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Sentiment and Geopolitics in the formulation and realization of the Balfour Declaration

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SENTIMENT AND GEOPOLITICS IN THE FORMULATION AND REALIZATION OF THE
BALFOUR DECLARATION

BY

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A master's thesis submitted to the Graduate Faculty in Middle Eastern Studies in partial fulfillment of the requirements of the degree of Master of Arts, The City University of New York

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This manuscript has been read and accepted for the Graduate Faculty in Middle Eastern Studies in satisfaction of the requirement for the degree of Master of Arts.

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Abstract

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The 1917 Balfour Declaration remains perhaps one of the furthest reaching British policy statements. It laid foundation for the establishment of a Jewish national home in Palestine, and was ever since perceived by some as the source of the subsequent Arab-Jewish conflict in Palestine. The Declaration was also interpreted in certain circles as a desperate wartime measure of the British government which hoped to turn the tide of the costly war against Germany by making promises to supposedly influential worldwide Jewish community. However, the Balfour Declaration was more than that. It was a continuation of parallel British geostrategic and humanitarian sensibilities dating back to the Foreign Secretary Viscount Palmerston, and which influenced the attitudes and policies of later British leaders like the Foreign Secretary Arthur J. Balfour and the Prime Minister David Lloyd George. Much of the geopolitical drive behind the Declaration could be traced back to long established British interest in the security of the Suez Canal and communication with India. Humanitarianism, on the other hand, involved a genuine concern for the future of European Jewry, sometimes leavened by messianic Protestantism. Palmerston, Balfour and Lloyd George believed they could successfully merge humanitarian philo-semitism with pragmatic geopolitics securing a better future for an oppressed people and their own empire simultaneously.

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Introduction

The 1917 Balfour Declaration remains perhaps one of Britain's furthest reaching policy statements. It contained a promise of British support for the establishment of a Jewish national home in Palestine. Its eventual incorporation into the 1922 mandate for Palestine transformed what was to some an abstraction of political sentiment into a real obligation under British and international law. Historians have debated it ever since. Leonard Stein identified various factors leading to it. One was the sympathy for Zionism shown by the Prime Minister David Lloyd George and the Foreign Secretary Arthur James Balfour. Another important factor was a desire to extricate Palestine from Britain's 1916 agreement with France (the famous Sykes-Picot agreement). No less significant was the fear that Germany was about to make similar offer to the Zionists, and a belief that a large-scale Jewish settlement could stabilize the whole region beneficially for the British empire.¹ Stein believed the timing of the Declaration was primarily related to a perception by the British cabinet that a favorable pro-Zionist statement would positively influence Russian and American Jews, who would in return help Britain by keeping their governments in the war against Germany.² Subsequently, Isaiah Friedman wrote how the Balfour Declaration was an attempt to secure vital wartime gains in the Middle East through an endorsement of the principle of self-determination, so avoiding American criticism of overt imperialism.³ Jonathan Schneer drew a similar link between reported German propaganda and the urgency on part of the British Cabinet to issue the Balfour Declaration in the fall of 1917.⁴

¹Leonard Stein, *The Balfour Declaration* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1961), pp.516-517, 549-551.

²Ibid., p.550.

³Isaiah Friedman, *The Question of Palestine: British-Jewish-Arab Relations 1914-1918* (New Brunswick, New Jersey: Transaction Publishers, 1992), pp.175, 285-287.

⁴Jonathan Schneer, *The Balfour Declaration: The Origins of Arab-Israeli Conflict* (New York: Random House, 2012), pp.343-344.

Nevertheless, Schneer wrote how even after the Declaration was adopted by the Cabinet, there was no immediate guarantee that Britain would fulfill its pledge. In November 1917 secret talks were held in Switzerland between British and Ottoman officials about a possible separate peace treaty, and Alfred Milner, the Secretary of State for War, considered leaving Palestine under nominal Turkish suzerainty.⁵ From these and other studies, it is evident that Britain's perception of the value of supporting Zionism is multi-faceted. One needs also to consider British interest in the fate of the Jews, which even in the nineteenth century had a humanitarian dimension. In this vein, Leopold Amery, an Assistant Secretary of the War Cabinet⁶ who was involved in moving Lloyd George's Eastern policy,⁷ observed how: "England was the only country where the desire of the Jews to return to their ancient homeland had always been regarded as a natural aspiration which ought not to be denied, if its fulfillment ever fell within the power of British statesmanship."⁸

The Balfour Declaration should not be regarded as just a short-term reaction to the events of the First World War. Rather, it was a continuation of parallel British geostrategic and humanitarian sensibilities dating back to Foreign Secretary Henry John Temple, Third Viscount Palmerston. Much of the drive behind the Declaration could be traced back to long established British interest in Palestine and the Jews. This paper will attempt to demonstrate how from 1840s to Lloyd George's prime-ministership, a combination of geopolitics and humanitarianism drew Britain to Palestine. The essence of geopolitical British interest was security of British interests in the Suez Canal and communication with India. Hitherto, this objective was accomplished by

⁵Schneer, *The Balfour Declaration*, pp.347-361.

⁶David Fromkin, *A Peace to End All Peace: The Fall of the Ottoman Empire and the Creation of the Modern Middle East* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 2001), pp.276-277.

⁷Friedman, *The Question of Palestine*, pp.128, 265-266.

⁸L.S. Amery, *My Political Life- Volume Two: War and Peace 1914-1929* (London: Hutchinson & Co. (Publishers) Ltd., 1953), p.114.

defending the Ottoman Empire from European rivals and their allies. In the decades preceding the First World War it seemed that the Ottoman Empire backed by Britain's European rivals could be a threat to Suez. Humanitarianism, on the other hand, involved a genuine concern for the future of European Jewry, sometimes leavened by messianic Protestantism. Certain British politicians notably Palmerston, Lloyd George and Balfour believed they could successfully merge humanitarian philo-semitism with pragmatic geopolitics securing a better future for an oppressed people and their own empire simultaneously. However, their attitude was by no means shared by everyone. Former Viceroy of India Nathaniel Curzon and Secretary of State for India Edwin Montagu along with army officers in Palestine such as Generals Gilbert Clayton and Louis Bols were skeptical, or even openly hostile to Zionism. Also, in its pursuit of geopolitical objectives, Britain made deals with the Arabs and French, which seemed to pull in other directions from the Balfour Declaration: the Hussein-McMahon correspondence and the Sykes-Picot agreement, to name two.

What paved the way for the Balfour Declaration, and eventual British mandate for Palestine, which from the legal point of the view carried a greater weight, was the outbreak of the First World War and the Ottoman Empire's belated entry into it, resulting in the latter's eventual dissolution. Having long preserved the Sultan's lands from other powers, Britain now contemplated a division of his territories. As early as January 1915 the Home Secretary Herbert Samuel submitted an official proposal for the British annexation of Palestine, which synthesized decades of British interest in the security of Suez with the future of the Jews. In a post-war settlement, it could not be left to rivals like France or surrendered to unpredictable international administration. Palestine as a buffer state between the Suez Canal and either French or Russian future holdings emerged as a strategic necessity, which was covered politically by supporting the

establishment of a Jewish national home there. Also, support for Jews in Palestine would permit indirect rule via a settler community completely dependent on Britain. Under Lloyd George's prime-ministership Zionist leaders like Chaim Weizmann were also close enough to the British government to influence policy formulation for Palestine. So the timing of the Declaration was related to the progress of the war against the Ottomans, advanced by certain key philo-semites in the British government, and an emergence of determined Zionists who were willing to support Britain and promise global Jewish support in return for a promise of restoration of their homeland. In the decades preceding the Declaration, not all of these factors had converged critically.

However, after the adoption of the Balfour Declaration, there was little planning of how to implement the pledge to the Zionists. This allowed for alternative policy initiatives to emerge, especially among British imperial agents in the Middle East who backed Britain's Arab allies and actively obstructed their government's pro-Zionist policy. Nonetheless, they proved unable to alter the determination of policymakers in London, notably Colonial Secretary Winston Churchill, to fulfill Britain's pledge, which they regarded as the prime justification for their legitimate claim to the Palestine mandate.

Nineteenth century British interests in Palestine

British interest in Palestine during the nineteenth century was marked by essentially two impulses: geopolitics and humanitarianism. Viscount Palmerston is most commonly credited for expressing interest in the fate of both the Ottomans and the Jews. His motives were viewed as a combination of genuine philo-semitism, humanitarianism and responsible statesmanship.⁹ To some authors like Mayir Varete, Palmerston was not really led by his sympathy for Jews, but mainly by national interest and geopolitics.¹⁰ Britain had to strengthen its position at Constantinople and try to offset the influence of Russia and France. Both of these countries were able to exercise pressure on the Sublime Porte through the respective Orthodox and Catholic Maronite communities they claimed to protect. Britain could interpose itself as a patron of the Jews, and thus gain influence in Ottoman affairs.

Palmerston's motives were more nuanced than this. Britain did not merely seek to reinforce its own leverage over the Sultan or compete more effectively with France or Russia. The ultimate objective throughout the nineteenth century was to preserve integrity of the Ottoman Empire. Akin to the Prime Minister Herbert Asquith, the Foreign Secretary Sir Edward Grey and the official experts of the De Bunsen Committee in 1915,¹¹ Palmerston too wanted to prevent predatory European powers or their allies from dismembering the Ottoman Empire and upsetting the balance of power. Only in that way would Britain's ultimate geopolitical goal –

⁹Isaiah Friedman, "Lord Palmerston and the Protection of Jews in Palestine 1839-1951," *Jewish Social Studies* 30, no. 1 (1968): 23-41.

¹⁰M. Varete, "Why Was a British Consulate Established in Jerusalem?," *The English Historical Review* 85, no. 335 (1970): 316-345.

¹¹CAB. 42/3/12 PRO (Public Record Office, London), "Committee of Imperial Defence- Asiatic Turkey", Report of a Committee, 30 June 1915. Asquith appointed a committee chaired by former diplomat Sir Maurice De Bunsen in April 1915 to determine the best strategy in case the Ottoman Empire was to be dissolved.

maintenance of its naval supremacy in the Eastern Mediterranean- be safeguarded. To this end, Palmerston wanted to promote policies he perceived beneficial to the Ottomans. Support for the Jewish colonization, although based on certain mythical assumptions, was one of them:

It is well known that the Jews of Europe possess great wealth; and it is manifest that any country in which a considerable number of them choose to settle, would derive great benefit from the Riches which they would bring into it...[It] would be of manifest importance to the Sultan to encourage the Jews to return to, and to settle in, Palestine; because the wealth which they would bring with them would increase the Resources of the Sultan's Dominions; and the Jewish People, if returning under the Sanctions and Protection and at the Invitation of the Sultan, would be a check upon any future evil Designs of Mehemet Ali or his Successor.¹²

Palmerston clearly believed in the power of Jews' financial resources and their willingness to invest in the Ottoman Empire. In his mind, if Jewish funds were applied properly, the Ottomans' ability to sustain their empire would be greatly improved. Following Mehmet Ali's destabilizing invasion and occupation of Syria in the 1830s, British policymakers wanted to reinforce the Ottoman Empire against future clients of its main rival – France. The policy was supposed to be beneficial to Jews as well. They would be given an opportunity to return to their ancestral homeland and escape persecution experienced in Eastern Europe. To encourage Jewish interest in settling in Palestine, Palmerston moreover realized it was necessary to promote reformism in the Ottoman Empire¹³ and protection for minority rights. He emphasized that in order to benefit from Jewish immigration, the Sultan had to see that the laws protecting persons and property were observed.¹⁴ Skeptical of the effectiveness and speed of Ottoman laws, Palmerston insisted that the Jews, who had no effective way of presenting their case in

¹²F.O. 78/390 (No. 134)., Viscount Palmerston to Viscount Ponsonby, 11 August 1840 in *The Rise of Israel Vol. 1*, ed. I. Friedman (New York: Garland Publishing Inc., 1987), pp.48-49.

¹³Friedman, "Lord Palmerston and the Protection of Jews in Palestine 1839-1951," *Jewish Social Studies* 30, no. 1 (1968): 34.

¹⁴F.O. 78/427 (No. 33)., Viscount Palmerston to Viscount Ponsonby, 17 February 1841 in *The Rise of Israel Vol. 1*, ed. I. Friedman, pp.53-54.

Constantinople, be given for a time a right to present their grievance through British diplomats.¹⁵ He empowered the British vice-consul in Jerusalem to provide related protection to Jews in Palestine.¹⁶ Britain thus unilaterally elevated itself to a position of a protector of Ottoman Jews, which was part of greater objective of preserving integrity of the Ottoman Empire itself, and ultimately British interests.

On the humanitarian aspect of British nineteenth century involvement in Palestine, there was continuity with attitudes expressed later by Lloyd George, and Balfour. Palmerston was sympathetic to the plight of Jews, especially in Eastern Europe. In Britain, there had been a historic interest in their future. In part, this was caused by messianic Protestantism. Palmerston's associate Anthony Ashley Cooper, the Seventh Earl of Shaftesbury, played a big role. While being a highly religious person, Shaftesbury shared Palmerston's compassion and humanitarianism. As a Member of Parliament he often stood up for the poor and sponsored the Ten Hours Bill, the Mines Act and the Lodging House Act.¹⁷ This compassionate activism combined with his fervent evangelical belief in restoration of the Biblical Jewish homeland to translate into support for pro-Zionist policies. He grew closer to radical premillennial interpretation of the Scriptures, which simultaneously influenced his missionary convictions, and commitment to social reform.¹⁸ These sentiments inspired him to work with Palmerston on furthering pro-Jewish policy in the Middle East. Shaftesbury's views were similar to those of Lloyd George two generations later: "We have done a deed...which the Jews will regard as an

¹⁵Ibid.

¹⁶F.O. 78/368 (No. 2)., John Bidwell to W.T. Young, 31 January 1839 in *The Rise of Israel Vol. I*, ed. I. Friedman, pp.45-48.

¹⁷Barbara Tuchman, *Bible and Sword: England and Palestine from the Bronze Age to Balfour* (New York: Funk & Wagnalls, 1956), pp.177-178.

¹⁸Donald M. Lewis, *The Origins of Christian Zionism: Lord Shaftesbury and Evangelical Support for a Jewish Homeland* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010), pp.115-117.

honour to their nation; and have thereby conciliated a body of well-wishers in every people under heaven.”¹⁹ Moreover, he thought the policy practical: “if we consider their return in the light of a new establishment or colonization of Palestine, we shall find it to be the cheapest and safest mode...they will return at their own expense, and with no hazard but to themselves, they will submit to the existing form of Government, having no preconceived theories to gratify.”²⁰ Shaftesbury’s sentiment misjudged the conscious nationalistic intention of the later European Jewish intellectuals like Theodore Herzl and Weizmann. However, this was decades before Herzl’s idea of Jewish state or nation, and given his evangelical conviction, Shaftesbury seemed to have viewed Jews as passive enactors of Christian millennialism.²¹ By contrast, Palmerston was a pragmatic man. He did not share Shaftesbury’s mystical visions about the future of Palestine, but he was eager to accept practical policies which furthered Britain’s goal of preserving the Ottoman Empire.²²

Humanitarianism was of course the driving force of influential Anglo-Jewish sensibilities, especially for Sir Moses Montefiore. He was the very wealthy Sheriff of London and a gentleman knighted by Queen Victoria in 1837.²³ He assisted Jewish communities in Palestine financially and politically. During Mehmet Ali’s war against Sultan Mahmud II he planned to create a colonization company in Palestine which would establish autonomous and

¹⁹Lord Ashley, *State and Prospects of the Jews*, p.189 quoted in Lewis, *The Origins of Christian Zionism: Lord Shaftesbury and Evangelical Support for a Jewish Homeland*, p.167.

²⁰Letter from Ashley to Palmerston, 25 September 1840. F.O. 195/165 (No. 251).Enclosure no. 2 in Palmerston to Ponsonby, 25 November 1840 in *The Rise of Israel Vol. 1*, ed. I. Friedman, pp.49-51.

²¹Tuchman, *Bible and Sword*, pp.198-200.

²²Friedman, *The Question of Palestine*, p. xvii.

²³Joseph Adler, *Restoring the Jews to Their Homeland: Nineteen Centuries in the Question for Zion* (Northvale, New Jersey: Jason Aronson Inc., 1997), p.175.

self-sufficient communities.²⁴ While the project did not materialize, Montefiore continued diligent work to assist the existing Jewish communities financially and fund new medical facilities, orange groves, and a relief fund for victims of famine.²⁵

In the end, Palmerston's goal of Jewish settlements in Palestine did not work. The Ottoman Empire, which was being encroached on by a variety of European powers and internally disturbed by nationalist movements, resisted British initiatives. Ottoman ministers Rashid Pasha and Saib Pasha explained to the dragoman of the British Embassy at Constantinople that: "[to] give the Jews the right of presenting their complaints to the Porte through the channels of the British authorities is as good as placing them under protection of England and effecting a blow to the independence of the Turkish Government."²⁶ This would set a dangerous precedent and would invite other powers, France and Russia, to seek similar rights for their protégés.²⁷ It would in effect weaken the Ottoman Empire. After Palmerston, no serious involvement in sponsoring Jewish colonization of Palestine, let alone British military action, was considered by the government. In the last two decades of the nineteenth century, Britain remained preoccupied with Egypt, which it occupied under the Prime Minister William Gladstone in 1882; for the time being Palestine was marginalized in its imperial calculations,²⁸ much as romantic and religious undercurrents remained.

²⁴Ibid., pp.178-179.

²⁵Ibid.

²⁶Pisani to Ponsonby (in French) enclosed to F.O. 195/185 (No. 19), Viscount Ponsonby to Viscount Palmerston, 21 January 1841, in Isaiah Friedman, "Lord Palmerston and the Protection of Jews in Palestine 1839-1951," *Jewish Social Studies* 30, no. 1 (1968): 34-35.

²⁷F.O. 195/185 (No. 19)., Viscount Ponsonby to Viscount Palmerston, 21 January 1841 in *The Rise of Israel Vol.1*, ed. I. Friedman, pp.51-52.

²⁸Tuchman, *Bible and Sword*, pp.269-270.

The 1882 occupation of Egypt partly reversed the policy of strengthening and protecting the Ottoman Empire pursued since the 1830s and again during the Crimean War 1853-56. Indeed, in the 1880s Britain was concerned about delimiting Ottoman influence on Egypt. This combined with Gladstone's anti-Hamidian sentiment,²⁹ denunciation of the massacres of Ottoman Christians, and the subsequent rise of German influence at the Ottoman court³⁰ led to cooling of British-Ottoman relations. However even Gladstone recognized a need to maintain the Ottoman Empire.³¹ When Robert Gascoyne-Cecil, Third Marquess of Salisbury, entered prime ministerial office in 1886, however, Britain focused on naval bases in Alexandria and Cyprus, which were deemed sufficient, and indeed rendered protection of the Ottoman Empire, most notably its capital, superfluous.³² It would not be until the early 1900s when Palestine was seriously considered an imperial objective, when this comparative neglect was seen to concede too much to German ambitions and influence.

²⁹He labeled Abdul Hamid's government "bottom-less pit of fraud and falsehood..." who "will fulfill *nothing* except under force" in M.S. Anderson, *The Eastern Question 1774-1923* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1966), p.224.

³⁰Anderson, *The Eastern Question 1774-1923*, pp.220-245.

³¹Ibid.

³²Tuchman, *Bible and Sword*, pp.251-252.

Build-up to the First World War

Britain's view of Palestine in early 1900s was part of a larger policy context concerning the Ottoman Empire. Relations between London and Constantinople had deteriorated. Nevertheless, British policymakers still believed that their interests were better served if the Ottoman Empire remained intact. In the early twentieth century the British started to embrace a new vision of the world sensing where their position was threatened by newly emerging rival powers. There was also new terminology to accompany this vision. The term "Middle East" was for the first time used by an American naval officer Alfred T. Mahan in his 1902 article for *National Review*.³³ It was further propagated by Valentine Chirol, an influential journalist for *The Times*. His articles emphasized the German threat, and a need to secure vital strategic areas such as the Persian Gulf and the approaches to India. To Chirol, the old Eastern Question was essentially replaced by the Middle Eastern Question.³⁴ He was alarmed by what he saw as Germany's desire to expand its influence into the Middle East. Kaiser William II visited Abdul Hamid II in Constantinople and Damascus in 1898, declared German friendship for Muslims, and later encouraged German financial and industrial ventures in the Ottoman Empire.³⁵ Chirol wrote how "for William II Constantinople was already the bridge over which Germany was to pass out of Europe into Asia and enter upon a vast field of splendid adventure."³⁶ German backing allowed Abdul Hamid to reassert his role as the Caliph, and thereby influence Muslim sentiments from Egypt to India. The Sultan also devoted himself to the Hejaz railroad which linked Constantinople to Mecca.³⁷ In addition to modernizing the Hajj, the railway was a German-backed design by the Ottomans

³³Roderic H. Davison, "Where is the Middle East," *Foreign Affairs* 38, no. 4 (1960): 667.

³⁴*Ibid.*, pp.667-668.

³⁵Valentine Chirol, "Turkey in the Grip of Germany," *The Quarterly Review* 223, nos. 442, 443 (1915): 231-251.

³⁶*Ibid.*, p.239.

³⁷*Ibid.*, p.243.

which allowed them to move closer to British controlled Suez.³⁸ Part of British concerns related to German flirtation with Islam, especially by Max von Oppenheim, a member of the Cairo consulate who was known for Anglophobia. He established contacts with anti-British Egyptian nationalists like Mustafa Kamil, a founder of the National Party,³⁹ and alleged how an anti-British uprising would follow if the Sultan led an army across Sinai.⁴⁰

Apart from Chirol, Sir Halford Mackinder was another influential figure who analyzed British imperial circumstances mentalities in early 1900s. Mackinder was an academic geographer, and Conservative Party politician close to Parliamentary pro-imperialists of both parties. In his study, “The Geographical Pivot of History”, he labeled Russia a pivot state, because it mastered Central Asia with its vast resources.⁴¹ To him, seaborne empires like Britain’s were vulnerable, and the only way to strengthen it was through greater economic integration with its colonies and the adoption of protective tariffs.⁴² Mackinder believed the “Columbian Epoch”, a period of superiority of maritime power such as Britain’s, was declining.⁴³ While the Suez Canal gave an advantage to maritime powers, the key to future supremacy lied in development of trans-continental railways which: “[were] now transmuting the conditions of land-power, and nowhere [could] they have such an effect as in the closed heart-

³⁸Ibid.

³⁹William L. Cleveland, *A History of Modern Middle East* (Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press, 2004), pp.107-109.

⁴⁰Donald M. McKale, *War by Revolution* (Kent, Ohio: The Kent State University Press, 1998), pp.12-23.

⁴¹H.J. Mackinder, “The Geographical Pivot of History,” *The Geographical Journal* 23, no. 4 (1904): 434-437.

⁴²Brian W. Blouet, “The Imperial vision of Halford Mackinder”, *The Geographical Journal* 170, no. 4. (2004): 327.

⁴³Brian W. Blouet, *Halford Mackinder: A Biography* (Texas: A&M University Press, 1987), pp. 108-111.

land of Euro-Asia.”⁴⁴ Russia expanded its railroad network to six thousand miles and sent its troops to Manchuria much like the British navy was able to carry British army to South Africa in 1902, thus proving land-mobility did not lag behind sea-power.⁴⁵ A real threat coming from pivot state was its potential alliance with Germany and expansion over marginal areas of Eurasia to access ocean and build a navy that would challenge Britain.⁴⁶

Meanwhile, as for British Ottoman policy, it was essentially shaped by three sets of considerations. First, the British attempted to compete with financial and other ventures of their rivals. Second, geopolitics continued to be instrumental to overall policy, especially considering the perception of Turco-Germanic threat to Egypt. Third, unlike in Palmerston’s era, humanitarian support for Zionism did not receive a strong backing in this period. Nonetheless, overtures made by Theodore Herzl, an Austrian Jew and a father of modern Zionism, to the Secretary of State for the Colonies Joseph Chamberlain ensured it remained a possibility.

First, economic interests were vital component to overall British policy towards the Ottoman Empire. London’s policies were shaped by commerce from which strategic imperatives followed and which diplomacy served allowing Britain to uphold its interests.⁴⁷ The reverse was the case, too. As investments in the Ottoman Empire gradually diminished, it was followed by a decline in the influence of the British government.⁴⁸ City of London capitalists became cautious about expensive ventures following Ottoman default in 1876, and they sold most of their

⁴⁴Mackinder, “The Geographical Pivot of History,” p.434.

⁴⁵Ibid., pp.434-435.

⁴⁶Ibid., p.436.

⁴⁷Marian Kent, *Moguls and Mandarins: Oil, Imperialism and the Middle East in British Foreign Policy 1900-1940* (London: Frank Cass, 1993), p.26.

⁴⁸P.J. Cain and A.G. Hopkins, *British Imperialism: Innovation and Expansion 1688-1914* (New York: Longman, 1993), pp.399-411.

holdings to the French and Germans.⁴⁹ British Ottoman policy was accordingly reappraised in the 1880s. Therefore, a decline in economic engagement went hand to hand with decreasing British diplomatic intimacy with the Porte. The central pillar of economic involvement with the Ottoman Empire remained British interest in the Ottoman Public Debt Administration (PDA). It had operated since 1881 when the French-controlled Imperial Ottoman Bank and Deutsche Bank cooperated to restructure debt repayments to all foreign shareholders. This was done mainly through the collection of tobacco taxes and duties on stamps, fish, and alcoholic beverages.⁵⁰ However, Britain's share of PDA was relatively small (fifteen per cent) compared to German and French shares (twenty-two and sixty three per cent).⁵¹ Reflecting on the position before the First World War, Foreign Secretary Grey felt "[we] sacrificed our influence and material interests in Turkey; we did indeed keep our hands clean and acquit the national conscience...[but] Germany...exploited the situation steadily to her own advantage."⁵² In a reversal of tradition, Grey attempted to revive diplomatic influence in Turkey via economic investment through the British-owned National Bank of Turkey in 1909. Yet, the project failed because London investors did not support it.⁵³

Of greater concern were railroad projects. Britain was alarmed after concessions for the Baghdad railroad went to the Germans in 1902. The central issue was concern over the British position in the Gulf, and strategic interests in Persia and Mesopotamia. In 1909 a subcommittee examined the project: "British claims to political predominance in the Gulf are based mainly

⁴⁹Ibid.

⁵⁰Roger Adelson, *London and the Invention of the Middle East* (London: Yale University Press, 1995), p.41.

⁵¹Kent, *Moguls and Mandarins*, p.14.

⁵²Viscount Edward Grey of Fallodon, *Twenty-Five Years, 1892-1916 Vol. I* (New York: Frederick A. Stokes Company, 1925), p.128.

⁵³Cain and Hopkins, *British Imperialism: Innovation and Expansion 1688-1914*, pp.407-408

upon the fact of our commercial interests having hitherto been predominant, and should our trade, as a result of a German forward commercial policy, be impaired, our political influence would proportionately diminish.”⁵⁴ While objecting to the railroad proposal for years, an agreement was nonetheless reached in 1914. It ensured that extension of the railway would not jeopardize British predominance in the Gulf, or allow other powers to establish themselves on the coast.⁵⁵ It was, however, the development of the Hejaz railway that led to strategic reconsideration of Palestine’s position, preceding an eventual invasion during the First World War.

The security of Egypt became a priority for London following the Aqaba incident of 1906. The background to British concerns over Egypt went back to its occupation of the country in 1882. Since then, a number of factors worried British policymakers, not least of which were limits imposed by international obligations on the size and deployment of British forces in Egypt.⁵⁶ The 1906 incident seemed minor: in January 1906 the Ottomans dispatched two battalions to fortify positions at Aqaba alongside the Hejaz railway, and later prevented Egyptian forces from landing nearby.⁵⁷ This dispute was resolved in October 1906 when the Sultan was pressed to accept new delineations of the border.⁵⁸ However, the event led to important discussions in the newly formed Committee of Imperial Defense (CID). In July 1906, the Chief

⁵⁴“Report of the Subcommittee of Committee of Imperial Defense on the Baghdad Railway, Southern Persia, and Persia Gulf”, Viscount Morley and others, 26 January 1909 in *British Documents on Foreign Affairs: Reports and Papers from the Foreign Office Confidential Print, Series B, The Near and Middle East 1856-1914, Vol. 18, Arabia, the Gulf and Baghdad Railroad, 1907-1914*, ed. David Gillard, (University Publications of America, 1985), pp.339-343.

⁵⁵Adelson, *London and the Invention of the Middle East*, pp.93-94.

⁵⁶Friedman, *The Question of Palestine*, pp.2-3, 333-334.

⁵⁷Rashid Khalidi, *British Policy towards Syria & Palestine, 1906-1914* (London: Ithaca Press, 1980), p.23.

⁵⁸*Ibid.*, pp.42-43.

of the Imperial General Staff Sir John French circulated a memo on the threat presented to Egypt. He argued how a war could be started by the German-backed Turks after a minor border dispute, perhaps using Aqaba as a base.⁵⁹ More importantly, General French challenged the notion that natural barriers, such as the hundred and thirty miles of desert separating the Suez Canal from the Levant, would be enough to protect Egypt from modern armies. He believed the Ottomans could assemble a hundred-thousand strong force and use railroads alongside the Egyptian border to deploy this army and cross the desert on camels.⁶⁰ While Sir Evelyn Baring, later Lord Cromer, who was Consul-General of Egypt, initially believed such an invasion was improbable,⁶¹ at another meeting he advised investigating what pressure could be placed on the Ottomans by operations around Haifa.⁶² Later, a subcommittee of the CID recommended:

In the event of such invasion being attempted, we accept the opinion given by the General Staff...that it would be better dealt with by an attack on Haifa than by a dispatch of an army to oppose it from Egypt. Such an attack would not only threaten the communication of the Turkish forces operating in the Peninsula but would also encourage the tribes east of Hedjaz Railway whose hostility to Turkey is well known.⁶³

Thus the old notion of naval power proved decisive as it did in 1840-41 when it was used to protect the Ottoman Empire from the ambitious Egyptian ruler Mehmet Ali.

⁵⁹CAB/38/12/42 PRO, "A Turco-German invasion of Egypt", Note by Sir John French, 16 July 1906.

⁶⁰Ibid.

⁶¹CAB/38/12/44 PRO, "Remarks by Lord Cromer on Sir John French's Memorandum", 23 July 1906.

⁶²CAB/38/12/46 PRO, "Committee of Imperial Defense- Minutes of the 92nd Meeting", 26 July 1906.

⁶³"Report of the subcommittee of the Committee of Imperial Defense on the Military Requirements of the Empire as affected by Egypt and Sudan", Viscount Morley and others, 11 March 1909 in *British Documents on Foreign Affairs: Reports and Papers from Foreign Office Confidential Print, Series B The Near and Middle East 1856-1914, Vol. 15, Britain, Egypt and the Sudan 1885-1914*, ed. David Gillard, (University Publications of America Inc., 1985), pp.442-449.

The Subcommittee's findings were significant in several ways. They highlighted Britain's readiness to depart from its long established policy of not intervening in the Ottoman affairs.⁶⁴ Palestine, rather than other parts of the Ottoman Empire, was considered as a suitable place for intervention. Also, it gave a hint of the policy that would be pursued through the First World War: turning the minorities of the Ottoman Empire against it.⁶⁵ In the end, however, no military action was undertaken. Politicians and the General Staff favored political pressures on the Ottomans⁶⁶ over a risky intervention. Still, the Aqaba incident remained an important moment and influenced strategic thinking on Palestine when the war finally broke out.

Meanwhile, the new Zionist movement was not able to win concrete political support from the British in the pre-war period, but did engage in certain overtures. In 1902 Herzl made a proposal to Colonial Secretary Chamberlain to establish a colony not in Palestine, but rather in El Arish and elsewhere in the Sinai Peninsula.⁶⁷ While recognizing the land he demanded was "worthless and almost uninhabited", he argued it could be transformed by Jewish hard work and capital from Eastern Europe.⁶⁸ This would offer Britain a rich colony, hundreds of thousands of productive citizens and ten million other Jews worldwide who would be her "secret but loyal subjects."⁶⁹ However, the proposal was skeptically received by Lord Cromer. He emphasized problems of the ill-defined frontier between the Ottoman Empire and Egypt at Sinai.⁷⁰ More

⁶⁴Khalidi, *British Policy towards Syria & Palestine, 1906-1914*, pp.83, 85.

⁶⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁶CAB/38/12/60 PRO, "The Possibility of A Joint Naval and Military Attack upon the Dardanelles", 20 Dec 1906.

⁶⁷"Memorandum from Theodore Herzl to Joseph Chamberlain", 24 October 1902 in Theodore Herzl, *Diaries, IV*, 1364-1367 in *The Rise of Israel Vol. 2*, ed. I. Friedman, (New York: Garland Publishing, Inc., 1987), pp.261-264.

⁶⁸ Ibid.

⁶⁹ Ibid.

⁷⁰F.O. 78/5479.No. 25., Lord Cromer to Lord Lansdowne, 29 November 1902 in *The Rise of Israel Vol. 2*, ed. I. Friedman, pp.267-271.

significantly, Cromer predicted Egypt's opposition to the creation of a Jewish colony on its territory, especially since many of these immigrants would likely be protected by capitulations, which were subject to numerous abuses.⁷¹ For centuries Europeans were able to obtain concessions from the Ottomans to place their subjects under immunity from local laws, which caused resentment from the locals. The alternative would be subjecting Jewish colonists to Egyptian law, which Cromer thought would be unattractive to Jews. He also believed a creation of cosmopolitan and politically driven Jewish settlement in Sinai would be difficult to reconcile with Egyptian or Turkish interests and would inevitably exacerbate already complex frictions.⁷²

Consequently, Herzl was urged by the Foreign Secretary Henry Petty-Fitzmaurice, Fifth Marquess of Lansdowne, to abandon the project, which was expensive and difficult to support in already complicated Egyptian circumstances.⁷³ Chamberlain was still willing to offer East Africa. He was of Unitarian background⁷⁴ and was interested in social activism and the fate of underprivileged groups at home and abroad, including for instance the Ottoman Christians.⁷⁵ When Herzl approached him in 1902, Chamberlain had similar sympathies for the Jews. Moreover, supporting their colony offered a pragmatic solution to the paucity of white farmers in the Kenyan highlands, which Britain wished to develop. Nonetheless, he doubted the area would

⁷¹Ibid.

⁷²F.O. 78/5479.No. 61., Lord Cromer to Lord Lansdowne, 14 May 1903 in *The Rise of Israel Vol. 2*, ed. I. Friedman, pp.283-287.

⁷³F.O. 78/5479., Lord Lansdowne to Theodore Herzl, 19 June 1903 in *The Rise of Israel Vol. 2*, ed. I. Friedman, pp. 291-294.

⁷⁴Peter T. Marsh, *Joseph Chamberlain: Entrepreneur in Politics* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1994), pp.6-7.

⁷⁵Ibid., pp.114-115.

appeal to Zionists given that it was “too far removed from Palestine.”⁷⁶ Indeed, Herzl found it difficult to convince his fellow Zionists to support such a venture, and so it was abandoned.

Early years of the war

After these false starts, the First World War was nevertheless a turning point in Anglo-Zionist relations, culminating with the Balfour Declaration. A number of factors facilitated this. First, the war with the Ottomans opened a realistic possibility of breaking up their empire. British strategic thinking in this period continued to be guided by geopolitical assessments of key strategic outposts. In that regard, it was a mixture of old and new ways of viewing the Middle East, where certain priorities (i.e. keeping both wartime enemies and allies away from the Suez Canal and the approaches to India), which the likes of Valentine Chirol long emphasized. Yet, by the third year of the war support for Zionism had emerged as a means to such ends and genuine philo-semitic sentiment levered this development into the minds of important political figures.

After less than six months of war, an official proposal for the conquest of Palestine and break-up of the Ottoman Empire was put forward to the Cabinet. It was authored by Herbert Samuel, Liberal Home Secretary, and the first British Jew to serve in the government.⁷⁷ Samuel claimed to have been supported by the Foreign Secretary Grey on 9 November 1914:

I spoke to Sir Edward Grey...about the future of Palestine...I said that now that Turkey had thrown herself into the European War and that it was probable her empire would be broken up, the question of the future control of Palestine was likely to arise. The jealousies of the great European Powers would make it difficult to allot the country to one of them. I thought that British influence ought to play a considerable part...because the geographical situation of

⁷⁶Ibid., p.545.

⁷⁷Nineteenth century Prime Minister Benjamin Disraeli was born a Jew but later converted to Christianity (Tuchman, *Bible and Sword*, pp.219-220).

Palestine, and especially the proximity to Egypt...Grey said that the idea had always had a strong sentimental attraction to him.⁷⁸

Samuel claimed he was not a Zionist at the time.⁷⁹ His interest in the creation of a Jewish state in Palestine nonetheless was precipitated by changing circumstances, and he began to see a chance to transform Palestine into a center of a new culture and fountain of enlightenment.⁸⁰ In January 1915, Samuel presented a memorandum to his colleagues, which echoing Herzl a decade earlier “would win for England the lasting gratitude of Jews throughout the world. In the United States, where they number about 2,000,000, and in all the other lands where they are scattered, they would form a body of opinion whose bias...would be favourable to the British Empire.”⁸¹ He even stressed prestigious side of adding the historic land of Palestine to the empire and thus bolstering the British prestige among its diverse subjects.⁸² His observations on strategic issues were similar to those put forward by Sir John French in 1906: “[the] belt of desert to the east of Suez Canal is an admirable strategic frontier...But it would be inadequate defense if a great European Power were established on the further side. A military expedition organized from Southern Palestine...would be formidable.”⁸³ In a revised draft of March 1915, Samuel advanced the strategic value of port-cities Haifa and Jaffa, which although underdeveloped, could be improved and would secure vital naval advantages in support of Alexandria.⁸⁴ Interestingly, he

⁷⁸Viscount Samuel, *Grooves of Change: A Book of Memoirs* (The Bobbs-Merill Company: New York, 1946), pp.172-175.

⁷⁹Ibid., p.173.

⁸⁰Ibid.

⁸¹CAB.37/123., “The Future of Palestine”, Memorandum by Sir Herbert Samuel, January 1915 in *The Rise of Israel Vol. 6*, ed. I. Friedman (New York: Garland Publishing Inc., 1987), pp.46-50.

⁸²Ibid.

⁸³Ibid.

⁸⁴CAB.37/126/I., “Palestine”, Memorandum by Sir Herbert Samuel, March 1915 in *The Rise of Israel Vol. 6*, ed. I. Friedman, pp.60-64.

admitted that an autonomous Jewish state was unrealistic at this point, given that Jews numbered only one sixth of Palestine's total population. This would necessitate overall British authority.

Several important elements stood out from Samuel's memo. Like those before him, he urged Britain not to allow a powerful European neighbor to establish a colony in proximity of Suez.⁸⁵ Since he believed in the inevitability of an Ottoman defeat and collapse, the only viable solution was the British occupation of Palestine. Second, he considered possible internationalization of Palestine dysfunctional due to conflicting interests, with a German take-over also possible.⁸⁶ He pointed out significant German investments in country like banks, hospitals and agricultural societies. Any form of Turkish suzerainty he dismissed as the perpetuation of a failing system, while French rule would meet domestic resistance. Samuel also emphasized international opinion as a potent force that could shape the course of the war. This factor would continue to influence minds of other British policymakers. Just like Palmerston seventy five years earlier, Samuel, Lloyd George and others shared a belief in the power of Jews worldwide to influence their respective governments. Despite Samuel's enthusiasm, this vision was not shared by Asquith or Grey who were interested in preserving a status quo in the Middle East. The Prime Minister was a level-headed man who thought Zionism a fantastic dream.⁸⁷ He was "not attracted by this proposed addition to...responsibilities."⁸⁸ Nevertheless, Samuel claimed Grey was still open to his idea, albeit preferring internationalization over a British protectorate, especially given multiple interests in the Holy Places.⁸⁹

⁸⁵Ibid., p.60.

⁸⁶Ibid., p.61.

⁸⁷Stein, *The Balfour Declaration*, pp.112-113.

⁸⁸The Earl of Oxford and Asquith, *Memories and Reflections 1852-1927 Vol. II* (Boston: Little, Brown, and Company, 1928), pp.70-71.

⁸⁹Samuel, *Grooves of Change: A Book of Memoirs*, p.176.

However, despite of their dislike of territorial aggrandizement, Asquith⁹⁰ and Grey had to define the British position. Their allies sought to divide the Ottoman Empire. The Russians initiated discussions which led to the Constantinople agreement in March 1915.⁹¹ It was a milestone departure from the older policy because it recognized Russia's right to capture Istanbul and the European shore of the Straits.⁹² As a result of this, Britain and France had to be compensated elsewhere. It led to two developments: the formation of a Committee on British desiderata in Asiatic Turkey, and a separate arrangement with France.

Asquith appointed an interdepartmental committee led by a diplomat Sir Maurice de Bunsen to identify the best strategy and key interests in case the Ottoman Empire was to be dissolved. One of the leading figures at the De Bunsen Committee was Mark Sykes. He was a Tory politician and Lord Kitchener's personal representative at the Committee.⁹³ Horatio Kitchener was the Secretary of State for War and a former Consul-General in Egypt, and his views reflected Cairo's position on British desiderata in Middle East. Institutional rivalry became a feature of the British geopolitical thinking during the war. London, its imperial agents in Cairo, and the government of India, often had different, and sometimes conflicting, visions and interests in the Middle East.

⁹⁰Asquith, *Memories and Reflections 1852-1927 Vol. II*, pp.82-83. While the Cabinet considered British claim in Ottoman Empire, Asquith wrote the following on 25 March, revealing how little interest he had in annexations: "I believe that at the moment Grey and I are the only two men who doubt and distrust any such settlement. We both think that in the real interests of our own future the best thing would be if at the end of the War we could say we had taken and gained nothing, and this is not from a merely moral and sentimental point of view. Taking Mesopotamia, for instance, means spending millions in irrigation and development...keeping up quite a large army in an unfamiliar country, tackling every kind of administrative question".

⁹¹Fromkin, *A Peace to End All Peace*, pp.137-142.

⁹²Hugh Seton-Watson, *The Russian Empire 1801-1917* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1967), pp.706-707.

⁹³Fromkin, *A Peace to End All Peace*, pp.146-149.

Cairo and Delhi disagreed not only on a definition of Muslim opinion, which to Cairo meant Arab opinion; to India it reflected sentiment of its Muslim population, but they also disputed which Arab leader to approach.⁹⁴ Delhi thought Ibn Saud was worth supporting, while Kitchener's lieutenants made overtures to Saud's rival, Hashemite Emir Hussein of Hejaz, the hereditary custodian of Mecca and Medina.⁹⁵ This High Commissioner in Egypt Sir Henry McMahon exchanged ten letters with Hussein between July 1915 and March 1916, and made territorial and political promises of British recognition of an Arab state in return of revolt against Turks. The key correspondence was sent on 24 October 1915. McMahon expressed readiness to "recognize and support the Independence of the Arabs within the territories included in the limits and boundaries proposed by Sherif of Mecca."⁹⁶ It was conditional on Hussein's recognition of special British interest and rights of administration in the Mesopotamian vilayets of Basra and Baghdad, as well as France's claims to districts Mersina and Alexandretta and those West of line Damascus, Hama, Homs and Aleppo.⁹⁷ In spite of reservations over the likelihood of a unified Arab state and India's concerns over interference in Muslim religious affairs,⁹⁸ the main controversy centered on the vague language of McMahon's letter and ill-defined borders, which caused lasting confusion, especially in relation to future of Palestine as a potential Arab state.

At the De Bunsen Committee, Mark Sykes exercised significant influence. Over the course of months he devised a decentralization scheme which would construct five distinct

⁹⁴Britton Cooper Busch, *Britain, India, and the Arabs* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1971), pp.56-60.

⁹⁵Ronald Storrs, *The Memoirs of Sir Ronald Storrs* (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1937), pp.162-176.

⁹⁶F.O. 371/2864/34982., High Commissioner Henry McMahon to Hussein, Sharif of Mecca, 24 October 1915 in *The Rise of Israel Vol. 6*, ed. I. Friedman, (New York, London: Garland Publishing, Inc., 1987), pp.118-120.

⁹⁷*Ibid.*

⁹⁸Busch, *Britain, India, and the Arabs*, pp.78-79, 89-91,

historic provinces in the Ottoman Empire: Anatolia, Armenia, Syria, Palestine and Iraq-Jazirah.⁹⁹ Like Kitchener, he was suspicious of Russia, and wanted to create a buffer zone between British interest in the post-Ottoman Middle East and any Russian sphere of influence.¹⁰⁰ One way of accomplishing this was by having a French sphere of influence border the Russian one. When Kitchener campaigned for the acquisition of Alexandretta, Sykes was able to push through his choice of Haifa, stressing French interest in Alexandretta, Haifa's proximity to Egypt and chance to connect it to Rowandiz in Mesopotamia with a new railroad.¹⁰¹

The Committee's report was presented on 30 June 1915.¹⁰² It considered four possibilities: A) partition of the Ottoman Empire with limited Turkish sovereignty in Anatolia, B) nominal maintenance of the Ottoman Empire in name and form, but with actual supremacy of other powers through spheres of political and economic interest, C) preservation of the empire as it was before the war with minor territorial losses and D) a decentralization model, where the independence of the Ottoman Empire would be preserved, but its system of governance would be modified along federal lines.¹⁰³ If the partition scheme was to be adopted, the Committee considered crucial areas and urged acquisition of vilayets of Basra, Baghdad and Mosul, all of Sinai and central and western Palestine. Sykes' recommendation on Haifa was recognized: "if Alexandretta were acquired by Great Britain, France could not be refused the southern part of Syria, which would bring her frontier into Arabia, a situation which we could scarcely tolerate...Haifa, which, though not such a good natural harbour as Alexandretta, is capable of

⁹⁹Roger Adelson, *Mark Sykes: Portrait of an Amateur* (London: Jonathan Cape Ltd., 1975), pp.182-185.

¹⁰⁰Fromkin, *A Peace to End All Peace*, pp.188-193.

¹⁰¹Adelson, *Mark Sykes- Portrait of an Amateur*, pp.182-185.

¹⁰²CAB. 42/3/12 PRO, "Committee of Imperial Defence- Asiatic Turkey", Report of a Committee, 30 June 1915.

¹⁰³*Ibid.*, p.4.

development into a sufficiently good port, and of connection by railway with Mesopotamia.”¹⁰⁴ In the end however, the Committee saw the decentralization scheme as the best way of securing British interests.¹⁰⁵ It believed the military liabilities of partition would be extensive.¹⁰⁶ Decentralization on the other hand would save Britain a burden of occupation and allow the preservation of key commercial interests.¹⁰⁷ On Palestine, the recommendation was similar to what Grey told Samuel: “Palestine must be recognized as a country whose destiny must be the subject of special negotiations in which both belligerents and neutrals are alike interested.”¹⁰⁸

The De Bunsen Committee’s recommendations were significant in several ways. While they were never officially adopted by the government, they remained an important guiding principle for British policymakers.¹⁰⁹ This was certainly the case with Mark Sykes’ later initiatives. Also, they indicated the non-annexationist character of British policy under the Asquith government.¹¹⁰ There was a clear recommendation for extending indirect influence in the Ottoman Empire over costly future military-administrative engagements. In that sense, it was not very different from policies pursued throughout the nineteenth century. Also, the De Bunsen Committee experts hoped that restraint of British ambitions would also keep those of their allies in check, and the concession of Constantinople to Russia might not lead to the partition of the rest of Ottoman Empire.¹¹¹ However, the issue of Zionism was not even mentioned.

¹⁰⁴Ibid., p.6.

¹⁰⁵Ibid., p.26.

¹⁰⁶Ibid., p.10.

¹⁰⁷Ibid., pp.23-24.

¹⁰⁸Ibid., p.26.

¹⁰⁹Adelson, *Mark Sykes: Portrait of an Amateur*, pp.184-185.

¹¹⁰Friedman, *The Question of Palestine*, p.21.

¹¹¹Ibid.

Accordingly, in 1916 France and Britain reached a mutual agreement on the division of Ottoman territories, the Sykes-Picot agreement. This settlement was important because similarly to the De Bunsen Committee, its pursuit of British strategic objectives never referred to Zionism. At the core of the agreement was a division of the spheres of influence between France (area A) and Britain (area B) over an independent Arab state or confederation of Arab states, which both countries pledged to recognize and protect.¹¹² The two states also agreed on blue (French) and red (British) areas where they could establish direct or indirect rule. Sykes was able to secure most of what he emphasized at the CID Committee in 1915, including crucial railway connections from the Mediterranean to the Gulf. Haifa and Acre would be acquired, as well as the right for Britain: “to build, administer, and be sole owner of a railway connecting Haifa with area (b), and...have a perpetual right to transport troops along such a line at all times.”¹¹³ France secured parts of the Palestinian and Syrian coasts including Alexandretta. Another disappointment for Zionists¹¹⁴ was an unfavorable arrangement on rest of Palestine: “there shall be established an international administration (for Jerusalem), the form of which is to be decided upon after consultation with Russia, and subsequently in consultation with the other allies, and the representatives of the Shereef of Mecca.”¹¹⁵ There were many issues with this agreement, not least of which was its conflict with assurances given to rulers of Hejaz. Hussein thought vilayets Aleppo and Beirut as well as Syria’s western maritime coast, which were to be directly or

¹¹²“The Sykes-Picot Agreement: 1916,” *The Avalon Project: Documents in Law, History and Diplomacy*.

¹¹³Ibid.

¹¹⁴In his memoirs, Weizmann noted how Sykes entered into the negotiations with the Zionists in 1916, gave them his support, but never told them about the separate agreement he concluded on the behalf of the Foreign Office with the French representative Picot. Weizmann learned about the Sykes-Picot agreement almost a year later, on 16 April 1917 (in Weizmann, *Trial and Error* (New York: Harper & Brothers Pub., 1949) pp.188-191).

¹¹⁵“The Sykes-Picot Agreement: 1916,” *The Avalon Project: Documents in Law, History and Diplomacy*.

indirectly ruled by France, were historic Arab provinces where “Moslem [was] indistinguishable from the Christian.”¹¹⁶ Therefore, these should become a part of an independent Arab state. On the other hand, the Foreign Office doubted the Arab revolt would even take place, or be effective at all, but it was nonetheless important to prevent an emergence of a Turco-Arab alliance.¹¹⁷ In the end, the Hussein-McMahon correspondence was connected with the Sykes-Picot arrangement in so far as the Arab state, where France and Britain would exercise influence, was to be formed only if Arabs rose against the Turks.¹¹⁸

¹¹⁶“The Sharif Husain’s Third Note to Sir Henry McMahon”, 5 November 1915 in George Antonius, *The Arab Awakening* (New York: G.P. Putnam’s Sons, 1946) Appendix A, pp.421-423.

¹¹⁷Busch, *Britain, India, and the Arabs*, pp.90-91, and Fromkin, *A Peace to End All Peace*, pp.184-185.

¹¹⁸Friedman, *The Question of Palestine*, pp.110-112.

Impact of the Sykes-Picot agreement

At the time of his negotiations with Picot, Mark Sykes was not a Zionist. He had no instructions to consider Jewish claims in Palestine. Nor were the Zionists aware of Anglo-French secret negotiations. Jewish interest in the future of the country was recognized as solely conscientious and sentimental.¹¹⁹ The Jews were perceived as having a religious rather than political stake in Palestine, much like other sectarian groups. Sykes was instructed by Foreign Secretary Grey not to commit Britain to sponsorship of any group, and instead to look for a solution that would alleviate conflicting claims.¹²⁰ Moreover, he was supposed to avoid conflict with France over Palestine, which was why he agreed to a vague international administration in the country.

The Sykes-Picot agreement had many British critics. The Arab Bureau felt Sykes gave up too much to Picot, and essentially failed the Arabs¹²¹ whom Britain promised a kingdom. Sir Arthur Hirtzel, Secretary of the Political and Secret Department of the India Office, lamented the loss of Alexandretta and Mosul, which allowed the French to control that part of the Baghdad Railway.¹²² One far reaching consequence of the Sykes-Picot Agreement was how the dissatisfaction it caused among various key figures in British government ironically stimulated even greater territorial ambitions in the Middle East, preemptive in character, in the final years of

¹¹⁹CAB. 42/11/9 PRO, War Department Secret Series, "Arab Question", Memorandum by Mark Sykes, 5 January 1916.

¹²⁰F.O. 371/2767/938., "Minute by Edward Grey", 15 March 1916 in *The Rise of Israel Vol. 6*, ed. I. Friedman, p.65.

¹²¹Bruce Westrate, *The Arab Bureau* (Pennsylvania: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1992), pp.135-137. General Gilbert Clayton, Director of the Military Intelligence in Egypt, believed conflicting deals would inevitably lead to problems with Arabs: "some of our Syrian friends seem to have an inkling that we have handed over Syria to the French, and I foresee trouble."

¹²²CAB. 42/11/9 PRO, War Department Secret Series, Sir T. Holderness to Sir. A. Nicolson, 13 January 1916, enclosed: "Note by Sir A. Hirtzel", 10 January 1916.

the war.¹²³ This became more pronounced when Lloyd George became Prime Minister in December 1916.

The key criticism of the Sykes-Picot agreement came from Director of Division of Naval Intelligence (DNI) Captain Reginald W. Hall. DNI was in charge of the key “Room 40” code-breaking unit, where experts deciphered messages from German Navy, Army and Foreign Service.¹²⁴ Among their impressive accomplishments was interception of the Zimmerman Telegram in January 1917.¹²⁵ This precipitated U.S. entry into the war against Germany. Hall had a strong standing in Naval Intelligence. Balfour, who replaced Winston Churchill as the First Lord of Admiralty trusted Hall and gave him a free hand in handling the Zimmermann Telegram with the Americans.¹²⁶ The Admiralty had its own interests in the Middle East. The First Sea Lord John Fisher congratulated Samuel on his Palestine memorandum from January 1915.¹²⁷ Also, Captain Hall was in charge of Egyptian railways and learned from captured Zionist agricultural expert Aaron Aaronsohn, who spent years in Middle East, about water supplies in Sinai and Palestine and possible railroad projects across the desert.¹²⁸ At his insistence, David Hogarth, who worked in Naval Intelligence, rather than Mark Sykes became head of the Arab Bureau.¹²⁹ As for the Sykes-Picot agreement, Hall emphasized the strategic disadvantages for Britain and questioned its reliance on Arabs, suggesting using the Zionists to advance British

¹²³Fisher, *Curzon and British Imperialism in the Middle East 1916-19*, (London: Frank Cass, 1999), pp.25-26.

¹²⁴Jacob Rosen, “Captain Reginald Hall and the Balfour Declaration,” *Middle Eastern Studies* 24, no. 1 (1988): 57-58.

¹²⁵Admiral Sir William James, *The Eyes of the Navy: A Biographical Study of Admiral Sir Reginald Hall* (London: Methuen & Co. Ltd, 1956), pp.135-141, 153-154.

¹²⁶*Ibid.*, pp.143-145.

¹²⁷John Bowle, *Viscount Samuel: A Biography* (London: Victor Gollancz Ltd., 1957), pp.178.

¹²⁸H.V.F. Winstone, *The Illicit Adventure: The Story of Political and Military Intelligence in the Middle East from 1898-1926* (Frederick, Maryland: University Publications of America, Inc., 1987), pp.194-195, 234-235.

¹²⁹Adelson, *Mark Sykes: Portrait of an Amateur*, pp.198-199.

interests indirectly in Palestine. Hall deplored concessions to the French: “under the proposed agreement we not only [abandoned] any possibility in the future of using Alexandretta as a naval base, but [allowed] a powerful opponent to do so, and [excluded] from the British sphere of influence Aleppo and rich cultivable country to the east.”¹³⁰ Hall stressed how Britain had to see that future agreements ensured her position in Egypt by way of “exclusive control of all railways in South Palestine; by occupation of an extension of Egyptian territory north and east into part of Palestine and Moab; and by the right of possession and fortification of a naval base on the Syrian coast.”¹³¹

Moreover, he questioned the effectiveness of the British policy of courting Arab assistance against the Ottomans. If Britain was to have any success there, a demonstration of force was needed because “force [was] the best Arab propaganda.”¹³² He doubted any such action was planned. More significantly, Hall questioned Arab unity and believed they sought independence, not ties to Britain.¹³³ He proposed alliance with the Jews who had “a strong *material*, and a very strong *political*, interests in the future of the country.”¹³⁴ They opposed recognition of an Arab state that included Palestine. Finally, Hall believed that Zionism should be considered in the “Brown Area”, designated to international administration in the Sykes-Picot agreement, and linked it to the British need to ensure control over entire railroad system in Palestine for the sake of security of Egypt.¹³⁵

¹³⁰CAB. 42/11/9 PRO, War Department Secret Series, Captain Hall to Sir A. Nicolson, 13 January 1916, enclosed “Memorandum on the Proposed Agreement with the French” by Captain R.W. Hall, pp.2-3.

¹³¹Ibid., p.3.

¹³²Ibid., p.2.

¹³³Ibid., p.3.

¹³⁴Ibid.

¹³⁵Ibid., p.4.

Reginald Hall's 13 January 1916 memorandum openly disagreed with the De Bunsen Committee on the division of sphere of influence in Asiatic Turkey. The Sykes-Picot agreement was a mistake which only helped strengthen French position. Hall looked beyond the war and anticipated allies as tomorrow's competitors. His emphasis on the importance of Palestine to the security of Egypt nonetheless demonstrated continuity with past strategists in the Committee of Imperial Defence like Sir John French in 1906. Hall suggested that supporting Zionists could secure Palestine for Britain. More importantly, this was a view shared by Minister of Munitions (by the end of the year Prime Minister) Lloyd George. Hall was also credited by some for converting to his views the very man whose memorandum he criticized in January 1916.¹³⁶ Mark Sykes gradually became a strong advocate of a pro-Zionist declaration.

¹³⁶Rosen, "Captain Reginald Hall and the Balfour Declaration," p.61.

December 1916: Lloyd George forms a coalition government

Lloyd George's rise to headship of the government in December 1916 was a turning point for Britain during the First World War. It also transformed British relationships with Zionism. Non-annexationists and non-Zionists Asquith and Grey were out of office. The new leader relied on the pro-imperialist Tories like Curzon and Milner in the War Cabinet which determined more assertive territorial desiderata.¹³⁷ Other important figures, who were interested in both expansionism and Zionism, were new assistant secretaries to War Cabinet Amery and Sykes, while Balfour succeeded Grey in the Foreign Office.¹³⁸ No less significant was Lloyd George's close association with Zionist leader Weizmann, which predated his rise to prime-ministership. The new leader was often at odds with those opposing his interest in campaigns against the Ottomans, especially the Chief of the Imperial General Staff William Robertson. Robertson believed the Egyptian campaign had to concentrate solely on defense of Suez.¹³⁹ He was of the military school that considered war could be won by defeating Germany in Western Europe, while other theaters of operation were less relevant side-shows.¹⁴⁰ Disastrous outcomes of Dardanelles/Gallipoli and the late 1915 Salonika expedition cooled military interest in the Middle East. But, Lloyd George blamed the Imperial General Staff for the failure to defeat of Turks in 1915-1916 and for four hundred thousand men Britain lost.¹⁴¹ As a prime minister, he circumvented opposition by using interdepartmental and ad-hoc committees, and excluded military men from cabinet meetings.¹⁴² He worked with men who shared his views, even if it

¹³⁷Fromkin, *A Peace to End All Peace*, pp.232-235.

¹³⁸Ibid., pp.232-235, 276-281.

¹³⁹David Lloyd George, *War Memoirs of David Lloyd George, 1917* (Boston: Little, Brown, and Company, 1934), p.82.

¹⁴⁰Adelson, *London and the Invention of the Middle East*, pp.111-118, 127-131.

¹⁴¹Lloyd George, *War Memoirs of David Lloyd George, 1917*, pp.66, 68, 81-82.

¹⁴²Adelson, *London and the Invention of the Middle East*, pp.137-141.

meant policies were devised by a small group. He also kept his own counsel and represented Britain himself at the main inter-Allied meetings.¹⁴³ All of this was important for understanding conditions in which decisions, like the Balfour Declaration, emerged.

Lloyd George's Middle Eastern policy was characterized by two strands in his thinking: a military offensive against the Ottoman Empire, and a sentimental predisposition towards Zionism. Often labeled the "Easterner", he believed the war could be ended sooner if Germany's allies were knocked out of the conflict, so he began a shift in military strategy and ordered attacks on the Ottoman position across Suez into Palestine. "[The] Suez Canal was [the] gateway of the East," he reflected, "[so] our campaign across the Canal in the direction of Palestine was a highly important offensive-defensive, so far as the interests of the British Empire were concerned."¹⁴⁴ Moreover, Lloyd George disliked the Sykes-Picot agreement which he called "a fatuous arrangement."¹⁴⁵ He was suspicious of France, contemplated revising the agreement, and considered creating a Jewish buffer zone against French possessions.¹⁴⁶

Palestine therefore became a crucial element in his strategic thought. Lloyd George's sympathy for the Zionist cause was also a mixture of his own Christian upbringing, philo-semitism and a belief in the propagandist value of supporting the Jews. He was from the start supportive of the Samuel's Memorandum which "[appealed] to the poetic and imaginative as well as to the romantic and religious qualities of his mind."¹⁴⁷ While not able to win Asquith over, he would later work with Samuel and select him as the first British High Commissioner in

¹⁴³Ibid., p.141.

¹⁴⁴Lloyd George, *War Memoirs of David Lloyd George, 1917*, p.81.

¹⁴⁵Ibid., p.86.

¹⁴⁶Friedman, *The Question of Palestine*, pp.125-126.

¹⁴⁷Samuel, *Grooves of Change: A Book of Memoirs*, p.175.

Palestine.¹⁴⁸ Lloyd George was a devout Christian brought up on the Bible.¹⁴⁹ His interest in Zionism and Palestine predated his prime-ministership. In 1906, as a member of the Liberal government, he helped early Zionist proposals for the colonization of Sinai. This was rejected but deepened Lloyd George's understanding of the goals of a movement with which he sympathized until prime minister himself.¹⁵⁰

His association with Zionists like Weizmann led to a collaboration that lasted for years. They first met in December 1914 when Lloyd George informed the latter of his interest in Palestine. Later, Weizmann helped the British by sharing discovery of the fermentation process that addressed Britain's paucity of acetone, which was needed for explosives, especially for naval munitions.¹⁵¹ Indeed, Lloyd George later claimed Palestine was given to the Zionists as a reward for Weizmann's technical assistance, much as this claim was disputed by both Weizmann and Samuel.¹⁵² Nonetheless, once he formed his coalition government, Lloyd George's cooperation with Weizmann became far-reaching and, shifting from Asquith's indifference to the establishment of a Jewish Palestine as safeguarding British interests in the Middle East.¹⁵³

However, there were also pragmatic considerations. One was the issue of propaganda. Lloyd George saw the value of a pro-Jewish declaration for gaining wide support for the Allies: "[it] was part of our propagandist strategy for mobilizing every opinion and force throughout the world which would weaken the enemy and improve Allied chances. Propaganda on both sides

¹⁴⁸Ibid., pp.183-186.

¹⁴⁹Fromkin, *A Peace to End All Peace*, pp.263-275.

¹⁵⁰Ibid., pp.274-275.

¹⁵¹Chaim Weizmann, *Trial and Error: The Autobiography of Chaim Weizmann* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1949), pp.171-175.

¹⁵²Samuel, *Grooves of Change: A Book of Memoirs*, p.180.

¹⁵³Weizmann, *Trial and Error*, pp.176-178, 192-194.

probably played a greater part in the last war than any other.”¹⁵⁴ It was indeed a powerful tool. It also reflected a continued perception of hidden and powerful Jewish influence on world affairs which Lloyd George and Balfour shared with the past British statesmen like Palmerston. Part of this assumption was that some Jewish groups were dangerous. British sponsorship of Zionism was also connected to the Manichean perception that nationalist movements were normative and good, while de-nationalized, ethnic movements could easily be controlled by the Germans.¹⁵⁵ Moreover, Britain had to become a patron over the movement which was hitherto a Jewish offshoot of German nationalist intellectual currents, dominated by German speakers. Therefore, Zionist Jews had to be supported in order to prevent Jews from being won over by the enemy.¹⁵⁶

Furthermore, while advocating a Palestine campaign, the British media heralded the offensive as a new or Last Crusade and tried to imbue the soldiers with knightly zeal. The Prime Minister believed in the moral value of capturing of Jerusalem, which not only opened the door to the return of chosen people to their homeland, but also “cheered our own people at a critical time.”¹⁵⁷ Lloyd George launched anti-Turkish slogans such as “The Turk must go!”, and Mark Sykes wanted the Allies to capitalize following their capture of the Holy City.¹⁵⁸ He believed that impact upon all Christians would have been significant because Jerusalem was “so profoundly impressed as a name and an idea on all who have been reared in a Christian environment.”¹⁵⁹ The idea of an overt propaganda was not without controversy, especially given the concerns over Muslim agitation. These issues were taken into account and to avoid a provocation, General

¹⁵⁴David Lloyd George, *Memoirs of the Peace Conference Vol. II* (New York: Howard Fertig Inc., 1972), p.723.

¹⁵⁵James Renton, *The Zionist Masquerade* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2007), pp.26-29.

¹⁵⁶ Ibid.

¹⁵⁷Lloyd George, *War Memoirs of David Lloyd George, 1917*, pp.97-98.

¹⁵⁸Eitan Bar-Yosef, “The Last Crusade? British Propaganda and the Palestine Campaign, 1917-18,” *Journal of Contemporary History* 36, no. 1 (2001): 87-109.

¹⁵⁹Adelson, *Mark Sykes: Portrait of an Amateur*, p.245.

Edmund Allenby, the British Commander-in-Chief, decided to enter the city on foot. The whole ceremony was devoid of Anglican or Christian symbols, and instead, it represented the entire Allied constituency by adding the commanders of the French and Italian contingents, despite the fact that victory was achieved without their help.¹⁶⁰ In the end however, it could be assumed the military campaign would have proceeded even without attempts to revive the crusader spirit. The propaganda proved to be of limited use. The pre-war literature like Walter Scott's *Ivanhoe* and emerging public school ethos especially boys' movements and sports like cricket reinvigorated ideals of chivalry, honor, patriotism, and were recognized by the Royal Commission on the Public Schools in 1864 as useful in teaching social qualities and manly virtues.¹⁶¹ While they helped mobilize young gentlemen, the impact of crusading spirit on ordinary soldiers in 1917 was not great.¹⁶² The majority of British people associated Palestine not with the Crusades, but rather with the Old and New Testaments, the Sunday school and religious tradition, and this reflected emotional distance between the makers of propaganda and their targets.¹⁶³

The timing of the Declaration was significantly connected to successful effort to receive President Wilson's support, and a belief that Britain had to prevent Germany from capturing the Zionist Movement. The Americans were first approached in September 1917, but were cautious not to endorse a statement that would carry a real commitment.¹⁶⁴ Also, the U.S. remained suspicious of the British plans in the Middle East and had reservations about backing a statement concerning Palestine, still part of the Ottoman Empire, with whom Washington was not at

¹⁶⁰Bar-Yosef, "The Last Crusade? British Propaganda and the Palestine Campaign, 1917-18," pp.99-101.

¹⁶¹Mark Girouard, *The Return to Camelot* (New Haven; London: Yale University Press, 1981), pp.232-239.

¹⁶²Bar-Yosef, "The Last Crusade? British Propaganda and the Palestine Campaign, 1917-18," pp.93-95.

¹⁶³Ibid., pp.89-90.

¹⁶⁴Stein, *The Balfour Declaration*, pp.504-506.

war.¹⁶⁵ However, after Weizmann and American Zionist Louis Brandeis intensified their lobbying, the support was received on 16 October 1917. The British were, however, asked not to mention American approval of their Declaration.¹⁶⁶ What affected this urgency in making a pro-Zionist statement was a belief by Balfour and the Foreign Office that Germany itself was close to capturing Zionism.¹⁶⁷ Weizmann and pro-Zionist papers in Britain actively reported on German designs. Weizmann sent to the Foreign Office a translation of the German newspaper *Reichsbote* which warned the German government about British plans for a “Jewish Republic upon Palestine soil” that provided a good railway connection to India and an encirclement and isolation of the Central Powers.¹⁶⁸ Germany had to prevent this by supporting “a Jewish State strictly dependent upon Turkish supremacy,” although with an opportunity of developing a national life. The paper argued this would bring productive citizens to the Ottoman Empire and strengthen it economically.¹⁶⁹ No less significant were writings by the British-based newspapers, like London’s *Jewish Chronicle* which emphasized Germany’s awareness of “general political importance of a Jewish revival in Palestine.”¹⁷⁰

Ultimately, the Balfour Declaration was adopted at the Cabinet meeting of 31 October 1917. It was not, however, without opposition, mainly from the Secretary of State for India Edwin Montagu and Lord Curzon. Montagu was an assimilated British Jew and an ardent

¹⁶⁵Ibid., pp.504-506, 528-529.

¹⁶⁶F.O. 371/3083/143082., Sir. W. Wiseman (New York) to Sir. Eric Drummond, 16 October 1917 in *The Rise of Israel Vol. 8*, ed. I. Friedman (New York: Garland Publishing, Inc., 1987), p.127.

¹⁶⁷CAB. 23/4., “War Cabinet meeting”, 4 October 1917 in *The Rise of Israel, Vol. 8*, ed. I. Friedman, pp.111-112.

¹⁶⁸Chaim Weizmann to Sir Ronald Graham, 6 June 1917, forwarding English translation of the article about a ‘Jewish Republic in Palestine’ in the *Reichsbote* in *The Rise of Israel Vol. 8*, ed. I. Friedman, pp.3-7.

¹⁶⁹Ibid.

¹⁷⁰F.O. 371/3083/143082., “Britain in Palestine” in the (London) *Jewish Chronicle*, 21 September 1917 in *The Rise of Israel Vol. 8*, ed. I. Friedman, p.22.

opponent of Zionism. He denied the existence of a secular Jewish nation and believed Zionism was a “mischievous political creed”. Montagu questioned British support of it, wondering whether it implied that Muslims and Christians of Palestine were to make way for Jews who would be put in positions of preference.¹⁷¹ Furthermore, he feared that creating a national home for Jews would imply Jews living elsewhere would become foreigners.¹⁷² To Lord Curzon, the former Viceroy of India, any pro-Zionist policy was questionable for practical reasons. The country was small and deprived of resources, and the Jews were less than a quarter of the population. If it was to be carried out, he recommended establishing European rather than Jewish administration of the country, and most importantly, securing religious sites for Muslims, Christians, and Jews equally.¹⁷³ Curzon realized that most Zionist settlers would come from Europe, be strangers in the Middle East and thus depend on Britain. He was skeptical about romantic visions of Palestine but did not block the policy. Nonetheless, he urged colleagues not to raise false expectations, while conceding that expressions of pro-Zionist sympathy added valuably to British propaganda.¹⁷⁴

Lloyd George’s patronage of Zionism was in some ways a continuation of Britain’s nineteenth century association with Palestine. Like Palmerston, he was interested in the fate of the Jewish people. Lloyd George combined Christian Zionism, propaganda, and also geopolitics. He understood the strategic value of Palestine for the safety of Egypt. His cabinet stressed the “importance of securing the future safety of the British Empire by removing the menace,

¹⁷¹CAB. 24/24., “The Anti-Semitism of the Present Government”, Memorandum by Edwin S. Montagu, 23 August 1917 in *The Rise of Israel Vol. 8*, ed. I. Friedman, pp.66-68.

¹⁷²Ibid.

¹⁷³CAB. 24/30., “The Future of Palestine”, Memorandum by Lord Curzon for the War Cabinet, 26 October 1917 in *The Rise of Israel Vol. 8*, ed. I. Friedman, pp.130-133.

¹⁷⁴CAB.24/4., “War Cabinet Minutes”, 31 October 1917 in *The Rise of Israel Vol. 8*, ed. I. Friedman, pp.138-139.

which...the German ambition for expansion towards the Suez Canal and the Persian Gulf created to the sea communications of the Empire, and to its peaceful development.”¹⁷⁵ It was thus desirable to retain territories such as Palestine and Mesopotamia. However, the Prime Minister was aware of changing circumstances in the world. For one, Britain became financially dependent on U.S. loans.¹⁷⁶ Second, President Wilson was an anti-imperialist. While Lloyd George was interested in partition of the Ottoman Empire, in the long run, he wanted to secure British interests through indirect rule. British imperialism of this period showed a continuity with overall patterns of British imperialism in the twentieth century where the security of Suez remained a prime concern. Acquisitions were necessary, but it was wise to put them in perspective: “[when] the war began, there was no idea in the minds of the British public, or of the British Government, of acquiring foreign territory. A succession of British statesmen had pronounced that our Empire was large enough.”¹⁷⁷ Blame was placed on aggressive pronouncements and policies by German leaders, academics and journalists who were bent on building an empire that threatened others. More importantly, Germany infected Turkey with

¹⁷⁵CAB. 23/40 PRO, “Minutes of a Meeting of the Imperial War Cabinet”, Report of Curzon’s Committee on Territorial *Desiderata* in the Terms of Peace, 2 May 1917.

¹⁷⁶In January 1915 Asquith’s government chose J.P. Morgan & Co. to serve as Britain’s sole purchasing agent in the United States. At the time, Wilson’s government did not object to belligerents purchasing weapons and ammunition from U.S. firms. Later, Britain also became financially dependent on U.S. loans to sustain its war effort. When it offered in October 1916 to sell unsecured Treasury bills to American banks, Wilson opposed it. American entry into war in April 1917 allowed further acquisition of loans, but approvals from administration became necessary. Public debt of British government in America rose dramatically in last two years of the war: in 1916-17 it was 303.6 million pounds, while in 1917-18 it increased to 1,027.3 million pounds. See Adelson, *London and the Invention of the Middle East*, pp.135-136 and Kathleen Burk, *Britain, America and the Sinews of War, 1914-1918* (Boston: George Allen & Unwin, 1984), pp.14-18, 79-85, 99-103, 138-139.

¹⁷⁷CAB.24/4., “German and Turkish Territories Captured in the War: Their Future”, Memorandum by Lord Curzon, December 1917 in *The Rise of Israel Vol. 8*, ed. I. Friedman, pp.159-160.

militarism.¹⁷⁸ So, captured territories like Palestine had to be kept by Britain for defensive reasons in this case, because it was the military gate to the Suez Canal. In Turkish and German hands, however, it would be a “sally port from which an attack might be made...upon [the] Sinai Peninsula and the valley of the Nile.”¹⁷⁹

However, Lloyd George understood that British claims of ruling interest over acquired territories could be bolstered by favorable dealings with minorities. For instance, the Jews in Palestine could help get territory claimed also by France.¹⁸⁰ Sykes believed such associations could reinforce British legitimacy: “what we may not be able to get by force of arms we may well get the substance of by negotiation if the national elements are on our side at the Conference.”¹⁸¹ This was where Dr. Weizmann came in. He disliked internationalization schemes or dual-administration with the French, as he viewed them as atheists at home and exporters of aggressive Catholicism abroad.¹⁸² By contrast, a British protectorate in Palestine was backed by American Zionists¹⁸³ and perceived by British Jewry as a possibility for “normal development of a Jewish commonwealth in Palestine.”¹⁸⁴ This was what Lloyd George sought as well. Interestingly however, there was an idea of involving the United States and entrusting it with a trusteeship in Palestine. This was expected to improve relations with the Americans in the post-war period, and allow Britain to validate its own trusteeships elsewhere in the Middle

¹⁷⁸Ibid.

¹⁷⁹Ibid.

¹⁸⁰CAB. 24/9, G.T. 372., “Notes on the Conference between Prime Minister Lloyd George, Lord Curzon, and Sir Mark Sykes”, 3 April 1917 in *The Rise of Israel Vol. 7*, ed. I. Friedman (New York: Garland Publishing, Inc., 1987), pp.68-70.

¹⁸¹F.O. 371/3059/159558, ‘Memorandum on the Asia-Minor Agreement’ by Sir Mark Sykes, 14 August 1917 in *The Rise of Israel Vol. 8*, ed. I. Friedman, pp.23-25.

¹⁸²F.O. 371/3053/84173., “Memorandum by Sir Robert Cecil”, 25 April 1917, and “Note of Weizmann’s interview with Lord Robert Cecil”, 25 April 1917 in *The Rise of Israel Vol. 7*, ed. I. Friedman, pp.88-92.

¹⁸³Ibid.

¹⁸⁴Weizmann, *Trial and Error*, pp.193-194.

East.¹⁸⁵ London would not be accused of land-grabbing, and would demonstrate how responsible administration was different from annexation. Thirdly, in Lord Milner's view, Britain would get the United States to take a part in carrying the white man's burden.¹⁸⁶ Yet, in the end, Lloyd George decided Britain would stay in Palestine and Mesopotamia. British interests in Egypt, Arabia and Mesopotamia were too complex, and placing a "new and crude Power" which would be tempted to hear complaints against the British by Arabs and then pressure Britain into humiliating concessions was undesirable.¹⁸⁷

¹⁸⁵CAB 23/42 PRO, "Minutes of the War Cabinet (with Prime Ministers of Dominions) and Imperial War Cabinet", 13 August 1918.

¹⁸⁶CAB 23/42 PRO, "Minutes of the Forty-fourth meeting of the Imperial War Cabinet", 20 December 1918.

¹⁸⁷Ibid.

Conclusion: The Balfour Declaration and the Mandate for Palestine

The Balfour Declaration combined many elements of a century-long relationship between the British political establishment and the question of Jews. Just as in Palmerston's time, support for Zionism in 1917-1922 was in part driven by strategic considerations. Britain had to secure its geopolitical objectives in the Middle East, while adapting its policy to what was politically acceptable and financially sustainable. British imperialism thus sought a form of indirect rule through patronizing local populations. In case of Palestine, the intent was to construct a new settler presence. There was also accompanying philo-semitism and humanitarianism on part of Lloyd George, Balfour and others. While the Declaration was a milestone in the British-Jewish relations, the determination to see it implemented into the mandate for Palestine was of even greater significance, because it institutionalized British support for Zionism.

At the end of the First World War, security of empire was a priority. The empire expanded into former enemy territories in the Middle East, consolidating maritime, air and land links to the Indian Ocean basin. Palestine remained a vital, despite France's attempts to dispute Britain's presence. Leo Amery claimed that "strategically Palestine and Egypt [went] together." Palestine covered the Suez Canal and its defense, centered upon Kantara. The key for British interest in the post-Ottoman Middle East was to "have control of a land through route from Egypt and the Mediterranean to Baghdad, both for rapidity of mutual support and in case of the danger of submarines in the Mediterranean or the Indian Ocean."¹⁸⁸ The British General Staff

¹⁸⁸F.O. 371/3384/747., "The Future of Palestine", by Leopold Amery, October 1918 in *The Rise of Israel Vol. 9*, ed. I. Friedman (New York: Garland Publishing, Inc., 1987), pp.397-401.

shared these views: Syria was vital only if a foreign power occupied Anatolia and Armenia. Palestine, however, had to be secured.¹⁸⁹

Yet, even after Britain conquered Palestine, its realization of the promise given to the Zionists was not well-defined. This created certain difficulties. It gave credence to views of the Balfour Declaration as a mere propaganda tool rather than a committed policy.¹⁹⁰ Indeed, there was no agreement on the meaning of “national home”. At the Cabinet meeting which approved the Balfour Declaration in October 1917, “national home” was believed to refer to “some form of British, American, or other protectorate, under which full facilities would be given to the Jews to work out their salvation, and to build up...a real centre of national culture.”¹⁹¹ It was not supposed to imply establishment of an independent Jewish State. Such a state would be a subject to “laws of political evolution”. In fact, at the end of the war, there were no specific discussions or plans on how the pledge to Jews would be fulfilled. At the time, the main objectives were to secure Palestine for Britain and avoid unsettling the Arab majority.¹⁹² Some in the Cabinet, like Milner, believed a separate peace with Ottomans was acceptable, even at the price of keeping Palestine under titular Turkish rule: “[the] time has come when we must rely upon diplomacy as well as upon arms in order to detach Turkey.”¹⁹³ In November 1917, it seemed such an opportunity appeared when British consulate in Athens received news that Ottomans wanted to

¹⁸⁹F.O. 371/3385/747., Memorandum by the General Staff- “The Strategic Importance of Syria [and Palestine] to the British Interests”, 9 December 1918 in *The Rise of Israel Vol. 10*, ed. I. Friedman, p.109.

¹⁹⁰James Renton, “Flawed Foundations: The Balfour Declaration and the Palestine Mandate” in *Britain, Palestine and Empire: The Mandate Days*, edited by Rory Miller (Farnham, England: Ashgate Publishing Ltd., 2010), pp.15-38.

¹⁹¹CAB. 24/4, “War Cabinet minutes”, 31 October 1917 in *The Rise of Israel Vol. 8*, ed. I. Friedman, pp.138-139.

¹⁹²Renton, “Flawed Foundations: The Balfour Declaration and the Palestine Mandate”, p.31.

¹⁹³Schneer, *The Balfour Declaration*, p.349.

talk about the exchange of prisoners, and also discuss a separate peace.¹⁹⁴ Britain and its allies would get a free passage through the straits, but would need to financially assist the Ottomans, and allow them to keep Asia Minor with Constantinople, and also retain nominal rule over Syria, Palestine and Mesopotamia.¹⁹⁵ There was a strong opposition to such plans. Curzon observed how Britain's other commitments, like the one to Zionists, precluded even nominal concession to the Ottomans.¹⁹⁶ On the other hand, the Chief of General Staff Robertson believed Ottoman leaders depended too much on Germany, and couldn't afford to leave the war on their own, even if the offer was genuine.¹⁹⁷ A meeting did take place in Zurich, but the initiative did not succeed, mainly because the Bolsheviks offered an armistice to the Ottomans in early December 1917, thus encouraging them to stay in the war.¹⁹⁸ The interest in a separate peace with the Ottomans indicated a continued interest in creation of a buffer zone between British spheres of influence and its rivals' dominions in the Middle East.

Another difficulty that arose from an ill-defined pro-Zionist policy was that it allowed imperial agents in Cairo to promote divergent visions, not only unfamiliar with pledges to Zionism, but hostile to them. Some higher officers in Allenby's army knew nothing about the Balfour Declaration or the sympathy of their political leaders for the cause.¹⁹⁹ A post-war Foreign Office memorandum referred to Brigadier-General Gilbert Clayton's warnings against

¹⁹⁴Ibid.

¹⁹⁵Ibid.

¹⁹⁶CAB.24/32 PRO, "Peace negotiations with Turkey", Memorandum by Lord Curzon, 16 November 1917.

¹⁹⁷CAB.24/32 PRO, "Situation in Turkey", Memorandum by W.R. Robertson (C.I.G.S.), 15 November 1917.

¹⁹⁸Schneer, *The Balfour Declaration*, pp.350-351.

¹⁹⁹Weizmann, *Trial and Error*, pp.217-218.

offending the Muslims and recommendations for an alliance with the Hashemites.²⁰⁰ No mention was made of Zionism. The British army in Palestine in late in 1917 formed the so called O.E.T.A. or “Occupied Enemy Territory Administration”. General Edmund Allenby was Commander-in-Chief and was assisted by his Chief Political Officer Brigadier-General Clayton, and Ronald Storrs, as District Commissioner of Jerusalem. Clayton and his colleagues felt they had a commitment to an Anglo-Arab alliance which they had sponsored throughout the war.²⁰¹ Their side of the argument was reinforced by finding of the Inter-Allied Commission to the Near East led by Americans Henry King and Charles Crane. The Commission was tasked by President Wilson to determine the wishes of the local populations concerning their political future.²⁰² In case of Palestine, they discovered how the realization of Zionist program would be contrary to the wishes of the nine-tenths of total population, and thus a serious modification of the program was recommended.²⁰³ The King-Crane Commission proposed adding Palestine to the unitary Syrian state under Feisal.²⁰⁴ However, Britain and France ignored these recommendations. Allenby urged Curzon, who in 1919 succeeded Balfour as the Foreign Secretary, for the Allies to recognize Feisal’s state sovereignty, over Syria, Palestine and Mesopotamia. This would preclude conflict with the Arabs, and also establish British and French administration in selected

²⁰⁰“Memorandum on French and Arab claims in the Middle East in relation to British interest”, Foreign Office, 19 December 1918 in *British Documents on Foreign Affairs: Reports and Papers from the Foreign Office Confidential Print, part II, From the First to the Second World War, Series B- Turkey, Iran, and the Middle East 1918-1939. Vol. 15, Supplement to Eastern Affairs, Volumes 1918-1939*, ed. R. Bidwell (University Publications of America, 1989), pp.244-249.

²⁰¹Bernard Wasserstein, *The British in Palestine* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Basil Blackwell, 1991), pp.23-25.

²⁰²Ibid., pp.39-41.

²⁰³“Recommendations of the King-Crane Commission with regard to Syria-Palestine and Iraq”, 28 August 1919 in Appendix H in Antonius, *The Arab Awakening*, pp.443-458.

²⁰⁴Ibid., pp.447-451.

provinces.²⁰⁵ Curzon refused, arguing this would advance Feisal's authority over that of the Peace Conference, and that Feisal, rather than the League of Nations, would determine mandates for the Allied powers.²⁰⁶

Meanwhile, O.E.T.A. sent numerous warnings to London about agitation and possible riots by Palestine's non-Jews and urging modification of the policy. Clayton noted the rising fear of Zionism, which spread not only among Muslims, but also Christians in Palestine. Arabs once viewed the British as dominant in the region, but suddenly believed Britain "[had] one hand tied by her agreement with France, and other by declaration to Zionists."²⁰⁷ This gave rise to an Arab party seeking complete independence, which was attractive not only to the youth, but to extremists as well.²⁰⁸ Clayton suggested publication of the Zionist proposal,²⁰⁹ which while highlighting Jewish historic claims to Palestine and to a National Home there,²¹⁰ reassured the non-Jews their established rights would be upheld, discrimination banned, and fullest religious freedom promoted. Overall, it was hoped such a proposal would alleviate concerns of a Zionist

²⁰⁵Field-Marshal Viscount Allenby to Earl Curzon, 18 March 1920 in *Documents on British Foreign Policy 1919-1939, First Series, Vol. XIII*, ed. by R. Butler and J.P.T. Bury (London: Her Majesty's Stationery Office, 1963), p.231.

²⁰⁶Earl Curzon to Field-Marshal Viscount Allenby, 19 March 1920 in *Documents on British Foreign Policy 1919-1939, First Series, Vol. XIII*, pp.231-232.

²⁰⁷F.O. 371/4179/2117., General Clayton to the Foreign Office, 28 February 1919 in *The Rise of Israel Vol. 11*, ed. I. Friedman, pp.13-16.

²⁰⁸Ibid., p.15

²⁰⁹F.O. 371/4171/1051.Cable 45., Clayton to the Foreign Office, 3 April 1919 in *The Rise of Israel Vol. 11*, p. 36.

²¹⁰Statement of the Zionist representatives to the Council of Ten in Paris, 27 February 1919 in *The Rise of Israel Vol. 10*, pp.228-229, and F.O. 608/99., "Amendments to the Zionist proposal made by members of the British delegation" in *The Rise of Israel Vol. 10*, ed. I. Friedman, pp.221-222.

take-over. Clayton favored a slow, constructive approach which considered the feelings of the non-Jews, and allowed the British policy to evolve over time in respect of all parties.²¹¹

Others, like the Chief Military Administrator Major-General Louis Bols, did not conceal their animosity towards Zionism. Bols complained about the Zionist Commission, which he perceived as “an administration within an administration”. The War Cabinet sent the Zionist Commission to Palestine in early 1918 to evaluate the local implications of the Balfour Declaration, and to put into practice the assurances given to the Zionists in the Balfour Declaration.²¹² In addition, it would serve as the link between Palestine’s Jews and the O.E.T.A.²¹³ However, to General Bols the work of such a body was a problem given that he believed Jews only listened to their Commission, distrusted the military, and “[sought] not justice from the Military Occupant but that in every question in which a Jew [was] interested discrimination in his favour [should] be shown.”²¹⁴ Bols also refused to publish a declaration which would “show Zionism in its true light, and dispel, not only amongst the native classes, but also amongst the Europeans, the very erroneous and harmful appreciation of the policy of H.M.G.”²¹⁵ Instead he openly advocated Feisal’s rule over Palestine.²¹⁶

²¹¹F.O. 371/3386/856., Clayton to Balfour, 6 December 1918 in *The Rise of Israel Vol. 10*, ed. I. Friedman, pp.71-73.

²¹²F.O. 371/3394/11053., “Minutes of the Middle East Committee of the War Cabinet”, 19 January 1918 in *The Rise of Israel Vol. 9*, ed. I. Friedman, pp.161-163.

²¹³F.O. 371/3392/6554., Foreign Office to Sir Reginald Wingate (Cairo), 13 February 1918 in *The Rise of Israel Vol. 9*, p.171.

²¹⁴F.O. 371/5119/85., Correspondence between the Zionist Commission and General Bols, April 1920 in *The Rise of Israel Vol. 12*, ed. I. Friedman, pp.145-149.

²¹⁵Comment by Col. R. Meinertzhagen in Wasserstein, *The British in Palestine*, pp.58-59.

²¹⁶Ibid., pp.58-61.

One Zionist ally at O.E.T.A. was Colonel Richard Meinertzhagen who assisted Weizmann often contrarily to his superiors.²¹⁷ He deemed the Military Administration in Palestine as suitable only for temporary tasks and not for long-term assignments given that “its creed is stagnation.”²¹⁸ Meinertzhagen attributed some unrest among the Arabs to the lack of a final settlement with the Turks and French mishandling of Syria. In the end, however, O.E.T.A.’s undoing came after the April 1920 riots in Jerusalem during the Nebi Musa religious festival. Over two hundred people were injured while several were left dead, mostly Jews, and Meintertzhagen described the event as a “pogrom”. His harsh criticism of the military administration’s anti-Semitic attitudes²¹⁹ reached Lloyd George and Curzon who were at the time in San Remo Conference. There at the meeting of victorious Allies, the Prime Minister and the Foreign Secretary secured British gains in the Middle East, and warded off attempts by French Premier Alexandre Millerand to undermine Britain’s mandate by introducing elements of the dual-rule in Palestine, such as the Inter-Allied Commission composed of representatives of interested religious bodies.²²⁰ After hearing Meinertzhagen’s complaints, they did not wait for an official inquiry into the riots, and decided at once, against Allenby’s advice,²²¹ to appoint a civilian administration under Herbert Samuel.

It is important to note that Curzon was wary about further pledges to the Zionists. He believed: “the only safe plan was to repeat the pledge in the precise form in which it had been

²¹⁷Weizmann, *Trial and Error*, pp.250-251.

²¹⁸F.O. 371/5034/2., Col. Meinertzhagen to Lord Curzon, 31 March 1920 in *The Rise of Israel Vol. 12*, pp.4-10.

²¹⁹Colonel Richard Meinertzhagen, *Middle East Diary 1917-1956* (New York: Thomas Yoseloff Publ., 1959), pp.79-80.

²²⁰“British Secretary’s Notes of a Meeting of the Supreme Council”, San Remo, 24 April 1920 in *Documents on British Foreign Policy 1919-1939, First Series, Vol. VIII, 1920*, ed. R. Butler and J.P.T. Bury (London: Her Majesty’s Stationery Office, 1958), pp.163-167.

²²¹Field-Marshal Viscount Allenby (Cairo) to Earl Curzon, 6 May 1920 in *Documents on British Foreign Policy 1919-1939, First Series, Vol. XIII*, p.255.

originally given.”²²² When Weizmann campaigned to include recognition of the supposed historic rights of the Jews to Palestine, Curzon objected noting “if you word it like that, I can see Weizmann coming to me every other day and saying he has a *right* to do this, that or the other in Palestine!”²²³ He feared further proclamations could cost Britain the support from Palestine’s Arab majority.²²⁴ Nonetheless, Curzon remained loyal to the policy stated in the Balfour Declaration.²²⁵ He and Lloyd George deemed the security of the Suez Canal vital and disliked the idea of leaving the mandate for Palestine to other foreign powers.²²⁶ Despite O.E.T.A., the pledge to Zionism was a serious commitment, which they saw as a justification for Britain’s right to administer Palestine.²²⁷ Curzon confirmed that the proposed terms of the mandate would incorporate the Balfour Declaration, and it was a “chose jugée”, which the Arab delegation to the peace conference had to accept, albeit reassured they would not be subjected to minority rule.²²⁸

Britain’s ultimate policy in the Middle East was defined by Winston Churchill, who succeeded Milner as Colonial Secretary in January 1921.²²⁹ Churchill had two objectives: reduce the costs of administering the Middle East and expand role of his office. He propagated a model of an empire on the cheap, secured by the Royal Air Force and use of local troops.²³⁰ Besides, to augment the role of the Colonial Office, he annexed resources and responsibilities from other departments, like Curzon’s Foreign Office, and wanted to have a dominant say on all of

²²²“British Secretary’s Notes of a Meeting of the Supreme Council”, San Remo, 24 April 1920 in *Documents on British Foreign Policy 1919-1939, First Series, Vol. VIII, 1920*, p.159.

²²³Weizmann, *Trial and Error*, p.280.

²²⁴Fisher, *Curzon and British Imperialism in the Middle East 1916-19*, pp.214-223.

²²⁵Weizmann, *Trial and Error*, p.260.

²²⁶Wasserstein, *The British in Palestine*, p.16.

²²⁷Ibid.

²²⁸Curzon to Colonel French, 4 August 1919 in *The Rise of Israel Vol. 11*, ed. I. Friedman, p.132.

²²⁹Fromkin, *A Peace to End All Peace*, pp.496-514.

²³⁰Adelson, *London and the Invention of the Middle East*, pp.194-197.

Arabia.²³¹ At the Cairo Conference in March 1921 he set out his vision for the Middle East. He was able to settle affairs with the Hashemites by recognizing Feisal's rule in Iraq and Abdullah's in Trans-Jordan, thus preventing the latter from making war on France.²³² Churchill emphasized the delicacy of Abdullah's position in Jordan and a need to give "a very free hand."²³³ Lloyd George worried France would view surrounding Syria with Hashemites in Iraq and Trans-Jordan as a deliberate British plot.²³⁴ Churchill, however, emphasized the area was given to Britain as an international obligation, and the steps undertaken were required to fulfill this duty, preserve order and prevent French intrusion.²³⁵ He believed supporting Abdullah in Trans-Jordan would cost little and would prevent costly entanglements,²³⁶ and asserted the latter "has definitely undertaken to be our friend."²³⁷ While the Zionists were disappointed by detachment of Jordan from Palestine, Churchill supported them by telling Palestinian Arab delegates how he couldn't repudiate the Balfour Declaration even if he wanted to.²³⁸ He emphasized it was the basis upon which Britain would discharge its mandate.²³⁹ He tried to allay their concerns by reiterating

²³¹Fromkin, *A Peace to End All Peace*, p.496.

²³²Ibid., pp.504-506.

²³³Letter from Mr. Churchill to Sir Herbert Samuel, At sea, 2 April 1921 in F.O. 371/6343. E8001 Middle East Conference, 12-30 March 1921, 107-115 in *The Rise of Israel Vol. 13*, ed. A.S. Klieman, pp.97-98.

²³⁴F.O. 371/6342., Prime Minister to Mr. Churchill in Correspondence between the Prime Minister Lloyd George and Winston Churchill on the proposed policy in Trans-Jordan, 22, 23 March 1921 in *The Rise of Israel Vol. 13*, ed. A.S. Klieman, p.99.

²³⁵F.O. 371/6342., Mr. Churchill to the Prime Minister in Correspondence between the Prime Minister Lloyd George and Winston Churchill on the proposed policy in Trans-Jordan, 22, 23 March 1921 in *The Rise of Israel Vol. 13*, ed. A.S. Klieman, pp.99-101.

²³⁶CAB 24/122/, Memorandum by Winston Churchill to Lloyd George, 2 April 1921 in *The Rise of Israel Vol. 13*, ed. A.S. Klieman, pp.102-103.

²³⁷Ibid., p.103

²³⁸F.O. 371/6343. E8001, "Official Reports of meetings of Winston Churchill with Arab and Jewish representatives in Jerusalem", March 1921 in *The Rise of Israel Vol. 13*, ed. A.S. Klieman, (New York: Garland Pub. Inc., 1987), pp.239-254.

²³⁹Ibid.

Britain would not allow “expropriation of one set of people by another or the violent trampling down of one set of national ideals for the sake of erecting another.”²⁴⁰

Churchill sympathized with Zionism. While speaking at the site of the future Hebrew University in March 1921 he stated how his ‘heart [was] full of sympathy for Zionism’, and how he had been a sympathizer for over twelve years.²⁴¹ He thought that the establishment of a Jewish National Home in Palestine would be a blessing to the whole world. Nonetheless he was also pragmatic and defended his officials. After the Jaffa riots in May 1921, Samuel recommended limits on the immigration by allowing in only those Jews who had ready employment.²⁴² His actions outraged many Zionists, and Parliamentary pro-Zionists like Colonel Wedgwood who questioned the imposition of immigration limits on an educated and hardworking European proletariat.²⁴³ Churchill, however, backed the High Commissioner. He still sought a compromise with the Arabs urging in them in November 1921 to join a proposed legislative assembly, but they rejected the idea.²⁴⁴ The British Government remained steadfast. They could withdraw from it, refer the mandate back to the League of Nations and see the development of an Arab government in Palestine, but it would compromise the Government’s prestige.²⁴⁵ Churchill emphasized the cost of such a choice: “we cannot possibly agree to allow the Jewish colonies to be wrecked, or all future immigration to be stopped, without definitely

²⁴⁰Ibid.

²⁴¹Mr. Churchill’s speech at the Hebrew University site, March 1921, in F.O. 371/6343 E8001.in*The Rise of Israel Vol. 13*,ed. A.S. Klieman, pp.253-254.

²⁴²C.O. 733/3, file 24660., Samuel to Churchill, 8 May 1921 after turmoil in Palestine in *The Rise of Israel Vol. 15*, ed. A.S. Klieman, (New York: Garland Publishing Inc., 1987), pp.6-16.

²⁴³Parliamentary Debates (Commons), Middle Eastern Services, vol. 151, cols. 1576-1583, Churchill and Col. Wedgwood, 9 March 1922, and Parliamentary Debates (Commons), vol. 143, cols. 303-311., 14 June 1921.

²⁴⁴Wasserstein, *The British in Palestine*, pp.116-117.

²⁴⁵CAB 23/26 PRO, “Conclusions of a Meeting of the Cabinet”, 18 August 1921.

accepting the position that the word of Britain no longer counts throughout...the Middle East.”²⁴⁶ Nonetheless, in his 1922 White Paper he recognized the reality of determined Arab opposition. Limits were put on the immigration which “[could not] be so great in volume as to exceed whatever [might] be the economic capacity of the country at the time to absorb new arrivals.”²⁴⁷

In the end, despite misgivings by ministers like Curzon or members of the military like Allenby and Clayton who believed support for Zionism undermined other gains in the Middle East, Britain entrenched itself behind the Jewish Nation Home, which was approved by the League of the Nations on 22 July 1922.²⁴⁸ The long-established strategic priorities for safety of the Suez Canal influenced British policy from the start of the war, and they remained vital after it. The Balfour Declaration combined elements of wartime strategy, propaganda and humanitarianism, and it remained a tool which allowed Lloyd George and his colleagues to secure the mandate at San Remo Conference in 1920. It was not a hasty wartime measure, but rather an ultimate expression of Britain’s geopolitical and humanitarian interest in Palestine. It was, nonetheless, remarkable how very few of the challenges facing realization of the pledge contained in the Balfour Declaration in 1918-1922 were foreseen by the statesmen who backed it in November 1917.

²⁴⁶Parliamentary Debates (Commons), cols. 283-290.,”Winston Churchill’s speech in the House of Commons”, 14 June 1921 in *The Rise of Israel Vol. 13*, pp.262-265.

²⁴⁷“British White Paper of June 1922,” *The Avalon Project: Documents in Law, History and Diplomacy*.

²⁴⁸Fromkin, *A Peace to End All Peace*, pp.523-526.

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