” The two combatants in the war were the Entente or Allied Powers: Britain, France, and Russia, with the United States entering the war in 1917, and the Central Powers: Germany, Austria-Hungary, and the Ottoman Empire. A special committee within the British government considered what objectives Great Britain should have in the Middle East and determined they would be “the protection of the sea routes to India and on ensuring postwar security for British investment and trade in the region.”

Starting in 1915, when the War lasted longer than anticipated, Britain, France, and Russia entered into secret negotiations to divide the territory of the Ottoman

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2 Gelvin, Modern Middle East, 3rd ed., 184.

3 Gelvin, Modern Middle East, 3rd ed., 185.

4 Gelvin, Modern Middle East, 3rd ed., 186.
Empire among themselves in anticipation of an eventual Entente victory.\(^5\) There were a total of four secret agreements: the Constantinople Agreement (March 4 – April 10, 1915); the London Agreement (April 26, 1915); the Sykes-Picot Agreement (April – October 1916); and the Saint-Jean de Maurienne Agreement (April – August 1917).\(^6\) In addition, during this same time period, the letters comprising the Husayn-McMahon Correspondence (July 1915 – March 1916) were exchanged that ended in an agreement for territory to establish an independent Arab nation in exchange for Arab military support for the British in the desert. While not secret correspondence, the contents were quickly known to the Arabs but the British did not publish the letters until several years later. Another objective of all these agreements was to motivate states and actors to join and remain loyal to the Entente Powers.\(^7\)

**The Constantinople Agreement**

The first, the Constantinople Agreement of 1915, "established the principle that Entente Powers had a right to compensation for fighting their enemies and that at least part of that compensation should come in the form of territory carved out of the Middle East."\(^8\) This agreement was actually a series of correspondence starting with a letter from the Russian foreign minister, on behalf of Emperor Nicholas, to the British and

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\(^7\) Gelvin, *Modern Middle East, 3rd ed.*, 186.

\(^8\) Gelvin, *Modern Middle East, 3rd ed.*, 187.
French ambassadors in Petrograd in which he suggested “that the question of
Constantinople and of the Straits must be definitively solved, according to the time-
honored aspirations of Russia” which included a warm water port for trade and
defense. In return, they would honor any “realization of plans” which Britain or France
may have regarding “other regions of the Ottoman Empire or elsewhere.” France
quickly accepted and claimed Syria and later added that the War must be “prosecuted
until victory” so that France and Britain would get what they claimed. Britain accepted
on condition that Constantinople and the Straits remain open for trade to all. The
British wanted to claim Persia but also wanted time to consider the opportunity and
other potential claims. Britain pointed out that it was “most desirable that the
understanding now arrived at between the Russian, French, and British [g]overnments
should remain secret.” Britain and France agreed to the proposal for their own
territorial ambitions but also to keep Russia from slipping away from the Entente
Powers. This concept of “compensation” for fighting would be seen in subsequent
secret agreements.

9 Sergei Dmitriyevich Sazonov, Russian Foreign Minister, Letter to British and French
Ambassadors at Petrograd, February 19/March 4, 1915, quoted in Hurewitz, Diplomacy, 2:7.

10 Sazonov, February 19, 1915 letter, quoted in Hurewitz, Diplomacy, 2:8.

11 French Ambassador at Petrograd to Russian Foreign Minister, Communication, March 28/April
10, 1915, quoted in Hurewitz, Diplomacy, 2:11.

12 British Memorandum to the Russian Government, February 12/March 12, 1915, quoted in Hurewitz, Diplomacy, 2:8–9.


The London Agreement

The London Agreement, April 26, 1915, was an agreement between the Entente Powers and Italy to bring it into the group in exchange for recognition of Italian “claims against the Ottoman Empire.” Further, Italy wanted a share of the “balance of power” in the Mediterranean region, consideration for any German territories in Africa, the Dodecanese Islands, and Libya. As far as other claims, Italy would yield to France and Britain to finalize their claims.  

The Husayn-McMahon Correspondence

The main reasons the Arabs thought the British promised them the territory that included Palestine for an independent nation are found in the pre-war negotiations between Sharif Husayn of Mecca and representatives of the British government located in Egypt and the subsequent correspondence between Husayn and Sir Henry McMahon, the High Commissioner of Egypt. The meaning of the contents and actual wording of the letters were widely debated during the Mandate period.

Before the beginning of the War, the British knew the eastern border of Egypt was vulnerable to attack. The modern instruments of warfare were not suitable to travel any great distance in the sandy desert making a potential attack by Ottoman or Arab

\[15\] Hurewitz, Diplomacy, 2:11.

soldiers on camels a security issue which the British realized was a strategic concern. In February 1914, during a brief exchange between Husayn’s son Amir Abdallah and Lord Kitchener, a British Agent and the Consul General of Egypt, Abdallah raised the possibility of Husayn staging an insurrection against the Ottoman Sultan if Britain would provide “outside encouragement.” At the time Britain declined but several months later, after the start of World War I, Ronald Storrs recalled the proposal and pursued the overture. In September 1914, with approval from Kitchener, Storrs reached out to Husayn to determine who he and his followers would support. Husayn’s answer was the British.

On October 31, 1914, a telegram from Kitchener to Abdullah read: “If Arab nation assist[s] England in this war England will guarantee that no intervention takes place in Arabia and will give Arabs every assistance against external foreign aggression.” Negotiations continued between British representatives in Egypt and Husayn. Storrs writes in his memoir that “in April 1915 the Governor-General of the Sudan was authorized to let it be known that H.M.G. [His Majesty’s Government] would make it an essential condition in the peace terms that the Arabian Peninsula and its Muhammadan Holy Places should remain in the hands of an independent sovereign.

17 Storrs, Memoirs, 162.
18 Hurewitz, Diplomacy, 2:13.
19 Storrs, Memoirs, 162 – 163.
21 Lord Kitchener to Sharif Abdullah, Telegram, October 31, 1914, quoted in Storrs, Memoirs, 166.
However, Storrs added "it was impossible to define at the moment how much territory should be included in this state." It was after these preliminary communications to see what might be possible that the letters began between Husayn and McMahon.

The Husayn-McMahon Correspondence is comprised of ten letters written in Arabic from July 14, 1915 through March 10, 1916 and contains the negotiation and agreement for the assistance of Arab soldiers to protect the area of Greater Syria from conquest by the Central Powers in exchange for territory to establish an independent Arab nation. The key point that would later be disputed was what territory was actually being promised to Husayn and this detail was discussed over multiple letters. First, from Husayn to McMahon, on July 14, 1915, he laid out the territory he wanted for an independent Arab nation in his "fundamental propositions."

Firstly—England to acknowledge the independence of the Arab countries, bounded on the north by Mersina and Adana up to the 37° of latitude, on which degree fall Birijik, Urfa, Mardin, Midiat, Jezirat (Ibn 'Umar), Amadia, up to the border of Persia; on the east by the borders of Persia up to the Gulf of Basra; on the south by the Indian Ocean, with the exception of the position of Aden to remain as it is; on the west by the Red Sea, the Mediterranean Sea up to Mersina. England to approve of the proclamation of an Arab Khalifate of Islam.

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22 Storrs, Memoirs, 166.
23 Storrs, Memoirs, 166.
The area described was expansive, even Storrs recognized that “he demanded, with the exception of Aden, the whole of Arabic speaking South-West Asia.”\(^27\) In exchange for the land, the Arabs under Husayn would, to the “best ability of their military...face any foreign Power which may attack either party.”\(^28\)

On October 24, 1915, McMahon wrote to Husayn, acknowledging boundaries were an important issue which he had discussed with the British government and responded to Husayn:

> The two districts of Mersina and Alexandretta and portions of Syria lying to the west of the districts of Damascus, Homs, Hama and Aleppo cannot be said to be purely Arab, and should be excluded from the limits demanded. With the above modification, and without prejudice of our existing treaties with Arab chiefs, we accept those limits. As for those regions lying within those frontiers wherein Great Britain is free to act without detriment to the interests of her ally, France, I am empowered in the name of the Government of Great Britain to give the following assurances and make the following reply to your letter:

(1) Subject to the above modifications, Great Britain is prepared to recognize and support the independence of the Arabs in all the regions within the limits demanded by the Sherif of Mecca.\(^29\)

McMahon concluded the letter by stating he is “convinced that this declaration will assure you beyond all possible doubt of the sympathy of Great Britain towards the aspirations of her friends the Arabs.”\(^30\) With this agreement an Arab revolt against the Ottoman Empire was initiated in exchange for guns, gold, and “the right to establish an


\(^28\) Sherif Husayn to Lord McMahon, Letter, July 14, 1915, quoted in “Correspondence,” 4.

\(^29\) Lord McMahon to Sherif Husayn, Letter, October 24, 1915, quoted in “Correspondence,” 8.

\(^30\) Lord McMahon to Sherif Husayn, Letter, October 24, 1915, quoted in "Correspondence," 9.
ambiguously defined Arab ‘state or states’ in the predominantly Arab territories of the empire.31 From this correspondence, the Arabs believed a victory over the Ottoman’s and Central Powers in World War I would lead to a large, independent Arab state.32

The Sykes-Picot Agreement

In 1916, British representative Mark Sykes and French representative Charles Georges-Picot, negotiated, drafted, and signed a secret agreement that basically divided the Middle East into spheres of influence and control between Great Britain and France.33 The document stated they were willing to protect the interests of independent Arab nations or confederation of nations but that France and Great Britain would have direct or indirect administrative authority over designated areas as well as priority in economic, infrastructure, security, and resource management.34 The areas would essentially be governed as the British or French saw fit to govern them.35 A map accompanied the document which showed who got what and what level of administrative authority they would hold it under. Basically, France would have the coastal and northern regions of Syria, Great Britain would have Iraq, Transjordan, and the cities of Haifa and Acre, and Palestine would be under an international

31 Gelvin, Modern Middle East, 3rd ed., 187.


administration until Russia, the Sherif of Mecca, and other allies could be consulted. However, after Russia had approved the agreement, the Bolshevik Revolution ousted the Russian government in November 1917 and the Bolsheviks rejected the agreement and released the secret agreement, and supporting documents, to the public. The revelation of the Sykes-Picot Agreement threatened Great Britain’s relationship with the Arabs because it appeared to contradict the promise of an independent state made in the Husayn-McMahon Correspondence. Husayn was contacted through two telegrams which reassured him that the British promises would be kept.36

The Saint-Jean De Maurienne Agreement

In the context of Palestine and the Middle East, the Agreement of Saint-Jean De Maurienne of 1917 is significant as another example of European powers secretly planning on dividing up the conquered territory as compensation for fighting World War I.37 With this agreement, France and Italy resolved competing claims over portions of Anatolia in anticipation of the end of the Ottoman Empire; however, this Agreement was rejected during the Paris Peace Conference after the War ended.38

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37 Gelvin, Israeli-Palestinian Conflict, 2nd ed., 80.

The Balfour Declaration

As the Husayn-McMahon Correspondence gave the Arabs an expectation of an independent Arab nation that would include Palestine, the Balfour Declaration gave the Jews the expectation of Palestine as a Jewish nation. The path to crafting this short declaration was long and the story is incomplete. However, there are documents that illuminate the process and many are compiled, edited, and annotate in Doreen Ingrams’s *Palestine Papers, 1917 – 1922: Seeds of Conflict*.

When charged with the task of writing a memorandum on the “origins” of the Balfour Declaration for Winston Churchill, William Ormsby-Gore wrote in 1922 that “little is known of how the policy represented by the Declaration was first given form” as documents were not available to create “anything like a complete statement of the case.”39 In hindsight, strategic and practical reasons included the protection of the Suez Canal as Britain’s water route to India, protection of British economic investments and opportunities in the region, and installing a grateful Jewish population in Palestine that would be supportive and loyal to Britain.40 But perhaps the simplest reason came from the memoir of David Lloyd George when he wrote “it was part of our propagandist strategy for mobilizing every opinion and force throughout the world which would weaken the enemy and improve the Allied chances.”41

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Omsby-Gore wrote in his memorandum that from what was available it appeared that negotiations were oral and through private communications between Arthur Balfour, Mark Sykes, Chaim Weizmann, Nahum Sokolow, and possibly Lionel Rothschild before drafts of the actual Declaration began to be circulated for comment among the parties.42 Making a written statement in general support of Zionists objectives was discussed; however, Zionist objectives needed to be clarified for British support to be stronger.43 The first direct mention of Palestine came in response to Balfour’s request to Rothschild and Weizmann to “submit a formula” for the intended statement of support.44 Rothschild’s reply on July 18, 1917 was the beginning of the basic wording for the Balfour Declaration. He wrote:

1. His Majesty’s Government accepts the principle that Palestine should be reconstituted as the National Home for the Jewish people.

2. His Majesty’s Government will use its best endeavors to secure the achievement of this object and will discuss the necessary methods and means with the Zionist Organization.45

This began a series of drafts and consultations with allies which included the United States, where it was believed the statement would garner support for Great

42 Omsby-Gore to Churchill Memorandum, 1922, quoted in Ingrams, Palestine Papers, 7. Sokolow was the chief London representative of the Zionist Organization.

43 Ronald Graham, Assistant Under Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs to Lord Hastings, Permanent Under Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, Memorandum, June 13, 1917, quoted in Ingrams, Palestine Papers, 8 – 9.

44 Arthur Balfour, Minute, June 13 – July 18, 1917, quoted in Ingrams, Palestine Papers, 9. A Minute(s) was official commentary made by government officials regarding memorandum, correspondence, and other documents they review and it appears to also include summaries of meetings. Ingrams, Palestine Papers, ix.

45 Lord Rothschild to Arthur Balfour, Communication, July 18, 1917, quoted in Ingrams, Palestine Papers, 9.
Britain. At a meeting of the War Cabinet on October 4, 1917 Lord Curzon objected saying he did not see how “barren and desolate” Palestine could be a good home for the future Jewish race and “how was it proposed to get rid of the existing majority of Mussulman inhabitants and introduce the Jews in their place?” This appears to be the first mention of the current inhabitants of Palestine in this plan to turn the territory into a Jewish home. This concern appears to have influenced a significant and far-reaching change to the statement. Alfred Milner provided another draft:

His Majesty’s Government views with favor the establishment in Palestine of a National Home for the Jewish Race, and will use its 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 the existing non-Jewish communities in Palestine, or the rights and political status enjoyed in any other country by such Jews who are fully contented with their existing nationality and citizenship.

The War Cabinet decided it wanted reaction and input from Zionist leaders and people who opposed the declaration. In the meantime, Milner’s copy of the statement was sent to President Woodrow Wilson, leaders of the Zionist movement, and representatives of the Anglo-Jewry opposed to Zionism. From this solicitation many replies were received. Ingrams includes eight in her book Palestine Papers. Six of the eight were enthusiastically in support of the statement; however, three of those six commented on the protection for non-Jews and said it was not needed and Rothschild

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46 Ingrams, Palestine Papers, 10.

47 Minutes of War Cabinet Meeting, October 4, 1917, quoted in Ingrams, Palestine Papers, 12.

48 Lord Alfred Milner’s alternative draft of Declaration, undated, assuming between October 4 and November, 1917, quoted Ingrams, Palestine Papers, 12 – 13.
flatly stated it was a “slur on Zionism” to even include the provision. The remaining
two of the eight expressed the opinion that the Jews did not constitute a nation and one
objected to the perception that Jews were homeless and did not have civil and religious
rights in the countries where they currently resided. The sampling shows that not all
Jews were of the same mind.

At the War Cabinet meeting on October 31, 1917, Balfour stated now was the
time to act, the support was there, and “if we could make a declaration favorable to
such an ideal, we should be able to carry on extremely useful propaganda both in
Russian and America.” He also believed “if Palestine were scientifically developed a
very much larger population could be sustained than had existed during the period of
Turkish misrule.”

As to what constituted a “national home,” it was described as a protectorate
until Jews were able to take over, not immediate independence but “gradual
development in accordance with the ordinary laws of political evolution.” In other
words, not an immediate independent state, but eventually an independent state
controlled by the Jews. The final wording was agreed upon and sent via a letter from
Balfour to Rothschild, November 2, 1917, and read:

49 Lord Rothschild, Comments on Milner draft of Declaration, October 1917, quoted in Ingrams, Palestine Papers, 13.

50 Sir Philip Magnus, M.P. and Mr. L. L. Cohen, Chairman Jewish Board of Guardians, Comments on Milner draft of Declaration, October 1917, quoted in Ingrams, Palestine Papers, 15 – 16.

51 Minutes of The War Cabinet, October 31, 1917, quoted in Ingrams, Palestine Papers, 16.

52 Minutes of The War Cabinet, October 31, 1917, quoted in Ingrams, Palestine Papers, 17.

53 Minutes of The War Cabinet, October 31, 1917, quoted in Ingrams, Palestine Papers, 17.
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 the existing non-Jewish communities in Palestine, or the rights and political status enjoyed by Jews in any other country.\textsuperscript{54}

Unlike the Husayn-McMahon Correspondence, which the British did not make public until much later, the Balfour Declaration was published in newspapers and translated into multiple languages and distributed on leaflets with added messages of support for the Entente Powers.\textsuperscript{55} Regardless of how it was used for British propaganda, the document itself contained two conflicting, intertwined obligations that would become known as the dual obligation. One to the Jews, that Palestine would eventually become their national homeland, or in other words, a Jewish State. And one to the non-Jews, a majority population of Muslims and a minority population of Christians, that their civil and religious rights would be protected in the future Jewish State. Further, the Balfour Declaration contradicts the promises and expectations raised just two years prior in the Husayn-McMahon Correspondence. Whether it was an oversight, intentional, or expediency in the face of war, Britain promised the same territory to two different but equally passionate and determined groups of people. This was the genesis of the incompatible goals which created the tensions between the British, Jews, and Arabs that would drive policy decisions on an international, national, and local level and

\textsuperscript{54} Arthur Balfour to Lord Rothschild, Letter (The Balfour Declaration), November 2, 1917, quoted in Ingrams, \textit{Palestine Papers}, 18.

\textsuperscript{55} Ingrams, \textit{Palestine Papers}, 19.
compromise the British efforts to develop sound land and agricultural policies in
Palestine under the British Mandate.

THE BRITISH TAKE JERUSALEM AND ESTABLISH A MILITARY GOVERNMENT

As World War I was nearing its end, British forces under General Edmund Allenby
pushed the Ottoman forces east and took Jerusalem in December 1917 and established
a military government known as the Occupied Enemy Territory Administration.56 He
immediately established martial law, put plans in place to protect the holy sites, and
encouraged the residence to go on with their business.57 The British focus on “restoring
normal conditions and general relief [after the] expulsion of [the] Turks...[precluded]
any great preoccupation in political questions” which kept them from getting too deeply
involved with the new tensions between Arabs and Jews in Palestine.58 When Allenby
first arrived he proclaimed that “the object of war in the East on the part of Great
Britain was the complete and final liberation of all peoples formerly oppressed by the
Turks and the establishment of national governments and administrations in those
countries deriving authority from the initiative and free will of those people
themselves,” which gave encouragement to Arab aspirations independence.59 However,


57 Edmund Allenby, Telegram, December 11, 1917 read to House of Commons on December 12,

58 Gilbert Clayton, Chief Political Officer in Cairo, to Foreign Office, Report, January 14, 1918,
quoted in Ingrams, Palestine Papers, 20.

news of the Balfour Declaration and its contradictory dual obligation had already reached Palestine and the Arabs were concerned about the impact it would have on promises of independence to them and how Britain planned to protect their rights under the Declaration. To add to the tension, a new Zionist Commission was formed by the Middle East Committee of the War Cabinet and was sent to Palestine with the mission to assist in the achievement of the goals in the Balfour Declaration. The Zionist Commission arrived in Jerusalem on April 10, 1918, which included Weizmann and Ormsby-Gore as Assistant Political Officer, and was under Allenby's authority.

Colonel Ronald Storrs, the Military Governor of Jerusalem, observed “from the first announcement of the formation of the Zionist Commission, the Arab and Christian elements of Palestine have been laboring under grave disquietude which has not been allayed by the arrival of the gentlemen themselves.” In his memoir, Storrs reflected on this period writing that “under the status quo we were entitled (and instructed) to impress upon those desiring immediate reforms that we were here merely as a Military Government and not as Civil Reorganizers.” While Storrs dismissed the notion of the British as “civil reorganizers,” that was exactly what the Balfour Declaration called for and the tension it created would eventually demand the attention of the British.

Under the British Military Government, Jewish land purchases, already a growing issue under the Ottoman Empire, continued and it was feared Jews would take

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60 Ingrams, Palestine Papers, 20 – 21.

61 Ingrams, Palestine Papers, 21 – 23.


advantage of the continuing war to buy up land. Weizmann responded that he did not intend to exploit the war situation to buy up land. However, he asserted that the Zionists did intend to strengthen Jewish colonies and buy waste and government land to provide for future immigrants.64

While Palestine was adjusting to British military rule, the fighting continued in Greater Syria for most of 1918 as British forces, with assistance from Arab forces, continued to push the Ottoman forces back towards Anatolia. Political and diplomatic maneuvering also continued.

POST-WAR AGREEMENTS CREATE THE BLUEPRINT FOR THE FUTURE

As the War concluded, the strategies and tactics of the battlefield shifted to negotiations and long-range planning to protect the interests of Britain and France. Other nations and world leaders expressed opinions but Britain and France shaped the future for the Middle East.

Wilson’s Fourteen Points

United States President Woodrow Wilson laid out his vision of how a post-war peace should be achieved and how to curtail future hostilities in a speech to Congress made on January 8, 1918. Known as Wilson’s Fourteen Points, he advocated an open peace process with the end of secret agreements between governments because

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64 Major Kinahan Cornwallis, Director of Arab Bureau in Cairo, Memorandum on Zionist Commission in Palestine, April 20, 1918, quoted in Ingrams, Palestine Papers, 28–29.
"secret covenants entered into in the interest of particular governments...[are] likely at some unlooked-for moment to upset the peace of the world."\textsuperscript{65} As for colonial claims, such as the ones Britain and France were making on Palestine and Syria respectively, he said they should be "based upon a strict observance of the principle that in determining all such questions of sovereignty the interests of the populations concerned must have equal weight with the equitable claims of the government whose title is to be determined."\textsuperscript{66} Wilson called for a world where nations could "determine [their] own institutions" and the nationalities under Turkish rule "should be assured an undoubted security of life and an absolute unmolested opportunity of autonomous development."\textsuperscript{67}

These points were directly applicable to the developing situation in Greater Syria. While they inspired hope in the Arabs they also impinged on the British plans for obtaining and managing Palestine. James L. Gelvin explains that Wilson "let the genie out of the bottle" with the notion of self-determination for the people of the old Ottoman Empire in the Middle East and while the British and French "humored" Wilson, they "seethed in private."\textsuperscript{68} Later, the British "approved in principle the idea of self-determination, if only to mollify Wilson's suspicions about European ambitions in

\textsuperscript{65} Woodrow Wilson, Preamble of Speech to Congress, (January 8, 1918), The Avalon Project, accessed, September 26, 2013, \url{http://avalon.law.yale.edu/20th_century/wilson14.asp}.

\textsuperscript{66} Wilson, Speech to Congress, Article V.

\textsuperscript{67} Wilson, Speech to Congress, Preamble and Article XII.

\textsuperscript{68} Gelvin, \textit{Modern Middle East, 3rd ed.}, 189.
conquered lands." It was in his fourteenth point that Wilson proposed a “general association of nations” held together by “mutual guarantees of political independence and territorial integrity to great and small states alike” and would promote international cooperation and peace. This point would soon evolve into the League of Nations.

The Faysal-Weizmann Agreement

To ease tensions created by the Balfour Declaration, the British asked Weizmann to talk with Arab leaders in hopes of developing cooperation between Jews and Arabs. To this end, Weizmann met with Faysal in Transjordan in June 1918. The British and Weizmann had hoped that through this move the Arabs might accept a Jewish Palestine if the Jews supported Arab independence outside of Palestine, specifically Syria. What Weizmann reportedly told Faysal was that “the Zionists did not propose to set up a Jewish Government, but wished to work if possible under British guidance in order to colonize and develop the country without encroaching on other legitimate interests.” For Faysal, his doubts over British intentions to honor promises made to Faysal’s father, Husayn, were enough that seeking an alliance with the Zionists was prudent, especially since the concept of a Jewish community did not directly conflict with Arab

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69 Smith, Arab-Israeli Conflict, 8th ed., 77.
70 Wilson, Speech to Congress, Article XIV.
71 Smith, Arab-Israeli Conflict, 8th ed., 74. See also Ingram, Palestine Papers, 36.
independence and self-determination. They reached an agreement pledging mutual support after the up-coming peace conference. The key provisions of the agreement called for incorporation of the Balfour Declaration into the constitution and administration of Palestine, the encouragement of “immigration of Jews into Palestine on a large scale, and as quickly as possible to settle Jewish immigrants upon the land through closer settlement and intensive cultivation of the soil. In taking such measures the Arab peasant and tenant farmers shall be protected in their rights, and shall be assisted in forwarding their economic development.” The agreement was signed on January 3, 1919 and, the following day, Faysal added an amendment stating that he would only be bound to the agreement if the Arabs obtained independence, to which Weizmann agreed and signed. The Faysal-Weizmann agreement had value as an example of Zionist and Arab ability to negotiate and reach an agreement but it held little diplomatic or practical value because Faysal did not have the authority to represent the Arabs of Palestine, and the British dismissed the agreement, even though they had originally encouraged Weizmann to reach out to the Arabs.

73 Tessler, Israeli-Palestinian Conflict, 2nd ed., 151.


The Political Path to the Mandate

Damascus was taken by the Arab forces under Faysal on October 1, 1918 and Allenby allowed Faysal to set up a government administration. France strongly objected to this believing it had a claim to Syria to which the British had agreed. In the meantime, the French captured Beirut and the final Ottoman forces were pushed back into Anatolia. The government of the Ottoman Empire surrendered in the Armistice of Mudros, signed in Istanbul on October 30, 1918. The military struggle was over but the political struggles over the area of Greater Syria increased in intensity as Britain and France worked to ensure they obtained their territorial spoils of war.

The Peace Conference was scheduled for January 1919 but in preparation for it various meetings took place in an attempt to resolve certain issues before the official conference. Realizing the discord between them, a meeting was arranged between David Lloyd George, Prime Minister of Great Britain, and Georges Clemenceau, Prime Minister of France, to resolve their differences prior to the start of the Peace Conference. An agreement, slightly different from the Sykes-Picot Agreement was reached in December 1918. France got an extended area of Syria and Great Britain got the area of Mosul added to Iraq and, as before, Palestine. The agreement was oral and

77 Cleveland and Bunton, Modern Middle East, 5th ed., 148 – 149.
78 Smith, Arab-Israeli Conflict, 8th ed., 72.
79 Cleveland and Bunton, Modern Middle East, 5th ed., 140 – 141.
80 Smith, Arab-Israeli Conflict, 8th ed., 74.
81 Cleveland and Bunton, Modern Middle East, 5th ed., 151.
private in order to limit evidence of not supporting Wilson’s policy self-determination for the people of the former Ottoman Empire.\textsuperscript{82}

The Peace Conference began in January 1919 in Paris with twenty-seven nations attending. Separate treaties were made between each of the Central powers and the Allied Powers. Treaties with Germany, Hungary, Austria, and Bulgaria were signed in 1919. Because of the disputes between the Allied powers over how the non-Turkish territories of the Middle East should be handled, a separate conference was scheduled to be held at San Remo, Italy in April 1920.\textsuperscript{83}

\textbf{Creation of the League of Nations and the Mandate System}

At the same time as the Peace Conference, efforts were also underway to give life to Wilson’s suggestion from his Fourteen Points for an international organization that would promote cooperation and peace. The League of Nations was formed through the Covenant, the agreement between all the signatory countries that were members of the League, which stated it was being formed “in order to promote international cooperation and to achieve international peace and security.”\textsuperscript{84} They pledged to not resort to war to resolve conflicts and to maintain “open, just and honorable relations between nations.”\textsuperscript{85} The Covenant itself was adopted by the members on April 29, 1919.

\textsuperscript{82} Smith, \textit{Arab-Israeli Conflict}, 8\textsuperscript{th} ed., 76.

\textsuperscript{83} Cleveland and Bunton, \textit{Modern Middle East}, 5\textsuperscript{th} ed., 151.


\textsuperscript{85} League of Nations, \textit{Covenant}, Preamble.
but it was incorporated into the Treaty of Versailles, the treaty between the Allied
Powers and Germany, therefore it did not take effect until January 10, 1920, when the
Treaty took effect.\textsuperscript{86}

Wilson’s opposition to the annexation of land as spoils of war and
encouragement of self-determination found expression in the mandate system created
in Article 22 of the Covenant.\textsuperscript{87} The Article stated,

To those colonies and territories which as a consequence of the last
war have ceased to be under the sovereignty of the States which formerly
governed them and which are inhabited by peoples not yet able to stand
by themselves under the strenuous conditions of the modern world, there
should be applied the principle that the well-being and development of such
peoples form a sacred trust of civilization and that securities for the
performance of that trust should be embodied in the Covenant.

The best method of giving practical effect to this principle is that the tutelage of
such peoples should be entrusted to advanced nations who by reason of their
resources, their experience, or their geographical position can best undertake
this responsibility, and who are willing to accept it, and that this tutelage should
be exercised by them as Mandatories on behalf of the League.\textsuperscript{88}

The Article continued with specific reference to this region:

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
assistance by a Mandatory until such time as they are able to stand alone. The
wishes of the communities must be a principle consideration in the selection of
the Mandatory.\textsuperscript{89}

\textsuperscript{86} "Organization and Establishment,” League of Nation Archives, United Nations Office in Geneva
Website, accessed October 1, 2013, \url{http://www.uno.ch/80256EE600570930/(httpPages)/
84C4520213F947DDC1256F32002E23DB?OpenDocument#}.

\textsuperscript{87} Smith, \textit{Arab-Israeli Conflict}, 8th ed., 77.

\textsuperscript{88} League of Nations, \textit{Covenant}, Article 22.

\textsuperscript{89} League of Nations, \textit{Covenant}, Article 22.
The article went on to explain that each mandatory power was required to submit annual reports to a commission established to review such reports. "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." The Council consisted of representatives from the Principal Allied and Associate Powers, significantly that included Great Britain and France, plus four other members selected at the League’s discretion. The first group of four were Belgium, Brazil, Spain and Greece. Because of their positions and influence, Great Britain and France essentially were able to give international sanction to the secret plans they had been making all along. As far as the wishes of the inhabitants were concerned, the British and French were not concerned about them, unless it advanced their goals. When given an opportunity to participate in a fact-finding mission to determine the wishes of the inhabitants, they stayed on the sidelines while the United States made an effort through the King-Crane Commission.

The King-Crane Commission

A requirement of the mandate system under the League of Nations was that “the wishes of these communities must be a principal consideration in the selection of a mandatory power.” At the Peace Conference both Wilson and Faysal wanted a

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90 League of Nations, Covenant, Article 22.

91 League of Nations, Covenant, Article 4.

92 League of Nations, Covenant, Article 22.
commission established to determine the wishes of the communities. Initially known as the Inter-Allied Commission on Mandates in Turkey, the plan was to have representatives from Britain, France, Italy, and the United States travel throughout the region to collect this information from the inhabitants. However, resistance to the endeavor was significant because it posed a threat to the plans and agreements already established between Britain, France, and Italy. Britain wanted Palestine excluded from the survey. Balfour’s rationale for this was that Palestine was a unique situation in that, according to the Balfour Declaration, they were “seeking to re-constitute a new community...in the future” and they did not intend “to go through the form of consulting the wishes of the present inhabitants of the country.” France objected because they already knew the Arabs did not want a French mandatory power. The British representatives to the Commission were named but when the French and Italians failed to name their representatives, Britain pulled out of participating, leaving only the United States.

The Commission went forward with the two representatives from the United States as co-chairman, Henry King, President of Oberlin College and Charles Crane.

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95 Louis Brandeis account of an interview with Arthur Balfour on the King-Crane Commission, 1919, quoted in Ingrams, *Palestine Papers*, 72 – 73.

96 Arthur Balfour to George Curzon, Memorandum, August 11, 1919, quoted in Ingrams, *Palestine Papers*, 73.

business man and philanthropist. During June and July 1919 they received 1,863 petitions some of which were presented when they met with 442 religious and political delegations as they traveled through Palestine, Syria, and Lebanon. Time was critical as the Commission was working while the Peace Conference was proceeding. The final report of the King-Crane Commission, as it was now referred to, was submitted to the Peace Conference in August 1919. In summary, the conclusions reached were the inhabitants wanted “one Arab state of Greater Syria, including Lebanon and Palestine,” of which Faysal should be king and the United States the mandatory power. If the United States could not take that role, then Britain was the second choice, and France was not acceptable. Finally, the majority wanted a “curtailment of the Zionist program” to only allow a Jewish community in an Arab state. The Report concluded that Zionism and an independent Arab nation were incompatible goals and “the Zionist program could not be implemented without prejudice to the rights of the non-Jews of Palestine.” The Report was not published because, according to Charles D. Smith, it was a reflection of what the inhabitants wanted which made it a threat to the British and the French and because Wilson was preoccupied with getting the Congress to support the creation of the League of Nations, he did not pursue the matter. While

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98 Grossi, Restoring Lost Voices.
99 Grossi, Restoring Lost Voices.
100 Smith, Arab-Israeli Conflict, 8th ed., 78.
101 Smith, Arab-Israeli Conflict, 8th ed., 78.
103 Smith, Arab-Israeli Conflict, 8th ed., 78.
the participants of the Peace Conference ignored the Report, the State Department of the United States also prevented government officials from seeing the report as it was contrary to “public interest.” The Report was made public in 1922 after the territory was divided, the British and French mandates established, and Wilson’s term as President was concluded.

While Wilson’s notion of self-determination let the “genie out of the bottle” in the Middle East, the work of the King-Crane Commission may have given hope to some of the inhabitants that self-determination might actually be possible. The Report is at least documentation of the wishes of the communities interviewed and the fact it was ignored and suppressed is evidence of the overwhelming political influence of Britain and France to push their agenda forward.

The San Remo Conference and the Consequences

Ahead of the San Remo Conference, a meeting of the Supreme Allied Council took place in London in February 1920, where it was agreed that once Greater Syria was divided, Britain would have the mandate for Palestine and France would have the mandate for Syria. Faysal, aware of the meeting, sent word that any decision made

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104 Grossi, Restoring Lost Voices.

105 Grossi, Restoring Lost Voices.

106 Ingrams, Palestine Papers, 88.
against Arab interests without his participation would not be honored by the Arabs.\textsuperscript{107} Britain endeavored to reassure Faysal while it still pursued its objective of a Palestinian mandate. Other pre-conference exchanges came in March when Weizmann wrote to the British delegation to urge the inclusion of the objectives of the Balfour Declaration in the final agreement of the upcoming San Remo conference.\textsuperscript{108}

In Damascus, on March 8, 1920, the General Syrian Congress declared Greater Syria a sovereign independent nation and named Faysal its king. The territory they laid claim to was Syria, Lebanon, Palestine, and Transjordan.\textsuperscript{109} This action was viewed by France as a violation of agreements made between France and Britain. Allenby sent his concerns to the Foreign Office that if Britain did not recognize Syria’s independence, but continued to recognize France’s claim to it, Britain could possibly be dragged into a war that was against British interests and they were “ill-prepared” to fight.\textsuperscript{110} Realizing the importance of its relationship with France, Britain had to back away from its support of Faysal in Syria.\textsuperscript{111} Gelvin writes, “as Lloyd George put it, ‘the friendship with France is worth ten Syrias.’”\textsuperscript{112} At the ongoing Peace Conference, Faysal argued for the

\begin{thebibliography}{99}
\bibitem{107} Colonel Meinertzhagen to Supreme Allied Council, Telegram, (February 1920), quoted in Ingrams, \textit{Palestine Papers}, 88.
\bibitem{109} Ingrams, \textit{Palestine Papers}, 90.
\bibitem{111} Cleveland and Bunton, \textit{Modern Middle East}, 5\textsuperscript{th} ed., 154.
\bibitem{112} Gelvin, \textit{Modern Middle East}, 3\textsuperscript{rd} ed., 191.
\end{thebibliography}
recognition of an independent Syria but the influence of France and Britain would prove overwhelming.\textsuperscript{113}

The San Remo conference ran from April 19 through 26, 1920 and resulted in a short resolution that established that there would be mandates in compliance with Article 22 of the League of Nations and they would be made up of the new territories of Syria, Mesopotamia, and Palestine.\textsuperscript{114} The exact boundaries and who should be the mandatories would be left up the Principal Allied Powers, which included Great Britain and France. Specifically in relation to Palestine, the Resolution directed the British declaration of November 8, 1917, the Balfour Declaration, be incorporated into the obligations of that mandate.\textsuperscript{115} Published on April 25, 1920, the San Remo Resolution excited the Zionists because it made the Balfour Declaration a condition of an international treaty and it angered the Arabs because it was an international rebuff of the Syrian claims of independence, divided Greater Syria, and opened the door to French mandatory power. As with the Covenant for the League of Nations, the San Remo Resolution cleared the way for the prior secret agreements and territorial ambitions of Great Britain and France to be fulfilled with international sanction. The San Remo Resolution was incorporated into the Treaty of Sèvres and took effect when that treaty was signed on August 10, 1920.\textsuperscript{116}

\textsuperscript{113} Cleveland and Bunton, \textit{Modern Middle East, 5\textsuperscript{th} ed.}, 154.

\textsuperscript{114} The San Remo Resolution, section (b), (April 25, 1920), in the Council on Foreign Relations, accessed September 26, 2013, \url{http://www.cfr.org/israel/san-remo-resolution/p15248}.

\textsuperscript{115} The San Remo Resolution, section (b).

\textsuperscript{116} Cleveland and Bunton, \textit{Modern Middle East, 5\textsuperscript{th} ed.}, 151.
After the San Remo Resolution, Faysal attempted to negotiate with France over the future of Syria but France march on Damascus on July 24, 1920 and dethroned Faysal, ending the independent Syria after only five months.\textsuperscript{117} While an independent Syria only existed for five months, it became a point of focus for future nationalist aspirations and a lasting and potent symbol of Arab independence.\textsuperscript{118}

In response, Husayn sent his other son, Amir Abdallah, along with a small army, to Amman, east of the Jordan River. The British saw an advantage in having an ally to the south of Syria in order to prevent the French from expanding Syria. Further, the British strategists were sensitive to the fact that Faysal's ouster as king of an independent Syria and Abdullah's presence near Syria could inspire local Arabs to rise up against the British or French. They approached Abdullah with a plan to partition off territory east of the Jordan River for him to administer.\textsuperscript{119} The proposition was given life at the Cairo Conference were senior British officials from around the Middle East gathered on March 12, 1921 as Winston Churchill presided. The official report from the conference stated that they "recommended that Trans Jordania should be constituted as an Arab Province of Palestine under an Arab governor, responsible to the High Commissioner."\textsuperscript{120} Importantly, this new province of Transjordan would not be subject

\textsuperscript{117} Cleveland and Bunton, \textit{Modern Middle East, 5\textsuperscript{th} ed.}, 154.

\textsuperscript{118} Cleveland and Bunton, \textit{Modern Middle East, 5\textsuperscript{th} ed.}, 154; Smith, \textit{Arab-Israeli Conflict, 8\textsuperscript{th} ed.}, 79.

\textsuperscript{119} Cleveland and Bunton, \textit{Modern Middle East, 5\textsuperscript{th} ed.}, 154 – 155.

to the Balfour Declaration. This recommendation was dependent upon Abdullah’s acceptance of the position. At first he rejected, advocating for governorship of both Palestine and Transjordan. The British refused because “His Majesty’s Government was already too far committed to a different system in Palestine.” Abdullah agreed to the position which satisfied the British but angered the Jews because they believed that territory split off as Transjordan should remain included in Palestine. The agreement disappointed the Arabs because it was not Palestine and was not a fulfillment of the promises to Husayn.

The British had combined the Ottoman provinces of Mosul, Basra, and Baghdad into Iraq. Internal conflicts were making that area difficult and expensive for the British to manage and they offered it to Faysal to administer, which he accepted. Both Transjordan and Iraq stand as an example of the power the Mandatories had to reshape territories and is illustrated by this statement from Churchill who “later bragged that at the [Cairo] conference he had created Jordan with a stroke of a pen one Sunday afternoon.”

121 Report of Cairo Conference, quoted in Ingrams, Palestine Papers, 117.
122 Geivin, Modern Middle East, 3rd ed., 192.
123 Smith, Arab-Israeli Conflict, 8th ed., 81.
Discussions Regarding the Draft of the Mandate for Palestine

Drafting the Mandate document created a great deal of discussion because it would be an international document and the authorization for and guiding instrument for the British management of its Mandate in Palestine. The British government, Arabs, and Jews all had interests they wanted to protect and this was a crucial opportunity to shape the future. Drafts of the Mandate, and a proposed constitution for Palestine, were circulated among Zionist and Arab representatives for comment prior to their adoption. In correspondence between the Palestine Arab Delegation, led by Moussa Kazim El Husseini, and the Secretary of State for the Colonies, Winston Churchill as communicated through his staff member J. E. Shuckburgh, a vigorous debate took place. Issues including the Balfour Declaration promise of a Jewish homeland in Palestine, promises to Arabs for an independent nation, immigration, formation of a national government, Zionist influence on the British, land, and language were covered. Chaim Weizmann, representing the Zionist Organization, briefly participated in the exchange of correspondence. Beginning on February 21, 1922 and ending on June 23, 1922, these exchanges basically went right up to the submission of the final draft to the League of Nations.125

The Arab delegation protested the inclusion of the Balfour Declaration’s aim to create a Jewish homeland in Palestine, "the Arabs of Palestine do not accept it but

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125 Palestine. Correspondence with the Palestine Arab Delegation and the Zionist Organization, Cnd. 1700, (London: His Majesty's Stationary Office, June 1922), 1 – 31, accessed January 30, 2013, ProQuest House of Commons Parliamentary Papers. This is a collection of nine numbered letters between the Colonial Office, the Palestine Arab Delegation, and the Zionist Organization.
protest, and have always protested against it." The British reply was "there can be no question of rescinding the Balfour Declaration."

The Arab delegation was suspicious of the motives of the Mandate. They saw the Mandate as a delaying tactic to allow time for Jewish immigrants to settle in Palestine and when the numbers were high enough to establish the Jewish homeland then the British would grant self-government. The Arab delegation called for an "immediate creation of a national government which shall be responsible to a Parliament all of whose members are elected by the people of the country – Muslims, Christians, and Jews." The British position was that the plan for a Legislative Council of their creation would serve the purpose of representation of the people while the British administration under the Mandate would govern Palestine.

The issue of influence and participation was discussed. In the draft Mandate "a special position" was assigned to the Zionist Organization through the Zionist Commission in Palestine to advise the British government on how to establish the Jewish homeland in Palestine. The Arab delegation protested its role and feared it

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126 Correspondence, The Palestine Arab Delegation to The Secretary of State for the Colonies, Letter No. 3, March 16, 1922, 13.

127 Correspondence, The Colonial Office to The Palestine Arab Delegation, Letter No. 4, April 11, 1922, 16.

128 Correspondence, The Palestine Arab Delegation to The Secretary of State for the Colonies, Letter No. 6, June 17, 1922, 27.

129 Correspondence, The Colonial Office to The Palestine Arab Delegation, Letter No. 2, March 1, 1922, 8.

130 Correspondence, The Colonial Office to The Zionist Organization, Letter No. 5, June 3, 1922, 17.
had undue influence over the British administration without due consideration to the impact on non-Jewish residents. The British denied this but also wrote to the Zionist Organization asking that they send Mr. Churchill "a formal assurance" that the declared aims of the Organization be "consistent with the policy of His Majesty's Government."\(^{131}\)

A copy of the policy was enclosed and it stated,

the Zionist Commission in Palestine, now termed the Palestine Zionist Executive, has not desired to possess, and does not possess, any share in the general administration of the country. Nor does the special position assigned to the Zionist Organization in Article IV of the Draft Mandate for Palestine imply any such function. That special position relates to the measure to be taken in Palestine affecting the Jewish population, and contemplates that the Organization may assist in the general development of the country, but does not entitle it to share in any degree in its Government.\(^{132}\)

The reply back from Weizmann, for the Zionist Organization, stated their "activities...will be conducted in conformity with the policy."\(^{133}\)

The final correspondence from the Colonial Office to the Palestine Arab Delegation came on June 23, 1922 and expressed the hope that the assurances from the Zionist Organization would relieve those concerns of influence they had over that provision.\(^{134}\)

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\(^{131}\) Correspondence, The Colonial Office to The Zionist Organization, Letter No. 5, June 3, 1922, 17.

\(^{132}\) Correspondence, The Colonial Office to the Zionist Organization, Letter No. 5 Enclosure, June 3, 1922, 17 – 18.

\(^{133}\) Correspondence, The Zionist Organization to The Colonial Office, Letter No. 7, June 18, 1922, 29.

\(^{134}\) Correspondence, The Colonial Office to The Palestine Arab Delegation, Letter No. 8, June 23, 1922, 30.
The Key Text of the Mandate

The final draft was presented to the League of Nations July 24, 1922 and it stated that pursuant to the Covenant for the League of Nations, the Principal Allied Powers had selected Great Britain as the Mandatory for Palestine and the British government had accepted this responsibility. Of the Articles, the most pertinent ones addressed Jewish aspirations and land and would play a role in the development of land policies under the British Mandate.

Article 2 contained the objectives of the Balfour Declaration:

The Mandatory shall be responsible for placing the country under such political, administrative and economic conditions as will secure the establishment of the Jewish national home, as laid down in the preamble, and the development of self-governing institutions and also for safeguarding the civil and religious rights of all the inhabitants of Palestine irrespective of race and religion.

Article 4 called for the establishment of a Jewish Agency which would advise the Administration of Palestine on all matters related to Jews and “other matters as may affect the establishment of the Jewish national home and the interests of the Jewish population in Palestine.”

Article 6 addressed Jewish immigration, settlement, and land:

The Administration of Palestine, while ensuring that the rights and position of other sections of the population are not prejudiced, shall

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facilitate Jewish immigration under suitable conditions and shall encourage, in co-operation with the Jewish agency referred to in Article 4, close settlement by Jews on the land, including State lands and waste lands not required for public purposes.\textsuperscript{138}

Article 11 stated that the Administration of Palestine would develop the country and its natural resources. As part of that "it shall introduce a land system appropriate to the needs of the country, having regard, among other things, to the desirability of promoting the close settlement and intensive cultivation of the land."\textsuperscript{139}

In general, the Mandate gave the authority to the British to form an administrative government for Palestine and function with all the powers of a government including the establishment of necessary laws, regulate trade, raise revenues through taxes, change borders, regulate immigration, and safeguard the public, antiquities, religious sites, and civil and religious rights. Transjordan was addressed in Article 25 which basically stated that it would be governed separately and that certain provisions of the Mandate would not be applicable.\textsuperscript{140}

The goal of the mandate system was to develop the country to the point where it was self-governing and the mandatory would relinquish its authority to leave the country independent. However, it was not as simple as it sounds. Gelvin points out a number of inherent flaws that hobbled the growth of the new country. First, because a mandate was designed as a temporary status it made it difficult for investors to commit to investing in the country since the post-mandate situation was an unknown. Second,

\textsuperscript{138} League of Nations, Mandate for Palestine, Art. 6, 3.

\textsuperscript{139} League of Nations, Mandate for Palestine, Art. 11, 4.

\textsuperscript{140} League of Nations, Mandate for Palestine, Art. 25, 8.
the countries had to pay their own way. The countries of the governing mandatories were not inclined to use their tax revenues for the costs of running a mandate country. Therefore, once the costs of running the government in the mandatory were paid for there was little left for other needs such as development projects. Third, if the governing mandatories were going to invest their own money, it would be for infrastructure such as roads and ports in order to easily transport valuable raw materials out of the country. These first three points will undermine the success of the Mandate for Palestine, especially where the welfare of the Arabs was concerned. Finally, the new country created under a mandatory was just that – created, not evolved through circumstances that created a national identity through history, struggles, and heroes.\footnote{Selvin, Modern Middle East, 3rd ed., 194.}

Going forward under the Mandate, the British would struggle to protect their own interests while acknowledging their commitment to the dual obligation of the Balfour Declaration, now incorporated into the Mandate. This endeavor played out dramatically in the arena agricultural production, agricultural debt, land sales, and immigration.
CHAPTER 4
THE BRITISH OCCUPATION OF PALESTINE

While the broader issues of post-war territorial claims were being resolved at the international level, the British were simultaneously starting to discover the realities of the complex situation confronting them at the local level in Palestine. The challenges of day-to-day issues of security, safety, and general welfare were clear enough but identifying and addressing the issues of shaping a government out of what the Ottomans left behind would be an enormous challenge. A predominately agricultural region, the issues of land, agricultural debt, and agricultural productivity were critical issues from the beginning and would challenge them throughout the Mandate and contributed to its eventual failure. This chapter examines the early formation of British policy and administrative control of Palestine and the initial concern and connections between agriculture and land policy with the objectives of the Mandate. These challenges were heightened by the political tensions between Arabs and Jews as a result of the dual obligation of the Balfour Declaration, which was incorporated into the Mandate, and the growing demand for more land to settle more immigrants.

The Third Aliyah was between 1918 and 1923 and approximately 40,000 immigrants came from Eastern Europe and Russia fleeing pogroms and revolution.¹ The Third Aliyah is considered a continuation of the Second Aliyah, with the interruption of World War I, because of the number of similarities of the immigrants. These young,

motivated immigrants helped to increase the number of Jewish agricultural settlements from 55 to 100 by the end of 1920. With the British occupation of Palestine in December 1917 came immigration quotas based on economic absorptive capacity, the ability of the economy to support new immigrants. Palestine had already experienced the need for new immigrants to emigrate out of Palestine because work was not available for them and both the British and Zionists wanted to keep the numbers under control to ensure success. Managing immigration was one of the multiple issues the British had to consider as they addressed agricultural productivity and land sales.

ESTABLISHING CONTROL OVER THE LAND

During World War I, ineffective Ottoman polices, tax demands, corruption by local officials, and disruption of trade seriously weakened agriculture in Palestine. Ottoman forces used the area as a staging ground and exhausted the agricultural resources. Crops, livestock, and work animals were commandeered for soldiers and trees were cut for wood for heating and fueling the trains. The cutting of citrus and olive trees would have a long-term negative impact because it took five to seven years of growth before such trees would bear fruit and become economically productive. Famine and disease were common in Palestine, as in the rest of Greater Syria, and the

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2 Krämer, History of Palestine, 193.
3 Krämer, History of Palestine, 194.
4 Stein, The Land Question, 3.
5 Stein, The Land Question, 4.
6 Stein, The Land Question, 102.
population was diminished as refugees fled. Prior to entering the War, the United States sent aid to Palestine, as did other aid groups, and they were able to get some help into the area; however, British and French navies sometimes intercepted that aid as part of their blockades.

As British forces approached Jerusalem, government institutions, such as courts, were emptied of experienced staff and no longer functioned. Many important and one of a kind records were destroyed or scattered. Land registers, tax records, agricultural bank registers, and maps of state land in Palestine were some of the valuable documents lost. The few records which survived were incomplete. The condition of the population, government records, and agricultural resources crippled the chance for a quick recovery under the British occupation. To gain control over the land and land transactions, the British took several actions which gave them the ability to start shaping a land policy in Palestine which carried forward under the Military Occupation and into the civil administration under the Mandate.

The Status Quo Doctrine and the Land System

The British Military Administration stepped into place in December 1917 to address simultaneous problems that were all in need of immediate attention. Security, food, water, and getting things back to some sense of normalcy were important. A key

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7 Gelvin, Israeli-Palestinian Conflict, 2nd ed., 77.

8 Smith, Arab-Israeli Conflict, 8th ed., 103 and 149, n.1.

9 Stein, The Land Question, 23.
problem was getting commerce up and running again, specifically agricultural production, and that required grappling with the tangle of Ottoman law, specifically land law. Limitations on land transactions were immediately implemented in urban areas around Jerusalem, Nablus, and Acre. The need to get the land system active again brought the status quo doctrine to the forefront.

The status quo doctrine was an international law from the Hague Conference of 1907 which held that an occupying country should “take all the measures in [its] power to restore, and ensure, as far as possible, public order and safety, while respecting, unless absolutely prevented, the laws in force in the country.” Directed at the substance of the law, the status quo doctrine left open the possibility of changing other influential factors in a justice system such as procedure, access, and which court would handle the different types of legal matters. Even though the Ottoman Empire was not a signatory to the Hague Convention of 1907, the British intended to comply with the doctrine because there were the issues of international prestige and the perceptions of the French to consider while territorial negotiations were still proceeding.

Accessing the Ottoman law was difficult simply because finding copies of it were almost impossible. Ottoman judges, court staffs, and lawyers fled ahead of the British

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11 Stein, The Land Question, 40.


taking records, case histories, commentaries, and books with them or destroying what they did not take with them.\textsuperscript{14} What was found had to be translated which was typically done only as sections of the law were needed and revised to fit “along colonial lines.”\textsuperscript{15} Under the military administration the law was simply patched together as they went along. This gave the British a significant opportunity to influence and control the re-structuring and re-writing of portions of the law in Palestine. And in the all-important area of land law, where it was extremely advantageous for Britain to have control, they took advantage of that opportunity by moving jurisdiction for land issues from the religious courts to newly created land courts under British control.\textsuperscript{16}

The loss of so much government information may have actually been a relief to the British because they did not approve of the system of laws, registration, and taxation that made up the Ottoman land system. A harsh critic was Sir Ernest Dowson who provided his assessment of the Ottoman land system in his 1925 report, “The Land System of Palestine.” He described the Ottoman land law as one cause for the difficulty the British had with land issues in the early Mandate period due to “the ambiguities, weaknesses and lacunae of the existing jumble of Ottoman statute law, religious law, provisional law, (and) regulations.”\textsuperscript{17} Specifically, he cites the multiple categories of land as cumbersome and the failure to put a “practical system of land registration” and

\textsuperscript{14} Bunton, “Status Quo,” 36.

\textsuperscript{15} Bunton, “Status Quo,” 49.

\textsuperscript{16} Bunton, “Status Quo,” 37.

\textsuperscript{17} Ernest Dowson, Report on the Land System of Palestine, December 1925, 2, reproduced in Bunton, Land Legislation, 5: 233 – 266.
taxation into operation as failures that would need to be addressed.\textsuperscript{18} Dowson was certain that the consequences of the failures of the Ottoman administration were “still deeply impressed on the land system of Palestine” and seriously limited the healthy growth of the economy and development of a good government.\textsuperscript{19}

In reality, efforts to maintain the \textit{status quo} were influenced by many factors. In some cases it was impossible due to the lack of information. In others, it was a matter of convenience, control, and political expediency. However, the burden of complying with the \textit{status quo} was sometimes raised as justification for the lack of progress. For example, Williams Ormsby-Gore wrote to Mark Sykes in May 1918 that “the existing land laws are the very devil and the necessity of maintaining the \textit{status quo} in occupied enemy territory is of course a stumbling block to really effective progress or development during the war.”\textsuperscript{20}

**The Land Registry Offices Closed in 1919**

The Land Registry Offices were closed on November 18, 1919 in response to missing, incomplete, and incorrect land ownership records which put a temporary stop to “official” land sales. The records the British were able to find were not accurate in part because not all Arab landowners registered their land, or only register part of their land, or the land was registered under another’s name. There were no maps with the registrations, only descriptions of the boundaries of a piece of land that were based on

\textsuperscript{18} Dowson, \textit{Report of 1925}, 6.

\textsuperscript{19} Dowson, \textit{Report of 1925}, 5.

other buildings, roads, or locations of important historical events. In 1920, the Director of Lands said he could not find a plot of land under these conditions. Another reason for the closure was to try to abate the growing number of landless Arabs. In the immediate post-war economy, selling land was one of the few ways to obtain money. The cycle of agricultural debt, which was well established during the Ottoman period and made worse by the War, was a powerful force as a growing number of Arab farmers found the only way they could pay their debt off was to sell all or part of their land. Jewish organizations and some immigrants were ready, willing, and able to buy that land. The consequence was a loss of livelihood for the farmers and any of the tenants or laborers working on that land at a time when other employment opportunities were scarce. A landless Arab population would potentially be an “unwelcomed” financial expense to the British administration. Since land could no longer be sold, officially, the British arranged for a limited loan program specifically for agricultural purposes through the Anglo-Egyptian Bank to assist peasant cultivators to buy seeds, animals, and equipment.

The closure of the Land Registry Office did not stop the negotiations and agreements for future transactions once the Registry reopened. In his memoir of his many years in Jerusalem serving in various positions as a high ranking British civil servant, Edward Keith-Roach describes Yehoshua Hankin, the land agent for the Zionist

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Commission, as a "most sought after man." He was kept busy receiving options from Arabs for the purchase of their lands once the land registries were open. Zionists, who had been in Palestine for approximately four decades, had their own records of their land transactions and ownership.

A number of government entities were established to assist with the various aspects of the land system in 1920. Land Settlement Courts were established to untangle the mess of land records and to resolve disputed ownership of land. Work on the new Land Registry Offices progressed and would reopen on October 1, 1920. For many Arab elites, a source of their influence and power came from controlling decisions over land disputes and land registrations. With these two entities, the British started moving control over many land issues away from local Arab elites into their own hands.

That year also saw another important policy entity formed, the Land Commission.

The Land Commission Established

Herbert Samuel announced the creation of a Land Commission "consisting of a British official and representatives of the Muslim and the Jewish communities" to examine "all proposals dealing with the use of state lands or the colonization of private

26 Stein, *The Land Question*, 44.
lands. The establishment of the Land Commission in 1920 serves as an illustration of the influence the Zionist Commission had on the administration of Palestine. In May 1918, the Zionist Commission suggested that a land commission be established in order to determine the amount of land in Palestine that might be available to them to purchase. They were thinking that state land, unoccupied lands, lands of uncertain ownership, and uncultivated lands would be easy to purchase for immigrants and an accurate record of these lands would facilitate the purchases. The suggestion came to life in 1920 when Samuel established a Land Commission whose duties included the suggestions of the Zionist Commission.

The role of the Land Commission was to formulate policy based on directives from the administration. They were also charged with keeping records on how much land, and of what category and soil quality, there was in Palestine, and to make recommendations on how the land could be more productive. They managed state land and the leases for that land and were to make recommendations to protect the interests of the tenants. The land commission was not a legal body and did not make ownership determinations.

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The Land Transfer Ordinance of 1920

The Land Registry Offices reopened on October 1, 1920 with the implementation of the Land Transfer Ordinance of 1920. Enacted in September, the Land Transfer Ordinance was intended to inhibit land speculation and minimize the creation of landless Arabs by requiring that all transactions be approved by the government based on four criteria. First, the buyer had to be a resident of Palestine. Second, the quantity and value of the land was limited. In the rural areas it was limited to 300 dunams or £E1,000. Third, small land owners or land owners with tenants, had to retain a “maintenance area” large enough to support the cultivator. And fourth, the buyer had to use, specifically cultivate or develop, the land immediately. This ordinance became effective October 1, 1920.

In the first six months of the Ordinance, only 26 of the 3,365 petitions for land transfers, the majority of which were in urban areas, were refused. The number of petitions was lower than expected. Both Jews and Arabs were critical of the Ordinance and were suspicious of the discretionary authority the High Commissioner had over the process. Arabs were critical of the residency requirement because it would prohibit land sales to other Arabs in Syria or Lebanon. This ordinance would become one of the

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33 Stein, The Land Question, 23; Dowson, Report of 1925, 8.
34 Stein, The Land Question, 44 – 46. One metric dunam equals ¼ of an acre. £E represents Egyptian pound.
35 Stein, The Land Question, 47.
36 Stein, The Land Question, 48.
friction points that contributed to the riots in Jaffa in 1921 and influenced an amended ordinance.

The First Survey in 1921

A cadastral survey of Palestine, a survey of land to document the size and boundaries of land for legal purposes such as taxation and sale, was started in 1921. This was to remedy the lack of reliable descriptions of parcels of land for the land registries. A Survey Department was established to accomplish the task; however, the Land Registries were also doing surveys. Both were collecting similar information and creating maps but not sharing or integrating the information. Further, the information was not being made public through publication to make it useful. Eventually the two agencies tried to work together but the situation did not improve. As Dowson reported in 1925, "the erection of the Survey Department four years ago to remedy the chief weakness of the existing system of Land Registration has left that system virtually untouched. If the Survey was abolished tomorrow the procedure of Land Registration would not be affected." According to Dowson, it was an abysmal failure. Slowly, efforts to survey would continue throughout the Mandate.

During the first few years of the occupation, the British worked towards establishing institutions that would reshape the old Ottoman land system into one

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38 Dowson, Report of 1925, 9.
under their control and suitable for a modern future of Palestine. The other critical issue was agricultural production.

AGRICULTURE

In assessing the state of Palestine after the War, Samuel described the country as being "exhausted by war." The country had "much cultivated land...left untilled; the stocks of cattle and horses had fallen to a low ebb; the woodlands, always scantly, had almost disappeared; orange groves had been ruined by lack of irrigation; [and] commerce had long been at a standstill." For the success of the future Mandate, agricultural production had to improve and modernize for both the expected increases in population as well as the economic development needed to help transform Palestine into an independent nation.

The British had regional experience in Egypt where they increased agricultural production to increase foreign trade while protecting British interests. Cotton was already a major export product for Egypt when the British became the protectorate for Egypt in 1882. Under the administration of the British, one million additional acres came under cultivation. They insisted on free-trade so that other British colonies could

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42 Gelvin, Modern Middle East, 3rd ed., 93.
take advantage of trade opportunities in Egypt to the detriment of Egyptian interests.\textsuperscript{43} Further, the British prohibited the building of textile mills in Egypt because they would compete with British textile mills.\textsuperscript{44} These details illustrate the expertise the British had at increasing agricultural production and trade while at the same time using it as a means to protect their own interests by limiting the development of others. The British not only suppressed Egyptian development to protect British businesses, they also did this to maintain a certain level “calm.” Gelvin wrote “many British policy makers believed that rapid economic development in Egypt would undermine the calm in their new acquisition and threaten their position there.”\textsuperscript{45} Gelvin further explained that this “asymmetrical development” intentionally left certain parts or aspects of society less developed.\textsuperscript{46} One benefit would be to limit any internal challenges to an administrative power that growth and awareness might create in the population. As the British established themselves in Palestine, their experiences in Egypt would influence their decisions as they were confronted with the similar need to increase productivity and maintain a calm population.

The British used agricultural education as an agent of change in order to improve agriculture in Palestine and “change the country as they saw fit.”\textsuperscript{47} This was intended to

\textsuperscript{43} Gelvin, Modern Middle East, 3\textsuperscript{rd} ed., 94.

\textsuperscript{44} Gelvin, Modern Middle East, 3\textsuperscript{rd} ed., 93.

\textsuperscript{45} Gelvin, Modern Middle East, 3\textsuperscript{rd} ed., 94.

\textsuperscript{46} Gelvin, Modern Middle East, 3\textsuperscript{rd} ed., 93 – 95.

\textsuperscript{47} EI-Eini, “British Agricultural Educational,” 98.
meet the immediate needs of increasing agricultural productivity for food and to keep Arabs on their farms. There were also the long-term goals of modernization and intensification of agricultural production for the future development of Palestine. Two new administrative units, the Department of Agriculture and the Department of Education, were established and they developed agricultural programs starting in 1920. Information was imparted through the use of school gardens, demonstration plots, extension services, lectures, leaflets, radio broadcasts, touring libraries, films, and contests.\textsuperscript{48} Topics included crop rotation, irrigation, fertilization, soil conservation, pest control, animal care, bee-keeping, forestry, grafting techniques, and more. Loans of modern equipment and beasts of burden were made available. Also veterinary hospitals and meteorological stations were established.\textsuperscript{49} The help was available to both Arabs and Jews; however, the Jewish agriculturalists were more independent having brought modern techniques and equipment with them to Palestine.\textsuperscript{50}

While the plan appeared to have the elements to be successful, the fact that the British did not take the circumstances of the farmers into consideration hobbled the chance for success. For example, the Arab farmers relied on traditional techniques passed along from one generation to the next by working together over a period of time, not all families had a child that could attend school, many were illiterate, and

\textsuperscript{48} The literature and broadcasts were likely in Arabic, Hebrew, or English depending on the audience. All three were official languages under the Mandate. El-Eini only mentions illiteracy as a bar to the Arab cultivators taking full advantage of the material and the lack of a radio for the broadcasts.


\textsuperscript{50} El-Eini, "British Agricultural Educational," 99.
many did not have radios. In addition, the poorer farmers were suspicious of government based on past experiences with the Land Code of 1858 reforms of the Ottoman government. Further, the plan was executed on a small scale. For example, even with an effort to increase the number of school gardens by 1928 only 50 of 259 schools had gardens. Only 4 hours per year were allocated to agricultural education in the classroom and, if there was a garden, some of the time would be spent actually working in the garden. Budget cuts of 6.19 percent for education came right after the start of the programs in 1920 – 21. In an estimation of British expenditures for 1921 – 1922, out of the total of £2,286,133, only £49,085 went to the Agriculture and Fisheries Department and £103,000 went to Education. In comparison, £745,579 went to railways, £216,642 went to security and prisons, and £119,526 went to ports, telegraphs, and telephones. The programs also suffered from the various eruptions of violence which impacted the travel of agricultural agents and inspectors. By 1930, these efforts did not make significant improvements in agricultural production by Arab cultivators.

Agricultural education was the chosen focus of efforts but the bigger source of the problems in Palestinian agriculture was money. The subsistence and small farmers

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51 El-Eini, “British Agricultural Educational,” 100.


seldom had the capital to buy the necessary seeds, animals, or other items to plant and harvest the crops and relied upon loans from moneylenders. As in the Ottoman period before the War, the moneylender during the Mandate could be a notable, merchant, large land holder, or anyone with the ability to lend the money and collect payment. Because of the usurious moneylenders, the farmers were seldom able to make a profit and fell deeper into debt. For farmers, the grain merchant would be a particularly harsh moneylender because the payment would come out of the crop and the grain merchant would set the price of the grain and could therefore drive the price down in order to get more grain in payment of the loan. The British learned an important lesson in Egypt regarding the role of moneylenders in the peasant economy. They implemented a policy in Egypt where moneylenders could not foreclose on peasant-owned land of approximately five acres or smaller. The objective was to protect the peasants from losing their land. However, the moneylenders just stopped lending money to the peasants for the annual supply of seed which made the situation worse because there was no other source of money. Because the British were not willing to back loans to subsistence and small farmers in Palestine, they were willing to live with moneylenders.

While the risk of lending money to farmers was too high for the British, in special circumstances they implement loan programs for limited assistance. For example, in response to the closure of the Land Registries, a loan program was set up because farmers could not sell their land to pay off debts. Unfortunately, the fact that many of the loans were not repaid gave the British a reason to reject future government backed

57 Gelvin, Modern Middle East, 3rd ed., 93.
loan programs. Other ideas such as cooperatives and lending societies were considered but never amounted to much of a solution. For the Arab farmer, this left the primary means of obtaining a loan as the moneylender while the British focused on agricultural development.

EARLY DIFFERENCES BETWEEN ARAB AND JEWISH GROUPS

Surrounding the administrative work of the British to address land issues and agricultural development was the tension between the Arabs and Jews. The issues of land sales and immigration took on new and much greater significance with the Balfour Declaration, the coming Mandate, and increased Zionist enthusiasm. From the beginning of the British Occupation and throughout the Mandate, the social and political position of the Arabs and Jews were on very different levels and it hindered the common Palestinian Arab while it helped the Zionists and Jews.

The Arabs in Palestine carried forward social structures from the Ottoman period, specifically a patron-client relationship with the upper class of urban elites and notables in position of power and control owning large amounts of land supported by poor and middle class Arabs, primarily farmers. It was advantageous to the elites to work with the British, or at least keep their protest moderate, in order to protect their positions. Further, within the elite class, there were self-serving power struggles between families which eroded any united front to advocate for the overall good of Arabs in Palestine. The clients, the common middle or lower class Arabs, had little influence during this period. Coming out of the War, Palestinian Arabs had to cope with
the impact of war on the economy, markets, loss or damage of homes and property, and a broken government system.\textsuperscript{58} They were faced with rebuilding from the rubble under the occupation of a foreign power as conquered people with no significant outside financial or moral support.\textsuperscript{59} As for aspirations of an independent nation, Arabs were of at least two minds to either reunite with Syria or maintain the division as Palestine.\textsuperscript{60}

The challenge for the Palestinian Arabs was commented on by William L. Cleveland and Martin Bunton when they wrote,

> Not only did they have to confront British imperialism, Zionist Determination, and the demands of their own constituents within the frontiers of the mandate, they also had to present the Palestinian case in the corridors of power in London, where none of them commanded the respect and influence that were accorded to Weizmann. They were provincial notables into whose hands was placed one of the most intractable problems of the twentieth century.\textsuperscript{61}

On many levels, at this point in time, the Palestinian Arabs were behind the Zionists and Jews in their ability to control their destiny and shape the future of Palestine.

The Jews had the advantage of having political organizations, especially the Zionist Organization, that were unified in their objectives throughout all classes of Jews even though they were not always unified on the means to achieve those objectives. They had the political and social sophistication to work with and, most importantly, influence the British in the development of British policy. As the Jews immigrated into

\textsuperscript{58} Gelvin, \textit{Israel-Palestinian Conflict}, 2\textsuperscript{nd} ed., 100.

\textsuperscript{59} Gelvin, \textit{Israeli-Palestinian Conflict}, 2\textsuperscript{nd} ed., 101 – 102; Smith, \textit{Arab-Israeli Conflict}, 8\textsuperscript{th} ed., 117 – 119.

\textsuperscript{60} Gelvin, \textit{Israeli-Palestinian Conflict}, 2\textsuperscript{nd} ed., 99 – 100.

\textsuperscript{61} Cleveland and Bunton, \textit{Modern Middle East}, 5\textsuperscript{th} ed., 229.
Palestine they were creating a new home, a fresh start, the fulfillment of a long held dream, and escaping from harsh circumstances. This put them in a very different psychological position than the Arabs. They were organized inside and outside of Palestine and were focused on establishing all the necessary services and institutions for self-sufficiency with financial and moral support coming from Jews in Europe and the United States. As for as aspirations of independence, the Jews were solidly united that Palestine would become their national homeland. At this point in time, the Jews were far ahead of the Arabs in terms of being in a position to control their destiny and to shape the future of Palestine.

When Herbert Samuel became the first High Commissioner of Palestine under the new civilian administration, he prepared and delivered his interim report on July 30, 1921 on the status of Palestine which offered his perspective on the positions of Arabs and Jews during this early period. He explained the British supported the Balfour Declaration because it wanted to support the Zionist ideas as well as support British interests in Palestine. The Jews received the news of the Balfour Declaration with “the warmest gratitude and enthusiasm.” Samuel acknowledged the Arab fears that the Balfour Declaration could mean that installing “the Jews in Palestine might mean the expulsion of the Arabs.” The Arabs doubted that with the anticipated majority Jewish

\[62\text{Smith, Arab-Israeli Conflict, 8\textsuperscript{th} ed., 116 – 119; Gelvin, Israeli-Palestinian Conflict, 2\textsuperscript{nd} ed., 100 – 102.}\]

\[63\text{Samuel, Interim Report on Palestine, 5 – 6.}\]

\[64\text{Samuel, Interim Report on Palestine, 6.}\]

\[65\text{Samuel, Interim Report on Palestine, 6.}\]
population that the rights of the Arab minority would be protected.\textsuperscript{66} However, Samuel then proceeded to dismiss those fears by saying that educated and enlighten Arabs "recognized that the fears that had been expressed were illusory" and they did not participate in "this antagonism."\textsuperscript{67} Of the Zionist rhetoric, he explains that a small group of Arabs were translating it and distributing it in Palestine to excite the population with the "wildest stories" and embarrass the British government.\textsuperscript{68} Although, he does not refute what the Zionist rhetoric was stating about their ambitions in Palestine.

Samuel correctly perceived at least two clear groups in Arab society. The enlightened Arabs he referred to were the elites and notables who had their own financial, social, and political interests to advance by working with the British. Samuel believed that they "realized that Jewish cooperation was the best means, perhaps the only means, of promoting the prosperity of Palestine, a prosperity from which the Arabs could not fail to benefit."\textsuperscript{69} Samuel assumed that all Arabs wanted the benefits the British government would bring and would trust the British to protect their civil and religious rights. As for the other group of Arabs, the farmers and laborers, Samuel believed that "among the mass of the population there were large numbers who, taking no interest in politics, thinking only of the needs of daily life, made no response to the


agitation that sought to arouse their fears and inflame their passions.” Contrary to Samuel’s belief, the second group of common people cared a great deal about politics.

The impact of the Balfour Declaration and the coming Mandate was to polarize the broader Palestinian community of Arabs, including Muslims and Christians, and Jews. To protect their own interests the Arabs and Jews created a number of political and social groups to support their various opposing positions.

Early Arab Groups

The Arab political groups all rejected the Balfour Declaration and the partition of Palestine from Syria and that is where the similarities ended. The Arab groups were either made up of elites, such as notables, large landowners, and professionals, with the goal of securing their position and wealth in the new future, or the populists groups made up of the common people, such as laborers, shop keepers, farmers, and others in the middle to lower class, with the goal to benefit a larger group of people. The elite groups included the Arab Club and the Muslim-Christian Association. The populist groups in Palestine had connections to populist and national defense groups in Syria such as the Higher National Committee. This connection would contribute to the futile hope that Palestine and Syria would be reunited and through that union Palestinian

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Arabs would become part of an independent Arab nation.\textsuperscript{74} It also hindered and delayed the development of any separate organized political push for an independent Palestine.

The Arab Executive was created in 1920 under the leadership for the former mayor of Jerusalem Musa Kazim al-Husayni in an effort to form a group to interact with the British. However, the British did not recognize them as representatives of the Arab community because they were not elected. This made it more difficult for the Arab concerns to be heard. The organization faded and fell apart in 1934 when al-Husayni died.\textsuperscript{75}

Representatives from these various Arab groups met in February 1920 for the First Palestinian General Congress which declared that Palestine was “an integral part of Syria” and that Zionism was a danger to their political and economic future.\textsuperscript{76} They passionately declared their dedication to defend their position “with the last drop of [their] blood and the last breath of [their] children.”\textsuperscript{77} Further, they would oppose and boycott anyone, including the Mandatory government, who supported Zionist activities.\textsuperscript{78} These pronouncements had no impact on the British or French.\textsuperscript{79}

In a move to preoccupy the Arab leading families, “the British, aware of the rivalry, used their power over appointments to maintain the division between the two

\textsuperscript{74} Gelvin, Israeli-Palestinian Conflict, 2\textsuperscript{nd} ed., 99.

\textsuperscript{75} Cleveland and Bunton, Modern Middle East, 5\textsuperscript{th} ed., 230.

\textsuperscript{76} Gelvin, Israeli-Palestinian Conflict, 2\textsuperscript{nd} ed., 98.

\textsuperscript{77} Gelvin, Israeli-Palestinian Conflict, 2\textsuperscript{nd} ed., 98.

\textsuperscript{78} Gelvin, Israeli-Palestinian Conflict, 2\textsuperscript{nd} ed., 98 – 99.

\textsuperscript{79} Gelvin, Israeli-Palestinian Conflict, 2\textsuperscript{nd} ed., 99.
families. The British appointed members of the two leading rival families to two important positions, Raghib Nashashibis was appointed mayor of Jerusalem in 1920 and Hajj Amin al-Husayni was appointed mufti of Jerusalem in 1921. The role of the mufti in the Muslim community was that of a religious leader in a government capacity that regulated “Islamic affairs.” While the early Arab groups had external and internal challenges to overcome to organize and advocate their cause, the Jewish groups were organized, funded, effective, and unified, at least in the beginning.

Early Jewish Groups

The chief political group for Jews in early Palestine was the Zionist Commission which was to assist the British government in achieving the goals of the Balfour Declaration. While officially an advisory council, the British gave their advice a great deal of weight to the degree that the Zionist Commission wrote draft versions of local ordinances that were accepted with minor modification by the British for implementation. As far as any political opposition from Arabs was concerned, the Zionists felt that was a problem for the British to solve.

In 1920, the Jewish community formed an elected body of 300 representative from which a smaller number served on a national council. They oversaw the Jewish

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80 Cleveland and Bunton, Modern Middle East, 5th ed., 230.

81 Cleveland and Bunton, Modern Middle East, 5th ed., 230.

82 Cleveland and Bunton, Modern Middle East, 5th ed., 230. A significant position, the mufti interpreted Sharia law, could sit as a judge in religious courts, manage schools, and oversee the waqfs.

83 Stein, The Land Question, 43.
communities and represented the concerns of the Jewish community to the British
government. Because they were an elected body, the British government deemed them
legitimate representatives of the people. The Palestinian chapter of the World Zionist
Organization became the Palestine Zionist Executive in 1921, then in 1929 it would
become the Jewish Agency. Throughout the Mandate, the chairman of this organization
had access to the High Commission and British officials. Weizmann stayed in London
where he could be a constant presence and quickly access British officials whenever an
issue or need arose.

The early Jewish and Zionist groups were focused on developing self-sufficiency,
working with the British to achieve their goals, and being patient. Importantly, they
were moving with the momentum of international recognition and had funding and
support from outside sources. Influential Zionist groups were forming in other parts of
the world and the Zionist Organization of America, founded in 1917 under Louis
Brandeis, was especially important and influential.

Histadrut was founded in 1920 as a labor organization to promote Jewish
employment and unionism. During the Mandate it would take on public work projects
for the administration and exclusively hire Jewish labor. It was also involved with

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84 Cleveland and Bunton, Modern Middle East, 5th ed., 232.
85 Cleveland and Bunton, Modern Middle East, 5th ed., 232.
86 Cleveland and Bunton, Modern Middle East, 5th ed., 233.
88 Cleveland and Bunton, Modern Middle East, 5th ed., 233 – 234.
coordinating agricultural labor with the collective agricultural settlements, or the *kibbutz*. Over time, it included more political action.\(^{89}\)

Outside funding and support continued to help in the cause to promote self-sufficiency. In response to the violence in 1920, local self-defense groups were formed. The Jewish community, known as the Yishuv up until the creation of Israel in 1948, continued to be better organized, utilized both its human and financial resources effectively, and developed educational, social, and economic programs to support their community.\(^{90}\)

**Samuel's Efforts to Build a Representative Legislature**

High Commissioner Samuel, and the British government, had hopes that a representative legislature could be established as the beginning of a future self-sufficient government and unified state of Palestine for both Arabs and Jews.\(^{91}\) The theory was that the Arab's standard of living would increase with the economic benefit the Jewish community would bring to Palestine and, for this reason, they should want to cooperate. Significantly, if Arabs participated, that would imply acceptance of the Balfour Declaration.\(^{92}\) That “acceptance factor” was the exact reason why the Arabs would not cooperate with Samuel's efforts to create a legislative council. The Arab

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\(^{89}\) Cleveland and Bunton, *Modern Middle East*, 5\(^{th}\) ed., 232.

\(^{90}\) Cleveland and Bunton, *Modern Middle East*, 5\(^{th}\) ed., 232.

\(^{91}\) Cleveland and Bunton, *Modern Middle East*, 5\(^{th}\) ed., 228.

\(^{92}\) Cleveland and Bunton, *Modern Middle East*, 5\(^{th}\) ed., 228.
position was to repeal the Balfour Declaration, all Arab groups agreed on this point, and they felt to participate with Samuel’s Palestinian legislature would be to accept the Balfour Declaration and the Jewish majority and rule that they believed it represented.  

Samuel tried elections, a constitution, and an advisory council but the Arab leaders refused to participate with these efforts for the same reason. The result was the Mandate would be “governed by the High Commissioner and his officials alone.” However, the Zionist Commission and the Palestine Zionist Executive (later the Jewish Agency) were highly involved in making suggestions to the British to achieve the goals of the creating a Jewish homeland. The Arabs viewed this as the Zionists playing an active role in running the Mandate administration. The other result of this situation was to foster further separation between Arabs and Jews who created their own community based political systems and economic activities. If the goal of the Mandate was to prepare Palestine to be a self-governing independent state, the difficulty of establishing any of the basics of a government indicated it would be a long, hard journey to that end.

**SIMMERING TENSIONS ERUPT AND INFLUENCE CHANGE**

In the early years of the Mandate “the country as a whole seemed peaceful” and Arab resistance to the Balfour Declaration and other events was primarily through

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94 Cleveland and Bunton, *Modern Middle East, 5th ed.*, 229.
95 Cleveland and Bunton, *Modern Middle East, 5th ed.*, 229.
political demands or demonstrations.\textsuperscript{96} The Nabi Musa Riots on April 4 and 5, 1920 was one of the first where casualties were involved. Traditionally, the Muslim Nabi Musa Festival was not a political event, but political speeches were included in 1920, including statements against the Balfour Declaration and support of Faysal as king. At one of these events, Zionist youths entered a crowd of Muslims, tensions accelerated, the British soldiers fired off shots to disperse the crowd, and a riot ensued. Victims included 5 Jews and 4 Arabs killed and a total of 230 seriously injured.\textsuperscript{97} The British military court and commission that investigated “viewed the riots as an expression of political and racial tensions, and not so much religious antagonism. Zionists by contrast tended to portray the Arab attacks not as politically motivated, but rather as the expression of anti-Semitism.”\textsuperscript{98} The British military administration was now aware that tensions were reaching a point where violence could erupt.

In July 1920, the civilian administration took over with Samuel Herbert as the first High Commissioner. While the Mandate was not officially approved, its contents and the fact it would soon be the policy for British management of Palestine, was well known, accepted, and used as a guide to set up the civilian administration.

At this time Palestine was in the midst of the Third Aliya and many of this group of young Jewish immigrants were socialists and were seen as bringing communism to

\textsuperscript{96} Krämer, History of Palestine, 207.

\textsuperscript{97} Krämer, History of Palestine, 207 – 209.

\textsuperscript{98} Krämer, History of Palestine, 210.
Palestine. To mark the occasion of May Day in 1921, two different groups of Jewish marchers, one supporting the Communist party and the other supporting the Zionist Ahudt HaAvoda, who were not supporters of communism, clashed in Jaffa, an entrance port for Jewish immigrants. When local police shot into the air to disperse the crowd, nearby Arabs thought the Jewish marchers were shooting at them and a riot ensued. Violence spread quickly and Arabs specifically attacked the hostel where newly arrived immigrants stayed. After three days of violence in Jaffa the death toll was 43 Jews and 14 Arabs and the injured were 134 Jews and 49 Arabs. As word of these events circulated outside Jaffa between May 5th and 7th Arab peasants attacked a number of Jewish agricultural settlements, where they met with armed resistance. During this violence the death toll was 48 Arabs, 47 Jews, with 73 Arabs and 146 Jews injured. The British dispatched Sir Thomas Haycraft to investigate the causes of the events. These events were “unexpected by Samuel and made a deep impression on him.”

Keith-Roach, who worked along-side Samuel during this period, recounted these events in his memoirs:

The fundamental cause of the riots and subsequent acts of violence was Arab discontent with immigration and their conception of Zionist policy. Had not the Jewish Foundation Fund advertised that the object of the modern Jewish pioneer was to prepare room and work for the

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100 Krämer, History of Palestine, 210.
101 Krämer, History of Palestine, 210–211.
102 Krämer, History of Palestine, 211.
103 Krämer, History of Palestine, 213.
thousands and millions that waited outside? The Arabs feared a steady increase of Jewish immigration, which would ultimately lead to their political and economic subjection.\textsuperscript{104}

Before the results of the Haycraft Commission were reported, Samuel put a hold on immigration into Jaffa.\textsuperscript{105} Zionists viewed this as Samuel giving into the Arab demands and violence.\textsuperscript{106} The Arabs viewed this as the possibility their other demands might be addressed and sent a delegation off to London in pursuit of that goal.\textsuperscript{107} The violence had brought about change and there would be more as a result of the Haycraft Commission.

The Haycraft Commission Report

Sir Thomas Haycraft and two others were assigned to investigate the causes of the disturbances in and around Jaffa and report back to High Commissioner Samuel and the Secretary of State for the Colonies Winston Churchill on their findings and conclusions. Published in October 1921, the Report concluded that while labor protests were the immediate cause of the disturbances, the charged atmosphere in which that spark ignited into greater violence was created by underlying tensions between Arabs and Jews “due to political and economic causes and connected with Jewish

\textsuperscript{104} Keith-Roach, \textit{Pasha of Jerusalem}, 87.

\textsuperscript{105} Keith-Roach, \textit{Pasha of Jerusalem}, 87.

\textsuperscript{106} Tessler, \textit{Israeli-Palestinian Conflict, 2nd ed.}, 172.

\textsuperscript{107} Smith, \textit{Arab-Israeli Conflict, 8th ed.}, 108.
immigration." The report further stated that the Zionists "exercised an exacerbating rather than a conciliatory influence on the Arab population of Palestine, and has thus been a contributory cause of the disturbance." Zionists did not accept this conclusion and said the cause of the riots was uneducated Arabs manipulated by elites trying to protect their position in a "feudal society and political structure which supported their privileged positions."

The Haycraft Commission wrote that Arabs felt that Zionists had undue influence over British policy making, specifically the Transfer of Land Ordinance of 1920, which put the Arabs at a disadvantage:

Laboring under these grievances the Arabs have regarded with suspicion measures taken by the Government with the best intentions. The Transfer of Land Ordinance, 1920, which requires that the consent of the Government must be obtained to all disposessions of immovable property and forbids transfers to others than residents in Palestine, they regard as having been introduced to keep down the prices of land, and to throw land which is in the market into the hands of the Jews at a low price. The temporary measure, now inoperative, which prohibited the export of cereals, was enacted, as they contend, to oppress the native landowners so as to compel them to sell their land, and at the same time to provide cheap food for the Jewish immigrants.

Recommendations to quiet hostilities from the Haycraft Commission Report focused on both sides being more respectful of the other's sensitivities while accepting

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109 Haycraft, *Disturbances in May 1921*, 55.


111 Haycraft, *Disturbances in May 1921*, 51.
The implementation of the Government’s policy of creating “the Jewish National Home.” Because the Land Transfer Ordinance of 1920 had been under scrutiny and criticism, it was amended.

The Amended Land Transfer Ordinance of 1921

The Land Transfer Amended Ordinance was enacted in December 1921 and eliminated all of the restrictions except protection for the tenant cultivator. Even this last protection could be manipulated under economic pressure. For example, if a land owner wanted to sell the land and the tenant was in financial need or want, the land owner would give the tenant money to leave thus clearing the way for the land sale. Protection for tenant cultivators remained an issue and would not receive attention again until 1929 with the Protection of Cultivators Ordinance.

THE WHITE PAPER OF 1922

After the series of significant events starting with the Jaffa Riots, the Haycraft Commission Report on the causes of the riots, Samuel’s hold on immigration into Jaffa, and the changed expectations of Zionists and Arabs that those actions fostered, Britain reviewed and restated its policy towards Palestine in a White Paper in June 1922. The purpose was to soothe the “uncertainty and unrest” which had contributed to those

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112 Haycraft, Disturbances in May 1921, 57.

113 Stein, The Land Question, 50–52.
events by attempting to clarify Britain’s intentions for Palestine.\textsuperscript{114} Issued while Winston Churchill was Secretary of State for the Colonies and sometimes referred to as the Churchill White Paper, it covered a number of issues. He acknowledged tension existed for both Arabs and Jews. For Arabs it was “partly based upon exaggerated interpretations of the meaning of the Balfour Declaration favoring the establishment of Jewish National Home in Palestine.”\textsuperscript{115} Specifically he pointed out that “unauthorized statements have been made to the effect that the purpose in view is to create a wholly Jewish Palestine. Phrases have been used such as that Palestine is to become ‘as Jewish as England is English.’”\textsuperscript{116} He explained that it was never the intention of Great Britain to subordinate the Arab “population, language, or culture in Palestine.”\textsuperscript{117} Then Churchill carefully explained that “the fact that the terms of the Declaration referred to do not contemplate that Palestine as a whole should be converted into a Jewish National Home, but that such a Home should be founded ‘in Palestine.’”\textsuperscript{118} He immediately addressed Jewish concerns that Britain was backing away from the pledge in the Balfour Declaration by stating that the Balfour Declaration would stand and was “not susceptible [to] change.”\textsuperscript{119}

\textsuperscript{114} United Kingdom, Colonial Office, White Paper of 1922, Secretary of State for the Colonies Winston Churchill, (June 1922), in The Avalon Project: Documents in Law, History and Diplomacy, accessed October 24, 2013, \texttt{http://avalon.law.yale.edu/20\textsuperscript{th}century/brwh1922.asp}.

\textsuperscript{115} United Kingdom, White Paper of 1922.

\textsuperscript{116} United Kingdom, White Paper of 1922.

\textsuperscript{117} United Kingdom, White Paper of 1922.

\textsuperscript{118} United Kingdom, White Paper of 1922.

\textsuperscript{119} United Kingdom, White Paper of 1922.
Focused on the concept of a unified Palestine with coexisting communities, he praised the “national characteristics” of the Jewish community. Named specifically were the civic and political organization, governing bodies for their community with elected representation, educational and religious facilities, and its own language. He envisioned that Palestine could become the center of the Jewish world and a place for Jews to thrive. This being so, he stated that “it [was] essential that [the Jewish community] should know that it is in Palestine as a right and not on the sufferance.” And to fulfill this potential and objective, Jewish immigration was a necessary component and would be moderated based on the “economic capacity” of the country to absorb immigrants without being “a burden upon the people of Palestine as a whole, and that they should not deprive any section of the population of their employment.”

In closing, he dismissed any claim to Palestine under the Husayn-McMahon Correspondence when he stated that “the whole of Palestine west of the Jordan was...excluded from Sir Henry McMahon’s pledge.” He explained that the path to self-government would be gradual and that there was nothing really to “alarm” the Arabs or “displease” the Jews in British policy.

The White Paper of 1922 was intended to be a document that clarified British policy but it failed to do that. The Arabs opposed the White Paper and saw it as

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120 United Kingdom, White Paper of 1922.
121 United Kingdom, White Paper of 1922.
122 United Kingdom, White Paper of 1922.
123 Cleveland and Bunton, Modern Middle East, 5th ed., 228.
merely buying time for Jews to increase their population in Palestine to the detriment of the Arab population and self-government would not be granted until the Jewish population was larger.\textsuperscript{124} The Palestinian delegation, who had been in London, advocating for the Muslims and Christians of Palestine, said “all these outward signs of a ‘national’ existence are also possessed by other communities in Palestine, and if these are to be considered as a reason why the Jews outside Palestine should be allowed into Palestine ‘as of right and not on sufferance,’ it is the more reason why the Arabs should be confirmed in their national home as against all intruders and immigration placed in their control.”\textsuperscript{125} They saw other Arab states around them, Mesopotamia (Iraq), Egypt, and Transjordan, gaining independence and the right to self-govern and believed they should have the same independence in Palestine.\textsuperscript{126}

It appeared the Zionists were holding their concern about the mitigating language of the White Paper in regards to a homeland “In” Palestine versus Palestine “as” the homeland. They were confident that the inclusion of the Balfour Declaration in the actual Mandate for Palestine would ensure their position, along with its inclusion in the San Remo Resolution and Treaty of Sevres. After all, the White Paper provided the opportunity for the Jewish population to become a majority it Palestine.\textsuperscript{127} In a conversation between Weizmann, the Chief Secretary of the Middle East Department,

\textsuperscript{124} Ingrams, Palestine Papers, 172.

\textsuperscript{125} Smith, Arab-Israeli Conflict, 8\textsuperscript{th} ed., 109.

\textsuperscript{126} Keith-Roach, Pasha of Jerusalem, 96.

\textsuperscript{127} Smith, Arab-Israeli Conflict, 8\textsuperscript{th} ed., 109.
and Keith-Roach, Weizmann showed his confidence that the Zionist goal would be achieved when he said that he accepted "'the White Paper because when the time is ripe, I shall make it a blue paper. The Arabs must go elsewhere.'" \(^{128}\)

The White Paper failed to improve the situation and actually made it worse because it confirmed the Balfour Declaration was not going to change, that Jewish immigration was a goal of the British government, proclaimed the Jews had a right to be in Palestine, gave the Jewish national characteristics recognition while appearing to dismiss those of the Arabs, and rejected any Arab claims under the Husayn-McMahon Correspondence. These elements of friction remained and would continue to be the source of tensions.

**THE PALESTINE MANDATE**

The Palestine Mandate, the guiding document itself, was officially ratified by the League of Nations in July 1922, although responsibility of the administering the Mandate was officially given to Britain in April 1920. \(^{129}\) The Mandate acknowledged "the historical connection of the Jewish people with Palestine and the grounds for

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\(^{129}\) Smith, *Arab-Israeli Conflict, 8th ed.*, 100.
reconstituting their national home in that country."\textsuperscript{130} In Article 2 the provisions of the Balfour Declaration were incorporated requiring that,

the Mandatory shall be responsible for placing the country under such political, administrative and economic conditions as will secure the establishment of the Jewish National Home, as laid down in the preamble, and the development of self-governing institutions, and also for safeguarding the civil and religious rights of all the inhabitants of Palestine, irrespective of race and religion.\textsuperscript{131}

While the Mandate did incorporate the dual obligations of the Balfour Declaration and added throughout the document protections for the civil and religious rights of the non-Jewish community, the Mandate was focused on establishing a Jewish homeland. The Zionist Organization was recognized as the group to act as the special agency that would advise the British administration\textsuperscript{132} and carry out certain tasks of developing the natural resources and public works of the country.\textsuperscript{133} Hebrew was made one of the three official languages, English and Arabic being the other two.\textsuperscript{134}

The Mandate had a number of other important provisions that would be referred to in future debates over the period of the Mandate. Immigration is addressed in Article 6:

The Administration of Palestine, while ensuring that the rights and


\textsuperscript{131} League of Nations, \textit{Mandate for Palestine}, Art. 2, 3.

\textsuperscript{132} League of Nations, \textit{Mandate for Palestine}, Art. 4, 3.

\textsuperscript{133} League of Nations, \textit{Mandate for Palestine}, Art. 11, 4.

\textsuperscript{134} League of Nations, \textit{Mandate for Palestine}, Art. 22, 8.
Position of other sections of the population are not prejudiced, shall facilitate Jewish immigration under suitable conditions and shall encourage, in co-operation with the Jewish agency referred to in Article 4, close settlement by Jews on the land, including State lands and waste lands not required for public purposes.\textsuperscript{135}

The first part of Article 11 addressed natural resources and the close settlement and cultivation of the land:

The Administration of Palestine shall take all necessary measures to safeguard the interests of the community in connection with the development of the country, and, subject to any international obligations accepted by the Mandatory, shall have full power to provide for public ownership or control of any of the natural resources of the country or of the public works, services and utilities established or to be established therein. It shall introduce a land system appropriate to the needs of the country, having regard, among other things, to the desirability of promoting the close settlement and intensive cultivation of the land.\textsuperscript{136}

Reactions from the Arab community to the Mandate were negative and Samuel would encounter the repercussions as he tried to develop the self-governing institutions, as required in Article 2 of the Mandate. The dual obligation would also continue to be a challenge as the Mandate for Palestine was now official.

**THE FIRST BRITISH CENSUS OF PALESTINE**

The British conducted a census in October 1922 and they would do another in November 1931. In addition they implemented birth and death records to track future interim changes in population.\textsuperscript{137} The results of the 1922 census showed that 89 percent

\textsuperscript{135} League of Nations, *Mandate for Palestine*, Art. 6, 3.

\textsuperscript{136} League of Nations, *Mandate for Palestine*, Art. 11, 4.

\textsuperscript{137} Krämer, *History of Palestine*, 182.
of the Palestinian population was Arab and 11 percent were Jews out of a total population of 752,048.\textsuperscript{138} Here, the Arab population was made up predominantly of Muslims, then Christians, then “others.” The population was centered in rural areas, with approximately 67 percent, and the remaining population, approximately 33 percent, living in cities and municipalities.\textsuperscript{139} An interesting detail from the 1922 census was that 40 percent of the population was under 15 years of age.\textsuperscript{140} This meant that a large percentage of the population would be maturing, starting families, and attempting to make a living during the Mandate period with all the tensions that existed. In the next fifteen years, the vitality of this segment of the population would add to the pursuit of their goals through a variety of actions.

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\textsuperscript{138} Krämer, History of Palestine, 182.
\textsuperscript{139} Krämer, History of Palestine, 185.
\textsuperscript{140} Krämer, History of Palestine, 183.
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CHAPTER 5

ESCALATION OF GROWTH AND TENSIONS

The British got off to a bumpy start in Palestine between 1917 and 1922 as they had their first round of violence, investigations, reviews, and restatements of British policy in Palestine. The Mandate was now underway and the next five years were relatively peaceful; however, they saw an increase in immigration and capital into the Jewish community, or Yishuv, which secured them on a very different trajectory from the Arabs and would contribute to renewed tensions over land and violence in the late 1920s. This chapter examines the various interactions between the British, Palestinian Arabs, Zionists, and Jews as tensions built resulting in outbursts of violence that once again had the British investigating and re-examining their policies and expressing them in a series of reports and policy statements which sharpened the focus on intensive agriculture as a key to achieving the objectives of the Mandate.

GROWTH AND PROGRESS

The Fourth Aliyah was between 1924 and 1928 with roughly 82,000 new Jewish immigrants who arrived as refugees from Eastern Europe, especially Poland, fleeing persecution.¹ This wave brought an important change for the Jewish community as these immigrants were middle class, skilled workers and merchants as well as capitalists, not socialists. Some had their own funds to by-pass immigration quotas and invest in

¹ Gelvin, Israeli-Palestinian Conflict, 2nd ed., 72.
starting their own businesses in Palestine.\(^2\) The vast majority of these immigrants stayed in urban areas, especially Haifa and Tel Aviv. The population of Tel Aviv more than doubled from 16,000 in 1923 to 40,000 in 1926.\(^3\) These immigrants would be part of establishing a strong economic foundation of manufacturing and business that would contribute to developing the Jewish economy. However, the growth of the urban population would also place a heavier burden on both Jewish and Arab cultivators to supply food for them.

**Agricultural Education**

Agricultural education and research were important to both the British and Jewish community but the commitment each gave to those pursuits was significantly different and was of great consequence. In preparing to send Jewish immigrants to the pre-World War I colonies, early settlers studied agriculture so that they could increase their chance of success with the colony. Hebrew University was founded in 1925 with an emphasis on agricultural research and education. The University collected information from around the world, especially Great Britain and the United States, in order to develop the best agricultural plans for the conditions in Palestine.\(^4\) A network of educators and agricultural agents circulated to bring the information out to the rural areas. Experimental stations, demonstration plots, and literature were also part of their


\(^3\) Gelvin, *Israeli-Palestinian Conflict*, 2\(^{nd}\) ed., 72.

\(^4\) Hubbard, “Agriculture in Palestine,” 254.
agricultural programs. The key difference between the Jewish programs and British programs was funding. Financial support was available for Jewish agriculture and they were able to benefit from modern tools, technology, and science.⁵ Because of the financial and educational support, the Jewish cultivators could practice intensive agriculture specializing in mass production for sale whereas the Arab cultivator was still at a subsistence level with only some crops for sale.⁶ The formation of Jewish cooperatives also contributed to the success of the early colonies. Going forward, cooperatives played an important role in circulating new methods and techniques and educating cultivators on finance and marketing their produce. There were approximately 250 cooperatives by 1930.⁷ As Jewish cultivators became more stable as time passed, Arab cultivators continually lost ground, even with the efforts of the British.

British agricultural education programs moved forward, as previously described, with “steady but slow” progress.⁸ Specialized seeds had been distributed and there was an increase in the number of animals on some farms; however, the farmers “still threshed by beasts treading out the corn but their crops [were] heavier.”⁹ In the late 1920s, a government farm was set up in Acre with a Supervisor of School Gardens in

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⁵ Hubbard, “Agriculture in Palestine,” 258.
⁶ Hubbard, “Agriculture in Palestine,” 258.
⁸ Keith-Roach, Pasha of Jerusalem, 93.
⁹ Keith-Roach, Pasha of Jerusalem, 127.
order to teach educators and students the latest techniques.\textsuperscript{10} In one of the annual reports to the League of Nations on the progress of the Mandate, it was reported that agricultural educators and agents were prepared to give assistance, which was true, but they were limited.\textsuperscript{11} These programs were primarily paid for through tax revenues that were subject to being diverted to other more immediate needs such as security. Regardless of the programs, the Arab cultivators continued to struggle and “the burden of debt still remained.”\textsuperscript{12}

**Changes Among Political Groups**

While the Jewish groups continued to be effective in advocating their cause and developing their communities, this period saw the beginning of disputes and factions within the Jewish community as a result of the more recent immigrants. The most divisive issues were territory and tactics. Valdimir Jabotinsky was the counter-point to Weizmann and headed up the anti-socialist “Revisionists.” Jabotinsky thought the Zionist should have fought harder for the entirety of Palestine to be included in the Mandate and not allowed Transjordan to be split off into a separate entity. He also thought Weizmann relied too heavily on the British “to bring about the fulfillment of Zionist objectives.”\textsuperscript{13} Jabotinsky was active before 1930, but he became a larger

\textsuperscript{10} El-Eini, “British Agricultural Education,” 100.

\textsuperscript{11} El-Eini, “British Agricultural Education,” 100.

\textsuperscript{12} Keith-Roach, *Pasha of Jerusalem*, 127.

\textsuperscript{13} Cleveland and Bunton, *Modern Middle East*, 5\textsuperscript{th} ed., 234.
presence during the 1930s.\textsuperscript{14} Even with their differences, the Jewish political groups maintained a united profile and forged ahead, motivated by constructing a foundation for a homeland, while the Arab groups split apart.

By the mid-1920s, the momentum began to fade for the Arab groups, factionalism eroded their unity, and their profile melted. The Muslim-Christian Association continued as the Arab Executive.\textsuperscript{15} The notable system, dependent on a patronage relationship, began to weaken because peasant farmers who had lost their land and livelihood had moved to urban areas in search of work. Without clients, the patrons lost “economic benefit, prestige, or both.”\textsuperscript{16} As Gelvin explained, there was a sense of competition between the notables for the remaining peasants.\textsuperscript{17} He further described this transformation in Arab groups as moving from a vertical structure, which was conducive to patronage with the elites and notables having control, to a horizontal structure, where the individual citizens were more involved in decisions and was a nationalist structure.\textsuperscript{18}

Efforts to organize Arab peasants into political groups struggled due to a lack of funds and support from other established groups. Socially, the peasants were looked down upon.\textsuperscript{19} But at least one group, the Peasants’ Party in Palestine, was included in a

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{14} Cleveland and Bunton, Modern Middle East, 5\textsuperscript{th} ed., 234.
\item \textsuperscript{15} Gelvin, Israeli-Palestinian Conflict, 2\textsuperscript{nd} ed., 99.
\item \textsuperscript{16} Gelvin, Israeli-Palestinian Conflict, 2\textsuperscript{nd} ed., 101.
\item \textsuperscript{17} Gelvin, Israeli-Palestinian Conflict, 2\textsuperscript{nd} ed., 101.
\item \textsuperscript{18} Gelvin, Israeli-Palestinian Conflict, 2\textsuperscript{nd} ed., 102.
\item \textsuperscript{19} Stein, The Land Question, 25.
\end{itemize}
conference in April 1925 with other Arab groups to meet with Colonial Secretary L.S. Amery who heard complaints about the large number of new laws and regulations. Their complaints were that they had no say in the new laws, they barely had time to learn about the new laws before they were amended, and that the laws were “not in the spirit and conditions of the country.” When Samuel left as High Commissioner he claimed he had passed 130 new ordinances. One participant stated, “our land is not so fertile in crops as the Palestine Government is fertile in giving us laws and legislation, which are considered as a burden by the inhabitants, who have not been used to them under the old regime.”

Laws and the Land Systems

One specific ordinance, The Protection of Cultivators Ordinance of 1929, was intended to address the practice of landowners buying off tenants in order to clear them out so the landowners could sell their land. The practice had been going on for years and some local officials were aware of it and bribed to stay quiet. This activity was in contradiction of the Land Transfer Ordinance which required that a “maintenance area,” enough land that the tenant could support himself and family, be left for the tenant farmer. With this new ordinance the practice of buying tenants out of their

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“maintenance area” was finally acknowledged and the requirement for the "maintenance area" was eliminated. This gave landlords the ability to just provide written notice to leave and money to go. Since the amount of money was usually equal to one or two years of income for the tenant, few said no. However, the long-term consequences of a lost livelihood were significant if other employment was not found. This was a contributing factor in the increased numbers of landless Arabs that went to urban areas in search of work. The “protection” element of this ordinance was weak as the tenant was in no position to demand land instead of money now that it was a legal option; however, the issue would be revisited in amendments in the 1930s.23

Work on developing a new land system continued. The survey of Palestine was progressing and the Land Registration Offices were slowly being brought up to date. Land Settlement Courts were resolving ownership issues. Dowson was still actively involved with developing the land system during this period and was involved with improving the Land Settlement Courts.24

THE ESCALATION OF TENSIONS AND VIOLENCE

As the 1920s came to an end the tensions between Arabs and Jews were high and flared up in 1928 as a dispute over one of the holy sites in Jerusalem, the Western Wall. The Wall had religious significance to Muslims as being part of the Haram al-Sharif which enclosed the place where Mohammed ascended to heaven on his celestial


journey. The Wall had religious significance to the Jews as the remaining wall of the Temple of Israel believed to still contain the divine spirit.\textsuperscript{25} The Wall itself was the property of the Muslims who allowed the Jews access for prayers and lamentations. Surrounding the Wall was a \textit{waqf}, Muslim property used for religious and charitable purposes.\textsuperscript{26}

Edward Keith-Roach was the Deputy District Commissioner of Jerusalem in 1928 and was an important player in the events surrounding the Western Wall incident. In his memoirs he gave a personal account of his role and other observations and provided unique insights into this turning point in the history of Palestine. As background, he explained that in 1918 Weizmann "suggested to the military governor, Ronald Storrs, that the Zionist Organization should acquire the...\textit{waqf} houses by exchange of some other property elsewhere to the value of £P 75,000. This would enable the approach to be opened up and secure for the Jews better conditions for free and undisturbed worship."\textsuperscript{27} Important considerations blocked such a proposal. First, "under international military law an occupying power cannot allow transfers of land or property," in other words, the British were protecting the \textit{status quo}.\textsuperscript{28} Second, Storrs informally inquired with Muslims he knew about the possibility and was advised "it

\textsuperscript{25} Cleveland and Bunton, \textit{Modern Middle East, 5\textsuperscript{th} ed.}, 237; Keith-Roach, \textit{Pasha of Jerusalem}, 118.

\textsuperscript{26} Keith-Roach, \textit{Pasha of Jerusalem}, 118.

\textsuperscript{27} Keith-Roach, \textit{Pasha of Jerusalem}, 118.

\textsuperscript{28} Keith-Roach, \textit{Pasha of Jerusalem}, 118.
would be unwise to raise the question." But, as Keith-Roach wrote, “the mischief was done.” The Western Wall then became a tense stage upon which the Jews and Muslims would continually push limits and make complaints to the British about the other for the next decade.

On the Day of Atonement in the fall of 1928 events started to escalate. Keith-Roach was observing the Jews making their way to the Wall for prayers and noticed that screens had been fastened to the Wall to separate the men and women in violation of an old law which continued under the doctrine of *status quo* that prohibited setting up objects, or appurtenances, near the Wall. The guardian of the *waqf* complained to Keith-Roach about it, Keith-Roach then asked the Jewish beadle, a ceremonial officer from a synagogue at the Wall, to remove it, and the beadle promised it would be done by the morning. Keith-Roach gave orders to the local police to confirm it had been removed in the morning and if it had not been, they were to remove it themselves. The following morning the screens had not been removed and the police began to remove them as “opposition was shown and one rabbi, who clung onto the screen, was carried bodily, with the screen, outside.”

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Keith-Roach wrote “the status quo had been preserved with as little force as possible. The actions of the police, though right and proper, could not be expected to be popular with the Jews and, as I was responsible for it, they attacked me furiously.” Delegations of Zionists complained to the British government about him, newspaper editorials said the religious slight to Jews was worse than the Spanish Inquisition, telegrams went worldwide condemning the actions of the police under Keith-Roach’s orders, and in New York a meeting of 10,000 Jews passed a resolution that “Keith-Roach must go.” But the turmoil went beyond complaints about Keith-Roach and became a means to re-energize the politics of the Zionist cause. He explained the attacks on him were “more political than pious” and included Jewish appeals to the League of Nations. In the months after the incident Keith-Roach “repeatedly asked the government to define rights at the Wailing Wall” but no action was taken.

In late June 1929, while both the High Commissioner and Keith-Roach were out of Palestine on leave, another administrator was temporarily in charge and gave permission for a Zionist march to the Wall where the Zionist flag was raised illegally and

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33 Keith-Roach, *Pasha of Jerusalem*, 120. About a decade later, Keith-Roach was told by Colonel Frederick Kisch, a former British officer who was an official in the Zionist Commission at this time that he “organized the world complaint, adding ‘a few telegrams did it.’”


chants of “the wall is ours” were made. Muslims responded the following day with a counter-demonstration and there was local violence in Jerusalem. Keith-Roach returned in the middle of these events and recounted that the following Friday the Imam at the mosque in Hebron gave an especially impassioned sermon citing that any “inch” given to the Jews regarding the Wall would start an avalanche that would end in their demand for all of Palestine with the Arabs being thrown out of their own country. He ended by asking that they “fight for the Faith and the Holy Places to the death.”

Fired-up, some Muslims left the mosque and proceeded to attack Jewish shops and killed upwards of 60 Jews starting a riotous series of destructive and murderous reprisals throughout Hebron and Safed. The British did not have enough troops to put the riots down and needed reinforcements who were flown in from Egypt. By the time things were under control 135 Jews were dead, 350 wounded and 116 Arabs were dead, 232 wounded with some of those figures caused by police and military efforts to suppress the riots.

Blame and accusations flew wildly and the British appointed an international commission, with Jules Lefgren, ex-prime minister of Sweden as the chairman, to investigate the decisions made by Keith-Roach and the actions of the police related the Western Wall incident. The commission visited the scene, took testimony for two weeks, and six months later came to the conclusion that Keith-Roach’s interpretation of

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preserving the status quo was correct.⁴² The British then initiated their own
investigation of the entire sequence of events at the Western Wall and the violence that
followed in 1929 through the Shaw Commission.

THE SHAW COMMISSION REPORT

The Shaw Commission, chaired by Sir Walter Shaw, was appointed on September
13, 1929 to “inquire into the immediate cause which led to the recent outbreak in
Palestine and to make recommendations as to the steps necessary to avoid a
recurrence.”⁴³ In their investigation the Commission members spoke to 130 witnesses
from all walks of life, reviewed documents, and toured the affected areas. The final
report was signed on March 12, 1930 and provided a detailed account of the Western
Wall incidents, the minor disruptions in the early part of 1929, the outbreaks of major
violence in August 1929, a historical review of the pertinent issues of immigration and
land, conclusions regarding the underlying and immediate causes of the August
violence, and recommendations to address the underlying causes.⁴⁴

The report determined that the immediate causes of the violence were the
Western Wall incidents, the fact the police and military forces were not well positioned
to respond to and mitigate all the outbreaks, and a “belief, due largely to a feeling of


⁴³ Walter Shaw, Chairman, Report of the Commission on the Palestine Disturbances of August,
House of Commons Parliamentary Papers Online.

⁴⁴ Shaw, Disturbances of August 1929, generally.
uncertainty as to policy, that the decisions of the Palestine Government could be influenced by political considerations.\textsuperscript{45} The underlying causes of the violence were the tensions between Arabs and Jews and were identified as the ongoing "fear of the Arabs that by Jewish immigration and land purchase they may be deprived of their livelihood and in time pass under the political domination of Jews."\textsuperscript{46} The Commission acknowledged that in the previous few years there had been "incontestable evidence" of excess immigration, beyond the absorptive capacity.\textsuperscript{47} This contributed to the fears of the Arabs. An attempt at addressing the landless Arab issue had been made through the Land Transfer Ordinances of 1920 and 1921 and the Protection of Cultivators Ordinance of 1929 but both failed. The Report concluded that "there is no alternative land to which persons evicted can remove. In consequence a landless and discontented class is being created. Such a class is a potential danger to the country. Unless some solution can be found to deal with this situation, the question will remain a constant source of present discontent and a potential cause of future disturbance."\textsuperscript{48} The Commission found that "Palestine cannot support a larger agricultural population than it at present carries unless methods of farming undergo a radical change. With more intensive cultivation,

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{enumerate}
\item[45] Shaw, \textit{Disturbances of August 1929}, 164.
\item[47] Shaw, \textit{Disturbances of August 1929}, 161.
\item[48] Shaw, \textit{Disturbances of August 1929}, 162.
\end{enumerate}
\end{footnotesize}
should this prove to be possible, room might be found for a number of newcomers in certain districts. These findings would shape the following recommendations.

The Shaw Commission recommended that the British government make a "clear statement of policy" with quotes from the Mandate on the obligation to protect the rights of the non-Jewish communities and explicit directions on the "conduct of the policy." Further, it should include a statement that "they intend to give full effect to that policy with all the resources at their command." Specific recommendations as to the policy included that immigration had to stay within the absorptive capacity. Scientific inquiry needed to be made to determine how to improve agriculture to increase the intensity of farming and output and, once that was determined, land policy should be shaped by those findings. An agricultural bank was suggested to assist poor cultivators with loans and measures to inhibit the increase of landless Arabs.

The Report puts an increased emphasis on intensive agriculture. This was a modern method of farming the Jewish cultivator had already mastered and was equipped to handle. For all Arab cultivators, especially the subsistence and small cultivator, this represented a major shift of skills, methods, and tools. Previous efforts by the British to improve and increase productivity had not been well funded, were

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49 Shaw, Disturbances of August 1929, 162.
50 Shaw, Disturbances of August 1929, 164.
51 Shaw, Disturbances of August 1929, 165.
52 Shaw, Disturbances of August 1929, 165.
53 Shaw, Disturbances of August 1929, 160.
54 Shaw, Disturbances of August 1929, 166.
limited, and unsuccessful. If the solution was intensive agriculture, the Arab cultivator was already at a serious disadvantage. The Shaw report requested more investigation regarding land and agriculture and recommendations to implement a move to intensive agriculture which led to the compilation of information in the Johnson-Crosbie Report and then the work of the Hope-Simpson Commission.

THE JOHNSON-CROSBIE COMMITTEE REPORT

A little over one month after the Shaw Commission Report was signed, W. J. Johnson and R.E.H. Crosbie were appointed to "examine...the economic conditions of agriculturalists and the fiscal measures of Government in relation thereto; and to make recommendations." This essential report was the source of the raw data upon which many of the subsequent policy decisions were made. In the Report they stressed how crucial the agriculture issue was in Palestine:

The claims of agriculture, which provides the fundamental necessaries of human and animal existence, cannot be overlooked. The rural population, which forms the bulk of the indigenous population, could not easily be industrialized even if there were industries to absorb it. It is therefore essential to secure to this rural population in its present occupation at least the minimum of subsistence.

The Johnson-Crosbie Committee collected the bulk of their information through questionnaires developed with input from the Commissioner of Lands, the Director of

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56 Johnson-Crosbie, Report on Agriculturalists, 60.
Agriculture, and others. However, the majority of the responses to the questionnaires came through a third party, not directly from the cultivators. For the Arab cultivators, the Committee selected 104 representative villages and had the questionnaires completed by Palestinian District Officials with the assistance of village leaders (mukhtars) and elders of the village. Excluded were “the Bedu areas and villages mainly cultivating citrus fruits, melons, grapes etc.” because they were of a more specialized nature. For the Jewish cultivators they worked with information supplied by the Jewish Agency, the Palestine Jewish Colonization Association, and the Farmers’ Federation. Because they were getting their information through these organizations, all types of agriculture were represented in their figures. In addition to the questionnaires, members of the Committee visited selected villages and settlements and spoke with agriculturalists, landlords, lenders, and others “interested in agriculture.”

The Commission acknowledged that the information in the report had its shortcomings. The Report had gaps, contradictions, inconsistencies, they relied on information provided by other sources with no ability to confirm it, and that they made assumptions in their presentation of the information; however, they proceeded to

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60 Johnson-Crosbie, Report on Agriculturalists, 2 and 41.
compile the information to present a much needed idea of the economic conditions of both Jewish and Arab agriculturalists. As one of the first British efforts to compile such information it was valuable and, at least on a limited scale, it provided an official look at the economic condition of agriculture in Palestine.

The three major findings were the need to increase agricultural production, establish a means to obtain loans, and to eliminate the musha land system. The predominate cereal crops were not produced in large enough quantity for the needs of all of Palestine, especially wheat and especially for the enlarging urban populations; therefore, wheat was imported to satisfy the demand. In so doing, the price of wheat in the Palestinian markets was determined by imports, often depressing the price. The Committee believed that expanding agriculture was not possible because there was little cultivable land left in Palestine. Marginal land would require capital investments for improvements, such as irrigation, but the lack of a guaranteed return made it too high a risk, at least for the British. This left intensification of production on the same plot of land and moving the cultivator from a subsistence farming towards production or cash crop farming as the solutions. The Report explained that there was “a great need for the training of cultivators in simple and economical methods of cultivation.

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Intermittent efforts in a small way have been made by the Government in this direction by the establishment of experimental stations and village plots, and Jewish Training Institutions have done much; but their influence over the bulk of the country [was] not felt.\(^\text{67}\)

The lack of credit and chronic debt was identified as a crucial issue. One specific reason was it forced the cultivator to sell or surrender part of their crop to pay a moneylender rather than wait for the best market price to make a higher profit.\(^\text{68}\) Such a "market timing" concern may have only been realistic for the larger land holders and not one for the small cultivator. However, the Report still acknowledged credit for the small cultivator as an issue and they addressed the role of the moneylender, who often charged as much as 30 percent interest on loans and was sometimes the local grain merchant. While acknowledging that they charged excessively high interest and were often at the threshing floor "first in line" to collect their payment leaving the cultivator with little left to support their family and use for seed for the next year's crop, the Committee saw the moneylender as playing an important role in the overall economic system because they would provide loans to the cultivators when no one else would.\(^\text{69}\) Based on their prior experience of eliminating moneylenders in Egypt, this position is understandable, although not helpful in relieving the agricultural debt of poor Arab cultivators.


The Report found the musha land holdings were the “greatest obstacle to progress in Palestine” because of the lack of individual accountability and reward as an incentive for a cultivator to invest in improving the land which was viewed as an absolute necessity for the move toward intensive agriculture.\textsuperscript{70} Exactly how much of the Arab land holdings were musha varied but a rough estimate was approximately half of that land. Converting musha to individual private holdings required partitioning and was difficult because it would have required cooperation of all those with an interest in the land, costs for surveys and new registration, and other expenses. Considering the financial position of those musha land holders, even if they were willing, they were not able to fund the process.\textsuperscript{71} The Report states it was “hardly surprising that the partition of musha land had not progressed.”\textsuperscript{72}

The status of the Jewish cultivators was determined to be “better equipped for the operations of agriculture than [was] the Arab farmer.”\textsuperscript{73} While they also were hit by the changes of market prices, their own community credit organizations and other support networks lessened the negative impact on the cultivator.\textsuperscript{74}

In summing up their recommendations, the Committee said that either the cost of production had to decrease or the gross income had to increase. Since the Arab


\textsuperscript{71} Johnson-Crosbie, \textit{Report on Agriculturalists}, 68.

\textsuperscript{72} Johnson-Crosbie, \textit{Report on Agriculturalists}, 69.

\textsuperscript{73} Johnson-Crosbie, \textit{Report on Agriculturalists}, 70.

cultivator was already using inexpensive primitive methods that only left increasing income through modern, intensive farming methods.\textsuperscript{75} Exactly how this would be done was beyond the scope of their work but the efficiency of agriculture was an important part of the economic future of Palestine.\textsuperscript{76} Since agriculture was so important, the Committee felt it should recommend agricultural education, experimentation, demonstration plots, and an Advisory Marketing Board “to advise the farmer on the disposal of his products.”\textsuperscript{77} Importantly, they urged that any steps taken should encourage the cultivators to stay on the land as cultivators and not seek work elsewhere because it was unlikely that other employment opportunities were available in sufficient quantities.\textsuperscript{78}

Other financial recommendations included the establishment of village cooperatives to help with agricultural loans, equipment, improvement of cultivation, and marketing even though “the mentality of the country [was] not favorable to cooperation and that such efforts [made in the past had] met with scant success.”\textsuperscript{79} An expert should be appointed to advise the Government on reaching this co-operatives goal.\textsuperscript{80} Taxes and tithes recommendations included moving away from traditional tithe

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{75} Johnson-Crosbie, \textit{Report on Agriculturalists}, 72.
\item \textsuperscript{76} Johnson-Crosbie, \textit{Report on Agriculturalists}, 91.
\item \textsuperscript{77} Johnson-Crosbie, \textit{Report on Agriculturalists}, 88.
\item \textsuperscript{78} Johnson-Crosbie, \textit{Report on Agriculturalists}, 72 – 73.
\item \textsuperscript{79} Johnson-Crosbie, \textit{Report on Agriculturalists}, 88 and 73.
\item \textsuperscript{80} Johnson-Crosbie, \textit{Report on Agriculturalists}, 88.
\end{itemize}
to an income tax.\textsuperscript{81} The Committee did not encourage government backed loans for smaller cultivators because there was a clear risk that loans would not be repaid but would encourage the government to provide short term loans for the next season in view of the recent dramatic 50 percent drop in wheat prices in order to ensure a crop would be planted for the following season.\textsuperscript{82} The government needed to address issues regarding commercial trade and the difficulties surrounding the limitations imposed by the Mandate through trade negotiations.\textsuperscript{83} Finally, musha land needed to be eliminated even if the partition had to be compulsory.\textsuperscript{84} On this point the Report stressed that unless this was done, “all the other fiscal measures as we have recommended must be no more than palliatives of a disease that cannot be cured.”\textsuperscript{85}

Of the three major findings, and possible options, the Report ruled out regular loans to small cultivators as too risky and ruled out the elimination of musha land as too difficult. That left intensive agriculture as the only solution. The goal of intense agriculture represented a radical change from traditional Arab farming methods and would take time, money, planning, and the willingness of the Arab cultivators to accomplish. To develop more detailed recommendations on how the British could

\textsuperscript{81} Johnson-Crosbie, Report on Agriculturalists, 88 – 89.

\textsuperscript{82} Johnson-Crosbie, Report on Agriculturalists, 80 and 90.

\textsuperscript{83} Johnson-Crosbie, Report on Agriculturalists, 83 – 84.

\textsuperscript{84} Johnson-Crosbie, Report on Agriculturalists, 86 – 87.

address these findings, the Hope-Simpson Committee was appointed, chaired by Sir John Hope-Simpson.

THE HOPE-SIMPSON COMMISSION REPORT

The Hope-Simpson Commission Report was delivered to the government on August 22, 1930. The Report repeatedly asserted its main conclusion that without modern agricultural development and intensive farming in order to support the Arab cultivators and keep them on their land there could be no more settlement of Jewish immigrants in Palestine. The Report stated,

It is the duty of the Administration, under the Mandate, to ensure that the position of the Arabs is not prejudiced by Jewish immigration. It is also the duty under the Mandate to encourage close settlement of the Jews on the land, subject always to the former condition. It is only possible to reconcile these apparently conflicting duties by an active policy of agricultural development, having as it object close settlement on the land and intensive cultivation by both Arabs and Jews. To this end drastic action is necessary.

The report further stressed,

There exists no easy method of carrying out the provisions of the Mandate. Development is the only way. Without development, there is not room for a single additional settler, if the standard of life of the fellahin is to remain at its present level.

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87 Hope-Simpson, Report, 142. Italics original.

88 Hope-Simpson, Report, 153.
The standard of life for the Arab peasants, or fellahin, was poor and more became landless and jobless. Arab agriculture was dependent on dry farming, which required more land than irrigated farming, and an area of 130 dunams was "required to maintain a fellah family in a decent standard of life" with dry farming.\(^8^9\) Under the Mandate the condition of Arab cultivators had not improved and "agricultural progress of any kind [had] been haphazard and of small extent or value."\(^9^0\) All the while the Arab population increased as the land available decreased.\(^9^1\) In contrast, "the Jewish settlers...had every advantage that capital, science, and organization could give them. To these and to the energy of the settlers themselves their remarkable progress [was] due."\(^9^2\)

The challenge then was how to improve the agricultural production of Arab cultivators and the theme of the recommendations was modernization in order to achieve a greater output on the same, or less, land. The Report made numerous other recommendations that included more agricultural education on modern methods and irrigation, the creation of several new commissions to study and prepare long range plans for the overall agricultural development of Palestine, cooperative credit societies, new legislation to reduce taxes, create a right of occupancy, and end imprisonment for

\(^8^9\) Hope-Simpson, *Report*, 141.

\(^9^0\) Hope-Simpson, *Report*, 142.


indebtedness. Work on land settlements and the maintenance of property records had continued but needed to be accelerated even if that required more money as "no avoidable delay should be tolerated." Again, the recommendation that musha land be broken up into individual parcels as soon as possible was presented because it was "a great obstacle to any agricultural development of the country."

Recommendations regarding labor and immigration were also made suggesting a "Government Employment Exchange" where unemployed Arabs could register for work and give the government a more precise idea of the need for work. The Report further stated that "if there are Arab workman unemployed it is not right that Jewish workman from foreign countries should be imported to fill existing vacant posts."

While there were more specific recommendations, the final focus turned to the need for cooperation from both Arabs and Jews to achieve these goals. In closing, the Report stated,

Any scheme for development presents serious difficulties. Unless such a scheme is accepted by both Jew and Arab it may very well fail. Of both it will require the support if it is to have the desired result, namely, the advancement of a neglected but historic country in the path of modern efficiency, by the joint endeavor of the two great sections of its population, with the assistance of the Mandatory Power.

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93 Hope-Simpson, Report, 143 – 150.
95 Hope-Simpson, Report, 148.
96 Hope-Simpson, Report, 152.
97 Hope-Simpson, Report, 153.
If past is prologue, the future of this plan was not bright. Several of the recommendations had already been tried between 1918 and 1930 with little success and the new programs and commissions would require money that had not been available to fund earlier projects. However, with the new sense of reality and perspective the previous years and the Shaw and Hope-Simpson Reports provided, the British would refocus and try again to fulfill the dual obligation of the Mandate.

THE WHITE PAPER OF 1930

The British government produced the White Paper of 1930 in October of that year, also known as the Passfield White Paper, to quell the controversy and confusion in reaction to the Shaw and Hope-Simpson Reports by providing a “more precise definition of their intentions.” Both Reports were criticized as departures from previously stated objectives of the British government, specifically in regards to Jewish immigration and emphasis on keeping Arab cultivators on their land. Additionally, it was hoped the Paper would “restore confidence on both sides.” However, while there is a clear re-commitment to the dual obligation of the Mandate, the British showed their own frustrations with the Arab and Jewish communities while at the same time they called for more cooperation from both communities.

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The Paper restated the dual obligation under the Mandate, Balfour Declaration, and the White Paper of 1922 to “secure the establishment of a Jewish National Home” while “ensuring that the rights and positions of other sections of the population are not prejudiced.”\textsuperscript{100} However, it acknowledged the British needed help regarding the “practical application of the principles” and would turn to the Palestine Administration as well as Arabs and Jews to get that help through their cooperation.\textsuperscript{101}

The Paper commented, at some length, on the frustration the British government felt over the lack of cooperation by the Arabs and Jews with British efforts for fulfill the dual obligation. It stated the many “misunderstandings which have unhappily arisen on both sides appear to be the result of a failure to appreciate the nature of the duty imposed upon His Majesty’s Government by the terms of the Mandate.”\textsuperscript{102} And that the Mandate is “an international obligation from which there can be no question of receding.”\textsuperscript{103} The British government doubted that the two sides “realized the full import of this fundamental fact” and that contributed to the “agitation” and criticism for not doing things that the Mandate prohibits.\textsuperscript{104} It appeared to the British that each side was trying to wear them down, in order to get their own way or “escape...the limitations plainly imposed by the terms of the Mandate.”\textsuperscript{105}

\textsuperscript{100} United Kingdom, White Paper of 1930, 8.

\textsuperscript{101} United Kingdom, White Paper of 1930, 8.

\textsuperscript{102} United Kingdom, White Paper of 1930, 4.

\textsuperscript{103} United Kingdom, White Paper of 1930, 5.

\textsuperscript{104} United Kingdom, White Paper of 1930, 5.

\textsuperscript{105} United Kingdom, White Paper of 1930, 5.
As to recent events the White Paper commented that,

His Majesty's Government feel bound, however, to remark that they have received little assistance from either side in healing the breach between them during the months of tension and unrest which have followed on the disturbances of August 1929, and that to the difficulties created by the mutual suspicions and hostilities of the two races has been added a further grave obstacle, namely, an attitude of mistrust towards His Majesty's Government fostered by a press campaign in which the true facts of the situation have become obscured and distorted.¹⁰⁶

As much as the Paper was about policy, it was also about relationships between all three parties and signs of strain were clearly starting to show. Committed to the dual obligation of the Mandate, the British government asserted it "will not be moved, by any pressure or threats, from the path laid down in the Mandate."¹⁰⁷ Intended to clarify, the White Paper of 1930 failed to do this and instigated even further reaction.

THE RAMSEY MACDONALD LETTER

The Arabs accepted the White Paper of 1930 as an indication the British heard their concerns over immigration and labor but it "was bitterly denounced by Zionist leaders as a violation of the letter and spirit of the Mandate."¹⁰⁸ Weizmann led a group of British and American Zionist leaders to have it repudiated.¹⁰⁹ On February 13, 1931, Prime Minister Ramsay MacDonald sent a letter to Weizmann "to remove certain

¹⁰⁶ United Kingdom, White Paper of 1930, 4.
¹⁰⁷ United Kingdom, White Paper of 1930, 5.
¹⁰⁸ Laqueur, The Israel-Arab Reader, 37.
¹⁰⁹ Cleveland and Bunton, Modern Middle East, 5th ed., 238.
misconceptions and misunderstandings” and act as the “authoritative interpretation” of that White Paper. In the letter, MacDonald pointed out that the White Paper of 1930 repeatedly referred back to the White Paper of 1922 and the Mandate as the guiding policies and ones which the British government intended to uphold. That meant that both the promise to the Jews and to the non-Jewish population of Palestine had to be upheld and that up to this point, the British had failed the non-Jewish population of Palestine and the dual obligation of the Mandate.

On the matter of immigration and labor, one of the more dramatic points made in the White Paper of 1930, MacDonald stated it was a stronger statement of a similar position expressed in the 1922 White Paper. He went on to explain that any Jewish Agency or jobs funded primarily by the Jewish community could be filled exclusively by Jewish immigrants but that other jobs, or ones funded by public funds, would need to be open to all workers. However, “it must be pointed out that if in consequence of this policy Arab labor is displaced or existing unemployment become aggravated, that is a factor in the situation to which the mandatory is bound to have regard.”

As to concerns over lack of Jewish cooperation, MacDonald disavowed that sentiment and acknowledged the cooperation from the Jewish Agency and community. He ended by emphasizing the “need for cooperation, confidence, readiness on all sides to appreciate the difficulties and complexities of the problem, and, above all, there must

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111 MacDonald to Weizmann, 37 – 39.

112 MacDonald to Weizmann, 41.
be a full and unqualified recognition that no solution can be satisfactory or permanent which is not based upon justice, both to the Jewish people and the non-Jewish communities of Palestine."\textsuperscript{113}

While it appeared the only real difference between the White Paper of 1930 and the MacDonald letter is a matter of tone, focus, and phrasing, the points regarding policy remained the same. But in a situation where tone, focus, and phrasing are used to fuel political action, it was enough to be considered and touted as a repudiation of the 1930 White Paper.\textsuperscript{114} The letter pleased the Zionists and displeased the Arabs, who referred to it as "the Black Letter," and took it as confirmation of "their belief in the ability of Zionist pressure groups to influence the decisions of the British government."\textsuperscript{115}

After the reaction to the MacDonald letter, a major cycle of tensions that erupted into violence followed by investigations, recommendations, and restatements of policy finally settled down. The British got to work at trying new ways to achieve the fulfillment of the dual obligation of the Balfour Declaration. But the Zionists were busy too, realizing their reliance on the British to fulfill the promise of a Jewish homeland may have been misplaced and that they would need to be even more pro-active to ensure it happened. And the Arab peasants had only seen their situation get worse without reliable help from the British or their own elite Arab leaders. They too realized

\begin{footnotes}
\item\textsuperscript{113} MacDonald to Weizmann, 41.
\item\textsuperscript{114} Cleveland and Bunton, Modern Middle East, 5\textsuperscript{th} ed., 238.
\item\textsuperscript{115} Cleveland and Bunton, Modern Middle East, 5\textsuperscript{th} ed., 238.
\end{footnotes}
they needed to be more pro-active to protect their claim to Palestine. The 1930s would be very busy years and all that energy and determination would build up and explode and change the course of the Mandate.
CHAPTER 6

"THE FORCE OF CIRCUMSTANCES"¹

The early 1930s saw the momentum created by the Shaw and Hope-Simpson Reports, the Passfield White Paper, and the MacDonald Letter funneled into a renewed commitment to the Mandate. This increase in governmental activity was centered in old and new committees working on agriculture and the landless Arab issue. At the same time, world events were having a large impact on Palestine through the world economic depression, trade protectionism, and anti-Semitic laws in Europe that triggered a dramatic increase of Jewish immigration. This chapter examines the efforts of the British to implement their intensive agriculture policy and landless Arab inquiry while they contended with increasing political pressures from the Zionists, challenges from world economic conditions, and growing frustrations from the Arab community. These challenges and subsequent events would change the course of the Mandate.

The Fifth Aliyah was between 1929 and 1939 and saw approximately 200,000 highly skilled, urban oriented immigrants arrive.² Coming from Germany and Eastern Europe, they came as refugees and, as with the Fourth Aliyah, some came with capital to invest in a future in Palestine. The population of the Yishuv was now 30 percent of


² Gelvin, Israeli-Palestinian Conflict, 2nd ed., 103, 120, and 151.
the Palestine’s total population.\textsuperscript{3} It contributed to an ongoing rural to urban shift of population with the rural population dropping to 63 percent and the urban population rising to 37 percent.\textsuperscript{4}

INTENSIVE AGRICULTURE

A key criticism in the Hope-Simpson Report was that the British administration showed a lack of commitment in Palestine because they had not taken “serious steps” to develop the country.\textsuperscript{5} Privately, Hope-Simpson himself wrote to Prime Minister Lord Passfield and described the attitude of the British administration towards Palestine as that of “an interested spectator of a social experiment...in which he does not feel that he has a duty to take an active part.”\textsuperscript{6} Even the Permanent Mandates Commission of the League of Nations noted that the “articles required of the Mandatory an active and not a passive or negative [role]” in the development of the well-being of the people.\textsuperscript{7} The conclusions of the Shaw and the Hope-Simpson reports, and subsequent reactions, made it clear to the British that this was a critical area that needed much more commitment from the British and was essential for the success of the Mandate.

\textsuperscript{3} Gelvin, \textit{Israeli-Palestinian Conflict}, 2nd ed., 103.

\textsuperscript{4} Krämer, \textit{History of Palestine}, 185.

\textsuperscript{5} EI-Eini, “British Agricultural Policy,” 213.


\textsuperscript{7} EI-Eini, “British Agricultural Policy,” 214.
A renewed effort focused on moving Arab cultivators from traditional methods of agriculture to intense methods in order to be more productive. In theory, this would generate more profits, stop their cycle of debt, and end their need to sell land to pay off debt. It would then mean the Arabs could live on smaller parcels of land and could voluntarily sell land for Jewish immigrants to settle upon. From the Zionist perspective, they indicated they wanted to see Arab agricultural production increase "in order to create more economic possibilities and to increase the capacity of the country, thus giving new places for Jewish settlement."\(^8\) Intensive agriculture was the means that would meet the obligation of close settlement for the Jews as well as protection of the Arabs.

**Committees and Departments**

The new Development Department was created to oversee and improve the current agricultural programs and develop a comprehensive agricultural policy in order to achieve those goals. With this effort came new committees to implement the policy. A General Agricultural Council was formed to coordinate research and education and get information out to the public and draft legislation.\(^9\) Early in the process, the Agriculture and Education Departments took over the tasks related to agricultural education and research while the Development Department focused on the landless Arab issue. High Commission Chancellor was replaced in 1931 by Arthur Wauchope and


he was an ardent supporter of agricultural programs and led an effort to consolidate the work done previously in the 1920s to allow for the Department of Agriculture to develop more diverse programs in the 1930s.\(^\text{10}\)

While supporting the general plan to promote intensive agricultural production, High Commission Chancellor had warned, before he was replaced by Wauchope, that it would require time and money.\(^\text{11}\) The programs would have been funded by tax revenues from Palestinians and loans from the British treasury. His concerns over money were well founded as a world-wide economic depression set in and Britain had to review all expenditures and the burden on British tax payers. As a result, loans for these programs were severely cut.\(^\text{12}\) Just as Britain pulled back on promises for loans Palestine was confronted with plagues of locust and outbreaks of disease among animals that demanded immediate attention and diverted and used limited funds to address those emergencies. “Hence, the many difficulties the Department faced meant that it could only skim the surface of Palestine’s agricultural problems.”\(^\text{13}\) The focus of their effort would be on agricultural education.

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\(^{13}\) El-Eini, “British Agricultural Policy,” 220.
Agricultural Education

Essentially, many of the programs from the 1920s were carried forward with added enthusiasm but limited funding. These included the school gardens, demonstration plots, agricultural agent visits to villages, and instructional literature. Agricultural education at the primary school level was seen as the key to success.\(^{14}\) An Education Committee, established in 1930, put their focus on the younger children in order to prepare them for the future with the hope they could influence and teach their elders.\(^{15}\) The school garden program saw an increase of approximately 50 school gardens in the 1930s.\(^{16}\) The connection that improvements in general education would mean improvements in agricultural education was made and, because of that, there was an added push to improve general education. In 1936, of the approximate 260,700 Arabs of school age, only 42,700 attended government schools, which would be 16.3 percent. That represented an increase of 3.1 percent from 1922 when it was approximately 13.2 percent.\(^{17}\)

Critics pointed to the limits of the education provided because of overcrowded schools that packed 40 – 60 students in a classroom, the limited number of agricultural agents and inspectors to go around, and the fact that few of the classroom teachers had


\(^{15}\) El-Eini, “British Agricultural Policy,” 221.

\(^{16}\) El-Eini, “British Agricultural Education,” 100.

\(^{17}\) El-Eini, “British Agricultural Policy,” 221.
received agricultural education. Efforts were made to address these problems; however, limited resources resulted in limited improvements.

One new initiative for the 1930s was an actual agricultural school specifically for Arabs. Two government agricultural schools were opened in 1931, one Arab and one Jewish, funded by a gift from Jewish philanthropist Sir Ellis Kadoorie. Students were to spend two years at the school and then return to their home villages to share what they had learned; however, many sought work with the government. The chance the new information would be applied back in the villages was slim as Keith-Roach observed that “their parents’ ways were too strong to be countered with a diploma.” In the end, not enough students attended or went back to their villages to have an impact.

The British continued with the outreach programs such as extension services and demonstration plots. Hope-Simpson specifically and strongly advocated for the demonstration plot to show small cultivators how modern techniques worked. Radio broadcasts started in April 1936 with a weekly “Talks to Farmers” in Hebrew and Arabic. The Palestine Broadcasting Service aired programs that were as simple as an agricultural officer interviewing a cultivator in his field or garden. However, one had to have a radio

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21 Keith-Roach, Pasha of Jerusalem, 148 – 149.


to receive the benefit of the program.\textsuperscript{24} The monthly publication \textit{Agricultural Supplement to the Palestine Gazette} and numerous leaflets were produced but illiteracy kept some Arab peasants from the benefits of these publications.\textsuperscript{25}

\textbf{Irrigation and Research}

Irrigation was a critical factor in developing Palestine’s agricultural potential but issues with land ownership and surveys, as well as water rights issues, slowed down any progress. While there had been progress with land settlements and land registries, there were still enough problems over clarity and certainty of land ownership to limit those willing to risk money in investments to further the progress of irrigation. To try to get around any ownership and water rights issues, the British passed legislation which gave them authority, through a public welfare rationale, to control the use of water for the benefit and economic welfare of Palestine.\textsuperscript{26} This tended to be limited to efforts to control the sinking of wells and excessive use of the water tables. Even still, the ownership and water rights issues stood in the way of the government investing in any capital improvements. This left access to irrigation to those who already had access to it with very little improvement during the 1930s to assist the peasants with irrigation. A


\textsuperscript{25} El-Eini, “British Agricultural Policy,” 224.

\textsuperscript{26} El-Eini, “British Agricultural Policy,” 236.
hydrographic survey was started and would be helpful in the 1940s when more was done regarding irrigation.  

Efforts to research various problems, especially disease and pest infestations, were conducted and reaped rewards for everyone in dealing with both issues. Other research, for example with fertilization, hybrid seeds, or specialized equipment, was conducted but the benefit of many of those programs never reached the poor cultivators but did assist the Jewish and larger, more financially secure Arab cultivators. This was because it required the cultivator to invest more money on an annual basis per crop or for equipment and maintenance to benefit from the research, all of which were out of the reach of the subsistence and small farmer.  

In a 1934 report from the Department of Agriculture which looked back on the situation, they determined the poor Arab cultivators were “caught up in a web of debt” having to devote almost all of their annual income to paying off their debt to moneylenders who were charging, on average, 30 percent interest on loans. As for the progress of the agricultural programs they observed that their work was limited towards actually helping the Arab cultivators:

The conservative nature of the Palestinian farmer makes the introduction of new types of crops into his normal rotation difficult.... It is questionable as to whether a good agronomist would advocate the use of expensive agricultural machinery and modern labor saving devices for the small holder. The Arab cultivator has neither the power to work nor the money to purchase...

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El-Eini summarized Stein’s conclusion that the British agricultural policy during the 1930s was “too little, too late.” But El-Eini was more charitable saying that, while it did fail for its immediate need of intensification of agricultural production, it did help some Arab peasants and it did lay ground work for future programs. Looking back on this period in 1946, the members of the Anglo-American Committee of Inquiry concluded the efforts of the agricultural program resulted in “little or no improvement.” Arab skeptics would look at the British agricultural programs as just another stalling tactic in order to allow more Jewish immigration to occur and would add to the growing discontent.

LANDLESS ARABS AND LAND TRANSFER CONTROLS

The other area the British looked at to address fulfilling the Mandate and easing tensions was the landless Arab issue and related land transfer controls. The landless Arab issue was not new, the British were aware of it from the beginning of the Mandate and it was one of the motivations behind early agricultural education programs but the issue grew along with land sales. The Shaw and Hope-Simpson Reports and the White Paper of 1930 all put a bright light on the direct role of land sales to landless Arabs, the


increasing Arab unemployment in rural and urban areas, and the strife which lead to violence that was costly for the British, both politically and economically. It was suspected that the limited availability of land, Jewish immigration, and land sales to Jews was the cause of the growing landless Arab problem. The early 1930s saw greater effort to investigate and address these problems under High Commissioner Chancellor. The new Development Department was created and several new pieces of legislation were considered for land transfer control.

The Development Department and the Landless Arab Inquiry

The Development Department was initially charged with dealing with both the landless Arab inquiry and land transfer controls. It was to have an Arab and Jewish advisor but both groups refused to appoint one. For the Arabs, it was the familiar argument that if they participated it indicated acceptance of the Balfour Declaration and Mandate policy. Also, the Arab Executive wanted the British to repudiate the MacDonald Letter before it would officially participate. They attempted to coordinate unofficial meetings but those were not successful. Stein writes that the Arab Executive was concerned that an investigation into landless Arabs would reveal that Arab elites were selling land and was another reason they did not participate. Even though the Arab Executive did not participate with the Development Department they did not reject its mission.35

34 Stein, The Land Question, 76.
The Zionists used appointing a representative to the Department and access to their land records as leverage to gain other concessions. One important early change they influenced was moving the land transfer controls issue out of the Development Department. The rationale was that the High Commissioner had ultimate control over new ordinances and Chancellor, the High Commissioner at the time, would not be as susceptible to Zionist influence as those in the Department.\(^{36}\)

Initially the Department was to be funded by a loan of £7 million, which was cut to £2.5 million, then cut again to £50,000 which was what the department had when it finally got started on its work.\(^{37}\) The key reason for the dramatic reduction was the world-wide depression which caused farmers in Britain to struggle and it did not seem appropriate for the government to help Palestinian farmers when British farmers were in need. Other reasons included the drop in the value of the British pound and the lack of cooperation from Arab and Jewish leaders in forming the Department.\(^{38}\)

The British concern over the connection between land sales to Jews and landless Arabs and the quantity of landless Arabs was expressed in the Hope-Simpson report. The Zionists bristled at the implication they were the sole cause of the landless Arab problem and their objective regarding the Development Department was to ensure the number of landless Arabs counted remained low so that the issue would not pose a threat to the availability of land for Jewish settlers and the admission of more

\(^{36}\) Stein, *The Land Question*, 138 – 139.

\(^{37}\) Stein, *The Land Question*, 146.

\(^{38}\) Stein, *The Land Question*, 128 – 129 and 137.
immigrants. This was a critical issue for the Zionists and turning it in their favor was essential. It was no less critical for the Arabs but through their failure to participate they lost any chance to influence the process in any way.\textsuperscript{39}

A critically important way the Zionists influenced the handling of this issue was by shaping the definition of “landless Arab” into a narrow one: “such Arabs as can be shown to have been displaced from the lands which they occupied in consequence of the land passing into Jewish hands, and who have not obtained other holdings on which they can establish themselves, or other equally satisfactory occupation.”\textsuperscript{40} This definition first appeared in the MacDonald Letter, which was heavily influenced by Weizmann and the Jewish Agency.\textsuperscript{41} Because the definition determined who would qualify as a landless Arab it controlled the scope of the problem.

When it came time for the potential landless Arabs to make their claims it was done through written questionnaires sent to village leaders who circulated them and assisted any illiterate claimants. Afterwards, they reviewed and sent the questionnaires back to the Department. These claims were reviewed by the legal advisor, A. H. Webb, previously the Nablus District Court Judge, who was put up for the position by Zionists and was appointed through their influence. Old land records held by the Jewish Agency

\textsuperscript{39} Stein, \textit{The Land Question}, 147.

\textsuperscript{40} Stein, \textit{The Land Question}, 128 – 129.

\textsuperscript{41} Stein, \textit{The Land Question}, 128 – 131.
were needed in order to evaluate the claims and Webb was willing to allow the Agency to review all the claims in exchange for access to those records.42

High Commission Chancellor was replaced by Arthur Wauchope in 1931 much to the pleasure of the Jewish Agency. Chancellor, who was familiar with land issues and was concerned about the status of Arabs under the Mandate, was not as sympathetic to the Zionist cause as Samuel and Plumer had been. Wauchope was not as familiar with land issues, giving the Zionist advocates an opportunity to influence him to move in a direction favorable to them.43

As the inquiry proceeded, an unexpectedly low number of qualified landless Arabs were identified. While the British were surprised by the result they did not push for further explanation. According to Stein, there was plenty of blame to go around for the landless Arab problem. He believed Arab landlords were also responsible for displacing tenants when they sold land and when elites acted as land brokers, coordinating sales with Jews and Jewish organizations. He explained the Arabs tried to hide their participation out of fear they would be criticized for their actions, and more importantly, to protect future opportunities. Further, the Zionists wanted to protect the names of the Arabs who were supplying them with names of willing sellers, or people in financial difficulties on the verge of wanting to sell, so they would not lose their connection to buying opportunities.44 Stein argued that the landless Arab problem was

42 Stein, *The Land Question*, 148 – 149.


44 Stein, *The Land Question*, 133.
created as much by the Arabs as by the Jews and he used that detail to delegitimize the concern for the landless Arab because both sides had an interest in keeping land transaction going. Stein concluded that “the task at hand for the Jewish Agency was to repudiate the implication that it was the sole cause for Arab landlessness and yet selectively protect the prestige and public honor of past and future Arab vendors.”\textsuperscript{45} At the same time, it was important to keep “the Arab need for money dependent upon Jewish land purchases and not [His Majesty’s Government’s] benevolence.”\textsuperscript{46} The British, having confirmed the Arab involvement in the land sales through a separate investigation conducted by Lewis French, essentially dropped further inquiry and focused on resettling those who were identified as qualified landless Arabs.\textsuperscript{47}

By the end of 1933, the effort to document and resettle landless Arabs resulted in only 74 of the 899 “qualified” Arab families being resettled on land through the Development Department.\textsuperscript{48} Because of the fear of outbreaks of violence, the British did not want to resettle the landless Arabs near Jewish settlements.\textsuperscript{49} What started to take shape were geographically distinct areas for Jews and for Arabs and, according to Stein, this planted the idea of a partition.\textsuperscript{50} Stein reported that approximately £84,000 was

\textsuperscript{45} Stein, The Land Question, 133.

\textsuperscript{46} Stein, The Land Question, 132.

\textsuperscript{47} Smith, Arab-Israeli Conflict, 8th ed., 130 – 131.

\textsuperscript{48} Stein, The Land Question, 146.

\textsuperscript{49} Stein, The Land Question, 137 – 138.

\textsuperscript{50} Stein, The Land Question, 138.
spent on resettlement and 85 percent of that amount went directly to land purchases.\textsuperscript{51} Other solutions utilized by the Department included paying landowners to hire the landless Arabs, leasing private land for them to work, or leasing government land to them to work.\textsuperscript{52}

The Development Department did very little work after 1936 and stopped functioning in 1939.\textsuperscript{53} Stein commented that "its aims were nobly defined, but its effectiveness was appallingly limited."\textsuperscript{54} For the Jewish Agency, they were successful in limiting the impact of the landless Arab issue on the ability of Jewish interests to purchase land.\textsuperscript{55} But regardless of the influence of the Zionists, the compromised position of the Arab elites, and the lack of commitment of the British, the underlying issue of landless Arabs remained and continued to contribute to the tensions building in the early and mid-1930s.\textsuperscript{56}

Land Transfer Controls and Regulations Blocked

At the same time work was being done on the landless Arab issue, the British considered more regulations on land transfers. This was identified as important to the administration because it was intended to prevent land speculators from buying up any

\textsuperscript{51} Stein, \textit{The Land Question}, 146.

\textsuperscript{52} Stein, \textit{The Land Question}, 159.

\textsuperscript{53} Stein, \textit{The Land Question}, 146 – 147.

\textsuperscript{54} Stein, \textit{The Land Question}, 147.

\textsuperscript{55} Stein, \textit{The Land Question}, 172.

\textsuperscript{56} Stein, \textit{The Land Question}, 142; Smith, \textit{Arab-Israeli Conflict, 8th ed.}, 131.
remaining lands the government might need itself to resettle landless Arabs on as well as to stop Jewish agents from buying land and options to buy land. However, the Jewish Agency was again influential and limited these new efforts. They successfully argued that until the landless Arab numbers were finalized and the connection and degree of impact between land sales and landless Arabs was established, no new land transfer controls should be implemented. Since the Development Department determined that the number of qualified landless Arabs was low, coupled with the limited funds of the Department, the need for land transfer controls faded. Stein concluded that the Jewish Agency “prevented implementation of the land-transfer controls implied in the Passfield White Paper.”

By 1933, the Zionists through the Jewish Agency effectively stopped the political momentum towards addressing Arab land concerns which the Shaw, Hope-Simpson, and the Passfield White Paper had generated. British administrators in Palestine may have been “displeased with the degree of influence enjoyed by the Jewish Agency,” but they appeared to be either unwilling or unable to stop their influence. Stein commented,

[The Jewish Agency] helped to sustain the perception that only political reasons prevented the establishment of a Jewish national home. [His Majesty’s Government] much preferred to accept this reasoning, especially after it had decided not to deliver the proposed development loan. And although many

57 Stein, The Land Question, 136.
58 Stein, The Land Question, 139 – 141.
59 Stein, The Land Question, 141.
60 Stein, The Land Question, 149.
fellaheen remained destitute, [His Majesty's Government] did little to alleviate their suffering.\textsuperscript{61}

Once again the second part of the dual obligation to the Arabs would go wanting for the necessary support from the British while the Zionists continued to successfully protect their interests.

THE GENERAL STRIKE AND THE GREAT REVOLT

At the same time as the agricultural efforts and landless Arab inquiries were being pursued, the British government had a number of new and rapidly developing forces and circumstances to contend with in the early to mid-1930s. Hitler had become chancellor of Germany in January 1933 followed by the implementation of numerous laws severely limiting the freedom of Jews.\textsuperscript{62} Persecution of Jews in Eastern Europe was also increasing adding to the flow of immigrants.\textsuperscript{63} Immigration into Palestine shot up from 9,553 in 1932 to 30,327 in 1933 and then continued to increase to 42,359 in 1934 then up to 61,854 in 1935.\textsuperscript{64} The urban population was now up to 43 percent and rural population was down to 57 percent.\textsuperscript{65} This wave of immigration brought in an educated,

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{61} Stein, \textit{The Land Question}, 172.
\item \textsuperscript{62} Smith, \textit{Arab-Israeli Conflict}, 8\textsuperscript{th} ed., 129.
\item \textsuperscript{63} Roza I. M. El-Eini, "Trade Agreements and the Continuation of Tariff Protection Policy in Mandate Palestine in the 1930s," \textit{Middle Eastern Studies}, Vol. 34, No.1 (Jan. 1998), 167.
\item \textsuperscript{64} El-Eini, "Trade Agreements," 168, Table 2, source of information from the Royal Institute of International Affairs, \textit{Great Britain and Palestine}, 3\textsuperscript{rd} edition (London, 1946), 63.
\item \textsuperscript{65} Krämer, \textit{History of Palestine}, 185.
\end{itemize}
skilled, business oriented middle class with capital to invest in Palestine and created an economic boom.\textsuperscript{66}

The population of urban areas, especially Tel Aviv and Jaffa, expanded rapidly improving economic growth in the Jewish communities and an increased demand for food and western consumer goods. Because local agricultural producers could not meet the sudden increase in demand for both quantity and diversity of foods, imports were necessary and depressed the market for Palestinian produced goods which hurt all local agriculturalists.\textsuperscript{67} The imports were particularly frustrating because of Article 18 of the Mandate which said Palestine could take no action that would discriminate against the nationals of any other member of the League of Nations and that was interpreted to mean that Palestine could not impose tariffs and duties on imports to protect Palestinian producers in the market.\textsuperscript{68} Zionists and Arabs lobbied the British repeatedly for repeal or lessening of this restriction but the Colonial Office determined it should be left alone.\textsuperscript{69} Aside from a few modest concessions the British were able to negotiate with Syria and Egypt in the mid-1930s, the Palestinian market was still subject to the impact of imports.\textsuperscript{70}

\textsuperscript{66} Smith, \textit{Arab-Israeli Conflict, 8th ed.}, 129; El-Eini, “Trade Agreements,” 167.

\textsuperscript{67} El-Eini, “Trade Agreements,” 167.

\textsuperscript{68} El-Eini, “Trade Agreements,” 179; Smith, \textit{Arab-Israeli Conflict, 8th ed.}, 132.

\textsuperscript{69} El-Eini, “Trade Agreements,” 179 – 182.

\textsuperscript{70} El-Eini, “Trade Agreements,” 171 – 172.
With the new skilled population and capital came a surge in manufacturing and building in the Jewish communities. This created jobs and was a draw to the urban areas of unemployed Arabs who, in the case of Haifa in the mid-1930s, lived in “gas-can huts” on the outskirts of town. While some Arabs were able to find work, the Jewish labor union Histadrut still advocated for and enforced Jewish hires only for Jewish businesses and challenged Jewish businesses for hiring Arabs. The Zionists also influenced the number of Jews versus the number of Arabs that were hired by the British for Palestinian government work. They persuasively argued that because the Jews contributed at least 50 percent of the annual tax revenue of Palestine, they should hold at least 50 percent of the government jobs, regardless of the percentage of population each group held, and regardless of the growing landless Arab population.

Even though there was economic growth in the urban Jewish communities, when the world economy entered a depression, it hit the rest of Palestine hard. The price of wheat dropped 50 percent between June 1929 and June 1930 which hurt all cultivators but hit Arab cultivators especially hard due to agricultural debt, moneylenders, and limited financial support from the British. The world depression was one of the reasons the British dramatically scaled back its efforts to fund

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72 Smith, Arab-Israeli Conflict, 8th ed., 131. He reports that 11,160 workers lived in 2,500 oil can huts outside of Haifa at this time.
73 Smith, Arab-Israeli Conflict, 8th ed., 132.
74 Smith, Arab-Israeli Conflict, 8th ed., 131.
75 Johnson-Crosbie Report, Report on Agriculturalists, 64.
agricultural programs and the landless Arab inquiries. Agriculture was the primary
source of livelihood for most Arabs and with limited work opportunities with the British
or Jewish employers, their situation was bleak.

These factors added to the ever growing tension between Arabs and Jews, but this time there were important differences. First, political groups on both sides
increased their activity and secured both financial and moral support from outside
sources. Second, both Arabs and Zionists began to complain about the British handling
of the Mandate. Both could make multiple claims of British betrayal of promises and
obligations. Most recently the Zionists could point to the conclusions of the Shaw and
Hope-Simpson Reports and the Arabs could point to the British repeatedly yielding to
Zionist influence with the recent example of allowing the Jewish Agency to “run” the
landless Arab inquiry. Smith points out that a new generation of Arabs and Jews had
been born under the Mandate and had learned the British were neither trustworthy or
in complete control of events in Palestine. Finally, both Arab and Jewish communities
saw more aggressive or radical factions emerge who actively began to shape the
future.

The discovery of a large shipment of smuggled arms for the Zionists spiked
tensions and Wauchope suggested a legislative council as a means to defuse the
tension. The Arabs accepted the proposal in part because they thought it could be a

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77 Smith, *Arab-Israeli Conflict, 8th ed.*, 132.

means to put an end to Jewish immigration “and the scope of the Jewish community.”

When both the Zionists and British Parliament rejected that proposal, Arabs took it as another example of Zionist influence over the British, and it sparked an eruption of violence in April 1936. This unified the Arab factions enough to create the Arab Higher Committee who called for a general strike.

The strike plan was for Arabs to stop working for Jewish employers and conducting any business with Jews. It went from April through November 1936 and was not effective primarily due to the fact that any Arab who refused to work would simply be replaced by a Jew. It had the unintended consequence of further solidifying the Jewish community because more Jewish workers were hired making the community even more self-reliant. Violence erupted in the countryside and required British forces to contain it. In response to the violence, schools closed and agricultural agents and inspectors restricted their fieldwork; however, some were killed while making their rounds in the countryside. Agricultural institutions and fixtures, such as fences, were damaged and animals killed as symbols of Britain. El-Eini explained that between 1936 and 1939, the Department of Agriculture “had to witness the sabotage and undoing or destruction of much of its work.”

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79 Smith, Arab-Israeli Conflict, 8th ed., 130.

80 Smith, Arab-Israeli Conflict, 8th ed., 130.


82 El-Eini, “British Agricultural Education,” 103 and 110.


The strike and violence finally ended when the British brought in additional troops and the Arab Higher Committee called off the strike. In May 1937 the Peel Commission was appointed to investigate the causes of the violence and make recommendations. At this point the Arab and Zionist demands were as polarized as ever. The Arabs wanted Palestine declared an Arab state and was "no place for the nearly 400,000 Jews who had immigrated since World War I."\textsuperscript{85} The Zionists wanted unlimited immigration and unrestricted land purchases "as a matter of right" in order to build a Jewish state.\textsuperscript{86}

THE PEEL COMMISSION REPORT

In response to the strike and violence of 1936, an independent Royal Commission, not beholden the British Government, was appointed to investigate and "ascertain the underlying causes of the disturbances" and "to inquire into the manner in which the Mandate for Palestine [was] being implemented in relation to [the British] obligations as Mandatory towards the Arabs and the Jews respectively."\textsuperscript{87} If they found any "legitimate grievances" they were to make recommendations to prevent any recurrence.\textsuperscript{88} The Chairman of the Commission was William Robert Wellesley, Earl Peel,

\textsuperscript{85} Smith, Arab-Israeli Conflict, 8\textsuperscript{th} ed., 135.

\textsuperscript{86} Smith, Arab-Israeli Conflict, 8\textsuperscript{th} ed., 135.

\textsuperscript{87} Peel, Royal Commission Report, vi.

\textsuperscript{88} Peel, Royal Commission Report, vi.
and the Peel Commission Report was published in July 1937.\textsuperscript{89} The Report concluded that the “chief problem in connection with the land lies in... the dual obligation”\textsuperscript{90} and explained that “one article imposed a definite obligation...yet another article [was] held to prevent the fulfillment of that obligation.”\textsuperscript{91} It acknowledged the conflict between the dual obligations had been the constant problem which generated a series of numerous investigations and reports which led to revised policies and new ordinances.\textsuperscript{92}

In their efforts to administer the Mandate the British faced the force of “circumstances of singular difficulty.”\textsuperscript{93} The challenges mentioned in the Report included dealing with the Ottoman Land Code, unreliable land records, and trying to complete a survey and land settlements.\textsuperscript{94} It also pointed specifically to “the unavoidable pressure of the Jews for land purchases and consequent land speculation” and the outbreaks of violence which diverted revenue away from development plans in order to pay for police and security.\textsuperscript{95} Lack of cooperation from the Arabs, especially as it related to agricultural reforms, was particularly frustrating. Had there been more progress with the transition from extensive to intensive agriculture, the economic pressures on the Arabs would have been less and the Arabs would have required less

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\textsuperscript{89} Smith, Arab-Israeli Conflict, 8\textsuperscript{th} ed., 135.
\textsuperscript{90} Peel, Royal Commission Report, 221.
\textsuperscript{91} Peel, Royal Commission Report, 222.
\textsuperscript{92} Peel, Royal Commission Report, 222 – 225.
\textsuperscript{93} Peel, Royal Commission Report, 225.
\textsuperscript{94} Peel, Royal Commission Report, 227.
\textsuperscript{95} Peel, Royal Commission Report, 225.
\end{flushright}
land to sustain themselves leaving more land available for settlement for the Jews. Agricultural reform was once again seen as necessary for the fulfillment of the Mandate.⁹⁶

The Report included a summary of “the problem of Palestine” starting with promises made to the Arabs and the Jews.⁹⁷ “Under the stress of the World War the British Government made promises to Arabs and Jews in order to obtain their support. On the strength of those promises both parties formed certain expectations.”⁹⁸ Each believed they were being promised territory for their own independent state. The British had hoped that under the dual obligations the Arabs and Jews “would prove in course of time to be mutually compatible owning to the conciliatory effect on the Palestinian Arabs of the material prosperity which Jewish immigration would bring to Palestine as a whole.”⁹⁹ But the two had a different language, religion, “cultural and social life, [and] their ways of thought and conduct [were] as incompatible as their national aspirations.”¹⁰⁰ Both wanted Palestine as their own country and “there [was] no common ground between them.”¹⁰¹ The “conflict was inherent in the situation from

⁹⁶ Peel, Royal Commission Report, 225.
⁹⁷ Peel, Royal Commission Report, 370.
⁹⁸ Peel, Royal Commission Report, 370.
⁹⁹ Peel, Royal Commission Report, 370.
¹⁰⁰ Peel, Royal Commission Report, 370.
¹⁰¹ Peel, Royal Commission Report, 370.
the outset. The terms of the Mandate tended to confirm it.”102 The British now officially recognized that the goals of the Mandate were unachievable.103

The Report acknowledged that matters would get worse in the future. Jewish immigration was expected to increase in response the increasingly dangerous situation in Europe.104 The children of Palestine were being raised in an atmosphere of division and rivalry.105 Both sides now had fellow Jews and Arabs outside of Palestine concerned for their futures who were providing political, moral, and financial support deepening the divide and pressuring Britain on their behalf.106 With tensions remaining, the British would need to maintain security forces, the cost of which kept funds from development programs. Should more outbreaks occur, that would require involvement of “the British Treasury to an incalculable extent.”107 Beyond that, there was a real concern that future violence could result in war, the loss of allies in the Middle East, and a lessening of British international prestige.108 The Report stated that the conflict would only intensify with these “estranging” forces “year by year.”109

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With those stark realizations, the Report turned to the future of the Mandate for Palestine. The British acknowledged that both the Jews and the Arabs were capable of governing but only of themselves, not the other. The British did not reject the goals of the Mandate or their obligations to the Jews and the Arabs; however, the Report saw no way to establish a “single, self-governing Palestine.” With that, the Report suggested partition as the solution to the problem of Palestine. It stated that “while neither race can justly rule all Palestine, we see no reason why, if it were practicable, each race should not rule part of it.” The hope was the possibility of peaceful co-existence would trump all the difficulties involved in a partition plan, including resistance over dividing the Holy Land. Finally, the Report stated that “partition seems to offer at least a chance of ultimate peace. We can see none in any other plan.”

The basic division of the Peel partition plan would have given the northern section and a strip along the coast to a point just below Jaffa to the Jews. It would have been approximately 20 percent of the land area of Palestine. The British would still maintain a Mandate over the Holy Lands, the immediate area around Jerusalem, and a swath of land from there to the coast. The Arabs would have the rest, approximately 80 percent of Palestine. The Arabs rejected the proposal because the most fertile land...

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110 Peel, Royal Commission Report, 374 – 375.
111 Peel, Royal Commission Report, 373.
112 Peel, Royal Commission Report, 375.
113 Peel, Royal Commission Report, 375.
114 Peel, Royal Commission Report, 376.
was in the Jewish section and there were approximately 250,000 Arabs in that area that
would have to be relocated. The Zionists cautiously accepted the plan with an agenda
to negotiate for expanded borders later. The Arabs, familiar with the success the
Zionist had had influencing the British, could see that the Zionist acceptance of the plan
would mean an even greater loss of territory for the Arabs in the future. Tensions
erupted again into the wide-spread violence of the Great Revolt and continued from
September 1937 through January 1939.

POLITICAL EXPEDIENCY AND THE BRITISH EXIT FROM PALESTINE

In a dramatic unfolding of events, the Mandate came to an abrupt end and the
issues of Arab cultivators vaporized in the heat of war. During the post-Peel Arab Revolt,
the Arab Higher Committee fell apart. To fill the void, and leadership of the Revolt fell to
individuals leading various independent groups of Arab fighters who created havoc in
the countryside. British forces were joined by the Jewish self-defense organization
Hagana. Later, the Revisionists military group, known as Irgun, was also involved and
acted independently of the British and Hagana. Arab peasants were caught in the
middle and were subjected to violence from the British, Jews, and other Arabs. After
more British troops came into Palestine, the Revolt ended in January 1939. The

\[116\text{ Smith, Arab-Israeli Conflict, } 8^{th} \text{ ed., 136.}

\[117\text{ Smith, Arab-Israeli Conflict, } 8^{th} \text{ ed., 136.}

\[118\text{ Smith, Arab-Israeli Conflict, } 8^{th} \text{ ed., 138 – 139.}

\[119\text{ Smith, Arab-Israeli Conflict, } 8^{th} \text{ ed., 139.}
Zionists grew stronger and more organized as the Arab leadership was fragmented and unorganized. But changing circumstance in Europe and the approach of World War II caused Britain to conclude that it, once again, needed the support of Arab countries, to protect the Suez Canal as well as vital communication, transportation, and air support networks throughout the Middle East. The British also needed to keep the Arab population of Palestine peaceful so that British troops could focus on the coming war in Europe. This change of priorities brought about another change in British policy in Palestine that focused on “a complete appeasement of Arab opinion in Palestine and in neighboring countries.”

In order to have the control over Palestine the British would need to keep it peaceful and supportive. This meant the Mandate had to continue with Britain as the Mandatory power over all of Palestine. The partition plan was reversed. Subsequently, the Woodhead Commission Report, released in November 1938, concluded there were “no feasible boundaries” to achieve self-supporting Jewish and Arab states. However, that report still proposed alternative border plans which were rejected by the Zionists. The White Paper of 1938 pronounced that partition was “impracticable” and returned to the Mandate policy. In the meantime, to address the lingering issues identified in the Peel Commission Report, the St. James Conference was called in 1939

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120 Smith, Arab-Israeli Conflict, 8th ed., 139 – 140.

121 Smith, Arab-Israeli Conflict, 8th ed., 141.

122 Smith, Arab-Israeli Conflict, 8th ed., 141 – 142.

123 Smith, Arab-Israeli Conflict, 8th ed., 142.
with Zionist and Arab representatives. The British advised the parties that if they could not agree to a resolution of the problems, the British would impose their own. There was no common ground between the parties and the White Paper of 1939 expressed the imposed British solution. The new plan “called for the creation of a Jewish national home [to] be created within an independent Palestinian state.” Immigration and land sales would be limited and in ten years the situation would be evaluated to determine if independence should be granted. Both Arabs and Jews rejected this dramatic change in policy but they put their rejection “on hold” because World War II was bearing down and both Arabs and Jews wanted to see Germany defeated and that would require their support of Britain as her allies.

During the early years of World War II, Palestine was relatively quiet. Zionists were busy preparing for the potential fight it would have after the War in order to achieve its objective of an independent Jewish state. Part of their preparations included stock piling weapons. The Arabs of Palestine were “exhausted and leaderless.” But the War years also brought British taxpayer’s dollars to Palestine and submarine warfare seriously limited imports which helped the Palestinian economy by giving locally

\[1^24\] Smith, Arab-Israeli Conflict, 8\textsuperscript{th} ed., 142 – 143.

\[1^25\] Smith, Arab-Israeli Conflict, 8\textsuperscript{th} ed., 143.

\[1^26\] Smith, Arab-Israeli Conflict, 8\textsuperscript{th} ed., 143 – 145.

\[1^27\] Gelvin, Israeli-Palestinian Conflict, 2\textsuperscript{nd} ed., 119.

\[1^28\] Smith, Arab-Israeli Conflict, 8\textsuperscript{th} ed., 146.

\[1^29\] Gelvin, Israeli-Palestinian Conflict, 2\textsuperscript{nd} ed., 119.
produced goods a chance to sell at inflated war prices.\textsuperscript{130} It saw Palestinian agricultural output improve 30 percent and, with the need to supply food for British troops at good prices, many Arab cultivators were finally able to break free from their debt.\textsuperscript{131} School gardens increased from 226 in 1938 to approximately 242 by 1945.\textsuperscript{132}

The direction of the Zionist movement began to move away from its moderate position to an aggressive position, one favored by the Revisionists, as they feared Britain could not be trusted to protect Jewish interests in Palestine. The pressure of finding a home for Jewish war refugees and the Holocaust prompted the suggestion that immigration limits in Palestine be increased; however, this was not done.\textsuperscript{133}

When the war in Europe ended in May 1945, immigration issues sparked outbreaks of violence in Palestine. British troops were again sent to contain the violence. This time, however, the British turned to the United Nations, successor of the League of Nations, and asked them to resolve the matter of the Mandate for Palestine. The conclusion of the investigation by the United Nations and the subsequent proposal was that Palestine should be partitioned but Jerusalem would be an international area. The proposal was accepted by the members of the United Nations. The British

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\textsuperscript{130} Keith-Roach, \textit{Posha of Jerusalem}, 208; Gelvin, \textit{Israeli-Palestinian Conflict}, 2\textsuperscript{nd} ed., 120 – 121.

\textsuperscript{131} Gelvin, \textit{Israeli-Palestinian Conflict}, 2\textsuperscript{nd} ed., 121.

\textsuperscript{132} EI-Eini, “British Agricultural Education,” 100.

\textsuperscript{133} Gelvin, \textit{Israeli-Palestinian Conflict}, 2\textsuperscript{nd} ed., 123.
\end{flushright}
announced their departure date as mid-May 1948 and both Arabs and Zionist knew this would be when “the war for Palestine began in earnest.”

From December 1947 through May 1948, a civil war was fought between Zionists and Palestinian Arabs which resulted in the proclamation of the independent Jewish state of Israel. The Israelis then fought surrounding Arab countries to secure its new borders and the final armistice agreements with those Arab countries were concluded and signed by mid-1949. In the course of the conflict, untold thousands of Palestinians died and approximately 750,000 Palestinian became refugees as they were forced from the territory, their homes destroyed, and were barred from ever returning. After three decades of disputes, investigations, reports, policies, and ordinances dealing with the land of Palestine under the British Mandate, “the Palestinian community was dispersed and had no territory to call its own.”

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136 Gelvin, Israeli-Palestinian Conflict, 2nd ed., 127.
CHAPTER 7
CONCLUSION

The Johnson-Crosbie Report officially identified intensive agriculture as the solution for the complex issues and tensions among the Arab and Jewish populations in Palestine under the Mandate. To address the issues of agricultural debt, land sales, landless Arabs, and the need for land for Jewish settlement, the British theory was if Arab farmers could produce more crops on less land it would provide them with a higher income so that they could get out of deep agricultural debt and modernize to sustain that level of production. A further benefit would be excess land they could sell for Jewish settlement. They would be motivated to do these things because the overall economic health of Palestine would improve because of the Jewish population and the Arab population would share in these economic benefits. In theory, this would result in their acceptance of the Mandate goals of creating a national homeland for Jews in Palestine where they would be subject to Jewish governance. And finally, a Jewish state would give the British their beholding and friendly ally in a strategically important geographic location to protect British interests.

However, the Johnson-Crosbie Report identified two other solutions that were rejected immediately. First, that credit should be extended to farmers so that the reliance on moneylenders could be eliminated as it was their high interest rates which decimated profits and continually kept the farmer in debt. The reason it was rejected was that the farmers, especially small and poor ones, were a high credit risk and it
would likely mean the loans would not be paid back, at least initially. But if any one action could have broken the debt cycle it would have been ending the constant reliance on moneylenders by providing government backed loans. If that were coupled with improved agricultural methods, increased production, and profits, then the loans could be repaid. But the money was not made available either though the limited tax revenues in Palestine or British government loans.

Second, the elimination of musha land, or the jointly owned land, through the transfer of it into individually owned land was also raised as a solution. In theory, the benefit would have been that an individual owner would invest in needed improvements in the land to make it more productive, reap the profits, and be willing to sell excess land to Jewish settlers. This was rejected immediately as too difficult to accomplish because of the assumed lack of cooperation of the joint owners, the cost which the joint owners would have to bare for the transfer, and the fact that it was a legally complicated process. On the last point, the British were still in the process of establishing a reliable land registry and settling land ownership disputes and that alone would have made these transfers difficult even if the other two points were favorable. However, if musha land made up approximately half of all Arab held cultivable land, this option should have been explored for those instances where joint owners were willing to go through the process, the land registries were sufficiently updated, and ownership was settled. The amount of land involved would have merited such consideration.

Intensive agriculture was the one solution that was repeatedly put forward and was expected to carry a tremendous burden to accomplish more than could reasonably
be expected under all of the circumstances. This was especially true given the lack of investment the British were willing to make in the agricultural programs. The fact that Jewish agricultural efforts far outpaced the British efforts chronically left the Arabs at an economic disadvantage. The key distinctions between the two efforts were funding and commitment. The Jewish agricultural efforts had funding from outside sources that went into equipping farmers with what they needed to succeed. Education and research was ongoing and information was widely shared and used by Jewish farmers. They practiced cash crop agriculture, traded in international markets, and were better able to weather economic challenges. Additionally, they had willing participants motivated to succeed. The British agricultural efforts were dependent upon limited local tax revenues and the occasional loan from the British treasury for their programs. While the design and objectives of their programs provided some educational and research benefits, those benefits were too limited and did not reach enough of the Arab farmers caught in agricultural debt. Further, the British efforts failed to take into account the cultural and learning differences of the small and subsistence Arab farmer. The British programs failed to achieve the desired result, which raises the question of why they repeatedly put intensive agriculture forward as a solution.

From the beginning of the Mandate the need to increase agricultural production was part of the British plan for Arab farmers and it took on greater importance as it was named in the major commission reports as a solution to end tensions and violence between Arabs and Jews in Palestine as well as to achieve the goals of the Mandate. Agriculture was the solution the British knew, they were masters at it themselves, and it
was their time-tested method to civilize the uncivilized and make normal the abnormal. Agricultural development was the answer because the British did not want to invest in providing loans and they had seen intensive cash crop agriculture work in Egypt and believed they could achieve the same results in Palestine. Intensive agriculture was an easier, faster solution than the complete conversion of the musha land system to individual ownership. Agricultural programs were the solution because they showed that the British were taking an active role to address problems in Palestine which would satisfy any concern the League of Nations had over their degree of involvement in their administration of the Mandate. Finally, the repeated call for agricultural programs to assist the Palestinian Arabs was a means to show an effort to uphold both sides of the dual obligation and was an effective tool to temporarily calm tensions and restore order in Palestine while the other business of the Mandate proceeded.

In the Peel Commission Report, a chapter entitled "The Force of Circumstances"\(^1\) reviewed all the various situations that had made it difficult for the British to achieve its goals under the Mandate. With the hindsight of history, it is hard to say if any one factor led to the demise of the Mandate or if it was truly the force of circumstances. However, the fact the British placed so much emphasis on agricultural policies as the key to achieving the goals of the Mandate would at least indicate that the failure of those policies contributed significantly to the failure of the Mandate.

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