

British Intelligence and Policy in the Palestine Mandate, 1919-1939

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This research argues that during the inter-war years in Palestine, British power was dependent upon intelligence. Intelligence was fundamental to the security of the country, since it varyingly augmented understrength force, or supported overwhelming force. Intelligence also supported policymakers as issues of governance were debated. It allowed British decision makers to avoid making a decision on self-government during the 1920s and it supported Britain's failed attempts to introduce a constitution during the 1930s. Intelligence also was crucial to Britain's relations with the Arab nationalist and Zionist communities. Of particular importance was Britain's partnership and subsequent war with the Mufti of Jerusalem, Hajj Amin al-Husseini. This thesis sheds new light on the role of intelligence in British colonial policymaking, the development of the Arab-Zionist conflict, and how Britain failed to manage communal violence.

This research offers a new and improved explanation of the origins, unfolding, and defeat of the Palestinian Arab rebellion. British intelligence and policymakers failed to grasp the sophistication of the Palestinian national movement until the mid-1930s, and even then, they focused on clan competition and the politics of 'notables'. Intelligence and military records explain how British police and military struggled, but ultimately succeeded to suppress and defeat this rebellion. Victory was made possible by innovations within the intelligence and planning staffs, as well as Zionist cooperation.

Intelligence shaped policy most clearly at the beginning and end of the period under examination. During 1918-20, the military government was administered by intelligence officers who guaranteed Britain's future control in Palestine both domestically, and at the League of Nations. In 1939, British policy abandoned its traditional Zionist partners when the need to impose a solution on Palestine coincided with the opportunity, revealed by signals intelligence, to bolster and leverage the influence of 'Abdul 'Aziz ibn Sa'ud over the Arab national movement.

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From 1919 until 1939, British power in Palestine depended upon intelligence. Britain's freedom to pursue its policy and its ability to influence the Jewish and Arab political communities was contingent upon political information, obtained secretly or overtly, on their policies, intentions, and capabilities.

Intelligence was vital to British security. In 1919, before the League of Nations mandated Palestine to Britain, intelligence prevented violence and dissent from embarrassing British claims to be the best custodian for the land and its people. The Feisal-Weizmann agreement, orchestrated by intelligence officers, also served to convince the Paris Peace Conference that British promises to Arabs and Jews were reconcilable.

After the explosion of nationalist violence and the subsequent introduction of a civil government in 1920, British security depended upon intelligence to handle a different array of threats. Intelligence and police treated communism as a political crime, and neutralized that threat between 1923 and 1924. They treated Arab nationalist movements differently, and used normal modes of colonial control over that population by co-opting influential elites. Yet this was not enough. In 1921, British officers admitted that they could not raise a local defence force as was the norm elsewhere in the empire. Jews and Arabs would not serve together in a mixed force, and sought to limit each other's participation. Moreover, Whitehall and Jerusalem admitted that it would not be possible to grant

Palestine self-government because Arabs could never accept Britain's commitment to Jewish immigration and the creation of a Jewish National Home. Britain and the Zionists could not accept any form of legislature which might contradict that interest.

Policymakers never outlined a strategy for dealing with this conflict, and so administrators in Palestine, many of whom were ex-intelligence officers, were forced to improvise. They rejected Palestinian demands for self-government, arguing that their political elite was not representative of the population. With Zionist help, Britain fostered an opposition to the nationalist notable elite. Britain also attempted to co-opt the influence of Hajj Amin al-Husseini by appointing him as Mufti of Jerusalem and President of the Supreme Muslim Council.

This 24-year-old was not qualified as an Islamic scholar or judge, but his family desired to retain control over these offices. British policymakers and administrators believed that they could foster a good partnership with a loyal and ambitious elite as they did in other colonies. From 1921-27, British intelligence officers maintained a good grasp of the Mufti's connections to independence-minded politicians and activists abroad, especially his support for rebels in Syria during 1925-27. By 1928, nearly all seasoned British experts had left Palestine, and stopped interfering with the Mufti's desire for pan-Arab independence. From then on, policymakers severely underestimated the Mufti's connections to the pan-Islamic and pan-Arab movements. In the 1930s, police and military intelligence differed on the Mufti's place in the pan-Islamic, pan-Arab and independence movements. Policymakers had access to data about his

connections with anti-colonial leaders, but believed the Mufti desired only to improve his local stature and that he depended on Britain to do so.

Historians have understated both the Mufti's role in leading the Palestinian national movement towards confrontation with Britain, and the way he mobilized transnational support for that aim. This thesis argues that from 1919 to 1938, the Mufti steadily fostered anti-colonial feeling. His propaganda combined the perceived threat to Muslim holy sites by Jews with more general anger at Britain for enabling Zionism. His movement was also connected to a wider pan-Arab movement which had expected independence in the wake of the First World War, and which struggled against colonial rule throughout the region. The Mufti also relied on the partnership of ex-suffragettes in London, who later aligned themselves with British fascists. The Mufti's connection to the broader pan-Islamic movement enabled support from influential Salafists Rashid Rida, his former teacher, and Shakib Arslan who advocated for Arab unity and independence and kept the Palestinian and Syrian causes on the agenda at the League of Nations.

In Palestine, youth mobilization, partly inspired by the Mufti, evolved into a more coherent independence movement during the early 1930s. At the same time, the Arab political elite from Palestine, Syria and Iraq found unity of purpose, which they previously lacked. During 1931-33, for the first time since nationalist politics emerged during the Ottoman period, this elite defined a strategy which they hoped would lead to independence. They sought to exploit a European war or crisis for leverage over Britain and France and to unify the movement with the influence of an

independent Arab King. Intelligence never understood these developments, or how they might affect British rule in Palestine. Despite the evidence of danger, the government and police worked with the Mufti, believing that as a leader his main interest was to improve his own prestige and influence, and that this partnership was in his interest. Intelligence services never reached consensus about the Mufti, and no organization ever gave a totally accurate assessment of his interests. By investing so much power in the Mufti, policymakers had created Frankenstein's monster, and only realized that they had lost control at the height of the Arab rebellion in 1936.

Palestinian politics were most strongly influenced by Ottoman-era developments in pan-Islamic and pan-Arab revivalism. Nationalist movements which emerged between 1907 and 1918 dominated political thinking during the inter-war years, producing a very small elite network. From the First World War until the mid-1930s, British intelligence never fully appreciated the sophistication or reach of the Arab independence (or Istiqlal) movement. They failed to appreciate the social, economic and educational links between these groups in Syria and Palestine, which predated Britain's conquest of the region.

As intelligence failed to grasp these issues, the government simultaneously struggled to offer Palestinians some promise of governance reform, such as constitutional proposals in the 1930s. Decision-makers never connected these negotiations with nationalist activity and assumed that the Mufti was doing his best to constrain the independence movement. In reality, he encouraged the growth and mobilization of a population which demanded an end to British rule.

British security policy never fully addressed these known weaknesses. In 1920, the government took the shape of an 'intelligence state', where administrators were dependent upon intelligence for decision making, and to prevent communal or anti-government violence. Intelligence officers founded and administered the military government during 1918-20. They envisioned an intelligence-led model of statecraft. When civil government took over, these officers continued to fulfil their previous intelligence functions, but without the centralizing mechanism of the army's General Staff. Security suffered because Whitehall's demands for economy limited military forces, the Zionist-Arab conflict prohibited the raising of mixed local defence forces, and intelligence and security budgets were slashed. Disturbances that broke out in 1929 over a religious dispute in Jerusalem quickly spun out of control, and nearly became a broader attempt at rebellion. With no garrison, no centralized intelligence, and with a weak police force, the government barely kept control. Intelligence consistently failed to grasp how nationalist achievements in Syria or Iraq would affect Palestinian demands.

During 1930-31, British security reformed and created two parallel 'intelligence states.' The first was embodied by the police Criminal Investigation Department that worked closely with the civil secretariat and produced regular summaries of Palestinian and Zionist politics, as well as other regional issues. This civil 'intelligence state' was restrained in its usefulness by government policy, which emphasized co-option of the Mufti of Jerusalem and his influence. A parallel military 'intelligence state' was embodied by the Air Force's staff intelligence, which centralized political

and security intelligence. It had less influence over government, but was prepared for disturbances. During the Arab rebellion, a combined service staff and its intelligence section took control of the military effort. The police and civil service were weakened by strikes, since some Arab employees demonstrated solidarity with the national movement, while others had been threatened. By 1938, the civil 'intelligence state' had collapsed, and the military 'intelligence state', administered by general staffs, once again governed Palestine. Officers working in centralized intelligence informally coordinated operations with other staff officers and commanders. They enabled an effective counter-rebellion, which included an ambitious programme for the construction of fortresses and border fences, secret intelligence gathered by agents, the recruitment of Arab 'irregulars', the use of Jewish paramilitary forces, and the 'turning' of rebels against their former comrades. This mechanism enabled the defeat of the rebellion, but also demonstrated the need for a change in policy. The Munich crisis, which coincided in September 1938 with the climax of the rebellion, also demonstrated the need to impose a solution for the future of the country.

British signals intelligence had demonstrated that the founding king of Saudi Arabia, 'Abdul 'Aziz ibn Sa'ud, had long attempted to foster friendly relations with Britain. He was not yet powerful, but was influential in the pan-Arab movement, and Britain saw him as one of the few honest and open Arab statesmen. The foreign office compared decrypts of his messages to confidants and ministers with what diplomats were hearing and saying. Between 1936 and 1939, Britain gradually improved the quality of

its relations with ibn Sa'ud, based on mutual shared interest, and determined from intercepted communications that Ibn Sa'ud was genuinely seeking British partnership and protection. By 1939, British policymakers saw the opportunity to exploit ibn Sa'ud's influence in the pan-Arab movement on the eve of the Second World War, as they were desperate to impose a solution on Palestine. In early 1939, after the unsuccessful Palestine conference at St. James's Palace, Britain broke from its traditional Zionist negotiating partners. In consultation with the Arab states led by Saudi Arabia, Britain abandoned its Zionist policy by placing severe restrictions on Jewish immigration and settlement to Palestine. This caused ibn Sa'ud to appear to be a national hero, a status which Britain hoped could influence the Arab world against siding with Germany or Italy.

Intelligence had also been fundamental to Anglo-Zionist relations. Since 1915, intelligence served as a form of currency. Zionists sought to purchase British support for Jewish immigration with secret intelligence on the political and physical landscapes of Palestine. Zionist intelligence sought to prepare for a future state, while Britain enjoyed a very useful colonial partnership. This partnership prevented disturbances in 1919, and was instrumental in helping to convince the Paris Peace Conference to grant Britain a mandate over Palestine. It augmented scarce British intelligence during the 1920s, and Labour Zionist institutions became an effective weapon against communists, and later Arab nationalist labour movements. Widespread intelligence cooperation, extending as far as Iraq, was closer with military intelligence than with the civil government, and was instrumental to the defeat of the Arab rebellion. From 1931, the Anglo-

Zionist intelligence partnership was characterized by side-by-side collaboration – common interests allowed each side was to be embedded in the other's intelligence work. Zionists knew the British system very well by 1939, and Jews had replaced Arab civil servants in many sensitive jobs, such as post and telegraph. This research illustrates how Britain's abandonment of the Zionist policy in 1939 led to deep security problems.

Intelligence never was a replacement for sensible policy. British administrators improvised, but had known since 1921 that without some form of representative government, British security would always have to contend with Arab nationalist demands. Both Zionists and Arabs tied control over Jewish immigration to the question of self-government, and thwarted any possibility for that institution to develop. British policymakers could deal with that problem, but knew it would not last forever. In the end, problems of policy were more fundamental to British security and rule in Palestine than was any intelligence problem. Britain's commitments were contradictory: self-government could not be reconciled with Jewish immigration. Public security could not be reconciled with budget cuts and local political strife. Commitment to non-interference in religious affairs could not be reconciled with a need to restrain the Mufti. Most of all, British attitudes towards 'good government' could not be reconciled with any of these paradoxes of colonial government, least of all intelligence work.

Preface

This thesis represents my own work. All errors and omissions are my responsibility alone. Translations, unless otherwise indicated in footnotes, are my own work. I have not used any standard form for transliterations from Hebrew and Arabic, since the source material provides a varied range of methods. I have attempted to avoid confusion through use of an inverted comma to represent the letters *'ayin*, *hamza*, and *aliph*, and to use consistent spelling outside of quotations.

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Table of Contents	
Preface	i
List of Abbreviations	v
Introduction	1
Chapter 1 – Background on Britain’s Wartime Policies.....	18
Chapter 2 – Intelligence, Policy, and the Emerging Modern Middle East	33
Intelligence, Peace and War	39
Emerging Anglo-Zionist Cooperation and Competition	63
Chapter 3 – Intelligence, Policy, and the Civil Government	69
Intelligence Organization under the Civil Administration	73
Jaffa Riots	81
Samuel’s Policy, the SMC and Anglo-Zionist Cooperation.....	90
PAD, Governance, and Britain’s Palestine Policy.....	98
Conclusion.....	109
Chapter 4- The 1929 (Attempted) Revolt.....	112
Religious-Nationalist Politics and the Riots	114
Air Control, Gendarmerie, and Palestine Security	129
British Security Reforms	140
Chapter 5 – British Intelligence, the Mufti and Nationalist Youth.....	152
The Mufti, a Social Network Analysis	155
Salafism and the Pan-Arab Movement	156
Youth and Mass Mobilization	163
The Mufti’s Mechanisms of Control	166
Summary.....	172
CID and Government against Nationalist Movements	173
Government and CID, and the Mufti	174
Confrontation.....	182
Conclusion: Intelligence Assessments.....	194
Chapter 6 – Intelligence, Security and the Road to Rebellion.....	199
Anglo-Zionist Relations: Cooperation and Competition	201
Good Government and the Rule of Law	216
Security Reforms on Trial	218
Road to Rebellion	230
Chapter 7 – The Arab Revolt: Intelligence and Politics	237
Historiography	240
The General Strike and Creeping Violence	251
Chapter 8 – Military Intelligence and the Arab Revolt	279

Tegart's Police Reforms and the Civil State	283
Military Organization and Intelligence	299
The Rebellion After September 1937	309
Chapter 9 – Intelligence, Ibn Sa'ud, and the White Paper Policy	329
Intelligence and Policy: Retreat from Partition, Advance to War	330
The Intelligence Record: Ibn Sa'ud and Palestine	344
A New Narrative	365
Conclusion – The 'Intelligence State' in Palestine	367
Appendix I – Social Network Analysis.....	375
Appendix I(a) – Modularity Report	387
Bibliography	388
Manuscript and Archival Sources	388
Printed Primary Sources.....	390
Printed Secondary Sources.....	391
Unpublished Theses	397

List of Abbreviations

AOC	Air Officer Commanding
APOC	Anglo-Persian Oil Company
ASC	Arab Supreme Committee
ASI	Air Staff Intelligence
AWS	Arab Workers' Society
BAZY	Beit Aaronsohn archive, Zichron Yaakov
BUF	British Union of Fascists
CID	Criminal Investigation Department of the Palestine Police
CIGS	Chief of Imperial General Staff
CO	Colonial Office
CS	Chief Secretary
CUP	Committee of Union and Progress
DSO	Distinguished Service Order
ECPAC	Executive Committee, Palestine Arab Congress
EEF	Egyptian Expeditionary Force
Exco	Executive Council
FO	Foreign Office
GC&CS	Government Code & Cypher School
GCHQ	Government Communications Headquarters
GOC	General Officer, Commanding
GS	General Staff
GSi	General Staff Intelligence
HC	High Commissioner
HMG	His Majesty's Government
IB	Information Bureau
IGP	Inspector General, Palestine Police
IJI	Illegal Jewish Immigration
IPC	Iraq Petroleum Company
IRA	Irish Republican Army
ISLD	Inter-Services Liaison Department
JA	Jewish Agency
JAPD	Jewish Agency Political Department
JB	Joint Bureau
JIC	Joint Intelligence Committee
MCS	Muslim-Christian Society
MPS	Miflaget HaPoalim HaSocialistim - Socialist Workers' Party
NAAFI	Navy, Army and Air Force Institutes
NILI	Netzach Yisrael lo Yishaqer ("The eternity of Israel shall not lie")
NPL	National Political League
OETA	Occupied Enemy Territory Administration
OETS	Occupied Enemy Territory Administration - SOUTH (Palestine military government)
PAC	Palestine Arab Congress
PAD	Palestine Arab Delegation
PAP	Palestine Arab Party
PAWS	Palestine Arab Workers Society

PIC	Palestine Information Centre
PICA	Jewish Colonization Association
PKP	Palestine Communist Party
PLL	Palestine Labour League
PMC	Permanent Mandates Commission
Pubsec	Public Security Committee (Tegart)
PWD	Public Works Department
PZE	Palestine Zionist Executive
RAF	Royal Air Force
SAC	Syrian Arab Congress
SAD	Sudan Archive, University of Durham
Sigint	Signals Intelligence
SIS	Secret Intelligence Service
SMC	Supreme Muslim Council
SNA	Social Network Analysis
SNS	Special Night Squads
SSO	Special Service Officer
TJFF	Transjordan Frontier Force
YMMA	Young Mens' Muslim Association
ZC	Zionist Commission

Introduction

On an August evening during 1945, in the town of Zichron Ya'akov, Palestine, Joseph Davidescu put his son Jack to bed and returned to chat with his neighbour at the kitchen table. A car pulled up to the window. Gunmen opened fire and killed Davidescu – a Zionist pioneer, Arabist, spymaster and British intelligence officer. During the First World War, Davidescu provided intelligence to Britain on the human and physical landscape between Allenby's front line and Damascus. He continued work for British and Zionist intelligence after the war, monitoring Arab villages and politics in the region. His work for Zionists sometimes conflicted with British interests, as he was caught smuggling weapons twice, jeopardizing the OBE awarded for his wartime service.¹ During the Arab rebellion in 1938, Davidescu managed a network of informers based in Damascus who supplied crucial information on rebels. His assassination in 1945 by Jewish terrorists from the Stern Gang was an act of revenge, but possibly a case of mistaken identity. Controversy over his assassination persists; rumours in Zichron Ya'akov claim that former Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir was one of the gunmen.² Davidescu's intelligence work in support of Britain and Zionism characterised the ways in which British intelligence secured Palestine and made policy, as well as the weakness of this practice. It also characterises the divided loyalties of the region's inhabitants.

¹ The first incident was connected with a case of perjury after, as chief of police in Haifa, a shipment of arms destined to his companions was uncovered. The second was in 1929. The National Archives at Kew (TNA) CO 448/36/2, *Suggested Forfeiture of Mr Joseph Davidescu's OBE*. Ca 1930.

² Conversation between Author, Jack Davidescu and Haviva Zemach 3 December 2011; Beit Aaronsohn, Zichron Ya'akov, Davidescu Papers. Dalia Karpel, *Bullet in the Head*. Ha'ir (Hebrew). 2.3.1990.

Little has been written about how Britain turned this conquered territory into a League of Nations Mandate and even less about the role of intelligence in its creation, development and eventual loss. This dissertation examines how intelligence shaped British policymaking in the Palestine Mandate from 1919 until Britain's decision in 1939 to abandon its Zionist policy. It is a significant reinterpretation of how British rule in Palestine was established, maintained, and began to collapse as a consequence of chronic policy flaws and the Arab rebellion of 1936-39.

These issues and their interpretations are complicated. The relationship between intelligence and policymaking is always complex, made more so in this case, as recently declassified intelligence records demand a re-examination of old debates and raise new questions regarding intelligence and policy-making. Thus, this thesis illuminates on old questions such as, 'How did the Arab rebellion unfold?' or, 'when did the Arab-Zionist conflict become a zero-sum game?' Likewise, this study treats intelligence gatherers and their subjects with equal interest. The Arab and Jewish communities of Palestine were as much agents in British policymaking as they were its objects.

Intelligence refers to information relevant to security, communal relations, and administration, obtained from open or secret sources, and normally kept secret from other competitors. It also served as a currency for exchange between collaborators. Zionists in particular sought to trade intelligence for British political support. Intelligence also refers to institutions: those bodies responsible for stealing secrets, keeping them, and

deploying them as an arm of policy, through anything from covert action, to propaganda, disinformation and deception, and clandestine diplomacy.

Intelligence records must be approached as though they were seen in a magnifying mirror. They clearly reflect British policy, enabling one to trace the way in which intelligence influenced policymakers, or was ignored by them, and which issues mattered to them and how they perceived events. But these records also offer a new and expanded view on the subjects of intelligence reportage pertaining to the Arab nationalist and Zionist communities. This evidence enables a new reading of political developments in these communities and of the colonial state as well. This study revises our understanding not only of the foundation and growth of the Mandate as a special form of British colonial state, but also of developments in the power and challenge of the Arab nationalist and Zionist communities.

This study examines political developments and conflict in Palestine by focusing on Britain's security policy, governance, and its relationships with the Jewish and Arab communities. With these central themes in mind, this thesis argues that intelligence – both as knowledge and institutions – was fundamental to British power and policy, especially Britain's freedom to influence political communities and their leaders. In particular, this thesis examines three key issues which were central to British power, intelligence and local politics.

To begin with, the Mandate involved competitions between the secrecy and intelligence services of Britain and the Arab and Jewish communities. Competition and cooperation occurred because the normal

colonial practices of the Empire could not be followed in Palestine, since British governance was constrained by its commitments to the League of Nations, and suffered from unusually limited finances and military power.

Traditionally, British colonial administrators preferred to maintain dominance through the minimum use of force. To that end, they required political and security intelligence, and collaborated with local forces and elites. According to British historian and author Robert Johnson, ‘divide and rule’ was a common outcome of this strategy, especially where societies were already divided, but it was not Britain’s only option. Moreover, after the First World War, British policymakers sought to expand local autonomy throughout the empire, especially in India. This was also a League aim, but was not possible everywhere, especially Palestine. Where it could not grant autonomy, Britain desired to provide ‘responsible’ or good government and did not trust local elites to govern themselves.³ British policy in Palestine was more restrained than almost anywhere else in the empire primarily because Palestine was mandated to Britain by the League of Nations, whereby Britain committed itself to providing self-government to the people, and to foster a Jewish ‘national home’, while protecting the rights of Arab residents. Britain could not reconcile these claims with its own interests, or its commitment to allow Jewish immigration against the wishes of the Arab population. Ideological, financial and military limitations also were at play. Liberals desperately sought constitutional solutions to the Palestine problem. Financial

³ Johnson, *British Imperialism*, 78, 85, 95, 115–116, 135–36, 154–156.

limitations made the use of large forces impossible, and also hindered effective intelligence work which required staff and cash for agents.

In order to balance all of these commitments and conflicts, usually through improvisation, Britain relied more heavily than usual in its empire on intelligence, and on its political relationships with local elites in order to boost its prestige, and to supplement the military force which it could not afford to maintain and could not use easily, in Palestine. Secret intelligence and diplomacy were essential for Britain to manage relations between Arabs and Jews, and preserve its interests and rule in Palestine. When that failed, however, Britain turned to the exemplary use of force⁴, relying on reserves from elsewhere. In the case of revolt, intelligence guided the use of hard power and served as a force multiplier.

The second central issue this thesis addresses is the origins, growth and defeat of the Arab revolt of 1936-39 – the greatest challenge to British power in Palestine during the inter war years, and one which transformed the balance of power among the three sides. Much of the thesis is dedicated to a series of questions relating to the explosion of the revolt and its outcomes. Nationalist and religious movements originating before Britain's arrival in Palestine play an important part in our understanding of how Britain's local partners became enemies.

The thesis addresses how the revolt developed despite improvements in the British security and intelligence machinery. It argues that the Mandate was irreversibly altered by the revolt and its suppression.

⁴ Bennett, "Minimum Force in British Counterinsurgency"; Reis, "The Myth of British Minimum Force in Counterinsurgency Campaigns during Decolonisation (1945–1970)."

Any hope for a civil government, as guaranteed by Britain and the League of Nations, imploded under the strains of civil disobedience, threat and use of violence, armed rebellion, and unprecedented Arab-Jewish tensions. Britain defeated the revolt amidst a steady slide towards a 'dirty war,' in which intelligence officers mobilized support from Jewish and Arab paramilitaries, and coordinated a vicious campaign to retake the country. The consequences were far-reaching. These events tipped the balance between the two key political and demographic developments in Palestine between 1917 and 1936: the increase in the Jewish population and the expansion of the Yishuv's political organs, and the corresponding rise in the Arab nationalist organization under the Mufti. The power of Jewish military and intelligence agencies surged. Palestinian society was shattered, divided, and leaderless. A militarized form of rule remained in place until 1948. Meanwhile, the international crises which coincided with the rebellion forced Britain finally to determine whether it would uphold its commitment to the Jewish National Home and immigration, or allow the self-government promised to the League of Nations, and demanded by Arab nationalists. In 1939, Britain ended its support for Zionism, not out of sympathy for Arab nationalism or international law, but rather to acquire the partnership of influential Arab statesmen against dangerous circumstances and world war.

Finally, this thesis argues that Hajj Amin al-Husseini, Mufti of Jerusalem from 1921 to 1937, was the key subject which British intelligence and policymakers needed to understand. Assessment of their understanding of the Mufti provides an excellent opportunity to rate British

intelligence services and their influence, or lack thereof, over policymakers. Of all Arab leaders, Husseini posed the greatest challenge to British policy in Palestine, although it was usually through indirect means. While Britain gave him the powerful position of Mufti, it nevertheless maintained a watchful eye on the Palestinian leader and his connections with the nationalist, pan-Arab and pan-Islamic communities until 1927-28 when it lost intelligence resources and expertise. During the 1930s British intelligence services and policymakers underrated the Mufti's desire for Arab independence, and underestimated his ability to mobilize the population to demand a halt to Jewish immigration.

This thesis offers a new understanding of how the Mufti exercised his power, disputing historians who have absolved him of responsibility for political violence, and those who accuse him of genocidal ambitions (at least before 1941). Recently declassified intelligence records reveal the need for a significant revision of the Mufti's story. Amidst his multiple interests and clashes with his partners, Husseini's responsibility for the violence that emerged during 1919-39 was hard for British observers to discern until late in the game. Nonetheless, a comparison of intelligence records from Britain and Israel against an analysis of the Mufti's social network reveals that his nationalist and pan-Islamist activity often provoked unexpected results. While others figures remained important and independent, Husseini remained the navigator of the Palestinian national craft. Ultimately, he drove that vessel onto the rocks.

This story is important to the rise of Israel, the nationalist conflict between Arabs and Zionists, and the shaping of the modern Middle East.

The role of intelligence in these processes, an important ‘missing dimension’, has been neglected by historians.⁵ Work on this topic is new; Hebrew studies on Zionist intelligence have described the British system of intelligence in the Mandate, but not comprehensively, and without accounting for recently declassified documents released in Britain and Israel. Few histories of Palestine have examined the years 1920-36, even though they shaped the collapse of Palestine’s security during 1937-47, and the demise of the Mandate. One cannot understand British rule, or its end, without appreciating the complex security problems it faced from the start, and how intelligence shaped these problems. To achieve these aims, one must incorporate Hebrew and Arabic sources, and widen the English base of sources to include records found in Israel, and declassified records in Britain. Historians also have overlooked the secret diplomacy between Arabs and Zionists, and how Mandate authorities sought to achieve their policy by liaising with both sides and relying on local intelligence networks. The intelligence record illustrates the clandestine tools that were central to British power, and Britain’s failure to manage the explosion of political violence in Palestine or to understand its roots. It also highlights a hidden dimension of the Arab Jewish struggle.

Intelligence was a pillar of imperial strategy and the Mandate was an ‘intelligence state,’ yet it faced stiff competition. Arabs, Britons and Zionists all used secret diplomacy and political warfare as tools of policy in Palestine. Zionist intelligence on Arab and Jewish affairs reached Britain as

⁵ Andrew and Dilks, *The Missing Dimension: Governments and Intelligence Communities in the Twentieth Century*.

part of a practice which began in the First World War, which sought to trade intelligence work for political support. This practice continued to the last years of the Mandate, even during the Jewish insurgency of 1944-47, and perhaps beyond. Political information supplied by Zionists helped Britain to manage subversive threats from within and abroad, although always at a price. The relationship varied, but was characterized by a co-dependency that Zionists sought to foster for the sake of open Jewish immigration to Palestine, a core Zionist objective. Intelligence was more important to Zionists than to Arabs, and sometimes the British. Ottoman-era immigrants such as Davidescu saw intelligence as a means to security, and later to end Turkish rule. Political Zionists led by Chaim Weizmann thought intelligence a key to statecraft, which could facilitate the Zionist endeavour. During 1919-20, the efforts of Arab nationalists to gather intelligence were weak, but their secrecy obscured means and intentions from British and Zionist observers, who worked to piece together the political picture. This concatenation of intentions made Zionists stronger intelligence partners for Britain, and Arabs a key target. Britain only began to closely monitor Zionist political activity during the 1930s, and its understanding of the clandestine aspect was limited – partly by the Anglo-Zionist partnership.

Intelligence about environment and enemies shaped British policy and actions. One cannot understand how Britain ruled and lost Palestine without assessing these details. No previous study has done so, partly because of limits to evidence. Now, much evidence is available on how intelligence informed and aided British, Arab and Zionist policies in

Palestine. Incorporating all of these sources illustrates how the Mandate was ruled, depended on intelligence, and how it failed.

Palestinian movements and organizations have not been comprehensively studied, especially in the context of British policymaking and the causes for war and peace in Palestine. No scholar has comprehensively studied the Arab underground or its use of intelligence and security. Likewise, political violence from the *Yishuv* (lit. settlement, but referring to the Jewish community of Palestine) has not been studied in the broader context of British policy. There is good work on the history of Israeli intelligence, but this has not accounted for recently-released records.⁶ There is no study on how Britain's secret relations with Zionists informed its policy.⁷ The success of Zionist intelligence at understanding its Arab opponents and breaking their secrets has been examined by sociologist Gil Eyal in his study on Israeli *Mizrahanut*, or Orientalism. Eyal distinguishes *Mizrahanut* from its English counterpart, arguing that *Mizrahanim*, or Jewish Orientalists, were themselves seen as "oriental" by Europeans, and were more central to Zionist history and politics than their academic counterparts in Europe.⁸

Mizrahanut was fundamental to the rise of the Israeli security state. Before the Mandate period, the emergence of *Mista'ravim*, or Jews who disguised themselves as Arabs, had important implications for the future of Zionist intelligence. These early Zionist settlers could "pass" as

⁶ Especially the official sponsored work by Gelber, *Shorshe ha-ḥavatselet*; and Harouvi, *HaBoleshet Khokeret*.

⁷ Save for my previous work, Wagner, "British Intelligence and the Jewish Resistance Movement"; Wagner, "Britain and the Jewish Underground."

⁸ Eyal, *The Disenchantment of the Orient*, 23, 30–31.

Palestinians, perfecting their dialect and, in Eyal's words, 'their imitation of the Palestinians functioned as a public sacrifice of their old selves for the sake of fashioning a new Zionist self.'⁹ Joseph Davidescu was among the original Mista'ravim. Yet, he and other Zionist immigrants of the Ottoman period resisted a separatist trend which occurred during the Mandate period.

Eyal argues that Zionist intelligence officers saw themselves as mediators managing information between authorities and their sources.¹⁰ He overemphasizes the professional tensions amongst Zionist intelligence officers in their attempts to communicate the Arab 'mentality' or to convey the intentions of Arab leaders.¹¹ All intelligence agencies debate the purpose of assessment. A similar dispute plagued British intelligence. Zionist intelligence officers, whether from an academic or 'field' background, demonstrated sophistication in these debates. In contrast, their British military and civilian counterparts tended to ignore and distrust each other, and competed for sources and attention. Nonetheless, Eyal fairly demonstrates that Mizrahanim in intelligence services were fundamental to the securitization of Israeli society and politics.

Until recently, historians looked at how Arabs, Britons and Jews struggled to rule Palestine not as a whole picture, but rather only in parts, and through a narrow range of sources. They tended to work only with English language archival sources. Arabic sources were neglected, while intelligence records, which reveal much about the workings of

⁹ Ibid., 10.

¹⁰ Ibid., 69.

¹¹ Ibid., 78–79.

administration and the politics of locals, were unavailable. Fortunately, in 2013, one can address this issue through the only proper means: a multinational, multi-archival and multi-linguistic approach. Important intelligence sources on Palestine and the Middle East began to be released in 2006. Since then, the UK National Archives and the archive of the Palestine Police CID in Tel Aviv have released much material. These records contain everything from tactical intelligence against terrorists and rebels, to political intelligence on Zionism and Arab nationalism, to the structure of British security in Palestine, augmented by personal papers of soldiers, administrators and intelligence personnel who served in Palestine, or led the counterinsurgency. The Yad Ya'ari Archive at Givat Haviva, Israel, possesses personal papers of Zionist intelligence officers, including correspondence with Arabs, Zionist leaders, and British officers, while the Aaronsohn House archive in Zichron Ya'akov holds the papers of Alex Aaronsohn and Joseph Davidescu, who served British intelligence throughout the period.

Publically held Arabic sources are few, mostly at the Israeli State Archive in its "Abandoned Documents" collection, or in memoirs.¹² The National Archives at Kew also hold English translations of signals intelligence intercepts of Saudi, Egyptian and Iraqi diplomatic cables, often addressing the interaction between events in Palestine and Pan-Arab and Pan-Islamic politics. The sparse Arabic sources can be augmented by coordinating the record of British, and Zionist intelligence liaison with

¹² Qawuqji and Qasimiyah, *Mudhakkirat Fawzi al-Qawuqji, 1890-1977*; Zu'aytir, *Yawmīyāt Akram Zu'aytir : Al-Ḥarakah Al-Waṭanīyah Al-Filasṭīnīyah, 1935-1939*.

Arabs. Comparing what each says about Arab contacts illuminates their secret diplomacy.

The Haganah Archives in Tel Aviv, the Israeli State Archives, and the Central Zionist Archives in Jerusalem contain stolen British documents, and highlight Zionist secret diplomacy, and liaison with British and Arab contacts. These records shape the overall picture on the relationship between intelligence and policy. Hebrew and Arabic material serves as a check on British reportage, revealing the accuracy of intelligence, and the competency of its assessors, and sometimes showing that intelligence might accurately assess issues or events, but misconstrue what they mean for the Yishuv, Palestinian politics or British security.

Peter Jackson describes two concepts of intelligence: One, credited to Michael Handel and John Ferris, regards intelligence as a tool to inform policy, the second as an instrument to implement it.¹³ He argued that both concepts must be assessed. So too, Martin Thomas argues that in the Middle East, British intelligence officers conflated their roles as intelligence providers and agents of state violence.¹⁴ In Palestine, the line between these activities was blurry. Intelligence officers collected information and spread disinformation. They monitored security threats, and countered them. Between 1918 and 1939, their roles varied according to leadership, administration and conditions.

Another key issue is the relationship between intelligence and policy, and whether the two are discrete. My past work has argued that

¹³ Jackson, "Historical Reflections on the Uses and Limits of Intelligence," 11.

¹⁴ Thomas, *Empires of Intelligence*, 6.

intelligence failed in Palestine because policy did, not the other way around. According to Richard Betts, ‘To be useful, intelligence analysis must engage policymakers’ concerns. Policymakers who utilize analysis need studies that *relate* to the objective they are trying to achieve. Thus, analysis must be sensitive to the policy context...’¹⁵ Betts rejects the ideal that intelligence advises policy and considers that this relationship is paradoxical, providing different outcomes in different states at different times. Palestine illustrates these caveats. Officials handling intelligence, whether providers or customers, did so according to style, informed by military experience, or colonial practice. When judging intelligence failure in Palestine, one must make reasonable expectations of the period, while understanding how policy was *normally* formed. Policy did not always base itself strictly on intelligence, and sometimes ignored it.

Martin Thomas characterises British and French colonies in the Middle East during the inter-war years as ‘intelligence states.’ They depended on intelligence for their security. Intelligence mattered to the day-to-day workings of the administration, and as an arm of policing.¹⁶ Thomas also emphasises a colonial-client relationship. ‘Colonies may have exhibited both the defined territoriality of a state and a single, central authority, but they lacked any voluntary associational basis between rulers and ruled to help underpin the state.’¹⁷ Thomas cautioned that

...it would be wrong to dismiss indigenous involvement in colonial government as merely the cooperation of elites and recruitment of junior auxiliaries by European officials. Neither could supplant the other. Nor were government and society entirely distinct from one

¹⁵ Betts, “Politicization of Intelligence: Costs and Benefits,” 61.

¹⁶ Thomas, *Empires of Intelligence*, 3–5.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 8.

another... the state may be understood as a political field in which competing interests – imperial governments, commercial elites, urban notables, tribal confederations, and political parties – sought influence and material concessions.¹⁸

Certainly, in Palestine, Arab and Jewish elite factions competed amongst themselves and with the British for their own interests. Thomas' model of an 'intelligence state' applies to Palestine in part, but does not explain everything. As a model, it is too neat. The British intelligence officers who created the Mandate saw some version of an 'intelligence state' as vital, even if they never articulated it as such. Yet the intelligence state did not always dominate British governance, which had to comply with League of Nations obligations, the general principles of responsible government, and a prevalent liberal internationalist ideology.

Nor was the state simple. During the 1920s, the 'intelligence state' was informal. Former intelligence officers took on governorships and secretariats in Palestine, and continued to handle intelligence as they had done during the military administration and the war. Yet this informality lacked the benefits of the centralized intelligence of the army. By 1927-28, most seasoned intelligence hands-cum-administrators had left the country, and the ghost 'intelligence state' disappeared with them. In the wake of the 1929 disturbances, two parallel 'intelligence states' were rebuilt. The government expected the first of them, the CID, to dominate intelligence, while conforming to its policy and treatment of Arab politics. Meanwhile, for internal and external security, the RAF reintroduced Staff Intelligence to coordinate military and political intelligence. It had a weaker relationship

¹⁸ Ibid., 4–5.

with government, but provided more nuance in assessing Arab and Zionist politics. During the Arab Rebellion, the CID collapsed and was rebuilt on military lines. In all, the ‘intelligence state’ was more of a security state in Palestine, since intelligence rarely affected the core of policy. Intelligence really did so only twice: first, during 1919-20, when it guaranteed the implementation of a British mandate, and again in 1938-39, when signals intelligence (sigint) led Britain to abandon its Zionist policy. During the inter-war years, intelligence mainly served to augment British force: it was fundamental to the defeat of the Arab rebellion, and occasionally mitigated violent disturbances, but not their politics. Policy limited the capacity for intelligence to prevent political violence.

This thesis is the first to study the role of intelligence in the British Mandate of Palestine, which has broader consequences. In the Middle East today regimes, and potentially borders, whose origins lay in this period, are collapsing. The literature lacks a comprehensive analysis of British policy in the Mandate, or even secondary studies of important matters. There is no English campaign history of the Arab rebellion, and no recent explanation of how it unfolded.¹⁹ The intelligence record enables conclusions about how the Palestine Mandate made its decisions and implemented them. As an ‘intelligence state’, the Mandate faced enormous security challenges with small forces. This thesis will show the successes and failure as British intelligence informed policy and compensated for this security shortcoming. This study will illuminate a key tool in British policy and

¹⁹ The best account remains, in my view, Porath, *The Palestinian Arab National Movement: From Riots to Rebellion*.

influence on its formulation. It also will use intelligence as a mirror to reflect the processes by which Britain maintained the Mandate, and then lost it, and on the policies of Britain, the Yishuv, and Palestinian Arabs.

Chapter 1 – Background on Britain’s Wartime Policies

This chapter provides some background which will illuminate certain issues in intelligence assessments and British policy as the war between Britain and the Ottoman Empire came to an end. It explains Britain’s promises to the Arabs and Zionists, contextualizing the reasons why intelligence officers and decision makers never saw a conflict or contradiction. Britain sought a nationally-based alliance against the forces of pan-Islam. Its intelligence services understood the issues, sometimes even questioning the wisdom of British policy. Yet all failed to notice the pervasiveness of pan-Islamism within the Arab national movement. British officials had a skewed picture of Middle Eastern politics as policymakers blindly bound the Empire to conflicting commitments which it would never fulfil.

Britain’s contradictory promises to Sherif Hussein bin ‘Ali of Mecca in 1915, to France in the Sykes-Picot agreement of 1916, and to Zionism in the Balfour Declaration of 1917, are infamous but misunderstood. British historian James Renton, for example, argues that the Balfour Declaration was not meant to be the constitutional basis for the Mandate, but for other reasons, ultimately become so.²⁰ Historian Jonathan Schneer has argued that each promise to Sherif Hussein, the French, and the Zionists was made with the aim of winning the war. In 1915, Britain’s military situation appeared dire, and the prospect of an Arab revolt that might disrupt Ottoman supply lines to Sinai was attractive. France, an ally, had to be included in these negotiations. The 1916 Sykes-Picot Agreement,

²⁰ Renton, “Flawed Foundations : The Balfour Declaration and the Palestine Mandate,” 27–30, 34, 37.

defining spheres of influence in the Middle East, stemmed from Britain's need to balance its interests with those of France, Russia and Sherif Hussein.²¹

Intelligence affected Britain's Zionist policy only after Whitehall decided to make the Balfour Declaration central to propaganda – championed by Chaim Weizmann in London – which was meant to subvert Britain's enemies and persuade peoples around the world (especially Americans and Russians) to support the allied cause. Britain assumed that Zionists had more power in Russia as a 'latent force' than was true.²²

So too, author Timothy Paris argues that the Balfour Declaration was delivered primarily because the cabinet sought to pre-empt any German attempt to gain Jewish sympathy and finance, though these concerns received more attention than was justified. Moreover politicians like David Lloyd George were committed Zionists, while imperialists liked the idea of a Jewish bulwark for Suez.²³ Britain's overarching purpose remained the defeat of Germany and the Ottoman Empire.

In this period, British policy was disproportionately influenced by Zionism, which seemed to solve multiple problems. In the Middle East, Zionist and Arab policies were seen as a counterbalance to hostile pan-Islam (and later, anti-British or anti-colonial nationalism). In Eastern Europe, the Balfour Declaration gave Jews a reason to support the Entente despite its alliance with the hated Czar. When Weizmann forged ties with British policymakers, Zionism was largely a German-speaking movement.

²¹ Schneer, *The Balfour Declaration*, 75–106.

²² Ibid., 366; Renton, *The Zionist Masquerade*, chap. 5. See p80 on Intelligence views of Zionist influence in Russia.

²³ Paris, *Britain, the Hashemites and Arab Rule, 1920-1925*, 39.

Germany, the Czar's main opponent, promoted emancipation in Eastern Europe and so earned Jewish sympathy. Later, Zionism was a political alternative to bolshevism for East European Jews. Finally, the 'Jewish vote' was one more way to persuade the United States to join the war and support British policy.²⁴ British officials assumed that Jewish opinion mattered, whether in Europe, or American electoral politics. Sometimes this assumption, encouraged by Weizmann, was driven by anti-Semitism.

The historiography of the Mandate tends to classify British opinion as having been "pro-Zionist", "anti-Zionist", or "Pro-Arab", yet British officials rarely used such terms in policymaking, or even to describe their own views. On the contrary, all that mattered was *The Zionist* policy, outlined in the Balfour Declaration of 2 November 1917, which vaguely promised Palestine as a "National Home" for the Jewish people, notwithstanding the rights of non-Jews in Palestine or the status of Jews elsewhere. Like James Renton, this thesis will use the term "the Zionist policy" as British officials did, meaning political and legal support for Jewish immigration and settlement in Palestine. Although this policy saw limits in 1921 when immigration rates were tied to the 'absorptive capacity of the country', and in 1930 when Lord Passfield sought to appease Arab demands, the Zionist policy remained in force until 1939. The crucial issue of the 1939 White Paper which ended the 22 year-old Zionist policy is discussed with new evidence and arguments in chapter 9.

²⁴ See Renton, *The Zionist Masquerade*; Schneer, *The Balfour Declaration*; McMeekin, *The Berlin-Baghdad Express*.

The Zionist policy might be contrasted to Britain's 'Arab' or 'Sherifian policy', which was a vague promise from Sir Henry McMahon, the High Commissioner of Egypt, to the Hashemite family for an Arab kingdom. Paris argues that Winston Churchill and Arab protagonist T.E. Lawrence largely drove this policy. Although Paris' book mainly addresses postwar events, its light treatment of Britain's interactions with Arab Sheikhs before the 1916 revolt, and even earlier, contains certain anachronisms. Namely, it assumes that Hussein was the natural standard-bearer for Arab nationalism. Like so many others dealing with this subject, the book fails to explain why, after having rebuffed them a number of times, Britain chose the Hashemite family to lead the revolt against the Ottomans. Britain had also rebuffed approaches by Arab nationalist societies, who were not represented by the Hashemites in any form, until the Damascus Protocol (see p.23) was issued only a few months before the McMahon-Hussein correspondence began. Britain's relationship with Arabs was complex, and gaps remain in that literature because Arabic sources are few and Ottoman sources generally are ignored. Paris correctly argues that Hussein approached Britain for support because he thought the Ottomans might replace him in his official role as protector of the holy cities.²⁵ Other authoritative scholars such as Hasan Kayali and Eliezer Tauber support this argument, but also provide more nuance in how Hussein came to lead the Arab national movements and the revolt.²⁶

²⁵ Paris, *Britain, the Hashemites and Arab Rule, 1920-1925*, 33–34.

²⁶ Kayali, *Arabs and Young Turks*, 165–170; Tauber, *The Arab Movements in World War I*, 68–69.

Historians see Palestine through an artificial timeline which begins with the British war in 1914. In fact, the greatest intellectual developments for Arabs occurred before 1914 at Ottoman universities, military academies, political and social clubs, and al-Azhar, the Egyptian Islamic University. In these venues, future leaders of the Arab national movement crystallized their worldviews and connections. Islamists relations with the Ottoman Empire were strained. On religious grounds, Islamists such as Shakib Arslan supported the Ottoman Sultan – the Caliph of Islam – whose propaganda sought Islamic unity in order to hold the empire together. Others opposed the Turkish nationalist Committee of Union and Progress (CUP) for its unequal treatment of Arabs and its weakening of the Sultan. Arslan was a Lebanese Druze prince who had embraced orthodox Sunni Islam. As a journalist, poet, writer and activist, he promoted Salafist principles in his writings and teachings (see p.160 for more on his background). Arslan was deeply disturbed by Christian domination of Muslim lands, the defeat of the Ottomans, the end of the Islamic Caliphate in 1924. He lived in voluntary exile in Berlin from 1918 through 1924, and then mainly in Geneva until his death in Beirut in 1946. When Britain conquered Palestine in 1918, its policymakers barely knew that the empire now confronted the hopes, desires, and disappointments of Arab nationalists and Salafists. Nor did they understand how little expectations of Arab movements aligned with Britain's vision for the region.²⁷

²⁷ Tauber, *The Emergence of the Arab Movements*; Cleveland, *Islam against the West*, introduction.

During the first year of the First World War, Britain was approached by many different Arab nationalists for support against the Ottomans. Yet Lord Kitchener personally approached Hussein to offer him an Arab Caliphate, despite having refused his family's requests for intervention before the war.²⁸ During 1917-19, Britain treated the Hashemite family, led by Sherif Hussein, as it did the Zionists. Policymakers hoped they could lead Arabs in alliance with Britain and Zionists against pan-Islamic forces. Britain never accounted for the desires of nationalist associations which emerged during the Ottoman period. British policymakers may not even have known about the 1915 Damascus Protocol, a letter to Sherif Hussein by the Damascus branches of the two largest nationalist secret societies, *al-Fatat* and *al-'Ahd* ('The Youth', and 'The Covenant'), demanding independence in Arab lands. Before the war, most Arab societies merely demanded decentralized rule under an Ottoman system, seeking modernization, equality, and national revival. With the Ottoman Empire's entry to the war, Arab associations began to demand independence.²⁹ In 1915, the Sherif began correspondence with the British army, then embattled with the Ottomans close to the Suez Canal. British promises to the Sherif at that time came to embody Britain's Arab policy, which, like the Zionist policy, was seen as a means to win the war and to cultivate a future strategic ally.

Before it ever took cooperation with Arab nationalists seriously, Britain had been approached directly by key Islamist figures such as Kamel

²⁸ Paris, *Britain, the Hashemites and Arab Rule, 1920-1925*, 19–20; Tauber, *The Arab Movements in World War I*, 63–69.

²⁹ Tauber, *The Arab Movements in World War I*, 62; Kayali, *Arabs and Young Turks*, 69–71, 198, 212.

al-Qassab, Rashid Rida, and the soldier ‘Aziz ‘Ali al-Misri (co-founder of *al-‘Ahd* and *al-Qahtaniyya* p. 170). Shakib Arslan, as mentioned, however remained loyal to the Ottoman Empire.³⁰ All four deeply resented British imperialism. The first three compromised this sentiment by reaching out to the British and Sherif, believing that Britain’s comparatively liberal rule in Egypt – the main refuge for Syrian nationalists – indicated that the Empire would further their national cause. As pan-Arabists, they actually preferred ‘Abdul ‘Aziz ibn Sa’ud to be standard-bearer for the pan-Arab independence movement.³¹ Arslan, Qassab, and Rida had far reaching influence over the Arab national movement and affected events in Palestine. They were key to the Mufti’s global and regional networks.

Arab nationalism has been traced back to the 19th century Ottoman *Tanzimat* reforms, which introduced changes in law and education.³² Its opposition to Zionism did not begin with the Balfour Declaration in 1917: the first recorded protest against Jewish immigration and land purchases reached the Ottoman Grand Vizier in 1891. This opposition was complex, and intertwined with political changes occurring in the Ottoman Empire during the early 20th century.³³ Palestinian identity developed with a polycentric system of competing and overlapping loyalties in individuals and communities.³⁴ This pattern continued into British rule. In his book, *The Arabs and the Holocaust*, Gilbert Achcar categorized Palestinian

³⁰ Tauber, *The Emergence of the Arab Movements*, 278–283; Cleveland, *Islam against the West*, 78.

³¹ Tauber, *The Emergence of the Arab Movements*, 114–15, 251, 264, 282, 326.

³² Khalidi, *Palestinian Identity*, 38–39.

³³ See ‘Allūsh, *Al-muqāwamah al-‘Arabīyah fī Filasṭīn (1917-1948)*, 37–40.

³⁴ Khalidi, *Palestinian Identity*, chap. 5.; Jankowski and Gershoni, *Rethinking Nationalism in the Arab Middle East*, xix–xx.

identity during the inter-war years into four currents: Liberal Westernizers, Marxists, Nationalists, and Reactionary and/or Pan-Islamists.³⁵ This approach, while oversimplified – Islamists were not reactionary, but shared the modernizing aims of nationalism – remains useful. Arabs during the British Mandate typically subscribed to multiple categories, which was difficult for outsiders to understand. Political habits predating British rule sometimes masked the intentions of Palestinian leaders. One report related, ‘In the words of one notable at Nablus, “We are a polite nation, and we tell the young government Officials what we think they wish to hear. If they had a better knowledge of our customs and language they might get more out of us.”’³⁶ Cultural barriers could be bridged through close relations, both overt and secret, which were facilitated by Zionist intelligence during these early years.

British policymakers did not fear nationalism, but they did worry about how to contain other forces. Some of these fears became irrelevant after the war. British officer and statesman Mark Sykes wrote in 1917:

...if we have agreements of an ancient Imperialist tendency, which the nationalities dislike it will be most probable that the Turk and German will score heavily to keep suzerainty and the Baghdad-Bahn, and land us (Great Britain) in a bad peace position in the Middle East, lacking both control and future security... I want to see a permanent Anglo-French Entente allied to Jews, Arabs and Armenians which will render pan-Islamism innocuous and protect India and Africa from the Turco-German combine, which I believe may well survive the Hohenzollerns.³⁷

This view referenced German and Ottoman pan-Islamic propaganda that sought to raise *Jihad*, or Islamic holy war, against Christian forces in

³⁵ Achcar, *The Arabs and the Holocaust*, 39–41.

³⁶ HA 115/9. *Situation in Palestine July 1921*. probably by Samuel.

³⁷ ISA, RG65/P/349/28 *Memorandum on the Asia-Minor Agreement*. Mark Sykes. 14.8.1917.

the Middle East. Such attempts sought to consolidate Islamic unity within the Ottoman Empire and to obstruct British mobilization in Egypt and India.³⁸ British intelligence and policymakers worried about revolution, which never materialized. A report from Cairo in June 1919 described the general unrest amongst Muslims against the background of disturbances in Egypt and in newly-conquered territory. The power of Islam, embodied by the Ottoman Empire, was weakened by decisions at the peace conference, and British intelligence linked disturbances to the Turkish Committee of Union and Progress (CUP), who ‘are doubtless using this feeling [of defeat of Islamic power] to create a pan-Islamic movement hostile to foreigners and Christians as this applies especially in Northern Syria. The recent agitation in Egypt although there is little sympathy between Egypt and Palestine or Syria has also had its effect...’³⁹

British intelligence and policy-makers saw transnational issues such as pan-Islam and Bolshevism as the main threats to the Empire. These issues are complex and controversial. British assessments confused the CUP with pan-Islamism, often treating the two as one, probably because of Turkish leader Mustafa Kemal’s propaganda that reached out to other Muslim populations, and his agreements with Arab nationalists.⁴⁰ They associated emerging Arab national movements with the CUP and pan-Islam, because they saw the common origins of *al-Fatat* (short for *Jami’at al-‘Arabia al-Fatat*, or ‘The Young Arab Society’), and the CUP in Istanbul during 1907-08. Both these Arab and Ottoman movements

³⁸ Kayalı, *Arabs and Young Turks*, 187–188.

³⁹ TNA, FO 608/115. ff.49. *GHQ Cairo to DMI*. 19.6.1919.

⁴⁰ Kayalı, *Arabs and Young Turks*, 203.

advocated political representation and equality for all citizens.⁴¹ Soon thereafter, however, Arab secret societies began to oppose the CUP, which discriminated against Arabs and stripped power from the Sultan.

Military historian John Ferris explains the conspiratorial lens through which intelligence officers and decision makers saw the world during this period.

One should take such evidence seriously. One cannot understand British strategy between 1919 and 1923 without accounting for it. That evidence reflected real issues, often accurately, and shaped assessments and actions at the highest of levels. Even when misleading or misinterpreted, it mattered. This evidence can be understood only when it is parsed properly, by taking care about periodization and overgeneralisation.⁴²

In 1919 and 1920, British analysts erroneously attributed political disturbances in India, Iraq and Egypt to the influence of a secret German-Bolshevik alliance. Ferris believes intelligence officers ‘did not distort (as against, mistake) the facts about conspiracy, revolt, Pan Islam and nationalism. Their interpretations were reasonable, but often wrong... They suffered from the professional deformation of alarmism. They overemphasised the power of conspiracies...’⁴³ Whitehall took such evidence seriously.

The views of the British Security Service, or MI5, illuminate the relationship between Islam and imperial security. In a discussion of its role in the world, and in order to justify a higher level of funding, MI5 described the emerging threats facing the British Empire. The first was

⁴¹ ‘Allūsh, *Al-muqāwamah al-‘Arabīyah fī Filasṭīn (1917-1948)*, 39–40.

⁴² Ferris, “The British Empire vs. The Hidden Hand,” 326.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 331.

Japan's military autocracy and its 'pan-Asianism, or "Yellow Peril"'.

Closer to home,

The other storm-centre is in the Near East and constitutes and even more immediate danger. It unfortunately remains a fact that the Committee of Union and Progress is still the only really live political force in Turkey, and, no matter what terms of peace are imposed, will retain its powers of sawying (sic) the ignorant masses, not only in Turkey but in other Muhammadan countries... The exiled leaders of the CUP have already allied themselves with the Russian Bolsheviks, who after all are quite Oriental in their ideas and terrorist methods, and we have thus arrayed against Western civilisation the three motive forces. Pan-Islamism, Pan-Turanianism, and Communism on the Bolshevik plan.⁴⁴

Threats were no longer confined to states, and could be embodied in the 'Muhammadan hordes of central and western Asia.'⁴⁵ Predictions of German and Russian officers leading these hordes did not come true, but the notion that transnational movements could cooperate against the British Empire, despite their ideological differences, shaped British views of how ideology might undermine the Empire, or bolster it.

This helps to explain why it took so long for British officers to realize that its Zionist and Arab policies would be irreconcilable. In 1917 Mark Sykes, in charge of the Middle East desk at the War Office, envisioned a British-Arab-Zionist-Armenian alliance to contain Turkish, German and pan-Islamic forces. In 1919 British intelligence officers were charged with implementing such a programme. The Zionist and Sherifian policies were seen as logical means to counter a united Middle Eastern front against the British Empire. Yet these policies would not be simple to implement; not only did the Middle East of 1919 look drastically

⁴⁴ TNA, WO 32/21125. 17A. *copy of minute by Mr. Newby, MI5. 10.7.1919.*
⁴⁵ Ibid.

different from that of 1917, but in 1919 Sykes inconveniently died of the Spanish flu. Where wartime policy saw Arab nationalism embodied by Sherif Hussein and his sons, the peacetime influence of nationalist societies like Fatat in Feisal's Damascus government was an unanticipated development.

Gilbert Clayton, Director of Intelligence at the Cairo-based Arab Bureau, doubted whether Syrian or Palestinian Arabs, whom he saw as backwards, would accept 'Meccan Patriarchalism' under a Hashemite king.⁴⁶ He also doubted whether the Zionist and Arab policies could be reconciled. He told Sykes,

I have just seen your telegraphic reply to Picot on the Zionist question... I am not fully aware of the weight which Zionists carry, especially in America and Russia, and of the consequent necessity of giving them everything for which they ask, but I must point out that, by pushing them as hard as we appear to be doing, we are risking the possibility of Arab unity becoming something like an accomplished fact and being ranged against us.⁴⁷

Within months of expressing these doubts about Zionism, Clayton changed his mind. His newfound enthusiasm stemmed from contact with Zionist leader Chaim Weizmann, Zionist intelligence, and reading of Zionist communications. While Clayton abandoned the anti-Zionist stance of many of his colleagues at the Arab Bureau in Cairo, he still worried that a Zionist policy might cripple British decision-making. His attitudes illustrate how British intelligence officers, incorporating direction from London with their own visions, shaped British rule in Palestine as victory approached.

⁴⁶ SAD 693/13/55. *Clayton to Bell*. 17.6.1918.

⁴⁷ SAD Gilbert Clayton Papers, GB-0033-SAD, 693/13/13. *Clayton to Mark Sykes*, 17.12.1917.

Britain's relationship with Arab nationalism was more complex than expected, because its Sherifian policy did not account for the intellectual developments in the Arab world over the preceding decades, and assumed that a victorious king could inspire loyalty. Clayton underestimated the political sophistication of the educated classes. Some nationalists were members of secret societies, hidden until the armistice. Others were still part of the Ottoman system, or had become attached to Feisal. British policy ignored Arab movements such as Fatat, looking only to the Sherif. The Balfour Declaration had produced feelings of 'dismay' amongst both settled Arabs and Bedouin. Clayton thought that 'fear of the Jew' could produce sympathy for the Sherif.⁴⁸ It was difficult in 1917 to foresee the role that members of al-Fatat would play in Feisal's government in Damascus, or their influence over the national movement.

The armistice with the Ottoman Empire gave way to free expression and so nationalist secret societies in Palestine emerged in the open. Arab nationalists partnered with notable families, mainly from Jerusalem, Jaffa, and Nablus, to found Moslem-Christian Societies (MCS). The various branches of MCS coalesced in early 1919 to form the Palestine Arab Congress (PAC). The Executive Committee of the Palestine Arab Congress (ECPAC) later advocated in Jerusalem, London and Geneva against Britain's Zionist policy and for independence. In each arena they were outmatched by the Zionist leader Chaim Weizmann, who reminded Britain that Zionists were not immediately pursuing independence.

⁴⁸ SAD, Clayton Papers, 693/13/10. *Clayton to Gertrude Bell*, 8.12.1917.;

The first PAC sent its resolutions to the peace conference at Paris. It advocated self-determination under Wilsonian principles, posing a political problem for Britain, which sought to contain the influence of the Fatat-inspired independence platform. Since not all PAC delegates agreed on policy, diplomats and intelligence were quick to dismiss the MCS as a group of unrepresentative, self-appointed troublemakers.⁴⁹ In reality, they comprised a movement: notables, merchants, ex-soldiers and ex-government officers, all educated by the Ottoman system. Leadership included members of Fatat and other decentralization movements from the Ottoman period. Many worked with Feisal and his family from 1916. They included future leaders of the Palestinian national movement such as Auni Abdul Hadi, Mu'in al-Madi, Izzat Darwaza, Rashid al-Hajj Ibrahim, Subhi al-Khadhra and many others. Their platform formed the basis for the Istiqlal party (henceforth "Old Istiqlal") which emerged that year in Syria, and later the Palestine Istiqlal Party founded in 1932.⁵⁰

The military intelligence officer in Jerusalem reported on the names, towns and sympathies of each PAC delegate. Pan-Arab nationalists from the *Nadi al-'Arabi*, or Arab Club, and the *Muntada al-Adabi*, or Literary Forum, supported union with an independent Syria while Christians supported French rule. 'There were also many pro-British delegates at once anti-French, anti-Zionist, and anti-Sherif...'⁵¹ The one point of agreement was anti-Zionism. 'I am convinced that if it were not

⁴⁹ TNA, FO 608/98. Ff356-7. *Covering Letter, Secret*. Storrs to Clayton n.d. ca 3.1919

⁵⁰ 'Allūsh, *Al-muqāwamah al-'Arabīyah fī Filasṭīn (1917-1948)*, 39–42.

⁵¹ TNA FO 608/98. *Secret – the Palestine Conference*. 15.2.1919. J.N. Camp, Intelligence (B) [B probably was for internal security].

for Zionism ninety per cent of the people of this country would come out without qualification in favour of a British administration or protectorate.’, noted British intelligence officer J.N. Camp.⁵² According to Clayton, the congress was inspired by Zionism’s aggressive pace in its own propaganda ‘to capture Jewry for Zionism.’⁵³

British intelligence officers had realistically examined pan-Islamic conspiracy and recognized the emerging influence of members of al-Fatat, which they described as a leading stream of Arab nationalism with Turkish pan-Islamic connections and inspirations. At the PAC, Fatat introduced motions against British control in Palestine and Syria, and pushed independence.⁵⁴ Its secrecy masked the complexity of Arab nationalist organization from British observers. Still, they were not completely unfamiliar with the issues, since they had engaged in anti-CUP propaganda before the war, and were aware of the CUP’s use of Islamic propaganda.⁵⁵ It would seem that they continued to view these movements through a distinctly Ottoman lens – where pan-Islam might remain a weapon against Arab nationalism, and vice versa, as was the case during the war.⁵⁶

⁵² Ibid.

⁵³ TNA, FO 608/98.ff354-5. Clayton to FO. 2.3.1919.

⁵⁴ ISA RG 2 M/7/12. 1a. *Waters Taylor to OETS admin.* 3.2.1919.

⁵⁵ Kayalı, *Arabs and Young Turks*, 133–134.

⁵⁶ Ibid., 175.

Chapter 2 – Intelligence, Policy, and the Emerging Modern Middle East

This chapter describes how intelligence shaped British policy, and implemented it. Geostrategic considerations defined Britain's Palestine policy, which foresaw an Anglo-Arab-Zionist alliance. This policy was rational, but based on a weak understanding of relations between Arab leader Sherif Hussein and the Arab nationalist movement. British decision-makers viewed the League of Nations Mandate as the best way to secure this new strategic foothold.

Intelligence officers who had served under Field Marshal Edmund Allenby during the conquest of Palestine, took on key administrative positions in the military government, or Occupied Enemy Territory Administration (OETA; OETS for south, or Palestine). They guaranteed British rule in Palestine by ensuring the League's consensus about Britain's future as a Mandatory power. They did so in three key ways. Clayton orchestrated an agreement between Emir Feisal (son of Sherif Hussein) and Weizmann, to convince the Paris Peace Conference that Arab and Zionist interests could be reconciled, while British rule was in the best interests of the population. Second, intelligence provided through cooperation with Zionists forewarned in 1919 of nationalist insurrection, which was stopped with force, preventing embarrassment at the Peace Conference while negotiations proceeded. Third, when the American "King-Crane" commission visited Palestine and Syria on behalf of the Peace Conference to ascertain the wishes of the people, intelligence censored and coerced nationalist associations. By muting calls for independence, it prevented the Arab nationalist movement from affecting decisions taken at the Peace

Conference. The American delegation concluded that a British Mandate would be the best outcome for the inhabitants in Palestine, and a French Mandate for Syria.

Finally, this chapter argues that violence exploded in 1920 due to confusing intelligence. Britain poorly understood the nationalists who were driving Feisal to confrontation with France, or who were fomenting popular hostility to Jews and Zionism in Palestine. It surveyed the structural makeup of the movement, but conflated clan conflict with nationalist political objectives. The effect of the violence was an acceleration at the 1920 San Remo conference of the decisions which reaffirmed the British Mandate, and Zionism's constitutional role. The looming instability hastened the installation by Britain of a civil government in Palestine, and produced the dual-competitive-cooperative intelligence relations that characterized the relationship between Britain and Zionism for years to come.

In 1918, Britain dominated the Middle East, but its power quickly eroded as a series of crises shook its policy. Controlling the area became costly, as calls raged for economy. Consequently, by 1921 Britain had retreated into a position that defined its Middle East policy for a decade: it cut budgets, costs of garrisons, and ambitions. Throughout the Middle East, British imperial forces were supposed to be balanced and replaced by collaborators, local elites, and small local forces. Britain's position rested on a fragile base of power, nowhere more than in Palestine, especially because weak government and communal tensions prevented the raising of local forces.

Britain wanted to hold Palestine for several reasons. Geostrategic considerations dominated military thinking, which governed the newly conquered territory. The Ottoman threat to the Suez Canal in 1915 caused policymakers to view Palestine as a base for the defence of the Canal Zone, the British Empire's lifeline. Palestine gave the Empire strategic depth and a way to protect the Suez Canal, surrounded as it was by defensible borders, and territory for airbase links between Egypt and India.⁵⁷ Palestine was one of Britain's few gains during the war, and policymakers hoped British influence would dominate the Middle East. Control over the Holy Land positively affected Protestant Christian and liberal sentiments. According to James Renton, 'the capture of Jerusalem was to be the biggest propaganda spectacle of the war.'⁵⁸ It would boost morale at home, and consolidate British support amongst 'such diverse communities as Irish-Americans, Russian and Greek Orthodox, Indian and Algerian Muslims, and of course, "Jews throughout the world."⁵⁹ The British did not fear Arab nationalism and wanted to be its guide. Through responsible government over a people unable to rule themselves, Britain hoped to run Palestine for generations.

Britain's possession of Palestine depended on the acquiescence of the peace conference. Clayton had attempted during 1918 to promote early Zionist-Arab détente, to help prepare the British case for the peace conference. When Weizmann met Clayton and Allenby at headquarters in

⁵⁷ TNA AIR 8/62. Pal.9. *The Future of Palestine*. Memo circulated at first cabinet Palestine Committee meeting, 5.6.1923. See especially *appendix II, strategical importance of Palestine*.

⁵⁸ Renton, "Flawed Foundations: The Balfour Declaration and the Palestine Mandate," 91.

⁵⁹ Robson, "Church, State, and the Holy Land"; Bar-Yosef, "The Last Crusade? British Propaganda and the Palestine Campaign, 1917-18."

April 1918 in his role as head of the Zionist Commission, he impressed them with his intelligence and openness. Clayton was persuaded that reconciliation was possible.⁶⁰ He asked T.E. Lawrence, a member of his Arab Bureau, to convince Feisal that the Arab movement depended on entente with the Jews.⁶¹ Weizmann, for his part, reported that he intended to tell Feisal he could depend on Jews to help him build his Arab kingdom. ‘We shall be his neighbours and we do not represent any danger to him, as we are not and never shall be a great power. We are the natural intermediaries between Great Britain and the Hedjaz.’⁶² Clayton told Gertrude Bell, still working for the Arab Bureau but now appointed “Oriental Secretary” in Baghdad, that the meeting resulted

In the establishment of very cordial relations and far more mutual sympathy than I had hoped was possible... There is little doubt that the Zionist Policy has been of very considerable assistance to us already and may help us a great deal more not only during the war, but afterwards. A Palestine in which Jewish interest is established and which is under the aegis of Great Britain will be a strong outpost to Egypt...⁶³

The Zionist Commission (ZC) clarified to Clayton and other officials that their aims were not, for the present, to build a state. Arabs could be reassured by British control. Yet Clayton emphasized that ‘local feeling has to be studied and conciliated... as it might re-act on the more important Arab elements on whom our Arab policy is based and who are a great military and political asset.’⁶⁴

⁶⁰ SAD 693/13/47. *Clayton to Sykes*. 4.4.1918.

⁶¹ SAD, 693/13/40, *Clayton to ‘my dear general’ (perhaps Wilson or Allenby)*. 4.2.1918.

⁶² TNA, FO 608/99.ff292-3. *Weizmann to Balfour*. 30.5.1918.

⁶³ SAD 693/13/55. *Clayton to Bell*. 17.6.1918.

⁶⁴ SAD 693/13/55. *Clayton to Bell*. 17.6.1918.

When nationalist societies began emerging, they threatened Britain's strategy to acquire the Palestine Mandate at the peace conference. So, at Clayton's instigation, Weizmann and Feisal met again. They represented a pro-British front which would enable Britain to attain its interests in Palestine and Mesopotamia. The Feisal-Weizmann accord was designed to build consensus about British Mandates in the face of French suspicion. France's concerns about Feisal, and especially T.E. Lawrence, were natural, as during January and February the French and British jostled over Middle East policy.⁶⁵ Yet cooperation was the rule, so by March 1919 David Lloyd George had conceded a Syrian Mandate to France, while the Foreign Office (FO) held 'no one contests France's right to rule in Syria.'⁶⁶ The military handover of Syria to the French was methodically planned and coordinated.⁶⁷ Borders were settled through negotiations.

Historians have attributed the design of Palestine's borders to Zionist pressure at the Paris peace talks.⁶⁸ In fact, geostrategic considerations drove negotiations over Palestine's northern border. Intelligence hand Col. (later Brigadier) Walter Gribbon advocated Allenby's suggestions at the peace conference. Gribbon had been part of the Arab Bureau, and was handler for the Zionist spy ring, *NILI*, a Hebrew acronym from I Samuel 15:29 meaning 'The eternity of Israel will not lie'. He emphasised the need to satisfy French demands in Syria and to preserve Britain's aims in Palestine. Allenby wanted "the Hermon line", roughly the

⁶⁵ FO 608/98/9. Feisal-Weizmann agreement. 16.1.1919. FO 608/98/8. Zionism in Palestine. 17.1.1919. MacMillan, *Peacemakers*, 400–402.

⁶⁶ TNA WO/106/194. 35. *Extract from a Secret Paper*. Ref meeting 21.3.1919. ; FO 371/4179. ff. 430. *Derby to British Foreign Secretary Lord Curzon*. 6.4.1919.

⁶⁷ TNA FO 371/4182. ff. 273. *DMI to FO*. 1.9.1919.

⁶⁸ Gil-Har, "Zionist Policy at the Versailles Peace Conference."

current northern border of Israel from Rosh HaNiqra to Mount Hermon.

Gibbon stated that this border gave France as much of Syria as was reasonable without ‘damaging our strategical position, unless Arab propaganda is taken too seriously...’ The strategic depth and high ground were most important to British interests, according to the General Staff. He continued:

Arabs should be told what is going to be done, not asked their opinion; they know that we shall be just. Feisul, probably the best of the Arabs, will not live for ever, and the limitations of even his power are clearly shown by his latest message to his father. In this he admits that the Wahabi threat [viz., ibn Sa’ud] undermines his whole position. It may also be remarked that if the Arabs are so potentially hostile as feared by General Allenby, we need not be too respectful of their feelings.

With the factors reduced to [British strategic interests], it will be seen that the Zionist question drops out and merely becomes a matter for adjustment as between the Jews and Arabs behind the British line.⁶⁹

Gibbon, a staunch Zionist, argued for imperial security. Cable intercepts revealed Feisal’s weakness, and later on, his instructions to arm and prepare for battle, even as he reached short-term agreements with the French.⁷⁰ In British eyes, Zionism was irrelevant to the issue of borders, but embracing the movement was an important aspect in maintaining friendly control over Palestine. Gibbon and other ex-intelligence officers under Allenby assumed that the Zionist policy was beneficial and could be handled independently of Arab demands.

Meanwhile, the Feisal-Weizmann charade achieved its purpose; the prospect of achieving reconciliation between Zionists and Arab nationalists created a window through which British interests in the Middle East could

⁶⁹ TNA WO 106/194. 3. Lt. Col. (Gibbon). 12.6.1919.

⁷⁰ TNA, HW 12/2. 000338, 000337, 000360, 000404, 000452, 000579, 000559; HW 12/3. 000683.

be secured during the Paris peace negotiations. However, other issues could have torpedoed British control. Revolutionary violence threatened to convince the peace conference that the locals resisted British rule, and perhaps might lead them to reconsider the mandatory system. Anglo-Zionist intelligence cooperation prevented this from occurring.

Intelligence, Peace and War

Intelligence prevented violence in Palestine from foiling Britain's plans for a mandate. This resulted from cooperation with Zionist intelligence groups, which had been ongoing since 1915. The NILI spy ring, run by the Aaronsohn family of Zichron Ya'akov, is an important part of Zionist history and mythology.⁷¹ With the Aaronsohns were Joseph Davidescu and Liova Shneerson, both decorated for their service.⁷² With the conquest of southern Palestine complete, the Aaronsohn ring served the British through the Jewish Bureau, established in cooperation with the military governor of Jaffa. The Bureau was a British office, run by the Aaronsohn network. Alex Aaronsohn was employed within the intelligence staff of the Egyptian Expeditionary Force (EEF) from 1918 to 1919, when he ran an Arab intelligence network. He was decorated for his work, which served dual purposes for the British and for the Zionists. From 1919 he served in the GSI of the British Camel Corps in Aleppo.⁷³ His brother Aaron served with the ZC delegation to Paris in 1919, until his death in a plane crash in May that year. The ZC was officially appointed by the

⁷¹ For scholarly work on British intelligence overall, including the Aaronsohns, see Sheffy, *British Military Intelligence in the Palestine Campaign, 1914-1918*. The story of Sarah Aaronsohn's spy work, capture and execution has been read by Israeli schoolchildren for decades-Melman, "The Legend of Sarah."

⁷² Jewish Museum, London. *Official Record of Gallant Deeds*. JML/1984.125/1984.125.T.p156. Gelber, *Shorshe ha-havatselet*, 12-15.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, 11.

British government to study conditions in Palestine and to make policy recommendations. On their journey to Palestine in March-April 1918, Aaron Aaronsohn and Weizmann discussed the need to establish a Jewish secret service.⁷⁴

By the end of 1918, Shneerson had developed a scheme with the founding member of the Jewish battalions of the British army, Vladamir (Ze'ev) Jabotinsky⁷⁵, who was a member of Weizmann's executive until March 1919. According to Shneerson's plan, Zionist intelligence could operate in Palestine and Syria for both British and Zionist needs. Its purpose was overlapping, without conflict of interest: It would examine the possibility of acquiring lands, and survey Arab politics and affairs and their relationship to Zionism and Britain. It would serve the ZC, and share intelligence with the British government.⁷⁶ His plan was the basis for the first Yishuv intelligence service, the Information Bureau (IB), which was headed mainly by members of NILI and the Jewish Bureau.

Attempts within the Yishuv to found Zionist intelligence and defence organizations were generally stymied by the problem of ideological organization, which plagued the movement throughout the Mandate period. The socialist *HaShomer* (The Guard) organization offered itself to Weizmann as a source of intelligence on Arab movements opposed to Zionism. Alex Aaronsohn, Joseph Davidescu and other prewar immigrants tended to prefer independence from the complexities of the Zionist

⁷⁴ Ibid., 12.

⁷⁵ In 1923 Jabotinsky founded the Revisionist Zionist movement, rejecting Weizmann's cautious programme, and called for a Jewish state under British protection.

⁷⁶ Haganah Archives, Tel Aviv (HA). 80/145/P/1. Shneerson to Zabutinsky (Jabotinsky). 15.12.1918.

movement, and returned to British service. This problem was noticed by the governor, Maj.-Gen. Sir Arthur Wigram Money, who reported in mid-April that although his ZC interlocutors were reasonable, they were managing a ‘difficult team, or rather a number of opposing teams,’ over which they exercised little control. Weizmann had to manage people from the socialist HaShomer, Jabotinsky’s militant followers in the Jewish battalions, and the independent-minded ex-NILI members.⁷⁷

Despite this friction, Zionist intelligence officers monitored and analyzed MCS and PAC. They were Britain’s main source on these matters; documents in Israeli and British archives demonstrate that British reports were authored by Zionist intelligence or at least developed on the basis of their reports. For example, the text of Alex Aaronsohn’s summary of the first PAC closely aligns with British military intelligence coverage of that event. The lead British officer in Jerusalem, J.N. Camp, attributed anti-British resolutions at the congress more to French propaganda than did Aaronsohn, who emphasised the role of secret societies in promoting anti-Jewish feeling. Aaronsohn sensed that Britain ought to pay more attention to the youth, who, he emphasized, were organizing extremist measures, mainly under the secret society *Ikha wal-‘Afaf* (Brotherhood and Purity) – which ‘which operated according to the direct instructions of the Literary Forum and causes most of the problems... trouble could break at any moment and unexpectedly even by the instigators themselves.’ A violent

⁷⁷ TNA, FO 608/99. ff.385. *Money to CPO (Chief Political Officer – Clayton)*. 15.4.1919.

outbreak was expected immediately after the peace conference.⁷⁸ Both Aaronsohn and Camp noted the rising influence of the Nadi and Muntada.⁷⁹

In a later report regarding PAC, Camp remarked that ‘The pan-Arab influence of certain members of the Muntada el-Adabi and Nadi el-Arabi was very persistent. It was the object of these young patriots to urge the members of the conference to pass a resolution in favour of union with a Sherifian Syria, which should be absolutely free and independent.’ Whereas British military intelligence concluded that French influence was behind anti-British resolutions at the PAC, Aaronsohn gave independence-oriented nationalists more credit, because he had learned of them while based in Aleppo. His source, Farid Pasha al-Yafi, emphasised emerging nationalist politics, especially the ‘Parti des jeunes nationalistes’ a clear reference to al-Fatat. Farid, a Damascus notable, had opposed the CUP, and was imprisoned for most of the war. His fearful reports of Fatat and the Nadi considered the leadership to be chauvinists, ‘drunk with independence... The party also is made of countryside notables, journalists, and does not cease to propagate its ideas throughout the population.’ These people had formed the central Arab Club (Nadi) in Damascus, which sought independence in all Arab countries, and cooperation with the CUP.⁸⁰

Reports of nationalist activity caused Camp and military governor of Jerusalem, Ronald Storrs, to fear that Britain would lose local support unless they limited Britain’s Zionist policy.⁸¹ Aaronsohn described the

⁷⁸ Gelber, *Shorshe ha-havatselet*, 19.

⁷⁹ TNA WO 106/189. 32. *French Propaganda in Jerusalem*. JN Camp. 2.2.1919.

⁸⁰ BAZY, Aaronsohn papers. 17/1/10. 2. p.1. 28.11.1918.; 17/1/10. 3. Date unclear – late 1918.; 17/1/23. Farid Pasha. 31.12.18.

⁸¹ Ibid and FO 608/98.f.356. *Storrs to Chief Political Officer*. N.D.; f.359. *The Palestine Conference*. JN Camp. 15.2.1919.

cooperative work of the Arab associations and their connections with Sherif Feisal's army in Syria. Other members of the IB such as Shneerson highlighted divisions which emerged at the first PAC in February 1919. Shneerson directed frustration against the British military government, particularly Ronald Storrs. He attributed the rise of Arab movements to British encouragement, and reported that Storrs had used an Arab agent to foment division at the first PAC.⁸² This probably derived from Zionists' frustration with British officers who had developed misgivings about the Zionist policy.

Zionist intelligence, shared with Britain, prevented organized nationalist violence during 1919, even as it exploded in Egypt and Syria. Clayton warned the FO of the danger of anti-Zionist propaganda, prevalent among Muslims and Christians, who feared that Jews would receive political and economic advantage at the peace conference. Zionist propaganda directed at Jewry contributed to those fears. He warned, 'There are considerable grounds for belief that anti-Jewish riots are being prepared in Jerusalem, Jaffa and elsewhere. Precautions are being taken but an announcement that Jews will be given any special privileges might precipitate outbreak...'⁸³ Violence might embarrass Britain at the peace conference, and jeopardize its claim to a Mandate over Palestine, which rested on the Feisal-Weizmann agreement and the premise that Arabs and Jews needed Britain for development.

⁸² HA 80/145/P/16. *Report on the present political and economic attitude of the British military administration in Palestine*. 30.4.1919.

⁸³ TNA, FO 608/99.ff 230. *Clayton to FO*, 26.3.1919.

The warning originated with Commandante Angelo Levi-Bianchini, a former Italian naval officer and member of the ZC. With Alex Aaronsohn, he built an intelligence network to monitor nationalists in Jerusalem. Importantly, intelligence was shared with the British.⁸⁴ His close ties with the ZC brought him closer to British intelligence, but their real trust in Bianchini was established through observation of his activities. A report which appears to be based on cable intercepts confirmed Bianchini's benign but accurate reports to the Italian Foreign Ministry, which he officially represented in Palestine. It also highlighted his independence, and his role in bridging division within the ZC.⁸⁵ Robert Szold, an American member of the ZC, forwarded Bianchini's report about impending disturbances to Weizmann so that he could deliver it to the FO. 'Some Arabs are very well organised, weapons, signals, leaders are ready, they wait for action against Jews only a signal.' This was expected to emerge after the peace conference. Clayton, Money, and Storrs feared a massacre. Szold added that all the reports 'confirm an increasingly alarming situation with bloodshed threatened.'⁸⁶

After receiving the warning Maj.-Gen Money placed a British battalion in Jerusalem and warned Arab notables, including Amin al-Husseini, against any subversive activity. The leadership would be held responsible for violence.⁸⁷ Bianchini's intelligence had prevented violence coinciding with the Palestinian *Nabi Musa* (the Prophet Moses) festival, but

⁸⁴ His connection to Aaronsohn is established in Italian documents described in Minerbi, "Angelo Levi Bianchini U-Fe'iluto BaMizrach (1918-1920)."

⁸⁵ TNA WO 106/190. 97. *Untitled*. 23.4.1919.

⁸⁶ TNA, FO 608/99. ff. 297. *Bianchini to Weizmann*. n.d. ca. spring 1919.

⁸⁷ Gelber, *Shorshe ha-havatsalet*, 20.; FO 608/99. Ff348-9. *Money to GHQ*. 31.3.1919.

it would be a different story one year later, as the festival became the setting for the first major Arab-Jewish violence.

By preventing revolution, Britain suppressed what would have been an obvious sign of local opposition to foreign government. A side effect of intelligence-sharing was an increase in British sympathy for Zionism, despite growing signs that it would be hard to enforce. It was also well-timed since, in Paris, staff intelligence officers began to negotiate borders and administration of mandates with France. Clayton told the FO that ‘The Palestinians desire their country for themselves and will resist any general immigration of Jews however gradual, by every means in their power including active hostilities.’⁸⁸ Britain would have to demonstrate that Zionist immigration would not be forced against the wishes of the population, as was suggested by Weizmann’s programme, which precluded mass immigration and statehood.⁸⁹ Thus, Weizmann’s increased influence within the ZC also increased British sympathy for the movement, which was conditional on his leadership.

Meanwhile, Zionism had become an international issue, approved by the United States, Italy and France. Clayton reminded the FO that this development was not without costs. ‘Unity of opinion among the Allied Governments... is not a factor which tends to alleviate the dislike of non-Jewish Palestinians to the Zionist policy.’⁹⁰ Weizmann’s moderate programme, which emphasized British protection for Jewish colonization and development rather than a state, might have been accepted by the

⁸⁸ TNA, FO 608/99. ff.371-2. *Clayton to FO*. 2.5.1919.

⁸⁹ TNA FO 608/99. ff.270. *Minute by AGT*. 18.4.1919.

⁹⁰ TNA FO 608/99. ff.451. *Clayton to FO*. 19.6.1919.

majority of Arabs. Arabs now lacked confidence in Britain, as they realized its policy was constrained by France and Zionism.⁹¹ Perhaps to counter this development, in May, 1919, Clayton attempted to revitalize the Weizmann-Feisal accord. Feisal had addressed the Arab congress in Damascus, and reportedly said that he did not consider Arab and Zionist aims to be incompatible. Members of the ZC were invited to visit Feisal, who considered inviting ‘a few leading Palestinian Arabs to attend with a view to rapprochement.’⁹² Clayton urgently insisted that the Zionists adopt a conciliatory attitude. He and the ZC approached Bianchini to liaise with Feisal during May 1919. The attempt to renew Zionist-Sherifian relations failed, as Bianchini needed official Italian approval, which the British government preferred not to pursue. The ZC never sent a delegation, and instead, Clayton met Feisal in May 1919. Meanwhile, Bianchini worked in Paris with Col. Richard Meinertzhagen, an avowed Zionist, and then returned to Italy.⁹³ On what was supposed to be his third and final visit to the region, he was killed in the summer of 1920 when brigands hijacked his train to Damascus, mistaking him for a French officer.⁹⁴

While Zionism had achieved consensus amongst the ‘Big Five’, the possibility of a British Mandate had yet to be guaranteed. Britain’s next approach to secure international support for a British mandate occurred during the tour to Palestine and Syria of an American delegation from the

⁹¹ SAD, Clayton Papers, 693/14/17. *Clayton to FO*, 28.2.1919.

⁹² TNA, FO 608/99. ff393. *Clayton to FO*. 11.5.1919.

⁹³ ISA RG 2 M3/9. 81 *Balfour to Egyptforce*, *Weizman to Bianchini* 15.4.1919. and 84. *Clayton to OETA South*. 8.5.1919; TNA FO 608/119. ff.46-53. *Clayton to Balfour* 5.5.1919.; Minerbi, “Angelo Levi Bianchini U-Fe’iluto BaMizrach (1918-1920),” 322–323.

⁹⁴ For more on his fascinating story, see Minerbi, “Angelo Levi Bianchini U-Fe’iluto BaMizrach (1918-1920).”

peace conference, led by Henry Churchill King and Charles Crane, to investigate the wishes of Middle Eastern peoples regarding the future of their country. To secure American approval for a British Mandate, British intelligence worked to examine and suppress the Nadi and Muntada – the main venues for nationalist organization. These clubs exercised their new right to free speech, calling for independence, but also organized and mobilized violent secret societies. The independence movement embodied by Nadi and Muntada was sure to cast doubt on British policy, which was predicated on Hashemite kingship and Zionist development under British stewardship. Some Arab nationalists were willing to accept Hashemite kingship alongside representative government; few welcomed the Zionist policy. The MCS, for its part, represented multiple conflicting interests beyond nationalism, and posed no threat to British claims that the country needed political guidance. British intelligence caused the King-Crane commission to view the urban literate political classes as lacking representativeness, influence, or unity.

Not long after the first PAC in February 1919, the military government suspended the rights of the Arab clubs to operate and publish pan-Arab propaganda, which undermined Britain's Sherifian policy. Britain and France already had determined that the region would fall under European control, even if Feisal was to retain the throne in Damascus. Intelligence did not have to work hard to expose differences in the national movement. Clan competition began to interfere with the independence movement, obscuring the common aims of its factions, and providing a pretext for British interference. The notable Husseini family led the Nadi

al-Arabi, while the Nashashibis and Khalidis led the Muntada al-Adabi. After its members stormed an MCS meeting, the Muntada al-Adabi was closed by OETS. Intercepted mail revealed that the Nashashibis had spied on the Husseinis; both plotted to dominate the MCS.⁹⁵ This clan competition had a lasting legacy in Palestinian politics.

In May 1919, the military administration consulted intelligence on whether to allow the Muntada and other clubs to reopen. With the King-Crane commission soon to arrive in Palestine, the military decided to use its leverage over the clubs. It wanted to allow open discussion, but believed the clubs ought to be coached on the mandatory system, which, the peace conference had already concluded, would be applied to the whole of the former Ottoman territory. Britain sought to ensure that no other power would obtain Palestine.

Upon reopening the Muntada, the intelligence officer forced the removal of the Sherif's flag (the basis of today's Palestinian and Jordanian flags). Palestinians and Syrians were using it, and Feisal's figurehead status, to promote the independence movement. The military governor of Jaffa reasoned, 'Freedom of speech is not understood in this country and the privilege is invariably abused.' In another letter he wrote, 'Freedom of speech, so innocuous in Europe, is impossible in Eastern countries, and we are only asking for trouble by allowing it.'⁹⁶

Other clubs were subject to similar draconian measures, which, however, were temporary. By late August 1919, after the King-Crane

⁹⁵ ISA RG 2/M/7/12. 38B. *Jaffa governor to Kawkab*. 31.5.1919.; 27A. *i/c Kinani to Zein el Din*. 20.5.1919.

⁹⁶ ISA RG 2/M/7/12. 29a. *political propaganda*. 20.5.1919; 35a *Ragheb Dejani*. 26.5.1919.;

commission had voiced support for a British Mandate in Palestine, most restrictions had been relieved. Britain suppressed pro-independence voices and emphasized divisions in Arab politics that could only fairly be managed under European supervision. The move was successful, as the American delegation approved the League of Nations' Mandate scheme, and Britain made plans to limit its military presence in the Middle East and to introduce a civil government. Zionist pronouncements were also suppressed, so as not to affect the American commission or Peace Conference.⁹⁷

Nonetheless, Britain, France and the United States each had determined their policies. The FO clarified policy to OETA on 4 August: A British mandate over Palestine, including the Balfour Declaration, but Arabs would 'not be despoiled of their land' and 'there is no question of majority being subjected to the rule of minority, nor does Zionist programme contemplate this.'⁹⁸ Intelligence had successfully suppressed vocal opposition that might have inhibited its plans for a Mandate in Palestine, and for the implementation of the Zionist policy there. It also had managed to maintain security during this period, and paved the way for Britain's strategic aims.

Security Intelligence and the Prospect of Political Violence

Britain cautiously tolerated open political societies, but suppressed independence propaganda and monitored secret societies that planned violence. In August 1919, Camp defined the makeup of the Palestinian national movement, naming the organizations and men, and detailing their

⁹⁷ FO 608/99.18332. *Spicer for Curzon to Balfour*. 21.8.1919.;

⁹⁸ WO 106/194. 19. *FO to French*. 4.8.1919.

backgrounds and aims. He characterized the Muntada as predominantly Muslim and a powerful propaganda society in Jerusalem, connected to the centre of Arab propaganda at Damascus.⁹⁹ The Jerusalem branch of the Nadi al-Arabi was comprised mainly of Husseinis. The report elaborated, ‘The aim of the Nadi al-Arabi is about the same as that of the Muntada, but the members of the Nadi are not so radical. That is, they are not so strong on Arab independence, but are just as much opposed to Zionism and Jewish immigration.’ Important members included Amin al-Husseini, brother to the contemporaneous Mufti of Jerusalem, Kamil. ‘Hajj Amin al-Husseini might be added to the list [of most dangerous members], but is by no means so violent and dangerous as the others.’¹⁰⁰ Likewise, Kamil had reproached an extremist for preaching Jihad at the Haram ash-Sharif. In 1919, the Husseinis appeared more moderate and less violent than any other leading Palestinian. They also worked closely with Feisal’s Damascus government. Seemingly only interested in the power of their clan, the Husseinis, from an early stage, appeared to be the most likely group for collaboration with Britain.

The report also described secret societies such as *Ikha w’al ‘Afaf* which was ‘composed of the more violent propagandists as leaders of a host of ordinary ruffians and cut-throats. These latter members are expected to do the dirty work for the Muntada and Nadi if and when any needs to be done.’ *Ikha* had attempted to stir trouble amongst Indian troops, and others had penetrated the army, police, and gendarmerie. Parallel to *Ikha* was

⁹⁹ TNA, FO 608/99.ff. 476-482. *J.N. Camp, Intelligence Office, Jerusalem, to Chief Political Officer GHQ Cairo*. 12.8.1919.

¹⁰⁰ TNA, FO 608/99.ff. 476-482. *J.N. Camp, Intelligence Office, Jerusalem, to Chief Political Officer GHQ Cairo*. 12.8.1919.

Fedaiyeh, a group of fighters ‘ready to sacrifice themselves’, formerly known as *al-Yad al-Sawda*, or the Black Hand. The Muntada and Nadi had encouraged Ikha and Fedaiyeh to arm. They prepared lists of prominent Jews and pro-Zionist non-Jews, and spread propaganda among Bedouin in Transjordan ‘the prospect of Jewish women and loot being held out before them.’ The societies’ agents learned Hebrew in order to monitor Zionists and their press. They had been trying to persuade members of the police and gendarmerie to hand over arms or not to obstruct their efforts in case a revolt occurred.¹⁰¹ From the government’s side, dangerous persons came under close observation, and some were interned. The ranks of the gendarmerie were purged under the guise of reorganization. Many Arab members quit, since political membership was forbidden to police, and were replaced with very limited numbers of Jewish police.¹⁰² These measures against the police and gendarmerie did not go far enough to suppress the potential for violence completely.

The most important observation of the lengthy report relates to the paradox of dealing with subversive nationalists. They could be arrested in advance of an announcement of the Zionist policy, but it would turn them into martyrs and inspire further anti-British sentiment across Palestine.

Equally, Clayton’s Weizmann-Feisal designs were dead.

If we mean to carry out any sort of Zionist policy we must do so with military force and adopt a strong policy against all the agitators in the country... In my opinion, Dr. Weizmann’s agreement with Emir Feisal is not worth the paper it is written on or the energy wasted in the conversation to make it. On the other hand, if it becomes sufficiently known among the Arabs, it will be somewhat in the nature of a noose about Feisal’s neck, for he will be regarded

¹⁰¹ TNA, FO 608/99.ff. 476-482. J.N. Camp 12.8.1919.

¹⁰² HA 19/mshtr/4. Various letters from June-September 1919.

by the Arab population as a traitor. No greater mistake could be made than to regard Feisal as a representative of Palestinian Arabs...¹⁰³

Presciently defining one of Britain's great dilemmas throughout the Mandate, Camp believed that open societies would work through the violent underground to resist Zionist immigration. This intelligence was passed to the FO, as Camp's commander, Colonel French, emphasized that 'there is every reason to believe that the facts as stated therein are accurate and unexaggerated and they may be taken as indicative of the widespread antagonism and organisation against the Zionist programme...'¹⁰⁴

Intelligence had now acknowledged the emerging conflict, which it expected might turn violent. Arab nationalists never would accept Zionism, and failed to reshape pro-Zionist impressions at the League. Britain would have to forcefully impose its policy against the will of Arab nationalists. The Feisal-Weizmann agreement never was designed to pacify nationalists, just to cause the peace conference to approve of a British Mandate in Palestine.

Zionist cooperation contributed to Camp's report, which aligns closely with material found in the Alex Aaronsohn and Zionist intelligence papers.¹⁰⁵ This was the most significant continuation of intelligence cooperation with Zionists, during the postwar period, yet by autumn 1919 this cooperation was losing its effect over OETA's erstwhile resolute support for Zionism. Col. Waters Taylor, in charge of the Haifa sub district

¹⁰³ TNA, FO 608/99.ff. 476-482. *J.N. Camp, Intelligence Office, Jerusalem, to Chief Political Officer GHQ Cairo.* 12.8.1919.

¹⁰⁴ TNA, FO 608/99. f. 475. *French to Curzon.* 26.8.1919.

¹⁰⁵ See for example the correlation between Camp's report and CZA Z4/3886/ii. *Jerusalem from Aug19-30.*

of OETS, saw Weizmann's 'miscalculation' regarding Arab support. He reported that 'The Zionist Commission have in Jerusalem a very efficient contre-espionage service and I suggest that their reports have either not been sent home or ignored as alarmist.¹⁰⁶' Zionist intelligence continued to warn about the activities of Ikha wa al-'afaf and Fedaiyeh, and the role played by the Arab clubs, Feisal, and even Mustafa Kemal in supporting them. British intelligence also monitored these activities, but was concerned with the regional picture, rather than the local one or purely Zionist interest. So while intelligence officers paid attention to events affecting Palestine, they focused on those in Syria and Anatolia. Naval intelligence reported on relations between nationalists in Syria and Palestine, who were thought to be organizing a simultaneous along the lines of the Wafdist revolt in Egypt. A Muslim-Christian rapprochement had been underway in Jaffa, with anti-Zionism forming the 'bond of union.'¹⁰⁷ These changes revolved around the revitalized role of Feisal as figurehead of the Arab movement.

British intelligence and policymakers began to conceive of this underground activity as a Syrian, anti-French movement. Between October 1919 and April 1920, most violence was directed at French troops in Syria. Intelligence focused on questions of Britain's future policy, the form of government to be established in Baghdad, and the growing chaos in Syria. The issue of Arab opinion on Zionism returned when on 8 March 1920 the PAC and MCS joined the Syrian Arab Congress (SAC) in proclaiming

¹⁰⁶ TNA FO 608/100. ff.458. *Memo by M.W. Taylor, AA&QMG. GHQ Mt. Carmel.* 12.8.1919.

¹⁰⁷ TNA FO 371/4238. 176186. *Intelligence* 9.1.1920.

Feisal King of Syria and Palestine. Peaceful demonstrations were held across Syria and Palestine in support of Feisal and in protest against the Jewish National Home. This 'recrudescence in anti-Zionism' had been attributed to 'outside intrigues.' French propaganda, it was suspected, was attempting to co-opt Feisal's role as titular Arab or Muslim ruler in order to exert French influence in Mesopotamia and Palestine and to undermine Britain's standing.¹⁰⁸ Naturally, the WO found the rapidly evolving situation difficult to appreciate, and with troops withdrawn from Syria, the most important source of intelligence had been lost. It asked headquarters recently established in Constantinople, with Britain's largest intelligence station on Islamic matters, to investigate events in Turkey, Cilicia and Syria and to submit weekly reports.¹⁰⁹ Meanwhile intelligence, probably sigint, confirmed these suspicions. '[The French] state the only reason they remain is because British do so and that they recognize they are not wanted by the people. They will, whilst recognizing Feisul, claim their zone if British remain.'¹¹⁰

Meinertzhagen, still political officer in Jerusalem working closely with the IB, reported to London that the arrival of French General Gouraud had inspired renewed French propaganda in Palestine. Other British sources confirmed this view. While Gouraud was not instructed to conquer Syria, he was ordered to play up Feisal's importance in case the new king would accept limited sovereignty over part of Syria.¹¹¹ Such reports ignored

¹⁰⁸ TNA WO 106/196. 15. *GHQ intelligence summary*. EEF. 9.4.1920.; WO 106/195. 28. *GHQ Egypt to DMI*. 9.3.1920; WO 106/195. 18. *GHQ Egypt to WO*. 10.3.1920.

¹⁰⁹ TNA WO 106/195. 25. *WO to GHQ Constantinople*. 12.3.1920.

¹¹⁰ TNA WO 106/195. 18. *GHQ Egypt to WO*. 10.3.1920.

¹¹¹ Gelber, *Shorshe ha-havatselet*, 26.; Barr, *A Line in the Sand: Britain, France and the Struggle That Shaped the Middle East*, 95–100.

independent nationalist motivations for anti-Zionist and anti-British activity. The IB observed that the literate notables read aloud newspapers to peasants, focusing on the simmering rebellion in Syria. They described politics in Damascus, and news of the Turkish-Bolshevik campaign in Cilicia, Iraq, and Syria against western empires. Their news concluded: ‘These are good tidings and may God give victory to the heroes, and we will know what we must do to the Jews and British.’¹¹² This form of mass mobilization and communication in a largely illiterate society was important, and intelligence monitored it. British intelligence reported that Hajj Amin and his cousin Jamal had been active propagandists amongst villagers. They read news and discussed politics. This medium became an important means for political communication during the 1920s and 1930s, as the literate wielded authority and influence over peasants who depended upon that class for news.¹¹³

OETA failed to recognize the potential for violent explosion in Palestine as the independence movement developed in Syria. Fighting was on the rise in Syria, especially directed at France’s initially weak positions. For instance, in the battle of Tel-Hai, which produced one of Zionism’s early martyrs, Joseph Trumpedor, Lebanese Mutawalli Shia fighters engaged the Jewish settlers while looking for French soldiers. In the aftermath, the British consul concluded ‘there seems to have been nothing political in this affair which was an act of pure brigandage’.¹¹⁴

¹¹² HA 80/145/P/20. *Lod*. 25-30.1.1920.

¹¹³ TNA, FO 608/99.ff. 476-482. *J.N. Camp, Intelligence Office, Jerusalem, to Chief Political Officer GHQ Cairo*. 12.8.1919.; Matthews, *Confronting an Empire, Constructing a Nation*, 144–145.

¹¹⁴ TNA FO 141/651. *British consul Beirut to FO*. 10.3.1920.

Intelligence provided on the Arab and Turkish movements was good, but British decision makers did not draw the same conclusions as Alex Aaronsohn about the consequences of resurgent nationalist propaganda, Feisal's coronation, and the organisation of armed groups in Syria. Confusion derived from the fact, as Aaronsohn indicated, that 'During [the past] two years there was no proper organisation in the Arab movement. Though there have been some centres... the entire movement is internal and that of Palestine in particular received the shape of an intrigue conducted by single individuals for their own benefit...'¹¹⁵

Further confusing matters, politics in Syria began to fissure. In 1919 members of *al-Fatat* founded the *Istiqlal* (independence) party to expand its influence over other classes of society. In early 1920, the independence movement split into three. Izzat Darwaza, chair of both PAC and SAC, led a faction of dissenters with Kamel al-Qassab who vehemently opposed British and French colonial policy. Qassab accused members of the Damascus administration of 'neglect of national interest'.¹¹⁶ Feisal's weakness in military and administrative terms, along with this pressure, led him to war with France in 1920. The political divisions in Damascus spilled into Palestine, where clan competition further obscured the picture. Palestinian members of the Nadi were alienated from the pan-Syrian *Hizb al-Watani* (National Party, also appears as *Difa'a al-Watani* or National Defence) which wavered between support for Feisal and desire for revolution. The Nadi, especially the Husseini family, expected

¹¹⁵ Beit Aaronsohn, Zichron Yaacov (BAZY). Alex Aaronsohn Papers (AAP). 17/5/13. *Secret- Arab movement in Palestine*. 19.3.1920.

¹¹⁶ Gelvin, *Divided Loyalties*, 59–62.

independence and confrontation with the great powers and so continued to organize and prepare revolution.¹¹⁷ When violence eventually exploded in Jerusalem, it was against the background of competition between clans, class, and party. Cooperation towards national goals coincided with factional tension and even violence.

The Nabi Musa Riots, 4-7 April 1920

Yehoshua Porath argued that Feisal's coronation and the associated nationalist activity started the path to violent conflict.¹¹⁸ Between 4-8 April, the Nabi Musa riots took five Jewish and four Muslim lives, and left 251 injured.¹¹⁹ OETS lost control over Jerusalem, as it did not deploy enough force to manage the crowds, and some of the police forces took part in the violence. Other police were left impotent as their barracks and stores were looted by the mob. Troops were deployed 36 hours after the situation had spun out of control.

British officers, focused on Cilicia and Anatolia, gave insufficient attention to these developments, which were confusing. Intelligence centred on how this violence might affect France's position, or Mustafa Kemal's power. It was difficult to see how events in Turkey, Syria and Iraq would affect Palestine. British military intelligence possessed the necessary evidence, but they only put the pieces together after the riots, when the role of the Nadi had become clear. On 15 April, the British Secret Intelligence Service (SIS) reported on a captured letter written by Mustafa Kemal

¹¹⁷ BAZY, AAP. 17/6/12. *Jerusalem*. 31.1.1920.; CZA Z4/3886/ii. 20 JM. 20.3.1920; Z4/3886/i. *Arab National Movement*. 31.1.1920.; L3/278. *Arab National Movement*. 31.1.1920.; CZA, Z4/14437. 22 JM. 22.3.1920.

¹¹⁸ Porath, *The Palestinian-Arab National Movement*, 1:93–100.

¹¹⁹ Matthews, *Confronting an Empire, Constructing a Nation*, 29–31.

during March 1920 that firmly established the role of the Nadi, ‘a club of Damascene and Palestinian nationalists which plays the same role in Arabia as the committee of union and progress does in Turkey.’ Mustafa Kemal had subsidized nationalist newspapers, and coordinated propaganda with Izzat Darwaza and the Nadi al-Arabi. Kemal allegedly reported that, ‘The operations undertaken at several points by the French military commanders, although they have acted with prudence and moderation compared with the British in the occupied territories, have been the cause of preparations for an Arab revolt, which is already feared.’ He described the allegiance of tribal chiefs to nationalist forces as proof that ‘the movement carried out in the name of Islam finds sympathy in the Arab countries which are under foreign rule. The task of the Nationalists is greatly eased thereby.’¹²⁰

Hajj Amin al-Husseini had returned from his mission to Damascus on behalf of the Nadi al-Arabi and reported optimism in that city. He believed Britain favoured handing the country to Feisal and that this would occur without war. ‘The Damascus government receives large sums of money and starts to organise the whole of United Syria. In case the French refuse to leave the Lebanon, then Feisal is going to send a strong Army, guns and new aeroplanes which arrived lately; then no French soldier will remain within 24 hours on the soil of Syria.’¹²¹ At Nabi Musa, Husseini electrified the crowd, holding Feisal’s portrait from the balcony of the Nadi, exclaiming ‘this is your king!’¹²² Yet he was not the only one; many notables gave incendiary speeches.

¹²⁰ TNA, WO 106/196. 41. ff136-143.

¹²¹ CZA. Z4/3886/ii. 32.JM. 1.4.1920.

¹²² Mattar, *The Mufti of Jerusalem*, 17.

A verbatim record of a meeting held before Nabi Musa between Storrs, Jamal al-Husseini, ‘Aref al-‘Aref, Fakhry Nashashibi and others, survives in Zionist intelligence records. It illuminates Storrs’ trust in the notables’ ability and willingness to control their followers. Aref al-‘Aref, editor of the Nadi mouthpiece, *Suriyya al-Janubiyya* (Southern Syria, i.e., Palestine), had returned to Palestine from Damascus. His newspaper was receiving paper supplies from Syria, perhaps funded by Mustafa Kemal. However, ‘Aref opposed violent revolution. Seemingly aware of what was to come, he attended an all-party meeting hosted by the Muntada and demanded steps to ensure that British or Zionists were neither attacked or even insulted. No arms should be carried in the Nabi Musa procession.¹²³ On the eve before Nabi Musa, he said, ‘in case that something happens conflicts or exclamations against the Jews, we shall be lost and we shall ruin our future by our own hands.’¹²⁴

On 2 April, 1920, Jerusalem celebrated Good Friday, Passover eve, and the beginning of the Nabi Musa festival. Storrs requested that the aforementioned notables prevent the religious procession from becoming a political demonstration.¹²⁵ During the procession, nationalist hymns were sung, and flags were flown. Some 60-70,000 people participated in the procession. It was too late to prevent violence from exploding despite ‘Aref al-‘Aref’s request for the crowd to ‘safeguard order.’ It had become a political demonstration, but violence only broke out on Sunday 4 April.

¹²³ CZA. Z4/3886/ii. 31 JM. 31.3.1920.

¹²⁴ CZA. Z4/3886/ii. 32 JM. 1.4.1920.

¹²⁵ CZA Z4/3886/ii. 33 JM. 2.4.1920.

Administrators possessed contradictory intelligence reports, varyingly suggesting that nationalist violence would be aimed at France in Syria, and also that secret societies were planning a revolt in Palestine, to coincide with Egypt, Iraq and Syria. What unfolded was a loosely organized attempt to coordinate violence against all colonial powers. It was difficult to see how revolutionaries would be encouraged by France's weakness in Cilicia and the Levant. Arab attacks against French forces had occurred sporadically for months, and had been organized in November 1919 and in early 1920 by the Nadi al-Arabi, seemingly with Mustafa Kemal's encouragement. Few observers, if any, could see how this might develop into a broader struggle against all armies occupying the Middle East. Izzat Darwazah later confirmed that Nadi branches in Syria coordinated this attempt.¹²⁶

The failure of this revolution only became clear to the Nadi and Muntada at the end of April 1920, after a battle near British positions at Semakh, on the Haifa-Dera'a rail link, at the southern tip of the Sea of Galilee. Bedouin attacked British troops as well as the train and telegraph lines. Indian cavalry fought off a much larger Arab force while the brand-new RAF bombed and strafed the attackers. The propaganda coordinated with this campaign influenced Jerusalem politics. Aaronsohn's intelligence reports reveal that the Nadi and Muntada in Jerusalem and Haifa had heard rumours of an Arab victory at Semakh, where Indians joined Bedouins against the British, allegedly causing 2000 deaths and thousands more wounded. At the Jerusalem Nadi, it was believed that Arabs fighting at

¹²⁶ Porath, *The Palestinian-Arab National Movement*, 1:77–78.

Semakh were supported by the Sherif with money, arms and officers. Some thought it might be British policy to allow a Sherifian victory. Zionist intelligence reported towards the end of April that there were plans for revolution, to be directed from Damascus. When the Semakh area, which had been under French administration, was secured by British forces, this pan-Syrian revolution was over.¹²⁷ Moreover, Feisal disavowed knowledge of it, and promised to punish the offenders, two of his officers and local governors in the Quneitra and Ajlun.¹²⁸

After the battle at Semakh, Zionist and British intelligence highlighted the connection between the Bedouin who had campaigned in Palestine, and Damascus-based plans for a general revolt, inspired by the Nadi al-Arabi.¹²⁹ Auni Abdul Hadi, a Nablus-born and Paris-educated lawyer, was a founding member of Fatat and Feisal's advisor. He boasted to a Zionist informant that

We, Arabs, shall never consent and tolerate that a European government should come and rule over us... Do you not understand that all this what has been done against France... was upon our advice? True. Bedouins are fighting, but all this upon our instructions. And all the conflicts which were caused in Palestine were made through Bedouins, Arabs, but all upon our orders. The Jews of Palestine will perish because of the Jews outside the country. Those are demanding Palestine, and they are losing but a few millions of dollars... but the Jews of Palestine will lose their lives.¹³⁰

In response to the Bedouin threat, the IB sent officers to Transjordan. They discovered that Bedouin political feeling was mixed and

¹²⁷ Ibid., 1:100.; TNA, AIR 5/1243. *Operations at Semakh April 1920*. Lt-Col Braine. 11.6.1920.; BAZY, AAP, 17/5/4 22 JA. 26/4/1920; 17/8/44, 46 JM. . 26/4/1920.; CZA L3/278. *Preparation for a Revolution*. 30.4.1920.

¹²⁸ TNA, WO 106/196. 50. *GHQ Egypt to WO*. 13.5.1920.

¹²⁹ Gelber, *Shorshe ha-ḥavatsselet*, 36.

¹³⁰ Yad Yaari, Givat Haviva (YYGH). Vashitz (1)15.35-95. *Transjordan (Damascus)*. 3.6.1920.

fickle. Bedouin attacks were apolitical – they sought only loot. Disguised as a Bedouin, Joseph Davidescu went to meet an Amir who participated in a raid on Givat Ada. He witnessed Palestinian meetings where Bedouin discussed British military movements in Palestine. The Amir invited Davidescu in the first place because, in the wake of the Semakh battle, he had been fined by Feisal and a relative was expelled to Egypt. He sought financial assistance, and for Davidescu to mediate and repair his relationship with Feisal and the British. Realizing the benefit the Yishuv could procure from this sheikh, Davidescu and Shneerson helped him. He only paid half his fine.¹³¹ This action became the seed for future secret diplomacy between Bedouin, the British and Zionists, which sought to provide security on both sides of river.

With the collapse of revolutionary plans, the lack of unity amongst Palestinians was exposed. The Nadi plotted to assassinate Fakhri Nashashibi, a leading Muntada member, because of his alleged collaboration with France.¹³² (Husseini agents would finally succeed in killing him in Baghdad in 1941.) During May 1920, Husseini-Nashashibi tensions were exacerbated when Ragheb Bey Nashashibi was appointed mayor of Jerusalem, replacing Musa Kazim, patriarch of the al-Husseini clan. Meanwhile Hajj Amin and ‘Aref al-‘Aref were now fugitives living in exile in Damascus.

Suspicious of the notables, Aref began to organize a labour party comprised of Jerusalem merchants, who were also disturbed that they were

¹³¹ Gelber, *Shorshe ha-havatselet*, 36–37.

¹³² BAZY, Alex, 17/7/44. *46 JM*. 26.4.1920.

being forced to close their shops – an unusual occurrence during Nabi Musa. He promised to organize a countrywide labour movement which would deprive the notables of their power over the merchant class.¹³³ It is a wonder that he was held responsible for the Nabi Musa riots, since all evidence showed that he tried to prevent them. After being pardoned, Aref joined the civil service.

Emerging Anglo-Zionist Cooperation and Competition

After the 1920 riots, Aaronsohn prepared a paper that described the administration's responsibility for failing to prevent them. He appended the evidence that had been provided to OETA about Arab secret societies and their penetration of police and gendarmerie. 'We have given sufficient evidence time and again to cause the arrest of at least half of the local Arab police but the intelligence and the police ignored the evidence.'¹³⁴ The crackdown on nationalists during the previous summer had not gone far enough to guarantee security. It convinced the King-Crane commission that British rule would be best for all, but the Nabi Musa riots demonstrated to Aaronsohn and the Zionists that Britain, having achieved its political aims, must reaffirm its commitment to Jews in Palestine.

Zionist relations with OETA broke down over the Nabi Musa riots. It is difficult to confirm what Aaronsohn and Zionists claimed about British maladministration. Repeating claims in Richard Meinertzhagen's diary, published in 1959, Isaiah Friedman argues that Waters-Taylor deliberately allowed the riots to occur.¹³⁵ The Meinertzhagen diary has been proven to

¹³³ CZA. Z4/3886/ii. 32.JM. 1.4.1920.

¹³⁴ BAZY, AAP, 17/5/3. *Pogroms in Jerusalem April 4th, 5th and 6th 1920.*

¹³⁵ Friedman, *British Pan-Arab Policy, 1915-1922*, 267.

be a problematic source.¹³⁶ No documentary evidence supports this simplistic explanation, which probably was designed to pressure Britain to advance Zionist immigration. In fact, Allenby sacked Meinertzhagen for insubordination, and Waters-Taylor used the documentary record to defend his actions: he recognized that Feisal was caught between commitments to his family, the nationalists, and the Peace Conference, and so warned him of the dangers inherent to revolutionary activity.¹³⁷

Zionists were frustrated that OETA was not fulfilling the Balfour Declaration. This led them, after the riots, to accuse British officials of allowing a pogrom against the Yishuv. OETA responded that it would be the duty of a civil administration to fulfil the Balfour Declaration, and admitted its own shortcomings, especially the failure to deploy sufficient force in response to the riots. Bols expressed his misgivings about the ZC, which he thought should be abolished. He described the large parallel administration which the ZC had developed.

... a complete administrative machine is operating, in fact its departments correspond in numbers exactly to my own. This administration within and administration renders good government impossible, the Jewish population look to their administration and not to mine, and the Moslems and Christians can only see that privileges and liberties are allowed to the Jews which are denied to them...¹³⁸

The Chief Administrator of OETS, Maj-Gen. Louis Bols, had been among the supporters of Weizmann's policy before the riots.¹³⁹

Nonetheless, parallel administration would soon be encouraged in the

¹³⁶ Lockman, *Meinertzhagen's Diary Ruse*.

¹³⁷ TNA, WO 95/4375. *Waters Taylor to Bols*. 16.4.1920.

¹³⁸ TNA WO 95/4395. *Bols to GHQ Cairo*. 21.4.1920.

¹³⁹ Weizmann, *The Letters and Papers of Chaim Weizmann*, 1:288.

Mandatory regime.¹⁴⁰ Bols complained that the ZC did not ‘...loyally accept the orders of the Administration, but from the commencement adopted and hostile, critical and abusive attitude...’ The ZC, he claimed, could not be convinced of ‘British good faith and ordinary honesty,’ and sought preferential treatment under the law. He also said that they alternately wanted to take the law into their own hands where they were the majority, but elsewhere sought government protection. Bols lashed out while defending his record and so his claims about Zionists were not as respected as they might have been.

While the OETA called for the disbandment of the ZC and Jewish battalions, Zionists, including Herbert Samuel, advocated an end to military administration.¹⁴¹ The latter won; at the San Remo conference in April 1920, which finalized plans for the mandatory division of the Middle East under the League of Nations, and guaranteed the incorporation of the text of the Balfour Declaration into the Palestine Mandate, the failure of OETA was evident. Lloyd George tapped Samuel, an old friend, to be the first High Commissioner (HC), to be installed on 30 June.

His appointment caused great change. Meinertzhagen wrote to Weizmann that, upon hearing the news,

Bols fled to Cairo and induced Allenby to wire home an objection... Waters Taylor is terrified and quite prepared for the demission he so richly deserved. Storrs is overjoyed and I think he is now irrevocably your man, though not a very stable one. Of course all the anti-Zionist feeling now severely criticises Samuel’s appointment and hints at Reigns of Terror, anarchy and such like. I don’t believe it for one moment. I consider Samuel’s appointment

¹⁴⁰ By the 1940s, the Zionist *imperium in imperio* had become a key weakness of British security. Wagner, “British Intelligence and the Jewish Resistance Movement,” 636.

¹⁴¹ Wasserstein, *The British in Palestine*, 84.; TNA WO 95/4375. *Congreve to WO*. 28.4.1920.

the culminating victory of a series which started really with the sad events of April 4th...¹⁴²

Meinertzhagen exaggerated the role played by Waters-Taylor in enabling the riots of 1920, but his interpretation of Samuel's appointment as High Commissioner does represent the mood of the moment. The San Remo conference confirmed the allocation of future mandated territories, still to be finalized by the League of Nations. This happened in the absence of peace with the Ottoman government, and with violence ongoing throughout the region. San Remo created two pressures on Britain: The need to establish a civil government in order to promote stability in Palestine, and need to make good on the Balfour Declaration, which had been incorporated into the conference's resolutions. These pressures explain the hasty appointment of a Zionist Jew as the first colonial governor in Palestine.¹⁴³

British military intelligence monitored Zionist cables throughout June 1920. These cables revealed their activities to raise funds, to convince the British government to retain the Jewish battalions, and to secure the freedom of Jabotinsky, imprisoned since April 1920 for preparing armed defence of the Jewish quarter in Jerusalem during Nabi Musa. Weizmann asked the ZC to maintain discipline in Palestine and to prevent public demonstrations during the final hours of the handover to Samuel's administration. As security in Galilee came under threat by growing Franco-Syrian violence, the army promised to deploy troops and even to arm Jewish colonists with 200 rifles. Weizmann guided the Yishuv through

¹⁴² HA 87/Zion/17. *Meinertzhagen to Weizmann*. 13.5.1920.

¹⁴³ See above; and Wasserstein, *The British in Palestine*, 72.

a very tense month and proved his influence over the population, which had been in a rebellious mood because of insecurity. The ongoing confinement of Jabotinsky also contributed to that feeling. The intercepts confirmed the Zionists' reliability as partners who did not seek to undermine British rule. Yet the cables misinterpreted an important development. They took the Hebrew word *gedud*, meaning battalion, to mean the 'Central Zionist Committee' when it probably referred, in code, to Jabotinsky's defense committee, comprised of soldiers of the Jewish battalions. The files reveal preparations and fundraising for the defence of outlying settlements, especially in Galilee.¹⁴⁴

As measured confidence was restored in Anglo-Zionist relations, there remained a dispute between the two sides over how British policy would interpret the Balfour Declaration (see p.91). Regardless, Zionist intelligence cooperation had helped to prevent violence in 1919, and contributed to Britain's efforts to secure a Mandate in Palestine. The Feisal-Weizmann agreement, orchestrated by Clayton, had convinced the Peace Conference that a British mandate was possible and that Arab and Zionist interests were reconcilable, especially with British guidance. British intelligence then focused on the suppression of the Nadi and Muntada during 1919 to prevent them from undermining Britain's position at the Peace Conference. From then until the Nabi Musa riots, intelligence missed key signs warning of forthcoming disturbances. Even though British and Zionist intelligence held mostly the same data about Arab politics in the region, they looked at events differently. Both failed to predict that Nabi

¹⁴⁴

TNA FO 141/742/3. Various.

Musa would be a forum for nationalist activity that might become violent. Save for Alex Aaronsohn, all failed to see how events in Syria could inspire political violence in Palestine. Zionist intelligence was concerned mainly with matters affecting Yishuv security, while British intelligence focused on data affecting Feisal, and France's partnership. After Nabi Musa, the Yishuv's sense of need for independent security combined with distrust of British officers. This trust was eventually restored with the appointment of Samuel and the San Remo announcement. Yet, what emerged was a cyclical pattern where intelligence cooperation was always conditioned by, and influential upon the Anglo-Zionist partnership. Despite the mistrust and suspicion which emerged during the military administration, this partnership was at the heart of British policy until 1939. The same cannot be said for Anglo-Arab relations.

Chapter 3 – Intelligence, Policy, and the Civil Government

This chapter focuses on the transformation of intelligence and governance systems as Palestine reached peaceful conditions. As budget cuts limited intelligence work for both the British and Zionists and eliminated their formal structures, they now had to rely upon informal networks instead of professional military systems. Intelligence had to deal with the consequences of the 1921 Jaffa riots, which had to be put down by force. These would be the last serious disturbances in the country until 1929.

The 1921 riots were the result of two simultaneous but unrelated plots. The first was a communist-inspired conspiracy to embarrass the British government and the socialist-Zionists. The second was Arab preparations for another revolution, which seized upon the Jaffa disturbances once they had already broken out. In response to the disturbances, the CID neutralized the communist threat relying mainly upon Jewish staff. In contrast, Arab nationalism was not treated as a political crime. Rather, British policy sought to co-opt the influence of Amin al-Husseini by appointing him to the influential office of Mufti of Jerusalem, and President of the Supreme Muslim Council (SMC), which controlled the *waqf* (pl. *awqaf*) or Islamic trust funds, giving him extraordinary patronage across Palestine. By supporting him, British policymakers believed that nationalists could be controlled.

This chapter explains why the 1920s were relatively peaceful in Palestine. Intelligence officers who had become government officials realized that negotiations with ECPAC over a legislative body and control over Jewish immigration were causing peaceful conditions in Palestine,

since Palestinians expected to achieve some measure of progress on those issues. Through improvisation and cynical calculation, they suppressed Palestinian demands for self-government and a reversal of the Zionist policy. There were three main causes for peace. First, negotiations with the Palestinian political elite created a false hope that the Zionist policy would change and that they might have a say in the governance of the country. Britain kept alive this hope, realizing that Palestinian nationalists did not prepare revolt or major disturbances.

Second, British and Zionist secret diplomacy co-opted Arab peasants and certain notable families who organized opposition to the Husseini-dominated ECPAC by supporting Chaim Kalvarisky's project of Jewish-Arab cooperation. For the sake of security, and in an earnest but naïve effort to achieve reconciliation, Zionist intelligence subsidized Arab parties and sought to achieve diplomatic accommodation at all levels. This venture received mixed support from British administrators, but fostered peace by weakening ECPAC's demands for self-government. This divide-and-rule tactic made the elite look weak while it negotiated with Britain and brought no results. It also supported the government's claims that ECPAC was a self-appointed, unrepresentative body that was unfit to lead. ECPAC negotiated in London for a reversal of the Zionist policy. Its Palestine Arab Delegation (PAD) was assisted in London by the National Political League (NPL, also known as National League). NPL organizers, mainly ex-suffragettes, supplied political and legal advice to PAD and also to Shakib Arslan, who negotiated for Palestine and Syria at the League of Nations. Unfortunately, their lack of influence was poorly grasped by

Palestinians, who hoped that negotiation might reverse the Zionist policy and bring a form of self-government into being. In fact, Britain was legally and morally committed to the Zionist policy and could not relinquish legislative control over immigration. British policymakers were suspicious of the motives of local elites and doubted the survival of democracy in their hands.¹⁴⁵ This attitude prevailed throughout the empire after the First World War, so as an alternative to democracy, Britain sought to provide ‘responsible’ or good government. What compounded the contradiction in Palestine was the impossibility of enforcing both the Balfour Declaration and the commitment to eventual self-government.

Finally, Britain’s patronage of the Mufti had a largely calming effect, at least in the beginning. Contrary to the views of some historians, Palestinian leaders were not inactive in their efforts to halt Britain’s Zionist policy, or to achieve some form of legislative self-government. ECPAC sought to negotiate the terms of the Mandate with Britain, and sent a delegation for that purpose in 1921.

However, the Mufti and ECPAC were more active on international fronts than in Palestine. Their subversion of colonial rule began to take a more underground shape. They built up their pan-Arab connections, appointing the pan-Islamist Shakib Arslan to represent their interests at Geneva. Together, they supported the anti-French, Druze-led revolt in Syria from 1925-27 with money, arms, field hospitals, and moral support. This international activity and connections with Islamists helped to build consensus in the Islamic world about opposition to the Zionist policy. As

¹⁴⁵ Johnson, *British Imperialism*, 135–36, 154–56.

these issues gave rise to later problems, it is surprising that many historians ignore the political developments of the 1920s. In particular, the Mufti's connections to Rashid Rida and Shakib Arslan are of importance, because it was through them that the Istiqlal party in Syria and Palestine was revived. Rida and Arslan provided moral and spiritual support within the Islamic world, but also the political support in Geneva and Cairo. Their connections to the Mufti are elaborated upon in chapter 5. In many ways, the roots of the 1936 Arab revolt were planted during this time.

In Palestine, the British system aimed to provide good government and balanced conflicting interests through improvisation. Once it became clear that Britain could not reconcile its various commitments, it focused on providing good government for the population. Clayton believed that this approach would fail without a clearly defined policy for the future of Palestine and while finances and force were in short supply. Yet these limitations provided few alternatives to this practise of improvisation.

British intelligence gathering transformed during this period. With the removal of the army from the Middle East, no central body collated and interpreted various intelligence sources. During the 1920s, all that remained was a weak and underdeveloped CID, and some remaining ex-intelligence officers who now were district governors and civil secretaries. Officials of the civil government such as Clayton or Wyndham Deedes provided intelligence assessments. This was an individual effort, ad-hoc, and conformed to pre-war intelligence practice in which colonial administrators used whatever resources were available to meet local needs. Anglo-Zionist co-dependency became more important as budgets were slashed.

Intelligence cooperation changed form as priorities shifted. In all, British decision makers were forced to improvise to maintain a status quo, and so not to provoke any change in the peaceful trend which emerged after 1921.

Intelligence Organization under the Civil Administration

During the First World War, military and political intelligence was coordinated under Allenby's General Staff, based in Cairo. Political intelligence from the Arab Bureau, sigint, and other sources, could be coordinated with General Staff Intelligence (GSI) for war planning purposes. Allenby's coordination of political and military intelligence was cutting-edge practice in the British system. Britain's success at obtaining international approval for rule in Palestine during 1919-1920 could not have been achieved without it. The system continued under the military government in Palestine until Herbert Samuel's takeover as High Commissioner in July 1920. It dissolved when security control was handed to the RAF in the spring of 1921.

During 1919-20, many officials proposed establishing a permanent combined intelligence service for the Middle East on the model of the Arab Bureau. Thus, Wyndham Deedes, an intelligence officer who soon would become Chief Secretary (CS) for the civil government of Palestine, argued that Britain was not fully exploiting its occupation of Turkey and Syria, and that the work of the Arab Bureau should expand to include all of the Islamic world.¹⁴⁶ Both these ideas and the GSI system were ended by austerity measures, which aimed to cut budgets and decentralize control.

¹⁴⁶

TNA WO 32/21125. 1B.

Thus, British intelligence in Palestine was good in 1919 but declined during the 1920s.

Security was one of Samuel's main concerns during his first month as HC. The Franco-Syrian war raged, and London began pressure to reduce military forces. Before taking the appointment, Samuel conferred with Allenby about how to tackle the daunting security problems. Allenby supported Samuel's proposal to offer amnesty to all political leaders arrested during and after the 1920 riots, including Jabotinsky, but also Amin al-Husseini and Aref al-Aref, who had escaped arrest.¹⁴⁷ They were pardoned a few months after the general amnesty for all prisoners. Allenby suggested that Samuel consult with Deedes, his new CS, whom Allenby considered to be competent and experienced in Arab matters.¹⁴⁸ Many British officers including Allenby had reservations about freeing Jabotinsky. Deedes thought he was a 'lunatic.' Samuel Landman, a solicitor and Zionist figure in London who would later join Jabotinsky's Revisionist party and come under observation by MI5,¹⁴⁹ reported to the FO on his visit to Jabotinsky. He had been led to believe that Jabotinsky was a megalomaniac, but found this was an exaggeration. Jabotinsky felt betrayed by the ZC, since it was on their instructions that he had prepared an armed defence of the Jewish Quarter of Jerusalem.¹⁵⁰ Landman added that Jewish intelligence services, which he had visited, had provided useful reports to the Criminal Investigation Department of the Palestine Police (CID), and stopped a plot to assassinate Samuel upon his arrival at Jaffa. He suggested

¹⁴⁷ Huneidi, *A Broken Trust*, 40–41.

¹⁴⁸ ISA. RG 100/p/649/7. *Allenby to Samuel*. 28.6.1920.

¹⁴⁹ KV 2/3133.

¹⁵⁰ FO 141/742/3. *Report by Landman*. 8.1920.

the civil government take on the Jewish intelligence officers and relieve the ZC of its collapsing budget.¹⁵¹ This would not be possible as British budgets also were limited.

Deedes, an avowed Zionist, was central to the establishment of patterns of security and cooperation with Zionists, patterns which lasted throughout much of the Mandate era. British control was founded on codependency and competition. Deedes knew the value of Zionist intelligence and worked closely with Alex Aaronsohn, Chaim Kalvarisky, and others. Yet, this was now an informal practice since the government lacked the funds to support its own centralized body. The CID nominally should have filled that role, but was underdeveloped. The Yishuv had many intelligence services, most of them ad-hoc. Few had the organization, staff or budget of the IB. Davidescu and Shneerson continued to work independently but conferred to corroborate each other's sources. Various settler movements, political parties, and even the nascent Haganah – founded by the Histadrut in 1920 to organize the self-defence of the Yishuv – collected intelligence for their own purposes. Most of it dealt with the nexus of Arab politics, attitudes towards Zionism, and paramilitary organization.¹⁵²

The Palestine government had access to the scant secret service funds allocated by secret vote in London, which could be used to pay agents. Other Ministries could provide funding for intelligence work, usually the Foreign Office, but the secret vote allocated resources for SIS.

¹⁵¹ Ibid.

¹⁵² Gelber, *Shorshe ha-ḥavatsselet*, 48–50.

The War Office had received part of the secret service budget because it occupied Constantinople and the Rhine. Its allocation for Palestine was £3000 in 1922.¹⁵³ However this money was designated to Bolshevism and Pan-Islam, as these issues related to security in Constantinople and elsewhere. In 1922, after the replacement of the army with RAF administration, the FO authorized a mere £40 for Palestine from its own budget to pay for agents.¹⁵⁴

Beginning in 1920, Zionists also faced financial limitations. That year the IB spent £2000 on bribes for Nablus notables – a fraction of its intelligence budget. But that resource was quickly depleted.¹⁵⁵ Intelligence officers such as Davidescu complained of lack of resources. Agents were not paid.¹⁵⁶ Bribes for Bedouin Sheiks, notables, and newspapermen had exhausted financial resources.

In August 1920, curiously, Arab informants had begun to queue outside ZC offices asking for their payment. Political rivalry amongst Zionists, especially between the Zionist executive and the Va'ad Leumi, led to the closure of the IB. The Va'ad Leumi, or National Council, had been founded in 1920 as the executive branch to the legislative assembly, or *Asefat HaNivharim*, where Zionist parties voted on the allocation of Yishuv resources and its policy. The Va'ad was the only remaining body with a budget for intelligence work. In 1921, its budget for “relations with Arabs” was £50,000, a significant cut from 1920’s £80,000, but still more than

¹⁵³ TNA KV 4/151. *Secret Service 1922/23*. 28.1.1922.

¹⁵⁴ TNA FO 371/7770. E 506. 14.1.1922.; E1441 9.2.1922.

¹⁵⁵ Gelber, *Shorshe ha-havatselet*, 34.

¹⁵⁶ HA 80/145/p/4. *Davidescu to Shneerson*. 7.7.1920. Thank you to Yael Steinitz for helping me with the handwritten document.

sixteen times the size of Britain's secret service allocation for Palestine. Chaim Kalvarisky led the intelligence effort of the Va'ad's 'Arab secretariat', which focused on Jewish-Arab relations, the movements of leading Arab merchants, and even a telephone tap network in Jerusalem.¹⁵⁷ Under Kalvarisky's guidance, the Va'ad subsidized opposition to ECPAC and the Mufti's dominance at the SMC.

The Va'ad had the biggest budget for intelligence work, but demonstrated a different political character than the IB, whose members were close to British officials and, like Weizmann, sympathized with British imperialism. Alex Aaronsohn was so sympathetic to Britain that he opposed the self-governing institutions of the Yishuv. He wrote to a British contact, 'I am sorry to tell you that some of our Jews here are committing a fatal mistake by convening a big congress of the Palestinian Jews [Asefat HaNivharim]... this will certainly cause the Arab leaders to stir up the old political feeling, and call for an Arab congress. But, nobody has the monopoly on fools and demagogues, and we Jews have managed to secure quite a few in our midst.'¹⁵⁸

Yet Zionists could not cover all of Britain's needs. In October 1920 Samuel asked Curzon to pay for the secondment of an Indian counterintelligence expert to supervise Indian Islamic propaganda in Palestine and Syria.¹⁵⁹ It was suggested that the Indian government pay for this position, but this idea was rejected, as the Viceroy did not consider it to be in India's interests. Officials in Palestine and Whitehall argued that

¹⁵⁷ Gelber, *Shorshe ha-havatsalet*, 41–42, 52.

¹⁵⁸ TNA WO 106/198. 84. *Aaronsohn to Colonel [French?]*. 19.9.1920.

¹⁵⁹ India Office Records, British Library. (IOR) L/PS/11/179. *Samuel to Curzon*. 6.10.1920.

Indian pan-Islamic propaganda had relations with Arab and Turkish nationalism as well as Italian intrigues. India never subsidized this work in Palestine, but it did back efforts in Constantinople during 1919-21.¹⁶⁰

Nonetheless, Britain's partnership with Zionists, and their cooperation in intelligence gathering, became fundamental to British power in the Middle East. In advance of Samuel's arrival, Storrs wrote to him about Kalvarisky, saying, 'I am more than ever convinced that he is a man who will, if given the opportunity, play an effective part in the general development of the country, and also in the gradual and necessary reconciliation of the Arab; in which I find he shares my views.'¹⁶¹

Zionist intelligence work followed similar a pattern to that of its British counterpart since it had decentralized. Kalvarisky's programme was the biggest part but was subject to three separate authorities. He reported to Col. Kisch, chair of the Palestine Zionist Executive (PZE), the Va'ad Leumi, and Edmund de Rothschild of the Palestine Jewish Colonization Association (PICA).¹⁶² The PZE used Kalvarisky for political and economic intelligence, while the Va'ad authorized budgets for his Arab Secretariat. Kalvarisky had worked for de Rothschild and PICA's predecessor, the Jewish Colonization Association, since around 1900. PICA required intelligence which would facilitate land acquisition and settlement. During the war, Kalvarisky proved his expertise as he managed to secure

¹⁶⁰ IOR, L/PS/11/179. *Minute LDW*. 25. 1.1921.; *FO to India Office*. 22.1.1921.

¹⁶¹ ISA RG 100/p/649/7. *Storrs to Samuel*. 7.5.1920.

¹⁶² CZA S25/10320. *ZO to Kalvarisky*. 6.2.1923.; *Weizmann to Kaplansky*. 23.2.1923.

land through loans while cut off from France and de Rothschild's funds.¹⁶³ This multiple employment was normal in the Yishuv, and enabled entrepreneurial types such as Kalvarisky to maintain considerable independence while they brought results to multiple power brokers. It was also controversial and attracted suspicion from other members about how Kalvarisky was spending his £3000 allotment from the PZE, and whether it produced any benefit.

Aiming to persuade Muslims and Christians of Zionism's merits and benefits, Kalvarisky subsidized and supported Muslim National Associations (MNAs) across the country as a counterbalance to MCS's influence. Yet in the midst of public debate about representative government, the MNAs failed to convince Arabs to support elections for Samuel's legislative council. Hillel Cohen remarks that this produced no change in Zionist strategy towards Arab nationalism.¹⁶⁴ This may be true, but Kalvarisky's long term aim remained to continue to foster Arab-Jewish cooperation. The MNAs were important means to that end.

This programme exploited divisions in Arab society that already had emerged, including competition between notable families, class divisions, and to a lesser extent, ideology.¹⁶⁵ Those in opposition to ECPAC and the Mufti also served as sources for intelligence. Kalvarisky achieved mixed success: subsidies prolonged the lives of opposition parties and exploited pre-existing differences within Arab society. British officials

¹⁶³ "Dr. Chaim Kalvarisky Buried in Palestine; Was Chief Exponent of Arab-Jewish Unity"; Huneidi, *A Broken Trust*, 270 n.102. Schama, *Two Rothschilds and the Land of Israel*, 169.

¹⁶⁴ Cohen, *Army of Shadows*, 18–22.

¹⁶⁵ Porath, *The Palestinian-Arab National Movement*, 1:211–213.

did not see this secret diplomacy as useful although they also subsidized partisan newspapers. A Zionist-sponsored Farmers' Party, after opening in Beisan, provoked MCS to redouble its efforts in the north. Britain preferred not to stir a revival of MCS, so one political officer wrote, 'It is to be deplored that Colonel Kisch and Mr. Kalvarisky should imagine that the future of the policy lies in the hands of those who attempt to create a favourable attitude of mind through the agency of promises of financial help. The personal activities of these two gentlemen at Beisan would be amusing if they were not pitiable.'¹⁶⁶ Opposition success consisted mainly of electoral victories in Palestinian cities, shutting out the Husseinis out during the mid-1920s.¹⁶⁷

In 1928 the PZE dropped Kalvarisky's programme to save its heavy cost, which always had been controversial as the various Yishuv institutions never agreed about Arab policy. The left-leaning members of the party *Hashomer Hatzair* (the young guard) such as Kalvarisky and Aaron Haim Cohen, who eventually worked for the JA, sought binational unity through their cooperative work with Arabs. The cooperative work served the interests of other bodies such as the Labour Federation (*Histadrut*), ZO, and Va'ad, because of the political information that it produced, and it weakened ECPAC to some extent. Even Kisch was lulled by the apparent moderation of ECPAC, which led to the dismantling of Kalvarisky's office. The consequent lack of organized intelligence work would leave the Yishuv unprepared for the 1929 riots.¹⁶⁸ Regardless of its

¹⁶⁶ TNA FO 141/672. Mills to CS – *Political report*. 6.9.1924.

¹⁶⁷ Porath, *The Palestinian-Arab National Movement*, 1:239–240.

¹⁶⁸ Gelber, *Shorshe ha-havatselet*, 55–56.

eventual effect, this intelligence work was the main response to the Jaffariots of May 1921, which demonstrated to the Zionist left that Arab nationalists must be reconciled to the Jewish National Home. However, those disturbances demonstrated to others, especially British policymakers, that such reconciliation was unlikely.

Jaffa Riots

The violence that unfolded in Jaffa in 1921, and took 47 Jewish and 48 Arab lives and wounded hundreds more, resulted from a May Day parade originally led by Zionist-Socialists. Communists forced the crowd out of the Jewish suburb of Tel Aviv towards Jaffa. The police attempted to disperse the crowd, and Muslim and Christian Arabs ‘rushed to help the police against the Jews’. Violence became deadlier, featuring revolvers and dynamite; funerals during subsequent days became scenes for renewed clashes. The Haganah called upon the remnant of the wartime “First Judeans” battalion, to deploy to Jaffa. About 30 soldiers arrived on the second day of the riots, further exciting tensions. On the third day, martial law was declared and the Arab police who had participated in the violence were disarmed, as were Jewish soldiers. However, violence expanded to other Jewish settlements such as Petah Tikva, Kfar Saba and Rehovot. Troops, police and aircraft took the fight to Arab villages, especially Ramleh and Tulkarm, as violence spread in the wake of false rumours of Jewish atrocities. According to GSI, at the beginning of the disturbance, the Palestine administration ‘did not take the matter seriously, and Zionists have always pretended that the [Bolshevik] movement was of no

importance.¹⁶⁹ Indeed they were surprised, although the response was far swifter and decidedly harsher than during the disturbances of 1920.

Arab nationalist and pan-Islamic political activity had been resurgent. Joseph Davidescu reported on these issues, saying that during Churchill's visit to Palestine in early 1921, he refused to meet MCS leaders. Realizing that its demands had weakened and that it lacked attention, MCS began to secretly prepare for renewed disturbances. Funds and arms were raised in Beirut, and over 200 new members of Fedaiyeh were recruited. Typical for 'Black Hand', Fedaiyeh began to threaten anyone who would not help or who supported the Jews. Those under threat turned to Jews for help, to little avail. Zionists only later learned to exploit such situations.¹⁷⁰

British intelligence received similar warnings in the months leading to May 1921. A former Turkish governor of Jerusalem, possibly Jemal Pasha, who had executed a number of Fatat members during the war, informed SIS that Arab nationalists were planning to attack Jews and thus embarrass the British government in the eyes of Jews and the world. The informant was of the opinion that the scheme had been suggested by Bolsheviks, who regarded Zionists in the same light as the bourgeoisie, and the suggestion, he added, had been enthusiastically received by the Jewish section of the Angora administration.¹⁷¹ The informant played up notions of a Bolshevik-Jewish-CUP conspiracy with Islamists to undermine Britain,

¹⁶⁹ Huneidi, *A Broken Trust*, 127–128; Wasserstein, *The British in Palestine*, 100–102. TNA CO 733/13. f.599. *Situation in Palestine*. C.D. Brunton, GSI. 13.5.1921.

¹⁷⁰ CZA J15/7223. 11. *Report the Muslim-Christan Society lately*. Davidescu. 5.4.1921.0

¹⁷¹ TNA WO 106/209. f16. *Palestine and Syria Nationalist Intrigue*. Constantinople. 25.4.1921.

connecting events in Turkey with the Levant and elsewhere. This likely had the effect of reinforcing exaggerated views about such conspiracies amongst British intelligence officers.¹⁷² Yet much of the data was real, and there was some reason to see a pan-Islamist connection to a supposed “CUP-Jew-German-Bolshevik” conspiracy, or at least to the political violence which plagued the region.

Shakib Arslan, living in exile in Berlin but known to be coordinating propaganda with Mustafa Kemal’s movement, had encouraged his compatriots in Jaffa to start an armed uprising. Yehoshua Porath used this and other evidence to suggest that Amin al-Husseini and other extremist leaders had perhaps premeditated the Arab part of the 1921 riots, or at least were responsible for their spread beyond Jaffa. Porath held back from drawing firm conclusions, but his evidence suggests armed agitators were prepared to exploit an outbreak but did not plan it.¹⁷³ This falls into the same pattern that occurred before every major disturbance between 1919 and 1939: Pan-Islamist propaganda would precede the organization of armed groups and nationalist leaders, who would prepare for an opportune moment to take to the streets. In this case, that was the May Day street riots of 1921.

The Arab response intensified only a few days into the events. British perceptions of a Bolshevik threat in Palestine must be seen in the context of the ‘red scare’, and British intelligence assessments of communist revolutionaries from around the world. Threats to democracy

¹⁷² Ferris, “The British Empire vs. The Hidden Hand,” 336–337.
¹⁷³ Porath, *The Palestinian-Arab National Movement*, 1:130–131.

were real, but the capabilities and intentions of Bolsheviks were poorly understood until the early to mid-1920s. Britain shared concern for Bolshevik agitation with the leading parties of the Zionist movement. Weizmann had long encouraged British policymakers to think of Zionism as a means to win over Jewry from the Bolsheviks, as did Jabotinsky, who was in 1917 advocating for the formation of the Jewish Legion. It is worth mentioning that James Renton emphasizes that Jewish support for the Entente derived from other political events such as the treaty of Brest-Litovsk, Wilson's 14 Points, and German threats to the socialist revolution.¹⁷⁴

The Zionist-Socialist party, Poale Zion (Workers of Zion) split between left and right in 1919. The former were followers of the Third International (or Comintern, est. March 1919). They supported the Bolshevik revolution, and organized under *Mifleget HaPoalim HaSotsialistim*, (Socialist Workers Party, henceforth, MPS). They opposed the nationalist faction led by Ben-Gurion and Yitzhak Ben-Tzvi, organized *Achdut HaAvoda* (Labour Unity), which dominated Zionist politics in Palestine. Socialist-Zionist activity in Europe and Palestine became an important source for SIS in its investigations of the Comintern. Still, many misunderstood this split and the social-democratic nature of the faction led by Ben-Gurion and Ben-Tzvi. Achdut HaAvoda saw communism as a threat to its own dominance at the Histadrut (trade union) congress. The Comintern was also a threat to the Zionist objective to found a Jewish state.

¹⁷⁴ Weizmann, *The Letters and Papers of Chaim Weizmann*, 1:212–213, 227 papers 48 and 51; Renton, *The Zionist Masquerade*, 25, 59–64, 145.

Britain shared these concerns, but also was more focused upon the domestic and global aspects of the communist threat. Since demobilization began, MI5 had been managing communist infiltration in the armed forces, in the workforce, and British domestic politics.¹⁷⁵

Alarm about communism in Palestine was raised by Robert Vansittart in a letter to British Foreign Secretary Lord Curzon in November 1920. French officials had expressed concerns over British policy, which by allowing Jewish immigration, they felt, would create ‘a Bolshevik colony on their flank...’¹⁷⁶ This issue was causing difficulties in border negotiations, but also served as a reminder that communists could join Jews fleeing Eastern Europe and reach Palestine. In February 1921, MI5 passed information gathered in Cairo stating that MPS - the Socialist Workers’ Party - had caused labour agitation in Jaffa and organized strikes. The accurate report described MPS as a communist movement which aimed to prepare Palestine for social revolution. It had branches across the country, with total membership at 300. According to the report, most members were ‘chiefly inexperienced immigrants.’ The labour troubles had been settled by a conference ‘held at Haifa on December 4th, a “Federation of Jewish Workmen” [The Histadrut] has been organized in which the moderate labour parties... are in an overwhelming majority.’¹⁷⁷

British and Zionist strategy both saw the Zionist movement as best placed to defeat Bolshevism in the struggle for hearts and minds of Jews.

¹⁷⁵ For more on the domestic and global contexts of the red scare, see Andrew, *The Defence of the Realm*, 140–150.

¹⁷⁶ TNA FO 141/742/3. 4759/333. Vansittart to Curzon. 16.11.1920.

¹⁷⁷ TNA FO 371/6374. f.201. *Bolshevism in Palestine*. GW Courtney, Director. 4.1.1921.

An FO minute recorded, ‘The better the progress with colonization the less Palestine will have to fear from Bolshevism. The Zionist programme is the best counter-blast to it.’¹⁷⁸ Another comment stated that Bolshevism in Palestine was an exaggerated danger. The May Day riots of 1921 in Jaffa demonstrated otherwise.

During the months leading up to those bloody events, SIS began to collate data on Bolshevism in Palestine. Some assessments were contradictory, some nonsensical, but many rested on accurate data. Reports discussed the importation of arms to Palestine in preparation for a joint Arab-Jewish uprising. Reports also covered the propaganda aspect to this problem.¹⁷⁹ Yet the authorities were not worried about communist plots, and were confident of the Zionist antidote to communism. Intercepted communications proved that Bolsheviks were persecuting Zionists in Russia. Communists accused Zionism of aligning with anti-Bolshevik movements in Western Europe and Russia, and of running an espionage bureau in Russia on Britain’s behalf.¹⁸⁰

By April 1921, reports on these subjects had accumulated. An MPS meeting in Vienna revealed the Palestine branch’s claim to influence 20% of Jewish workers in Palestine. It received constant support, ‘both in the shape of literature and money’ from the Comintern. MPS’s popularity had reportedly been on the rise, but SIS observed its efforts to compete with Achdut HaAvodah and other non-Comintern parties.¹⁸¹

¹⁷⁸ TNA FO 371/6374. f.199. Minute by OG Scott. 15.2.1921.

¹⁷⁹ TNA WO 106/205. 41. *Reported attempts to cause trouble in Palestine*. 28.1.1921.; 42. WO to GHQ Egypt. 21.2.1921.

¹⁸⁰ TNA CAB 1/29. *The Poale Zion*. N.D. captured document dated 25.3.1921.

¹⁸¹ TNA WO 106/208. 32. *The communist party*.; 26. *The Bolsheviks and the poale zion*. 1.4.1921.; f.4. *The Bolsheviks and the poale zion communists*. 1.4.1921.

Following the riots, it became clear that Zionists alone could not suppress communist revolutionaries. During 1923-24, all key leaders were either imprisoned or deported, and communist publications were banned. The remainder of the movement was under regular surveillance. MPS, which began as a branch of Poale Zion, evolved during the early 1920s into the Palestine Communist Party (henceforth known by its German acronym, PKP). It was a branch of Comintern and sought to unite Arab and Jewish workers to replace British rule with an independent Soviet government. Arab support for communism remained weak in Palestine until many years later. David Tidhar, born in 1897 in Jaffa, led the anti-communist effort of the CID during 1922-24. In 1926 he resigned from the police and became a private investigator. He was also an author, sharing observations gleaned from his career in two publications: in 1924 a book based on his police diary, *Crime and Criminals in Palestine*, and later a comprehensive, 19-volume encyclopedia of leading personalities in the Yishuv, a valuable 'Who's Who' of the period.¹⁸²

Under Tidhar, the CID hired Zionists who spoke German, Russian, Arabic, and Yiddish. One of the earliest surviving CID records is a daily intelligence summary from October 1923. It reported on communist proclamations circulated in Arabic, a "Fascisti" meeting in Jerusalem, and Musa Kazim's appeal for unity to the Moslem Society of Haifa, which had already begun to oppose ECPAC.¹⁸³ The CID monitored a wide range of issues, but unfortunately, the only CID records from the 1920s and 1930s

¹⁸² Tidhar, *Crime and Criminals in Palestine*; Tidhar, "Entsiklopedyah le-halutse ha-Yishuv u-vonav" online version at <http://www.tidhar.tourolib.org/>.

¹⁸³ HA 47/787. 217181. DIS 282. Saig. 3.10.1923.

which survive in bulk at the Haganah Archive deal with communism and the registration of clubs and societies. The CID considered communism, not Arab nationalism, to be a serious political crime during the 1920s.

Surveillance of PKP meetings in 1923 revealed constant reference to ongoing conflict in Europe, and that Arabic communist publications were being printed in Egypt.¹⁸⁴ Raids led to confiscations of literature, and improvements in intelligence on membership in PKP.¹⁸⁵ The Palestine government reported on these events to the Colonial Office, saying that the communists' efforts had no 'appreciable effect on the main body of Jewish Labour, at which they are mainly directed, still less amongst the Arabs. To the latter, who have not yet entirely abandoned the tribal or patriarchal system of existence, communism, as interpreted by the Russian soviet, appears to be particularly unattractive.'¹⁸⁶

The situation troubled the Chief Secretary Gilbert Clayton, who ordered the CID to watch the Bolsheviks closely.¹⁸⁷ In response, the CID summarized its intelligence on communist leaders in Palestine. 'I consider there is, without a doubt, an under current of Bolshevism in Palestine.' Clayton admitted that no actual violence had occurred, and recommended 'that the Jewish cooperative Labour Association [Histadrut], with a vast majority of labour votes, under the leadership of [Yitzhak] Ben Zvi, is

¹⁸⁴ HA 47/466. 19144. *Extract Jerusalem DIS*. 5.10.1923.; 19149. *Bolshevik Proclamation*. 9.10.1923.

¹⁸⁵ HA 47/466. 19159. *Search at PK Club*. 10.10.1923.

¹⁸⁶ TNA FO 141/672. *Report on political situation in Palestine*. 10.1923.

¹⁸⁷ HA 47/466. 19176. *Extract intel summary* 86. 31.10.1923.; 19177. *Clayton to DIG, CID*. 31.10.1923.

strong enough to cope with any opposition it may receive from the communist party.¹⁸⁸

Only in May 1924, after a raid in Tel Aviv, did Moscow's direction of the movement become clear.¹⁸⁹ Documents found in the luggage of a suspect under surveillance by the police in Haifa revealed the extent of the involvement of Russian agents and connections to the Berlin-based International Press Bureau. The find helped the CID to uncover the names of the key paid agents of the Comintern in Palestine.¹⁹⁰ By the end of July 1924, after further raids, all communist leaders were under postal censorship. In early August, the 'Fractzia' Club, or workmen's faction, a constituent member of the Histadrut, was raided and closed by Tidhar, and the government considered deporting leaders by the end of the month.¹⁹¹ However, only a small number of communists ever faced deportation. The investigation of communism opened the way to CID-SIS cooperation on communist intelligence, shared via Clayton.¹⁹² Regardless, communism did not emerge as a significant problem in Palestine until recession struck in later years. Even then, as Zachary Lockman has shown, the Labour movement became the key tool for suppressing communists, and co-opted Arab opposition.¹⁹³

Whereas communism was treated as a political crime, Arab nationalism was confronted as a force to be wielded by British authorities.

¹⁸⁸ HA 47/466. 19188. *AIG to DIG*. 5.11.1923.

¹⁸⁹ HA 47/788. 217284. *Summary of Intelligence no 10*. 31.5.1924.

¹⁹⁰ HA 47/982. 158a. *DCP North to AIG-CID*. 20.7.1924. and related fols.

¹⁹¹ HA 47/466. 19119. *Closing of the Fractzia Club*. Tidhar. 11.8.1924.; 47/983. 19133. *Communists*. 26.8.1924. and attached deportation list.

¹⁹² HA 47/986. 19369. *Young to Clayton* 26.1.1924.

¹⁹³ Lockman, *Comrades and Enemies*.

In order to prove Britain's capacity for good government, the CID became the state's main weapon against communism. Zionism also was an important counterweight. Policymakers believed that Britain could and should provide good government, but felt no commitment to Arab self-government in Palestine. Zionist immigration was more important to Britain than a legislative council, although Samuel tried to reach compromise with Jews and Arabs. Britain negotiated with ECPAC on these matters, since self-government was a League aim. Intelligence officers understood that these negotiations led to peaceful conditions in the country. Britain relied upon an older colonial model for good government, which relied upon the influence of local elites and religious law. The SMC embodied Britain's commitment to Palestinians that they could govern themselves according to their customs, without British interference. This approach disregarded the demands of Palestinian leaders, but co-opted the scion of the leading notable family – Amin al-Husseini.

Samuel's Policy, the SMC and Anglo-Zionist Cooperation

Samuel was surprised by the Jaffa riots. In their aftermath, the Middle East department of the CO composed a memo, with Churchill's support, which defined Britain's position. This policy aimed to uphold Zionist development, but to limit the possibility for communist penetration, and the effect of Jewish immigration on Arab opinion.

...a certain proportion of the ten thousand Jews who have entered the country during the past year were undesirable characters, tainted with Bolshevism. [Samuel] also appears to have received reports on the lines of a military intelligence report which has already been circulated to the Cabinet, which led him to the conclusion that the anti-Jewish disturbances were organised and premeditated.¹⁹⁴

¹⁹⁴ TNA FO 371/6376. 9488. *Palestine*. 11.8.1921.

Britain's new policy tied Jewish immigration to the absorptive capacity of the country, and reinterpreted the Balfour Declaration accordingly. Arabs saw this policy as a victory. Optimistic, they sent a delegation (PAD) to London to negotiate a reversal of the Zionist policy. Yet British policy remained firmly committed to Zionism's aim of creating, through immigration and development, a Jewish National Home in Palestine. The alteration in immigration policy was a minor issue and resulted from a problem of 'tactics, not strategy, the general strategic idea being the gradual immigration of Jews into Palestine to the extent to which they can be absorbed into the economic life of the country without detriment to the rights and privileges of the non-Jewish majority.' Anti-Zionist government officials were stripped of their positions to support this strategy.

Samuel also changed his approach to Arab politics. After the war and the Nabi Musa events, the Hussein clan had been stripped of nearly all its official positions, including the mayoralty of Jerusalem, but also other posts associated with Feisal in Damascus and the previous Ottoman government. In late 1918 the Husseinis had pressed the Damascus government for independence. As a consequence, Jevdet Pasha, military governor and CSO of the Arab army, had Murad al-Husseini sacked from the office of inspector of Awqaf.¹⁹⁵

In early 1921, the Husseinis bargained with Samuel to secure the leadership of the SMC for Hajj Amin, who only had a minor background in religious education, having studied in Cairo only during 1912-13, but never

¹⁹⁵ BAZY, Aaronsohn papers. 17/1/21. Political notes. 14.12.1918.

taken a degree. All of his rivals were qualified Ulema or Muslim legal scholars. He was not a qualified or likely candidate for the position, yet he was nominated by his family over his more qualified cousin, Tahir, who, scorned, became a Zionist informant. Religious leaders throughout Palestine supported the Husseinis for their reputation, traditional influence and support, and their Arabic and Islamic pedigree. Amin was particularly popular for his nationalist organisation during 1918-20. In early April 1921, however, Amin met with Samuel and the legal secretary, Norman Bentwich (also a Zionist). Amin stated that his influence and that of his family would 'be devoted to maintaining tranquility in Jerusalem.' Amin publicly opposed revolt, but preferred to concentrate on fighting the Zionist policy.¹⁹⁶ Jamal al-Husseini, Amin's cousin and confidant, followed the same strategy as secretary of ECPAC. Nabi Musa 1921 passed peacefully only days before the May Day riots. This event proved Amin's promise. Jerusalem had been peaceful while tension exploded in Jaffa.

The appointment of Amin as Mufti and limitations to Jewish immigration caused Palestinian politicians to negotiate amongst themselves and with Britain to reverse the Zionist policy. Hillel Cohen and Yehoshua Porath have argued that the years 1924-28 were a 'nadir for the Palestinian national movement.' ECPAC nearly disappeared, leaving 'no more than an office run by Jamal al-Husseini...'¹⁹⁷ This comment is an overstatement, and mischaracterizes the way Arab leaders saw their changing roles. They focused on negotiations with the government at Whitehall and Jerusalem,

¹⁹⁶ Mattar, *The Mufti of Jerusalem*, 24–26; Elpeleg, *Grand Mufti*, 7–10.

¹⁹⁷ Cohen, *Army of Shadows*, 58; Porath, *The Palestinian-Arab National Movement*, 1:242–243.

and with the League of Nations. The record does not show a lack of activity on the ground in Palestine. There was more to Arab nationalism than the Mufti, riots, and rebellion. Educational, cultural, and athletic organizations took shape, and produced the next generation of nationalists. In particular, the *Najah* and *Rawdat al-Ma'arif* schools, the former subsidized by the SMC and the latter controlled by it, fostered a national spirit and a broad base of support for Amin al-Husseini.¹⁹⁸ Opposition to Zionism took place abroad, at its bases of support in London and Geneva.

Despite the government's willingness to work with the Mufti, it still maintained suspicions. In his book, *The Mufti of Jerusalem*, Philip Mattar overstates the government's trust in the Mufti. The British government was satisfied with Amin al-Husseini so long as he kept the peace, but it monitored his political activity. His fundraising trips abroad for the Dome of the Rock caused suspicion, as British observers remained cautious about the purpose of his missions. In 1923, the Egyptian interior ministry warned Palestine that the Mufti was travelling with Mahmoud Kemal ed-Din Bey, a pan-Islamist supporter of Mustafa Kemal, so he was watched while in Cairo. Egypt warned that his real object was to rouse Muslim opinion on the Caliphate, which was abolished by Mustafa Kemal in 1924, but at the time remained a heated issue in the Islamic world. Cairo also believed that the Mufti and Kemal ed-Din were there to spread Kemalist propaganda.¹⁹⁹ SIS reported on the Mufti's intense pan-Islamic propaganda in Palestine and elsewhere, noting especially the SMC's fundraising delegation to the

¹⁹⁸ Porath, *The Palestinian-Arab National Movement*, 1:204.

¹⁹⁹ ISA RG/65/p/3051/26. 4. Mackintosh to Dept of Immigration & Travel Jerusalem. 8.3.1923.

Hejaz. Herbert Young from the CO asked Clayton why his reports did not emphasize pan-Islamic plots, whereas SIS reports did. Was SIS exaggerating? Confused, Young pressed Clayton on whether Palestinian politics were driven by pan-Islam, Turkish Islamic and nationalist influence, or Arab nationalism. Palestinian Muslims and Christians were united against Zionism, but ‘once they leave the common ground of opposition to the Jews does each party pursue secret and conflicting aims which relate more to international politics than to the internal politics of Palestine?’²⁰⁰

Young’s confusion is understandable, given the climate in the Middle East as the crisis between Britain and Mustafa Kemal’s Turkey came to conclusion. It reflects a general lack of understanding of the connection between the wars in Anatolia, the crushing by Britain and France of Arab independence movements, and the developments in Islam and Arab nationalism which had occurred during the late Ottoman period. Clayton answered that SIS was exaggerating, and that ‘it is the local political issue which really appeals to the people of Palestine but pan-Islamic and pro-Turkish agents are doubtless quick to seize any opportunity of turning any local agitation or discontent to their own purposes.’ Clayton also concluded that the SMC’s Hejaz delegation followed anti-British currents in Mecca, and played along. Palestinians were united against the Zionist policy. Muslim sympathy for Mustafa Kemal was not exclusive of Arab nationalism, Clayton pointed out, since the SMC and MCS were

²⁰⁰ TNA FO 141/464. *Minute sheet: FO to HC*. 4.10.1923.; CO 537/859. 10. *Young to Clayton*. 14.9.1923.

‘distinctly pro-Arab rather than pro-Turk’.²⁰¹ CO bureaucrats agreed with Clayton that local issues drove discontent in Palestine, as they had in Iraq during 1920.

Clayton believed the Mufti was supporting peaceful conditions within Palestine, even if he agreed on the need to watch him. Britain began to treat Palestinian nationalists in isolation from the pan-Arab movement. Yet, chapter 5 demonstrates that these networks remained fundamental to the Mufti’s political programme. British authorities knew that the Mufti could be trouble. British security also was concerned by the Mufti’s relief agency during the Druze revolt in Syria. Much later, after the Mufti’s escape to Lebanon from Jerusalem in 1937, MI5 prepared a file on him and began to collate relevant material that had accumulated over the years. A cross-reference from 1926 revealed that during the Druze revolt, the Mufti accepted support, via Shakib Arslan, from German spymaster Max von Oppenheim, who sent medical supplies to the Druze during their anti-French revolt. ‘Haj Amin was in charge of the fund for Druze refugees and considered to be thoroughly bad. The Palestine Authorities think he is more dangerous than Bedus in Trans-Jordan.’²⁰²

Indeed, the Mufti’s cousin Jamal admitted in 1926 to NPL that ‘we are in direct touch with the rebel headquarters and get their informations in due time...’²⁰³ NPL supported the Mufti’s pro-rebel efforts, and secretly planned a “big move” – perhaps at Geneva or even in the field. They sent a “friend”, Mr. Dent, to visit Jerusalem. British intelligence had monitored

²⁰¹ TNA CO 537/859. 14. *Clayton to Young*. 5.10.1923.

²⁰² TNA, KV 2/2084. 1a. *xref: Haj Amin Husseini*. 30.9.1926.

²⁰³ ISA RG 65/P/985/19. *ECPAC to NPL*. 25.8.1926.

these communications, and believed the Mufti had raised £50,000 in Iraq. In response to a veiled warning from the CS, ex-intelligence officer George Stewart Symes, against using such funds support rebels, the Mufti denied using the money for anything other than aid work and said that this figure was overestimated. British administrators could do nothing to interfere with the handling of SMC funds.²⁰⁴ Regardless, the warning was received, and the crisis in Syria dwindled shortly afterwards. London-based support for Arab nationalist rebellions was common, as Captain Robert Gordon Canning, a future NPL supporter and British fascist, ran guns for Abdul Krim's anti-colonial campaign in Morocco during the mid 1920s.²⁰⁵ Canning also visited Palestine in the wake of the 1929 riots, where he was received warmly by Palestinian leaders.

While certain officials may have been fooled, the government remained wary of the Mufti throughout the 1920s. The double-edged nature of his influence was known, but decision makers believed that their relationship with him was one of co-dependency. As ECPAC led negotiations, the Mufti improved his own influence in the Islamic world. Aware that he lacked the desirable academic/religious credentials for his title, he improved his Islamic and Nationalist standing by participating in Hashemite and Saudi Islamic conferences in Mecca and Cairo, respectively. Moreover, he restored the Muslim holy site, the Dome of the Rock, and made a name for himself by supporting the Druze rebels.

²⁰⁴ ISA RG 65/P/985/16/ *Broadhurst to Jamal*. 16.12.1926.; TNA, AIR 5/206. 68A. *HC to CO*. 22.2.1927

²⁰⁵ KV 2/877. 39a. *Gordon Canning*. 3.11.1925.

In 1926, the RAF reported on the Mufti's involvement in pan-Islamic politics, saying that he attended a recent pan-Islamic conference in Cairo because of 'his desire to acquaint himself with the Moslem leaders present; and above all his desire to draw political benefits for Palestine.' The Mufti saw Palestine as a distinct part of the emerging Arab world, but remained sympathetic and loyal to pan-Arab aims. He was prepared to deal with 'Abdul 'Aziz Ibn Sa'ud of Arabia or any other Arab statesman to secure promises for the defence of Palestine's interests. For him, Palestine must not be isolated from a future Arab federation by the Balfour Declaration.²⁰⁶

The Mufti's external relations and pan-Islamic activity did not matter to British security considerations in Palestine, which was quiet. The Mufti remained a reliable government officer, effectively governing the civil life of Palestinian Muslims through the SMC. ECPAC led the struggle against Britain's Zionist policy, enabling the Mufti to remain loyal to Britain and build his influence in the Muslim world. Nonetheless ECPAC as well as the Mufti, Arslan and Rida were actively working against colonial rule, even though events seemed quiet on the ground in Palestine. This suited British administrators in Palestine, who were forced to improvise and relied on negotiations and divide-and-rule tactics to keep the peace. They lacked a long-term strategy to deal with Arab opposition to Zionism and British support for Jewish immigration. They could issue protests at the League of Nations, but caused little trouble within Palestine. The government took advantage of negotiations with PAD and ECPAC,

²⁰⁶ TNA, AIR 5/723. 1B. *Palestine and Transjordan Intelligence Summary*. 5.1926.

knowing that the mere promise of change made violent disturbance less likely.

PAD, Governance, and Britain's Palestine Policy

One of PAD's main obstacles was that it was not perceived by Britain to represent PAC, nor was PAC seen to represent Palestinians. Policymakers exploited these divisions, which emerged during Arab negotiations with Samuel over his proposed legislative council. Multiple, overlapping, and conflicting interests in Arab politics emerged as factions wavered between support and boycott of Samuel's proposal, which aimed to provide for consultation with locals in the administration of government. The peaceful result itself was an important source of control within the government's pattern of divide and rule.

The government, through communications intercepted by its censorship office, was aware of Palestinian efforts to reverse the Zionist policy. Samuel reported on these communications to the Colonial Office. In 1921 he wrote that PAC had sent telegrams to European governments, the Vatican, and League of Nations. However, he downplayed the representativeness of the congress, saying that the 'vast majority of [the] population take no overt part either for or against [PAC], and degree of support accorded to it is far from indicating anything in the nature of a national movement. This information is sent in case the attention of Mandates Commission of League of Nations is drawn to the resolutions of the Congress.'²⁰⁷ As a mandatory power, it was Britain's duty to build up representative institutions, yet in 1922-23, the 5th PAC boycotted

²⁰⁷ TNA FO 371/6375. E2363. *Samuel to CO*. 20.2.1921.

constitutionally mandated elections for a legislative council, forcing the government to instead appoint of an advisory council.

Out of convenience, the government maintained the tactic of downplaying PAC's representativeness in order to counter demands for change to the 1922 constitution or immigration policy. Zionist intelligence promoted this view as well. Kisch reported that the 6th PAC of June 1923 was 'in no way representative... In effect, the delegates elected themselves.' Few invitees came to the congress. What was important was a threat to boycott government taxation.²⁰⁸

The League Mandate came into effect in September 1923, and the League's Permanent Mandates Commission (PMC) only began to discuss Palestine in 1924. By then, some PMC members had been influenced by PAC. William Ormsby-Gore, formerly of the Arab Bureau, became Colonial undersecretary at this time and travelled to the Geneva to represent Britain's case. He argued that the development of self-governing institutions had been made impossible by PAC, which aimed to use such institutions to prevent Jewish immigration, which was legally enshrined in the Mandate. At Weizmann's prompt, Ormsby-Gore reminded the League that it had sanctioned and guaranteed the Zionist policy. The PMC ceased to question the Zionist policy, and Zionist delegates were appointed to Geneva from then on in order to keep it that way.²⁰⁹ PMC members met privately with Arab delegates, and normally included Shakib Arslan on the agenda, but never considered a revision of the text of the Mandate between

²⁰⁸ TNA AIR 8/62. 20. *Clayton to Devonshire*. 27.6.1923.

²⁰⁹ Pedersen, "The Impact of League Oversight on British Policy in Palestine," 42–45.

1924 and 1929, due to the quick reaction of Zionist diplomacy to early attempts at revision. Only the 1929 riots would raise new serious discussion.²¹⁰

The PAC also attempted to change British policy in London. In the wake of the Jaffa riots, the congress raised money to send a delegation, (PAD) led by ECPAC head Musa Kazim to London in 1923. PAC recognized that policy was formed at Whitehall, not by Samuel, who attempted to mollify Arabs and the League through a ‘scheme of popular representation’ which would not affect Jewish immigration. Miss Frances Newton, an English missionary in Haifa, and daughter of Britain’s former consul at Beirut, accompanied PAD to London via Geneva, where they attended the Syrian Congress.²¹¹ Newton joined other women in London in their support for Arab nationalists. Wyndham Deedes reported on the quiet in Palestine produced by PAD’s absence, and the anticipation of good results.²¹² This quiet reinforced his tactic, shared by Clayton, Storrs, Symes, and other intelligence officers-cum-administrators, to keep alive Arab hopes for change by prolonging negotiations.

Churchill met PAD in London after refusing to meet ECPAC earlier in 1921 during his visit to Palestine and Egypt. PAD expressed its grievances about the Zionist policy and the lack of representative government. The Balfour Declaration, Churchill said, was binding, but was open to some interpretation. He told Musa Kazim, ‘I do hope that what you are going to do over here is to find some satisfactory way of carrying out

²¹⁰ Ibid., 46.

²¹¹ TNA CO 733/13. 37529. *The Moslem Christian Delegation from Palestine*. 27.7.1921.

²¹² TNA CO 537/849.f8. *Deedes to Young*. 2.8.1921.

the policy of the British government, and not merely a way of bringing it to an end.²¹³ Churchill and Musa Kazim could not agree on self-government, which, according to the CO, never was promised. Newton and Young debated the meaning of ‘National Home’, since in Arabic, two terms for ‘national’²¹⁴ gave very different impressions of British aims for that policy. Major Young exclaimed ‘You cannot imagine they want all the Jews in the world to go and live in Palestine. Nobody could ever imagine that. They cannot mean that – all of the Jews in the world – that Palestine should be to them what England is to us.’²¹⁵ Yet precisely this end is what many Zionists imagined, and what Arab nationalists feared.

These talks failed because of this and other misunderstandings. Churchill insisted that Musa Kazim negotiate directly with Weizmann. Yet Weizmann and his associates set as a condition for talks that PAD accept the Balfour Declaration. Musa Kazim thought this meant acceptance of moving all Jews in the world to Palestine. Churchill ended the meeting with a lengthy lecture about Britain’s commitments to Zionists and Arabs. He conceded nothing to PAD, believing it should negotiate directly with the Zionists.²¹⁶

PAD gave proposals for representative government which acknowledged Britain’s benevolent intentions but emphasized the wrongdoing of the Zionist policy. PAD’s proposals included representative

²¹³ ISA RG65/P/984/10. *Shorthandwriter’s report of conversation between Churchill and PAD at the House of Lords.* 12.8.1921.

²¹⁴ *Watani* implied an ancestral homeland, whereas *Qowmi* was a tribal sort of peoplehood.

²¹⁵ ISA RG65/P/984/10. *Shorthandwriter’s report of conversation between Churchill and PAD at the House of Lords.* 12.8.1921.

²¹⁶ ISA RG65/P/984/10. *Shorthandwriter’s report of conversation between Churchill and PAD at the House of Lords.* 12.8.1921.; RG65/P/984/10. *report of conference held at CO.* 22.8.1921.

government, with Britain as suzerain; an organic constitution guaranteeing religious freedom and equality and which could 'make impossible state aid to any religion.' This clause is particularly interesting, since it challenged Amin al-Husseini's new status as President of the SMC, and that of his uncle Musa Kazim PAD. PAD offered Britain military rights to the territory and offered to guarantee for 'some small area in Palestine which should be, in regard to the Palestine National Movement, extra territorial.'²¹⁷ Musa Kazim envisioned this to be some sort of religious centre for world Jewry.

This exchange killed any possibility for a representative legislative council. PAD ordered a boycott of Samuel's attempts to form a representative council, since participation would have amounted to an abdication of Arab claims to Britain and Zionism. Zionists and Arab nationalists may have agreed upon the definition of "national home", but British policy functioned according to a very different definition, although policymakers were willing to limit Zionist immigration in order to calm Arab fears.

The next year, Chaim Kalvarisky, in charge of Arab-Jewish cooperation for the Va'ad among other roles, discussed PAD's proposals with Jamal Husseini, secretary of ECPAC. The pair were neighbours and met socially. Jamal said that ECPAC could change its policy from one of a 'national government', to a bicameral legislature. The lower chamber would be proportional, while the upper chamber would be formed on the basis of Samuel's executive council, and could thus safeguard Zionist

²¹⁷ ISA RG 65/p/339/14. *PAD to Churchill*.25.8.1921.

interests. He also proposed an immigration commission with an English chair, two Jews, one Muslim, and one Christian. Jamal complained about Zionist support for ECPAC's opposition. Col Kisch remarked that ECPAC's change of stance came 'no doubt as a consequence of the realisation of the hopelessness of the attitude hitherto adopted.' He worried that if the proposed upper house consistently vetoed immigration legislation, world opinion would turn against Zionism. He warned that the Zionists would have to move in some measure towards democratizing the government.²¹⁸ Britain considered this option impossible by this point. Yet it was satisfied with the negotiations themselves, which produced peace on the ground.

The British government was outwardly sympathetic, but according to Yehoshua Porath, attached the condition that the High Commissioner, Lord Plumer, must consider the proposals to come from an "effective body" representing the population. This was easy to dispute, especially since ECPAC's influence had greatly declined in favour of the opposition.²¹⁹ British policy could not afford to be tied down to a constitution as it had in Iraq, which is what Palestinians desired. Palestine's political problems already had proven to be irreconcilable, and representative government endangered Britain's basic interest to remain in Palestine.

The visit of PAD to London and the inability to reach agreement on representative government because of the Zionist policy marked the point

²¹⁸ YYGH, Vashitz Papers. (1)15.35-95. *Kisch to ZO London*. 7.11.1924.

²¹⁹ Porath, *The Palestinian-Arab National Movement*, 1:245-247.

of no return at a political level. It was at this time that British officials admitted to themselves that the Arab-Zionist conflict was irreconcilable. It is therefore little wonder that Churchill told Musa Kazim to approach Weizmann directly. It is also no coincidence that the RAF, army and government had come to the same conclusion in the summer of 1921 when they determined that it would be impossible for Jews and Arabs to serve together in a locally-raised self-defence force (see p.135). Once Britain had admitted it was an irreconcilable conflict, it necessarily became zero-sum. The conflict between Jews, Arabs and Britain remained focused on British support for Zionist immigration. Curiously, the Zionist left never admitted that this was the point of no return for the Arab-Zionist conflict. Their version has dominated the thinking of historians who have focused on partition because of later events. Hillel Cohen argues that the 1929 riots mark “year zero” of the Arab-Zionist conflict.²²⁰ However the evidence presented in this thesis demonstrates that the British admitted to themselves in 1921 that the conflict would not be solved.

Policymakers used the promise of negotiations to coax Palestinian politicians towards collaboration. Samuel concluded that ‘Nothing could be more desirable than a détente, as Sir Gilbert Clayton urges... The difficulty is to find any solution which the Arabs will accept short of the transfer of the government to their own hands...’ Britain would not accept proposals which would destroy the Zionist enterprise. Opposition parties including the farmers’ and Muslim National Associations, sponsored by Britain and Zionists, had thrived upon the existing uncertainty. ‘The possibility that

²²⁰ Cohen, *Tarpat*.

power may after all be transferred to their hands has given them adherents and increases greatly the difficulties of the government.’²²¹ So Britain sought to maintain a balance and focused authority in the SMC, which was a government office. This was classic ‘divide-and-rule’ colonial politics, supported by the realization that negotiations themselves caused peace. Britain emphasized ‘responsible government’ as the substitute for self-government.

Although it was not seen at the time, this approach was the nail in the coffin for any possibility of civil government. So long as British rule depended on upholding these dual obligations, it would be committed to securing the country from nationalist violence which sought to undo the Zionist policy. Intelligence services would be necessary to record the pulse of the national movement, but no independent body was capable of doing so. Britain’s defence arrangements were not appropriately matched to this condition, and could not meet the security needs of the country.

ECPAC also received support in these negotiations from outside. The NPL, based in London, was led by a group of ex-suffragettes who had become sympathetic to Arab complaints against Zionism.²²² Mary Adelaide Broadhurst, Margaret Milne Farquharsohn, and others joined Frances Newton in this cause, and wrote letters to the Times, parliament, the House of Lords, and ministries in support of ECPAC. They gained the support of Col. S.F. Newcombe, formerly of the Arab Bureau, as well as a number of other soldiers and intelligence figures. This group maintained varied

²²¹ TNA AIR 8/62. 13. *Cabinet Cte on Palestine: Note by Samuel*. 18/7/1923.
²²² Pryce-Jones, *Treason of the Heart*, 193–195.

influence throughout most of the mandate years. During the 1930s, NPL organized a pro-Mufti propaganda service called the Palestine Information Centre (PIC). It attracted the support of Nazi sympathizers such as Robert Gordon-Canning, and Barry Domvile, and the attention of MI5.²²³

During the 1920s NPL played an important but accidental role in supporting the efforts of British administrators to foster peaceful conditions through negotiations with EPCAC. In 1926 Mary Broadhurst on behalf of NPL advised PAC on how to address the League. ‘The Legality of the terms of the Mandate should be called in question and judicially considered by an impartial tribunal. If the League Council refuses to face the point there should be an appeal to the judicial commission. It is a point not only affecting the Arabs but of international importance. Your case should be drawn up by an experienced international lawyer, and I will try to get help in this respect also.’²²⁴ Broadhurst reminded ECPAC secretary Jamal Husseini to send money, since ‘we should like to be able to tell your supporters that you are helping yourselves in this way. They think you are not sufficiently in earnest if you do not show a proof that you can sacrifice a little in money for keeping alive your great cause. We are finding it harder to make excuses for you.’ The next year, NPL again asked for money to support their efforts to block the Jewish acquisition of rights to mine the Dead Sea Salts.²²⁵

NPL also promoted PAC’s strategy of a tax boycott and supported demands for self-government. ‘You will see that members of the House of

²²³ See ahead. Also see KV2/877; KV2/834, *Gordon Canning.*; and KV 2/2084 *Barry Domville, Amin al-Hussieni.*

²²⁴ ISA RG65P/985/19. *Broadhurst to Jamal.* 8.4.1926.

²²⁵ ISA RG65P/984/23. *Broadhurst to Jamal.* 7.7.1927..

Commons are being organised for a push on as regards a representative government in Palestine. This question was for the purpose of eliciting and giving publicity to the weakness of the position from a constitutional point of view – one that will appeal to the British people. You have a cry that can be accepted by all – “no taxation without representation” and now that a heavy burden is being imposed [at home], that attitude will have a very strong influence and should unanimously be taken up.’²²⁶

By 1926, when Britain appointed Lord Plumer as the new HC to Palestine, little had changed: the Palestine government’s policy remained one of status-quo. Jamal Husseini wrote to NPL saying that the Lord Plumer’s policy was unknown. Their ECPAC’s newspaper *al-Shoura*, based in Cairo, had been banned, and NPL was asked to find a way to raise question about it in parliament.²²⁷

None of NPL’s efforts saw much success, although it did cause the *Encyclopedia Britannica* to remove the Zionist flag from its entry on Palestine.²²⁸ NPL continued to ask for financial support from PAC on a periodic basis, despite providing no tangible result. The group’s failure to move British opinion at Whitehall was undetected by ECPAC. British intelligence demonstrated ECPAC’s weakness, its belief in NPL, and the lack of results from either body. This intelligence enabled policymakers to comfortably maintain the status quo. Intercepted letters revealed the Palestinians’ shift in focus from revolt to negotiation. It also revealed their financial struggles. In September 1923, an intelligence summary referred to

²²⁶ ISA RG65P/985/19. *Broadhurst to Jamal*. 30.7.1926.

²²⁷ ISA RG65P/985/19. *PAC to NPL*. 20.1.1926.

²²⁸ ISA RG65/P/985/16. *NPL to Jamal*. 2.12.1926.

PAD's abrupt decision to cancel the American leg of its trip, and Musa Kazim's sudden return to Palestine. One member, Amin Tamimi, stayed in London to keep contact with NPL. These messages follow the exact contents of the telegraphic correspondence between Jerusalem and London found in ECPAC's records.²²⁹ Another intelligence summary referred to a police report which discussed the contents of NPL's letters which referred to its propaganda work.²³⁰

ECPAC was led by NPL in a fruitless exercise. The true result was that the status quo prevailed at home while they negotiated abroad. British administrators were aware of this effect and enjoyed its results. Yet Clayton knew that sooner or later Britain would have to confront its unresolved policy problems. In 1918, he had been optimistic about the Zionist policy. Now, he saw no way for Britain to reconcile its own contradictions. He reportedly told the French Consul in Jerusalem:

With regards to this ambivalent policy, many people ask themselves the question, 'which Machiavellian intentions do we have in mind?'... We caused conflicting endeavours... which rope us into a web of complications. We are not only obstructed in our course of action, but also limited in our means. We do not have any money anymore nor do we want to spend money anymore... I am therefore convinced that we should abandon Palestine and its stony grounds and leave its starving and quarrelsome population to themselves, if we could. We are however the prisoners of our Balfour Declaration. The Jews seized our government by the throat and do not let go.²³¹

Britain's lack of movement on policy frustrated strategic thinkers like Clayton, but simplified policymaking for successive High

²²⁹ Compare ISA RG 65/p/985/9 with TNA FO 141/672. *Political report Palestine*. 9/1923.

²³⁰ TNA FO 141/672. *Palestine situation report*. 12.1923.

²³¹ ISA RG65/P/946/15. French Consul Gaston Maugras relating conversation with Clayton (handwritten German notes, copied during WW2 from French original held at Quai D'Orsay. 2.8.1924 Credit for translation to Christian Wehrenfennig).

Commissioners and the governments at Whitehall. A dangerous situation had emerged: on the one hand, British decision-makers in Palestine were forced to improvise since there was no policy on the future of the country, or how Britain would fulfil its commitment to the League to guide the country to self-government while upholding its League commitment to the Jewish National Home. This improvisation caused decision-makers to welcome any development which promoted peace and stability. This included the appointment of the Mufti, prolonged negotiations with ECPAC, and the fostering of a domestic opposition to ECPAC. On the other hand, British officials no longer paid attention to the pan-Islamic and pan-Arab connections of the Palestinian political elite. They watched the key players , intervening at times, but they never calculated the possibility that the same clique of nationalists supporting revolt in Syria might turn their guns on Britain in Palestine.

Conclusion

Porath attributed the relative peace of the 1920s to the Yishuv's economic and morale crises, and declining Zionist immigration after 1925, which resulted in net emigration during 1927.²³² Yet, it is clear that Palestinian nationalist leaders were in no way inactive. They attempted negotiations, but had very little chance of succeeding in achieving their aims. British officials in Palestine used their faith in these negotiations to maintain the peaceful status quo, since they lacked alternatives. Yet this chapter has shown that the Mufti and ECPAC increased their pan-Arab and

²³² Porath, *The Palestinian-Arab National Movement*, 1:243–244.

pan-Islamic activity through international connections, which did not disturb the Palestine government although it should have.

The 1921 riots produced a sense of deep need for political change in Palestine. Britain addressed this perception on multiple fronts. It eliminated the communist threat through the CID and recruitment of loyal Zionists. It attempted to neutralize the Arab nationalist threat on multiple fronts: First, it co-opted the power of the Husseini family by appointing Amin al-Husseini as Mufti of Jerusalem and president of the SMC. This lent him considerable power, which he used to improve his influence in the Muslim and Arab worlds through activity abroad. He also now controlled the appointments of religious civil services for most Palestinian Muslims. Second, the government and Zionists fostered opposition to nationalists led by the Mufti's family in ECPAC, and promoted opposition parties which forced ECPAC to keep negotiating. Third, it prevented any change in constitutional governance for Palestine, which would have complicated Britain's commitments to the League, and undermined its control.

Without an official Arab-Zionist détente, or even without a clear sign that ECPAC represented the Arab population, Britain claimed that it did not have to concede self-government to that body. Finally, Britain depended upon these negotiations and measures to keep the peace in Palestine. The prolongation of negotiations was encouraged by the Palestine government, and unintentionally, by NPL. The government enjoyed the peaceful results. Samuel, Plumer, and many former intelligence hands agreed that representative government was needed to solve the political deadlock between Arab nationalism and Zionism. Yet this was

never a priority, and most doubted this would be possible since PAC rejected imposed solutions. As a consequence, 1921 marked the point at which Britain recognized that its commitments to both sides were irreconcilable. British policy thus maintained the status quo without much security risk. This was less an articulate strategy than a set of improvisations guided by policy principles: Zionist immigration, good government, British administration, and pseudo-autonomy for local communities.

Intelligence shaped these events in a complex way. The security issues were settled through the suppression of communism, but also through interference with the Arab political communities. The intelligence state was disjointed, maintained only by officers who were experienced and competent. They knew that their improvisation would not prove a permanent solution to Arab demands for self-government or the need to reconcile that with the Zionist policy. This was not an intelligence problem, but a policy one. Experienced officers could maintain the situation, but without a strategy for addressing this conflict, it would eventually explode.

Chapter 4- The 1929 (Attempted) Revolt

In August 1929 in Jerusalem, demonstrations quickly turned into riots and extensive violence between Arabs and Jews, which spread to other towns and ultimately resulted in hundreds of deaths. British security was unprepared to deal with the situation. The outbreak, and more importantly, Britain's inability to respond, cannot be attributed to any single factor, be it intelligence failure, lack of force, or policy weakness. The core problem was eight years of policy-strategy mismatch. At no point during 1921-29 was the strength or organization of British forces, intelligence, or policy, appropriate to Britain's stated aims. This chapter focuses on British security policy, which cut defence and security forces, and the role of intelligence in supporting the government's attempt to manage a state of heightened inter-communal tension with little force, focusing on the imperial defence scheme known as "Air Control".

Strategists saw Palestine as a deep base for defence of the Suez Canal, for air links to the Far East, and a point of control for a future air or naval war in the Eastern Mediterranean. As a base, Palestine would keep enemy air forces a safe distance from Suez.²³³ Tellingly, in 1923 strategists and the Chief of Imperial General Staff (CIGS), appended imperial ambition to British strategy. 'So long as British influence is supreme in Palestine in Transjordan, so long we control Arabia.' The mandatory regime was to create internal peace which would have a favourable effect on Egypt, Syria, and Iraq. Future rail and oil communications were to be

²³³ TNA AIR 9/19. 26. *Extract from CID paper 199-C. 13.6.1923.*

protected.²³⁴ Britain aimed to have a supportive Middle East behind the Empire in any future war. This strategy, developed in 1923, would remain at the centre of British planning in the Middle East through to the beginning of the Second World War. It was central to Britain's 1939 decision to abandon its Zionist policy.

It became clear in 1929 that British policy in Palestine was not engendering the desired support. During the 1920s, British forces globally were at minimal strength, given the unlikelihood of a major war. Furthermore, financial limitations had caused a gradual withdrawal of military force in the Middle East. However, this lack of force caused weak internal security. Britain tended towards the relinquishment of control to local powers and locally-raised forces in Iraq, Transjordan, and Egypt. But because of its unpopular policy of promoting Jewish immigration and denying self-government in Palestine, Britain was unable to raise a local defence force there. As a result, the government was dependent on the goodwill of the Mufti and his influence which was not enough to prevent the violent outbreak of 1929. Britain's weak response had important consequences for Arab and Jewish politics, but also for British policy, including security.

Since 1920, no formal mechanism for handling politico-security intelligence had existed in Palestine. By 1921 centralized intelligence had been removed from the mandated territories, and by 1923 the last centre of military intelligence in the region, based in Istanbul, had been withdrawn.

²³⁴ TNA AIR 9/19. 5. *Notes on importance of Palestine and Transjordan...role in major war...* 8.10.1926.

Under the circumstances, it is no surprise that Britain was so unprepared in 1929 that reserves were only called up once violence had broken out.

Although they lacked centralized intelligence, British decision-makers were not ignorant about Arab politics. However, by 1928 most of the key governors and secretaries who were accustomed to handling these issues, and had been members of Allenby's GSI or Arab Bureau, had left Palestine to work elsewhere. In 1926 G.S. Symes, who had managed security as district governor in northern Palestine and Samaria, left for Aden. In 1928, Clayton was High Commissioner in Iraq, and Albert Abramson, district governor of southern Palestine, became a Special Service Officer (SSO) in Transjordan. Through these personnel movements within an informal system, the quality of intelligence declined in ways Mandate authorities could not understand. As Arab politicians began positioning themselves in 1928 to regain control over their movement, British intelligence was inadequate to meet the coming challenge. No British official in Palestine could have interpreted events during that year as precursors to riot or attempted revolt.

Religious-Nationalist Politics and the Riots

During the 1920s, the Mufti allowed ECPAC to challenge British policy, while he built a reputation as a pan-Islamist in order to improve his prestige amongst Palestinians, who had begun to support opposition parties, especially in the SMC. He maintained his role as a nationalist anti-colonial figure through his support for the Druze rebellion in Syria, and pan-Islamic propaganda, but as a government officer, he did not formally lead any political movement. Beginning in 1928, he used a religious dispute over an ancient holy site to mobilize Islamic sentiment for national purposes, and

thus revived public opposition to Zionism, which had been weakened by internal Palestinian political divisions.

His campaign focused on the Western, or Wailing Wall of Jerusalem, known in Arabic as *al-Buraq*. This site had been holy to Jews since it was believed to be the outer retaining wall, and the last remaining part, of Herod's Temple, destroyed by the Romans in 70 CE. Muslims, too, valued the site, believing it to be the place where Mohammad tied his steed, Buraq, and then prayed at al-Aqsa before ascending to heaven. There are records of Jewish-Muslim disputes over the site from at least 1840, and Zionist immigration to Palestine from the late 19th century further aggravated Muslim fears. Under the Ottomans, the site was ruled to be the property of the Waqf. Britain's first and most important commitment regarding the holy sites of Jerusalem was to maintain the status quo. This idea governed their decisions throughout the 1920s. Thus, for both nationalistic reasons and their experience with Christian holy sites, Muslims sought to oppose any deviation from the status quo.²³⁵ Despite failed Jewish attempts to legally purchase the site, Jews maintained the right to worship there, often by bribing Ottoman officials. Devout Jews sought to repair the narrow square through which many other citizens passed, sought to pray there, to bring chairs, and to set up a dividing screen between the sexes.

In the early 1920s, the SMC and ECPAC disseminated examples of Jewish art depicting the *Haram ash-Sharif* (Noble Sanctuary or Temple Mount), which they wrongly interpreted as proof of Jewish designs to

²³⁵

Porath, *The Palestinian-Arab National Movement*, 1:258–262.

demolish the Muslim holy site. This had been their main anti-Zionist propaganda in their delegations to Hejaz, Egypt, Iraq and India during 1922-28. On Yom Kippur 1928, at the urging of Jerusalem's Arabs, police forcibly removed the dividing curtain from the Jewish prayer service. The British saw the curtain as a deviation from the status quo, but this caused a scuffle from the Jews who sought to defend their rights to pray as they pleased. The SMC and Mufti began a propaganda campaign in defence of al-Aqsa and the Wailing Wall, and persuaded the British government to support their position. The Jews interpreted this step as an extension of Ottoman oppression, and the action enabled Jabotinsky's Revisionists, like the SMC, to exploit the Wailing Wall issue for its national and religious importance.²³⁶

The government sided with the Mufti and sought to prevent future provocations. As Zionists attempted to negotiate the issue in London, SMC propaganda pressed the matter in Palestine. Meanwhile restrictions on Jews at the site gave momentum to the Revisionist youth movement, *Betar*, which aimed to provoke the British government to reconsider Jewish rights at the Wailing Wall. Ten months after the Yom Kippur incident, they held a demonstration at the Wall on *Tisha B'Av*, a fast day which commemorates the sacking of the Temple in 70 CE. In response, Jerusalem's Muslims held a counterdemonstration there during the next day. Yehoshua Porath attributed culpability to the Mufti, who knew that the Wailing Wall was an issue which could unite Muslims throughout Palestine, and did not affect his relations with the government. Porath recorded that 'Izzat Darwaza...

²³⁶ Ibid., 1:262-267.

stated that the national movement was overcome by weakness but it “renewed its activity for some time after the *al-Buraq* uprising, and it was this [re-activation of the movement] that *those who caused the uprising from behind the scenes* had hoped for.”²³⁷ Darwaza’s reflection is important. While his statement must be taken with a grain of salt, the military and police evidence clearly demonstrate that that the events were anything but spontaneous disturbances. The historiography has characterized the events of 1929 as ‘riots’ which lasted from the 23-29 of August. They may better be characterized as an attempted or failed rebellion, the quelling of which lasted considerably longer. Evidence from British and Zionist sources, as well as Darwaza’s statement, lend weight to that argument.²³⁸

Philip Mattar offers an alternate view. According to him, historians like Porath have ‘ignored or assume too much in an effort to tailor the facts to fit their theses. They ignored the sequence and sources of provocation on both sides, and assumed that the Mufti had the intention and ability to orchestrate events and to sustain them for eleven months.’²³⁹ Rather, says Mattar, the Mufti intervened after a week of Jewish protests in Palestine, London and at the League. As president of the SMC, the Mufti had to defend Waqf property. Mattar underemphasized evidence presented both by himself and Porath, which demonstrates the Mufti’s role in organizing the “Committee for the Defence of the Buraq”, and other such groups, and the propaganda associated with the issue. The evidence suggests that the Mufti

²³⁷ Ibid., 269. Emphasis in original.

²³⁸ Compelling examples also found in Townshend, “Going to the Wall: The Failure of British Rule in Palestine, 1928–31,” 37.

²³⁹ Mattar, *The Mufti of Jerusalem*, 37.

did guide events to a considerable extent. His decade of experience in both nationalist/anti-colonial and religious politics eventually led to a blended political stance not unlike that of Shakib Arslan. One cannot prove that he planned an uprising. However, he did seek to use Muslim sentiment to raise as much attention as possible to the anti-Zionist cause, with violent results. Moreover, this follows a pattern which he had established as early as 1919-20, and periodically refined through 1938.

After the events, the Va'ad reminded the British government of the precedent for religiously-inspired political violence. 'For some considerable time there has been conducted in the country a systematic propaganda, both secret and open, for an attack on Jews who are engaged in a work of peace and reconstruction.' The correspondent noted that this had happened before, in 1921, although they probably meant 1920, when Amin al-Husseini led the Nabi Musa disturbances.²⁴⁰ The Va'ad's mistake in dating the Mufti's role in the 1920 riots is telling, as it reveals the lack of preparation within the Yishuv for the possibility of violent outbreak in 1929. As Yoav Gelber remarks, '...in the summer of 1929, not a person remembered the Information Bureau [IB of 1920] or the information accumulated there.'²⁴¹ After 1929, Zionist intelligence was rebuilt from scratch.

Attempted or Failed Revolt

Indian police expert Charles Tegart (for more on background see p.285), who was called in to reform the police during the Arab rebellion,

²⁴⁰ Middle East Centre Archive, Oxford. (MECA) GB165-0188 Luke papers. 5/2. ff.70-80. Va'ad to HC. 2.9.1929.

²⁴¹ Gelber, *Shorshe ha-havatselet*, 67.

said that the genesis of armed rebellion was the 1929 riots and ‘extreme racial hatred’.²⁴² This view has contributed to certain myths about the origins of the conflict which have been perpetuated by historians. The conflict was neither purely racial nor purely religious in nature. It was inspired by the Mufti, but was not necessarily planned by him. This was the Mufti’s way of handling politics: a judicious mixture of politics and religion to inspire the devout, illiterate peasant masses, the urban literate classes, and the notable families to embrace his cause and discipline, and actions plausibly deniable, at least from a distance.

The reorganization of the Jewish Agency (JA) in 1929 contributed to Muslim fears about holy sites.²⁴³ The JA had expanded powers over its predecessor, the PZE, and was formed to represent all of World Jewry instead of just Zionists. Thereby, the religious demands of Jews and the nationalist demands of Zionists regarding the Western Wall to the British government were now represented by one officially-recognized body. Following the Tisha B’Av demonstrations on 15 August, led by Betar and Jabotinsky, 2000 Muslims marched to the wall and desecrated a Torah scroll and destroyed other property. On 17 August, a Jewish boy was stabbed after startling an Arab woman while trying to retrieve his ball from her garden. He died on the 20th, and his funeral was the scene of further demonstrations. An Arab youth was killed in retaliation. Aharon Cohen, disguised as an Arab on behalf of the Haganah, entered Al-Aqsa sometime shortly after the 17th of August, and witnessed the stockpiling of pistols.²⁴⁴

²⁴² IOR MSS Eur C235/2. Tegart. *Memoir of an Indian Policeman*. 252.

²⁴³ Mattar, *The Mufti of Jerusalem*, 46.

²⁴⁴ Gelber, *Shorshe ha-ḥavatsselet*, 58.;

Rumours emerged from Hebron that the Jews aimed to attack Al-Aqsa on Friday 23 August. Armed men, inspired by the call to defend the site, began to pour into Jerusalem. After a week of incitement and propaganda, events exploded on 23 August, 1929.

Police monitored the tension, but it being August, many officials were away on holiday, including the HC, John Chancellor, and the Police Commandant, Arthur Mavrogordato. The acting commandant, Alan Saunders, did not attempt to disarm the peasants from the countryside for fear of provoking them. In any case, he only had a small reserve to call up, so he took the chance of allowing the leadership at the Mosque to defuse the situation. The acting governor, Harry Luke, believed the leaders at al-Aqsa had complied, yet certain Sheiks in its courtyard had delivered inflammatory Friday sermons. The Mufti personally assured Saunders that the crowd would not take any action unless provoked. Saunders trusted Husseini's good faith, having worked with him for many years. Nonetheless, by mid-day, Saunders had ordered the preparation of rifles for the British police, in anticipation of violence, but it was already too late – rioters had begun to rampage in the old city.²⁴⁵

By the end of the 23 August, Luke had cabled Malta, requesting reinforcements, including one warship each to arrive at Jaffa and Haifa, and he asked London for a battalion of troops. On the 24th, he was informed that the battleship “Barham”, the cruiser “Sussex” and the carrier “Courageous”, would be despatched. Egypt made available one composite battalion (typically 800 soldiers) and one section of engineers, who were to

²⁴⁵ Kolinsky, *Law, Order, and Riots*, 44–46.

be despatched by train on the night of the 24th. On the same day, the Air Officer Commanding (AOC), Group Captain Playfair, was ordered to arrange air transport for two officers and 50 soldiers, to be flown directly from Egypt to Jerusalem.²⁴⁶ On the 26th, after several days of violence, a naval landing party took control of Jaffa, and various detachments dominated major cities. Brigadier William Dobbie, who commanded troops from Egypt, reported that the situation in Jerusalem, Haifa and Jaffa was ‘now well in hand... But country outside these immediate centres [remains] unsettled.’²⁴⁷ Unprotected Jewish colonies were under constant attack, and Dobbie worried that assailants might begin to attack British establishments. The colonies were widespread over rough terrain, which frustrated British movements to protect them. He called for an offensive policy to put an end to the attacks, since there were still not enough defensive troops available.

Lack of force was one of the basic reasons why violence spread out of control. The British section of the police was too small, and not well-suited to violence of this scale. To make matters worse, the Palestinian section of the police had proven unreliable, as some Arab policemen refused to obey orders, or to share intelligence; others even participated in the violence on the side of the rioters.²⁴⁸ Figure 1 demonstrates how the trickling of reinforcements to Palestine was insufficient to secure the

²⁴⁶ MECA GB165-0188 Luke papers. 5/2. ff.4-10: *CinC Medfleet to Luke*. 24.8.1929.; *RAF Amman to Luke*. 24.8.1929; *Egyptforce to Luke*. 24.8.1929.; *Luke to Governor Malta*. 23.8.1929.

²⁴⁷ MECA GB165-0188 Luke papers. 5/2. f.19. *Brig. Dobbie to Egyptforce*. 26.8.1929.

²⁴⁸ TNA CO 733/176/5. 9. *Chancellor to CO (Passfield)*. 20.11.1929.; AIR 5/1243. 13. Playfair, *Report on the Palestine Riots*. 26.12.1929. pp.8,33.; Kolinsky, *Law, Order, and Riots*, 51; Kolinsky, “Reorganization of the Palestine Police after the Riots of 1929,” 160.

country.²⁴⁹ Only by the end of August were the major centres under complete control and British forces in a position to stop the entry into Palestine of organized, armed bands from Iraq, Transjordan and Syria.

The failed rebellion caused the deaths of 133 Jews and 110 Arabs. Most Jews were killed by rioters, most Arabs by British police and military. Two cases particularly scarred the Yishuv. On 24 August, 59 religious Jews in Hebron were massacred, and the remainder of that centuries-old community was displaced by the violence. On 29 August in Safad, another Jewish holy city with a long-established community, 20 Jews were killed.²⁵⁰ And the violence continued beyond that date. During the first week of September, British troops and RAF battled large bands of infiltrators from Transjordan and Syria who had come to attack Jewish settlements as part of a broader campaign. Dobbie reported on 5 September that ‘Internally, the arrests which resulted from the numerous raids have had a good effect and disorder appears to have generally stopped.’²⁵¹ He added that Bedouin from the south and cross-border raiders had been excited by false rumours. In the countryside, ‘the attitude of the Moslems is by no means settled’ and propaganda still had considerable effect. Yet, even the previous day, the Transjordan Frontier Force (TJFF) and a company of Green Howards from Britain which had been deployed for the emergency had engaged in battles at the border near Jisr-Majmie’ and

²⁴⁹ Compiled from AIR 20.5996. Playfair and Dobbie: *Report on Palestine Riots*. 3.1930.; MECA GB165-0188 Luke papers. 5/2. Various.

²⁵⁰ Kolinsky, *Law, Order, and Riots*, 42.

²⁵¹ MECA GB165-0188 Luke papers. 5/2. fol.171. *Dobbie to CAS, Baghdad*. 5.9.1929.

Beisan.²⁵² The situation was precarious but the army had prevented outright rebellion. Operations lasted until 11 September 1929. It was clear that Pan-Islamic propaganda had had an effect on the violence which unfolded outside of Jerusalem, in the countryside, led by foreign fighters.

After suppressing rioters in the major cities until 29 August, police worked with troops to arrest offenders and to collect evidence throughout the country. ‘Punitive actions’ of troops took the form of raids against ‘offending villages’. Then, forces concentrated on border defence, which was secured by cooperation with RAF, and the French regime in Syria. Dobbie attributed the success of the operations to the mobility of the battalions which had been introduced. He thought that the quick restoration of order prevented a wider disturbance in Syria, Transjordan, Sinai, and Iraq.²⁵³

Dobbie aimed to ‘deal with this menace as far from the Palestine frontier as possible, and in any case to get timely warning of any such hostile movement.’²⁵⁴ RAF reconnaissance was coordinated with ground forces, and at times aircraft confronted attackers at Jewish colonies on their own. The TJFF played their role at the border. This element of the defence plan for Palestine worked the way it had been envisioned eight years earlier. However, the system obviously could not cope with the enormity of the problem: the complexity of the politics, the mechanics of deterrence, or the security of cities.

²⁵² MECA GB165-0188 Luke papers. 5/2. *TJFF to HQ troops and HQ, RAF, Jerusalem*. 4.9.1929.

²⁵³ TNA AIR 20/5996. Dobbie. *Narrative of Operations*. 7.10.1929. 90.

²⁵⁴ TNA AIR 20/5996. Dobbie. *Narrative of Operations*. 7.10.1929. 90.

Figure 1 - Estimate of Forces Available in Palestine 23-29 August 1929

Day	Major incidents	Police	TJFF	Army	RAF	Navy
Fri, 23-Aug	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Mid-day violence in Jerusalem - Reserves called 	~1375 local and ~250 British		nil	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -1 sqn bombers -1 section ACC arrived J'lem midday. Another at night. 	nil
Sat, 24-Aug	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Overnight sniping in Jerusalem - AOC Playfair assumes command - Hebron Massacre - Mufti disavows attributed call for defence, rumours of Jewish attack. - Partial control of J'lem by nightfall - Colonies in north attacked. - Decision against Martial law - Decision against arming Jews - Press suspended 	Volunteer special constables.	<p>One coy in north.</p> <p>One coy near Jericho.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Evening arrival by air of two plts, 1/SWB. - 80 armed airmen arrive from Amman 		
Sun, 25-Aug	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Ongoing battles in Jerusalem - More reinforcements requested - 1 coy 1/SWB to Jaffa prevents worsening of situation. - Police and SCs in J'lem exhausted, relieved by 2 coys 1/SWB - Bn HQ personnel armed and deployed 		<p>North:</p> <p>Detachment at area of Beisan and Beit-Alfa, another at Safad</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Arrival by train of remainder of 1/SWB, one coy 2/GH, & 1 sec RE. 		

Key

Squadron (sqn)	12 aircraft, or three flights.
Flight	4 aircraft
Platoon (pltn)	typically 30-50 troops.
Company (coy)	typically three platoons.
Battalion (Bn)	typically 800 troops, or four companies plus an HQ coy.
MT	Motor Transport.

Naming convention:
2/S.Staffs – 2nd Battalion, South Staffordshire Regiment.

Regiments:
 SWB – South Wales Borderers; GH – Green Howards;
 S.Staffs – South Staffordshire;
 RE – Royal Corps of Engineers;
 Kings - Kings regiment (Liverpool);

Day	Major incidents	Police	TJFF	Army	RAF	Navy
Mon, 26-Aug	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 1 coy 2/GH to Haifa - Bedouin from Gaza move north, turned back by political officer. - Persistent reports about incursions from Syria and TJ 	Tel Aviv special police disbanded		-Arrival remainder of 2/GH, one coy 1/Kings and 1 MT coy		-“sussex” 270 Marines in Jaffa
Tue, 27-Aug	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Dobbie assumes command of all forces in Palestine - 100 British constables requested from England - Attacks at Beit Alfa 	Jewish special constables disarmed		-One coy 2/GH moved to Afula. Remainder of 2/GH to Jenin and Nablus.		-“Barham” to Haifa
Wed, 28-Aug	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Calm in Jerusalem - Riots in Haifa, Acre - French intelligence and border cooperation 			-2/S.Staffs from Malta via “Courageous”.		-“Courageous” + six flights, +“Wanderer” and “Veteran”
Thu, 29-Aug	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Safad Massacre - Chancellor returns - Battle at Hittin (vs. 1000 under-armed Arabs) 			One coy 2/GH arrives late to Safad.		

Violence had not completely ended in September 1929. Between October 1929 and March 1930, the army confronted a gang called “Green Hand”. Green Hand was formed ‘of absconded offenders and other bad characters, inhabitants of Palestine and the neighbouring territories, who for a considerable period after the disturbances of August last terrorised the more inaccessible parts of upper Galilee... The question of organising such bands has been discussed by disaffected politicians in both Palestine and Trans-Jordan.’²⁵⁵ Chancellor emphasized that these were not highway robbers, which had been a problem in Palestine until the early 1920s.

They are mainly escaped criminals, fugitives from justice and desperados from Syria. They have nothing to hope for and little to lose and they have been used as tools by disaffected politicians in order to create a state of anarchy in the belief that any change which might arise out of it would be better than the existing state of affairs in Palestine.’²⁵⁶

Green Hand exposed many of the country’s police problems – the north had rough terrain, ‘broken and rocky’ which favoured the movements and concealment of brigands. In October 1929 the gangs began to coalesce around Safad and attacked police. The army and police still were processing detainees from the riots. On 1 November, the band was reinforced by Syrian Druze, experienced from their anti-French rebellion. These had also connections to the Mufti, who supplied them through his aid agency in Transjordan. After numerous skirmishes, by 19 December 1929, the gang captured four policemen at the small village of Suhmata. There, the captive police learned that the band had adopted the name ‘Green Hand’.²⁵⁷ The group did some damage to police and troops, which

²⁵⁵ TNA CO 733/190/5. 1. Chancellor to Passfield. 22.2.1930.

²⁵⁶ TNA CO 733/190/5. 1. Chancellor to Passfield. 22.2.1930. pp1-2.

²⁵⁷ Ibid. p7.

responded forcefully. By the New Year, sufficient reinforcements were in the region, and French troops closed off the Syrian border. Secret agents supplied information to the police, suggesting the population's acceptance of government, although locals were sympathetic to the pious mujahidin. At no point was the gang was stronger than 25 armed men. By February, 16 members had been caught. Chancellor called for the construction of roads from Acre to Safad and to improve other village tracks in the Golan and Sea of Galilee areas. By mid-march, the gang was broken; Tafish and a number of his followers were arrested.²⁵⁸

The HC reported that other gangs were expected to be formed around Nablus, Hebron, and the Jerusalem-Jaffa corridor. However, combined operations by troops, RAF and police over the space of six weeks had 'so harassed' the gang, such that the movement had been stunted. He warned, 'It may, however, be anticipated that in the event of a recrudescence of disturbances in Palestine this method of embarrassing the government would be resorted to on a considerable scale.'²⁵⁹

There is some evidence that the Mufti was connected to ongoing violence after August 1929. In 1938 the CID recorded that the Green Hand had been backed by the nationalist and religious supporters under the patronage of the Mufti.²⁶⁰ Contemporaneous evidence recorded in telephone taps found in Jewish Agency records from October-November 1929 also demonstrates the Mufti's violent role. Jamal al-Husseini had asked the Mufti about preparations, presumably for a demonstration to

²⁵⁸ TNA CO 733/190/5. 1. Chancellor to Passfield. 22.2.1930.; 7. *HQ RAF Jerusalem to Air Ministry*. 15.3.1930.

²⁵⁹ Ibid.

²⁶⁰ TNA CO 733/370/9. 1. Terrorism 1936-1937.

coincide with the Shaw commission of enquiry. They debated over whether action was best taken immediately or until after the Shaw commission, when the movement was further prepared. The Mufti said that to depend on the opinion of the Shaw commission was ‘...impossible, as the Jews are flowing into Palestine and the government is allowing them to come in. We must look for a way to frighten local and foreign Jews so that nobody should arrive here and that is the best means. Listen, Jamal, the matter must be examined thoroughly and we cannot do it by telephone.’²⁶¹ It is unclear what they were planning, but within weeks the Mufti ordered arms to be distributed from a cache in David’s tomb in Jerusalem to the youth in villages around Jerusalem. Curiously, not unlike Haganah, the Mufti’s supporters used euphemisms such as “bananas”, “cucumbers”, and “feathers” for arms.²⁶²

The ‘Green Hand’ was not the end of political or religious violence in Palestine. Another group, called *al-kaf al-aswad*, or ‘Black Hand’, emerged in Haifa in late 1929, and threatened to murder anyone who stood in the way of the boycott movement. A note in Haganah intelligence records recorded in September 1930 described another Black Hand group centred in Tel Aviv, which had some 3000 followers and was armed with wartime-era rifles and pistols.²⁶³ The term, “Black Hand”, was ubiquitous, but groups with this name had the common aim to kill any collaborator, or anyone who put obstacles in front of the national movement, especially boycott efforts.

²⁶¹ S25/22329. Phone taps. p.30.

²⁶² S25/22329. Phone taps. pp42-45.

²⁶³ HA 8/Klali/29. *Black hand*- note. 9.9.1930.

Air Control, Gendarmerie, and Palestine Security

Major reforms were needed in the police, intelligence, and broad defence policy of the country. Israeli historian Dr. Eldad Harouvi eloquently characterized the problem in Britain's response: 'This was both a political and intelligence failure alike. It is possible that the army possessed the force to prevent the events, if only force had arrived in time.'²⁶⁴

The root cause for the explosion and spread of violence of 1929 was British security policy in Palestine, under the overarching scheme of Air Control. The RAF took responsibility for Middle East security during a drive at Whitehall for austerity. It had bested the army in a struggle for scant financial resources by proving its value in battle in Afghanistan in 1919, and Somaliland, Palestine, and Iraq during 1920, and by asserting that substituting air for ground forces would enable an efficient and cheap means of imperial policing.²⁶⁵ Air control was a key aspect of British strategic policy after 1918, as money was stripped from defence and Whitehall pressed its colonies to become self-sufficient in defence. . Under the 'ten-year rule', the guidelines upon which defence estimates supposedly rested, military estimates were to assume that no great war could occur for years to come. In the interim, the services were to replace manpower with mechanical devices, especially in imperial policing. That principle always remained central in British strategy, despite debate over other issues, as did Air Control in the Middle East. As the 1920s advanced, Britain's services became "too weak to support its foreign policy yet too expensive to suit its

²⁶⁴ Harouvi, *HaBoleshet Khokeret*, 59.

²⁶⁵ Omissi, *Air Power and Colonial Control*; Ferris, *Men, Money, and Diplomacy*, 63–66.; also see ch2.

financial one.²⁶⁶ Nowhere were these problems more apparent than with air control in Palestine.

The main driver for air control in 1919-22 was Churchill, first as Secretary for War and Air, and then as Colonial Secretary, with power over Palestine and Iraq. In May 1920, he cautioned the cabinet that commanders in these locales were attempting to occupy huge territories. ‘Thus are they led under the pressure of local policy to wide dispersions of force and to consequent enormous increase in numbers and expense.’ Churchill instead argued for

one single concentrated force at some convenient centre point... and that from this base gradually in the process of years, ten or fifteen years if necessary, our influence should gradually be spread throughout the country. This process may be greatly assisted and accelerated by the use of air forces. It is, after all, the same process which we have hitherto always followed in the development of our great Asiatic and African possessions. Never have we attempted to settle down all over the country at once with a large proportion of the army used for the purposes of conquest...²⁶⁷

Air Chief Marshal Hugh Trenchard likewise thought that Air Control would enable political officers to quickly back-up their threats with force, and so hold a country with small forces. He stressed the need for intelligence, gathered on the ground and by air reconnaissance, which could provide early warning of disturbances.²⁶⁸ Some political officers had parallel views. Deedes, for example, warned that the presence of troops in Transjordan ‘might be regarded in some quarters as provocative rather than

²⁶⁶ French, *The British Way in Warfare, 1688-2000*, chap. 7; Ferris, *Men, Money, and Diplomacy*, 12, 22, 24, 53.

²⁶⁷ TNA, WO 32/5281.ff.6-9. *The Cabinet: Palestine and Mesopotamia*. Churchill. 7.5.1920.

²⁶⁸ TNA, CAB 1/29. *A Preliminary Scheme for the Military Control of Mesopotamia by the Royal Air force*. Trenchard. 12.3.1920.

a means of pacification...'²⁶⁹ Political officers could better work without a garrison, not by administering Transjordan directly, but rather by advising the local population in the conduct of their government. Though Transjordan was an extreme in these regards, the British also hoped to govern Palestine with a tiny administrative capability, and consent from the population.

Neither Churchill nor Trenchard envisioned the complete replacement of ground forces; both accepted the need for a small, preferably local, garrison and gendarmerie. In Transjordan this vision was realized with the creation of the Arab Legion for local security and, in 1926, the TJFF for border security. In Palestine, after 1929 the TJFF replaced the gendarmerie's function in the north of the country. Local policing and paramilitary forces remained weak, and British policy towards arming Jewish settlements was inconsistent.

The role of the RAF, intelligence and military forces in British imperialism within the Middle East has been a source of misunderstanding in recent scholarly works. In her study of the culture of British intelligence and imperialism in the Middle East, Priya Satia has characterized air control as 'terror', stemming from the imagination of paranoid officials.²⁷⁰ This post-colonialist interpretation neglects other facts apparent on the ground. In Satia's words, her book is not about policy, but 'is essentially about the realm of *practice* – military diplomatic, intelligence. It does not dispute the historiography on policy so much as provide a cultural-

²⁶⁹ TNA WO 106/204. fol.47. *Deedes to various political officers*. 16.12.1920
²⁷⁰ Satia, *Spies in Arabia*, 163, 246–255.

historical explanation for the particular institutional environment in which it was formed...²⁷¹ Satia's work aids our understanding of colonialist attitudes in the intelligence realm, but offers skewed assessments of how policy was made and executed, and rests on assertion over evidence. Satia overemphasizes racism and orientalist imagination; while these are important issues, they must be taken together with the broad base of multinational and multilingual evidence about intelligence and policy.

Air control was an administrative arrangement intended to save money, enable self-government in Transjordan and Iraq, and to limit the recurrence of bloody and lengthy 'small wars'. As Churchill wrote in 1922, 'this does not imply that Palestine is to be controlled from the air, but merely that as a convenience the administrative channel through which the military affairs of the country will be conducted will be the Air Ministry and not the War Office.'²⁷² . Air control worked as it was designed, but this was not enough to secure Palestine, since that policy was inappropriately matched to an urban and settled country. The system depended on early-warning intelligence, a garrison, and on the gradual raising of local security forces: police, gendarmes, frontier forces, and defence forces. This vision never came to fruition, blocked by a series of uncoordinated actions. By the end of the 1920s, only Arab local forces, that is the Arab Legion and TJFF, had been raised. A largely British gendarmerie had been raised in Palestine, and then disbanded. The police force lacked personnel, especially British officers.

²⁷¹ Ibid., 11.

²⁷² TNA AIR 9/19. 9. *Notes on Public Security in Palestine*. 2.9.1929.

Moreover, the end of the military regime meant the end of centralized intelligence, which was seen as an expensive war-time mechanism which, along with the general staff, was considered redundant in peacetime. The RAF handled maps and statistics, and only scant political intelligence from Transjordan. In fact, in 1927 RAF intelligence officers were explicit in their need to focus on tribal events in Transjordan and were not disposed to watching Palestine. The High Commissioner told Air HQ that ‘Palestine is a settled country and that we may expect no trouble there beyond that well within the capabilities of the police.’ He even went so far as to say that he was ‘not justified in keeping Imperial troops in Palestine merely to cope with the Palestine situation.’²⁷³ Those imperial troops left the next month. RAF intelligence only handled tribal politics between Transjordan, Syria, Iraq, Hejaz, and Nejd. Even so, throughout most of the 1920s, there was a shortage of Arabic speaking intelligence officers.²⁷⁴

Colonial governors and district governors handled political intelligence, as did the CID, but no single staff ever saw all the material. This situation transpired because of improvised decisions taken at Whitehall and Jerusalem which lost sight of the vision for Middle East security, outlined in 1920, and because no strategic policy for Palestine ever truly materialized. As Gilbert Clayton reportedly told the French consul in 1924, ‘You cannot explain a policy, if you do not have one. We

²⁷³ TNA AIR 2/1212. 23a. *Rees to Burnett*. 4.1.1927.

²⁷⁴ TNA AIR 2/1212. *Minute* 38. 24.5.1928.

live for the moment without any foresight, only manoeuvring between the cliffs, as soon as they appear. Where the journey goes, nobody knows.²⁷⁵

Figure 2- British Forces in Palestine and Transjordan 1921-29.²⁷⁶

Year	army garrison	RAF	Police ²⁷⁷	Gendarmes	TJFF
1921	4400 British, 10,800 Indian	1 sqn	~1300 local and ~200 British	-	-
1922	4879 British, 1763 Indian, 875 Egyptian	1 sqn	~1300 local and ~200 British	762 British, 533 Local	-
1923	1 British company	1 sqn, 3 AC sections	~1300 local and ~200 British	762 British, 462 Local	-
1924	1 British cavalry reg	1 sqn, 3 AC sections	~1300 local and ~200 British	462 British, 482 Local	-
1925	jan-aug nil/ from august 1 british cav reg	1 sqn, 3 AC sections	~1300 local and ~200 British	462 British, 475 Local	-
1926	1 british cav reg departed february	1 sqn, 3 AC sections	~1375 local and ~250 British	Disbanded	787
1927	-	1 sqn, 3 AC sections	~1375 local and ~250 British	-	675
1928	-	1 sqn, 3 AC sections	~1375 local and ~250 British	-	628
1-8/1929	-	1 sqn, 3 AC sections	~1375 local and ~250 British	-	506
8-10/1929	3 bns, 1 Armoured Car (AC) section, ancillaries	2 sqns, 5 AC sections	+ 100-170 Special Constables	-	536
Dec-29	2 bns	2 Sqns, 4 AC sections	~1300 Local, and 378 British	-	593

At the same time as Britain was floundering in its approach to defence/security plans, it was ‘an open secret’ that Jews were arming themselves, so Richard Meinertzhagen, still a political officer, proposed to

²⁷⁵ ISA RG65/P/946/15. French Consul Gaston Maugras relating conversation with Clayton (handwritten German notes, copied during WW2 from French original held at Quai D’Orsay). 2.8.1924

²⁷⁶ Compiled from: TNA AIR 8/47. 9. Air Vice Marshall Dowding. *Appreciation of situation in Palestine*. See chart (item 9 within).; CO 733/176/5.fol.38. *Present Establishment of British Section of Palestine Police*, in Mavrogordato *Reorganisation British Police in Palestine*. 14.11.1929.; CAB 19/97. ff. 16-19. *Report of Palestine Garrison Sub-Committee, Committee of Imperial Defence*. 27.6.1930.

²⁷⁷ The sources have major discrepancies for this. Ie, in 1928, the police force may have been as strong as 2100 total. Kolinsky, “Reorganization of the Palestine Police after the Riots of 1929,” 158.

Samuel that they should be ‘embodied in an official reserve to the existing police, and it should be explained to the Arabs that they will not be called out except in the event of unprovoked aggression, in which case the whole force of the Government will be behind them.’²⁷⁸ Samuel approved, and wrote to Shuckburgh of the CO, that intercommunal tension prevented the formation of a mixed Jewish-Arab force, or all-Arab or all-Jewish forces. Economy prohibited the establishment of a long-term imperial garrison, but arming the Jews to defend themselves could ease this burden. T.E. Lawrence added that a serious rising against Jewish colonists was a real danger:

The urgent course today would seem to be to allay the local discontent by a beginning of popular government... If [Samuel’s] proposal is approved and succeeds, it should prevent any general rising; and by giving the colonists the means of defence we can ensure that any one will be able to resist in case of local trouble until the British troops can be move to its support.²⁷⁹

Yishuv settlements were supplied with locked armouries containing shotguns, to be used in emergency. A gendarmerie was raised under British leadership which comprised both Jews and Arabs. Samuel accepted Meinertzhagen’s proposal and directives from Whitehall regarding Air control. However, the two policies were in direct contradiction. Air Control, which aimed for cheap imperial security, required locally raised forces, which, after May 1921, was politically impossible in Palestine. Deedes concluded that a mixed force could only work if it was led by British officers, and only if it could be raised with equal numbers of Jewish,

²⁷⁸ TNA FO 371/6376. 9488. *Palestine*. 11.8.1921.

²⁷⁹ TNA CO 537/826. *Meinerthagen to Shuckburgh*, 13.5.1921.; TEL *minute*. 17.5.1921.

Arab, as well as foreign recruits. There was little chance it would work.²⁸⁰

The plans were scrapped and the government promoted local settlement defence along the lines discussed by Lawrence. Samuel and others understood that mixed security forces would be unreliable and could not protect the Yishuv.²⁸¹ Their security policy, which armed Jewish settlements and required the importation of British officers, undermined the need for economy. Lawrence may have been right to suggest representative government as a solution to the political problem. Yet, this too may not have been possible. The dual problems of representative government and locally-raised defence forces should have made clear that British policy was unworkable. Instead, British decision-makers improvised their way down the channel between the cliffs.

The gendarmerie, British-led, comprised many former ‘Black and Tans’ from Ireland. It was a paramilitary force meant to police northern Palestine, which featured rough terrain, porous borders, and longstanding problems of brigandage. Until 1922, this area was managed by Indian cavalry, expensive to maintain abroad. Maj-Gen. Henry Hugh Tudor, Air Officer Commanding (AOC) in Palestine, and director of Public Safety (police and prisons department), negotiated with Whitehall for financial support to improve the gendarmerie, but was limited by ‘Geddes’s Axe’, which drastically cut military budgets.²⁸² Whitehall was pleased by savings found in replacement of Indian troops with gendarmes, whom Tudor and

²⁸⁰ TNA CO 837/849. *Deedes to Young*. 2.8.1921.

²⁸¹ TNA FO 371/6375. *Military Aspect of the Present Situation in Palestine*. GS note. 8.7.1921.

²⁸² Ferris, *Men, Money, and Diplomacy*, 89–91.

Deedes attempted to professionalize.²⁸³ Clayton had feared the loss of mounted troops and so insisted on tying reductions in imperial forces to increases in gendarmerie. The presence of imperial troops, he said, had ‘a strong moral effect’ and deterred violence.²⁸⁴

Whitehall supplied a grant-in-aid to the Palestine government to cover the cost of the gendarmerie, and enacted loan guarantees for the development of the country, in 1926.²⁸⁵ These loans were for economic development, however, not security. The Air Ministry approved other cost-saving measures such as limits on flying duties of the RAF squadron, and planned to withdraw British cavalry by 1925.²⁸⁶ In order to further the aims and efficiencies of substitution, it sought to foster self-sufficiency for Palestine’s defence, and to eliminate imperial forces save for those needed to protect air bases.²⁸⁷

The CO and Air Ministry argued over whether the gendarmerie should be incorporated by the police, or the defence force under the RAF. Under financial pressure, the Air Ministry aimed to cut the proportion of British gendarmes. The force was more expensive than had been imagined in 1921, even more so than the cavalry and regular garrison, which was due to be permanently withdrawn.²⁸⁸ In this context, Plumer’s decision to disband the gendarmerie and send home the British cavalry was sensible,

²⁸³ TNA CO 733/53. fol.460. *Air to CO*. 4.5.1923.; fol.600. *Tudor to Chief Secretary*. 18.8.1923.

²⁸⁴ SAD 694/10/26. Clayton. *Memorandum on the proposed reduction of the British garrison in Palestine*. 19.6.1923.

²⁸⁵ Smith, *The Roots of Separatism in Palestine*, 34–35; Wasserstein, *The British in Palestine*, 152.; TNA CAB 24/178. *Palestine Loan Guarantee Bill*. 17.2.1926.

²⁸⁶ TNA AIR 9/19. 4. *Air Staff Note on Reduction of Palestine Garrison*. 5.1924.

²⁸⁷ TNA AIR 8/47. 4. *CO proposals to convert the gendarmerie...* 15.1.1925.

²⁸⁸ TNA AIR 8/47. 26. *Williams, FO3, to DCAS*. 16.4.1930.; CO 733/58.43662. *WO to Treasury*. 29.8.1923.

since the Palestine government maintained those expenses during economic recession in 1926 without financial assistance. These decisions, however, assumed that forces in Transjordan and Egypt could serve as a reserve in an emergency. Plumer alerted Egypt and the CO that he might need emergency reserves from Egypt in the event of disturbances.²⁸⁹ The High Commissioner in Egypt replied to Plumer in the negative, worrying that this decision might set a precedent and cause the War Office to impose military reductions on Egypt. Moreover, ‘Plumer only a few weeks ago decided he could not only do without British troops, but also, I believe, that he could afford to dispense with the British personnel in the Palestine Gendarmerie. That was his risk. I propose it should remain his.’²⁹⁰ Such were the limitations that shaped the unfolding of violence in 1929.

Egypt’s position was not unreasonable, since there was a crisis over the British leadership of the Egyptian army during 1927, which was resolved with the mediation of Clayton’s secretary, the Cambridge-educated and future prolific nationalist, George Antonius.²⁹¹ Egypt was designed to be a base for an imperial reserve force, but the politics of austerity prevented the commitment of such forces. Nevertheless, it was troops based in Egypt which prevented the violence of 1929 from becoming more widespread than what materialized.

With the gendarmerie disbanded, the newly formed TJFF secured the rough terrain in the north, but only in Transjordan. It protected northern Palestine after the 1929 outbreak. Papers included in a report by the

²⁸⁹ TNA CO 537/864. 10. *Plumer to Amery*. 6.5.1926.

²⁹⁰ TNA FO 141/432/3. *Lloyd to Haking*. 20.3.1926.

²⁹¹ ISA RG 65/P/3049/16. Egyptian Army crisis 1925-27.

Palestine Garrison sub-committee of the Committee of Imperial Defence reveal the discrepancy. In 1925, the gendarmerie could control the main strategic centres of Palestine. By 1929, the police had no paramilitary support and no reserve force. There were only 140 British officers out of a force of 1300.²⁹² In addition to the police, there was one company of armoured cars, and one RAF squadron.

Another decision by Plumer which affected the security of the country was to disarm the Yishuv. Jewish arms had been an understandable cause for worry amongst Arabs. He replaced the sealed armouries in the Yishuv with official village watchmen, known to the British as *Ghaffirs*, or *Notarim* in Hebrew. Jewish Notarim were special police who, in 1936, along with other supernumerary forces, came to form the core of the British-sponsored Jewish Settlement Police, which was divided into static and mobile forces. They eventually became the backbone of the Haganah as a consequence of mass recruitment of Jews during the Arab revolt (see p.291) Meanwhile during the late 1920s, Ghaffirs fell under the command of the Palestine Police and received salaries, but were only placed in villages which could pay for those salaries. When the decision came in early 1928 to disarm the Yishuv, Achdut leader Yitzhak Ben-Zvi highlighted the risk that this could pose to the Jewish colonies.²⁹³ It also contradicted earlier promises. After much negotiation, Col. Kisch only achieved a partial cancellation of the disarmament. Older colonies could keep their arms, but new colonies would have to pay for Ghaffirs. In 1928,

²⁹² TNA CAB 16/97. *Enclosure 5 to CID sub-ctee report on Palestine Garrison*. 17.1.1930. pp26-29.

²⁹³ ISA RG 160/P/1946/24. Y. Ben-Zvi. *Report on Security and Police Matters*. 13.12.1928.

Ben-Zvi reported on the weakened security in certain areas. Importantly, Col. Kisch warned the government that guns which had been smuggled to the anti-French rebels in Syria could easily flow in the opposite direction.²⁹⁴

Decisions taken between 1922 and 1929 in Whitehall and Jerusalem left Palestine unprepared for disturbances. A mismatched policy and strategy emerged due to financial restrictions in London and Jerusalem, and differing views between the Air Ministry, Colonial Office, and the Palestine government about the role of security forces. These issues overrode the strategy which had been envisioned for Palestine, which necessitated the raising of local security. Politically, that too was impossible. Air Control never could have managed Palestine, which was urban, settled, volatile, and lacked local defence forces. It had some achievements: cross-border raiders were interdicted in 1929 by RAF and TJFF. However, this policy was not comprehensive enough to address the main shortcoming in security – there lacked a force to manage the irreconcilable politics of the country. Defence, such as it was, was designed to provide cheap security, and to uphold the status-quo. Plumer's plan was driven by the notion that 'Palestine is a police country only.'²⁹⁵ Yet the police were badly equipped for the riots.

British Security Reforms

Historian Martin Thomas argues that in Palestine an 'intelligence state' was 'elusive' during the 1920s and early 1930s.²⁹⁶ Indeed, no central

²⁹⁴ Kolinsky, "Reorganization of the Palestine Police after the Riots of 1929," 157.

²⁹⁵ TNA AIR 9/19.25. *note reference to letter Plumer to Trenchard*. 29.7.1926.

²⁹⁶ Thomas, *Empires of Intelligence*, 240–241.

machinery could process the various sources of intelligence available to the police, RAF, High Commissioner, or district governors. All of these bodies used intelligence of different sorts, while not one element maintained a grasp of the entire picture. The problem was not so much one of incompetency, but rather ignorance, derived from a lack of experienced staff and inadequate organization. During 1920-27, Clayton, Deedes, Symes, and others managed an informal 'intelligence state', which departed the country when they did. Their replacements in the civil service were not experienced with intelligence. Thus, in the years before 1929, when the Palestine authorities and SIS characterised the Mufti as being 'thoroughly bad', it is unclear whether the police shared this assessment, or even the High Commissioner. The close watch on the Mufti, which lasted from 1921-27 and which had led to many suspicions about him, simply ceased to function. No single arm of government saw the dangers associated with the Mufti's Wailing Wall campaign, or how they might cause disturbances. Police assumed the Mufti's plea for calm would have more effect than what materialized.

Security reforms after the riots created two parallel 'intelligence states'. One took civilian form: close collaboration with the Chief Secretary by the police and the CID. The other was embodied by RAF Air Staff Intelligence (ASI). HC Chancellor sought to reorganize the CID and transform it into the main source of political and security intelligence, upon which all arms of government and military could depend. His emphasis on the civilian CID was part of a philosophy of good government, never explicitly articulated, but evident nonetheless. A short time after the riots,

he met with the Air Vice Marshall Hugh Dowding, the district commissioners, and the commanders of the Police, TJFF and Arab legion to discuss the recently stabilized situation. Chancellor insisted they ‘must rely on the reorganised Criminal Investigation Department for information.’ Saunders, still acting Commandant of the police, said that they were ‘experiencing difficulty in getting information as their sources were weaker now than they had ever known before.’²⁹⁷

Dowding, who had just taken command of the RAF, reported on the situation before Chancellor’s conference. He attributed fault to weak civil and military intelligence. The ‘melting away’ of the Palestinian police while under stress, combined with a lack of intelligence, were the main deficiencies in the system. The CID must be drastically reformed, and include a liaison between civil and military intelligence. He recommended that a small intelligence staff be attached to Air headquarters in Palestine, to control four Special Service Officers (SSOs), modeled after the system in Iraq.²⁹⁸ Chancellor did not wish to install SSOs, since Palestine was more like India, which erupted because of ‘communal hatred’ and ‘civil lawlessness’. SSOs in Iraq liaised with tribes, which was not suitable to the urban settled centres of Palestine.²⁹⁹ They were also controversial, as many Iraqis interpreted SSO to mean ‘secret’ service officer, which, in a sense, they were. However, structural changes to Middle East intelligence organization overruled Chancellor’s wishes and gave SSOs authority to run agents and handle military and political intelligence across the Middle

²⁹⁷ MECA GB165-0188 Luke papers. 5/3. fol.114. *Minutes of a Conference held in the Office of the HC.* 3.10.1929. p.3.

²⁹⁸ AIR 8/47. 9. Dowding, *Note on the Future Garrison of Palestine.* 25.9.1929.

²⁹⁹ AIR 9/19. 14. *Note on the Future Garrison of Palestine.* 10.1929.

East.³⁰⁰ Within a few years, SSOs in Palestine took on roles of both intelligence liaison between civil and military authorities, and assessors of multiple sources of intelligence. They would become the main figures to coordinate military and political intelligence.³⁰¹

In 1930, policing expert Herbert Dowbiggin was brought in to examine and reform the regime in Palestine. His secret report drew many conclusions about the form and organization of police, of which he determined intelligence was the weakest branch. Officers and men needed more training and supervision, and the whole organization lacked vision, initiative, and leadership. Dowbiggin criticized police commandant Mavrogordato in particular.³⁰² He called for a new commandant with intelligence and vision, saying, ‘the days of the illiterate constable are over.’ Mavrogordato, to his credit, at least understood the role of police, and its limitations. He lacked British policemen and, as of November 1929, could only effectively cover the three main towns of Palestine. He thought troops were necessary to come to the aid of the civil power after disturbances had occurred, and also as a deterrent.³⁰³

Dowbiggin also called for the coordination of military and police intelligence. He prescribed a formula for a binational, federalist police force which would not discriminate according to race or religion. While his report was not entirely implemented, it did influence the reshaping of the

³⁰⁰ AIR 2/1196. 40a. *AOC Iraq to Air Ministry*. 22.5.1931.; 27c. *Future intelligence Organisation in Iraq*. 21.7.1930.

³⁰¹ Thomas, *Empires of Intelligence*, 245–246.

³⁰² CO 935/4/2. *Dowbiggin*. Report. 6.5.1930. p.228-229

³⁰³ CO 733/176/5. *Enclosure 1: reorganisation of British Police in Palestine*. Commandant to CS. 14.11.1929

Palestine Police, its organization, staffing and use of intelligence.³⁰⁴ One reform which could not be implemented was the mixing of Arab, Jewish, and British police. The reality in Palestine meant that by the 1936 rebellion some 3000 Jews had been drafted as supernumerary police for settlement defence.³⁰⁵

Police reforms accompanied broader security reforms. Air Control came into question as a result of the riots, since command had to be handed to the army under Dobbie, and the overall weaknesses of the scheme were exposed. Historian David Omissi acknowledges the role played by RAF in suppressing the disturbances, which otherwise might have become a general uprising. The Chiefs of Staff focused on the role of police to suppress riots, and the need for intelligence to anticipate them. The lack of reserves and disbandment of the gendarmerie were seen as mistakes. Dowding believed a mobile battalion was necessary to fill this role. The TJFF could play the part, but a British battalion might be more reliable (but expensive). The cabinet even considered the recruitment of Assyrian Christians from Iraq – although this would introduce political problems to both countries.³⁰⁶ Dobbie insisted upon a permanent garrison of two British battalions, and even suggested creating a Palestine command, separate from Egypt. Air policing would continue to function in the desert, but Palestine was different. By the summer of 1930, the cabinet had agreed that two battalions would remain in Palestine, and that the entire security regime

³⁰⁴ Kolinsky, “Reorganization of the Palestine Police after the Riots of 1929,” 162–173.

³⁰⁵ Ibid., 164.

³⁰⁶ Omissi, *Air Power and Colonial Control*, 67–68.; CO 733/176/5. 9. Chancellor to Passfield. 20.11.1929.

would be re-evaluated annually.³⁰⁷ The CID adopted more of a role as political police, investigating communists, the pan-Arab and pan-Islamic movements, local Jewish and Arab politics, and immigration and naturalization.³⁰⁸

This system restrained British security policy. Military forces, as during the 1929 riots, could only serve ‘in aid to the civil power’ and never completely could take over a policing function, or adopt a war footing. The Air Minister emphasized the bad optics of using military force to maintain order in Mandated territory.³⁰⁹ This prevailing attitude defined government thinking until the Arab rebellion intensified in 1938. From these reforms in 1930 until 1936, an Air Officer remained in command in Palestine. As a consequence of this arrangement, an informal process of inter-service coordination of operations and intelligence developed.

The formulation of Air Staff Intelligence (ASI) in Palestine, which coordinated military and political intelligence and produced periodic reports, was an important step forward for security. Its activity was distinct from, and often competed with the CID. ASI was the first return to staff intelligence since the military regime ended in 1920. Its relationship with government was difficult – as reported in Yitzhak Gil-Har’s two good, if narrow, articles about politics and intelligence in Palestine during the 1930s.³¹⁰ Relying on staff lists, Gil-Har claimed that SSOs were installed in

³⁰⁷ CAB 16/97. *CID: Palestine Garrison Sub-Committee. Report.* 27.6.1930.

³⁰⁸ Harouvi, *HaBoleshet Khokeret*, 69.

³⁰⁹ CAB 16/97. 1. *CID Palestine Garrison Sub-Committee.* 29.5.1930; CO 323/1113/17. Hankey. *CID: The Garrison and Responsibility for Control...* 31.7.1931.; CAB 16/97. fol.34. Passfield. *Enclosure 2.* 1.5.1930.

³¹⁰ Gil-Har, “Political Developments and Intelligence in Palestine, 1930–40”; Gil-Har, “British Intelligence and the Role of Jewish Informers in Palestine.”

Palestine by the end of 1930, but active beginning in 1931. They employed office staff, paid informers, and Jewish and Arab liaison officers. They served as liaison officers between the army and police, but SSOs and the CID competed over agents.³¹¹ SSOs functioned like a security service for the country, coordinating military and political intelligence.

Such assessments also were produced by the army's "I" Branch, which informally cooperated with ASI. There was also a position called X2, which first appears in my records in 1935. It worked with the CID and military intelligence, and seems to have played a coordinating role with SIS intelligence from abroad, and may well have been an SIS representative in Palestine. According to official historian Keith Jeffrey, the SIS office in Palestine was opened in 1933.³¹² It is also likely that X2 coordinated some of the sigint collected at the large collection station in the coastal village of Sarafand, which monitored wireless communications in the Mediterranean, Red Sea, Black Sea, Arabia, and even parts of central Asia. Sarafand intercepts were passed to the Government Code and Cypher School, (GC&CS, today GCHQ).

The reformed security regime was only loosely coordinated – mainly by the Chief Secretary and High Commissioner. The government consulted each intelligence service, but worked most closely with the CID, and tended to exclude ASI from decision-making. This new security regime faced several tests during 1931-36. One of its biggest weaknesses was the coordination of policy with intelligence. The role of police and CID was the

³¹¹ Gil-Har, "British Intelligence and the Role of Jewish Informers in Palestine," 120.

³¹² Jeffrey, *MI6*, 276–277, 283–284.

acid test for the viability of the Mandatory system, and Britain's stewardship of Palestine in the eyes of the League. The League pressured Britain to perform, since it had overwhelmingly supported Zionist claims that Britain had failed to protect the Yishuv in 1929, that it had not acted determinately to prevent violence, and that the Shaw Commission enquiry into the riots had whitewashed the Mufti. The PMC reaffirmed its view that the Jewish National Home was a priority object of the Mandate, as was the development of democracy. However, the latter project was vaguely defined, while Jewish immigration was the obvious means to fulfil the Jewish National Home. The immediate obligation of the Mandatory power was to protect the inhabitants.³¹³

The reform of the CID was approved in August 1930, and by February 1931, it had begun production of at least two political summaries per month, submitted to the Chief Secretary.³¹⁴ Fresh faces were brought into the police leadership, and a clearer command hierarchy, professional record keeping and other reforms led improvement.³¹⁵ Dowbiggin reshaped the Police on a civil model, later criticized by Tegart.³¹⁶ The CID was professionalized with the introduction of new personnel and modern techniques of fingerprinting and record keeping.

Britain had been embarrassed at the League for its failure to protect Jews; the Yishuv demanded the restoration of sealed armouries, and Arab politicians increasingly expressed their dismay that Britain acquiesced to

³¹³ Pedersen, "The Impact of League Oversight on British Policy in Palestine," 49–51.

³¹⁴ CO 733/180/1. 80. *Draft Passfield to PM*. 11.8.1930.; see IOR citations ahead.

³¹⁵ Thomas, *Empires of Intelligence*, 240.

³¹⁶ Kroizer, "From Dowbiggin to Tegart," 121–122, 128.

that demand. Both Arabs and Jews were arming themselves. In a strange incident, Joseph Davidescu, long inactive in the realm of intelligence, was arrested in Beirut in early October 1929 with five others in possession of rifles, pistols, grenades and a machine gun. He was sentenced to six months imprisonment. With him was Joseph Shabbatai, aka Shabbatai Levi.

Zionist phone taps from that time reveal Arab worry that compatriots had helped Jews purchase arms. Subhi al-Khadra, an Old Istiqlalist and graduate of the Ottoman Military Academy, called to ask Haifa-based Ahmed al-Imam, a Mufti supporter, about such activities.³¹⁷ Ahmed al-Imam in turn asked the future first Prime Minister of Lebanon, Riad al-Sulh, who said ‘many Moslems were buying arms in Beirut for Arabs. We helped them to buy. They have purchased a large quantity of rifles and revolvers, and a small quantity of machine guns. All this was purchased for Arabs and it is possible that part of it was sold to Jews.’³¹⁸ The Arabs arrested with Davidescu included Khayr al-Din al-Ahdab, who became an agent of the JA’s newly created intelligence arm, the Joint Bureau (JB) in 1930. Haj Khalil Taha and one of his brothers were also arrested. They had Jewish contacts, but never were Zionists. In fact, it was the testimony of Hussein Effendi Taha, a Haifa landowner of the same family, which led to Davidescu’s conviction.³¹⁹ Khalil Taha and his son were assassinated by the Mufti’s supporters in September 1936 for proposing an alternative to the general strike.³²⁰

³¹⁷ Incidentally, al-Imam became one of Davidescu’s informants in 1937.

³¹⁸ CZA S25/22329. pp58-59.

³¹⁹ On nous mande de Jérusalem, “Nouvelles Télégraphique”; FROM OUR SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT, “Palestine Inquiry A Sheikh’s Evidence.”

³²⁰ Cohen, *Army of Shadows*, 106–107.

Curiously, Arabs speaking on these intercepted phone calls referred to Davidescu as Joseph Daood (David). Davidescu was one of the original *Mistaravim*, or agents who disguise themselves as Arabs. It is possible that he was known to Arab nationalists as an Arab Jew, rather than the son of Romanian immigrants of the First *Aliyah* (or first wave of immigration, from 1882-1903). In fact, he even took on the Arabic *kunya*, “Abu-Djaj”, or “father of chickens,” for his livestock business which covered his clandestine work. The French authorities sent the arrest and conviction records to the British, who considered revoking Davidescu’s OBE which he had earned in 1919. Churchill forgave his conviction for perjury during an arms smuggling trial in 1922 – an affair for which Davidescu resigned from the Haifa police.³²¹ In fact, after six months, Davidescu was released, returned to Palestine, and began official work for the newly installed SSO in Haifa. Here began a new pattern, as Davidescu only worked on matters ‘which would not hurt Jews.’ Also interestingly, Davidescu reported that the SSO and CID were in competition.³²² Indeed, other sources in this period report that the two services often competed for and manipulated each other’s agents.³²³

Zionists also cooperated with the Jerusalem SSO, Patrick Domville, the ‘best Zionist informer on the English.’³²⁴ He hired Reuven Zaslani, then a protégé of Dov Hoz of the Histadrut and Labour Party, Moshe Shertok of the Jewish Agency Political Department (JAPD), and Haganah’s de facto commander, Eliyahu Golomb (the three were brothers-in-law, and

³²¹ TNA, CO 448/36. See all.

³²² Gelber, *Shorshe ha-ḥavatsalet*, 106.

³²³ Kolinsky, *Law, Order, and Riots*, 100–101.

³²⁴ Friling, *Arrows in the Dark*, 279.

graduates of the High School *Gymnasia Hertzliya* of Tel Aviv). Zaslani, born 1909 in Jerusalem, was an Arabist trained at the Hebrew University, although he never graduated. He later changed his name to Shiloah, and became the founding chief of Israel's *Mossad*. In 1931 he was hired as Domvile's translator, personal secretary, and liaison to Haganah's Jerusalem commander, Yacov Pat. As Domvile's secretary, Zaslani visited the headquarters of RAF and Army intelligence, and the CID. This experience played an important part in the relationships which he cultivated during later years, and his 'hospitality policy' which fostered friendly relations with British military, intelligence and political figures while they were stationed in Palestine.³²⁵ Anglo-Zionist cooperation reached new heights, even as the government grew more suspicious of Yishuv hostility, arms smuggling, and illegal immigration. Zaslani's experience was the foundation of Israeli intelligence work. It also was the beginning of what would become Zionism's most important weapon against Britain in the 1940s, since JA and Haganah intelligence penetrated British government and mastered intelligence work during a secret war against the mandate.³²⁶

The 1929 riots were a watershed for politics and security in Palestine. Uncoordinated government decisions between Jerusalem and London left Palestine defenseless, and without an effective body to handle politico-security intelligence. The Wailing Wall dispute and ensuing violence exposed all the security weaknesses which had developed since 1920. An intelligence state was lacking, as were security forces. In the

³²⁵ Harouvi, "Reuven Zaslani (Shiloah) and the Covert Cooperation," 32–33; Eshed, *Reuven Shiloah*, 16–24.

³²⁶ Wagner, "Britain and the Jewish Underground."

aftermath, two intelligence states were created, one civil and one military. Liberal values embodied by the League and mandatory system pushed policy towards making government as civilian as possible, so the CID became the main source for security. A garrison was introduced to Palestine, as well as a military intelligence staff which began to work on political matters and to cooperate with Zionists. Reforms fixed many of the flaws which led to the 1929 disturbances, but none of the fundamental problems were addressed.

Chapter 5 – British Intelligence, the Mufti and Nationalist Youth

During 1930-35, Arab nationalists came to view Britain as the main obstacle to independence. British intelligence and security were prepared for new developments in Arab politics, but their grasp of how the various blocs in pan-Islamic, pan-Arab, and Palestinian politics cooperated and competed with each other was weak. They understood the facts, but their interpretation of events did not consider that the Mufti might wholeheartedly begin to back the independence movement, and cease to play games of local politics. This caused deep problems as Arab demands for self-government reached new heights and were replaced with demands for complete independence. The prospect of a pan-Arab revolt affecting Syria and Palestine was monitored by government, which again attempted to manage the situation by attempting to co-opt the Mufti, and by negotiating more seriously over the introduction of a constitution. The government severely underestimated the Mufti's leadership over nationalists and his sympathy with the pan-Arab movement. It also failed to see that the population was rejecting any British proposal for constitution.

This chapter is divided into two parts. The first examines Palestinian politics during 1930-36, applying the modern intelligence technique of Social Network Analysis (SNA) to demonstrate that, contrary to the opinions of the CID and many historians, the Mufti played an important role in guiding the national movement towards violence using three main mechanisms. First, the pan-Arab network not only improved the Mufti's local and international prestige, but also was a source for coordination and influence of nationalist leaders who aimed to liberate all

Arab lands from colonial rule. Second, as president of the SMC he wielded his power through patronage. Finally, the threat of assassination against Arabs who opposed the Mufti helped to consolidate conformity.

The second half of this chapter examines practically how the CID and government attempted to confront rising Arab nationalist movements, but failed to address the Mufti's role. Many historians argue that the Mufti lacked control over the violent elements in Palestinian politics, and did not want revolt. This chapter will demonstrate that such claims are only partially true.

The CID and the government overlooked the Mufti's deep influence over some of his main sources of criticism – especially in the Palestine Istiqlal party, founded in 1932. British and Zionist intelligence developed what they believed were good assessments of increasingly complex Palestinian politics. They understood the need to look beyond Palestine's borders to appreciate events in that country. As their grasp of these issues improved, the government maintained a sense of confident control, whereas, in fact, Palestinian nationalism was increasingly enraged by, and prepared to struggle against British rule. The SNA reveals that both government and CID failed to understand the Mufti's relationships with movements and individuals across borders and time, or how these relationships impacted Palestine.

The government believed it could exploit the vicious competition between the Husseini and Nashashibi families in order to maintain its supremacy in Arab politics. The High Commissioner, Arthur Wauchope, felt he had fostered a co-dependency with the Mufti in which the latter

would not dare risk losing government financial or moral support for his official status as president of the SMC. Wauchope enabled the Mufti to improve his status in the Islamic world, believing this was a check on nationalists within Palestine when, in fact, it was another avenue to encourage the national movement. Beginning in 1931, the Mufti used the pan-Islamic Congress to improve his own prestige while the British used it to secure his cooperation. The CID ceased to provide assessments which attributed nationalist violence to the Mufti's influence, or provide special insight to the movement. Younger, maximalist nationalists began to perceive the Mufti as part and parcel of British imperialism. Yet many of the young nationalists were also sympathetic with pan-Islam and the Mufti's leadership, even if they criticized his momentary decisions to cooperate with Britain. The Mufti influenced the nationalists, who, between 1930 and 1935, tended to conform to his policy.

The Mufti used pan-Islam to arouse national sentiment in 1932, intrigue to exert influence over the Istiqlal party, and mass demonstrations to send signals to an increasingly frustrated Britain. In 1934, the Mufti politically triumphed over his arch-rival, Ragheb Nashashibi when the latter was ousted in mayoral elections for Jerusalem by Dr. Khaldi, a converted Husseini ally. The Nashashibis then produced letters demonstrating that the Mufti and Shakib Arslan supported and spread Italian propaganda on the eve of the Abyssinian crisis. This embarrassment to the Mufti did not affect his prestige or moral leadership of the Palestinian national movement. Palestinian national politics were wrapped up with the

regional pan-Arab independence movement, which obscured British assessments or policy treatment of the Mufti.

The Mufti, a Social Network Analysis

The appendix contains a computer-generated diagram of the Mufti's social networks. It shows that he was central to the nationalist community, and that the network depended upon his centrality, as well as that of Shakib Arlsan and certain key Istiqlalists. Middle East scholar Weldon Matthews argues that historians have overemphasized the influence of notable families in Palestinian politics, skewing our understanding of Britain's interactions with Arab nationalism. Focusing on the Palestine Istiqlal Party and youth leadership, Matthews uses identity politics to aid our understanding of the nationalist movement. He argues that Istiqlal was the first faction to attempt mass public mobilisation; that it represented a watershed for Arab political identity and association; that Istiqlal politics weakened the politics of notables; and that these youthful politicians employed public opinion to push Palestinian notables towards confrontation with Britain.³²⁷ Matthews also identified their admiration and emulation of Ghandi. Istiqlalists, then in a strained relationship with the Mufti and his party, were not the only ones to think about events in India. The CID reported in 1932 that Jamal al-Husseini had organized the Young Mens' conference aiming to provoke a civil disobedience campaign on an Indian model. He did not hide that aim.³²⁸

Whereas Matthews argues that notables have too prominent a place in Palestinian history, this chapter argues that the relationship between

³²⁷ Matthews, *Confronting an Empire, Constructing a Nation*, 2.
³²⁸ IOR L/PS/10/1315. fol.431.CID weekly summary 1/32. 14.1.1932.

notables and the nationalist youth was more symbiotic. Elites needed mass movements to achieve their shared aim of independence from colonial rule. The Mufti maintained considerable influence over all segments of society, and has wrongly been absolved by historians of orchestration of political violence. His reach was weakest amongst the opposition, which he began to threaten, intimidate, and even assassinate. Examination of the Mufti's social, intellectual and political connections across the Muslim and Arab worlds, reveals a picture of a peculiarly small political class, which includes the Mufti and his faction, the youthful nationalists, Salafists such as 'Izz al-Din al-Qassam, and the pan-Arab movement. This SNA will examine some of the Ottoman-era intellectual developments which affected Palestinian politics during later years, and developments which occurred under the British Mandate.

Salafism and the Pan-Arab Movement

One of the key intellectual roots for this period is the nexus of pan-Islam and Arab nationalism. In Syria and Egypt a secret society called *al-Urwa al-Wuthqa*³²⁹ followed the teachings of Jamal al-Din al-Afghani and Mohammad 'Abduh. In the late 19th century the pair produced a journal with the same name. After publication ceased, al-'Urwa al-Wuthqa continued to teach that the prestige of Islam could only be rescued by the rebirth of the Arab nation. The movement strove to reconcile Islam and the Arab nation with modernity. It was deeply resentful of British control over Egypt, and the Ottoman Empire's weakness in the face of western

³²⁹ A nickname for Islam or its principles, meaning 'the most steadfast support'. Milson, "العروة الوثقى"; Also see Qur'an 2:256 and 31:22.

powers.³³⁰ This was the heart of Salafism, an ideology which influenced many others who rose to prominence in Palestine.

During the First World War, Germany, the Ottoman Empire, and Britain each attempted to mobilize Islam as a weapon. The Sultan called for Jihad with Germany's encouragement, while Britain attempted to undermine Ottoman influence with the prospect of an Arab caliphate. Many Islamists took to those promises, yet others such as Arslan were steadfast in support of the Sultan. However, the war stunted the development of these movements, which then were rocked by various revolts, communal conflicts, and the war in Anatolia between 1918 and 1923. Kemal's abolition of the Caliphate in 1924 shattered Islamic unity, and British policy ceased to care about pan-Islam. Afterward a marriage between pan-Islam and pan-Arab nationalism emerged: Most leaders such as Arslan and Rida subscribed to the school of al-Afghani and 'Abduh, and held that the revival of Islam depended on the revival of the Arab nation. In the words of John Ferris, 'a new orthodoxy emerged' among British observers who by the 1930s, used the terms pan-Arab and pan-Islamic as almost interchangeable synonyms.³³¹

Pan-Islam was transformed under the leadership of Arslan, Rida, and others, who politicized that movement, and forged an alliance with Arab nationalism. Before the war, 'Abduh varyingly taught, mentored, and collaborated with many other leading figures, including 'Izz al-Din al-Qassam, Sheikh Kamil al-Qassab, Rashid Rida, and Shakib Arslan. The

³³⁰ Tauber, *The Emergence of the Arab Movements*, 22–24.

³³¹ Ferris, "The Internationalism of Islam," 62–64, 70–72.

four will be discussed in detail, to illustrate the small world of Salafism and its wide influence in Palestinian, pan-Arab and pan-Islamic politics.

A forthcoming article by Mark Sanagan is the best assessment of Qassam in English. Qassam was among those who rejected the CUP before the war on religious grounds. He was a Syrian Salafist influenced by the environment at al-Azhar in Cairo while Abduh and Rida taught and studied there. Disappointed with Istanbul's weak stance against Italy in 1911, he used Jihadi language in his sermons. After the war he participated in the anti-French insurgency in Syria, which failed, forcing him to move to Haifa in 1921. There, he worked in the Islamic Society, and supported the Palestine Arab Workers Society (PAWS) against the creeping influence of the Histadrut amongst Arabs. This fiery preacher considerably influenced society in the north. Sanagan makes clear his connections to other key figures such as Istiqlalists Izzat Darwaza and Rashid al-Hajj Ibrahim, as well as fellow Syrian Kamil al-Qassab.³³²

Kamil al-Qassab had been in Fatat before the First World War, and when it began, attempted to contact the British on behalf of the Damascus branch of Fatat. An educator, like Darwaza, he inculcated the younger generation with the national spirit. He also was involved in an attempt in 1929 to raise a modern army for 'Abdul 'Aziz Ibn Sa'ud along with Shakib Arslan, his brother 'Adil, Fawzi al-Qawuqji, and Nabih al-'Azme. They saw Ibn Sa'ud's kingdom as an Arab Prussia.³³³ This reflects a deep sense of admiration held by many for Ibn Sa'ud, and not just the clique involved

³³² Sanagan, "Teacher, Preacher, Soldier, Martyr: Rethinking 'Izz Al-Din Al-Qassam."

³³³ Tauber, *The Emergence of the Arab Movements*, 95–96; Matthews, *Confronting an Empire, Constructing a Nation*, 51,72,76,80–81.

with him at this time. Qassab later served as the interlocutor between the Mufti and Ibn Sa'ud, and his communications became a key source for Britain.

Rashid Rida was a Salafist leader in Egypt, who cooperated with Britain on the outbreak of the First World War, but remained critical of British imperialism.³³⁴ From the time Rida met Amin al-Husseini before the First World War until his death in 1935, he remained al-Husseini's teacher and mentor. During the 1920s Rida was a member of the Syro-Palestinian Congress, based in Egypt, and comprised of Old Istiqlalists and other nationalists.

The 6th PAC in June 1923 had appointed Shakib Arslan as head of the Syro-Palestinian congress, which represented the pan-Arab movement at the League in Geneva. Arslan also continued to proliferate Islamic nationalist ideas, and criticize imperialism.³³⁵ He began to send regular reports to Jamal al-Husseini about the League proceedings.³³⁶ The Mufti's support for the Druze revolt reinforced his ties with Arslan and his Syro-Palestinian congress – the face of the Arab cause in Geneva.³³⁷

Arslan's support for Palestinians was important, as it put him 'at the forefront of the Arab cause in the minds of his compatriots and of European leaders.'³³⁸ He supported both the Syrian and Moroccan revolts, and was involved in mobilizing the support of sympathetic Englishmen, and coordinating that with his programme. Arslan and Rida were involved

³³⁴ Tauber, *The Emergence of the Arab Movements*, 281–282.

³³⁵ Matthews, *Confronting an Empire, Constructing a Nation*, 78.

³³⁶ ISA RG/65/P/985/47. *Syrian Information Bureau*. Throughout.; ISA RG/65/P/985/16. *Arslan to Jamal*. 21.10.1925.

³³⁷ Cleveland, *Islam against the West*, 52–54.

³³⁸ *Ibid.*, 52.

in the short-lived and failed Syrian unity scheme which sought to install Feisal as King of Syria and Iraq in 1931. Their pan-Arab movement was pan-Islamic at its heart, even though they cooperated with more secular Syrians and Palestinians.

Rida and Qassab, although influenced by the anti-British ‘Abduh, attempted to support the British Empire during the First World War. Arslan, conversely, used pan-Islamic propaganda as a pro-Ottoman weapon. When these movements merged, Arslan, a prolific journalist, Salafist reformist, and propagandist, became the senior figure in postwar independence movements. He knew al-Afghani before his death, and was close to ‘Abduh.³³⁹ Arslan’s influence over Arab nationalism should not be underestimated.

Shakib Arslan had a long track record of working with foreign powers against colonial rule in Syria and Palestine, which began with his Berlin-based propaganda work during 1919-21. He and the Mufti together influenced the nationalist youth in meaningful ways. His combination of pan-Islam and anti-colonial nationalism was the heart of the ideology which inspired the nationalist youth.³⁴⁰

The role of the youth will be described below. It is important here to emphasize that, from Geneva, Arslan led the organization of a common pan-Arab platform in 1931. Old Istiqlalists held a series of meetings in Syria and Palestine from May through July that year. The CID believed that Arslan was leading preparations for a ‘revolutionary campaign.’ It believed

³³⁹ Ibid., 8–9, 65.

³⁴⁰ Ibid., 58, 132; Matthews, *Confronting an Empire, Constructing a Nation*, 77.

that the campaign was still under discussion, but the CID did not know that this was the beginning of a long march to revolt. It also did not yet know the extent to which the Mufti was sympathetic to and supportive of Arslan's aims. Arslan outlined a strategy to start 'to attempt to arouse other Islamic countries, which are under foreign rule. The campaign is expected to take the form of armed attacks along the lines of those made in 1925 [in the Syrian revolt]'. The CID believed that violence could reach Palestine and be directed against government and the Jewish colonies.³⁴¹ These discussions continued through July 1931, and the CID connected Arslan and his 'high diplomacy' in Europe with the Old Istiqlalist leaders in Palestine.³⁴²

The Mufti likely first learned to identify with the politics of Islamic and Arab revival as a student of Rashid Rida during 1912-13. At that time, Rida had travelled to India for propaganda work – a pattern which Haj Amin emulated as Mufti.³⁴³ The politics of mass mobilization, public opinion, and youth politics were nothing new. These had dominated emerging Arab nationalist movements before the First World War, and marked the largest anti-imperialist movements in the British Empire, in Ireland and India.³⁴⁴ That war caused the pan-Islamic issue to arise, as Britain and the Ottomans each attempted to use that cause as a weapon. By the 1930s, it was an important means for elites to mobilize the mass peasant and working populations.

³⁴¹ IOR L/PS/10/1315. *Summary no.21*. 26.5.1931.

³⁴² IOR L/PS/10/1315 *no.27*. 28.7.1931. *no.29*. 25.7.1931.

³⁴³ Matthews, *Confronting an Empire, Constructing a Nation*, 31; Tauber, *The Emergence of the Arab Movements*, 115.

³⁴⁴ Tauber, *The Emergence of the Arab Movements*, 93, 303–319.

The Mufti was influenced by the power of pan-Islam which he had witnessed in his youth. He could not have failed to notice the powerful influence of the Kaiser's propaganda promoting anti-British Jihad in Jerusalem during 1915. He also would have met Max von Oppenheim at that time.³⁴⁵ He already was a member of Arab decentralization societies, and after joining the Ottoman army in 1916, was influenced by nationalist Arab officers, and had a tense relationship with his Turkish commander.³⁴⁶ Thus, Amin al-Husseini crystallized his beliefs on Islam and Arab nationalism as a young man in the Ottoman system. By the time he was appointed Mufti in 1921, he was 24 years old; a former student of Rashid Rida, influenced by Arab nationalism and Salafism. He had served as an Ottoman officer and then assisted Britain's Arab propaganda. The mobilizing forces of nation and religion were at the centre of his youth experience.

As seen in chapter 2, during 1919-20, he experimented with those forces. Disappointed with the Hashemites' failures during 1920-24, and in need of outside support to reverse the Zionist policy, he drew closer to Shakib Arslan's Islamist anti-colonialism, through his connection to Rida. Arslan was appointed in 1923 by the 6th PAC to represent Palestine at the League.³⁴⁷

These connections matter. Historians such as Philip Mattar have overemphasized the competition between the Mufti and the youthful

³⁴⁵ Details of this campaign found in McMeekin, *The Berlin-Baghdad Express*, 172–179.

³⁴⁶ Matthews, *Confronting an Empire, Constructing a Nation*, 31; Elpeleg, *Grand Mufti*, 3.

³⁴⁷ Cleveland, *Islam against the West*, 58.

nationalists, or even between the Mufti and Islamists under Qassam.³⁴⁸

While such groups pressured the Mufti, and affected his balance of interests among his family, his political aims, and those of other Palestinians whom he led, such pressure went both ways. The Mufti, Rida, Qassam, and Arslan came from the same Salafist environment, as did many Istiqlalists.

Youth and Mass Mobilization

Between 1928 and 1935, a younger generation of nationalists rose to prominence, but not dominance, in Palestinian politics. They tended to be subject to the same influences as the Mufti – namely late 19th-century Islamist anti-Imperialism and Salafism. After the 1929 riots, ECPAC organized countrywide strikes against the government's heavy-handed crackdown which killed 116 Arabs, and led to the detainment or arrest of some 1300 more. Some 25 death sentences were passed, but only three people were executed. The government pressured ECPAC to cancel the strike, and it complied.³⁴⁹ According to Weldon Matthews, the initiative then passed to the Young Mens' Muslim Association (YMMA). YMMA, of Egyptian origin, sought to preserve Islamic values and to respond to YMCA's proselytizing work and association with colonial government. The Palestinian YMMA was founded in 1928 with a Salafist orientation, but was an important tool for nationalist organization, and certain branches had Christian membership. The *Mu'tamar al-Shabab* or Youngmen Congress attempted to govern YMMA and coordinate its branches. In reality they were parallel, often overlapping movements. The Youngmen

³⁴⁸ Mattar, *The Mufti of Jerusalem*, 66–67.

³⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 48.

sought to mobilize the educated youth, and to raise alternate leadership to the notables in an all-party coalition. It was hoped that this unity would advance the movement's independence agenda. It was limited in those aims and rarely exercised control over all the YMMAs. Both YMMA and the Youngmen were effective vehicles for recruitment and mass mobilization. The Youngmen Congress was a prototype for the Palestinian *Hizb al-Istiqlal*, or Independence Party. By 1932, the Youngmen became its own political party, loyal to the Mufti, even though it was disappointed by his temporary opposition to civil disobedience.³⁵⁰ In 1933, YMMAs were subsumed by the Istiqlal party. Ghussein maintained his chair, and grew closer to the Mufti over the years.³⁵¹

The Istiqlal party, which often criticized the Mufti for not openly opposing the government, still was subject to his influence. Its leaders inclined to Salafism, and saw the world in a similar light as the Mufti. Ibrahim al-Shanti and Akram Zu'ayter, who both became leaders in Istiqlal in 1932, were members *al-'Urwa al-Wuthqa* while students at the American University of Beirut.³⁵² 'Ajaj Nuwayhid, a member of Old Istiqlal, taught al-Afghani's principles to the YMMAs during the late 1920s.³⁵³ Other leaders such as Izzat Darwaza and Auni Abdul Hadi were founding members of al-Fatat, and the Old Istiqlal party which supported Feisal in Syria. Neither were Salafists, but both had experience accommodating pan-Islam into the independence movement.

³⁵⁰ Elpeleg, *Grand Mufti*, 32–39; Matthews, *Confronting an Empire, Constructing a Nation*, 119–122. (Matthews here blurs the distinction between YMMAs and the Youth Congress).

³⁵¹ Matthews, *Confronting an Empire, Constructing a Nation*, 175–176.

³⁵² *Ibid.*, 272.

³⁵³ *Ibid.*, 56–57.

Other clubs were involved in political propaganda. Very often, these clubs seemed innocuous, like the Moslem Sports Club. In the wake of the riots, the CID requested further intelligence on its connection of to communist or Arab nationalist political agitators.³⁵⁴ At the time, evidence of such connections was lacking – but that soon changed. Even during 1930, while the YMMA suffered from British restrictions, it proposed unification with the sports club, and later gave cover to the Islamic Rover Boy Scouts.³⁵⁵ Jamal al-Husseini made considerable effort organizing scouts and Youngmen Congress branches.

The youthful nationalists did change the face of Palestinian politics, and caused new sources of trouble for the Mufti. They were their own agents with their own interests, and not pawns of the Mufti or SMC. However, Amin al-Husseini had connections and influence with each political circle, including the young and Old Istiqlalists, the Salafists, the communists and others. Moreover, many of the Mufti's opponents in the Istiqlal party shared his Islamist worldview. At root, this was shaped by al-'Urwa al-Wuthqa. They were not part of a conspiracy, but shared a worldview and similarly approached nation and religion. The relationship between Istiqlal, Qassam, and the Mufti's faction was closer than has been appreciated. Pan-Islam and Arab nationalism were linked because of the role which Salafism had played in Arab movements before the First World War, and the way those ideas had been disseminated since that time. The Mufti, by both fate and design, became a nexus in these social, religious

³⁵⁴ HA 47/747. fol.307. *Commandant to DSP South*. 26.11.1929.

³⁵⁵ HA 47/747. 314. *Extract from DIS 69*. 23.4.1930.; 318 *DSP South to Commandant*. 10.8.1930.

and political networks. If we accept that Qassam and the nationalist youth most directly provoked rebellion, and that the Mufti closely influenced these movements, then his leadership and responsibility for the Arab rebellion must also be recognized.

The Mufti's Mechanisms of Control

His Pan-Arab network

It is through the YMMA movement that the Mufti exerted his influence from December 1929 until the mid-1930s. Each major city in Palestine had its own YMMA branch. Each had its own characteristics, but was often led by figures loyal to the Mufti. The Haifa YMMA was mostly influenced by Syrian Salafism and Arab nationalism. It was founded by Rashid al-Hajj Ibrahim and 'Izz al-Din al-Qassam, who were both SMC employees. The Nablus branch had the strongest connections to the Old Istiqlal party, mainly ex-members of Feisal's Damascus government such as Izzat Darwaza, who directed the al-Najah (success) schools, whose graduates were the leaders of the 1932 Istiqlal party and the Youngmen Congress movement.

The Gaza YMMA had communist connections, as it was founded by Hamdi al-Husayni – no relation of the Mufti – who was an agent of the Comintern in Palestine and worked with the PKP to 'Arabize the party.'³⁵⁶ The Mufti's influence extended to Arab communists as well. MI5 documents contain a cross reference from June 1930 which states that 'Jamal Hussein and 'Ajaj Nuweihid, the right hand men of the Haj Amin were associated with Hamdi Hussein, the local secretary of the anti-

³⁵⁶ Matthews, *Confronting an Empire, Constructing a Nation*, 56–60.

Imperialist league.³⁵⁷ Shakib Arslan was on the board of that Berlin-based communist organization.³⁵⁸ Thus the Mufti had sway over them through both local and international channels.

The YMMA branches in Jerusalem and the surrounding area were under the indirect control of the Mufti, who attempted to arm them after the 1929 riots. A new force was unleashed in Arab politics – nationalist youth reshaped political dynamics, displacing clan competition with a focus on anti-colonial nationalism.

In August 1931, a youth conference was convened at Nablus to protest the government arming of Jewish colonies, with the guidance and direction of the Mufti, mainly through Darwaza. Confusingly the CID said that after the congress it did not know whether the movement still followed the Mufti's direction. It understood that both the Mufti's faction and the Youngmen were meeting with each other and Syrian Istiqlal leaders. The CID mistakenly assumed that communists under Hamdi al-Husayni had penetrated the Youngmen, and were competing with the Mufti for influence.³⁵⁹ Yet both the Mufti and Hamdi worked with Arslan and his pan-Arab platform. The Mufti resisted pressure from the Youngmen to support a strike or civil disobedience, knowing that he needed British support for his pan-Islamic congress, which was eventually held in December 1931.

³⁵⁷ KV 2/2084. 4A. *Cross Reference – Haj Amin*. 17.6.1930.

³⁵⁸ Matthews, *Confronting an Empire, Constructing a Nation*, 77.

³⁵⁹ IOR L/PS/10/1315. No.32. 14.8.1931; No. 34. 26.8.1931.

Patronage and the SMC

The SMC was a key mode of control. British policy had originally conceived of it as a form of communal self-government, but it became a powerful force in Palestine politics. Nepotism determined SMC committee and employee appointments. Nuwayhid, Auni Abdul Hadi, Darwaza, Yacoub al-Ghussein, Rashid al-Hajj Ibrahim, Subhi al-Khadra, and others all were all members of ECPAC or SMC, all benefited from SMC funding (and therefore the Mufti's patronage). They all were delegates to the Mufti's 1931 pan-Islamic congress in Jerusalem, and many were party to the pan-Arab programme which developed on the side. They all became members of the Palestine Istiqlal party.³⁶⁰

In one example, the Mufti asked Abdul Rahman al-Taji, who managed the awqaf for the SMC, to resign in 1932. The CID reported that al-Taji was forced to admit maladministration, when in fact the Mufti's faction wished to replace al-Taji with a younger, more active nominee. They threatened to expose al-Taji's land transactions with Jews were he to object. Taji had backed the Mufti on the SMC during the previous year, but now the Mufti saw fit to be rid of him.³⁶¹ Exposure of land transactions was initially an important means to coerce other notables. However, most families had sold or brokered land to Jews, and by the Second World War, almost all leading figures had been accused of that sin. The Mufti exercised political options according to immediate need – in this case, a more energetic manager of the awaqaf who could direct money towards land

³⁶⁰ Kupferschmidt, *The Supreme Muslim Council*, 66–77 appendix III; Matthews, *Confronting an Empire, Constructing a Nation.*;

³⁶¹ IOR L/PS/10/1315. fol.388. *CID weekly summary* 12/32. 30.3.1932.

trusts and the youth movement – and lost very little by alienating important figures since he furthered the national cause. He maintained his considerable influence through his control of the SMC. Preachers, teachers, and other civil servants working through the SMC – all of whom were government employees – were controlled according to the Mufti's vision.

When the opposition struck at the Mufti's prestige on certain fronts, he was able to improve it elsewhere. The CID reported on the Mufti-manuevered appointments at the SMC, where he isolated his opposition from official government positions. The opposition had accused the Mufti of misappropriating funds. In response, the Mufti muscled them out of office with the same accusations, and sought to place loyal employees such as Subhi al-Khadra in influential positions.³⁶² No CID assessment ever commented, in situations like this, on how the Mufti used his power of patronage to maintain control over the SMC executive and shut out opposition. The maneuver also was a chance to secure support from the nationalist youth – an obviously growing new base for power and mobilization.

The Mufti easily maneuvered around any opposition or obstacles placed by the nationalist youth or certain Old Istiqlalists. He always recovered any lost prestige, because of his control over SMC funds, and since Islamic propaganda was a reliable source of support. He simultaneously played Britain's game while attempting to meet the demands of the youth, the Islamists, the pan-Arabists, and other Palestinian national leaders.

³⁶² IOR L/PS/10/1315 *summary* 26. 30.6.1931; *no.* 20. 19.5.1931.; *no.*21. 26.5.1931.

Threat of assassination

A harsher and more coercive tool for the Mufti's influence was violence. From 1929, various groups loyal to the Mufti threatened Palestinian collaborators with death. This followed patterns with origins in the late Ottoman period. For example, Daud al-Dabbuni was an Istanbul-based Islamist and, like Arslan, Qassab, and Rida, also was an early admirer of Ibn Sa'ud. Daud al-Dabbuni was an ex-member of the *Qahtaniyya*, a movement parallel to *Fatat*, founded by Arab military officers. Dabbuni, driven by 'burning hatred for the CUP,' recruited students from the *Muntada al-Adabi* in Istanbul to his secret society, Green Flag. Disappointed that its activity was restricted to publishing, he founded *al-Yad al-Sawda*, or Black Hand, which penetrated the Ottoman military academy, and threatened to assassinate Arabs who cooperated with the CUP. The group never actually carried out assassinations at that time, and only one of its followers was known to have done so in 1913.³⁶³ Dabbuni died during the war, but his influence lived on. Perhaps Amin al-Husseini, who trained as an officer at the military academy, was influenced by Dabbuni or Black Hand.

There are features both common and distinct in manifestation of "Black Hand", including Dabbuni's in 1913, the Fedaiyeh's in 1919-21 (see p.51), the Mufti's assassins from 1929 onwards (p.171), and during the 1930s Qassam's "Black Hand" known in Arabic as *al-kaf al-Aswad* – a variation of the same meaning (see p.128). All these movements threatened collaborators with assassination. Their violence targeted Arabs in that

³⁶³ Tauber, *The Emergence of the Arab Movements*, 118–120, 317.

manner, but each of the Mandate era manifestations of Black Hand sought to prepare arms and men for anti-colonial revolt. They were also each Salafist to varying degrees. What distinguished them was the immediate political aims. Dabbuni sought to foster solidarity amongst anti-CUP Arab officers. The Black Hand movements of Fedaiyeh and Qassam rejected British rule, while the Mufti's supporters merely sought to intimidate his opposition and concentrate power in his hands.

Beginning in October 1929, with the murder of Musa Hadeib, Palestinians feared assassination on the Mufti's orders or influence. Hadeib, a source of firm opposition to the Mufti in Hebron, was friendly with Zionists, and had sold land to them. He was the first of many examples to be made.³⁶⁴ These attacks, and those committed by "Black Hand" and "Green Hand" – both led by Qassam – typified extremist aims and means. As a tool, assassination was supposed to be a deterrent to collaborators, although it will be seen that both British and Zionist intelligence rarely had a problem finding informants. More importantly, assassination and intimidation were means to coerce opponents of the Mufti or the boycott movement. Importantly, the CID political survey rarely commented on political murder by such groups, unless Jews were their target. The new CID chief, Quigley, related in a memoir that the CID focused heavily on Arab murders of Jews, but not Arab family feuds or other murders.³⁶⁵ This was because police and government perceived the need to prove their legitimacy following the security reforms in 1930-31. By ignoring political

³⁶⁴ Cohen, *Army of Shadows*, 59–61.

³⁶⁵ Kolinsky, *Law, Order, and Riots*, 100.

murder within Arab society, Britain allowed the Mufti to use assassination as a form of politics by other means.

Summary

The Mufti had a unique and powerful political position within Palestinian politics. He possessed unmatched powers of patronage among Arabs in the Mandate. He was the only notable with links to ideological or religious nationalists, with an extraordinary range of contacts. Thus, the Mufti had sway over Arab communists through Hamdi al-Husseini and Shakib Arslan (both members of the League against Imperialism); over the Najah school via the SMC and Ajaj Nuwayhid; over the YMMAs at which Nuwayhid taught, and which Jamal helped to organize along with other youth movements; and over Qassam, an SMC employee who cooperated with both Nuwayhid through the YMMAs, Hamdi through workers' societies, Rashid al-Hajj Ibrahim through the Islamic Society and YMMA; and via Rashid Rida - the Mufti's mentor and Qassam's former colleague. Equally, the Mufti was connected to the Najah director, Darwaza, both from their work with Feisal in 1919-1920 and through the aforementioned connections. If the Mufti's influence over Najah was only indirect, the other major school, Rawdat al-Ma'arif, based in Jerusalem, was under his direct control via the SMC and his family.

The Mufti's influence amongst the Old Istiqlalists was important because they had cultivated the younger generation of leaders through the Najah and Rawdat al-Ma'arif schools, and the Youngmen movement. Old Istiqlalists, like the Mufti, became part of the Syro-Palestinian congress during the 1920s, and thus maintained connections with Shakib Arslan,

who led the delegation in Geneva, and with Rashid Rida who supported the movement from Egypt. Thus the Mufti influenced the Old-Istiqlalists such as Abdul Hadi and Darwaza through patronage at the SMC, the national and pan-Arab movements, and via his closer association with and loyalty to Arslan and Rida.

These movements all shared the same intellectual roots. They had belonged to Arab nationalist societies before the war, or were taught by those who had, or by Islamists, or both. Most had opposed the CUP, either on religious or national grounds. Throughout the early 1930s, the Mufti exerted influence over the young nationalists and the violent radicals through both Istiqlal, the SMC, his cousin Jamal's youth work, and a more general pan-Islamic inspiration.

CID and Government against Nationalist Movements

The remainder of this chapter assesses the confrontation between British authorities and Arab nationalists. It explains why the CID and government fostered close relations with the Mufti, despite some knowledge of his role as leader of anti-colonial nationalists. Wauchope and the CID believed that they could forge a useful relationship with the Mufti by improving his status and resources in exchange for his restraint of youth activists. In the process, they did not see the various means by which the Mufti advanced his personal and nationalist political agenda.

ECPAC, the Mufti and the Syro-Palestinian congress remained committed, in the long-term, to the independence of Palestine. Britain's fatal error was treating Palestinian nationalists in isolation from Arslan or Syrians. As these movements became more organized during the early 1930s, their followers galvanised mass public support. By focusing on local

matters and ignoring transnational movements, British officials lost sight of how the Palestinian elite sought to mobilize against British policy for the longer term.

British intelligence faced difficulty in grasping key issues in Arab politics. Its surveys of Arab and Jewish affairs were high-quality in their detail and scope, but offered few insights which could excel beyond the capability of any well-informed observer. They suffered from multiple deficiencies. Competition between SSOs and the CID was one such problem, but not a fatal one. The CID saw the Mufti's nastier side, but believed that his first interest was his status and prestige that came with his government post and political victories over the Nashashibis. They never considered that the Mufti might be fomenting revolution through the youth or his pan-Islamic or pan-Arab connections. When the Mufti's culpability in arousing anti-government movements was reported by the CID, no action was taken, nor was any suggested. Thus, the basic problem was that of government policy – not intelligence. Both the CID and Arthur Wauchope, High Commissioner since 1931, believed that a legislative council would placate Palestinian demands. Yet it was too late. Anti-British extremism was a rising trend which Palestinian leaders did not want to control.

Government and CID, and the Mufti

In February 1931 the CID began to monitor proposals for a pan-Islamic congress. It discussed the visit to Palestine of Shawkat Ali, Indian pan-Islamist and leader in the former Khilafat movement, on his tour of Arab countries. Hosted by the Mufti, Ali was in Palestine to discuss the

revival of the pan-Islamic movement and to support the growing boycott movement. The CID doubted whether Palestinians could take concrete steps towards a complete boycott of European goods. However, the movement had derived its momentum from Arab unity efforts. The report warned that

The struggle against Zionism and for national independence will leave its limited circle to merge into the whole Arab and Islamic world movement. The money which may be raised will enable Haj Amin to surmount one of the main difficulties of political activity in this country and to remove one of the causes of friction with the opposition and other political workers.³⁶⁶

(This level of insight by the CID would disappear later in the year, when Harry Patrick Rice took control of that body.) Ali paid tribute to the Mufti and urged Palestinians to unite under his leadership. The opposition faced difficulty competing with the Mufti's prestige, which continued to improve both locally and internationally.

The government believed in the Mufti's role as a Muslim leader. It monitored his pan-Islamic activities, and used his desire to hold a pan-Islamic conference in Jerusalem as an opportunity for a political bargain. Weldon Matthews has argued that the Mufti depended on the British to underwrite his status, and in exchange for financial support, he influenced the Islamic congress, and the nationalist youth, not to advance an anti-imperialist agenda. His negotiations with Britain brought a larger subsidy to the SMC, which in turn increased his ability to generate patronage. This forced Jamal to attempt to exert some control over the youth leaders such as Zu'ayter.³⁶⁷ Yet Matthews and other historians have downplayed the

³⁶⁶ AIR 23/405.19a. *Weekly appreciation summary* 7. 18.2.1931.

³⁶⁷ Matthews, "Pan-Islam or Arab Nationalism? The Meaning of the 1931 Jerusalem Islamic Congress Reconsidered."

influence which the Mufti wielded over these youth via Jamal's work, and via the office of the SMC. After the Islamic congress, Jamal al-Husseini was reported to be 'unusually active' in organizing a new Nablus youth conference for the sake of dominating the opposition faction.³⁶⁸ Influence went both ways, and as quickly as Jamal scrambled to control the Youngmen, they lobbied the Mufti to support civil disobedience and oppose the government.

The CID was not naïve about Mufti's motives. In the background during this activity were negotiations over a proposed legislative council. A report from March 1931 said that 'The cause of the extremist section led by Haj Amin (who from the beginning was in favour of boycotting the Legislative Council) has accordingly been strengthened...'³⁶⁹ Arabs had lacked confidence in government since the publication of British prime minister Ramsay MacDonald's letter to Weizmann, repealing the 1930 Passfield White Paper on British policy in Palestine. Palestinians began to look to the Indian example for the boycott and civil disobedience movements. The CID warned that unless the opposition faction defeated the Mufti's supporters at the forthcoming youth assembly, the government could expect his faction to lead a boycott against the proposed Legislative Council and Jewish and foreign goods.

The Mufti saw the potential for the upcoming Islamic Congress to expand the whole movement, and to achieve a form of unity which would reduce his rivalry with the Nashashibis to a petty local matter. The Islamic

³⁶⁸ IOR L/PS/10/1315. *weekly* 52. 30.12.1931

³⁶⁹ IOR L/PS/10/1315. *Political summary*. 3.3.1931.

Congress of December 1931 was an important victory for the Mufti, who was elected President of its Executive, to which nine of his supporters were elected. The movement was expected to change the political outlook and trend of nationalism in Palestine, especially if the Congress would raise enough funds for its plans, including the founding of an Islamic university in Jerusalem to rival Hebrew University (although Egyptians worried it aimed at replacing al-Azhar's status).³⁷⁰

The Congress also served as a venue for a gathering of pan-Arabists, mainly Old Istiqlalists. They met at the home of Auni Abdul Hadi, and according to the CID, conspired to threaten another anti-French rebellion to force more concessions. For Palestinians, the renewed pan-Arab activity brought Rashid Rida together with Izzat Darwza, Ajaj Nuewihid, Subhi al-Khadra and Auni Abdul Hadi with many others for the first time in a common platform – a pan-Arabist ‘National Pact’ which opposed colonisation and promoted complete independence (ie, the Istiqlal policy). The CID had reported that Arslan promoted this strategy amongst old Istiqlalists during May-July. Their connections to ex-Syrian rebels, living as refugees in Transjordan, were a cause of certain worry for the CID. Zionist intelligence reported that the meeting was held at Arslan's request.³⁷¹ This movement saw the Youngmen as a tool to help actualise their platform – as a new generation not unlike theirs when they began Arab national activity during the Ottoman period. The CID reported that Jamal al Husseini worked in the south, and Subhi al-Khadra in the north to

³⁷⁰ IOR L/PS/10/1315. *CID to CS*. 22.12.1931.;

³⁷¹ IOR L/PS/10/1315. *CID to CS re 3/32*. 26.1.1932.; Matthews, *Confronting an Empire, Constructing a Nation*, 118.

organize Youngmen and YMMA branches.³⁷² This was a classic example of the Mufti's indirect control over the movement through his closest supporters.

The Mufti's influence helped to unleash the youth of Istiqlal, YMMAs, Youngmen, boy scouts, and other groups to influence public opinion and government policy. A good illustration of this influence can be found in plans in the summer of 1932 to commemorate the Battle of Hittin of 1187, when Saladin's army defeated the crusaders. This event symbolized much for the Palestinian national movement, especially its Islamic element. The battlefield had been the scene of skirmishes between police, army and Arab fighters during 1929.³⁷³ Before the events, in order to exert more control over the Youngmen, Ya'aqub al-Ghusein, a Cambridge-educated supporter of the Mufti, was installed as chair of the Youth Congress.³⁷⁴ The commemoration plans were orchestrated by Istiqlal, recently officially formed in Palestine. Its organizers all were Mufti supporters, and the party was formed with his approval, the CID noted. The Mufti had been anxious to 'extricate himself from the present party conflict, and to unite both factions.' The party was to address Palestinians' distrust of the notable elite, and its internal conflicts. Pro-Mufti Rashid Hajj Ibrahim appealed to his Haifa branch of YMMA for cooperation. The CID reported that 'Izz al-Din al-Qassam and other Sheikhs spread pan-Islamic propaganda through lectures and sermons in the north, and had been actively preparing for the commemoration of the Battle of Hittin.³⁷⁵

³⁷² IOR L/PS/10/1315. *CID to CS re 3/32*. 26.1.1932.

³⁷³ MECA. GB165-0168 Luke Papers. 5/2. ff.82, 102. 2.9.1929.

³⁷⁴ Matthews, *Confronting an Empire, Constructing a Nation*, 154.

³⁷⁵ IOR L/PS/10/1315. 31/32. 10.8.1932.

Haganah intelligence records contain a Hebrew handwritten transcription of a CID report, elaborating on the event. Jamal Husseini and Hamdi al-Husayni were among the leaders of a procession through the Jewish neighbourhood of Hadar in Haifa.³⁷⁶

Afterwards, the CID reported that the event had a positive effect on Istiqlal, and more generally, the nationalists. They said that the Mufti's attitude towards the demonstration could not be ascertained, despite all prior evidence it had reported. Conflicting reliable reports varyingly suggested that the Mufti had influenced the rise of Istiqlal, but also that it was related to the 'general pan-Arab movement' beyond Palestinian borders.³⁷⁷ Both were true, as the CID soon realized that the pan-Arab congress movement and Istiqlal were 'one and the same party.'³⁷⁸ Either way, most of the organizers were Mufti supporters. Istiqlal was expected to mobilize the youthful masses and reinvigorate the national movement.

The Mufti could influence Istiqlal via its senior members, who were partnered with Rida and Shakib Arslan at the Syro-Palestinian congress. This was true even when Izzat Darwaza and Auni Abdul Hadi defected from the Mufti's faction to join and lead the younger ones. They and other employees of the SMC were frustrated that the Mufti was moving closer to the British in the early 1930s, and had difficulty reconciling their official positions with their anti-colonial views.³⁷⁹ Yet there is more context to be considered. Darwaza, Abdul Hadi and others had long felt the need to form a new party to oppose the Mandate and Zionism. Whereas the Mufti

³⁷⁶ HA 8/klali/30b. Battle of Hittin, 28.8.1932.

³⁷⁷ IOR L/PS/10/1315. *CID to CS 35/32*. 9.9.1932.

³⁷⁸ IOR L/PS/10/1315. 37/2. 21.9.1932.

³⁷⁹ Matthews, *Confronting an Empire, Constructing a Nation*, 122–123.

previously rejected such action, he now welcomed efforts to coordinate the Old Istiqlalists with the new party. The CID, however, reported on the Mufti's growing hostility to Istiqlal, which accused him of self-interested policies and government cooperation. The new CID chief, Rice, said, 'These leaders are actively engaged in the organisation of the movement in Palestine and other countries, and the revival of Arab parties which had been working under the Turkish regime, before the Great War, such as 'al Ahd', 'Al Fatah' [sic, Fatat], is much spoken of in nationalist circles.'³⁸⁰ This is the only reference in my records of British intelligence to the importance of prewar movements such as Fatat. It is to Rice's credit that it was raised, although he and the CID thereafter refrained from connecting the Mufti to the nationalists. It is clear, in hindsight, that this should have caused further investigation.

There was more here than meets the eye. The Mufti welcomed the division, and used it to his own benefit and that of the movement. He preserved his relations with the government, while he simultaneously expanded the reach of the national movement and mobilized more youth. His open dispute with Istiqlal coincided with efforts by Jamal to organize scout and YMMA branches. These were the base of support for the nationalist youth, and fed the Palestine Istiqlal party. Meanwhile in Nablus, the political base for Abdul Hadi and Izzat Darwaza, the SMC used its resources to appoint Mufti supporters and influence Istiqlal politics in that city.³⁸¹ The movement nonetheless grew. Scouts and Istiqlal cooperated to

³⁸⁰ IOR L/PS/10/1315. 37/2. 21.9.1932.

³⁸¹ IOR L/PS/10/1315. *CID to HC 13/33*. 22.4.1933.

protest to the eviction of Bedouin from the Wadi Hawareth lands, today known as Hefer Valley, which had been sold to Jews. The Mufti's faction alleged that Abdul Hadi was involved in the sale in order to isolate him from Istiqlal.³⁸² Yet, ironically, Abdul Hadi and Darwaza had defected to Istiqlal in the first place when the Mufti refused to protest land sales to the government.³⁸³ So, while relations appeared hostile, the conflict was not so serious. From the Mufti's perspective, there existed a harmless political chain which propelled the national movement forward without harming his status as a government official. Abdul Hadi's alienation was only temporary. Meanwhile Istiqlal incorporated and cooperated with pro-Mufti youth groups to protest the transfer of lands which Abdul Hadi sold. This was a circle of negative blows, each cancelling the last, which caused little damage to Abdul Hadi, the Mufti, or Istiqlal. These conflicts were petty, but accelerated political progress by improving the mobilization of youth groups as a base of support. The CID either did not understand, or was unwilling to describe these cynical maneuvers for what they were.

The conflict with the Nashashibi clan was more real. The Mufti's opposition maintained much influence at grassroots levels – holding mayoralties and civil service jobs. Opposition propaganda illustrated the Mufti's misdeeds, or those of his supporters, in order to embarrass him in his nominal role as leader of Palestinians. This supported Wauchope's complacency – he tended to temper his political surveys with evidence that the Mufti was restrained by Nashashibi politics. In response to the Mufti's

³⁸² IOR L/PS/10/1315. *CID to HC 20/33*. 10.8.1933

³⁸³ IOR L/PS/10/1315. *8/33*. 10.3.1933.

Islamic congress, the Nashashibis organized a formal opposition party, with its own congress, which sought to reform the SMC and challenge the Mufti's wide reach.³⁸⁴ The Mufti then changed tactics, and launched a press campaign against Ragheb Nashashibi, highlighting his weak support of the national movement. The move satisfied the Mufti's extreme supporters, but alienated his senior partners such as Jamal, who warned of the harm personal attacks would cause to the national movement. The Mufti then suspended the paper, and gained some popularity by appearing to offer an olive branch.³⁸⁵ Small steps temporarily upset his base of support but dealt long term blows to his opponents.

Confrontation

By the summer of 1933, the government felt it had a grasp on the Arab nationalist politics of the country. It overlooked the potential for unity, and the fact that the Mufti was not always suppressing nationalist activity on their behalf. The disturbances in Jaffa in autumn 1933, launched in response to a new wave of mass immigration of Jews mainly from Poland and Nazi Germany, further changed the landscape. It brought forward the issue of immigration for Jews, Arabs, and Britons alike, and it drew extra attention to fascism and Nazism in Arab political circles.³⁸⁶ CID and other intelligence reports were clear that Arab interest in Nazism and Fascism had most to do with national revival, and industrial, social, and military development.³⁸⁷ Gilbert Achcar clearly demonstrates that anti-

³⁸⁴ CO 732/53/3. 15. Wauchope to CO. 30.1.1932.

³⁸⁵ IOR L/PS/10/1315. *CID to CS*. 9.2.1932.

³⁸⁶ Achcar, *The Arabs and the Holocaust*.

³⁸⁷ Examples are many, see Achcar, and for one CID example, IOR L/PS/10/1315. *CID to CS* 24/33. 7.10.1933.

Semitism and pro-Nazi sentiment had a stronger hold over nationalists in Iraq and Syria.³⁸⁸

During 1933, 30,327 Jews legally entered Palestine – about three times the previous year’s figure. Nazi Germany was now a factor in Palestine politics, as those figures grew each year. In 1935, 61,854 Jews legally entered the country.³⁸⁹ The disturbances in Jaffa in October resulted from the encouragement of all Palestinian leadership to resist British policy; propaganda which had for many years suggested a Jewish displacement of Arabs in Palestine seemed more real than ever before. The security aspects of the disturbances will be discussed in the next chapter, while the following paragraphs will deal with the political side.

The Arab youth had, from an early stage, adopted a militant disposition. They even looked to the Zionists as a model. Boy Scouts and sports organizations had been organized along the lines of the revisionist youth movement, Betar. The CID remarked: ‘Secret defensive organisations such as Hagana is not a new idea; it is only a continuation of efforts started by the young extremist faction several months ago.’³⁹⁰ The CID reported on the ‘increasingly prevalent belief that protests and political action on constitutional lines are of no avail and that the Arabs should resort to revolutionary activity.’³⁹¹ Hamdi Husseini was seen throughout the 1931 Youth Congress to have been passing directions to Akram Zu’ayter. ‘A purely militarist spirit was in evidence throughout the proceedings.’ The CID emphasized the role of the young extremists, who

³⁸⁸ Achcar, *The Arabs and the Holocaust*, 87–98.

³⁸⁹ Shaw, *A Survey of Palestine*, 2:185.

³⁹⁰ IOR L/PS/10/1315. Weekly 31. 5.8.1931.

³⁹¹ Ibid.

led the proceedings despite the presence of more senior Arab leaders. It was clear that the nationalist youth would eventually form a new party to contend with the notable factions.

In early October, the press and youth organizations became especially active and vocal, while the Mufti's faction and Istiqlal quietly considered next steps. The CID concluded that the party conflict caused leaders to realize that 'general action is not possible without centralized control.'³⁹² Yet, the parties achieved some form of unity. Musa Kazim, despite his age and alleged favouritism of the opposition, led a strike in Jerusalem on 13 October 1933, and received widespread admiration for his stance. His actions probably rescued ECPAC, which had become an unpopular notable organization. ECPAC appealed for a national strike – the CID believed it was forced to do so, lest the more extreme youth replace its leadership of the national movement. Istiqlal hosted lectures intending to 'strengthen the spirit of resistance, hatred and revenge.' Jamal al-Husseini received particular attention for having supervised the closure of shops in Jerusalem. The CID noted that this 'calls to mind the influence which he exerted on political agitation during the earlier years of government.'

The strike leaders, especially Jamal Husseini, were disillusioned with government, and believed that Britain would 'not yield except to force... That riots are the only means of delivering them and that a European war is the only chance for the Arabs to rid themselves of foreign rule...' These important statements mark some of the earliest expressions of the pan-Arab strategy to use a European conflict to force Britain to

³⁹² IOR L/PS/10/1315. CID 24/33. 7.10.1933

concede. Also important, the CID noted that ‘the decision of the executive marks the beginning of the resumption of the Arab political campaign and the revival of agitation on the lines of that pursued in the years 1920-23, although with some different objectives.’³⁹³ Whereas in 1920-23 the mandate without the Zionist policy might have been accepted, the movement now was determined for independence.

Yet the CID refrained from concluding that this might evolve into a violent anti-colonial movement, even though it hinted that Jamal might have wanted a disturbance of the peace at that moment. Perhaps administrators recalled that balance had been achieved in 1921 with the support of the notable leadership. Either way, ECPAC was satisfied that its decision fulfilled the need for demonstrations, harmed the Nashashibis, and encouraged a spirit of national revival. Further, it fostered some unity between Istiqlal, the Youngmen, and ECPAC, which otherwise might have collapsed.³⁹⁴ The anti-British aspect of the national movement became more pronounced, and more determined. It led to reconciliation between the Old Istiqlalists with the Mufti’s faction.

Certain leaders had been held accountable for the disturbances, which were suppressed by the police and army. Jamal al-Husseini and Izzat Darwaza stood in front of a judge, but refused to recognize the court. Their party reiterated its demands for the stoppage of Jewish immigration, and planned further demonstrations. Meanwhile the Mufti visited India for the purpose of fundraising and pan-Islamic work. Certain Istiqlal leaders were

³⁹³ IOR L/PS/10/1315. *CID* 24/33. 7.10.1933; *CID* 25/33. 23.10.1933

³⁹⁴ IOR L/PS/10/1315. *CID* 25/33. 23.10.1933.

reported to have been dissatisfied at the quiet, and at the Mufti's apparent control 'from behind the scenes.'³⁹⁵ This had now become a consistent pattern – every time actual tension rose in Palestine, the Mufti reached out to the Islamic Congress. By doing so he dissociated himself from nationalists, while conferring with senior pan-Arab leaders.

The government and CID maintained confidence in the Mufti, believing that his main goal was to defeat the Nashashibis. In reality, this was one of many goals; he did succeed in this particular endeavour in late 1934. Throughout 1934, cooperation between his *Majlisi* (council) faction and the opposition was deemed impossible. Yet unity within the broadly Mufti-inclined factions was more consolidated than ever. Musa Kazim died before he could be sentenced, leaving the Mufti and Jamal free to dominate the opposition. The CID attributed 'foresightedness' to the government decision to forgive the strike leaders.³⁹⁶ In reality, this was a loss of nerve on the part of the government, which was willing to overlook the role of the notables in order to see Istiqlal weakened. Wauchope obviously saw the promotion of notable politics through ECPAC as an antidote to younger nationalists. These events concentrated influence in the Mufti's hands, and undermined the opposition. The prospect of municipal elections drew attention back on the Majlisi-Opposition conflict, since the cities were an important source of popular power and many remained in Opposition control.

³⁹⁵ IOR L/PS/10/1315. 3/34. 30.1.1934.; 1/34. 5.1.1934.; 27/33. 19.12.1933.

³⁹⁶ IOR L/PS/12/3343. 12/34. 28.8.1934.; 10/34. 14.7.1934.; 11/34. 6.8.1934.

If anything, the Mufti had least influence over the Nashashibi-led opposition faction, which included other notable families. Opposition members generally were less-well-connected because they lacked official government positions. This difference in influence became more pronounced in the 1934 municipal elections, when Ragheb Bey Nashashibi, the incumbent mayor of Jerusalem, was defeated by Dr. Hussein Khalidi. The CID summarized the cause of this turnover, as well as two other pro-Majlisi decisions in other cities. Despite the fact that the Khalidis and Nashashibis had once been allied in the Muntada al-Adabi, Haj Amin persuaded the Khalidis to leave the opposition faction. They formed an independent party with a platform characterized by the CID as ‘liberal, but a true national spirit.’ During the mayoralty contest, the Mufti’s faction relied on persuasive propaganda whereas the Nashashibis resorted to accusing Dr. Khalidi of collaboration with the government. The Mufti personally led a propaganda campaign which focused on Ragheb’s pro-Jewish and pro-Government inclinations. He also used both legal and illegal means to persuade voters. Jewish voters were persuaded by Ragheb Bey’s recent vocal opposition to Jewish immigration, which, ironically, had been motivated by a desire to win more popular support. The CID was impressed by the Mufti’s political skill and use of his religious offices. The downfall of Ragheb ‘has been described by many Arabs as a master stroke.’ Moreover, the result was that the Husseinis lacked any obstruction, and ‘can now proceed with their national and family advancement unhampered.’³⁹⁷ The CID failed to discuss the potential consequences of

³⁹⁷

IOR L/PS/12/3343. *CID summary 13/34*. 20.9.1934.; *CID 14/34*. 15.10.1934

Husseini control over every important civil and political office, either directly, or through patronage, family connection, or party. As its later reportage about splits between the Histadrut and Revisionist organisations shows, the CID could offer penetrating political analyses, when the government wanted to receive them. Its silence regarding the Mufti speaks volumes.

With the Nashashibis isolated from the national leadership, the Mufti improved relations with Istiqlal, using his influence through the SMC. He won over Istiqlal by supporting the election of Rashid Hajj Ibrahim to the Haifa municipal council. In that single move he brought in Istiqlal, including Auni Abdul Hadi, Nuwayhid, and Qassam. This is key to understanding how the Mufti exercised his influence over other Arab parties, and expanded his own power in the process. It also illustrates his connection to the Haifa extremists responsible for a string of murders at this time. On the advice of Ihsan Jabri, partner to Arslan, now living in Geneva, and in-law of Jamal, Istiqlal now fully cooperated with the Mufti. The government, in response to ECPAC, reneged on sentences for strike leaders.³⁹⁸

The parties reconfigured, and Istiqlal was eclipsed by the Mufti's faction, since their independence platforms had closely aligned since the "National Pact", especially its subsequent iterations. ECPAC no longer mattered to the Mufti's strategy, and so in April 1935 Jamal founded the Palestine Arab Party (PAP). The CID reported that the Husseinis intended to ignore ECPAC or any future congress, and 'allow it to die a natural

³⁹⁸ IOR L/PS/12/3343. *CID 14/34*. 15.10.1934; *12/34*. 28.8.1934.; *10/34*.

death, and then proceed with their own programme to lead the national movement in the country.³⁹⁹ There seemed to be no obstacle in the Mufti's path, until the Nashashibis mysteriously came into possession of the Mufti's correspondence with Italian agents.

In January 1935, the opposition, now embodied in *Hizb al-Difa'a al-Watani*, the National Defense Party, led by Ragheb, published copies of correspondence between the Mufti and Shakib Arslan, revealing that Arslan and Ihsan Jabri were Italian agents, supported by the Mufti.⁴⁰⁰ By April, these accusations had become the subject of a press war between the factions. Controversy was rooted in the fact that Italy had normally been the most hated of imperial powers. Ironically, at the pan-Islamic congress in Jerusalem in 1931, Britain tried to suppress criticism of Italy as the two sought cordiality.⁴⁰¹ The Mufti's organ, *al Jamia'a al Arabia*, praised Italy and its Abyssinian policy, whereas *Al-Difa'a* and *Falastin* both criticized the Mufti's pro-Italy inclinations and highlighted Italian persecution of Muslims, especially in Tripoli. ASI concluded that Arslan had influenced the Old Istiqlalists towards a pro-Italian stance, with the Mufti's collusion, since he was informed of Arslan's contact with Mussolini.⁴⁰² ASI intelligence considered Arab acceptance of Italian support to be cynical. They were 'not at all fond of Italy, but hope[d] to obtain financial assistance for their own schemes by playing up to her.' In general ASI reports reflect the deep worry of the Mufti that this scandal might impact his influence in Palestine. Historian William Cleveland accepted claims by

³⁹⁹ IOR L/PS/12/3343. CID 8/35. 20.04.1935.

⁴⁰⁰ IOR L/PS/12/3343. CID 2/35. 21.1.1935

⁴⁰¹ FO 141/489. *Papers on Islamic Congress*. Enclosures III and IV. 25.1.1932

⁴⁰² CZA S25/22735. *ASI summary*. 3.4.1935.

Arslan, Rida, and others that the letters were forgeries, although he admitted that Arslan's policy aligned closely with their content. Moreover Rashid Rida warned Arslan 'that he was carrying his self-defence to extremes.' Arslan denied being an Italian propagandist, and insisted his rapprochement with Italy, and condemnation of Ethiopia, was sensible under the circumstances.⁴⁰³

By August 1935, Palestinian politics had overcome the press scandal, which Istiqlalists helped to defuse. Jamal visited branches of PAP, recently established throughout Palestine, and found broad popular support, owing to the public view that PAP represented the Mufti. Through PAP, Jamal organized youth along 'Fascist-Nazi lines', calling them *Dawsarieh*⁴⁰⁴, to serve as a strike force. Boy Scout and Youngmen activity was on the rise as well. The Mufti led agitation against land sales and brokerage, and instructed SMC employees and Sheikhs to do the same.⁴⁰⁵ Yet, contrary to the common misconception about German support for the Mufti, the opposition was the first Palestinian party to align with Nazi Germany, probably in response to the Mufti's relations with Italy. In 1934, the opposition newspapers *Difa 'a* and *al-Jamia' al-Islamiya* printed Nazi propaganda.⁴⁰⁶

The Mufti's alignment with the pan-Arab movement was probably the most significant of his political maneuvers. In 1934, he and Arslan led a delegation of the Islamic Congress to Mecca where they facilitated a peace

⁴⁰³ Cleveland, *Islam against the West*, 147–149.

⁴⁰⁴ Origin uncertain. Dawasar is a large Arabian tribe. It was also the name of some valorous cavalry of a pre-Islamic Arab king. Ṭabarī, *The History of Al-Tabari*, 79–80.

⁴⁰⁵ IOR L/PS/12/3343. *CID 11/35*. 27.6.1935; *CID 12/35*. 5.8.1935; *CID 13/35*. 24.8.1935.

⁴⁰⁶ IOR L/PS/12/3343. *CID 13/34*. 20.9.1934.

treaty between Ibn Sa'ud of Arabia and Imam Yahya of Yemen. Their war, between two of only three sovereign Arab states, disturbed nationalists and Islamists. The Mufti and Arslan succeeded, and raised the prestige of the pan-Arab movement, and created a palpable sense of unity. Arslan returned to Palestine after the delegation – his first steps in the Levant since 1917. He was sent back to exile after France pressured Wauchope.⁴⁰⁷

By August 1934, Old Istiqlalist plans for Arab confederacy felt within grasp. A European war was foreseen by the independence movement as an opportunity to pressure Britain and France. The movement articulated this strategy in 1933, but division between the Arab kings made the prospect improbable.⁴⁰⁸ In February 1935, as the opening quote of this chapter shows, Arslan urged the Mufti to cease cooperation with Britain (see p.194). In August, Amir Faysal, Ibn Sa'ud's son, visited the Mufti in Palestine. The Mufti exploited this visit to improve his own prestige. By September the Mufti was fully committed to the independence movement, and visited Syria. ASI reported that his 'real intention' was to meet the Syrian National Bloc, and then he planned to proceed to Geneva to attend the European Islamic Congress. 'More probably the intention is to consult with Amir Shekib Arslan and his associates...' Italy was still believed to be supporting Arslan and the Mufti, and that while most Palestinians were suspicious of Italian intentions, they were willing to take advantage of Italian policy.⁴⁰⁹ The Mufti planned to increase violent pressure in order to force concessions during the international crisis. Arslan's role was

⁴⁰⁷ Cleveland, *Islam against the West*, 81–83.;

⁴⁰⁸ IOR L/PS/12/3343. *CID 11/34*. 6.8.1934.; L/PS/10/1315. *CID 6/33*. 18.2.1933. *CID 17/33*.20.6.1933.

⁴⁰⁹ CZA S25/22735. *ASI summary*. 3.9.1935.

important because he came to influence the Palestinian nationalist youth directly. He corresponded with leading Istiqlalist, Akram Zu'ayter, urging him to 'maintain his anti-British activity and enquired if he were willing to support Italy by direct Italian propaganda.' ASI concluded that Zu'ayter had accepted Italian financial support, as had PAP for running the *al-Liwa* newspaper (the same title as Arslan's German pan-Islamic project 15 years prior).⁴¹⁰

ASI was unequivocal: PAP was positioning itself to be the 'main spring of Arab resistance to the further Judaizing of the country.' Jamal al-Husseini's campaign had co-opted the youth movements, boy scouts, and athletic clubs – all militant movements 'of a fascist or Nazi complexion' – in preparation for demonstrations, when the time was ripe. Religious propaganda was on the rise, exploiting a dispute between non-Zionist Orthodox Jews and Muslims at the Cave of the Patriarchs in Hebron. ASI warned that: 'It is considered that no incident could be better calculated to arouse intense resentment... The inference is made that Jews of all persuasions, militant and otherwise, have a common object in view.'⁴¹¹

The CID and government believed it could manage nationalist groups via the Mufti. The recipe for disaster was apparent to ASI, although it expected religious-inspired outbreaks. The spark which ignited the fires of violent resistance was, surprisingly, not a violent incident itself, but an apparently harmless accident at a shipping dock. As a consignment of cement barrels was being unloaded at the port of Jaffa, one fell off a crane

⁴¹⁰ S25/22735. ASI. 6.12.1935.

⁴¹¹ CZA S25/22735. ASI summary. 2.10.1935.

and cracked open, revealing concealed arms, obviously destined for Haganah. The result was widespread public outrage. Arms smuggling came into focus for the work of CID, ASI and SIS alike. Britain was thought to be turning a blind eye to this activity, and quickly became the most hated power in Arab nationalist politics. The Youngmen organized an all-party meeting, and with the Mufti's guidance, it was convened on 21 October 1935. They led the first completely observed nationwide strike.⁴¹² The CID downplayed the Husseinis' relationship with the youth movements and their persuasive and mobilizing power.

On the other hand, ASI reported that Palestinian leaders had become more anti-Mandatory than before, and that the

activities of the agitators of the Hussein faction point to the preparation of unrest at no distant date... Over and above the "scout" groups organised by Jamal Hussein there are in existence more especially in the Tulkarm area, gangs of young men who give themselves high-sounding titles such as "The Terrorist Youth" etc.... Heretofore, the activities of these gangs have been confined to talk but it is probably that if any disturbances break out as a result of political agitation, they would attempt to carry into effect their threats against the coastal Jewish settlements.⁴¹³

Rice, of the CID, was invited to comment on this report. He agreed that the Hussein faction had intended to create unrest through this agitation, but minimised expectations for unrest, saying that no concrete plan existed. Rice was unimpressed by Arab political activity, probably believing that its divisions were more debilitating than was true. He gave no comment to PAP's behind-the-scenes activity. He doubted threats of gangs operating against Jewish settlements, as well as the importance of the

⁴¹² IOR L/PS/12/3343. *CID 16/35*. 30.10.1935.

⁴¹³ S25/22735. *Extract from RAF weekly intel summary*. 25.10.1935.

boy scouts, although he promised to follow up with the Tulkarm groups.⁴¹⁴

Subsequent events proved Rice wrong.

ASI intelligence was the only service to report on Arab arms traffic. Italian vessels brought illicit arms to Haifa, and other deliveries occurred via the Syrian frontier. ‘An official of the Arab Bank in Haifa is reported to have stated to an informant “The Arabs of Palestine are supplying themselves with arms which reach them from places no one is aware of”’.⁴¹⁵ One cannot be sure, but the source was probably citing Rashid al-Hajj Ibrahim – director of the Haifa branch of the Arab bank, which was founded to finance the *Sunduq al-Umma* (Arab National Fund). Ibrahim was a close with ‘Izz al-Din al-Qassam, who may well have been recipient of such arms. In November, ASI reported on the weak coalition of parties, which had submitted demands to the government. Yet behind the scenes, ASI emphasized, PAP was destabilizing the country.⁴¹⁶ Sure enough, the armed groups turned their guns on Britain at that moment.

Conclusion: Intelligence Assessments

Arab nationalists were now prepared for violent confrontation with Britain. Shakib Arslan explained to the Mufti that the time had come for him to end his ties with the British government.

No friendship, no bribery, and no policy is of avail with the British as nobody can play any tricks with them, because they are the most cunning people and can not (sic) be taken by sympathy, evidence or leniency. The Englishman has a special language that cannot be understood and the only language he can understand is resistance.⁴¹⁷

⁴¹⁴ S25/22735. *From CID*. 30.10.1935.

⁴¹⁵ S25/22735. *ASI monthly summary*. 1.11.1935

⁴¹⁶ S25/22735. *ASI Monthly summary*. 22.11.1935

⁴¹⁷ CZA S25/22745. *Translated letter from Arslan to Husseini*. 20.2.1935.

The government's own policy and misplaced faith in the Mufti had led to this situation. Around the time of the pan-Islamic Congress of 1931, HC Chancellor and the Colonial Office reaffirmed the policy of co-option of the Mufti, which had originated with Herbert Samuel. They did so before a security-intelligence regime existed to assess the wisdom of the policy, believing that the normal colonial politics of cultivating elites would preserve British interests in Palestine. The High Commissioner in Egypt, Percy Loraine, wrote to the Colonial office,

Whatever may be the motives of our policy, it appears to operate towards a strengthening of the hold of the Mufti on Palestine... But, even supposing that he was really more harmless than many suppose, I cannot help feeling that there is danger in allowing so much power to be concentrated in one Moslem personage in Palestine. Perhaps the Palestine government would be afraid of offending him and his supporters by any diminution of his functions. If so, there will be much more ground for nervousness in the future if he goes on consolidating his power through functions with which we have invested him.⁴¹⁸

This advice went unheeded. British policy thereafter was based upon the presumption that the Mufti was a willing and able partner, because his status depended on British concessions, for which he had to bargain. The British also lacked alternatives. The Mufti had a rare degree of freedom of action compared to other British-sponsored elites in the Empire. According to historian Rob Johnson, elsewhere, especially India, 'neotraditionalist elites' sought to damage collaboration through the organization of modern political parties which forced elites away to side with mass movements.⁴¹⁹ In Palestine, the Mufti was viewed as essential despite his deleterious influence. Elsewhere in the Empire, Britain usually

⁴¹⁸ FO 141/489. *Minute Loraine to Oliphant*. 5.1.1932.; AIR 23/405. 24b. *Percy Loraine to Lancelot Oliphant*. 12.6.1931.

⁴¹⁹ Johnson, *British Imperialism*, 89.

could rely upon alternate collaborative elites. Moreover, the case of Palestine and the Mufti is unique since as a leader, the Mufti was part of the old and new elites, but also the popular nationalist movement. His actions gave the appearance of normalcy when, as in India, nationalists attacked his collaboration with government. Yet these attacks ultimately served the common aims of the notables and the masses.

Upon defeat of the Nashashibis in 1934, Wauchope lacked leverage over the Mufti, but continued to believe in his good faith until 1936. The government failed to see the connection between the Mufti's creeping domination of Palestinian politics, and the violent extremism which his faction and his religious officers were promoting for the sake of the national movement. The difference in ASI and CID reportage during 1935-1936 clearly demonstrates how the government and CID lost control of this process. According to the philosophy which prevailed since Dowbiggen's reforms, good government had to provide security via the police and CID – the only appropriate source for security intelligence, and enforcement. The events of 1933 likely reinforced this view. Yet, this attitude politicized CID reportage in favour of Wauchope's accommodating attitude towards the Mufti and obscured the Mufti's leadership over the increasingly violent national movement. As a result, it tended to provide lots of valuable data and political information, but little intelligence.

ASI was more critical than the CID, and skeptical that the Mufti could accept British rule any longer. His dispute with Syrian and Palestinian Old Istiqlalists over Italian support illustrated that problem. Yet, this dispute was a pan-Arab one, and was resolved by the decision in 1935

to ask Saudi Arabia, Yemen, and Iraq for a united policy of neutrality, and independence, in the event of a European war. Furthermore, ASI connected the Mufti's visit to Syria at that time with the broader campaign which he had organized in Palestine which pushed the youth movements and parties towards demonstrations against Jewish immigration, Jewish desire to control over Islamic sites, and British policy. They had studied the Mufti's role in this campaign closely since, in March 1935, they discovered a memo definitely written in Haj Amin's handwriting, which outlined his Islamic propaganda designed to arouse religious-nationalist sentiment. The propaganda was distributed during the pilgrimage to Mecca, but also to 'prominent persons in all Moslem countries and to certain royal personages.' The CID, upon seeing the material, confirmed its authenticity, but downplayed its significance, and did not follow-up in its own reportage.⁴²⁰ The Mufti aimed to use Islamic propaganda to contribute to popular mobilization. 'A pamphlet containing the speeches delivered by Haj Amin Hussieni at the Ulemas Conference and at the Villages assembly has been printed in the Moslem Orphanage for distribution during the forthcoming Feast. It is expected that further copies of the fatwa of Sheikh Rashid Rida and of the statement by the Society for the Protection of the Haram will also be distributed.'⁴²¹ The CID reported on this global and local mobilization, but did little to handle it, downplaying its significance.

CID and government both clung to the civilian-oriented system of good government, knowing that real democracy could never be

⁴²⁰ S25/22735. *Letter from CID*. 21.3.1935.

⁴²¹ S25/22735. CID extract . 14.3.1935.

implemented. CID reports on the Mufti were reliable, although it is clear if one follows the long-term patterns in pan-Arab politics that they excluded his connection to that movement in most assessments. ASI intelligence could not afford to ignore the Mufti, because it would become responsible for fighting back if Arab nationalists ever fulfilled their revolutionary plans. ASI tended to be ignored because it contradicted the fundamental assumption of Wauchope and other civil servants, that the police were best suited to handle matters of politics and civil security. The result was that the Mufti was given the leadership over the Palestinian national movement, and managed to hide the reach of his power from government until the Arab rebellion broke out in 1936.

The Mufti's actions to this point were rational, and his expectations were reasonable. His growth in strength was unparalleled among nationalist leaders in the British Empire during 1919-36, because he did not openly oppose Britain, which patronized him in turn and, in any case, lacked alternatives. Palestinian politics had become sophisticated by the 1930s, if less advanced than Egypt and India. His secret violent campaign contributed to his growth in power, but also encouraged his escalation of violence during 1937-39, which forced Britain to take him seriously as a threat. Had he died in 1936, he would be remembered as a hero. Not one volume would have taken interest in his Nazi connections, and fewer would focus on his violence against Palestinians. He might even have been commemorated on Palestinian postage stamps. But he did not die; he continued in his manipulative ways on his misguided path, and his later missteps were fatal to the national movement.

Chapter 6 – Intelligence, Security and the Road to Rebellion

This chapter is about the successes and limitations of British intelligence, but also the growth of violent and well-organized Palestinian opposition alongside the growth of the Yishuv's intelligence, security and labour structures. These issues are interconnected. An improved historical understanding of nationalist organizations serves as a benchmark for assessing the performance of British intelligence. This enables an assessment of policy-strategy match. This chapter demonstrates that despite the inability of Britain, the Yishuv, or Palestinian leaders to agree, the government still focused on the possibility of introducing constitutional self-government. Despite the fact that Britain possessed evidence that the Mufti was leading a rebellious movement, the High Commissioner was blind to that fact and believed that a constitution could solve the country's problems.

Britain improved its ability to impose law and order, but mistook this form of strength for power, though it lacked popular support. Arab nationalists did not trust Britain's good faith in negotiations and were increasingly committed to independence from colonial rule of any form. The High Commissioner mistakenly placed his faith in the Mufti's willingness and ability to limit the Arab nationalist movements. He lent credence to this position by encouraging the police to focus on political murders of Jews, rather than Arab assassinations. In the light of such misunderstandings, policymakers failed to address the fundamental issues. Britain's grasp on good government eroded. This amounted to government complicity in the concentration of power in the Mufti's hands. Crucially,

the drive for both communities to arm and organize themselves demonstrated Britain's loss of control. Intelligence observed these developments, but the government and security forces could do little to stop them.

After the 1929 riots, rebellious groups immediately began to form in the north. In particular, "Green Hand", based in Safed, endangered British security. Murders of Jews at Yagur and Nahalal, inspired by Qassam and the "Black Hand", challenged British police and Britain's competency to provide good government. The League of Nations criticized the British administration in Palestine and reaffirmed its expectation of Britain to protect the population. Britain's reformed security regime succeeded in most cases, and was ready to confront open rebellion early on. The civil 'intelligence state' did not expect widespread problems, whereas the military one organized drills and improved readiness. Britain had to prove to the Yishuv and the League of Nations that the government could competently police the country. Distrustful, the Yishuv had already taken steps to improve its security and the organization of the Haganah. Meanwhile, the police focused on political murder of Jews and disregarded Arab murder and blood feuds, while it could barely police arms smuggling in the Yishuv.

Britain's cooperation with the Zionist labour federation and intelligence services comes into focus here. The government feared the alienation of Arab workers, but depended on the Histadrut's ability to break strikes and to constrain revisionists and communists. Intelligence monitored the Yishuv's self-armament and defiance of immigration rules, but could

not yet enforce the law as British forces were being reorganized.

Meanwhile, the potential for an explosion of Arab nationalist violence was the main focus of both Britain and the Yishuv. Security reforms, initiated by Dowbiggen and continued by the RAF and army garrison, were successful. Between 1930 and 1935 British security, while imperfect, had vastly improved its competency. Intelligence also improved, even though ASI and CID differed in analysis. The competency of policymakers was the root problem as the Arab national movement marched towards revolt.

Anglo-Zionist Relations: Cooperation and Competition

One of the most reliable forms of control available to the Palestine government was the Labour Zionist movement. Economic woes normally plagued the country, and the inquiries following the 1929 disturbances focused on landless and unemployed Arab peasants as a key target for development. Competition between the Histadrut and various Arab parties for influence over a growing Arab working class was intense.

Zachary Lockman assesses the interaction between government, the Labour Zionist movement and Histadrut, the various Arab labour unions and parties, and the communist party. The Histadrut tended to pursue its own interests regarding Arab labour, at first attempting to co-opt this powerful force, to monopolize the labour supply. It then shifted to confrontation with Arab labour as part of a movement to promote "Hebrew Labour". This was a means for the Labour-Zionist movement to create and lead a Jewish working class. Histadrut propaganda appealed to Jewish workers not on national, ethnic or religious lines, but rather as a Jewish

proletariat that had been boycotted by Jewish employers in favour of cheaper, unionized Arab workers.⁴²²

An economic boom during the early 1930s made ‘Hebrew Labour’ difficult to maintain. The influx of capital with the German immigrants significantly changed these dynamics. In Haifa, where the port development and the Iraq Petroleum Company (IPC) pipeline attracted many workers, the Histadrut competed with PAWS, the labour union comprised of Arab workers who had abandoned a short-lived binational railway workers’ union during the 1920s. Histadrut-PAWS competition was nationalistic, but both strove to meet the needs of workers, and those of the government. By the 1930s, PAWS was suspicious of Histadrut which previously had pleased the government and the Zionist movement by replacing Arab workers in Haifa with Jews. Arab workers also often collaborated with the Histadrut, out of choice or need, but not because they were ‘gullible dupes’.⁴²³

The Histadrut formed the Palestine Labour League (PLL) which sought to organize Arab workers in competition with PAWS, and later with Fakhri Nashashibi’s Arab Workers Society (AWS). The role of Histadrut and the labour party *Mapai* was no secret. Palestinian and Zionist labour shared the common aim of excluding immigrant Arab labour. These *Hauranis* mainly came from Hauran in Syria, although the term came to apply to all migrant workers. They lived in slums, drove down wages, and played a role in the Arab rebellion. The police in 1934 estimated that

⁴²² Lockman, *Comrades and Enemies*, 50–53.

⁴²³ *Ibid.*, 202–207.

15,000-20,000 Hauranis lived in Palestine illegally.⁴²⁴ Action to deport them was discussed in 1935-36, but none was taken.

The Histadrut served and shared many interests of the Arab workers. To attract workers, PLL offered health care, a loan fund, legal services and other benefits to its workers in Jaffa. Histadrut lawyers sued Arab employers on the behalf of Arab workers, making a strong impression. PAWS and AWS were able to use nationalist pressure on PLL members in Jaffa to defect or at least participate in national strikes. The cement incident in October 1935 killed any chance of recovery for PLL.⁴²⁵

The government benefitted from the Histadrut's role in bringing strike-breakers to important industries such as the Nesher cement factory, or Public Works Department (PWD) projects, especially strategic infrastructure like ports and the IPC (Iraq Petroleum Company) pipeline.⁴²⁶ During the Arab general strike and revolt from April through October 1936, the Histadrut organized strikebreakers while the British army supplied military force to protect them. These were motivated by poverty and a desperate need to work.⁴²⁷ Haifa-based David HaCohen, a senior manager in the Histadrut and director of its subsidiary building contractors, *Solel-Boneh*, played a key liaison role with British military during the Arab revolt and secured supplies for the construction of the security infrastructure. During the Second World War, he used his personal finance (or more likely that of Histadrut) to raise an engineer company from amongst Histadrut

⁴²⁴ S25/22735. Police: *Deportation of Hauranis*. 12.4.1935.; CID. *Deportation of Hauranis*. 2.9.1935.; IOR L/PS/12/3343. CID 12/34. 28.8.1934.

⁴²⁵ Lockman, *Comrades and Enemies*, 217–220.

⁴²⁶ *Ibid.*, 207, 222–233.

⁴²⁷ *Ibid.*, 240–247.

workers.⁴²⁸ The Histadrut and Mapai also were the backbone of intelligence collaboration. Ben-Zvi, Shertok, and Zaslani coordinated their intelligence on communists and labour unions with the British, promoting confidence in the Histadrut.⁴²⁹

British reports on the boycott movement from 1929-35 consistently doubted the viability of a complete boycott of Jewish or European goods. During the IPC strike in February 1931, the CID reported that the Histadrut and PAWS cooperated to defend their common interests, demonstrating the results of Histadrut's efforts in previous years to reach cooperation, despite anti-Histadrut propaganda. Communist influence, despite PKP efforts, was negligible thanks to labour organization.⁴³⁰ In 1932 the CID credited the Histadrut and Jewish socialist parties with a successful anti-communist campaign; both sides battled over the hearts and minds of Arab workers. 'By organizing Arab workers the Jews would establish good relations with them, would secure their help in case of disturbances, would ensure an increase of wages for both working communities and would be able, with a united front, to demand an increase of wages of workers employed by the government.'⁴³¹ On the eve of rebellion in early 1936, the Histadrut countered Arab attempts to boycott the employment of Jews and succeeded in replacing Arab with Jewish workers in Jaffa. No violence was used, and the contractor retained unskilled Arab workers.⁴³² The government and CID

⁴²⁸ ISA RG 69/p/935/36. *David Hacoen letters of appreciation*. B. Paget, CinC to HaCohen. 19.2.1946.; [Brig.] Jack Evetts to Hacoen 24.3.1939.; KW Blackburne to HaCohen 11.9.1938.; Air Marshal Park to HaCohen 21.10.1944.;

⁴²⁹ Lockman, *Comrades and Enemies*, 220–221.

⁴³⁰ IOR L/PS/12/3343. *CID 7/35*. 9.3.1935.

⁴³¹ IOR L/PS/10/1315. *CID 14/32*. 27.4.1932.; *CID 43/32*. 2.11.1932.

⁴³² IOR L/PS/12/3343. *CID 4/36*. 10.3.1936.

knew that Histadrut dominated the labour market. The message even reached the Security Service in London. GSI Palestine transmitted a message during the Arab rebellion to MI5 regarding the communist movement:

The main reason for the lull in communist activity can be ascribed to the opposition of the Jewish Labour Party [Mapai] and the Histadruth... as the organisations are national whilst communism is international. It is true that the Labour party incorporates many ideas which may be similar to those of communists but, as previously stated, the organisation of Jewish labour is, in the main, national.⁴³³

This accurately reflects the way the movement saw itself, and demonstrates the close working relations between Labour-Zionist-controlled intelligence bodies and with British intelligence. Curiously, during and after the Second World War, Jews would find it increasingly difficult to cooperate with British counterparts, partly because they came to be seen as “bloody bolshies.”⁴³⁴ This view emerged in the context of Anglo-Zionist competition and the Jewish insurgency. This competition became intense as Zionists disputed British limitations on their right to immigrate, and to defend themselves.

The 1929 riots scarred the Yishuv. The Haganah had thus far been a group of poorly armed and loosely coordinated militias, concentrated in Jewish settlements. It had contributed to the defence of Jerusalem, but was outperformed even by the Oxford theology students who served as special constables.⁴³⁵ The riots prompted a deeper investment by the Haganah in armament and training, but also exposed the three main ideological

⁴³³ TNA KV 5/16. 2a. *cross reference Histadruth re communism*. 8.11.1937. emphasis in original.

⁴³⁴ Wagner, “Britain and the Jewish Underground,” 23.

⁴³⁵ Shapira, *Land and Power*, 178.

divisions in thinking on defence. Ben-Gurion's Mapai party sought to improve investment in defence and to fight the legitimacy of Arab nationalism's claims. This position closely aligned to British policy. The left wing movement, led mainly by *HaShomer HaTzair*, sought to invest more deeply in their chances of reconciliation with Arabs.⁴³⁶ Jabotinsky's Revisionist party stood apart. During the later 1920s, Jabotinsky's position that Palestine should become the seventh dominion of the British Empire was promoted with parliamentarian Josiah Wedgewood. In the wake of the 1929 riots, Jabotinsky called for the establishment of a Jewish state rather than a "national home", and he began on the path towards uncompromising political and defensive stances, modeled partly after the IRA.⁴³⁷

The left and centre found common ground, and each believed that the other's programme would suit its interests. In 1930, when the Jewish Agency founded the JB, it was a cooperative effort with the left, especially *HaShomer*, which still sought reconciliation with Arabs. This meant that A.H. Cohen, who belonged to the left camp, took on the dual role of leading Zionist intelligence work, while promoting peace and cooperation. His work was based on contact with Arab figures throughout the country, and a general effort to reach compromise. Cohen had emerged from the 1929 riots as a superstar of intelligence – providing crucial defense information at the last minute which saved many lives in Jerusalem.⁴³⁸ The JB officially sponsored the activities of the left wing to reach reconciliation, believing that it could reduce anti-Jewish agitation, and

⁴³⁶ Ibid., 184, 187–88.

⁴³⁷ Shindler, *The Triumph of Military Zionism*, 86–92, 107–115, 143–147.

⁴³⁸ Gelber, *Shorshe ha-havatselet*, 59.

would strip power from the Mufti.⁴³⁹ This was an expansion of Kalvarisky's programme, but now it would be coordinated with the Jewish Agency's overall policy and strategy.

Although Zionists worried about British policy since the cancellation of the Passfield White Paper, the policies of the Jewish Agency and British government were closely aligned, facilitating intelligence cooperation. Jewish staff were employed by SSOs, and Zaslani even undertook missions to Iraq on Domvile's behalf, which addressed one of SIS's major concerns. SIS had discovered evidence from a 'well placed Moscow source' or 'a Moscow source which has proved reliable in the past', which indicated Soviet intentions to use the Iranian communist party to attack Britain's main interest in Iran, the Anglo-Persian Oil Company (APOC).⁴⁴⁰ During 1929-31 SIS sent Lieutenant-Colonel Geoffrey Wheeler to create a network to monitor that threat, based in Iraq. 'By far the most important object of my enquiries was to be the activities of Soviet propaganda and intelligence agencies' against British interests in Persia. After some effort, he concluded there was no threat. Whitehall had been misled by refugees, forgeries and its tendency to credit the Soviets 'with superhuman skill in manipulating Eastern governments and peoples according to the requirements of Soviet policy'. He believed many documents about a Soviet attack on Britain were forgeries. Wheeler's

⁴³⁹ CZA J105/19. *Outline of Programme for the Improvement of Jewish-Arab relations*. 27.2.1930.

⁴⁴⁰ Credit and my thanks to John Ferris for his help with this paragraph. FO 371/13784, E 3200. *Report by SIS "Eastern Department" to FO*, 21.6.1929,

memoir emphasises his reliance in reaching these conclusions on the help of a Jewish employee, obviously Zaslani.⁴⁴¹

Despite deep intelligence cooperation, which could better be characterized as mutual-embedment, and Britain's firm and open commitment to the Zionist policy, there was a secretive, competitive aspect to Anglo-Zionist relations. The armament of the Yishuv caused tension. The Jewish Agency executed a dual strategy of advocating for the return of officially sanctioned sealed armouries at Jewish colonies, while simultaneously, the Haganah illegally procured arms. Its aims were defensive, although Revisionists sought to change the Haganah's policy of restraint. This and other issues led the right wing of the Haganah, known as 'Haganah B', to evolve into the militant group *Irgun Zvai Leumi*, National Military Organization, henceforth known as Irgun. The question of Jewish arms, from the arrest of Davidescu in November 1929 to the cement incident in Jaffa in October 1935, is key to understanding how British intelligence and policy treated its relations with the Yishuv. It is also important to compare that treatment with the government's attitude toward Arab arms.

Arabs responded with reasonable hostility to the government's decision in 1931 to bolster the policy of police-administered sealed armouries in Jewish colonies. This led to reports that Arabs from Nablus had been raising funds and arms in response, and that the Youngmen had

⁴⁴¹ FO 371/12278, E 3134/G AOC Iraq to Air Ministry 1/438, 9.6.1927; E 3324, "C" to Bland, C/2664, 9.8.1927; AIR 23/433, Air Ministry to AOC, Iraq, 1.2.1928; MECA, GB165-0298, MSS. *Fifty Years in Asia*, pp. 130-55.

organized demonstrations against the decision.⁴⁴² A hand-copied CID note from that same month, found in Haganah intelligence records, records a meeting in Safad of about 30 men and some village *Mukhtars* ('chosen' village heads), where it was decided to purchase arms via agents in Syria.⁴⁴³ A police report from October 1931 outlined some of those difficulties. The Great War left large stockpiles in Palestine, particularly amongst the Bedouin. Many of these had been sold to Druze rebels in Syria during 1925-26. 'It was obvious during the 1929 riots that there was not a great number of arms in the country because they were not extensively used or carried, but after the riots, both the Arabs and the Jews decided that they must arm themselves...' Jews were thought to have purchased more than Arabs, and apparently, Arabs had assisted Jews in their purchasing and smuggling of arms into Palestine. Arms which had left Palestine in 1925-26 had now returned in addition to consignments from Europe. The police could not guess as to numbers of illegal arms, but showed statistics of seizures, and concluded that 'it is safe to say that the country is, simply, an armed camp.' The border control force was still small so the flow of arms could not be controlled. Law prevented police from searching for arms indiscriminately. The police proposed financial reward for the recovery of illegal arms.⁴⁴⁴

Another police record from the same months shows that one Lulick Bercovitch, an agent of the police and of Joseph Davidescu, provided information leading to the capture of arms from an Arab family. The police

⁴⁴² IOR L/PS/10/1315. *CID to CS re 29/31*. 25.7.1931.; *CID to CS re 30/31*. 29.7.1931.

⁴⁴³ HA 8/kali/29. fol149. *Public movements & propaganda*. 8.1931.

⁴⁴⁴ TNA AIR 2/1568. Barker. *Enclosure 1*. 19.10.1931.

requested that Bercovitch receive a reward.⁴⁴⁵ In this manner, Zionists, who had close relations with the police and arms smugglers, could disarm their opponents and receive financial reward from government. Equally, however, the Haganah was concerned with the armament and organization of Revisionist youth groups. It reported on the *Brit HaBiryonim* (ruffians) movement and its efforts, as well as arms smuggling by Arabs and Jews from Transjordan. It also highlighted that soldiers from the garrison near Rosh Pina, in the north, had been training Arab youths in military drills. The police were informed and Foley, the District Superintendent, investigated.⁴⁴⁶ Thus Haganah maintained its advantage. Later reports showed that British soldiers had been assisting smugglers bringing arms in from Syria, and from Transjordan. ‘Their names are known to us. “Z” investigated and handed a report, but they did not believe him. The police sent a senior officer to investigate, and found more than what Z had indicated.’⁴⁴⁷ Tellingly, these issues never appeared in CID summaries.

In contrast, reports on Jewish attempts to bribe British officials or purchase arms directly from them were handed directly to the Air Ministry. In 1932 a Haganah representative asked a British policeman for help, saying he had £P4000 collected from America and Europe to purchase arms. He and a few others were arrested as the police carefully controlled the case until the moment before arms were transferred.⁴⁴⁸ In 1934, a large consignment was intercepted during offloading at Haifa, leading to the

⁴⁴⁵ HA 8/klali/29. Fol 54. 24.10.1931.

⁴⁴⁶ HA 8/klali/30b. fol360. *Secret*. 3.8.1932..

⁴⁴⁷ YYGH. Vashitz papers. (2)15.35-95. *Information from Z'Y*. 30.3.1933.; Z may refer to Israel Zablodovsky (Amir), a Haganah district commander and intelligence hand.

⁴⁴⁸ AIR 2/1568. *Kingsley-Heath – Hagana*. 19.7.1932. forwarded by Wachope. 6.8.1932.

arrest of the ship's crew and a few Haganah members.⁴⁴⁹ Attempts by Zionists to buy arms from the RAF led to demonstrations and general Arab hostility.⁴⁵⁰ Arab and Jewish self-armament embarrassed Britain's claim to good government by exposing its lack of control. Yet the interception of Jewish arms was offered as evidence by the government to prove to Arabs and League that it upheld the law. It never persuaded Arabs or Jews that they need not worry about this issue. By 1935, politics had intensified such that even Jewish arms seizures were received by Arab public opinion with open hostility. ASI reported such an event in January that year, which resulted in the suspension of two Arabic newspapers for using the case to publish 'violent articles'.⁴⁵¹

Despite all this, the defence of Jewish colonies was still a key part of British security planning. The memoir of spymaster Dudley Clarke illustrates how British soldiers saw the illegal arms issue and their role in the security of the country. Clarke, then an officer in TJFF, described a 1931 visit to Beit Alfa where he organized a joint training drill to test the defences of the colony, saying

The Jews put up a spirited defence, though so short of arms that I had to lend them some of my men to make the exercise realistic. However, I was quite sure they were reluctant to deploy their real weapon power for reasons which I well understood, and I left with the firm impression that they would be well able to hold their own until I could bring the squadron to their aid in an emergency.⁴⁵²

Britain's inability to control illegal arms was a root source of insecurity in Palestine. The cement incident of October 1935 unleashed a

⁴⁴⁹ S25/22735. *Smuggling of firearms*. 10.1934.

⁴⁵⁰ IOR L/PS/10/1315. *CID 4/34*. 12.2.1934.

⁴⁵¹ S25/22735. *ASI*. 2.1935.

⁴⁵² Imperial War Museum (IWM). Clarke papers. *Memoir*. pp.485-486.

mass movement and a spiral towards violence. Consequently, the government began to collate data about Yishuv armaments which it had collected since 1930. The CID discussed likely storage sites, as the government asked the JA to dissociate itself from Haganah and the illegal arms. Characteristically, the JA maintained silent ambiguity on the matter. X2, compiling intelligence on Haganah, asked the CID about the size of that force. The CID said that the size was difficult to pinpoint, and that reports varied between 7,000 and 15,000. News reports suggesting a size of 60,000 were exaggerated.⁴⁵³

Intelligence also collected statistics on the confiscation of arms in neighbouring countries. The British Liaison Officer periodically met with the French sûreté générale in Beirut, which had been interested in the arms question since the cement incident. Tribes had been stockpiling arms and the French authorities sought to warn their British counterparts. Arms seizures rose dramatically between 1934 and 1935.⁴⁵⁴ Surprisingly, intelligence on arms stockpiling did not lead British figures to conclude that a rebellion was imminent.

Intelligence on the Haganah was becoming useful. After the cement incident, Rice, commander of the CID, summarized previous reports on the Haganah. The first, from 1930, illustrated the division between the Revisionist and Histadrut sections of the Haganah. It named some but not all key members and organizers. Rice admitted that it was impossible to confirm details about the Haganah, whose existence was an open secret,

⁴⁵³ HA 47/145. ffs 1495-1500. *OAG to CID*. 13.11.1935.; *CID to X2* 21.12.1935.
⁴⁵⁴ S25/22740. *Extract from Beirut liaison officer – arms traffic*. n.d.

yet, who successfully maintained secrecy about its arms, organization and size. He assessed the organization's size, which he broke down as 4-500 first line members working as storm troops (which in fact Haganah did not yet have) and instructors, about 7,000 second-line members capable of bearing arms for settlement and town defence, and unknown numbers of third-line reserves able to serve in transport, works, and supplies. Arms were thought to number 7,000 of various sorts, mostly pistols. The CID warned that every Jewish immigrant or visitor to Palestine 'should be looked upon as a possible arms smuggler.' Finally, the CID gave reference to a report on Haganah from 1933 which commented on the intelligence section of Haganah which

Consists of a number of Draughtsmen and others sufficiently skilled to draw up maps and plans on which are demarcated Jewish and Arab quarters and thoroughfares, numbers of inhabitants (Jews and Arabs proportionately), vulnerable points, etc.... Certain signalling stations would be used in case of emergency...⁴⁵⁵

The CID also gathered intelligence on Revisionist activities, including intelligence gathered in Poland. In November 1935, the consul in Warsaw passed unverified intelligence that discussed *Betar*, and the leadership of the Revisionist movement in Poland. It also outlined (with some mistakes) the Hebrew terms used in military organization. It also neglected to mention the divide within Revisionism between radical fascists under Abba Achimeir and mainstream Revisionists under Jabotinsky.⁴⁵⁶

Investigations revealed the large amounts of arms brought in during 1929 alone. A report also described the surveillance of a man known to be

⁴⁵⁵ S25/22735. Capt. Rice. *Memorandum*. n.d.

⁴⁵⁶ HA 47/76. *Jewish Military Activities in Poland*. (in French!) 26.7.1934.; HA 47/145. *Warsaw to CO*. 10.11.1935.; Shindler, *The Triumph of Military Zionism*, 154–159.

smuggling arms for Haganah via Syria, and the means he used.⁴⁵⁷ Arab intelligence work also attempted to understand Haganah arms smuggling, as Jamal al-Husseini prepared such a report for the police.⁴⁵⁸ Little else is known about Arab intelligence work, although it is safe to say that preserving secrecy of their own activities was far more important to Arab nationalist leaders than was breaking British or Zionist secrets.

By the end of 1935, the illegal arms situation was out of control. Spicer, the Inspector General of Police (IGP), remarked that the Jewish Agency, for about one year, had not complained about the sealed armouries in colonies, and one could therefore infer that they possessed clandestine supplies.⁴⁵⁹ The Officer Administering the Government (OAG), John Hathorn Hall, passed a telegram to Jamal Husseini, Ragheb Nashashibi and a member of the Budeiri family, insisting that the government was investigating the cement arms incident and the culprits would be brought to justice. A note at the bottom of the document suggests that this was an attempt to induce Arab leaders to abandon their plans for a general strike.⁴⁶⁰ It was too late.

The mass influx of Jews from central Europe also became a grave source of tension, and Jewish Illegal Immigration (JII) became the most serious dispute between Britain, Jews and Arabs. Britain aimed to prove to Arab politicians that it controlled the situation. In the early 1930s, Arab politicians organized the youth to form vigilante coast guard and shore

⁴⁵⁷ HA 47/76. ffs 1493-1494. *OPH?, XO4?, Haifa port to CID*. 8.11.1935.

⁴⁵⁸ S25/22735. *Smuggling of arms by Jews from Trans-Jordan*. 25.11.1935.

⁴⁵⁹ S25/22737. *Extract from meeting at gov't office*. 23.10.1935.

⁴⁶⁰ S25/22737. *From colonia office*. 8.11.1935. *letter to three Arab leaders*. 10.11.1935.

patrols. Fearing a setback in law and order, the CID improved its efforts to prevent Jews from entering Palestine illegally. Organized illegal immigration, known in Hebrew as *Aliyah Bet*, began in 1934 with the Zionist youth movements: the left-wing, labour-affiliated *HeHalutz* and, and the Revisionist *Betar*. The Jewish Agency and government disagreed over the number of immigration certificates which should be allotted. This number was still fixed to the ‘absorptive capacity’ of the country, for which both sides used different metrics. British decision makers had been influenced by the reasoning in the 1930 White Paper which sought political limits to Jewish immigration. While the official limit was economic, all sides assigned political meaning to immigration figures.

Meanwhile anti-Semitic laws in Germany and violence in Poland led to calls in the Zionist movement for mass immigration as a moral response to the rising oppression of Jews. *HeChalutz* worked in both Poland and Palestine to prepare potential migrants for arrival, and to raise the number of legal certificates issued. They organized the first illegal sailing in mid-1934, which brought some 340 passengers to Palestine without detection. Subsequent attempts were blocked, and *HeChalutz* faced financial disaster in maintaining its ship. *Betar* initiated its first attempt at *Aliyah Bet*, in part, because it felt discriminated against by the majority Labour-Zionists who secured legal certificates for their followers in Poland. In 1934 it began to bring in immigrants under the guise of tourist groups, especially during the Maccabiah sports tournament. This ‘adventurism’ was better suited to the Revisionist ideology, and had official sanction. They also attempted to purchase ships, holding one successful sailing in

September 1934. A second ship sank in harbour in Danzig. These setbacks caused both groups to hold off on *Aliyah Bet* until 1937.⁴⁶¹

Good Government and the Rule of Law

Jews were not the only ones to take the law into their own hands.

Vigilantism amongst Arab youth, which aimed to stop illegal immigrants and was officially encouraged by Palestinian leaders, underscored a dangerous path to communal violence. Moreover, the issue created tension between Revisionists and the Histadrut. A CID report from 1933 indicated earlier attempts at illegal immigration. Informers had warned police about attempts by *HaPoel Hatzair*, the Mapai youth movement, and the revisionist Biryonim to conduct illegal immigration. Public opinion had turned against the police, and informants faced intimidation by Jewish youth movements. A demonstration on 9 December 1933 led to a clash with police.⁴⁶²

By mid-1934, the Youngmen Congress began to organize volunteers for its vigilante force. Little had materialized so far except for a watch network. Jewish newspapers had described Jewish youth efforts to counteract such a movement, and to prevent Arabs from interfering, reporting that 'this may mean clashes between both parties.' Border security and patrols had been increased, but were not thought to be effective. One Jacob Gordon had been arrested bringing tourists in from Warsaw via Syria. His co-conspirators had fled to Italy.⁴⁶³ By August the youth activity had led to clashes between Arab boy scouts and Jewish youth, presumably

⁴⁶¹ Ofer, *Escaping the Holocaust*, 7–11.

⁴⁶² IOR L/PS/10/1315. *CID* 27/33. 19.12.1933.

⁴⁶³ IOR L/PS/12/3343. *CID* 11/34. 6.8.1934.

from *Brit HaBiryonim* or *Betar*. In one instance, the scouts, acting as a volunteer coast guard, had marched through the town of Netanya on their way to the beach but were forced to retreat by a Jewish group, despite police patrols in the area. The incident led the government to clarify that volunteer coast guards were illegal and would be prosecuted. The government also stepped up its patrols, and employed TJFF units and RAF aircraft in search and patrol functions. The show of force, it hoped, would calm Arab sentiment.⁴⁶⁴ The CID knew that Jamal Husseini and Yacoub Ghusseini, the chair of the Youngmen's Executive, had led the committee which organized the coast guards.⁴⁶⁵ Thus, the Mufti's party directly encouraged youth militancy. Nevertheless, no action was taken against them or their organizations. The incident was not reported in CID summaries to the secretariat, and thus encouraged the militant youth to continue. Good government and the security structure had both failed.

Palestinian nationalists were not satisfied with measures against illegal immigration – they desired an end to Jewish immigration altogether. It was only in the summer of 1939 that the government began to make wholehearted efforts to intercept IJI, and in the process coordinated CID intelligence with efforts of the FO, and SIS throughout Europe. Nor did efforts to stop Haganah arms traffic affect Arab opinion. CID and ASI seemed to realize this, but the government still attempted to placate nationalist leaders.

⁴⁶⁴ IOR L/PS/12/3343. *CID 12/34*. 28.8.1934.

⁴⁶⁵ HA 47/1035. 7a. *extract dis 178/34*. 31.8.1934.

The root problems were that despite a policy of good government, Britain treated Arabs and Jews unequally under the law and failed to manage Palestine's security problems. Arabs complained that Jews were not treated as harshly as they were when caught with arms. Jews complained that the government dared not confront Haurani illegal immigrants, who outnumbered Jewish illegals by a large factor. Illegal arms, illegal immigration, vigilantism, and the general rise to prominence of Jewish and Arab youth gangs eroded Britain's grasp on the law. Good government was failing because Britain could not enforce the law, or instill public confidence in it. Its reliance on the Histadrut was part of this problem, as was its growing dependence on the Yishuv's self-defence and intelligence cooperation. Yet Wauchope continued to feel that he could rely on the Mufti's influence and that of the Labour Zionist movement. Wauchope rarely consulted intelligence opinion, even when CID and ASI agreed about the gravity of the political problems.

Security Reforms on Trial

The remainder of this chapter will discuss the modes of control exercised by the government during the various crises between 1930 and 1936. These included censorship, the registration of societies, improved police work, training of police and military, as well as the measures discussed above. These means were introduced as a consequence of the 1929 disturbances. During most of the 1920s the Palestine government was reluctant to conduct political censorship. Although it monitored the press to gauge public opinion, it tended not to interfere, except in the case of 'immoral literature'. The Postmaster General requested that retained French magazines such as *Lingeries Libertines*, *Sex Appeal*, and *froufrou* be

forwarded to his office.⁴⁶⁶ Even at the height of the Arab rebellion, moral censorship was given considerable government attention. In fact, it was the army rather than government, with the help of Ezra Danin and other JA Arabists, which intercepted and translated Arabic mail and other captured documents during that time.

After the 1929 disturbances, press control became an important part of the government toolkit for security and control. Another step taken was the registration of societies and their publications. This measure existed before the 1929 disturbances, but CID records on registered societies which survive seem to concentrate on Arab, communist, and Revisionist Zionist movements. These records demonstrate government's increased concern with monitoring youth groups; any youth movement or sports club drew particular interest, since these were perfect sources for political movements to raise forces. This attention gave the CID a window into the mindset of the youth. For instance, one report about a meeting led by Akram Zu'ayter and more senior nationalists at the Moslem Sports Club in Jaffa, noted that leaders suggested 'introducing among the young adult students some form of military training similar to that shown by the Jews.' During the previous year, Ajaj Nuwayhid called upon the youth at the sports club to 'be brave like the Europeans, devote their lives towards their country...'⁴⁶⁷

Censorship rarely silenced publications. After the controversial eviction of Bedouin from the Wadi Hawareth/Emeq Hefer lands, Musa al-Husseini, a relative of the Mufti, published an article in *al-Jamia al-Arabia*

⁴⁶⁶ IOR L/PS/11/201. 3992. Samuel to CO *Press censorship*. 4.8.1921.; ISA RG 15/m/5145/1 *weekly confidential summary of information and opinion in the press*. Jan-nov 1928.; ISA RG 28/m/1951/4, *postmaster general to director of customs*. 30.5.1938.

⁴⁶⁷ HA 47/747: *Jaffa DIS*. 3.4.1932; *Jaffa DIS*. 2.8.1931;

of ‘a seditious character,’ according to the CID. asked the Chief Secretary whether the writer and editor of the paper should be prosecuted under laws enacted during 1929.⁴⁶⁸ It does not appear that any action was taken in that case. The government generally was hesitant to close a newspaper or journal, although it would fine them. Emergencies increased incidence of penalties and closures following the 1933 disturbances.

The reformed security regime faced several tests. It had to prove to the Yishuv, the League, and itself that it could protect the citizens of Palestine. A series of murders, especially the major incidents at Yagur and Nahlal, served as the main test case for that particular objective, as did the murder of Labour leader Haim Arlosoroff. Britain also had to prove that it could prevent major disturbances – which it did successfully in autumn 1933. A countrywide drill in 1934 served as proof that if matters spun out of control, the forces available in the country could handle it. The biggest and most important test of this security regime was its ability to translate intelligence into wise policy decisions. This was the biggest weakness, resulting from the government’s belief that it could manipulate the Mufti, who was more interested in personal prestige than the undoing of the Zionist policy. It also resulted from the politicization of CID intelligence, and the lack of influence by ASI outside of military matters.

The challenge to police became more serious when ‘Izz al-Din al-Qassam’s followers murdered three Jews at in an ambush at the gates of the Yagur (Yajur in Arabic) farm on 4 April 1931.⁴⁶⁹ This launched a series of

⁴⁶⁸ HA 47/1035. *CID to CS re eviction of arab wadi hawareth*. 20.6.1933.

⁴⁶⁹ Gelber, *Shorshe ha-havatselet*, 105–107.

anti-Jewish murders, which caused the Yishuv to demand that Britain provide better security law enforcement. Police pointed to Qassam as head of the organizing group, which included Subhi al-Khadra.⁴⁷⁰ Subhi al-Khadra was a Mufti supporter, SMC employee, Istiqlalist, and had been in the Ottoman military academies, where Black Hand had threatened CUP collaborators.

Haifa became a centre for counter-terrorist activity, under the guise of the investigation of the Yagur murders. Yishuv intelligence worked with the CID, with figures such as Davidescu coordinating intelligence from multiple sources. The first CID summary to attribute any political activity to Qassam was from February 1932, when it highlighted the role of ‘marriage registrars, preachers, and other officials’ of the SMC who had been ‘instructed to enlist support for the Husseini party in the course of their visits to villages.’⁴⁷¹ For some unknown reason, perhaps a lack of trust, or even the security of ongoing investigations, the CID never reported Qassam’s connection to violent groups, or even Subhi al-Khadra, despite the reportage of the Haifa police and SSO.

Regardless, the CID never caught the perpetrators. The next major incident was the murder of Joseph Yacoubi and his nine-year-old son on 22 December 1932 when their home in Moshav Nahalal was firebombed. Five arrests were made during subsequent months, and one interrogation led a suspect to name Qassam as having instructed the YMMA branch in Saffuriyya (today’s Tzipori), which called itself “Black Hand”, to commit

⁴⁷⁰ Ibid., 106.

⁴⁷¹ IOR L/PS/10/1315. *CID to CS re 7/32*. 23.2.1932.

the act. Rashid al-Hajj Ibrahim, in his memoir, considered the bombing to be the first “revolutionary experience” during that period, and discussed the requirements for recruitment to Qassam’s gang.⁴⁷²

In February 1933 CID attributed the energy of the YMMAs in the north to Ibrahim and Khadra. Istiqlal aimed to control these groups.

The increased interest of Arabs in sports and in independent Boy Scouts troops, as witnessed in their frequent excursions and displays, with political manifestations, is due to the spirit which the [Istiqlal] party is spreading. It should be noted that the party includes a dangerous element who hold revolutionary views and are intent on militant activity and who may in the future prove a source of agitation and trouble.⁴⁷³

Ibrahim and Khadra were inspired and encouraged by the Mufti in this work. Both SMC employees, they depended on the Mufti’s patronage, and supported his leadership. To further illustrate the point, months before the Nahalal murder, the CID reported on the role played by Khadra and Ibrahim in reviving YMMAs, and improving the popularity of the Mufti in the north.⁴⁷⁴ Despite all this, the CID summaries to the government never reported such connections. It barely treated political murder as a topic, although Arlosoroff was an important exception.

CID and government worried more about Jewish perceptions of their competency. Regarding Nahalal, it focused on Revisionist demonstrations and resolutions, one of which demanded of “the British Government which maintains by Jewish money an Arab military unit in Trans-Jordan” the foundation of a “Jewish military unit for lawful self

⁴⁷² Sanagan, “Teacher, Preacher, Soldier, Martyr: Rethinking ’Izz Al-Din Al-Qassam,” 29.; I am grateful to Mark Sanagan for sharing with me his unpublished paper on the Nahalal murders.

⁴⁷³ IOR L/PS/10/1315. CID 6/33. 18.2.1933.

⁴⁷⁴ IOR L/PS/10/1315. CID 29/32. 27.7.1932.

defence.’⁴⁷⁵ This was in reference to the use of Palestine tax funds to support the TJFF and Arab Legion in Transjordan. It reflects the CID’s lack of concern for the crime, rather its political fallout. So, the Yishuv’s satisfaction with the arrest of the perpetrators was important to the government. Moreover, the police’s interest in the assassination of Chaim Arlosoroff was limited to the problem of increased Revisionist militancy.⁴⁷⁶ Patrick Domvile wrote to Zaslani about the case, sharing the glee of the Labour-Zionists about the conviction of one of the perpetrators and government measures to prevent disturbances with Revisionists. He attributed peace between the parties to the good behaviour of Mapai.⁴⁷⁷ The convicted assassin Stavsky was acquitted on appeal, which outraged Mapai and Histadrut. The CID reported on the gravity of the case, describing the unprecedented confrontational behaviour of Revisionists, their success at stripping the Histadrut of its middle-class followers, and the possibility that this might set back the Zionist project – or even destroy it.⁴⁷⁸ Their worry about Histadrut-Revisionist competition, and the possibility of armed conflict within the Yishuv stands out in CID reportage. The Histadrut was seen as an important support to the government, and Jabotinsky was seen to subvert Chaim Weizmann’s influence, which Britain still believed in.

Yet, unlike Arab factions, Revisionists and Mapai shared a common political goal which was paramount. A paradoxical phenomenon emerged in the Yishuv where rival ideologies curbed action against each other and shaped a common social framework. The voluntary nature of the Yishuv

⁴⁷⁵ IOR L/PS/10/1315. *CID to CS re 2/33*. 11.1.1933.

⁴⁷⁶ IOR L/PS/10/1315. *CID 20/33*. 10.8.1933.

⁴⁷⁷ ISA RG 130/mfa/4373/7. *Domvile to Zaslani*. 9.6.1934.

⁴⁷⁸ IOR L/PS/10/1315. *CID 9/34*. 15.6.1934.

and its political system also curbed extremism.⁴⁷⁹ At first, the Histadrut rejected attempts to reach détente over bitterness at the loss of Arlosoroff and its opposition to fascism, represented by Brit HaBiryonim at that time. Tenuous peace was reached between the parties when Ben-Gurion and Jabotinsky reached terms in 1935.⁴⁸⁰

Wauchope was satisfied with the results of police reforms. He praised Spicer for his leadership of the police and its newfound efficiency. Crime rates between 1931 and 1934 were reported to have fallen. The police performance during October 1933 was a source of specific praise, especially for the Palestinian section of the police. Wauchope wholeheartedly backed Spicer's defence of the quality of the police force.⁴⁸¹ This was the reflection of the perspective of a civil police force, and did not account for the performance of the CID which was, practically, a political police. It also whitewashed certain problems, not all of which were caused by politics.

The 1933 Disturbances & 1934 Security Exercise

The CID's successes culminated in its preparation of the police for confrontation with demonstrators during the 1933 disturbances. CID summaries leading up to the disturbances described the activist politics which were trending towards the possible disturbances.

The Arabs believe that immigration has exceeded all bounds, that they are destined to extermination and expulsion, that Government has disregarded Arab interests and representations and its own expert opinions, that protests and words are of no avail and that nothing but action can save them.⁴⁸²

⁴⁷⁹ Gorney, "The Voluntaristic Zionist System on Trial," 554.

⁴⁸⁰ CZA S25/22735. ASI. 2.5.1935.; IOR L/PS/12/3343. CID 6/35. 27.2.1935.

⁴⁸¹ CO 733/250/7. 9. Wauchope to Philip Cunliffe Lister. 13.3.1934.; A. RGB Spicer to Wauchope, 29.11.1934.; B. Spicer to Wauchope. 5.12.1934.

⁴⁸² IOR L/PS/10/1315. CID 24/33. 7.10.1933.

When Musa Kazim led a procession from al-Aqsa, the group was intercepted outside the old city by police who dispersed them by means of baton charges. This led to some injuries, but Musa Kazim was let through on account of his advanced age.⁴⁸³ Authorities in Egypt were kept up to date about intelligence in Palestine, in case of the ‘un-anticipated event of reinforcements being required.’ After the events, AOC Palestine asked Egypt for a Signal Detachment – perhaps to monitor the unfolding of potential disturbances. Egypt had complained that intelligence was arriving slowly.⁴⁸⁴ Either way, on 27 October in Jaffa, the riots broke out when a procession in that city was dispersed. This time, the crowd fired on the police, who shot back. One policeman and ten rioters were reported killed. Within two hours, the scene had calmed down. The High Commissioner proudly reported that no troops were called upon for support.

This outcome was possible because of police preparation. The district superintendent of police (DSP) at Jaffa prepared a briefing about the event, which survives in the papers of J.A.M. Faraday – a senior police officer and ex-gendarme. The plan outlined two days before the riots exhibits a precise knowledge of how the procession was to unfold, the armament of the demonstrators, and their objectives.⁴⁸⁵ This preparation was possible because of the cooperation of the Jewish Agency, JB, and other collaborations. The CID understood the relationship between the Istiqlal party and the radical youth. The Haganah, for its part, first learned

⁴⁸³ FO 141/699/9. *HC Palestine to HC Egypt*. 13.10.1933.

⁴⁸⁴ FO 141/699/9. *Hall to Loraine*. 14.10.1933.; *Egyptforce to HC Palestine*. 14.10.1933.

⁴⁸⁵ MECA GB165-0101 JAM Faraday papers. 1/3. *Police Dispositions for Friday 27 October 1933*. 25.10.1933.

of forthcoming disturbances through its observation of government and police. Only the date was a surprise: the government had expected demonstrations to coincide with Balfour Day on 2 November.

Similar warnings came from the SSO in Haifa. Haganah observed police preparations in Jaffa in the weeks leading up to the events. This perhaps calmed Haganah and enabled restraint. The JA Arab Department learned first-hand from source '*Ne'eman*' that concerted trouble was to be expected. Schools ordered youth to stay home. The source was one Abu-Na'ema of the village Battir, a contact of Ben-Zvi and A.H. Cohen, who was motivated by his friendship with local Jews. He was in touch with Musa Darwish, the Mufti's right hand-man during the 1929 disturbances. Other Arab informants confirmed that youth were being summoned for demonstrations, and that medical facilities were being prepared. Another source was a Jew working in the electric company, who happened to be connecting the home of Musa Kazim and reported to Haganah on the visitors to the senior leader. This gave forewarning of the demonstrations in Jerusalem, which police intercepted.

Informants told the Jewish Agency that the Jaffa disturbances would be even larger during the coming week. Throughout the month of November, the Haganah and the Jewish Agency cooperated with the CID and SSOs on the deteriorating security situation. The Haganah maintained constant telephone taps in Jerusalem and Jaffa, since at that time, both phone networks depended on a central exchange which was not automated. The Haganah provided Shertok with the intelligence, who shared it directly with the Chief Secretary. This source, as well as reports from Eliyahu

Epstein (Eilat) of the Arab Bureau of the Jewish Agency, who was in Beirut, also highlighted the role played by the Syrian Istiqlalists in preparing for general demonstrations in Palestine. The British consul in Damascus, Gilbert MacKereth, reached the same conclusion.⁴⁸⁶ Italian financial and propaganda support was noticed thanks to observation of Mohammad Ali al-Taher, based in Cairo, who worked closely with Shakib Arslan, and the Italians.⁴⁸⁷

British security managed the increasing tension in a number of ways. On Balfour Day some 'slight desultory sniping' near Jerusalem and the cutting of telephone wires took place, but the situation was otherwise quiet.⁴⁸⁸ Security also took steps to manage the press and refute false claims by Arabic papers.⁴⁸⁹ The Palestine Police corresponded with MI5 to suppress false news and rumours being spread to Arab communities around the world. One telegram in particular sought to get Syrian nationalists in Brazil to protest to the League of Nations. MI5 did not see the need to suppress this particular message, but sought clarity from the government on MI5's power to suppress international cables, for future reference. Valentine Vivian of SIS believed they did have the legal power to do so.⁴⁹⁰ Communist attempts to monopolize the Jaffa disturbances were suppressed through successive raids over the two days preceding 27 October.⁴⁹¹ In all, British security measures worked.

⁴⁸⁶ Gelber, *Shorshe ha-ḥavatsselet*, 61, 115–116; Rivlin and Rivlin, *Zar Lo Yavin*, 317.

⁴⁸⁷ FO 141/699/9. *GSI Egypt to First Secretary Cairo*. 1.11.1933.

⁴⁸⁸ FO 141/699/9. *ASOME to Cairo Residency. Situation- Palestine*.

⁴⁸⁹ FO 141/699/9. *Jerusalem to Cairo*. 1.11.1933.

⁴⁹⁰ HO 144/22592. *Guy Liddell to Newsam*. 13.11.1933.

⁴⁹¹ IOR L/PS/10/1315. *CID 8/34*. 26.5.1934.

The NPL became more active in London as a result of these events. Margaret Farquharson wrote to Musa Kazim, reporting on a meeting she hosted at the Hyde Park Hotel on 12 December 1933. She promised that the majority of British people supported the Arabs, adding that she was pursuing the matter of immigration in the House of Lords, and already had caused questions to be asked in the House of Commons about Arab compromises.⁴⁹² One cannot be sure, but this political pressure in London may well have helped to secure the lenient treatment of the strike and riot leaders, many of whom accepted bonds for ‘good behaviour’ instead of their sentences for prison or hard labour.

The army, while not called upon during the October riots, was actually deployed around the country to enable a swift response – just in case. This may explain why Palestine Air Headquarters borrowed the mobile signal unit from Egypt.⁴⁹³ This was the first major test for British security since 1929, and it was a success. Nonetheless, lessons were learned, and applied throughout 1934 and 1935. Plans for defence against external threats were well established, but in 1934, the army and RAF actually drilled a simulated rebellion. Tony Simonds, then commander of battalion intelligence in the Royal Berkshire Regiment, remarked that battalion/regimental intelligence was rated of such low importance by the system that it was combined with the role of Railway Transport Officer, and twelve members of the intelligence section were the drummers in the regimental band.⁴⁹⁴ As head of battalion intelligence, Simonds saw much

⁴⁹² ISA RG/65/p/986/39. *Farquharson to Musa Kazim*. 4.12.1933.

⁴⁹³ FO 141/699/9. *AOC Middle East to Chancery, Cairo*. 6.11.1933.

⁴⁹⁴ IWM, A.C. Simonds Papers. *Pieces of war*. p.10.

of the country and learned its terrain and people. Then-Col. Jack Evetts, the senior army commander, had observed Simonds' 'enthusiasm for mixing with Arabs and the country side, ordained that there would be an exercise by the Royal Berkshire Regiment against a guerilla band, (incidentally, far ahead of its time in military thinking).'⁴⁹⁵ Simonds' section was dressed in Arab clothes and planned an ambush of the rest of his regiment. The drill was a success, although he broke his ankle. Simonds' remark that the drill was ahead of its time was indeed true. It was only at this time in the UK that the army even began to revise its thinking for war preparation and revision of field service regulations under Archibald Wavell, another Palestine 'graduate'.

The countrywide drill was held in June 1934. Army, RAF, police and civil departments participated, comprising the entire garrison: Two infantry battalions (1600 troops), two TJFF cavalry squadrons, a half-company of mechanized TJFF, three armoured car sections, a signals detachment, as well as one and a half squadrons of aircraft. The drill 'envisaged a state of unrest throughout the country on the first day' and sought to achieve a high degree of realism. The second day simulating the dying-down phase of disturbances and was more of a test for commanders and the government. The drill even simulated the deliberate distraction of SSOs, who would normally supply warning in emergencies – but often were prevented from doing so. It simulated situations such as Labour-Revisionist disturbances, Arab-Jewish disturbances, a plot to murder a senior police officer, a Bedouin incursion from Transjordan, the widespread

⁴⁹⁵ IWM, A.C. Simonds Papers. *Pieces of war*. p.25.

cutting of telephone lines, and other events typical of emergencies and disturbances in Palestine.⁴⁹⁶ Wauchope was most satisfied with the exercise, remarking that difficulties experienced in communications were normal. He also expressed concern about poor civil-military liaison. In fact, many records from ASI and government which survive in the Central Zionist Archives show consistent concern with these issues as the politico-security situation developed during 1935.⁴⁹⁷ Thus, while the situation spun out of control between November 1935 and April 1936, the government was constantly revising its security procedures, ensuring that infrastructure, especially signals and telegraph, was in place to enable a military response.

Road to Rebellion

Security preparations and reforms culminated in the defeat of 'Izz al-Din al-Qassam's 'Black Hand' gang in November 1935. On 7 November, while investigating a theft from Ein Harod, Jewish police Sergeant Rosenfeld was shot while tracking the suspects near Mt. Gilboa. Police backup found Rosenfeld dead, as well as the remnants of the rebel camp. 'Subsequent investigation... identified his murderers with the gang reported to have been formed by Sheikh Essedin el Qassam'. Intelligence about Qassam's movements in the Nablus-Jenin area led police to close in on the region. Skirmishes broke out in the countryside near Jenin during police searches. Qassam's rebels fired on police again on 20 November, engaging them in direct combat lasting from 0645 to 1000. Four or five gang members were reported killed, and five captured. Qassam was among the dead. Police hoped that their success would have a deterrent effect.

⁴⁹⁶ CO 323/1248/13. *Report on the Internal Security Exercise*. 6.1934.

⁴⁹⁷ S25/22735. Wauchope. *Speech on public security*. n.d.

However, information obtained after Qassam's death demonstrated the contrary.⁴⁹⁸

From a security point of view, this was the culmination of success – proof that British rule could stand up to serious disturbances, despite all the controversies of 1929-1932. After much preparation and training, the police had led the investigation and defeat of a rebel gang. Aircraft had passed reconnaissance information to the CID, and intelligence had been coordinated between civil and military sources to support a police operation. Yet, the government, CID, and to some extent ASI, failed to appreciate the political significance of Qassam's death. CID and ASI agreed that new gang formation was mostly talk and little action, and that nothing in the immediate future could be expected. They also believed the action against Qassam had had a deterrent effect against 'unorganised banditry'.⁴⁹⁹ ASI was more apprehensive than the CID about the potential for future violence organized in response to Qassam's defeat and concluded with a severe warning that the gang was connected by family and other lines to national leaders such as Auni Abdul Hadi.

The mood in the country certainly had changed. Hamdi al-Husseini told the Jaffa branch of Youngmen that now was the time for confrontation with England.

Bad Leadership changed the course of our struggle. If we fought the English face to face we should not be as we are now. We fought in 1921, 1929, and 1933 and our blood was lost because of the leaders. We are not succeeding because we do not fight the right way, that is, face to face with England.⁵⁰⁰

⁴⁹⁸ CZA S25/22735. *ASI summary*. 22.11.1935.

⁴⁹⁹ CZA S25/22735. *Handwritten note, AS (Alan Saunders?) to Assistant Chief Secretary*. 5.12.1935.

⁵⁰⁰ CZA S25/22735. *Air Intelligence weekly summary*. 13.12.1935.

Britain, not the Yishuv, was the main obstacle to Palestinian national aims. As discussed in the last chapter, the cement incident led to a mass movement led cooperatively by PAP, the youth, and Istiqlal, which led to a general strike in April 1936. This spark coincided with efforts by the Mufti to consolidate support from outside Palestine – and it is reasonable to conclude that this included some notion of military support. It was no coincidence that mujahidin in the north began to mobilize at the same time.

Fawzi al-Qawuqji, who led a military rebellion beginning in August 1936, wrote in his memoir that the revolt had been planned since 1935. As an officer in the Iraqi army, he had visited Palestine and suggested a broad plan to prepare for revolt, to be implemented when needed. A similar plan had been developed in Syria to confront French policy. The French, caught between the Rhineland crisis, the Abyssinian crisis, and the prospect of revolution in Syria, were forced into negotiations after a 54-day strike. The same action was intended for Palestine. Qawuqji recruited volunteers from Iraq and Syria to join his campaign. Under the guise of official work for Transjordan, he reconnoitred the border areas, and prepared maps for the forthcoming campaign. He believed he was under investigation by British intelligence, and began to spread a mix of false and true rumours about volunteer groups from the Iraqi army wishing to volunteer to fight in Palestine. He became friendly with British intelligence officers, and ‘began pretending to be shameless and drunk.’ This, he used as an excuse to resign and pilfer or purchase arms from Indian army bases.⁵⁰¹ It is important to be

⁵⁰¹ Qawuqji and Qasimiyah, *Mudhakkirat Fawzi al-Qawuqji, 1890-1977*, 10–14.

cautious about what Qawuqji says about this period – he was later accused (almost certainly falsely) by the Mufti of being a British spy, and many Palestinians share this view. Nonetheless, Qawuqji's premise that preparations were made long in advance is interesting. There is a lack of other evidence which might substantiate some of Qawuqji's claims – including that he was forced by circumstance to rely on commercial telegraph in Transjordan to organize military preparations for revolt.

Likewise, even Akram Zu'ayter's memoir shows some degree of preparation for revolt, or at least a spirit of resistance. He discussed the coincident deaths of Qassam and Ibrahim Hananu, who had led Syrian revolutionaries, and published an article about the role of leadership and self-sacrifice. He recorded in his diary in the New Year, 'The revolution is our path until the end. Propaganda and preparation for revolution are the most important duties. Public opinion has incessantly been injected with the spirit of revolution, and it is necessary to transition to the phase of action.'⁵⁰² Sure enough, communist and Istiqlalist Hamdi al-Husseini began a renewed program at that time. Furthermore, Zu'ayter discussed his correspondence with Qawuqji in April 1936. Qawuqji had recently visited Jerusalem and so Zu'ayter wrote that he regretted that they had not met, and updated him on the revolutionary excitement in the country, and on efforts to organize a movement, and the hopes that he had tied to Qawuqji in the revolutionary movement about to activate.⁵⁰³

⁵⁰² Zu'aytir, *Yawmīyāt Akram Zu'aytir : Al-Ḥarakah Al-Waṭanīyah Al-Filasṭīnīyah, 1935-1939*, 42–43.

⁵⁰³ *Ibid.*, 54.

Mark Sanagan demonstrates clearly how nationalist youth and Istiqlal co-opted the martyrdom of Qassam in order to increase the spirit of rebellion. Qassam was eulogized by many, but Zu'ayter's accused the Mufti and senior leaders of ignoring the nation. Sanagan describes this as 'rhetorical posturing', arguing that the leadership feared a loss of power to a populist revolt.⁵⁰⁴ This view overlooks the evidence which demonstrates the Mufti's role in preparing the ground for these events. Sanagan cited Jamal's statement to the government that perhaps 'one day it might be that every Palestinian would become as one of those [Qassamites] who were killed a few days ago near Jenin.'⁵⁰⁵ This has been mischaracterized as an expression of fear. More reasonably, it was an underhanded threat. The day after his meeting with the government, Gilbert MacKereth shared an intercepted letter from Jamal to the Syrian nationalists. The letter used typical Islamist language to arouse fear of Jewish aims to take over Muslim holy sites at Al-Aqsa and Hebron. The PAP urged 'their brethren in race and religion to unite to bring such tyranny and injustice to an end so that Palestine may remain an opulent Arab country with its sacred shrines.'⁵⁰⁶ Meanwhile CID intelligence reported on the Istiqlal's push for non-cooperation.⁵⁰⁷ The CID also discussed the efforts of those connected to SMC Sheikhs to increase membership in YMMA branches in the north, and spread propaganda.⁵⁰⁸

⁵⁰⁴ Sanagan, "Teacher, Preacher, Soldier, Martyr: Rethinking 'Izz Al-Din Al-Qassam," 33–34.

⁵⁰⁵ Ibid., 35.

⁵⁰⁶ FO 684/8. *MacKereth to Wauchope*. 26.11.1935.

⁵⁰⁷ HA 47/770. *Extract Jaffa DIS*. 30.11.1935

⁵⁰⁸ HA 47/1033. *Haifa DIS extract – Arab youth congress*. 21.12.1935.; ASP Haifa *new armed gangs – Hikmet el-Namleh*. 29.11.1935.

CID intelligence withheld useful assessments, and failed to show the Mufti at the centre of this web. ASI reports, however, were insightful. In the wake of Qassam's death, ASI reported that the peasants were 'entirely in sympathy' with the gangs. The PAP had encouraged the formation of gangs, and the aim was to arouse hostility to government. Extremists like Zu'ayter attacked leaders like the Mufti 'to remove the restraining influences which impede the adoption of militant action as a means of coercing the government.'⁵⁰⁹

The Mufti and Jamal used these extremist youth and had fostered their growth during preceding years. Husseini influence remained strong, and the outbreak of the general strike in 1936 was a way for PAP to take concrete action while still restraining revolt, which was premature, since foreign fighters were not yet organized. The negotiations in Syria which led to the Franco-Syrian treaty allowed the shifting of efforts and expectations to Palestine. With the force led by Fawzi al-Qawuqji arriving in August, the general strike had appeared to evolve into revolt. In fact, this was simply another element of the same movement and programme. The pan-Arab strategy was to force Britain to concede as France had done. Even as early in 1932, the CID reported that Palestine Istiqlal's founders tended to support the Mufti, favoured absolute independence for Syria and Palestine, and Izz al-Din al-Qassam had begun to preach in favour of this policy.⁵¹⁰ Only by 1935-36 did this strategy take a mature shape.

⁵⁰⁹ CZA S25/22735. *ASI summary*. 22.11.1935.

⁵¹⁰ IOR L/PS/10/1315. *CID*. 10.8.1932.

Typically, the Mufti's campaign centred on raising alarm in religious and nationalist circles separately, while maintaining personal distance from the nationalists' dirty work. The Mufti most likely wished to be the man who negotiated independence with the British government, which he expected to cave under pressure. He underestimated Britain's refusal to negotiate under armed threat and its willingness to push back forcefully, and could not have anticipated that during 1936, the British army had begun rearmament, and would be relieved of the crises in Europe and the Red Sea.

*Our problems will not be solved by loud voices, but only
by iron and blood.*
-Rashad al-Khatib of the Palestine Arab Party, quoting
Bismarck.⁵¹¹

Chapter 7 – The Arab Revolt: Intelligence and Politics

This chapter examines the outbreak and suppression of the revolt, with a general focus on the role of intelligence in guiding the conflict towards a temporary political solution. Historians have addressed how policymakers confronted the threat of revolt without explaining the process of decision-making. Intelligence reports illustrate how the government managed its escalating conflict with Palestinians as well as that between Jews and Arabs. The political context examined here is essential to understanding intelligence and the military confrontation with the rebellion, which will be the focus of the next chapter.

Policymakers, especially the HC Arthur Wauchope, believed that internal Palestinian conflicts could be exploited so to help Britain maintain control. He believed the Mufti was mainly interested in his own power, and overlooked his increasingly obvious desire to win concessions from Britain on Jewish immigration and possibly independence. This misplaced faith drove the Palestine government's impotent policy. After a look at existing literature on the strike and rebellion, this chapter will examine the role of the Palestine government in managing the conflict, as broken down into three distinct phases: the general strike and creeping violence from April through August 1936, guerilla warfare from August until the so-called 'ceasefire' which commenced in November, and the proceedings of the

⁵¹¹ IOR L/PS/12/3343. *CID summary 2/36*. 18.2.1936. p4.

Peel commission from November 1936 until the Bludan conference and assassination of District Commissioner for Galilee, Lewis Andrews, in September 1937.

Despite all evidence, Wauchope still bet on the possibility that the Mufti could be controlled with the help of other Arab statesmen and the promise of an improvement of his prestige. Alas, the HC, government and CID were finally forced to concede that the Mufti's wings needed clipping. Intelligence never convinced policymakers to take pre-emptive action. Rather, British policy was only ever provoked by rebel escalations. After one year of struggle for Palestinian cooperation, Britain announced a partition scheme in the summer of 1937. Pan-Arab leaders helped to renew the rebellion, and so the government finally started to treat the Mufti as an enemy. Zionist intelligence was well organized by this point, and it became a more important asset for its British counterpart. Weaknesses in intelligence were understandable but were less significant problems than British policy, which continued to seek a constitutional solution in 1936 and continued to treat the Mufti like a potential partner until mid-1937.

In March 1936, the House of Commons debated Wauchope's proposed legislative council. Jews and Arabs watched closely and the CID reported on the changed atmosphere in the government of Stanley Baldwin. 'Following so closely after the debate in the House of Lords, where a formerly friendly atmosphere has now become definitely hostile to them, it has made them [the Arabs] realise more than ever the strength of Jewish influence in England, and they are now definitely suspicious as to Government's intentions in regard to the establishment of the Council.' The

CID concluded that Palestinians now doubted that they would get any concession from Britain, and that they believed that British parliamentarians had been corrupted. From the Palestinians' point of view, the original deals offered by Churchill and Amery in the 1920s outweighed the present offers. The CID warned on the eve of revolt that any delay in implementation of legislative reform would lead to disorder.⁵¹² The proposals for a Palestine legislative council fell apart as both Arabs and Jews set conditions which could not be met by any other party.

In May 1936, five weeks into the strike, Whitehall proposed sending a Royal Commission to investigate the disturbances and propose solutions. At the top of the list was the problem of governance, which was still at the centre of Palestinian grievances. The Arab leadership rejected this proposal, but nonetheless a commission headed by Lord Peel was imposed by Britain the next week. However, the Peel Commission would only begin its investigations once Palestine had returned to peace conditions.⁵¹³ This then became Britain's military aim – to force an end to the strike and disturbances, and cause Palestinian leaders to participate in the Royal Commission. Britain had in essence begun the road to an imposed solution.

Between the 15th and 19th of April 1936, against a background of political tension, violence gradually escalated to the point where riots broke out in Jaffa on the 19th. It began with highway robbery in which three Jews were shot, and then reprisal attacks. Funerals were the scenes of mass

⁵¹² IOR L/PS/12/3343. *CID* 7/36. 1.4.1936.

⁵¹³ "Macdonald Explains Status of Royal Commission"; "Royal Commission to Probe Palestine Disorders, Commons Told."

demonstrations and police confrontations. By the 19th, all five major parties: PAP, *al-Difa'a* (Defence; Nashashibi's party), Istiqlal, the National Bloc (Nablus), Reform (Khalidi's party), as well as the Youngmen movement represented by Ya'aqub al-Ghussein, had coalesced to form the Arab Supreme Committee (ASC, also called 'higher committee' – 'supreme' is a better translation). This committee led the general strike, which articulated three familiar demands:

1. Prohibition of Jewish immigration
2. Prohibition of transfer of Arab land to Jews, and
3. The establishment of a national government responsible to a representative council.

This was the first successful general strike in Palestinian history, and was said to be virtually nationwide. CID intelligence emphasized that despite this unity, the ASC was not 'entirely free from party interests.'⁵¹⁴ The CID and Wauchope would tend to emphasize these differences, concealing the fact that they had enabled the Mufti's violent programme. Towards the end of the first phase of rebellion, the CID began some soul-searching.

Historiography

The rebellion has been mischaracterized in many different ways. A salient myth is that the rebellion was spontaneous and the Mufti did not control events. In fact, the Mufti's control and influence was considerable, and was part of a general pan-Arab effort to pressure colonial powers into giving concessions. Another myth is that the 1939 White Paper policy (see

⁵¹⁴ IOR L/PS/12/3343. CID 9/36. 6.5.1936.

p.333) brought the revolt to an end, or at least coincided with it. This view is not supported by the records. Violence continued in Palestine into 1940. The political threat of terrorism and armed bands continued until 1941. A better interpretation of events equates the death of the rebellion with the defeat of the Rashid Ali coup in Iraq in April 1941, or even the British occupation of Syria and Lebanon months later. At this point, its leadership had become completely fractured – a process which began years earlier. Leaders not captured by Britain fled to Axis-held territory, where the Axis powers attempted to use them to foment rebellion behind British lines.

Many historians have addressed the Palestine rebellion. Few have examined more than one element of it in detail. Much primary material exists, but there lacks a campaign history of the rebellion and its suppression, though Matthew Hughes has produced a considerable amount of original research. One piece examines Britain's use of the 'peace gangs' – Arab rebels and other armed groups which turned against the pro-Mufti forces. Peace gangs created psychological disorder amongst the rebels and their civilian support, and were an early example of 'pseudo warfare' in British army counterinsurgency campaigns where 'turned' insurgents were used by government as loyal forces against rebels. This approach, in combination with Anglo-Zionist cooperation in guerilla counterinsurgency, in the form of Major General Orde Wingate's Special Night Squads (SNS), and the intelligence work of the British Consul in Damascus, Gilbert MacKereth, consolidated a counterinsurgency which influenced the British

military in subsequent years.⁵¹⁵ Britain also exploited pre-existing divisions and relied upon a flexible command structure which embraced intelligence work and Zionist cooperation in that field. Despite a tendency among historians to attribute much to Anglo-Zionist cooperation, British policy treated this relationship with caution and placed certain limits, which often were broken by Wingate and other intelligence officers.

Another important study by Hughes addresses the use of law during the crisis. Government used emergency regulations to increasingly unleash the brute force of soldiers during crises. During 1936-37, British law became ‘statutory’ martial law, which granted the army powers over the High Commissioner. By 1938, martial law existed all but in name. According to Hughes, ‘the High Commissioner tempered rather than directed the actions of British armed forces.’ This process began in the 1920s with the introduction of collective responsibility and punishment ordinances. By the 1930s, the government was issuing collective fines ordinances, financially penalizing villages which hosted rebels.⁵¹⁶ The unhinging of civil law culminated in the capture of the Old City of Jerusalem by the Mufti’s supporters in October 1938. The retaking of that area was followed by a vicious campaign to pacify the entire country and a permanent form of military rule. Arthur Wauchope had resisted the army’s desire to institute martial law in 1936. Britain viewed the revolt as an internal insurrection under international law, and therefore captured guerillas and terrorists were treated as criminals. Possession of illegal arms

⁵¹⁵ Hughes, Matthew. “Collaboration and Pseudo Warfare during the Arab Revolt in Palestine, 1936-39” unpublished, shared in author’s personal correspondence.

⁵¹⁶ Hughes, “The Banality of Brutality: British Armed Forces and the Repression of the Arab Revolt in Palestine, 1936–39,” 316–319.

became a capital offence – although the death penalty was enforced in few cases. Once unleashed, the army targeted villages in search operations and temporary occupation. This allowed commanders to pressure civilians to resist the rebels in the future. A tough practice, but it worked. Hughes admits British abuses, but gives them appropriate context, parsing the issue with the legal, political, military, and oral evidence available.⁵¹⁷

A chapter in Martin Thomas' *Empires of Intelligence* also addresses the rebellion. Thomas provides the military-strategic context to the rebellion, and describes the role of intelligence in that campaign. Like Hughes, Thomas raises the role of law, as armed force escalated from 'in aid to the civil power', to de facto martial law. British policy resisted martial law because it signified an 'abrogation of normal legal procedure' and a 'negation of due process.'⁵¹⁸ In other words, this was the end of good government, and a civil regime. The outbreak of rebellion, Thomas emphasizes, represented the collapse of Britain's 'intelligence state' in Palestine as well as any prospect of civil government. As mentioned, there really were two intelligence states. As the civil intelligence states flagged, the military one now embodied by 'Combined Staff Intelligence' compensated. The two continued to exist until 1938, when the CID and police completely collapsed. The intelligence state was rebuilt on military lines, more closely coordinated CID and military intelligence, and suppressed the rebellion during the latter 1930s. Meanwhile the collapse of

⁵¹⁷ Ibid., 352353.

⁵¹⁸ Thomas, *Empires of Intelligence*, 231–232.

the civil state hastened the drive at Whitehall to impose a solution for the future of Palestine.

Intelligence at GSI was coordinated with SSOs, whose branches expanded from Jerusalem and Haifa to include Jaffa, Nablus, Nazareth and the Jordan Valley. The RAF produced new maps, and aircraft were used for reconnaissance, for strafing and sometimes bombing of ground targets. The RAF also worked in tandem with ground forces in the “XX” and “GG” systems. In the XX system, ground forces ambushed on a road would call for air support with the map reference, road, and mile marker. Aircraft responded within minutes. The GG system was the opposite, and necessarily slower. Aircraft which noticed armed bands would report it to nearby ground forces over wireless, who would attempt to search the area.⁵¹⁹ CID intelligence was criticized by the army for its slow reaction: SSOs used wireless sets in their cars to transmit reports. The CID was reliant on Arab personnel, so the organization suffered.⁵²⁰

Simon Anglim challenges the myth of Wingate’s originality in leading the SNS, or that this took place without the approval of the Army or government. In fact, Jewish cooperation was overt through the police and covert with the Haganah, and was encouraged afterwards, with limits.⁵²¹ The army found it expedient to cooperate with Haganah and to recruit Jewish supernumeraries to the police. The risks of this policy were understood by most, but it followed a very old and reliable pattern of

⁵¹⁹ CO 733/317/1. fol182. App3. Op instructions. 24.6.1936.; CO 732/81/10. 25. GSI Summary 22/38. 4.11.1938.; CZA S25/22738. Foley. Military operational standing orders. 16.9.1938. part c.

⁵²⁰ Thomas, *Empires of Intelligence*, 245–246.;

⁵²¹ Anglim, *Orde Wingate and the British Army, 1922-1944*; Anglim, *Orde Wingate, the Iron Wall and Counter-Terrorism in Palestine, 1936-1939*.

cooperation. The leadership of the counter-rebellion was key in enabling this policy and allowed it to develop to the extent that it did. Yet, it did not go as far as some wished, and limits to the extent of this cooperation were imposed by generals and policymakers. The ultimate intention always was to disarm the Haganah.

Thomas' survey effectively describes the role of intelligence in the counter-rebellion, and its representation of the degree of civil control. That is, the more intelligence was received from the civilian population, the more supportive of the government it generally was.⁵²² Indeed, this served as a useful measure of public faith in British security. Thomas describes certain elements of how intelligence was used in the counterinsurgency. Officers coordinated intelligence-gathering with the irregular military efforts of the 'peace bands', SNS, the Zionists in a more general way, and MacKereth's efforts in Damascus.⁵²³ These views must be considered along with other intelligence evidence. MacKereth's operation in Syria was consistently reliable because British partnerships there had a different dynamic. Moreover, Zionist intelligence was an effective addition to Britain's weaker intelligence on Palestinian villages, yet it was not always shared directly. The way in which government and the army used these sources was dependent on the situation and military leadership. Finally, restoring intelligence gathering about villages and towns in 1939 had as much to do with the revitalized, militarized CID, and irregular forces, as with Palestinians' willingness to work with government. Hughes notes that

⁵²² Thomas, *Empires of Intelligence*, 252–253, 255.

⁵²³ *Ibid.*, 253–256.

by late 1938 Palestinians broadly followed the path of *attentisme*, supporting no side, while trying to survive. Palestinians maintained sympathy with rebels but understood the mistake of supporting them actively, and maintained political opposition to British policy.⁵²⁴

In keeping with their wish for a European war to force Britain's hand, rebels received support from Nazi Germany and Fascist Italy. German material support was not as significant as that of Italy. However, Davidescu uncovered documentary evidence of the financing of rebels through the German colony of Haifa, which included a Photostat of a cheque paid.⁵²⁵ Nir Arielli argues that Italy's support for Arab nationalists was driven by its desire to compete with the British Empire and to improve its influence in the Middle East.⁵²⁶ This process began in the early 1930s through Italy's financial support of Shakib Arslan and Ihsan Jabri. Italian support for the Mufti was accepted by some with cynicism, fewer with gratitude. Italian propaganda broadcasts stopped during negotiations for the 1938 Anglo-Italian treaty, but support for the rebels carried on in one form or another.

German support for the rebels has been discussed, but skewed by the lens of the Mufti's wartime cooperation with the Nazis.⁵²⁷ Few historians, if any, have properly treated Nazi support for the rebellion, or the Mufti's slide to sympathy with Goebbels's anti-Semitic propaganda.

⁵²⁴ Hughes, Matthew. "Collaboration and Pseudo Warfare during the Arab Revolt in Palestine, 1936-39" unpublished, shared in author's personal correspondence.

⁵²⁵ BAZY, Davidescu Papers. 1. *The Germans are inciting the Arabs*. 30.9.1938.; n.t. Haifa 6.10.1938.; Aziz Domet. 31.8.1938.

⁵²⁶ Arielli, "Italian Involvement in the Arab Revolt in Palestine, 1936-1939"; Arielli, *Fascist Italy and the Middle East, 1933-40*.

⁵²⁷ Achcar, *The Arabs and the Holocaust*, 137-144.

Some historians have wrongly attributed too much attention to the Mufti's relations with the Nazis during the 1940s, and so have mischaracterized the Mufti's personal and political character and that of the Arab national movement. In the 1930s, the Mufti was no Nazi. He and other Arab nationalists admired German and Italian national revival. By 1938, Jamal had met Goebbels, and accepted his advice.⁵²⁸ The Mufti's attitude to Nazism changed during the war, but even in his meeting with Hitler in 1941, the Mufti focused on Arab independence, while Hitler sought to extend his struggle against Jews to Palestine through the Mufti.⁵²⁹

Philip Mattar provides an important but misleading argument: his assertions are only part of the truth. Mattar argued that during the early 1930s, the Mufti rejected Qassam's proposals for violent revolution as he had done during the 1920s.⁵³⁰ Yet, he cited Subhi Yasin – a problematical source, who was a junior member of Black Hand and decidedly anti-Mufti in 1959 when writing about the issue.⁵³¹ While Shai Lachman's study of Qassam and the Mufti has some limits, as discussed by Mark Sanagan, Lachman's criticism of Yasin as a source is noteworthy.⁵³² Mattar argued that the ASC, formed under the Mufti's leadership to represent all parties during the general strike, 'did not lead the revolt so much as [was] led by it.' Mattar argued, and Weldon Matthews agreed, that the young radicals led the strike, and the ASC was consulted. In the process, it absorbed moral

⁵²⁸ KV 2/2084. 17a. *Palestine and cognate matters*. . 28.3.1938.; 24a. *Palestine:misc*. 21.7.1938.

⁵²⁹ ISA, RG 65/P/946/11. *Mufti diaries*. Meeting with Fuhrer, Berlin 28.11.1941.

⁵³⁰ Mattar, *The Mufti of Jerusalem*, 67–68.

⁵³¹ Lachman, "Arab Rebellion and Terrorism in Palestine: 1929-39: The Case of Sheikh Izz Al-Din Al-Qassam and His Movement," 65–75.

⁵³² Sanagan, "Teacher, Preacher, Soldier, Martyr: Rethinking 'Izz Al-Din Al-Qassam," 6.

authority over the movement, and was forced by public opinion to take such an oppositional stance, demanding an end to Jewish immigration, land transfers, and the establishment of representative national government.⁵³³

Laila Parsons' study of Qawuqji will make an important addition to our understanding of that soldier's motivations in supporting the rebellion, and the role of such figures in the pan-Arab movement. She claims, 'For Qawuqji, the 1936 revolt was a soldiers' war, while 1948 was a politicians' war'⁵³⁴ Yet, Qawuqji's relations with Syrian and Lebanese politicians are an important part of understanding why he raised his force of 200 (mostly Iraqi) volunteer soldiers, and entered Palestine to battle Britain in 1936.

Ted Swedenberg's *Memories of Revolt* is an interesting look at the period based on oral testimony. It is not used in this thesis because the testimony, as well as Swedenberg's conclusions, are so coloured by the events of the 1987 *Intifada*, that it is difficult to treat this evidence without closely interrogating it alongside other Arab sources.⁵³⁵

Another important source on the rebellion is Tom Bowden's 1975 article. While dated, and lacking sources which are now available, it was a good survey at the time which has made a strong impression on other studies. Bowden argued that the revolt was militarily hopeless, aimed to defeat the government, and lacked political direction. 'It had few chances of political success' but did achieve the curtailment of Jewish immigration in the 1939 White Paper policy. He also argued that the 1936-39 revolt was dogged by tribalism amongst Palestinians who were satisfied by 1939 that

⁵³³ Mattar, *The Mufti of Jerusalem*, 71; Matthews, *Confronting an Empire, Constructing a Nation*, 253.

⁵³⁴ Parsons, "Soldiering for Arab Nationalism," 39.

⁵³⁵ Swedenburg, *Memories of Revolt*.

they had attempted resistance at all. The revolt, ‘was in no way a throughgoing general conspiracy against the Mandatory Government. Rather it was highly developed brigandage. In such a struggle as the Palestinian Arab attempted to wage the first axiom should be that ‘armed action is by no means the whole struggle, it is just one of several kinds of resistance...’⁵³⁶ In fact, the opposite is true. Palestinians by 1939 were war-weary, and the revolt did emerge from a conspiracy to reverse the Zionist policy and attain independence. Other issues, discussed in chapter 9, changed British policy.

The Mufti encouraged revolt to force concessions like those given by France in Syria. Before 1935, he sought only to make Britain abandon its Zionist policy, since representative government might have limited his power. However, successful strikes in Syria, combined with the Abyssinian crisis and his sympathy for pan-Arab unity, pushed the Mufti toward the independence camp. Previously, his dual track strategy of open cooperation with Britain and secret subversion of it, and the instrumental use of violence, had found success at small cost. In 1936-7, the consequences were different, because British behaviour changed. Unlike France in Syria, Britain did not budge in the face of civil disobedience and unrest. It would not negotiate in the face of armed challenge to its position, but faced less immediate danger than France from the Rhineland crisis which coincided with the Syrian strike. As Britain resisted, the Mufti lost control of his pawns. His strategy changed when he failed. In 1937 as violence restarted, he escaped to Lebanon and Syria. His behaviour became less rational, as he

⁵³⁶ Bowden, “The Politics of the Arab Rebellion in Palestine 1936–39.”

focused on controlling the rebel movement and rejected the advice of Arab statesmen, especially Ibn Sa'ud, while insisting on his financial and military support through Jihad. The campaign against Britain climaxed during 1938 when major centres fell to rebel control or influence, but then eroded.

The intelligence record illustrates precisely how civil government failed. The government and CID never understood the Mufti's policy, which was to use his networks to mobilize proxies to pressure Britain to give concessions. They continued to see him as a government agent until the summer of 1936. The CID did not appreciate the Mufti's connections to the independence movement, which actually kept few secrets. His known connections to the pan-Arab movement were considered by the CID to be less important to him than his domestic, political, and administrative concerns – especially his competition with the Nashashibis. By treating the Mufti as the sole power broker in Arab and Muslim politics, British policymakers were deprived of options. This was a failure of colonial government, and a break from the norm in imperial policy, which was to keep alive alternative power structures. Rob Johnson argues that collaboration with elites was a reliable method for managing communal conflicts throughout the British Empire. Britain did not invent social and political structures, but sought to work within them.⁵³⁷ In Palestine, there was no single elite community with whom the British could work to limit communal violence. They only had the Mufti. This policy failure stemmed from a mindset that was reluctant about maintaining imperial rule, but keen

⁵³⁷ Johnson, *British Imperialism*, 95, 115–116.

on good government. This ideology drove Britain's attitude towards the League of Nations, but also its reforms of the police. This system could not work when Palestinian nationalists demanded self-government in addition to a reversal of the Zionist policy.

The General Strike and Creeping Violence

In March 1936, the CID reported on the concessions granted by France to the Syrian nationalists. 'The concessions which are regarded as the result of the strike and demonstrations have inevitably led to the suggestion of similar activity in Palestine...'⁵³⁸ PAP, Istiqlal, and the majority of the Youngmen's Executive favoured that policy. Old Istiqlalists such as Nabih al-Azmeh thought such action should be delayed until details with the French were final. This process happened in September, but Palestine erupted before that time, when the senior leadership was not yet prepared. PAP held an executive meeting on 28 February 1936, where a 'negative' policy of civil disobedience, strike and demonstration was adopted. Tellingly, Jamal al-Husseini added that 'before anything effective could be done, the "Futuwah" [militant youth] groups must be formed'.⁵³⁹ If the establishment of a legislative council and limits to Jewish immigration and land transfers were delayed, the CID said that 'methods adopted in Syria and Egypt are bound to appeal with greater force to the Arabs in Palestine.' In fact, the Mufti's propaganda had already led Palestinians on this course. Palestinian Futuwah were prepared. Their oath read: 'Liberty is my right – Independence my hope – my language Arabic –

⁵³⁸ IOR L/PS/12/3343. CID 4/36. 10.3.1936.

⁵³⁹ Ibid. p2.

Palestine is mine and mine only. This I attest and god is my witness to my loyalty.⁵⁴⁰

The government could not force the ASC or the Jewish Agency to agree on a council.⁵⁴¹ Some officials now saw the danger of the government's relations with the Mufti and his party. These conflicting views reflect dissonance between Wauchope's conciliatory approach to PAP and ASC, and the latter's role in driving violence in Palestine. Zionist intelligence saw the role played by this leadership in fomenting disturbances, but was surprised by the outbreak on 19 April, about which its information was unclear.⁵⁴² British intelligence shared this problem. Zionist intelligence, however, quickly adjusted. The Haganah coordinated information with Davidescu and shared news with the Arab Bureau of JAPD. Davidescu reported that Rashid al-Hajj Ibrahim and others were waiting for a coordinated violent outbreak, so their calls for calm in Haifa were intended to prevent individual action until that moment, despite the youth. The Mufti was reported to have been asked by telephone for his views by Bedouin strike leaders. He replied evasively, saying each action was uncoordinated, and so 'every man for himself.' Haganah agents followed prominent journalist, lawyer, *Difa'a* activist, and strike leader, Hasan Sidqi Dajani, in Jerusalem during the last two days of April. They observed his visit to Barclays Bank, and meetings with Ahmad Hilmi Pasha, director of the Arab Bank. He also met Ya'aqub Ghussein, the leader of the Youngmens Executive and several Bedouin Sheikhs.

⁵⁴⁰ IOR L/PS/12/3343. *CID summary* 2/36. 18.2.1936. p4-5.

⁵⁴¹ See above. Also S25/22704. *Auni Abdul Hadi to HC*. 14.5.1936.; *Auni Abdul Hadi to CS*. 12.5.1936.

⁵⁴² Gelber, *Shorshe ha-havatsselet*, 145–147.

Ghussein, the Mufti's 'strong Majlisi hand in the leadership of the youth movement' and member of the Mufti's Islamic Congress was a member of the ASC.⁵⁴³ No doubt this was the ASC's effort to give financial support to the strike leaders, and to the Bedouin who would participate in armed violence or facilitate the movement of arms for rebels. On 25 April, the Bedouin in the south of Palestine had to be reassured that rumours they had heard that 40 Arabs had been killed in disturbances was untrue.⁵⁴⁴ This pattern of instigation through disinformation had occurred during previous disturbances.

Weldon Matthews said that the ASC, comprised of factional leaders, 'ostensibly took up leadership of a movement that was in fact leading them'.⁵⁴⁵ He ignores the Mufti's considerable role in assisting and provoking the Youngmen, SMC Sheikhs, and other sources of instigation to demonstration, strike, and violence. He did not control everything that happened, and like all actors in this drama, did not always get the results he hoped for; yet he was a player, the key one on the Arab side. Evidence on these issues was available to British decision makers and intelligence services, although perhaps not all at once. It did not take Zionist intelligence long to understand what was happening – Davidescu was the first to raise the possibility of holding the Mufti to account. He and Alex Aaronsohn, whom he dragged back into the intelligence business, were forced to turn to London since JAPD's exhortations fell on deaf ears in

⁵⁴³ Ibid., 146–147; Matthews, *Confronting an Empire, Constructing a Nation*, 154–253. Dajani was assassinated 12 October 1938 by the Mufti's agents.

⁵⁴⁴ IOR L/PS/12/3344. *HC to CO*. 25.4.1936.

⁵⁴⁵ Matthews, *Confronting an Empire, Constructing a Nation*, 253.

Jerusalem.⁵⁴⁶ It is fair to assume that SSO intelligence was ignored or rejected before Davidescu took such action, because if true, the consequences for British policy were unpleasant. As the situation unfolded, the AOC, Peirse, was given more power to arrest strikers and riot leaders, and to search villages. In order to do so, he warned, he would need reinforcements. Peirse believed that the ASC had ‘made retreat impossible for themselves but hoped the government could find some face saver.’ The evidence for that assertion was weak, and was in fact more of an attempt for Peirse and Wauchope to save face. The possibility of a Royal Commission, according to Peirse, was doubtful, but Wauchope refused to escalate the military role or to request reinforcements until ‘this last card... had been played.’ By mid-May, ‘the outlook was one of continued civil disobedience, e.g., arson, destruction of telegraph and telephone wires, interference with rail and road communications; minor disturbances and isolated attacks on individuals.’ On 16 May Peirse told the General Officer, Commanding (GOC) Egypt that he would probably require an extra battalion.⁵⁴⁷

Discussions between government and members of the ASC occurred against the background of a persistent cycle of violence, a steadfast strike movement, and increasing anxiety towards the Yishuv. Wauchope’s first move was to check whether Abdullah of Transjordan could influence an end to the strike. His unpopularity amongst most Istiqlalist, Islamist and other nationalist leaders rendered that hope null.

⁵⁴⁶ Gelber, *Shorshe ha-havatselet*, 187–188.

⁵⁴⁷ CO 733/317/1. 13. *Despatch by Air Vice Marshal Peirse. Part II – 26 april to 16 may 1936.*

However, it was a convenient way to reinforce Wauchope's policy that he would not suspend Jewish immigration, and that matters of policy could be discussed by the forthcoming Royal Commission. Wauchope regretted that Arab leaders made 'no strong pronouncement against murder and acts of violence.'⁵⁴⁸ He thanked Abdullah for keeping Transjordan quiet at this time, and mentioned the negative effect that Palestinian violence was having on English public opinion.

However, the Palestinian leaders who met Abdullah told him that they did not control the movement, and complained of other difficulties, which they asked Abdullah to convey to the British.⁵⁴⁹ They did not treat Abdullah as an Arab leader, but rather as a British official. In June, Abdullah tried again, but was told that violence was a response to harsh measures imposed by the British army and police such as searches, destruction of property, firing on Arabs, and emergency laws which allowed detainment in prison camps.⁵⁵⁰ Abdullah's influence would not alter the situation.

In mid-May, Wauchope met face to face with the ASC. They must have noticed his apologetic tone. After telling them that the Royal Commission would not come to investigate political claims until violence stopped, Wauchope said:

I feel sure that you gentlemen, as reasonable and experienced men, will readily agree that this is a necessary condition of any successful enquiry, and that immediately on the announcement, which I believe will be made tomorrow... you will use our influence publically to restore normal conditions throughout the country and that you will express your strong disapproval of all lawless acts. I

⁵⁴⁸ IOR L/PS/12/3344. *HC to CO*. 2.5.1936.; S25/22726. *Wauchope to Abdullah*. 10.6.1936.

⁵⁴⁹ S25/22726. *Wauchope to CS*. 2.5.1936.

⁵⁵⁰ S25/22726. *Intelligence Summary (police)*. 8.6.1936.

have always been frank with you, and I wish to be entirely frank with you now. It will not be within the competence of this Royal Commission to recommend any alteration of the terms of the Mandate.⁵⁵¹

If the ASC felt that Britain was not meeting its commitment to Arabs, it could say so to the Commission. All agreed that the Royal Commission was a good idea, yet the ASC members felt that the results of a commission must lead to a stoppage of immigration. They were unwilling to cooperate without some commitment to that objective. Wauchope could provide no such opening, and so the conflict continued.

Shertok then met with Wauchope and held his feet to the fire. After the HC complained that his staff were ill, and tired, Shertok asked who would be going to Geneva to report on disturbances in Palestine. The HC 'looked a little roguish and replied that he was not at liberty to tell me that. I said that I had put up the question on the supposition that Geneva still existed which seemed now rather doubtful, after it had been flouted so openly by Italy in addition to its having been deserted by Germany and Japan. The High Commissioner thought it was yet too early to despair of the League of Nations altogether.' Shertok threatened Britain's standing in Geneva, and exposed Wauchope's sensitivity to League criticism. Wauchope emphasized division between ASC leaders about the strike. Shertok asked the HC whether Auni Abdul Hadi was now the moving spirit in the ASC. 'Auni had always struck me as a type of doctrinaire revolutionary, very rigid and dogmatic, with little sense of realities. The High Commissioner remarked that I would be surprised if I knew how

⁵⁵¹ S25/22704. *Minutes of Meeting held at Gov't offices*. 14.5.1936. 11am. Emphasis in original. Present were, the High Commissioner, the Chief Secretary, his assistant, and the private secretary of the HC.

many times Auni Bey had changed his mind in the last few weeks.’ Shertok was baffled by the HC’s inability to see the situation as he did: so-called ‘moderates’ had rejected invitations to London, and even the Royal Commission. Wauchope interjected, saying that the ‘there had not been the slightest doubt in the minds of those gentlemen from the very beginning that there could be no question of Jewish immigration being stopped.’⁵⁵² The HC thus exposed the futility of his policy – there was no basis for negotiation.

This exchange is telling. Wauchope was unwilling to treat the ASC as insurrectionist because he saw their supposed division as evidence that he could continue his older patterns of influence and control. Shertok, the next day, pleaded with Wauchope to take tough measures against strike instigators in Haifa. They had so far failed to persuade most workers to join, but the latter could hold out much longer under the pressure of the strike committee.⁵⁵³ As the increasingly grave situation became apparent to more quarters, Wauchope began to make excuses. At a government Executive Council (exco) meeting, Wauchope admitted that stronger action must be taken against the organizers of the strike and disorders. He opened the possibility for action against ASC, but ‘it was clear that no useful purpose would be served at present by proceeding against individuals for civil disobedience;...it was [also] necessary that he should have some responsible body with which to continue negotiations’ The ASC twice had

⁵⁵² HA 80/153p/9. *Meeting Shertok and Wauchope*. 19.5.1936.

⁵⁵³ YYGH, Vashitz papers. 2/15.35-95. *Shertok to Wauchope*. 20.5.1936.

publically dissociated itself from violent methods, and its unity was expected to collapse.⁵⁵⁴

The government ignored evidence which connected the ASC to violence, because it needed the ASC to serve the same purpose the Mufti had done for years – as a power broker who could control the movement. Wauchope was not alone in this view. The CID also overemphasized political divisions in its reportage – focusing exclusively on the Nashashibi-Husseini conflict, and the youth-driven extremism. It believed the ASC when it said that any capitulation before an immigration stoppage would lead to a loss of its control over the strike.⁵⁵⁵ In fact, this was really a back-handed threat. In other words, if ASC did not get what it wanted, it would not be responsible for the dire consequences. Even so, it only admitted partial control over the strike. Wauchope still hoped that divisions would disable the ASC and the strike movement. However, the police began to work with the government to prepare lists of subordinate agitators and other future suspects who could be arrested for provocations. The situation escalated even further – Jaffa essentially had become a war zone between 23 May and 9 June, and government asked Whitehall for permission to use gas, an ‘effective and merciful weapon’, for riot control.⁵⁵⁶

The CS concluded that “Moderate” Arabs do exist, but they have no influence in a situation like this one simply because they are

⁵⁵⁴ S25/22768. *Minutes of executive council meeting*. 21.5.1936.

⁵⁵⁵ IOR L/PS/12/3343. *CID 10/36*. 21.5.1936.

⁵⁵⁶ HA 8/klali/38. Part II. ? to District Commissioner Jaffa. 23.5.1936.; ? to DIG. 9.6.1936.; AIR 2/1759. 131a. *HC to CO*. 25.5.1936.

moderate.⁵⁵⁷ The situation in Jaffa became so grave that Wauchope relented and gave some control to the AOC. He organized a combined service command comprised of the RAF, army, and intelligence staff, an important innovation to be discussed in the next chapter. Its first major operation was the pacification of Jaffa, where it destroyed houses in the old port city, paving the way for new roads. The tightly-packed and impoverished neighbourhood no longer was the source of persistent gunfire and harassment of British troops and police.⁵⁵⁸ The escalation of the military campaign continued, especially in response to the arrival in August of foreign volunteers under Qawuqji's command. The government possessed intelligence which should have forewarned of this problem, as Mu'in al-Madi, an Old Istiqlalist, was seen in Baghdad spreading propaganda for the Palestinian cause, and was promoting anti-British and anti-Jewish propaganda in nationalist clubs.⁵⁵⁹ This activity established a direct connection to the Mufti, since al-Madi was a secretary of the SMC and a pro-Mufti Istiqlalist.

Escalation in Palestine was a reciprocal problem, as heavy-handedness led Palestinian rural society towards lawlessness, hunger and dislocation.⁵⁶⁰ This was a more pronounced problem in 1938 than it was in 1936, but claims against Britain's treatment of Palestinians provided fodder for potent propaganda. This news was spread not just in the Arab world. In

⁵⁵⁷ S25/22768. *Notes by CS on letter to HC from Treasurer*. 30.5.1936. The letter had resulted from conversation with Arabist Humphrey Bowman, who was directed of education, and Johnson, the treasurer of the Palestine government.

⁵⁵⁸ Hughes, "The Banality of Brutality: British Armed Forces and the Repression of the Arab Revolt in Palestine, 1936–39," 322.

⁵⁵⁹ S25/22708. *Baghdad to Eden (FO)*. 25.6.1936.

⁵⁶⁰ Hughes, "The Banality of Brutality: British Armed Forces and the Repression of the Arab Revolt in Palestine, 1936–39," 324.

June 1936, Jamal al-Husseini travelled to London with a few other leaders in an unofficial delegation. The CID reported that ‘They received a sympathetic hearing from many people in England, including a number of Members of Parliament, and they have enlisted a great deal of support for the Arab cause.’⁵⁶¹

The true purpose of this mission was to fund and organize a propaganda office in London. This had for years been an aim of Jamal and the Mufti, and now was the time to reinvigorate their propaganda strategy. They contacted NPL, which had been an important source of support after the October 1935 cement incident.⁵⁶² Together, they formed the Palestine Information Centre (PIC). The Prime Minister was advised not to pay too much attention to their efforts.⁵⁶³ Key figures were now organized to lobby parliamentarians and other officials in favour of the Arab case. They produced pamphlets and hosted lecture series and social functions to promote the cause.⁵⁶⁴ They supported the Mufti despite his anti-British campaign. When the strike ended, Col. Newcombe, Frances Newton, and one ‘Bennett’ (probably ex-MP Earnest Bennett) cabled the Mufti expressing their regret that immigration had not been suspended as on former occasions.⁵⁶⁵ An intercepted letter from Newton to Newcombe in April 1938, on the eve of the most intense phase of the rebellion, reveals their attitude:

⁵⁶¹ IOR L/PS/12/3343. *CID 14/36*. 18.8.1936

⁵⁶² ISA RG 65/p/986/36. *Jamal, President PAP, to CO, Times, Morning Post.... Archbishop Canterbury, national [political] league*. N.d. [late October 1936]

⁵⁶³ CO 733/285/21. *Farquharson to Baldwin*. 20.12.1935.; *India Office to CO* 18.12.1935.;

⁵⁶⁴ See throughout ISA RG 65/p/3220/17. Especially ‘The Palestinian Arab Case’ in *Great Britain and the East*. 2.7.1936., correspondence between Ghory and Jamal.;

⁵⁶⁵ ISA RG 65/p/3220/17 *Bennet, Newcombe and Newton to Mufti*. 10.11.1936.

...of course, the Colonial Office should recognise that there are reasonable Jews and as equally reasonable Arabs, and get them to meet. The only thing I fear is that the Government will never accept the fact that the Mufti is a reasonable Arab, and take him on as a negotiator; but my belief is that will never get any forrarder till it does so. Ninety-nine per cent of the country are Husseini supporters...⁵⁶⁶

Newton was sympathetic to the rebels, and it is difficult to blame her. In 1938, Joseph Davidescu reported on her visit to Palestine. She travelled to al-Bassa with General McNeill, presumably Col. Angus McNeill, founding commander of the Gendarmerie who remained in Palestine to raise horses after it was disbanded. Bassa had been burnt and its inhabitants viciously murdered by British soldiers, in retaliation for the village's protection of rebels who killed four members of the Royal Ulster Rifles. Davidescu reported that Newton took a report there, and sent it back to London. He warned that the details might be exaggerated. Matthew Hughes has supplied a sufficient range of evidence to suggest the truth of the grisly events.⁵⁶⁷

NPL and PIC quickly came under suspicion by the Security Service, MI5, because they supported an insurrectionist group in Palestine and were allied with pro-Nazi groups in Britain. Robert Gordon-Canning came under observation by SIS in late 1936 as he planned a trip to Palestine, allegedly to organize a 'blackshirt movement'. In 1938 he was in contact with Shakib Arslan – the details of this correspondence are unknown as the MI5 minute sheet of his file marks most entries as destroyed.⁵⁶⁸ Records in the MI5 file contain intercepted communication between PIC members such as

⁵⁶⁶ KV 2/2084. 19r. *cross-reference: intercept Newton to Newcomb, PIC. 25.4.1938.*

⁵⁶⁷ Hughes, "The Banality of Brutality: British Armed Forces and the Repression of the Arab Revolt in Palestine, 1936–39," 335–338.

⁵⁶⁸ KV 2/877. 139a. *MI5 to SIS. 16.12.1936.; min 176.*

Newcombe and Mrs. Erskine, and even include evidence of informal negotiations between the Jewish Agency and the Mufti through PIC. Not all PIC members were BUF members, nor sympathetic to Nazis. Newcombe tended to take a moderate tone. He was trusted by both sides, and remained involved in negotiations through the revolt. His views received some attention during 1939-42, but that is another study.

The creation of a combined staff with centralized intelligence alongside Wauchope's partial relinquishment of control to the military, led to an improvement of intelligence and its role in decision making. As the government began to militarize, military intelligence increasingly mattered. Tellingly, the CID did not offer intelligence summaries between 23 May and 23 June – the period where urban violence spilled into revolt. Yet its report in June recorded that the movement lacked any organization or control. It claimed that the extremist Ulema were asking the Mufti and SMC to declare *Jihad*.⁵⁶⁹ This mischaracterized the relationship, as the Mufti used SMC official positions to exert influence in the first place, and would later pressure Ibn Sa'ud to declare Jihad.⁵⁷⁰ The strike and violence, and eventually the revolt, were instigated by the Mufti and his party.

By late June, the next important phase began – the attempt to undermine Arab officials in government positions. The CID reported that Arab policemen and government officers had come under pressure to leave their jobs. The less cooperative were threatened in letters from the “Black Hand” society.⁵⁷¹ Each month from May until October, the CID reported

⁵⁶⁹ IOR L/PS/12/3343. *CID 11/36*. 23.6.1936.

⁵⁷⁰ S25/22776. *From Alexandria*. 16.7.1938.

⁵⁷¹ IOR L/PS/12/3343. *CID 11/36*. 23.6.1936. p.5.

that the strike would be called off ‘in the near future.’ Despite its weak assessments, the CID still reported important facts. For instance, in August 1936 the CID reported that the Mufti completely controlled fundraising in Palestine and abroad as well as the disbursement of funds, including that received by armed bands. Abdullah had again tried to mediate between the Mufti and the government, but his attempt to corner the Mufti with Nashashibi supporters at the meeting annoyed the Palestinian leader. When those talks broke down, ‘an immediate breaking out of disorders throughout the country’ was the result.⁵⁷² Despite all this evidence, the CID never acknowledged that the Mufti controlled the revolt even slightly. The government sought to rely on the influence of Arab statesmen instead of attacking the Mufti or his official position. Wauchope reasoned that without the Mufti, there would be nobody with whom to negotiate or control the violence.

The strike and rebellion only ended as the result of the intervention of multiple Arab statesmen and military operations. In September Air Control ended, and John Dill came to Palestine to lead military operations as GOC. For the first time in months, Wauchope met the Mufti, and expressed his regrets that despite his ‘true feeling of friendship’, his advice had not been followed. Dill would take over next week, ‘I shall have no influence over General Dill’s actions and His Eminence [the Mufti] must be sure that His Majesty’s Government will continue military action until all resistance has ended. As a friend of the Arabs I would say that it is clearly in their interest to end resistance and violence now rather than be forced to

⁵⁷² IOR L/PS/12/3343. *CID 14/36*. 18.8.1936. p.2.

do so later...⁵⁷³ Wauchope finally had resorted to threats, but still only as part of a dual policy.

By co-opting Arab kings, the Mufti attempted to tie the Palestine question to a pan-Arab one, and succeeded in that endeavour. The pan-Arab solution to the conflict was the CID and government's way of working around the uncomfortable fact, which they reluctantly and barely admitted, that they could no longer control Frankenstein's monster. Ibn Sa'ud communicated through Kamil al-Qassab, who obtained assurances that the Mufti would accept Ibn Sa'ud's advice and call off bloodshed. Ibn Sa'ud's interest in his involvement will be elaborated upon in chapter nine, and is crucial to our understanding of this story.

The government finally considered deporting the Mufti, and stripping him of his offices in October 1936, but the Arab kings scheme worked.⁵⁷⁴ The Colonial Office, based on its knowledge of Ibn Sa'ud's role behind the scenes, advised Wauchope, 'I should certainly not wish you to deport the Mufti in the absence of further action on his part justifying this step (as to which I assume you would consult me) I hope we shall still be able to clip his wings effectively.'⁵⁷⁵ The next day, the CO ordered that any plans for deportation be abandoned entirely, unless the Mufti were to take action to justify otherwise. 'Question as to the best procedure for curtailing the power of the Mufti for evil and in particular to secure close control of Wakf funds by Government can be taken up separately.'⁵⁷⁶ Now seeking a new equilibrium with the Mufti, Wauchope was told to raise the matter

⁵⁷³ S25/22704. *Note on my interview with his eminence the mufti.* 9.9.1936.

⁵⁷⁴ S25/22726. *CO to HC.* 10.10.1936.

⁵⁷⁵ S25/22784. *CO to HC.* 13.10.1936.

⁵⁷⁶ S25/22704. *CO to HC.* 14.10.1936.

with the Royal Commission. What changed overnight was that Saudi Arabia, Iraq and Yemen had consulted with Britain, which recognized their representations so long as they did not give any promises to the Mufti about British intentions for future policy. The Mufti, negotiating with Qassab, 'fought until the very last minute for certain conditions' before they agreed to this mediation. Jamal 'realised that it was useless to endeavour to insert any conditions whatsoever, and that the call-off [of the strike and violence] must be complete. Ibn Sa'ud demanded such assurances before proceeding. He also warned the Mufti that his 'struggle cannot be protracted without considerable losses finally resulting in your defeat'...⁵⁷⁷ On 12 October, the ASC called on its followers to pray for the martyrs who had fallen, and to return to work. Within a week, Fawzi al-Qawuqji and what remained of his forces had slipped out of the country. The Royal Commission arrived one month later.

During the lag time between the end of the strike and the arrival of the commission, Wauchope and Dill wrangled over policy. In essence, Dill struggled to highlight the causes and consequences of revolt, and Wauchope to defend his decisions and legacy. The HC gave a line-by-line criticism of Dill's survey of the revolt from September through October. Wauchope felt that Dill was wrong to attribute the end of revolt to economic exhaustion, rather than the political bind facing the ASC. Of course, both men were right, but Wauchope chose to ignore evidence that there were 'already signs of preparations [by ASC] to retain present organisation and stocks of arms intact for future struggle.' Dill

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IOR L/PS/12/3343. CID 17/36. 16.10.1936

recommended disarmament of the country, save for licensed arms at Jewish colonies, and insisted that martial law would be necessary to carry this out. Wauchope evaded the point and focused on the Mufti, downplaying his leadership. Wauchope felt the Mufti had ‘always to be shoved into every line of action that he reluctantly takes, and his chief fear is to be left alone in the dark.’ Wauchope was willing to deport him, but it would be ‘the height of folly to imagine that by the removal of the Mufti or this committee the danger of a fresh Arab rising will be ended or even greatly reduced.’ The Civil Power might need military assistance if disarmament were enforced. If it was resisted, martial law might be required.⁵⁷⁸

Wauchope was partially right, but also was covering the fact that the Mufti had manipulated him. The ASC was no example of organized or capable leadership. The Mufti used this body to represent a united front – a superficial measure to cover his normal means of operation: propaganda in the Arab and Islamic worlds and London; control of the SMC, sheikhs and awqaf funds; his influence over the radical youth and jihadi fighters; intimidation and assassination through secret societies like ‘Black Hand’; his relations with the Istiqlal party and the pan-Arab movement as well as the pan-Islamic movement; and his relations with Arab states and foreign powers such as Italy. It was through these means that pressure incrementally increased until revolt broke out, yet by September it was obvious that it would not achieve a change in British policy. The Mufti’s dependence on foreign statesmen was not a sign of weakness, but rather, an extension of his normal means of exercising power.

⁵⁷⁸ CO 733/317/1. 1. *Wauchope to Ormsby Gore*. 17.10.1936.

The CID reported with surprise that the strike and revolt had ended abruptly and effectively, and credited the Arab statesmen, whom the population believed had secured some form of assurance from Britain. The population saw this outcome as a victory.⁵⁷⁹ The CID shared the same problem as Wauchope in that it had to reconcile its shortcomings with what had unfolded. Its intelligence summaries were more honest than the HC's reflections, and the police began to become more assertive in their assessments. Unlike Wauchope, the CID saw the Mufti as having emerged 'as the strong man in Palestine Arab politics.'

Military intelligence had also come to see reality. Group Captain Buss met with Kisch, still military liaison for the Jewish Agency. Buss, a Muslim from the Egyptian service, was head of Dill's staff intelligence. He was surprised to hear that Kisch had had problems with the Mufti as early as 1923. He agreed with Kisch that it was 'intolerable that one man, however sincere his convictions, should be able indefinitely to prevent any progress being made in solving a problem [Arab-Zionist] in which great and wide public issues were involved.' The Mufti wanted a Muslim Arab Palestine to the exclusion of Christian, Jewish or British interests. Kisch recorded, 'To my remark that I was aware that it was not easy to deal with a man occupying the positions held by Haj Amin, I was surprised to hear the prompt rejoinder that "it should not be so difficult, the Government put him there," the implication being obvious.'⁵⁸⁰ Turning to the Royal Commission, soon due to arrive, Buss remarked that it would be 'logical

⁵⁷⁹ IOR L/PS/12/3343. *CID 18/36.* 7.11.1936.

⁵⁸⁰ HA 8/153p/11a. *Interview with Group Captain Buss (Chief Intelligence Officer) at Army HQ.* 7.11.1936.

for the Mufti to boycott the Commission.’ ASI thus saw the Mufti as leading an ongoing threat, which had to be tolerated until government changed its policy. Boycott of the commission was proposed by PAP leaders, according to the CID, since no change to Jewish immigration schedules had taken place. The Mufti’s newspaper, *al-Liwa*, saw the unchanged immigration rate as an act of Britain’s bad faith.⁵⁸¹ The next month the CID reported that despite efforts by Arab statesmen to change policy regarding the new boycott, the Mufti and Auni Abdul Hadi were steadfast. ‘The belief exists in the minds of the majority of Arabs that any Arab appearing before the Commission voluntarily will be asking for ostracism and possibly assassination.’ Palestinians did not expect the Royal Commission’s findings to meet with their approval, and further disturbances were predicted for early 1937.⁵⁸²

During the Commission’s investigation, violence remained persistent, mostly directed at Jews. It was less intense than previously, but enough to cause much more intelligence and defence work on the part of Haganah and the Jewish Agency. The HC reported such acts as being non-political; rather, they were economic. He claimed the Jewish press was exaggerating incidents of highway robbery in order to impress the Royal Commission and to prevent further reduction of the garrison, or discharge of Jewish supernumerary police. Nonetheless, he admitted that tension was high due to incitement in the Arabic press and speeches in mosques.⁵⁸³ The CID reported with increasing realism about gang organisation, preparing

⁵⁸¹ IOR L/PS/12/3343. *CID 18/36*. 7.11.1936.

⁵⁸² IOR L/PS/12/3343. *CID 19/36*. 20.11.1936.

⁵⁸³ S25/22769. *HC to CO*. 29.12.1936.

for future operations. ‘Sudden and simultaneous attacks will be made on Government and Jewish colonies... [it is] nevertheless possible that some idea of intimidating Government more favourably to consider the Arab demands exists.’ The CID began to offer nuance to its assessment. It cited liaison with ‘Jewish intelligence sources’ which were worried about outbreaks in the near future, after the departure of the commission.⁵⁸⁴ The improvement in CID assessments derived from a combination of soul-searching towards the end of the revolt, increased military control, and liaison with Zionist intelligence.

The CID’s first report for 1937 was clear that an outbreak was not necessarily imminent, but future plans were being developed, especially to assassinate British officials. The population in the north was ‘armed almost to a man and the surviving disciples of Sheikh Izzel Din Kassem [Qassam] are said to have taken on themselves the role of assassins-to-be.’ The next disturbances would not be accompanied by a strike. The two movements were being developed separately, and ‘The proposal appears to be that terrorist activity will be carried on by special gangs now being organized.’ The boycott of the Royal Commission was ongoing, but Ibn Sa’ud and King Ghazi intervened. Auni Abdul Hadi, Izzat Darwazah, Mu’in al-Madi, and Kamel al-Qassab flew to Riyadh and Baghdad to consult with the kings. They explained their reasons for boycotting the commission, but also sought support for a new pan-Arab congress ‘to decide on a concerted programme of action for the future, for all Arab countries, particularly in the case of a European war breaking out.’ Neither Iraq nor Saudi Arabia

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IOR L/PS/12/3343. *CID* 20/36. 12.12.1936.

consented. Ibn Sa'ud informed Britain that he had pressed for cooperation with the Commission, which they confirmed in signals intercepts. Upon return to Palestine, Jamal Husseini, Auni Abdul Hadi, Darwazah, and others appeared before the commission. The Mufti never participated, instead relying on his faction members' representation.⁵⁸⁵

The Royal Commission returned to London, while further security reviews took place in Palestine. Violence and intrigue persisted, but organized disturbances had not yet broken out. Intelligence services improved, focusing mostly on Palestinian politics and terrorism. In July 1937, the CID reported on widespread anticipation of the pronouncement of the Royal Commission. Following a pattern which should have been all too familiar by this time, the Mufti travelled to Damascus. 'It is reported that he discussed with Pan-Arab leaders the creation of a joint front to deal with any proposals about Palestine.' Rumours of partition were plenty – and the Mufti was suspicious of Amir Abdullah's intention to support a partition scheme. The Mufti and Istiqlal were expected to 'bitterly oppose' such a scheme.⁵⁸⁶

When the Royal Commission proposed the abolition of the Mandate for most of Palestine, excluding the Jaffa-Jerusalem corridor, and partition of the country into Jewish and Arab states, the Nashashibis' *Difa'a* party left the ASC, citing changes to that body's constitution which were taken without consultation. This step may have had more to do with Ragheb Nashashibi's alignment with Abdullah's pro-British stance. A plot to

⁵⁸⁵ IOR L/PS/12/3343. *CID 1/37*. 4.1.1937.; HW 12/211. 67350. Intercept; *Ibn Saud to London*. 1.1.1937.; ISA RG 65/P/3056/37. Royal Commission 57th meeting. 13.1.1937.; 58th meeting 13.1.1937.

⁵⁸⁶ IOR L/PS/12/3343. *CID 11/37*. 5.7.1937.

assassinate Amir Abdullah had been uncovered and foiled in Amman. ASC politicians, meanwhile, sent delegations to London and Arab states to determine next steps. The possibility of violent outbreak was not ruled out by the CID, but it did not expect it would be organized.⁵⁸⁷

Through August 1937, signs of preparation for armed rebellion multiplied. Intelligence from Syria, especially from MacKereth, demonstrated the stockpiling and smuggling of arms. British intelligence references to such matters are few. Bashir Sa'adawi was sent by Shukri al-Quwwatli Syrian National Bloc to Egypt with funds for arms. MacKereth supposed that Abdullah's cooperation in closing the border may have forced the ASC to raise arms in Egypt. He believed that the true mission was to raise sympathy for the Mufti, and 'there would be nothing strange in coupling this with gun-running activities. Saadawi is a very cunning old boy.' Eliyahu Epstein passed intelligence to the Jewish Agency from Damascus showing that Fakhri Abdul Hadi, who had served with Qawuqji the previous year, was now meeting rebels in Syria, and presumed to be organizing them.⁵⁸⁸ There is little indication whether British sources saw such reports, although Yoav Gelber records that the Nashashibis were the main source for warnings to the JAPD that British officials, Nashashibi supporters, and Jewish colonies would be the target of a forthcoming wave of terrorism. The Mufti was concentrating his people in Jerusalem, mainly in the Haram ash-Sharif. On the Mufti's instructions, thousands of weapons

⁵⁸⁷ IOR L/PS/12/3343. *CID 12/37*. 14.7.1937.; *CID 13/37*. 2.8.1937.

⁵⁸⁸ HA 115/25. *MacKereth to Kingsley-Heath (CID)*. 17.8.1937.; HA 80/50p/35. Eliyahu Epstein. *Arab Bureau Intelligence from Damascus*. Source; 'ayin 'ayin.27.8.1937.

were concentrated in Nablus. He intended to use armed bands to foil any implementation of partition.⁵⁸⁹

The ASC members and delegations from around the Arab world convened at Bludan, on the outskirts of Damascus in September. When the Mufti visited Damascus in June, he charged Nabih al-Azmeh with initiating the pan-Arab gathering. Typically, it was an attempt to raise foreign support for the forthcoming struggle in Palestine. Eliyahu Sasson, an intelligence hand of the JAPD who began his career as an Arab nationalist before the movement took an anti-Jewish turn in the 1920s, observed the preparations for the Bludan conference. He ran agents in Syria and Lebanon who passed reliable intelligence about it. Abba Hushi of the Histadrut also had an informant at Bludan. Gilbert MacKereth, the British consult at Damacus, also had a secret agent, "X", who attended a secret meeting after the conference where plans for Jihad were arranged by Syrian nationalists. MacKereth and Sasson may have had the same agent.

MacKereth submitted a detailed report on Bludan to the FO. The report on the secret meeting after the conference demonstrated the Mufti's intentions clearly. A 'violent' anti-Jewish pamphlet which used selected hateful passages from the Qur'an to promote anti-Jewish (and Christian) sentiment was distributed at Bludan. The pamphlet encouraged Jihad in Palestine. At the secret after-conference meeting, Syrian and Palestinian extremists spoke of the weakness of Bludan and the need to take further steps. Ya'aqub al-Ghussein appealed for more money to purchase weapons and described arms caches in Nablus and Tulkarm. Fawzi al-Qawuqji, long

⁵⁸⁹ Gelber, *Shorshe ha-havatselet*, 208.

rumoured to be preparing another campaign, sent a letter to Ghussein in which he promised to renew revolt. In fact, Qawuqji only returned to Palestine in 1948. The meeting discussed armed tactics – citing the difficulties in attacking well-defended Jewish colonies, but observing that police armoured cars were vulnerable to mines. ‘The shooting of British soldiers was said to be most inaccurate, and aeroplane bombs were not to be feared.’⁵⁹⁰ Preparations for a renewed campaign were underway, but there was no sense of how it would be carried out, except, like last time, under individual leadership of commanders over small formations.

David HaCohen, connected to Haifa businessman Taher Caraman, who attended Bludan, reported on the unprecedented erasing of borders at the conference, and the Mufti’s noticeable influence. He reportedly was more popular in Iraq than King Ghazi. Two of HaCohen’s informants, Caraman and Haifa Mayor Hasan Shukri, feared for their lives after Bludan. Shukri often had been threatened, and survived a number of assassination attempts. HaCohen also spoke to Rashid al-Hajj Ibrahim, who was loyal to the Mufti and Istiqlal party, who emphasized that Jews and Arabs could come to terms under the framework of the Bludan decisions, which on principal sought to freeze the demographic situation in Palestine. Behind the scenes of Bludan were preparations for another revolt.⁵⁹¹

Joseph Davidescu gathered intelligence personally and through agents about those preparations. In one reference, he focused on the Mufti’s threats against the newspaper *al-Jamia al-Islamiya*, which opposed

⁵⁹⁰ FO 684/10. MacKereth to FO. 15.9.1937.; *MacKereth: memo.* 14.9.1937.; “X” to *MacKereth.* 13.9.1937.; annexes 5&6.

⁵⁹¹ Gelber, *Shorshe ha-ḥavatsselet*, 210.

Bludan.⁵⁹² Terrorism quickly spread during September. Opponents of the Mufti, suspected “collaborators”, and land brokers were targeted for assassination. One Abdul Salam Barkawi of Jenin was assassinated for helping the police catch Qassam’s gang in 1935.⁵⁹³ These assassinations had become less frequent during February-August 1937, but Qassam’s former disciples were resuming this practice. They particularly targeted the police, culminating in the murder of Haifa CID officer, Halim Basta. They even had an informant connected to RAF intelligence, according to the CID. GSI surveyed political assassinations during September.⁵⁹⁴ The weakening of the police at this moment was critical.

Intelligence from Davidescu presumably was passed to the SSO, his main employer. The CID reported the Mufti’s disappointment that he must share control of the movement with Syrians, who would not follow his discipline. Tension in Palestine, rejection of Bludan, a pan-Arab front, and a recrudescing *Jihadi* spirit which targeted Britons, Arabs and Jews alike culminated in the assassination on 26 September of Lewis Andrews, the Acting District Commissioner of Nazareth. This step was the last straw for the government, which immediately deported four ASC members to the Seychelles islands, including Ahmed Hilmi Pasha, Fuad al-Saba, Ya’aqub al-Ghuessin, and Dr. Khaldi. The remaining members were abroad, except for Jamal al-Husseini who was still at large. The government decided to arrest the Mufti and strip him of his offices at the SMC and Awqaf. He

⁵⁹² Ibid., 210–211.; HA 8/klali/103. Galili records. *Arab Bureau Intelligence*. ‘Joseph informs’. 30.8.1937.

⁵⁹³ HA 80/141p/1. *List of Arab moderates assassinated and assaulted during recent months*. 17.9.1937.

⁵⁹⁴ HA 47/757. Fol.276-497. *Haifa*. 20.9.1937.; HA 115/97. *GSI. I (a) Summary*. 1.10.1937. p5.

holed up at the Haram ash-Sharif, and the police dared not to cause an incident by storming the area. There was no chance that the Woodhead Commission, sent to Palestine to determine how to implement partition, would find any cooperation amongst Arabs, although it proceeded anyway. The Mufti rejected the Christian government's control over Islamic affairs, and continued to organize the Sheikhs in the country to support him. Government action now meant that the movement would be controlled from Syria – which posed a new and difficult intelligence and military problem.⁵⁹⁵

More evidence on the stand-off with the Mufti can be obtained from significant intercepts of the cables of the US Consul in Jerusalem to the State Department. On 2 October, the consul said that the British were apprehensive of further terrorism against them, and felt bitter resentment against Arabs after Andrews' murder. The Attorney-General explained their decision not to arrest the Mufti, still in the Haram area. They feared reaction of the Muslim world by intervening in that sacred area. 'It is hoped too, having clipped his wings by cutting off most important source of propaganda funds, he may be forced to retreat from his present uncompromising attitude.'⁵⁹⁶ Yet, by 8 October, the gloves came off. A decision of the government executive council (exco) stated

It was entirely agreed that the stage in which Government sought the support of any local party has passed. Government must have confidence that it is fully capable of controlling the situation by itself, at last (sic) until public security is completely and fully established. This being so it is agreed that the Government should refuse any approval of the [Mufti's] manifesto. This need not close

⁵⁹⁵ IOR L/PS/12/3343. *CID 16/37*. 15.10.1937.

⁵⁹⁶ HW 12/220. 069440. *Wadworth to Washington*. 2.10.1937.

the door to the very desirable end if it really is inspired by a change of heart.⁵⁹⁷

The Mufti escaped the Haram in disguise, and slipped away to Beirut. Certain British intelligence officers, in their memoirs, claimed he had help from sympathetic government employees, and was warned before police came to arrest him. Tony Simmonds, working for GSI, recorded that he thought a policeman had been bribed to extract the Mufti before he could be arrested. This account may be partly true, but the details are dubious.⁵⁹⁸ Dudley Clarke regretted not having confronted the Mufti sooner. Clarke met him not long after his arrival to Palestine in spring 1936, and within a few months, would, along with the rest of the military, press Wauchope to arrest him. ‘But when we did at last gain reluctant permission he slipped away in the night and was never seen again. It was said there was some collusion in high places, for the Palestine Police made no effort to stop his flight, whereas the Lebanon authorities had ample warning to welcome him when he arrived by sea off Beirut.’ He was satisfied by the government’s prompt and vigorous action.

...at long last we were rid of that “arch-scoundrel”, as General Dill once called him. About the same time that these events were taking place the Arab Kings and Princes openly declared their complete rejection of partition, and with that the Arabs once more resumed their tactics of rebellion. So we found ourselves back again with the same old sorry business!⁵⁹⁹

These two sources, from men who knew the inside story, are telling. Dudley Clarke’s memoir is very reliable, and written with a great deal of soul-searching. Both accounts reflect the deep frustration of intelligence

⁵⁹⁷ S25/22768. *Executive council decision*. 8.10.1937.

⁵⁹⁸ IWM, AC Simonds Papers. *Pieces of War*. 43-44.

⁵⁹⁹ IWM. Clarke Papers. 2. *Memoir*. 551-2, 588.

officers that government would not account for their product, and mismanaged Palestinian politics.

Many rumours about the Mufti's escape exist, but even the CID recorded that 'A number of persons were convinced that he could not have escaped without the connivance of Government, and these persons were, therefore, confirmed in their opinion that the Mufti had throughout acted as an agent for the government.' The Mufti meant to reach Damascus, but was prevented by French authorities, so the government and CID interpreted his temporary residence in Lebanon to be a form of victory which limited his power. MacKereth cautioned the government, military and intelligence authorities that the Mufti had little influence in Syria, and was 'weak and therefore useless in vigorous action. He must still be regarded, however, as a possibly rallying point.'⁶⁰⁰ As can be expected, the Mufti eventually circumvented such obstacles.

The government long maintained that it had good reason not to arrest the Mufti. By September 1937, this thinking no longer applied. The original question was whether arresting the Mufti would do more harm than good, which it probably would have. It now became a question of how long the Mufti could avoid responsibility for Andrews' assassination and the rebel movement. In a way, even in exile, he had won: Britain had lost control. It is difficult to conceive of how the government could have reconciled its policy with his demands: Until 1939, the Zionist policy was

⁶⁰⁰ IOR L/PS/12/3343. *CID 17/37*. 9.11.1937.; S25/22768. *Meeting at office of OAG.*.p.11.

fundamental to the mandate, and was not going to change. When it finally changed in 1939, it was done so not because of the Mufti, but despite him.

Chapter 8 – Military Intelligence and the Arab Revolt

In late 1936 or early 1937, Patrick Domvile was reluctantly reassigned from Jerusalem to Baghdad. The RAF and army wished to keep him away from the Zionists and the intelligence mechanisms which were implemented during the political crises leading up to the murder of Lewis Andrews. While relieved to see tough action by October 1937, he felt that it should have come 18 months earlier, and that most Arabs would be delighted to be rid of ‘a tyrant and terrorism’. In a letter to his former colleague Reuven Zaslani, he criticized British imperial policy, which, he thought, had regressed since Iraq’s independence. Partition was a mistake in his eyes, and unnecessary now that the Mufti was out of country. In a serious reflection of the problems of empire, he joked: ‘I am not a ruthless Imperialist as I would wish my Empire built on LOVE, PEACE AND COMMON UNDERSTANDING. All in my Empire must work for these ends- anyone going against them must be ruthlessly, if humanely, exterminated.’⁶⁰¹

Domvile was not in charge of policy, for good reason. He was one of many officers sympathetic to Zionism, probably the most sympathetic. Yet his vision did not jive with reality. There was no policy that could be imposed without force – a direct contradiction of the League of Nations’ aims, laws, and principles. Partition represented retreat from that paradox of empire and an admission by Britain that it could not live up to its commitments to both Jews and Arabs and govern both. Palestinians still overwhelmingly favoured the Mufti’s stand against British policy above

⁶⁰¹ CZA S25/22393. *Domvile to Zaslani*. 22.10.1937.

any alternative. War-weariness led to a state of *attentisme*, but Palestinians distinguished between their moral and material support for the Mufti's forces, or for those of Britain. The need to survive overwhelmed political allegiances. The army exploited this force, enabling Britain's defeat of the Palestine rebellion.

This defeat of the enemy was not a victory in a Clausewitzian sense. At great cost, Britain could impose its will over the population. Yet it never changed the politics of the country, or forced the Mufti or other enemy leadership to concede. However, it caused many members of the enemy leadership to secede. The 'peace gangs' were an important means to military victory, yet they never translated into political victory – no pro-British Palestinian leadership ever emerged with enough influence over the population to accommodate Britain's Zionist policy. Britain reached a stalemate and called it victory.

Other changes emerged from the revolt. Sir Charles Tegart, formerly a senior officer of the Calcutta police, arrived in Palestine with David Petrie – another senior Indian policeman who had run the Indian Intelligence Bureau – with a mission to reform the Palestine police in the midst of the rebellion. During 1937-39, Tegart simultaneously coordinated a counter-rebellion with police, army, and Zionists while reforming the Palestine Police with Petrie, who also reported to SIS on intelligence requirements for East Africa. Gad Kroizer argues that Tegart, during the process of reform, 'rejected the idea of a civil police.'⁶⁰² In fact, that Tegart was called upon in the first place was essentially an admission by the

⁶⁰² Kroizer, "From Dowbiggin to Tegart," 129.

government that a civil state in Palestine was impossible. The police were militarized, enabling CID intelligence to work more efficiently with the military effort.

Another important factor in the counter-rebellion is the role of military organization and its incorporation of intelligence. For the first time since 1920, General Staffs used political and security intelligence to support operations in one centralized machine. In 1936, this machine existed in a very short-lived experiment of combined staffs, while Air Control was still in effect. With the arrival of General Dill in September 1936, this experiment came to an end. Dill's enlarged staff absorbed those mid-level officers who had led Peirse's Combined Staffs Intelligence. Intelligence from other sources was coordinated through GSI, but commands remained separate. When Robert Haining took command in April 1938, he operationalized plans which had been developed during Wavell's tenure as GOC since August 1937. Staff intelligence maintained its role in one form or another through the Second World War. It also influenced the organization of British intelligence in the Middle East during that war, as many buccaneering officers gained experience in Palestine which was applied to their leading roles thereafter. Without centrally-coordinated intelligence, it would have been very difficult for commanders to effectively apply force in the field. By 1938, this system had become so sophisticated that it incorporated deception of rebels, and 'peace gangs' had become a sub-rosa part of the counter rebellion.

The cooperation of the Yishuv in both military and intelligence matters positively contributed to the counter-rebellion. It is difficult to

imagine how the British campaign would have been conducted without the help of Zionist intelligence, or even the support of its irregular fighters in the form of Bedouin controlled by police, peace gangs, and Haganah fighters under Orde Wingate's SNS. Each took guerilla tactics to the enemy in an offensive campaign. However, many historians have overstated the case as regards Anglo-Zionist cooperation. British officers widely appreciated this cooperation. Yet it never went as far as either side had hoped. British officials rightly feared the long-term result of arming and empowering Haganah troops, so official limits were placed on this cooperation.

The counter-rebellion restored the importance of General Staffs and the incorporation of intelligence into staff and command through that body. It improved cooperation with the Yishuv so far that Britain lost control over Haganah's self-armament and education. The effort centred on buccaneering, entrepreneurial officers who led change within the British system. When official channels were blocked, they were circumvented informally, often with the help of Zionists.

Tegart's Police Reforms and the Civil State

Tegart felt that it was time to admit that the civil state in Palestine had collapsed. He determined that 'Virtually all trace of civil government has been swept away by the rebellion... where might is right, blood feuds are likely to appear in nearly every village... the whole police machinery has got to be overhauled and fitted for its task...' ⁶⁰³

The campaign of intimidation by rebels and terrorists led to the collapse of the police. This was not a sudden event, but rather a gradual process that came to a head during August-September 1938 when police stations in Palestinian towns such as Nablus, Hebron, Jenin, and Lydda were encircled and attacked. Arab police varyingly helped the rebels, suffered brutal murder, or simply stayed home. The rebels absconded with arms and ammunition at each station. ⁶⁰⁴ This period saw the capture of the old city of Jerusalem by rebels, and the declaration on 19 October 1938 of military control – de facto martial law. Until then, the police had managed to survive considerable pressure. The collapse can be attributed to the especially intense campaign of intimidation and assassination from September 1937, and the uncomfortable situation which Arab civil servants found themselves in throughout most of the 1930s.

One of the most serious incidents was the murder in April 1937 of a senior figure at the Haifa CID, Halim Basta, who had been Rice's personal assistant. He had come under suspicion by A.H. Cohen during the Qassamist murders during 1932-33, for being subject to influence of Haifa

⁶⁰³ IOR MSS Eur C235/2. Tegart memoir.291.

⁶⁰⁴ WO 191/90. GSO, British Forces Palestine. *The Development of the Palestine Police Force Under Military Control*. 6.1939. appendix D.

notables connected to the Mufti, but generally had a good reputation. His loss cut deep, since he kept sources close to himself.⁶⁰⁵ Cohen concluded that Basta was assassinated by Qassamists, encouraged by Palestine Istiqlal in a campaign against Arab police and notables such as Haifa mayor Hasan Shukri, who maintained good relations with Jews.⁶⁰⁶ Interestingly, police noticed a methodological connection between Basta's assassination and that of Andrews. Kingsley-Heath told Bernard Joseph, Shertok's deputy at JAPD, that both Andrews and Basta, before their murders, had received intelligence suggesting they could relax their personal security measures such as bodyguards, since assassins were only out to get "Bad Arabs" such as those who sold land to the Jews.⁶⁰⁷ Deceptive tactics aside, Basta's death was part of a vicious campaign during 1937-39 against anyone suspected of disloyalty to the Arab nation.

Personal threats were but one part of this intimidation. The awkward position of Arab policemen was well known. The CID depended on Arab staff, who were compromised as each individual had to pick sides. Nationalists understood this problem, and exploited it. Akram Zu'ayter described the shame expressed by an Arab CID officer sent to question Zu'ayter about a seditious speech he gave.⁶⁰⁸ Government employees went on strike during the 1936 rebellion, threatening to cripple the judicial system and rail transport during a critical period. Many services were shut down. In January 1938, Tegart and Petrie discussed ways to solve this

⁶⁰⁵ MECA, GB165-0281 Tegart Papers. 4/6. Diary 23.12.1937.

⁶⁰⁶ Gelber, *Shorshe ha-havatselet*, 81, 112, 197.

⁶⁰⁷ HA 87/zion/10. *Minute of interview with the DIG CID*. 2.10.1937.

⁶⁰⁸ Zu'aytir, *Yawmīyāt Akram Zu'aytir : Al-Ḥarakah Al-Waṭaniyah Al-Filasṭīniyah, 1935-1939*, 14.

problem. Acting police commandant Saunders felt that hiring locals was impossible, but foreigners would lack local experience. Tegart and Petrie agreed, suggesting based on their investigations that the government had failed to support Arab personnel who were vulnerable to intimidation. Officers with families would be spared from returning each night to potentially hostile villages or towns during a crisis if only there were enough living quarters.⁶⁰⁹

Tegart initially was called upon in October 1937 to help in Palestine, not as a response to this pressure on Arab personnel, but as a consequence of the crumbling of security. It was originally proposed that he take over the police entirely, perhaps a reflection on Spicer, replaced by Saunders in November. Instead, Tegart proposed that he 'be deputed to go to Palestine and examine and report on the police administration as a whole. On receipt of my report, should you consider it advisable, the question of my taking charge might further be discussed.'⁶¹⁰ Tegart's approach to security was summarized by the Viceroy after Tegart's successful counter-terrorist campaign in Bengal:

Tegart went on to say that the one thing he required was that he should be able to deal promptly, and before they occurred, with actual outrages. His reason, in a word, was that his counter-outrage organisation must be made to feel, in its personnel, that it was top dog. The moment outrages occurred and were not punished, his organisation began to crumble.⁶¹¹

It is no surprise that Tegart's report in January 1938 emphasised the protection of Palestinian personnel and investment in infrastructure to accommodate them, and mix them up with British and Jewish personnel.

⁶⁰⁹ S25/22744. various 1936; *HC to British resident Amman (Cox)*. 1.1938.

⁶¹⁰ MECA, GB165-0281 Tegart Papers, 4/2. n.s.

⁶¹¹ IOR MSS Eur. C152/5, Wedgwood Benn to Lord Irwin 21.11.29

Tegart and Petrie began their investigations in December 1937. They toured the country, witnessed military operations, and even consulted French authorities and British liaison and diplomatic staff in Beirut and Damascus. Petrie's role, seldom discussed in the record, likely was to assign or recommend the assignment of Secret Service funds. Diary entries refer to this matter during Tegart's meetings with the CID, and with Gilbert MacKereth in Damascus. 'I asked MacKereth whether in his opinion, apart from the question of recognition in other ways, Secret Service money could not be usefully expended in Damascus. It might be taken as axiomatic that if information were wanted, it would have to be paid for. MacKereth spent very small sums (some £95 per annum).' Tegart wished to know whether an increased investment would lead to the capture of rebels and arms smugglers who regularly crossed the Syria-Palestine border, such as Black Hand leader Sheikh Atiyah Ahmad 'Awad. Atiyah had led a battle, witnessed by Tegart, against British forces at Umm al-Fahm. He was killed in battle in March 1938.⁶¹² It is unclear whether MacKereth asked for further funds, although his activity throughout the remainder of 1938-39 suggests that more resources were available.

Tegart and Petrie submitted their lengthy report, which contained 28 recommendations. Tegart retrospectively felt that the two most important suggestions dealt with the reorganization of the CID and the creation of a Rural Mounted Police (RMP) – another gendarmerie. The CID, under the command of 'an extremely able officer... Mr. Kingsley-Heath,' was

⁶¹² Tegart Papers, 4/6. Diary. 23.12.1937.; Tegart papers, 4/7. 7.2.1938.; Lachman, "Arab Rebellion and Terrorism in Palestine: 1929-39: The Case of Sheikh Izz Al-Din Al-Qassam and His Movement," 83; Cohen, *Army of Shadows*, 135.

‘hopelessly’ understaffed and required enlargement. ‘Greater efficiency will not be secured merely by increasing the personnel. Expert control is essential and the staff must be properly trained. This applies with almost equal cogency to the other branches of the police machine which we have examined.’ The RMP would be used to detect and intercept the first signs of unrest at the borders, although the military would be used against large armed bands.⁶¹³ The RMP never materialized for lack of funds.⁶¹⁴

Tegart also proposed a unit of ‘irregulars’ to patrol the border. Such a paramilitary force, comprised of locals, may be seen as an attempt to renew the gendarmerie. It was the seed for an offensive strategy which later was embodied by Arab irregulars and SNS. It is possible that the ideas were split, and the notion of irregular Jewish forces was informally and secretly suggested to army intelligence. Tegart’s memoir does not explicitly state such a connection, but makes clear his admiration for Jewish colonists.⁶¹⁵ Jewish supernumerary policemen, who were armed for settlement defence, formed the backbone of Wingate’s SNS. Tegart wrote that SNS ‘became a brave and useful force trained and commanded by that outstanding personality... it is no exaggeration to say that the Jews who served under him idolised him and would have followed him to the ends of the world.’⁶¹⁶ The friendly relations between British officers such as Tegart, Clarke, and Wingate, were a crucial part of the staff and command structure which led the counter-rebellion.

⁶¹³ IOR MSS Eur C235/2. Tegart memoir. 255-256.

⁶¹⁴ CO 733/383/2. 13. MacMichael to CO. 4.8.1938.

⁶¹⁵ IOR MSS Eur C235/2. Tegart memoir. 273-274.

⁶¹⁶ IOR MSS Eur C235/2. Tegart memoir. 278.

Tegart's first mission to Palestine shaped the end of civil government. At an exco meeting which included Wauchope, Wavell, Petrie, the Chief Secretary (Battershill), and Saunders, Tegart suggested using secret service funds to reward any source of good work, whether in the civil service, regular police, army, but 'but especially for irregulars.' Secret Service funds could be paid quickly, were unaccounted for, and '...would provide a great stimulus to persons in a position to help the Govt.'⁶¹⁷

This scheme also paved the way for the peace gangs. Tegart imagined a long-term need for irregular forces, and recommended that 'enlistment of the ordinary type of policemen... should be stopped and a policy of concentrating more on the irregular type of men, i.e. the illiterate (sic) tough type capable of fighting rural lawlessness by its own methods should be applied. Sir C.T. described the two categories, by reference to uniforms, as "blue" and "buff" respectively.' Tegart and Petrie also remarked that police should probably stop operating in the field in their blue uniforms during 'rural operations against wrongdoers. It is conspicuous and hampers strenuous physical action on the part of the wearer.'⁶¹⁸ Such measures did not kill civil government. The accumulation of unwise policy decisions leading up to the rebellion did so. The failure to rationalise the governance of Palestine and its Zionist policy was the root problem.

⁶¹⁷ S25/22753. *Record of Meeting on public security*. 7.1.1938.

⁶¹⁸ S25/22753. *Record of Meeting on public security*. 7.1.1938.

Tegart's impact on the counter-rebellion was important, as its intensity fluctuated, and eventually became all-out war. A report on the development of the police under military control from June 1939 makes special reference to the role of Tegart's fence along the northern frontier, and the fact that many of his recommendations were not yet implemented. It also noted the importance of military control over police 'as soon as rebellion has become so widespread as to need the continual presence of troops in the area, and before the disintegration of the police has set into any great extent. This stage may be said to have been reached in Palestine at the end of 1937.'⁶¹⁹ In other words, the situation was allowed to deteriorate, but the civil power would neither relinquish control, nor prove that it was 'top dog'.

Tegart played some role in changing that matter, but mostly it was due to the collapse of the Arab police during September-October 1938. Matters spun out of control during the Munich crisis in September when troops were temporarily shorthanded, the Arab section of the police collapsed completely and troops and British police had to reclaim the Old City which had been overrun by hundreds of rebel fighters. Police and soldiers used underground tunnels to reconnoitre the Old City, and to secretly deploy force. Aircraft dropped leaflets, and then British forces emerged from underground while others stormed the gates of the city in a well-timed crackdown. The vicious fighting was successful, and the entire Old City, including the Haram ash-Sharif, was retaken. Police and

⁶¹⁹ WO 191/90. GSO, British Forces Palestine. *The Development of the Palestine Police Force Under Military Control*. 6.1939. pp9-10, 14, 21.

government officials were pleased at the lack of blowback from the Muslim world at these actions.⁶²⁰

Meanwhile Tegart rebuilt the police, now that it was under military control.⁶²¹ He focused on the ‘expansion and rehabilitation of the force, especially the British section.’ His Housing Committee dealt with police accommodations, especially their inclusion within precinct buildings. This committee coordinated the needs of government, police, and the army with the overall counter-rebellion and police ‘rehabilitation’ strategies.⁶²² Small isolated police posts in rural areas were replaced with the famous ‘Tegart fortresses’ – self-contained barracks, accommodations, mess, intelligence, signals and headquarters in one well-protected building. Arab police were protected from sources of hostility and intimidation. Their poor accommodations were even noticed by Bernard Montgomery, who urged Tegart to professionalize the police and make it a ‘real career’.⁶²³ Tegart’s cooperation with David HaCohen, director of Solel Boneh, the Histadrut’s building contractors, also was important. He remarked that he did not trust government to complete construction of his forts or the fence, since it had taken five years to build one station during 1934-39.

None of the proposed defensive constructions were implemented in full. The counter-rebellion was costly, and while government saw need to

⁶²⁰ See FO 371/23242. *HC to CO*. 3.12.1938.; MECA, PPOCA, G6/24. *Retaking of Jerusalem*. Various memoirs.; CO 732/81/10. 25. *GSI 22/38*. 4.11.1938 and *GSI 21/38*. 21.10.1938.; a colourful account is found in IWM A.C. Simonds papers. Memoir. 49-52.

⁶²¹ MECA Tegart papers, 3/4. *HC to CO*. 20.10.1938.; Brunskill, *reorganization of Palestine police force*. 15.10.1938.

⁶²² MSS Eur C235/2. Tegart memoir. 283-287.

⁶²³ MECA Tegart Papers, 3/4. *Montgomery to Tegart*. 10.12.1938.

invest in improvement, it never signed a blank cheque.⁶²⁴ Nonetheless, the investment was unprecedentedly large. Previously, the police had rented most of its infrastructure. In June 1938, there were only 20 ‘stations’ in the main cities, and five ‘posts.’ In rural areas there were 37 stations and 51 posts. Most were small and poorly situated for tactical purposes. Kroizer fully detailed the expensive construction program: The first eleven forts were built between August 1939 and April 1940, and the remaining 45 between then and October 1941, at a cost of £P2.4 million. A total of 54 were built by October 1941. The HC demanded an additional seven, which were built in 1943.⁶²⁵ Beyond Tegart’s capital expenses were the annual investment increases in force strength, and the political cost of arming the Yishuv.

Figure 3 demonstrates the scale of improvement in the police, between September 1938 and March 1939.⁶²⁶ It shows the deep investment in British personnel, the weakening of Arab police, and the massive increase in armament and training of Jews, and their incorporation into British operations. The number of supernumeraries below does not account for the approximately 4000 recruited for settlement defence in 1936. Practically all of these were Haganah members; their training and experience acquired from the police was transferred to the Haganah through its training and education programme.

⁶²⁴ Kroizer, “From Dowbiggin to Tegart”; Connolly, “Charles Tegart and the Forts That Tower over Israel”; Kroizer, ““Back to Station Control’: Planning the ‘Tegart’ Police Fortresses in Palestine.”

⁶²⁵ Kroizer, ““Back to Station Control’: Planning the ‘Tegart’ Police Fortresses in Palestine,” 96, 104, 115–116, 119, 128.

⁶²⁶ WO 191/90. GSO, British Forces Palestine. *The Development of the Palestine Police Force Under Military Control*. 6.1939. appendix E.

Figure 3- Strength of Palestine Police 31 March 1938 to 31 March 1939.

Category	Type	Strength 31.3.38	Strength 12.9.38	Strength 31.3.39
British	Regulars	1100	1285	2837
	TOTAL	1100	1285	2837
Arab	Regulars	1572	1644	1434
	Temporary	302	106	-
	Supernumeraries & Ghaffirs	144	115	48
	TOTAL	2018	1865	1482
Jewish	Regulars	651	717	685
	Temporary	37	265	1608
	Attached Police (infantry)	-	-	210
	SNS Police	-	50	50
	Settlement	1006	931	1282
	Defence	-	-	-
	Railway protection	-	325	434
	Supernumeraries and Ghaffirs	112	449	592
	TOTAL	112	449	4861
	TOTAL Paid Police	Grand total- all classes	4924	5887
TOTAL Specials	(settlement defence)	3853	4430	13,650

The construction and personnel improvements were costly, and did not take effect until late into the rebellion. Many historians falsely attribute the end of the Arab revolt to April 1939, even though fighting continued well into the Second World War. It really ended only with the occupation of Iraq after the April 1941 coup, and the occupation of Syria and Lebanon that summer. The premature dating probably is due to the coincidence of a decrease in fighting with the White Paper announcements. Also, a note from “Hutton” – possibly Christopher Hutton who would take an important role in British covert action during the Second World War – recorded that ‘it can now be fairly claimed that the rebellion is being rapidly stamped out.

The main rebel leaders have been killed, have surrendered or fled. The villagers are no longer prepared to submit to the depredations of the “warriors”, and information improves daily.⁶²⁷

Many rebel leaders and fighters returned to Iraq and Syria during 1939. In 1940, Colonial Secretary Malcolm MacDonald prepared a paper for the War Cabinet on the possibility that the British garrison in Palestine could be reduced. He ruled out substitution of British forces with locally-raised forces. He concluded:

It is contemplated that when rebellion has been finally broken and the relations between Jews and Arabs may have improved, and when the police Force has been reorganised and established in fortified posts on the lines recommended by Sir Charles Tegart, it should be possible to reduce the British garrison to 1 motor battalion, 1 infantry battalion, and 1 cavalry regiment.⁶²⁸

In other words, the rebellion had not yet ended. The Colonial Secretary did not think Britain could ever replace the British garrison with a local force – a problem known since 1921. The police were not yet ready to handle security, nor had Tegart’s building plan been put into full effect. Without any means for local security, the garrison in Palestine never dropped below the strength of a division. The political failure behind this policing problem never was solved. Britain attempted to disarm the Haganah a few times, but needs of the war caused further military collaboration.⁶²⁹ Still, the borders of Palestine remained secure during this period, largely due to the security system designed by Tegart. His

⁶²⁷ MECA, Tegart papers, 4/4. *Hutton- personal*. 22.4.1939.

⁶²⁸ CAB 67/4/16. *Recruitment of Palestinian Armed Forces – release of British garrison*. 20.1.1940.

⁶²⁹ Harouvi, “Reuven Zaslani (Shiloah) and the Covert Cooperation”; Wagner, “British Intelligence and the Jewish Resistance Movement,” 58–62.

architectural legacy remains visible to tourists in Israel today; some of his buildings remain in use by Israeli security forces.⁶³⁰

The improvement of the CID and intelligence services was central in securing the Levant during the Second World War. After Syria and Lebanon were conquered by British, Free French, Australian, and Haganah Forces during the summer of 1941, the allies were faced with the problem of what to do with the large number of ex-rebels and anti-Colonial “renegades” who resided there. Further research must unveil the story of the arrest, internment, interrogation, and in 1945 the release, of Arab ‘renegades’ who had fought Britain in the 1930s, or supported the Axis during the war. Key parts of this story cannot be told because the documents are not available. The Special Operations Executive (SOE), the British covert action and sabotage organization of the war, kept some 17 files on its operations in the “Arab World,” of which only three are available to the public.⁶³¹ The remainder are held by SIS – and it is those files which are most likely to reveal how intelligence from interned Arabs was used in the war effort. These records could also reveal the roles of Arab agents recruited from these camps.

Recently released files of the CID at the Haganah Archive in Tel Aviv help to illuminate the subject. In summary, the CID prepared records just before the outbreak of war which would support the internment of certain Arabs who had either been rebels, supported them, or had served as German or Italian agents. By late September 1939, these lists were

⁶³⁰ Connolly, “Charles Tegart and the Forts That Tower over Israel.”
⁶³¹ TNA, HS 3/97-113.

categorized according to risk, and included people on both sides of the border.⁶³² In 1942, Teague and the security service officer in Palestine discussed arrangements for internment of Arabs, since nationalist activity was resurgent.⁶³³ CID files document the interrogation of internees in Palestine and Syria between 1941 and 1945, the reasoning behind the arrest and release of individuals, and the sharing of this intelligence with other intelligence services in the Middle East and London. Colonial office discussion on what to do with ‘colonial renegades’ after the war played a large part in how Britain aimed to shape Middle Eastern politics from 1945.⁶³⁴

These records represent two important developments for British intelligence in the Middle East. First, they show how Britain managed regional security during the war, and the central role of the improved, but militarized, CID in that effort. Secondly, they show how in the years following the Second World War, British intelligence maintained a firm grasp on Arab nationalists in a way completely absent from 1920-39. The various factions, parties, and youth movements were documented in detail; decision makers no longer had to guess about the intentions of these movements. Britain’s understanding of Arab underground activity helped to prevent anti-British violence from that community while the government grappled with the Jewish insurgency after the Second World War. Haim Levenberg produced the only study on this issue, which was quite limited because it was produced before the declassification of relevant records.

⁶³² HA 47/1185. fol.311. *A/ASP, CID Haifa to DIG CID: Police Action in the Event of War*. 23.9.1939.

⁶³³ HA 47/680. Fol.203. *note*. 4.4.1942.

⁶³⁴ CO 537/1314-18

However his book still shows how Jamal Husseini struggled to control the national movement upon his 1946 return to Palestine from a British detention camp in Rhodesia. British authorities were anxious about the possibility of a renewed Arab revolt, but overall were focused far more on the Jewish insurgency and illegal immigration.⁶³⁵

While the rebellion did not end 1941, Tegart played a key role in the counter-rebellion, and the gradual improvement of British control leading up to March-April 1939. Historians have ignored his essential role in shaping the command and staff organization under the government, and later the military, an informal but crucial connection. Leading up to 1920, Allenby and later the OETA administration were the last in Palestine to use a system of centralized intelligence in staff and command. Many in the army and in government at Cairo and Jerusalem saw the ongoing need for some form of Arab Bureau. Problems of finance, and civil versus military administration led to the rejection of that idea.. It was also considered no longer necessary: centralized intelligence was a novel feature of the army, and was a wartime need.⁶³⁶ The crises in Palestine proved otherwise.

Certain forms of this system reappeared in the 1930s, but it was not until a few enterprising officers chose to form a combined staff command in 1936 that the road towards a functioning intelligence state had been paved.

However, this intelligence state was militarized and at war over policy with a parallel civil intelligence state and the majority of the population.

⁶³⁵ Levenberg, *Military Preparations of the Arab Community in Palestine, 1945-1948*, chap. 1-3, 6.

⁶³⁶ WO 32/21125. 21a. *MI2 to FO*. 17.10.1919. see other items in file.

The influence of these events on the conduct of covert action, deception, and other intelligence operations during the Second World War cannot be understated. By 1937-38, the army and RAF in Egypt were already planning proposals for a centralized intelligence bureau for the Middle East, to be based in Cairo. When discussions began in the wake of the Abyssinian emergency, Sudan was looked upon as an example for an intelligence staff with a civilian head. General Dill was queried about his system about one year before the The Joint Intelligence Committee (JIC) – the main forum at Whitehall for inter-departmental examination of open and secret intelligence – began to survey such a possibility.⁶³⁷

It is no coincidence that Archibald Wavell, who witnessed the success of Allenby's GSI and that of the army in Palestine when he took command, promoted these efforts in London.⁶³⁸ According to John Ferris, Wavell

disagreed with Whitehall about the organization of intelligence. As a staff officer during 1917, Wavell had witnessed General Allenby's use of irregular warfare, signals intelligence and deception, and often referred to them in later years. In 1939 he wished to model his intelligence services on that organization. This system was never allowed to work as he intended...'

Wavell moved quickly towards Allenby's stride, developing irregular warfare and a grander version of the 'haversack ruse'. He established [the deception organization] 'A' Force and wrote its first order...⁶³⁹

Wavell appointed Clarke to lead 'A' Force, and Clarke brought in Simonds. This description brings into focus the methods which had

⁶³⁷ AIR 23/810. *Notes on Emergency in the Near East September 1935 to June 1936*. 15.7.1936. p.14.; WO 282/5. 6a. *Lt. Gen. Weir to Dill*. 17.2.1937.; FO 371/21838. E6646. *Proposal for combined Intelligence Bureau for Middle East*. 31.10.1938

⁶³⁸ Ferris, "‘FORTITUDE’ in Context: The Evolution of British Military Deception in Two World Wars, 1914-1945," 120, 131–2.; TNA KV 4/305 reveals Wavell's role in 1939.; CAB 104/72. 51A. CID 36 meeting minutes. 25.5.1939.; 6a. note by DDI, Air ministry. 14.11.1938.

⁶³⁹ Ferris, "The 'usual Source': Signals Intelligence and Planning for the Eighth Army 'Crusader' offensive, 1941," 84–85.

developed while Wavell was in command in Palestine, especially during his last few months. No doubt this experience influenced the military leaders of the Second World War. These developments led to deep Anglo-Zionist intelligence cooperation during the Second World War, but paradoxically, this made the British state in Palestine more insecure.

The British government's 1939 White Paper policy was hated by Zionists and became the heart of Anglo-Zionist conflict, which saw a confrontation between British policy and the united resistance of all armed Zionist factions. Despite the bitterness, cooperation between Britain and the Zionists continued into the Second World War.⁶⁴⁰ There was some concern over the politics of terrorists, but the Allies were confident of the loyalty of the Yishuv during the war. Some extra insight is provided in declassified American intelligence records.

The Jews won't work for the enemy naturally because of the enemy's anti-Jewish program, and any who would do would soon be caught up by the Jews themselves. The Arabs would work for the enemy for political reasons and especially for money however the chief Arab leaders are now in the enemy countries (MUFTI) so that the Arabs lack good leadership and policy. Also the Jews keep a good eye on them.⁶⁴¹

In other words – the Jews lacked a choice in the matter, and had reason to seek further political advantage through cooperation in war. That strategy had worked for them in the First World War, and there was no harm in trying again, especially since the threat of the Mufti to British or Jewish security in Palestine disappeared once his loyalty shifted to the Axis. After the war, Britain did not change its policy, and had to contend

⁶⁴⁰ Harouvi, "Reuven Zaslani (Shiloah) and the Covert Cooperation."

⁶⁴¹ NARA RG165 entry 77 box 758. Report no. 336. G2-USAFIME. *Genreal Security Information in Syria, Palestine & Egypt*. 1.9.1943.

with hundreds of thousands of stateless Jewish refugees and the results of Hitler's largely but not completely successful genocide. As Britain struggled to prevent illegal Jewish immigration and terrorism, the Palestine government was heavily penetrated by agents of the Jewish Agency and Haganah after years of Anglo-Zionist cooperation. Intelligence lacked the edge which it normally enjoyed in colonial conflict. This unwinnable conflict, and a general lack of political direction, led to the British decision to quit in 1947.⁶⁴²

Military Organization and Intelligence

On 7 June 1936, Air Vice Marshall Peirse, the AOC and senior military commander in Palestine (Air Control was still in effect), reported on the formation of a combined staff and brigade under the command of Col. (soon to become Brigadier) Evetts.⁶⁴³ This would be 'the chance of a lifetime.' With Naval reinforcements imminent, this was an opportunity to experiment. See figure 4 for an organizational chart.⁶⁴⁴ Evetts was pleased with the results of the combined staffs.⁶⁴⁵ It incorporated commands of RAF squadrons and armoured car companies, as well as the equivalent of an army division replete with tank sections, and engineers.

The experiment coordinated intelligence into the staff and command structure. Two members, Dudley Clarke and Tony Simonds, later commanded and led a section of the deception organization 'A Force'. Due to scarce records, the role of SIS or X2 in this picture is unclear, though in 1938 it would have worked in the same offices or at least had one person

⁶⁴² Wagner, "British Intelligence and the 'Fifth' Occupying Power"; Wagner, "British Intelligence and the Jewish Resistance Movement."

⁶⁴³ AIR 2/1761. 95a. *AOC to Air ministry*. 9.7.1936.

⁶⁴⁴ WO 33/1436. Appendix A- information for commanders of reinforcing troops.

⁶⁴⁵ Evetts, John (IWM interview) reel 3.

working with the intelligence section of the combined staff. In May 1937, John Teague, the SIS officer, appears in a CID summary distribution list, receiving four copies at Air HQ Jerusalem, based at the Old Fast Hotel.

This was the office for GSI, so clearly Teague was attached to that body.⁶⁴⁶

However, at the end of that month, GSI received four copies, and Teague alone received three.⁶⁴⁷ Some separation may have taken place, but that is

impossible to know without further data. According to Keith Jeffery,

Teague focused on the help that neighbouring countries were giving to the rebellion, perhaps referring to the pan-Arab movement. He also monitored

III.⁶⁴⁸ Dudley Clarke discussed intelligence organization in the official report, 'Military Lessons of the Arab Rebellion in Palestine, 1936.'

Intelligence was handled at the level of the combined staff. SSOs produced most data from agents and, no doubt, liaison with Zionists. Army intelligence officers

collected and collated the vast amount of varied information obtained by the fighting troops, and relieved the SSO of much of the routine work, particularly that concerned with topographical information. SSOs had their own wireless cars and reported direct to Force HQ, so that the value of their information was greatly enhanced by the speed with which it arrived. As officers of Force HQ, they had direct access to local commanders, and this personal contact was a valuable asset to the latter.⁶⁴⁹

⁶⁴⁶ IOR L/PS/12/3343.CID 7/37. 10.5.1937.

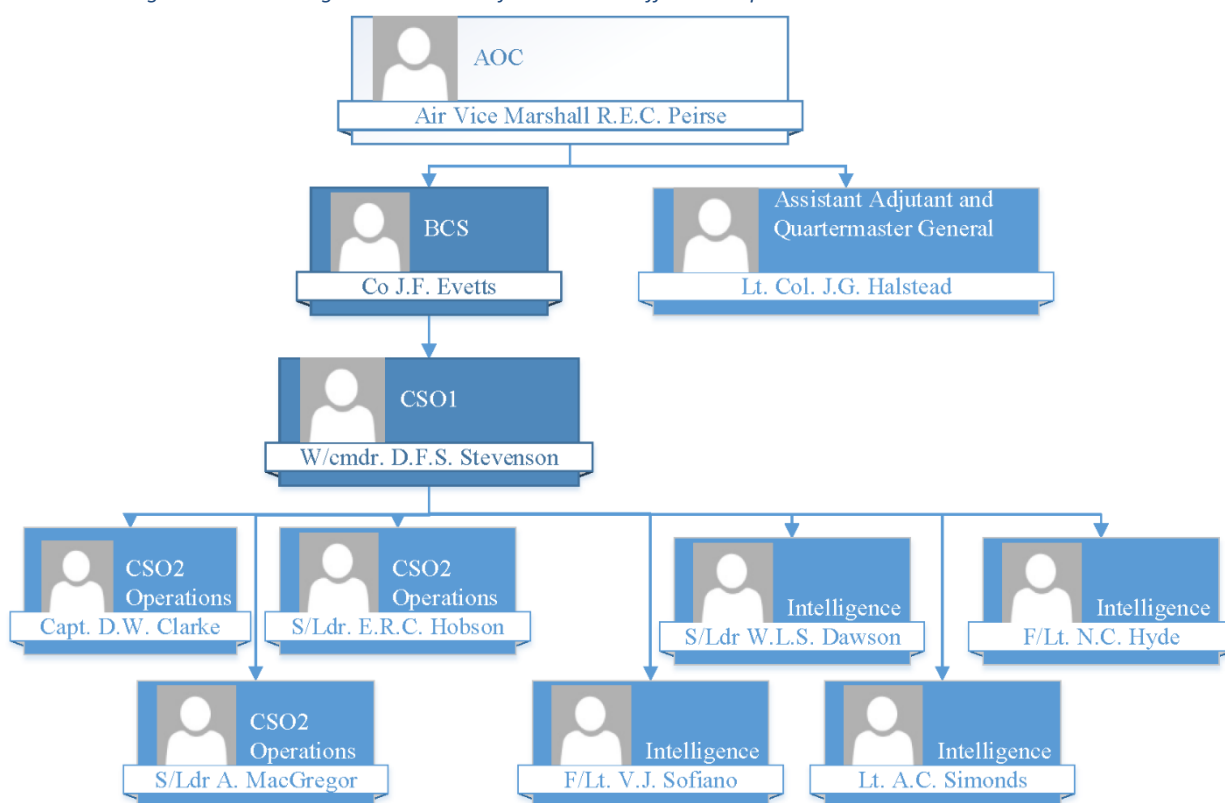
⁶⁴⁷ IOR L/PS/12/3343.CID 8/37. 28.5.1937

⁶⁴⁸ Jeffery, *MI6*, 283–284.

⁶⁴⁹ AIR 2/1244. General Staff HQ, Palestine. *Military Lessons of the Arab Rebellion in Palestine, 1936*, feb.1938. p.45.; On Clarke's authorship see IWM, Clarke Papers. 1. 'Note on Qualifications'.

Police intelligence was deemed to suffer from the awkward situation of its Arab section, and from professional shortcomings such as a tendency to deliver urgent intelligence late, and to exaggerate authenticity and value of intelligence. However, it was admitted that a mutual lack of collaboration and confidence were root problems. Jewish intelligence

Figure 4 - Partial Organization Chart of Combined Staffs June-September 1936



sources often gave information in order to keep troops in an area, but ‘responsible Jewish sources were however very well informed on the whole.’

Evetts and Clarke developed a good working relationship, and remained close friends.⁶⁵⁰ Friendly relations between these staffs underlay the informal system which developed after Air Control ended. The official report remarked, ‘At the start [the combined staff] was frankly an

⁶⁵⁰ IWM Clarke papers. 2. Memoir. 546.

experiment, but very soon it was found that the army and RAF officers had little difficulty in learning to perform... both learnt a great deal from each other and the very closest cooperation resulted.’⁶⁵¹

Clarke also recorded in his unpublished memoir that, while Whitehall never admitted it, ‘this was undoubtedly the prototype of the “Combined Operations Headquarters” which was to set the pattern for much greater thing in the years to come.’⁶⁵² This system provided for the XX procedure described in the previous chapter, and led to the decision to demolish large swaths of the old city of Jaffa.⁶⁵³ The combined staff found its feet early on – as it took control over matters of civil infrastructure which were crucial to the military effort. Regular meetings were held between Evetts, the Chief Secretary, and Spicer (still IGP) to coordinate the military and civil effort.

A meeting on 13 June, 1936 included the acting postmaster general, his chief engineer, and a representative of the Royal Corps of Signals. They planned the protection of telegraph lines, and set up measures to quickly alert of interruptions and repair them. Then the three visitors left and the meeting turned to questions of increasing Jewish supernumerary police, the mobilization and tactics of the TJFF, railway protection, and other matters. Evetts insisted that the general strike and all strike committees be declared illegal – probably as a means to give the army more power to intern political prisoners. More camps might have to be prepared. The discussion then turned to intelligence. The SSO in Haifa had given Evetts ‘a variety of

⁶⁵¹ AIR 2/1244. General Staff HQ, Palestine. *Military Lessons of the Arab Rebellion in Palestine, 1936*. feb.1938. p.42.;

⁶⁵² IWM Clarke papers. 2. Memoir. 557-8.

⁶⁵³ S25/22678. *Conferences* 9-10.6.1936

information' including 'a list of leaders who [the SSO] considers should be placed in detention. He reports that arms, including Italian revolvers, are being smuggled through Haifa, and stats that English searches (including women searchers) are necessary.'⁶⁵⁴ The necessity of counter-propaganda was also discussed.

The combined staff, despite its successes, did not coordinate a political objective for their campaign with the civil administration. In mid-July 1936, Whitehall asked Wauchope to arrest the Mufti. According to a handwritten note by a Jewish Agency mole, correspondence between Wauchope and Ormsby Gore went on in secret, and apparently it was brought to the exco only on 15 July. Wauchope feared the 'religious cry in Palestine and other countries.' Yet, parliamentary pressure on the government to act was growing. Wauchope ordered a cipher officer to send Palestine's reply from the Chief Secretary's house, lest anyone see it.⁶⁵⁵ Clearly, the compromise for an escalation in the campaign was the Arab kings' scheme to use their influence to induce the Mufti to call off the strike. The combined staff advocated martial law, which would enable seamless military planning and coordination of the intelligence system and provide a forceful deterrent against crime.⁶⁵⁶ Dudley Clarke's 'lessons' clarify this issue. He argued that the police and civil service were penetrated, and that sympathetic officers leaked intelligence to the rebels. Carelessness by all three bodies also caused leakage, as did loose talk at the NAAFI club. Moreover, locals simply observed troop movements and

⁶⁵⁴ S25/22768. *Note of situation conference*. 13.6.1936.

⁶⁵⁵ S25/22784. *Most secret – note from G*. 15.7.1936. 'G' may be the initial of the mole.

⁶⁵⁶ CO 733/317/1. *Appendix A to appreciation dated* 20.8.1936

would use light and smoke signals to alert their compatriots. Clarke concluded,

without Martial Law the only legal action which could be taken to combat this extensive enemy signal organization was to arrest and hand over to the police any person caught in flagrante delicto. This was plainly very difficult to do, and more difficult still to prove afterwards, although no one... could have failed to observe obvious signalling in progress. Had it been possible to open fire on all signal lights, some innocent people might have been killed, but equally the lives of some British soldiers might have been saved.⁶⁵⁷

Wauchope argued against martial law, while Peirse and the combined staff sought to stem the deteriorating situation, and to protect British soldiers. Clarke's memoir records that all the necessary preparations had been undertaken, including court appointments, but Wauchope saw himself as destined to lead Palestine to peace, and 'could not bring himself at the last moment to hand over to anybody else what had now become an almost sacred trust.'⁶⁵⁸ Wauchope blamed the army for not having defeated armed bands, and insisted that a 'happy medium' could be found which would provide the ASC with a face-saving retreat from their intransigent position, and allow the government not to set 'a precedent of yielding to violence.' Thus, in July, he persuaded Whitehall to follow the "Arab kings" scheme, which was key to policy changes in 1938-39.

Simultaneously, with the entry of Fawzi al-Qawuqji and his force into Palestine in August, the government committed itself to boosting troop strengths.⁶⁵⁹ The garrison, until then consisting of three brigades plus headquarters and ancillaries, was reinforced with the Army's First Division,

⁶⁵⁷ AIR 2/1244. General Staff HQ, Palestine. *Military Lessons of the Arab Rebellion in Palestine, 1936*. feb.1938. p.51-52.

⁶⁵⁸ IWM Clarke papers. 2. Memoir. pp571-2.

⁶⁵⁹ S25/22771.comments by HC on Peirse memo.; CO 733/317/1. fol..207. Appendix A- Peirse memo. 20.8.1936.;

doubling the army strength to around 18,000 troops. These reinforcements would barely see action before being called away after the strike ended in early November.⁶⁶⁰ None the less, by September 1936, the equivalent of two divisions were deployed to grapple with only a few hundred rebels, organized in bands, and fighting in teams of five to seven. They always chose the time and location for battle, and rarely were caught out. The XX system allowed the RAF to help destroy small sections, but larger formations rarely were encircled and eliminated. This required the occupation of village and water supplies in a wide region so as to deny them to the rebels, and leave them out in the open. Therefore, it seldom worked. The best chance was a well-planned operation based on good intelligence – all too rare during this phase of the rebellion. Qawuqji's force was almost encircled on 24 September as the result of intelligence, and the ensuing battle led to 40 enemy casualties. The rough terrain prevented the total encirclement of the rebel leader.⁶⁶¹

At this time that the CID began to admit the influence of ASC and the Mufti. It concluded in late September 1936 that the violence and strike had been maintained 'according to the attitude of the Supreme (Higher) Committee.' Despite the hardship suffered by villagers due to the strike and rebels, no sign of let-up was foreseen unless the ASC were to change its policy. Nuri Said, the Iraqi foreign minister (and Istiqlalist) had attempted to mediate, but the government denied his official status saying that he had no authority to promise concessions. 'It is emphasized that government

⁶⁶⁰ CO 733/317/1. 3c. *Memo of comments by HC on Dill's report.* 15.9-30.10.1936;

⁶⁶¹ AIR 2/1244. General Staff HQ, Palestine. *Military Lessons of the Arab Rebellion in Palestine, 1936.* feb.1938. p.161-62; IOR L/PS/12/3343. CID 16/36. 28.9.1936.

would not yield to violence and that order must be restored before any steps could be taken.’

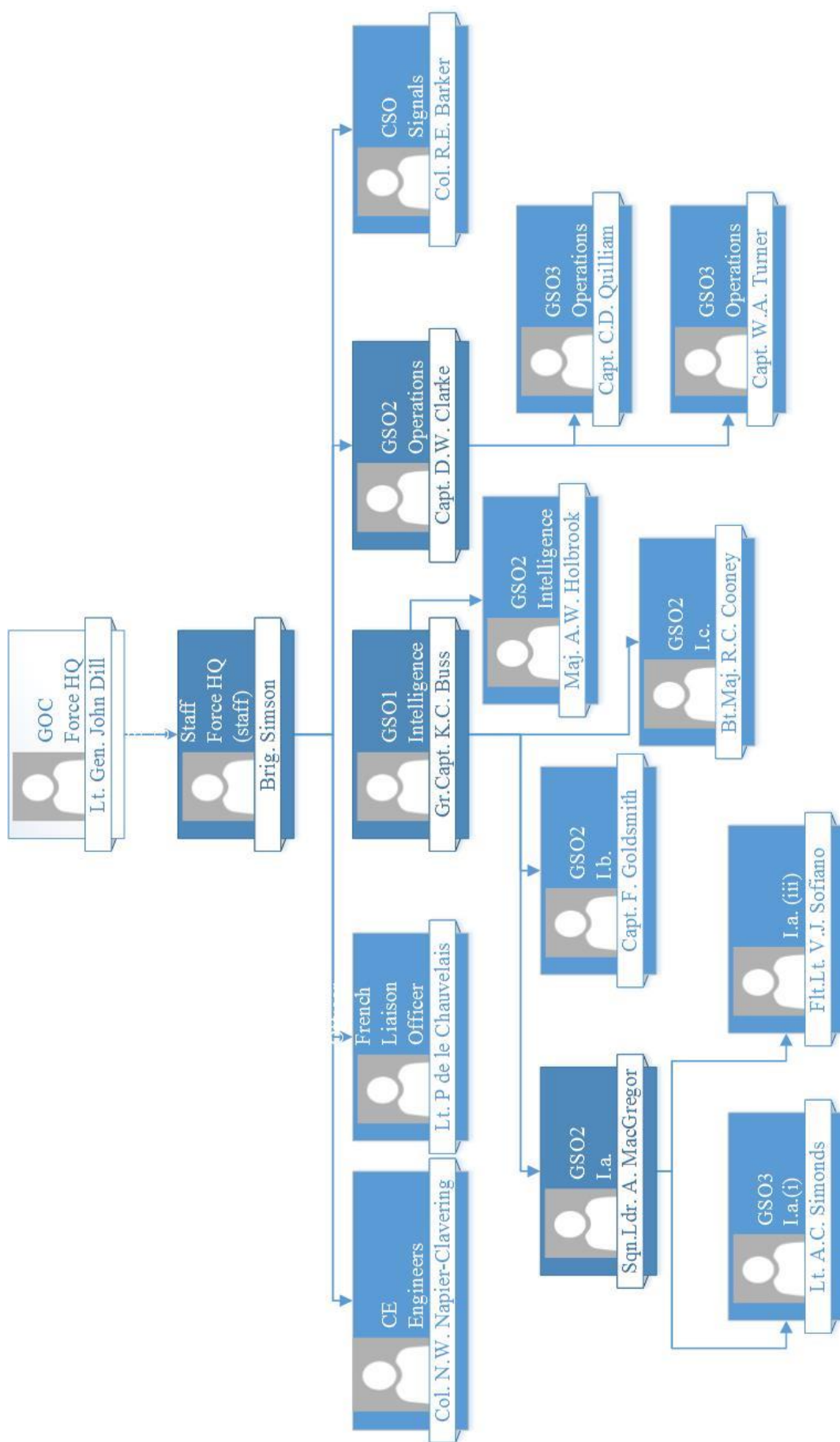
When Dill arrived with 1 Division in mid-September, the combined staff experiment came to an end, although its important features were preserved. Having to command and manage the equivalent of a corps, Dill oversaw a considerable increase in the machinery of staff and command (see figure 5). His staff retained inter-service cooperation and integrated intelligence. The informal coordination between intelligence hands and the rest of the staff remained in place. One day before Dill took over command, Evetts, who would soon command the 16th infantry brigade, wrote to Clarke describing his appreciation and that of Peirse. ‘The experiment of working a combined staff was a bold one to try out, but it undoubtedly proved what can be done when all are imbued with a real team spirit. There is no doubt that the combined staff has come to stay...’⁶⁶²

The War Office gave Dill choice over staff organization, but urged him to continue combined RAF and army staffs. Essential intelligence staff remained in their roles.⁶⁶³ Army and RAF headquarters both were located at the King David Hotel, where full collaboration was ongoing. ‘The staff is in fact more combined than it appears on paper and on all big questions we put our heads together. At least the intelligence under Buss is really combined and functioning well under great difficulties. With every Arab to a man agin (sic) us – or rather agin our policy as represented by the Balfour Declaration– it is most

⁶⁶² IWM Clarke papers. 1. *Evetts to Clarke*. 15.9.1936.

⁶⁶³ WO 32/4174. 9a. *Instructions*. 7.9.1936

Figure 5 - Partial Staff Hierarchy for Force HQ Jerusalem, October 1936



difficult to get good information. Nevertheless some of the information Buss has got has been excellent and has led to results.’⁶⁶⁴

Good intelligence was available on foreign support for rebels and the diplomatic efforts to have Arab statesmen induce the Mufti to end the strike. It finally worked in October 1936 when Ibn Sa’ud called upon the Mufti to call off the strike. The latter complied and the armed rebellion was limited to minor brigandage and attacks on Jews. By November the Royal Commission had arrived, and the garrison was reduced to one division – still a large force. Intelligence indicated ongoing rebel preparations in Syria and Transjordan.

The Chief Secretary asked GSI whether intelligence on the villages could be obtained. Someone, either Buss or F/lt. Dawson, chief SSO, responded that based on his experience, he doubted whether they could achieve this aim, which was supposed to be the CID’s job. The writer did not think that centralized intelligence would produce good results, but that the more reliable police should be depended upon. Yet the police could do nothing without money for paying agents or bribing the elite.⁶⁶⁵ Obviously, neither government nor army trusted the police, while intelligence officers sought to work around the police and civil government. Buss then began to improve relations with the Jewish Agency.

The rebellion caused an improvement in Anglo-Zionist intelligence cooperation. Reuven Zaslani had worked for Kisch during this time, and learned from him how to relate to British intelligence counterparts. This

⁶⁶⁴ WO 282/4. 7a. *Dill to Courtney*. 28.9.1936.

⁶⁶⁵ Dawson was chief of SSOs. WO 33/1436. Part4.; S25/22740 ? to CS. n.d. approx. Oct.1936.

was the origin of his ‘hospitality policy’, implemented by committees throughout the country in an effort to generate personal relationships with British officers and soldiers. This cooperation grew after the Mufti’s escape.⁶⁶⁶ Liaison continued between SSOs and various Zionist intelligence hands. British sources for cooperation included Teague, and his counterpart at GSI, Major Frank Goldsmith. Goldsmith, the heir of a wealthy Jewish banking family, had designed the King David Hotel, and served at Gallipoli and Palestine in the First World War. He returned to Palestine during Dill’s reinforcement of to work in intelligence. The diary of Teague’s wife refers to Goldsmith as a friend.⁶⁶⁷ Goldsmith probably represented MI5, still responsible for army security, or even SIS in Palestine, as he corresponded on Italian issues.⁶⁶⁸

The Rebellion After September 1937

Shortly after Tegart’s arrival in October 1937, he sought Shertok’s perspective on the crisis. Shertok told Tegart that CID liaison with Arab sources was deficient. Through the JAPD, Shertok received intelligence on the whereabouts of rebels and fugitives, ‘and he is often perplexed as to what to do with it.’ Shertok had good relations with senior British police, but did not trust the CID’s ability to hold onto secrets. He believed that intelligence leaked through the CID’s Arab personnel. ‘An Arab may be loyal today and disloyal tomorrow either through intimidation or changes in the political atmosphere. [Shertok] thinks there should be a sort of “Holy of Holies” in the CID where information would only be seen by British

⁶⁶⁶ Eshed, *Reuven Shiloah*, 29–31.

⁶⁶⁷ MECA GB165-0279. *Teague papers*. Part III. 122.; ‘Social and Personal’. *Palestine Post*. 7.5.1939. p2.; His name also appears on distribution lists for CID summaries.

⁶⁶⁸ KV 3/317. 108a *Kell to Goldsmith*. 4.1.1938.; 116a. *Kell to Goldsmith*. 18.3.1938

personnel.’ This lack of faith in the CID only reinforced its failures. Shertok passed intelligence to Tegart in that meeting, saying that he thought the ‘general centre’ of the rebellion was split between Beirut and Damascus. Shertok thought that the Mufti directed policy, but did not take an active hand in organizing rebel groups. In Jerusalem, the Mufti could provide funds. Now deprived of access to the waqf, the rebels resorted to extortion of Palestinian villages, donations, and foreign subsidy – especially from Italy. Shertok also gave Tegart intercepted documents relating to the Mufti’s contacts with assassins and rebels. He worried about reprisal attacks by revisionists upon Arabs – which he assured Tegart would be stopped by the Jewish Agency.⁶⁶⁹ Throughout this crisis, British dependence on the Jewish Agency was constant.

Tegart also met intelligence staff from Force HQ, including Goldsmith, who handled intercepted correspondence, including all telegrams and letters in and out of the country, Ibn Sa’ud’s decrypted wireless messages, and those of Iraq, Egypt and Transjordan. Goldsmith complained that in London, letter openers had been clumsy with NPL mail, and consequently that source was lost. CID intelligence was weak, and mishandled cases involving secret intelligence. They failed to capture a courier carrying letters from the Mufti to Qawuqji on two opportunities. SSOs now collected intelligence in villages, which contributed to the arrest of Sheikh Farhan as-Sa’adi – an octogenarian rebel leader who led the Qassamists who killed Andrews.⁶⁷⁰ He was executed in late November

⁶⁶⁹ MECA, Tegart papers. 4/6. *Diary*. 30.12.1937.

⁶⁷⁰ Elpeleg, *Grand Mufti*, 48.

1937. Later, two members of GSI and Sofiano, the SSO Haifa, agreed that CID intelligence was ‘almost worthless.’ Sofiano, after a year, had no relations with the CID whatsoever since its Haifa chief was Arab.⁶⁷¹ Neither the Zionists nor other British security agencies were willing to trust the CID. In retrospect, this was a fundamental sign of its impending implosion.

Tegart proposed to employ irregulars on the Jerusalem Jaffa road, which was constantly under sniper fire.⁶⁷² The JA wanted armed guards on busses travelling that route. Tegart also was in talks with Ragheb Nashashibi, who confirmed that police had weak control. Nashashibi gave guidance as to how police and army could cooperate with village mukhtars, who would be more helpful if they could be sure of government protection.⁶⁷³ Nashashibi had also been in talks with the Jewish Agency. Ultimately, he would be subsidized by both in an effort to raise irregular pro-British forces.

Tegart understood he must take measures to mend public suspicion of the police in order to improve intelligence of both police and military, but also to operationalize information which was not being shared by either side. The fundamental problem was terrorism within Arab society. Some sources attribute 4500 deaths to assassinations alone – although the true number may be under 1000.⁶⁷⁴ If the police had been competent, reliable data might have survived for historical research. Perhaps the problem was that they still disregarded political murder within Arab society. Regardless,

⁶⁷¹ MECA, Tegart papers. 4/6. *Diary*. 29-30.12.1937

⁶⁷² *Ibid. to battershill*. 2.1.1938.

⁶⁷³ MECA, Tegart papers 4/6. *Diary*. 2.1.1938.

⁶⁷⁴ Cohen, *Army of Shadows*, 143.

it was dangerous for Arabs to oppose the Mufti. In response to this knowledge and the pleadings of the Assistant District Commissioner for Samaria, Tegart formed a strategy which would provide some confidence to villagers. He suggested pressuring villages to come to the government while taking the fight, somehow, to the rebel camp.⁶⁷⁵

Tegart became a focal point for cooperation of Gilbert MacKereth, the Palestine government, the police, Solel Boneh and other arms of JA and British intelligence. Military success was enabled by the staff intelligence organization, and the enterprise of Tegart and Clarke. They were responsible for the first 'irregular' peace band under Faiz Idrissi – a police officer who led an irregular force which supported the Nashashibis and fought pro-Mufti forces. Peace bands were a more extreme extension of this process. The most important was the one led by Fakhri Abdul Hadi. In 1936, he served under Qawuqji in the rebellion. By 1938, he had fallen out with the Mufti's supporters, and was co-opted into the counter-rebellion through MacKereth, Zionist intelligence, and the army. Under Tegart regular intelligence sharing improved. Solel Boneh and the Histadrut hastened Tegart's construction scheme and managed Arab labour. Finally, Anglo-Zionist military cooperation took place under Wingate helped to take the fight to the enemy.

Tegart and Petrie raised proposals for irregulars for border protection with the CS and police. Secret Service funds would be used to pay 'generous rewards for good work.' Areas subject to sniper fire, such as key roads, would be patrolled by irregulars. Villages accommodating rebels

⁶⁷⁵ MECA Tegart papers. 2/3. Foot. *Note on recent terrorist activity*. 24.12.1937.

would be punished, while those helping British forces would be rewarded. Tegart also proposed erecting a border fence in that area.⁶⁷⁶ Tegart recruited for the Jordan valley Faiz al-Idrissi, a long-time member of the Palestine police, considered very reliable. He was encouraged to recruit more ‘buffs’. One such recruit was Hashim Arikat, who had been fired from the police following the Dowbiggin report, which disparaged the ‘illiterate constable.’ Tegart needed these types in his force – and told Idrissi to find more like Arikat, who had been recruited back into the force in late November.⁶⁷⁷ By early January 1938, Idrissi’s irregulars were patrolling the treacherous terrain around the Jerusalem-Jaffa road. Simultaneously Tegart encouraged trust in the Arab section of the police. By the end of January, Idrissi was included in security meetings on how to expand security in the villages west of Jerusalem.⁶⁷⁸

By May, this programme had begun to expand, and was operationalized by Dudley Clarke into the military campaign. This happened against the background of increased rebel preparations for operations against British forces, plundering of Arab villages by rebels, and numerous other clashes. The rebels were believed to be in a weak position, underfinanced and outgunned. Captured rebel documents revealed that the high command in Syria had ordered groups to stop raiding Arab villages, which was harming the movement. Such orders were not obeyed. Those attacks increased, as did acts of murder, sniping, bomb attacks and sabotage. Other captured documents suggested that enemy strength had

⁶⁷⁶ MECA, Tegart Papers, 2/3. *Notes on meeting with CS.* 31.12.1937.

⁶⁷⁷ MECA, Tegart papers 4/6. *Diary.* 25-26,28.12.1937.

⁶⁷⁸ MECA, Tegart papers, 2/3. *Minutes of meeting.* 28.1.1938.

been underestimated. Rebels had been divided into at least thirteen detachments spread across Samaria and the Galilee, and were ruthless. British forces had not concentrated efforts except for in a few areas.⁶⁷⁹ Tegart met with Clarke, the IGP and CS to discuss plans for ‘the simultaneous suppression of disorders in all parts of Palestine.’⁶⁸⁰

This led to the military occupation of villages in Galilee and Samaria, while the border installations began construction, and irregular forces, both Arab and Jewish, took the fight to the enemy. The occupation plan was ordered by Col. Keith Simmons, General Haining’s chief of staff, and orchestrated mainly by Dudley Clarke.⁶⁸¹ It went into effect on 20 May. The static occupying force was to be the main means of security. Mobile columns operating between villages were to strike enemy bands. Curiously, much of the western Galilee security was left to police, under whose command fell both supernumeraries and irregulars. Under the new chief intelligence officer, Alan Ritchie, intelligence centres were set up in Nablus, Haifa and Nazareth, the last by Orde Wingate. These were to coordinate CID and military intelligence with police and army actions.⁶⁸²

The next part of the plan, authorized on 18 May, was the construction of the wire fence, guarded by police posts. Road construction was authorized the next week. In coordination with the Histadrut, Tegart hurried the construction programme. In early June, he submitted a secret

⁶⁷⁹ Such events are detailed in CO 732/81/9. 10. *GSI serial 8/38*. 22.4.1938.; *GSI serial 9/38*. 6.5.1938.; MECA Tegart papers 2/3. *Present situation*. 3.5.1938.

⁶⁸⁰ S25/22753. *Minutes*. 2.5.1938.

⁶⁸¹ ISA RG65/p/3059/9. *Preliminary instructions...* 11.5.1938.; *Force HQ Warning order* 14.5.1938; ISA RG65/p/3058/20. Clarke. *Operation order no 1*. 18.5.1938.

⁶⁸² IOR. Microfilm m2313. Wingate papers. Ritchie. *Force intelligence instruction no.1*.20.5.1938.

report on the closing of the borders. He had reconnoitred the Jordan valley with Faiz Idrissi, and the northern border with army, police, and David HaCohen. Fords on the Jordan were to be blocked by barbed wire. Faiz was to organize the installation of these measures in the coming weeks, and to take over under-manned police posts so to station his irregular border force. The vulnerable points on the northern fence were to be rigged with electrical sensors which would set off flares and tear gas if disturbed. Tegart's report discussed other control measures, especially emphasizing the need for closer supervision of the workmen so to keep on schedule, the installation of searchlights, and wireless telephony devices throughout the system.⁶⁸³ After meeting Idrissi, Wingate noted in June 1938 that he did not think his unit was likely to succeed at eliminating gangs. He added 'when I first heard, from the lips of Faiz Idris (sic), of the formation of this force, I was in the set of drawing up a report with a view to suggesting the formation of a joint force composed of Jewish supernumeraries working with local Bedu.'⁶⁸⁴

A public security committee (pubsec) had been formed on 28 March which coordinated military, police, irregular, and other operations with Tegart's plan.⁶⁸⁵ Plans were drawn up to build border defences and controls, occupy the villages of Samaria and Galilee, and to use irregulars as an offensive weapon. In secret, not necessarily with official sanction from high levels, these plans included the use of Jewish paramilitary forces. An important prototype developed at Hanuta, on the Lebanese border. On

⁶⁸³ ISA RG65/p/3056/37. *Tegart Final Report on closing the northern and eastern frontier*. 9.6.1938.; Clarke. *Conference at government offices*. 19.5.1938.

⁶⁸⁴ IOR. Microfilm m2313. Wingate papers. *Intelligence appreciation*. 5.6.1938.

⁶⁸⁵ S25/22762. *Note*. 28/3/1938.

the night of 21 March, convoys of Jews ascended the mountain range which straddled the Palestine-Lebanon border, and founded Kibbutz Hanita in an overnight 'tower and stockade' operation. Two *Notarim* – "watchmen" of the Haganah who were supernumerary police – were killed in defence of its founders. Historians have neglected the role which the British army and RAF played in supporting this operation for their own purposes. Settlement construction temporarily was restricted by law, but it was also illegal to tear down settlements, so the Yishuv took to building new ones overnight.

Monya Adam, chief engineer for the Haganah signal service, recorded in his memoir the role the RAF played in the defence of Hanita, in conjunction with the Haganah signal service. By this time, the Haganah was vigorously expanding its wireless service to cover all frontier settlements, so that the organization could be aware of attacks, border smuggling, or other dangers at the periphery of the Yishuv. The signal service had begun in the early 1930s with official police sanction, using heliographs to alert police of attacks on outlying settlements. Most of its activity, however, was illegal and involved secret labs and smuggling of crystals for receivers. Adam and his unit built the wireless station at Hanita immediately after its founding, and returned three months later to move the station to higher ground. The site had come under periodic attack by rebel groups. During one such attack, Haganah signallers contacted the British base at Haifa Bay. RAF aircraft appeared over the area, and Hanita's defenders indicated the direction of the rebel attackers by forming an arrow

out of shovels on the roof of one of the buildings. ‘This arrangement was set by Captain Orde Wingate when he visited the place.’⁶⁸⁶

Wingate’s connection to Zionists was well-established by April 1938, when he visited Hanita with a letter of introduction from Eliyau Golomb, the Haganah’s ‘informal’ commander. His main task was to better prepare supernumerary police defence tactics. He aimed to break the Haganah’s policy of *Havlagah*, or ‘restraint’, and teach them pre-emptive offensive tactics. This led to his Special Night Squads (SNS). In June, the headmen of the Arab village neighbouring Hanita asked for a truce. SNS tactics were vicious and involved laying ambushes outside villages, and surprise incursions into them. SNS patrols focused on the IPC pipeline, which constantly was subject to sabotage.⁶⁸⁷ As the wire fence in that area was completed, it improved the defence greatly.⁶⁸⁸ Wingate had applied to Ritchie to formalize his plans to expand SNS, but was rejected on 25 May.⁶⁸⁹ However, Dudley Clarke approved a similar scheme the next week. In this manner, Clarke enabled Wingate and circumvented the army’s wish to limit the training and armament of the Yishuv. This probably happened with Ritchie’s unwritten consent. Clarke gave guidelines to military commanders involved in training Jewish supernumeraries, which authorized using their standard arms, but also using visual signals for communications with troops and police, patrols, ambushes, and other ‘active measures’ – an obvious euphemism.⁶⁹⁰

⁶⁸⁶ Adam and Rivlin, *Kesher Amits*, 107.

⁶⁸⁷ Anglim, “Orde Wingate and Anglo-Jewish Military Cooperation in the Arab Revolt of 1936-39 - Myth Versus Reality.”; Many thanks to Simon for sharing this paper.

⁶⁸⁸ S25/22743. *Ben Zvi meeting Moody*. 6.7.1938.

⁶⁸⁹ M2313 Wingate papers. *Ritchie to Wingate*. 25.5.1938.

⁶⁹⁰ HA 87/zion/28. Clarke. *Training of supernumeraries*. 2.6.1938.

These matters were coordinated by Clarke at Tegart's public security committee, which included police and the military. A meeting directed by Clarke discussed Tegart's construction plan, but also contingencies for a cordon and search operations in Hebron, should the situation there deteriorate. This was the first indication that the 'Faiz Column' – 40 Arab irregulars under police auspices, would be included in military operations to cut off and search the city with troops, TJFF, and other police. Other security measures were discussed, as was Tegart's report.⁶⁹¹ This document reveals how Tegart's scheme fit into the bigger picture – which included measures for detecting railway sabotage and for secretly testing how the fence might be crossed. By July, Faiz's force was 160 strong, augmented by Bedouin, and patrolled the Jordan valley.⁶⁹² According to Haganah records, with Clarke's support, Wingate negotiated with GOC and government to expand SNS.⁶⁹³

Record of a pubsec meeting reveals the coordinating role played by Dudley Clarke. Soon before his departure from Palestine, Clarke managed the funds, armaments, and manpower for projects such as Tegart's fence; coordination of security operations around the fence with French authorities; Jewish supernumerary railway police who relieved regular police and army; and even a village register project out of Haifa which collated data on villages, perhaps in preparation for identity cards.⁶⁹⁴ Clarke, in his memoir, commented on the role of manpower and technology in the protection of rail lines, and wondered 'why, in our desperate state of

⁶⁹¹ S25/22768. *Minutes pub-sec meeting*. 10.6.1938.

⁶⁹² ISA RG65/p/3056/37. Clarke. *Response to GOC*. 1.7.1937.

⁶⁹³ HA 87/zion/27. Gordon. *Notes to circular on training supernumeraries*. 3.7.1938

⁶⁹⁴ S25/22753. *Pubsec meeting*. 24.6.1938.

manpower, we failed to make more use of the Jews. I asked this question many times myself.’ The army was forbidden from using armed Jews, despite the eagerness of the Jewish Agency.

Even when, on 1st June [1936], after serious incidents in several police barracks, the inspector-General himself reported that his Arab police were on the verge of mutiny and might even go over to the enemy with their arms, the suggestion of replacing them by Jews was met with something approaching horror by the High Commissioner and his senior officials. Why, for heaven’s sake, why? For the Jews were on our side, and the Arabs were not – yet they were using plenty of arms against our soldiers. But the answer was always the same. It has long puzzled me how often, when confronted with internecine strife, the British authorities somehow managed to antagonize both sides and thus forfeited the help of either!⁶⁹⁵

By summer 1938, as government measures in rural areas began to pay off, urban terrorism returned with a vengeance. Reprisal and premeditated terrorist attacks by the nascent Irgun – the Revisionist militant group – and counter-reprisals by Arabs, led to mounting violence in major cities, especially Jerusalem.⁶⁹⁶

Clarke was weary of Palestine and the ‘sickening’ heights of urban terrorism. Haining sent him home, but the combined staff carried on. Clarke and Tegart had built a military staff and intelligence machine which could informally accommodate ‘irregular’ support. This came in three forms: The column led by Faiz Idrissi, Wingate’s SNS, and the ‘peace gangs’ of Fakhri Abdul Hadi, the Nashashibi party, and others.

At the same time in the summer of 1938, both Tegart and Clarke had left Palestine. Clarke would not return until the war, but Tegart returned in September to help regain control a second time. In mid-July

⁶⁹⁵ IWM Clarke papers. 2. Memoir pp.556-7.

⁶⁹⁶ CO 732/81/9. 17. *GSI serial 14/38*. 15.7.1938.

Tegart wrote to Haining, describing his impressions after meeting with officials at Whitehall. The cabinet was ‘deeply exercised over the failure to restore public security in Palestine. They realise apart from the deplorable effect of this failure in Palestine itself, that it is having most harmful repercussions at home and abroad, alike in the political and economic sphere.’ Tegart told the colonial secretary of the fundamental change since Harold MacMichael, the new HC, and Haining, the new GOC, had taken over. ‘For the first time in many years the forces of government were being mobilised as a whole against the enemy.’⁶⁹⁷ Indeed – all the pieces combined to form a security strategy that would eventually work. Urban terrorism was a significant distraction; the return of a reserve division in autumn 1938 would ultimately lead to a decline in such violence. There was, however, one more important aspect to the successful counter-rebellion: the ‘peace gangs’ under Nashashibi leadership.

For some time, motivated by self-interest and survival, the Nashashibis had collaborated with JA intelligence in one form or another, willing to cooperate against common enemies. Fakhri Nashashibi had also reported to the CID, as Rice told a New York-based JA official. He had gone to Egypt on behalf of Rice to expose Italian financial support for the Mufti.⁶⁹⁸ Ragheb Nashashibi first proposed a deal to the Jewish Agency in December 1937, the same time that he met Tegart. They reached terms in March 1938. He accepted their subsidy and organized counter-terrorist forces. Few details on the composition of his peace bands survive in the

⁶⁹⁷ MECA Tegart papers. 4/4. *Tegart to GOC*. 15.7.1938.

⁶⁹⁸ HA 80/141p/1. *MBH (Hexter) to Shertok*. 23.5.1938.

documentation. Ezra Danin's annotated record of captured rebel documents considered 'peace gang' control to have been late, not reaching full form until December 1938, and mainly succeeding in ousting pro-Mufti gangs from the Hebron area.⁶⁹⁹ Villages were under pressure from rebels to pay tribute or suffer violence, and Nashashibi was able to co-opt defence groups which had appeared in the Nablus area in June 1938. These efforts were poorly organized and casual until Fakhri Abdul Hadi returned to Palestine. GSI reports on those initial 'peace bands' described them as being organized by Nashashibi's defence party, but then being co-opted to the rebels' side.⁷⁰⁰ Hughes considered the peace bands to be fundamental to British victory. They did not win the war for Britain, but helped by exploiting endemic blood feuds in rural Palestine, spreading psychological disorder. They proved to be an effective force multiplier.⁷⁰¹

Unable to reach the rebels' base of support in Damascus, Britain worked to separate the rebels from the Mufti's leadership. Using secret service funds supplied by Tegart and Petrie since January 1938, Gilbert MacKereth was also instrumental in raising "peace bands" amongst Syrian Druze. His other target for recruitment was the rebel leader Fakhri Abdul Hadi, who was known to have fallen out with the Mufti's party and the rest of the rebel leadership. Fakhri Abdul Hadi, broke and isolated, had been a target of MacKereth and the JAPD since the summer of 1937.⁷⁰² Fakhri Nashashibi first attempted to bribe Fakhri Abdul Hadi in March 1938, but

⁶⁹⁹ IOR microfilm M2313. Wingate papers. Danin,, 'Documents and Portraits.' pp.150-151.;

⁷⁰⁰ CO 732/81/9. 16. *GSI serial 13/38*. 1.7.1938.

⁷⁰¹ Hughes, *Pseudo-Warfare* (unpublished). Many thanks.

⁷⁰² HA 80/50p/35. *Arab bureau intel*. 27.8.1937.; FO 684/10. *MacKereth to FO*. 19.10.1937.

was outbid by Izzat Darwaza. Gilbert MacKereth intervened with his enlarged budget.⁷⁰³ Once Fakhri Abdul Hadi entered Palestine in October 1938, his “peace bands” fought the pro-Mufti forces under ‘Abd al-Rahim al-Hajj Mohammad, Yusuf Abu Durra, and ‘Aref ‘Abd al-Razeq. Coincident with peace band operations, the police and army conducted operations to retake control of the old city of Jerusalem, which had been overrun by rebels. Neither of these steps would have been possible without the integrated combined intelligence staff at Force HQ.

According to Yoav Gelber, the JA was involved with the SSO in founding the peace gangs. JAPD had understood the division between Fakhri Abdul Hadi and the Mufti that had existed since summer 1937. JAPD’s Haifa liaison, Nahum Wilenski, suggested exploiting Joseph Davidescu’s connection in this regard, but there is no sign it was followed up. In March 1938 the JAPD Arab Bureau learned of Fakhri Abdul Hadi’s contacts with Fakhri Nashashibi. By May, it had learned of ‘the establishment of local armed units that would operate against the gangs.’ Apparently, Abdul Hadi had played both sides, until Abba Hushi’s Druze agent informed him in August that the gang leader had taken leadership of a group and entered Palestine. Neither the Histadrut nor JAPD intelligence were clear whether this action was undertaken with British support. By November 1938, Ezra Danin was coordinating operations between the army and Abdul Hadi’s peace gang. Druze agents passed intelligence from Yusuf Abu-Durra’s gang. That, as well as other intelligence coordinated between

⁷⁰³ Porath, *The Palestinian Arab National Movement: From Riots to Rebellion*, 2:251–253.

Hushi, JAPD, Davidescu and the Haifa SSO, enabled the systematic liquidation of Abu-Durra's gang from the Carmel area during November. Davidescu and the Druze agents guided two army companies to the Druze villages of Daliat al-Carmel and 'Usifiya. The ensuing battle was observed by Alan Ritchie. The cover action was sanctioned by Jack Evetts, the area brigade commander, and Bernard Montgomery, the divisional commander. Evetts contributed by deploying an irregular force of Druze and other Arabs against the gangs.⁷⁰⁴

The CID recorded in early November 1938 that 'Organised terrorism has now forced the fellahin [peasants] into complete subjection and various successful gang actions have raised the morale and prestige of the "Mujahideen" to the extent of bringing about an open Arab revolt in the more distant rural areas.' Jaffa, Gaza, Beersheba and Ramallah were overrun by gangs. 'Many government supporters and moderates have been forced to seek safety by leaving the country and a number of Arab government officials have either tendered their resignations or have been given extended leave abroad for similar reasons. Those remaining are in the unenviable position of being in fear of their lives with their sympathies towards their national cause.'⁷⁰⁵

By the end of that month, the situation had improved due to the presence of two divisions, and a centralized intelligence machinery able to coordinate the support of Zionists and opposition factions. GSI reported that whereas Fakhri Nashashibi had previously only enjoyed secret support

⁷⁰⁴ Gelber, *Shorshe ha-ḥavatsalet*, 236–238.
⁷⁰⁵ IOR L/PS/12/3343. CID 4/38. 1.11.1938.

from the population, on 30 November ‘some 25 notables and Mukhtars representing 70,000 Arabs of the Ramallah, Jerusalem and Hebron districts were interviewed by representatives of the Press at Fakhri Nashashibi’s house in Jerusalem. They expressed their opposition to the Mufti and his policy and their desire to assist the government in the restoration of order.’⁷⁰⁶ GSI attributed the weakening rebel situation to an increase in intelligence due to Arab confidence in the government and their consequent readiness to give names and identify rebels. A large number of rebel documents captured in November also helped the troops’ effort to search villages. Yusuf Abu Durrah’s band was ‘decisively’ defeated at an action at Umm al-Zinat, although the Druze agents, irregulars, and Joseph Davidescu were uncredited, of course. Abu Durrah was on the run, and his group’s strength had dwindled to some 40-50 men. Selective arrests in the Nazareth area had propped up the Zu’bi family, which supported the Nashashibis. GSI emphasized that ‘the successful arrests of the right people appears to have taken the gangsters by surprise and the constant search by troops and the confiscation of arms, has lowered the rebel morale in the area.’⁷⁰⁷

The Mufti’s organization and method of control from Lebanon and Syria were known to British intelligence.⁷⁰⁸ Another important factor, revealed in SIS records within the MI5 file on the Mufti, was the weak discipline of rebel leaders themselves. On 19 October 1938, the Mufti’s organization in Damascus struggled to prevent rebel groups from acting on

⁷⁰⁶ CO 732/81/10. 27. GSI 24/38. 2.10.1938.

⁷⁰⁷ Ibid.

⁷⁰⁸ KV 2/2084. 32a. *Tannous’ mission to Lebanon*, 20.9.1938.; 33a. *Mufti’s organization in Lebanon*. 7.10.1938.

their own, as they spiralled into a bloody cycle of clashes with Fakhri Abdul Hadi. Their jealousies and failure to follow instructions from Damascus enabled the peace bands to cause psychological disorder.

GSI reports feigned ignorance about Fakhri Abdul Hadi's role, but emphasized the benefit accrued by the internal friction he was exploiting. An October report mentioned the competition between rebel leaders 'Aref 'Abd al-Razeq and 'Abd al-Rahim al-Hajj Mohammad. The Damascus leadership was considering replacing Rahim as commander-in-chief with Aref. Rahim was aligned with Istiqlalists, whereas Aref was a 'whole-hearted supported of the Mufti'. Deep divisions in Damascus about the future of the pan-Arab movement prevented an effective campaign, which in any case had become impossible, given large British forces. The report conspicuously raised Fakhri Abdul Hadi's role:

In this situation a somewhat mysterious factor is the presence of Fakhri Abdel Hadi in Samaria. Like Rahim, Fakhri's connections are with the Istiklal party. For the past year he has been on bad terms with the Mufti and the majority of the leaders in Syria and it has frequently been stated that he would not return to Palestine. The circumstances of his return about a fortnight ago are unknown, but there seems to be little doubt that it did not meet with the approval of the exiled leaders....⁷⁰⁹

Fakhri Abdul Hadi was thought to have aligned with Rahim.

Ritchie, author of these GSI reports, knew better. Several accounts confirm that thorough army occupation and search operations in Fakhri's hometown of 'Arrabeh purposefully skipped over his house.⁷¹⁰ Ritchie's report emphasised that 'Fakhri's arrival has added yet another disturbing factor to the welter of personal rivalries in Samaria.' The next month's report more

⁷⁰⁹ CO 732/81/10. 24. *GSI serial 21/38*. 21.10.1938.

⁷¹⁰ HA 8/klali/2 part3.uniltted report -T/A no.63. *With note to Ezra Danin*. 11.11.1938.; S25/22734. *Armed gangs 48/38*. (probably GSI) 15.11.1938.

accurately reflected his violent clashes with the other two rebel leaders, and Abu Durrah as well.⁷¹¹ By the end of November, captured documents procured through victory in battle confirmed that internal bickering had caused the collapse of the organized rebel effort. The heavy military deployment enabled the temporary occupation of the area and the internment of some 4000 Arabs over a period of two weeks in November. Nevertheless, GSI warned that the rebellion was not done. Over much of the country, ‘the rule of terror is still supreme... any relaxation of military activity at the present time would only result in allowing the rebels once more to tighten their grip...’⁷¹² Indeed, rebel activity carried on well into the Second World War.

The role of centralized intelligence staff – developed by Tegart and Clarke – which freely worked between government offices: those of brigade, divisional, and senior commands, the field, agents, and the Jewish Agency, cannot be over-emphasized. As an indication of his true feelings of the roots of success, Tegart told his Jewish Agency contact, ‘give me 100 Wingates. The main point is to harry the bands and persist in doing so.’⁷¹³ He did not think the deployment of more troops was as important if they would not support this role. Having returned to Palestine, Tegart clearly played a role in ensuring that force was applied effectively. Cooperation between Tegart and Zionists intensified, as he worked with David HaCohen to complete his construction programme, and compared notes with JAPD officials.

⁷¹¹ CO 732/81/10. 25. *GSI serial 22/38*. 4.11.1938.

⁷¹² CO 732/81/10. 26 *GSI 23/38*.18.11.1938.; 27. *GSI 24/38*.2.12.1938.

⁷¹³ HA 87/zion/9. *Conversation with Tegart*. 10.10.1938.

For the first time since OETA handed control of Palestine to a civil government, Britain could depend on some form of centralized intelligence which was attached to both security and policymaking. This mechanism was vital, but only led to victory once military control was declared. A civil regime could not have accomplished the same feat. After 1929, police and security were improved, but British policy was configured according to old colonial patterns, and concentrated power in the Mufti and JA. It is difficult to imagine a scenario in which the Mufti would not have led the country to violence against Britain and the Yishuv. So long as the Zionist policy was in place, it was only a matter of time before Palestinians reacted to the different treatment they received from colonial powers and League, as compared to Iraq or Syria.

In November 1938 the Woodhead Commission published its report, recommending three options for implementing some form of partition. British policymakers soon retreated from these suggestions, and pursued some way to convene Arab statesmen in London to confer on a new policy. The Mufti and his clique then reconsidered their policy. Shakib Arslan began to publish articles on the economic and defensive power of the Arab world. He and most others foresaw an inevitable world war, and called upon any member of a London conference to leverage that power in negotiations with Britain.⁷¹⁴ Arab statesmen had their own interests to preserve, and British policy was formed not because of the pressure of the Mufti or Istiqlal, but rather, in spite of them. The participation of the Mufti

⁷¹⁴ S25/22191. *Shakib Arslan on the economic and defence power of the Arabs...* 15.11.1938.

or his party in that conference was less important to British policy than was the prospect of retaining the political support of Arab states such as Saudi Arabia.

*Much importance seems to be attached by the Arab leaders to the possible outbreak of a European war, when the Arabs can be in a position to dictate.*⁷¹⁵

- CID report August 1934

Chapter 9 – Intelligence, Ibn Sa’ud, and the White Paper Policy

This quote represents the strategy of the Istiqlal party which sought to exploit European crises for leverage over Britain, which was aware of its limitations and the possibility that they might be exploited. Yet, it was not through the CID or the Palestine government that Britain chose to shift its policy away from Zionism. This process began as British foreign policymakers became more inclined to support Ibn Sa’ud around 1930, coming to his rescue during the Ikhwan revolt in 1928, and then the Hejaz revolt in 1932. It also occurred because Ibn Sa’ud’s frequent use of radio and telegraph for communication provided intelligence to policymakers. His correspondence with confidants gave British officials unusual insight into his policy and diplomacy.

Despite everything that happened in Palestine, British policy considerations for the future of the Middle East stemmed primarily from the realization in 1937, through top secret intelligence, that Ibn Sa’ud would be a reliable partner during a European war, and that Britain could build up his status as a standard-bearer, and leverage it. This was a move to counter the Istiqlalist strategy to federate under the independent Arab kings. Saudi politics shaped Arab nationalism throughout the 1930s. When considering the influence of events in Palestine on Ibn Sa’ud, one must carefully appreciate the differences between what Ibn Sa’ud told

⁷¹⁵ IOR L/PS/12/3343. CID Periodical Appreciation Summary 11/34. 6.8.1934.

Palestinians, British diplomats, and his own representatives. Comparing this evidence with British policymaking records reveals that, beginning in 1937, Britain sought ways to improve Ibn Sa'ud's leadership in the Arab world while maintaining his sympathy. It was on this altar alone that the Zionist policy was sacrificed. The White Paper policy never attempted to appease Palestinian nationalists – British officials understood this was impossible. Rather, it aimed to boost Ibn Sa'ud's prestige, leadership, and to bring his kingdom closer to Britain, whose strategic situation in the Middle East was just as vulnerable in 1939 as in 1915. During the First World War, pan-Islamic propaganda unsuccessfully threatened British stability in Egypt as the Ottoman army nearly seized the vital Suez Canal. In 1939, Britain occupied even more of the Muslim world and was the object of even more anti-colonial hostility. The pan-Arab movement had sponsored revolt, which could expand, and Italy was within bombing range of the canal. The common link of pan-Islamic propaganda had not changed, and leaders such as Shakib Arslan influenced anti-colonial unity across borders. These circumstances led Britain to abandon Zionism.

Intelligence and Policy: Retreat from Partition, Advance to War

Britain had no desire or need to appease Palestinians. Few if any offices expected Palestinians to support the British Empire after three long years of rebellion. Signals intelligence on Saudi communications, conversely, showed Whitehall that a retreat from partition would bolster the status of 'Abdul 'Aziz ibn Sa'ud. Britain aimed to co-opt his leadership in the pan-Arab and pan-Islamic worlds, hoping for a base of stabilizing influence.

This was a cynical policy. Abdullah of Transjordan also sought leadership in the pan-Arab movement, but had only the support of some tribes in his own territory, a weak faction of the pan-Arab movement, and some elements of the Nashashibi-led opposition. British support for Abdullah's leadership in the pan-Arab movement cannot be treated here, but it significantly shaped relations with France and its influence in the Middle East after the Second World War. During the 1930s, kingship over Syria remained an open option for colonial powers, Arab statesmen, and pan-Arab politics alike.⁷¹⁶ This issue offers a glimpse of how Britain foresaw colonial control continuing as the number of independent Arab states grew, but is too big to address in this thesis.

Regardless, by 1939, the need for support from a popular Arab statesman drove British policy. This radical change, which marked the abandonment of Britain's 22-year old Zionist policy, also aimed to retain influence over national movements in Egypt and Iraq. The latter hope was not entirely achieved, since Britain spent considerable treasure and blood in securing the Middle East from pro-Axis sympathy and force between 1939 and 1942. Nonetheless, that situation easily could have been worse, and policymakers never expected Ibn Sa'ud to control national movements. Britain's turn to the Arab leader was rational, and perhaps worthwhile from the perspective of its interests.

Many historians have discussed Britain's retreat from the partition recommendations of the Peel commission. Yehoshua Porath and Elie

⁷¹⁶ Zamir, "The 'Missing Dimension': Britain's Secret War against France in Syria and Lebanon, 1942-45 – Part II"; Landis, "Syria and the Palestine War: Fighting King 'Abdullah's 'Greater Syria Plan'"; Porath, "Abdallah's Greater Syria Programme."

Kedourie argued that certain FO bureaucrats, especially G.W. Rendel, were behind this retreat. They rejected partition because it would alienate the independent and semi-independent Arab states.⁷¹⁷ Indeed, the record does show that the pair embarked on a crusade to change Whitehall's policy from a Zionist-Imperialist stance to a pan-Arab protectionist one. Yet the motivations may be different than have been described thus far. New information from recently released British sigint records sheds important new light on what Britain knew about its Arab interlocutors during negotiations.

There also was important domestic pressure. NPL had helped PAP set up a propaganda office in London, known varyingly as PIC, the Arab Office or Bureau. An SIS report found in MI5's file on the Mufti reveals that in February 1938, Abdul Latif al-Husseini, a relative of the Mufti and senior figure in PAP, who, in 1944, would be involved with a Nazi parachute mission to Palestine,⁷¹⁸ credited 'a number of friends in London of the Arab who were advising them not to give up the struggle in Palestine until the British Government had shown signs of solving the problem more in accordance with Arab wishes. (He did not say who these friends were.)'⁷¹⁹ They probably were the English members of PIC which included National Labour backbencher Ernest Bennett, who also were connected somehow to the FO bureaucrats who worked against the Zionist policy via Freya Stark.⁷²⁰ The evidence shows that this group did promote the

⁷¹⁷ Porath, *The Palestinian Arab National Movement: From Riots to Rebellion*, 2:277–281; Kedourie, "Great Britain and Palestine: The Turning Point."

⁷¹⁸ KV 2/400. *SIME interrogation of Abdul Latif*. 23.10.1944.

⁷¹⁹ KV 2/2084. 14b. *Miscellaneous Arab Information*. 24.2.1938.

⁷²⁰ Miller, *Divided against Zion*, 12–14.

continuation of violent revolt as a means to pressure British policy. Yet this alone did not move much. The mechanism was more complex, and involved a variety of competing interests within the British government, and between it, Arab statesmen, and political movements.

Historians have not agreed on a pinpoint moment for the retreat from partition, which would have enabled Britain to maintain its Zionist policy. Yehoshua Porath wrote that Malcolm MacDonald, as Colonial Secretary, realized in 1938, after the Munich crisis, that no solution could practically be implemented. He hoped for peacemaking under British guidance, but by October 1938 government meetings on the Palestine question made evident a new prevailing attitude – that ‘Arab goodwill had to be safeguarded at all costs.’ A Jewish-Arab conference was scheduled for early 1939 and held at the palace of St. James. The Mufti was excluded, but his party leadership attended. The Woodhead Commission reported that partition was not viable, at least not without much force and suffering. The guiding principal was to at least temporarily freeze the demographic balance, and prepare Palestine for independence and to join an Arab federation.⁷²¹ Yet nothing was final, and this chapter will examine how sigint guided British diplomacy at the conference.

The Yishuv’s demands for full control over immigration and settlement could not be accepted by Britain, which had bigger problems to manage on the eve of war. The British White Paper policy of 1939 came after a decade of attempts to find a compromise between Arabs and Jews.

⁷²¹ Porath, *The Palestinian Arab National Movement: From Riots to Rebellion*, 2:279–80.

Britain could no longer uphold its conflicting obligations to allow Jewish immigration and introduce self-government; out of options and time, it adopted a new policy. Britain's consultation with the Arab states was a major shift away from its longstanding pro-Zionist policy, which had normally been negotiated directly with Weizmann and the Zionist Organization. Fearful that militant anti-British nationalism in Palestine could spread in the Middle East, and threaten its position.⁷²² British policy-makers focused on keeping Palestine quiet and on keeping the region in line behind a supportive leader. The Arabs of Palestine demanded an end to Jewish immigration and rejected the possibility of a Jewish state, as proposed by the 1937 Peel Commission. In any case, a Jewish State was never a British aim. The government's solution, the White Paper of 1939, limited further Jewish settlement and land purchases, and restricted immigration to 75,000 people divided evenly over five years, wherein it would expire. Afterward, a semi-independent Palestine would be governed on the basis of majority rule.

Historians have attributed many root causes to Britain's decision, such as anti-Semitism, Orientalism, strategic policy, and the war itself.

Bernard Wasserstein argued from a Zionist perspective, that

...the retreat from the Balfour Declaration policy was also a retreat from the perception of the Jews as a nation. The Jews lacked the essential attribute of state sovereignty, and (by contrast with the position during the First World War) it was a cardinal principle of British policy that Jews should not gain state sovereignty.⁷²³

In fact, British policy tended not to address the possibility of statehood until the 1937 Peel Commission. The retreat from the possibility

⁷²² Cohen, *Palestine to Israel*, 101.

⁷²³ Wasserstein, *Britain and the Jews of Europe, 1939-1945*, 353.

of statehood was a mere 18-month process – hardly traumatic for Zionist expectations. Wasserstein’s view ignores the fact that Britain’s struggle against Germany risked its own national survival, while abandoning sovereignty over Palestine threatened British interests. He acknowledged a “tinge of anti-Semitism in the words of some British officials and politicians... But anti-Semitism does not by itself explain British conduct.”⁷²⁴ So too, Michael J. Cohen argues that on the eve of the Second World War, British strategy never sought to appease Arabs at the expense of the Jews.

But following the crises precipitated by the Italian conquest of Abyssinia, policy in Palestine had to be decided with one eye on the strategic needs of the area. Once the Arab states were brought in, or themselves took the initiative in mediation, the Palestine issue was treated as a Pan-Arab issue – at first only by the FO, but by mid 1938 by the Colonial Office as well.⁷²⁵

This assessment generally is correct. However, the need to observe Britain’s strategic situation was paired with the need to foster partnerships with leading Arab statesmen, especially Ibn Sa’ud. Cohen also questions whether Britain could

rely on some half million Jews to counter-balance the possible enmity of the Arab states in the region? What point would there be in having a Middle East supply base in Palestine, or for that matter a British-fortified Zionist state, if Iraq were to sell its oil to Germany, and allow axis (sic) aircraft to land on its airfields? If Saudi Arabia were to collaborate with the Italians along the Red Sea Littoral? If King Farouk [of Egypt] were to welcome Italian forces at his borders? The strategic nuisance value of the Arab states far outweighed any advantages the Zionists could hope to offer.⁷²⁶

⁷²⁴ Ibid., 351.

⁷²⁵ Cohen, *Palestine to Israel*, 97.

⁷²⁶ Cohen, *Palestine to Israel*, 98.

Signals intelligence helped British diplomacy navigate these issues with considerable success, and showed policymakers that at least Ibn Sa'ud would be reliable.

Cohen's conclusion is based on a particular reading of the diplomatic evidence. After discussions with Ibn Sa'ud, Rendel had first proposed freezing the demographic ratio in order to appease Arab nationalists. Yet the rest of Whitehall limited his ability to make promises to Arab statesmen such as Ibn Sa'ud or Nuri Said (the Iraqi FM). The CO maintained the need for a Zionist policy, and continued to entertain partition. Cohen attributes a victory of the FO in this struggle by December 1937, when Rendel argued that a local Jewish-Arab solution would be simple if the problem of alien Jewish immigration could be solved. Despite all the ideological, familial, religious and national division in the Arab world, a Jewish state could not survive without British troops.⁷²⁷ When it was conceived after the First World War, British strategy did not anticipate a large troop commitment and occupation of the Middle East. Yet, by 1938-39, it was clear that was becoming necessary. Britain was forced to re-imagine its future role in the Middle East, and its relationship with local partners. Saudi Arabia had many weaknesses: it was sparsely populated, and did not begin to build a modern standing army until 1938, the same year that oil was discovered in that country. Yet Ibn Sa'ud had the power that came from being the only viable standard-bearer for a future Arab federation or confederation. His influence in the Arab world was unrivalled. Signal evidence shows how British policy considered these

⁷²⁷ Cohen, *Palestine, Retreat from the Mandate*, 38–49.

strengths and weaknesses, but also his open, honest, and earnest desire to be a reliable partner to the British Empire.

Martin Thomas demonstrates that British strategists sought alternate solutions to partition once it was clear that Britain lacked the force to impose that solution. The JIC worried about the military commitment involved in partition, especially given possible reactions in Egypt and Iraq. It discussed measures to induce the support of Arab states during a war, but the Palestine question obviously had to be resolved in their favour. The military commitment involved in policing Egypt alone was cause for concern.⁷²⁸

Rosmarie Said Zahlan and Elie Kedourie are the only historians to have noted the impact of Anglo-Saudi relations on Britain's Palestine policy during 1937-39. Zahlan noted the influence of Ibn Sa'ud's 1937 recommendations to the Peel Commission on the White Paper.⁷²⁹ Kedourie's argument, made in 1980, has been ignored by historians, who, like Kedourie, lacked the evidence now available. His essay emphasizes Rendel's role in Britain's retreat from partition. Kedourie's incredulous description of this about-face ignores the realities facing Britain at the time. Ibn Sa'ud used his prestige in the eyes of his own subjects and the Arab and Muslim worlds in his negotiations with Britain. Kedourie downplayed the local factor of domestic pressure on Ibn Sa'ud to act against the Zionists, citing 'artificial' borders. Actually, Saudi borders with the Gulf sheikdoms had been under negotiation between Ibn Sa'ud and Britain. Said Zahlan

⁷²⁸ Thomas, *Empires of Intelligence*, 258.

⁷²⁹ Said Zahlan, *Palestine and the Gulf States*, 21.

emphasized the issue of Saudi partnership. As strategic issues emerged such as Palestine and German and Italian encroachment, Ibn Sa'ud's goodwill became all the more important to the FO and CO.⁷³⁰ According to Kedourie, nobody challenged Rendel's assertions that Palestine truly mattered to the Arab world. Kedourie argues also that Ibn Sa'ud was motivated to oppose the partition plan more by jealousy of the Hashemites in Iraq than fear of losing his throne.⁷³¹ His concern about pan-Arab perceptions of his role were significant. Yet he had no reason to be jealous of the 'hated' Hashemites; King Ghazi was not very popular and had supported Bakr Sidqi's coup. The place of Palestine in pan-Arab politics is open to debate, but by this time, Britain was not trying to solve Palestinian problems. It traded political capital with Ibn Sa'ud, whom was perceived to be the only reliable independent Arab statesman.

Kedourie's argument is important: Ibn Sa'ud's diplomacy was a major factor in shaping the FO's approach to the Palestine question, and perhaps ultimately persuaded the government to change tracks. Nonetheless, the author's survey is flawed by a sense of injustice to Zionism. He wrote, 'Did Ibn Sa'ud justify this blind belief [by the FO] in his absolute loyalty? Did he deserve the fond protectiveness with which Rendel and his colleagues so tenderly regarded him?'⁷³² Citing discoveries that Ibn Sa'ud was arming rebels or amassing troops on the Transjordan border, as well as his decision to oppose position only once Iraq openly had done so, Kedourie argued that British support for him was not justified. 'No

⁷³⁰ Ibid., 20–24.

⁷³¹ Kedourie, "Great Britain and Palestine: The Turning Point," 153, 162–163.

⁷³² Ibid., 154.

doubt in order to protect his position, Ibn Sa'ud sent a telegram to a friend in Damascus which became known to the Palestine government. Its text is not now in the file, but it was enough for Wauchope to refer (in a letter of 14 July) to its "unfortunate and most disappointing substance." Rendel continued to support the Arab king, arguing his message was not a sign of bad faith; Ibn Sa'ud had long warned that he might have to adopt a policy at variance with British wishes.⁷³³ It so happens that the original intercepted telegram is available today. Ibn Sa'ud communicated with his emissary in Damascus, Sheikh Kamel al-Qassab, who, it will be remembered, was in *al-Fatat* and the decentralization party before the First World War, and afterwards joined the independence movement; he was close to Rashid Rida and 'Izz al-Din al-Qassam; and organized Ibn Sa'ud's failed attempt to raise a modern army with Fawzi Qawuqji in 1929. The British diplomat at Jeddah supplied a preview of the Royal Commission report to Ibn Sa'ud, but did not ask for comment. The leader said to Qassab:

We told him that we were disappointed with the report because formerly our talks with them were favourable to Moslems and Arabs; and we have an interest in Palestinians. Now Question has become a blow at Arabs in general and at us personally apart from the people of Palestine for three reasons; 1) first it may lead to feeling between the other Arabs and the English and we should not like that for it would harm both sides. 2) The foundation of a Jewish state in Arab country would be harmful and very dangerous, and it cannot be ceded by Arabs. 3) If Emir Abdulla of Transjordan obtains the new Kingdom then this is more important to us than two previous points because owing to his open actions, which are apparent to all, it is possible he will ask the Jews for [? help] for his country. If question is finished and there is to be no consultation on matters than we can say no more... Tell al Haj al Amin about that.⁷³⁴

⁷³³ Ibid.

⁷³⁴ TNA, HW 12/217. 68731. i/c: *King to Saudi Minister Damascus*. 10.7.1937. brackets with ? are original and represent probable solutions to corruptions in transmission.

The perception of treason here is obvious: Ibn Sa'ud previously kept the Mufti at arms' length, yet now was opening communication with him. His suspicion of Abdullah is more understandable given his own military situation. He lacked a standing army, whereas Transjordan was protected by the Arab Legion, TJFF, and the RAF – all formidable professional forces. Those forces had rescued Ibn Sa'ud during the Hejaz rebellion years earlier. Without seeing a Saudi archive, we cannot know for sure, but there is every reason to believe that Ibn Sa'ud feared an independent Abdullah with expansionist ambition which, in light of the Royal Commission report, could have included territory in Palestine. Moreover, Ibn Sa'ud's opinion definitely represents some sort of pan-Arab feeling which transcended borders. Real or not, the FO would have been wrong to discount it. British diplomacy artfully brought in Ibn Sa'ud, a popular pan-Arab leader, after this minor and temporary dip in relations.

Weizmann said 'it would be extremely unfortunate if the Jewish Agency had to break off relations with the British government...' An FO official replied, 'they will be fools if they do but it would be a great relief to us' but crossed 'would' and replaced it with 'might.'⁷³⁵ This anecdote tells much about the FO attitude towards Zionism by 1938, but it also reveals the reality of Britain's strategic problem: the Jewish Agency needed Britain more than the other way around. By turning the Palestine question into a pan-Arab one, the British government did not just 'surrender control and initiative in Palestine', as Kedourie said.⁷³⁶ Rather, it compromised an old

⁷³⁵ Kedourie, "Great Britain and Palestine: The Turning Point," 168.

⁷³⁶ Ibid., 169.

policy which was becoming less relevant as the march to war in Europe proceeded, and as the League of Nations' relevancy declined in turn. Nothing suggests that British policymakers at Whitehall thought that they had enabled the Mufti's desire for prestige, and perhaps furthered the pan-Arab scheme, by acceding to the Arab kings' scheme.

In August 1937 the PMC discussed the Royal Commission report and expressed its annoyance at the attempt by Iraq to intervene on behalf of Palestinians at the League. The League criticised the British government for not having more firmly supported Jewish immigration. It had little faith in Jewish or Arab self-government, and castigated Ormsby-Gore for not having imposed martial law. Ormsby-Gore pointed out that this was contrary to democracy, and would have worsened Arab-Jewish tensions; military force could not settle conflict between 'right and right'. The problem, he argued, was political. He and the Foreign Minister Anthony Eden agreed upon the importance of the League, but ultimately circumstances forced a change in attitude and policy. This change was an attempt to buy five years of peace, and the government could not possibly entertain negotiations with the Mufti, even though Britain had negotiated with terrorists elsewhere.⁷³⁷ In reality, the government's approach in the 1939 White Paper sought to supplant the Mufti's influence with that of a more influential Arab statesman – Ibn Sa'ud.

Britain's relations with Ibn Sa'ud were turbulent between 1915 and 1933, although he was generally regarded with respect. He usually was

⁷³⁷ Pedersen, "The Impact of League Oversight on British Policy in Palestine," 57–61.

trapped in security dilemmas with at least one neighbour while Britain aimed to stabilize borders in the Arabian Peninsula. Britain militarily contained Ibn Sa'ud during much of the 1920s, but also sought solutions to his security dilemmas, which, by the mid-1930s, extended beyond containment and border treaties. Britain's main aim was to achieve stability under its Gulf treaty system. The 1915 Anglo-Saudi treaty was signed, according to one historian, to include Ibn Sa'ud in a system of similar agreements with other Gulf rulers. It was a response to his expansion into the Hasa territory on the gulf coast, and also to prevent any Saudi agreement with the Ottoman Empire. Britain could not coax him to join the war effort, but he did reliably stay out of it.⁷³⁸ Supposed Saudi hostility to Britain during the early 1920s was treated with marked coolness. This may have had to do with the shattering of pan-Islamic unity as the Indian Khilafat movement collapsed and split from the Wahhabis. Relations with Ibn Sa'ud became tense during the conquest of Hejaz during 1924-25 by his Wahhabist Ikhwan followers who were deposing the Hashemites from the Muslim holy cities. Britain recognized his status by treaty, but contained the Ikhwan using aircraft and armoured cars during their raids on Iraq during 1928. Treaties negotiated between Gilbert Clayton, Ibn Sa'ud, and Imam Yahya, also contributed to Britain's relaxed attitude. Interestingly, Rendel himself had observed that Islamic unity was 'a fiction' except as a reaction against European penetration in the east.⁷³⁹

⁷³⁸ Goldberg, "The Origins of British-Saudi Relations: The 1915 Anglo-Saudi Treaty Revisited."

⁷³⁹ Ferris, "Small Wars and Great Games," 219; Ferris, "The Internationalism of Islam," 72.

Anglo-Saudi relations improved in 1932 when Hamed ibn Rifadah led an anti-Saudi revolt in Hejaz, seemingly with clandestine support from Hashemites, or the pro-Hashemite faction of Istiqlal, and possibly even British sources. Rifadah was defeated with British help. RAF, Arab Legion, TJFF and police forces closed the border and disarmed rebels attempting to enter or leave Hejaz. Britain feared escalation and needed to prove its neutrality and uninvolvedness to Ibn Sa'ud, whom it had recognized in Hejaz by treaty in 1927. Ibn Sa'ud's victory added considerable weight to his prestige in the pan-Arab movement. The pro-Saudi faction of Istiqlal, led by Kamel al-Qassab and Nabih al-Azmeh, eclipsed the pro-Hashemite faction of Auni Abdul Hadi.⁷⁴⁰

This background is important because, from Ibn Sa'ud's perspective, Britain likely was seen to have proved itself as predictable and reliable. We cannot know for sure without seeing his records, but the British intercepts reveal his inclination to continue doing business with Britain. By 1935, the FO had concluded that its control over the region depended on the ability to show sufficient force to contain Ibn Sa'ud. When he pressed for concessions in the Persian Gulf, Britain sought to clarify to him that 'HMG will not abandon their established policy in the Persian Gulf in order that Ibn Saud may play with greater effect to the pan-Arab gallery.' The diplomat in Jeddah was instructed to 'disabuse' the King's representative of any notion that borders were negotiable.⁷⁴¹ Within months

⁷⁴⁰ IOR L/PS/10/1315. CID 32/32.17.8.1932.; AIR 5/1244. *Report on operations of "souforce" in Southern Transjordan from 14 June 1932 to 2 September 1932.* 28.9.1932.; HA 8/klali/30b. m.sh. *intel on hejaz revolt.* 19.7.1932.

⁷⁴¹ S25/22776. *Extract FO to Jeddah.* 15.2.1935.

relations were considered ‘extremely cordial’.⁷⁴² During the Abyssinian crisis, Italy approached Saudi Arabia for partnership. Ibn Sa’ud accepted Italian gestures, including military aid, and fostered good diplomatic relations. He did so as an independent statesman and in the interests of his kingdom. He maintained suspicion of Italian intentions, however, and his emissaries told Britain of every step taken with Italy during 1935-36, many of which Whitehall already knew.⁷⁴³

The Intelligence Record: Ibn Sa’ud and Palestine

Ibn Sa’ud’s relations with Abdullah seemed to be thawing at this time. His son Faysal was expected to visit Transjordan. Ibn Sa’ud was irritated with the Mufti who used the Hajj pilgrimage as an occasion to distribute anti-Jewish propaganda, which was confiscated in Mecca.⁷⁴⁴ This was only one year after the Mufti and Arslan had embarked on their peace mission. When Amir Faysal visited Transjordan and Palestine, the prestige and influence of his family became evident to British observers. The Mufti used the occasion to show off his own influence and prestige, and so he arranged welcome celebrations for Faysal, who was convinced that Haj Amin was ‘the only capable leader in Palestine.’ The CID remarked how Faysal bin ‘Abdul ‘Aziz had now captured what was left of Hashemite prestige since the death of Feisal bin Hussein. The Hashemite prince had formerly been enthusiastically received – now this excitement was reserved for a Saudi, whose father was the obvious standard bearer for pan-Arabism. Importantly, during this visit, political leaders from Syria and Palestine

⁷⁴² S25/22735. *ASI Intelligence*. 2.5.1935.

⁷⁴³ S25/22776. *Bullard to Eden*. 2.10.1936

⁷⁴⁴ S25/22735. *ASI intelligence*. 31.5.1935. and 2.5.1935.

gathered in Jerusalem to discuss the question of what to do in the event of the outbreak of war in Abyssinia, and the case of other European powers becoming involved. The Mufti, Nabih al-Azmeh and Auni Abdul Hadi all hosted meetings. They agreed that Yemen, Hejaz [already officially known as Saudi Arabia] and Iraq should remain neutral. Upon the declaration of war, Istiqlal delegations would visit the Arab kings to promote neutrality, and build a new pan-Arab unity congress which would use the crisis to leverage European governments for independence. Most curiously, they sought to ask Ibn Sa'ud to negotiate with France to appoint Amir Faysal to the Syrian throne. Istiqlal would strive to foster Saudi-Hashemite cooperation, assuming Abdullah actually would work towards Arab independence.⁷⁴⁵

This platform was reaffirmed during the Mufti's visit to Damascus in 1935, in preparation for forthcoming disturbances. Ibn Sa'ud's Minister Fuad Hamza, who was 'well connected with certain members of the Istiqlal party in Palestine' was reported by the CID to have observed these deliberations in Damascus, and 'endeavoured to obtain a decision in favour of Ibn Sa'ud to speak in the name of Syria and Palestine, leaving the question of other territories to their respective rulers.'⁷⁴⁶ Ibn Sa'ud's stance was a practical one, and only addressed territories whose future remained uncertain in 1935. He also had an interest not to agitate Italy during its operations in the Red Sea and to maintain a neutral stance in that conflict. It

⁷⁴⁵ IOR L/PS/12/2118. CID 24.8.1935

⁷⁴⁶ IOR L/PS/12/3343. 9. CID summary 14/35. 28.9.1935.

was rumoured that Italy and Saudi Arabia had forged a secret agreement on Saudi neutrality.⁷⁴⁷

The pan-Arab platform illustrates Britain's approach to Ibn Sa'ud. When in 1935 the pan-Arab movement attempted to leverage international crises in negotiations with France and Britain, figures like Rendel saw value in co-opting this movement, even though it explicitly was trying to avoid a repeat of 1915. The CID report concluded, 'They argue that such an emergency is the only opportunity for them to force the British government to grant their aspirations and they are careful not to forego the opportunities afforded in the last world war or to repeat the mistakes of the late King Hussein. It is alleged that this was hinted to Emir Saoud (sic) at private conversations.'⁷⁴⁸ This was not the first expression of such wishes.

Reporting on the October 1933 disturbances, the CID reported that the demonstrators 'firmly believe that the Government would not yield except to force... That riots are the only means of delivering them and that a European war is the only chance for the Arabs to rid themselves of foreign rule...'⁷⁴⁹ Such comments were made periodically until the possibility of war became real in 1935, and the pan-Arab movement articulated the aforementioned strategy.

By the time of the Palestinian general strike in 1936, the Saudi role in the pan-Arab world had not been not forgotten. The British Minister at Jeddah, Sir Andrew Ryan, reported to Wauchope and the FO on his discussions with the Saudi courtier, Sheikh Yusuf Yasin. Previously, Yasin

⁷⁴⁷ S25/22735. *ASI summary*. 1.11.1935.

⁷⁴⁸ IOR L/PS/12/2118. *CID* 24.8.1935

⁷⁴⁹ IOR L/PS/10/1315. *CID* 25/33. 23.10.1933.

had been instructed by Ibn Sa'ud to share with the British consul a telegram he had received from the Mufti: a plea for assistance.

Although he [Yasin] spoke of the King's desire to avoid doing anything which would clash the policy of His Majesty's Government or might imply interference in their concerns, Yusuf also mentioned that the maintenance of his prestige in the Arab world was important to Ibn Saud. He referred to "general Arab feelings" which had inspired rapprochements (sic) with Egypt, the Yemen and Iraq, and which in connection with Palestine must also be taken into account.⁷⁵⁰

British sigint, available in May, 1936, confirmed that Ibn Sa'ud had rebuffed the Mufti's plea for help.⁷⁵¹ The British Minister frankly expressed his personal views 'with some freedom, leading up to the conclusion that if he concerned himself in any way with the affairs of Palestine Ibn Sa'ud would increase neither his friendship with His Majesty's government nor his prestige in the Arab world.' There was a difference between a mandated territory and independent states such as Egypt, Iraq, and Yemen. Yasin assured Ryan that Ibn Sa'ud did not wish to interfere.⁷⁵² Yet, even though Ibn Sa'ud was told not to encourage future hope of involvement, by that summer – 1936 – much had changed.

In June, Ibn Sa'ud instructed his minister in London to approach the British government regarding Palestine, saying that he preferred not to interfere, but was under pressure from the Muslim and Arab worlds. He emphasized Saudi friendship, and noted that he had suppressed anti-British demonstrations in his country. He said,

My instructions are that you should explore suitable means, without causing misgivings, to sound the British government regarding the Palestine question, and in particular how we are to make excuses for ourselves in any action we might eventually have to take concerning

⁷⁵⁰ S25/22726. *Jeddah to HC Palestine, FO.* 30.4.1936.

⁷⁵¹ HW 12/203. 65196. *Yasin to King.* 29.4.1936.

⁷⁵² S25/22726. *Jeddah to HC Palestine, FO.* 30.4.1936.

the Arabs. You should insist that our sole object in this is to guard against our own people disapproving of our policy.⁷⁵³

By the end of June, Ibn Sa'ud was seeking guidance as to how to approach the Arab kings and sheikhs. Britain, it will be seen below, had approved some course for communication.⁷⁵⁴ He anxiously awaited Britain's reply, and informed Britain that he knew of its attempted scheme with 'Abdullah, whom he did not trust. He received word in mid-July after Wauchope negotiated with the Colonial Office to enable the Arab kings scheme. He believed it would be the quickest way to end the crisis and let the ASC save face. The Mufti pursued the strategy articulated during 1935, that during an international crisis, Arab kings would pressure Britain for independence. Syrians had secured a negotiated path to independence from France, which caved in March 1936. Palestine was the logical next step. Britain now saw the opportunity to co-opt Ibn Sa'ud's leadership against that effort, knowing that he was not inclined to support the Mufti. Britain told Ibn Sa'ud

that if he was able to use his influence to persuade the Arabs to abandon the campaign of violence he would be doing a service not only to HMG but to the Arabs themselves. He suggested in reply that action should be taken by him in conjunction with the King of Iraq and the King of Yemen. He purported to act in his own initiative but did not wish to make such a proposal at Baghdad or Senaa (sic) unless HMG concurred. Saudi Arabian Minister was informed on the 3rd July that this offer was gladly accepted by HMG.⁷⁵⁵

By 15 July, the CO had approved this approach. The king reportedly had worked to suppress Bedouin who organized themselves to fight in Palestine, and told the British government that anyone who slipped through

⁷⁵³ HW 12/204. 65317. *King to Minister*. 15.6.1936.

⁷⁵⁴ HW 12/201. 65398. *King to Minister, and reply*. 21.6.1936.

⁷⁵⁵ S25/22726. *CO to HC*. 7.7.1936.

should be arrested. His language in his exchanges with Palestinians was bluntly pro-British, and suspicious of their stated aims: namely, that they were only quarrelling with Jews, and wished simply for the release of all prisoners, remission of collective fines, and cessation of Jewish immigration. Ibn Sa'ud suggested to the Palestinians that before they proceeded, 'the first thing necessary was submission' since the British government would not negotiate under fire, until their side had shown the white flag. When it became evident to Ibn Sa'ud that Iraq, represented by Nuri Said, and Yemen both insisted upon suspension of immigration, the King immediately told the British about the developments. He also suggested satisfying Palestinian demands, but when the British rejected this offer, the King wrote, 'I preferred to follow the advice of the British government and sent the required counsels to the people of Palestine...' He believed Britain was suspicious of his motives, so he secretly communicated everything to them so to demonstrate that he had 'taken no steps in the Palestine affair except to offer counsel and reply.'⁷⁵⁶ British authorities could confirm many of his reports through their own sources. The Foreign Office reassured Ibn Sa'ud, and promised to keep him informed of developments.⁷⁵⁷

Britain's change in policy between April-May and July was radical. It may have resulted from Ryan's imperfect relationship with Ibn Sa'ud. He departed in May. According to Kedourie, the change was due to Ormsby Gore who was new to the job of Colonial Secretary, was not 'tough or

⁷⁵⁶ HW 12/207. 66083. *King to Minister*. 30.8.1936.

⁷⁵⁷ HW 12/207. 66134. *Minister to King*. 2.9.1936.

forceful, and his style may have been cramped by his reputation as a Zionist sympathizer.’ Rendel had approved of Ryan’s approach, saying that this was a matter for the CO. In June, Ibn Sa’ud’s Minister in London, Hafez Wahba, was instructed to approach the FO and tell them that his master’s prestige was at risk since he had not taken a position on Palestine, and he could be painted as a coward or British agent. Kedourie states that Ibn Sa’ud only aimed to ascertain British policy in this approach.⁷⁵⁸ The sigint records are clear that Ibn Sa’ud asked Britain whether he could become involved, although he left every possibility open.

Britain silently hijacked the pan-Arab programme and blocked the strategy of its Arab enemies by exploiting this opportunity. It cannot be a coincidence that Britain, by July 1936, had negotiated with Iraq, Saudi Arabia, and Yemen to help end the rebellion. Only Egypt was excluded, for obvious reasons: Its pseudo-independence was signed only in August 1936 in the Anglo-Egyptian treaty, and only ratified in December. Its teenage King Farouk was not of the same league as the Sheikhs who were heads of state in Yemen, Saudi Arabia, Iraq or even Transjordan.

Whitehall was careful not to give promises to the Arab kings, or to Palestinians, and never committed to limiting Jewish immigration beyond the present regime. Kedourie argued that due to an error of Hafez Wahba’s interpreter, the Saudis mistakenly believed that Britain agreed to the Ibn Sa’ud’s approach to the Palestine problem – concessions to the ASC in exchange for peace.⁷⁵⁹ In fact, the king told the Palestinians in late July that

⁷⁵⁸ Kedourie, “Great Britain and Palestine: The Turning Point,” 97–98.

⁷⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 101–102.

Britain had clearly stated that it left the future of Palestine to the Royal Commission. He hinted that Palestinians might get some concession, but made no promises, and advised them to give up.⁷⁶⁰ Kedourie argued that Britain had relinquished its own initiative in the political sphere, and opened Pandora's Box by leaving open the possibility of overtures from other Arab statesmen in what otherwise was an internal rebellion or disturbance. This view had some force, and the possibility certainly concerned Zionists. The Jewish Agency obtained details of Nuri Said's proposals to Britain, and leaked them in the Palestine post, calculating that this would embarrass the CO and force a public denial.⁷⁶¹

In the end, the cabinet escalated the military commitment to Palestine, but before they could reach victory, the Arab kings intervened at the Mufti's request in a well-managed stage show. The Mufti called off the strike at their request – improving both sides' prestige in pan-Arab politics, and diminishing that of Britain. To be fair, Britain was steadfast in its refusal to concede any promise to the ASC or kings other than to address issues at the Royal Commission. Yet, by involving Arab kings, Britain conceded that the Palestine problem had now become a pan-Arab one, 'not peculiar to Palestine', as the CID put it.⁷⁶² At this point it might be said that Britain had relinquished enough control of its policymaking to force an eventual change in its overarching Zionist policy.

Nonetheless, Ibn Sa'ud achieved much for Britain. His intervention immediately led to an expedited solution to the crisis. Kamel al-Qassab met

⁷⁶⁰ HW 12/207. 66155. *King to Minister*. 24.7.1936. – decrypted 5.9.1936.

⁷⁶¹ Kedourie, "Great Britain and Palestine: The Turning Point," 103–104.

⁷⁶² IOR L/PS/12/3343. *CID 16/36*. 28.9.1936.

with the ASC and Iraq consul, stating that Ibn Sa'ud would not issue his call to the Mufti to end the strike unless the ASC was prepared to end all violence. In essence, he guaranteed that this concession to the Mufti would work in Britain's favour, and reassured the ASC that the Royal Commission would treat them justly.⁷⁶³ In doing so, he allowed the ASC to save face, rescued it from Nashashibi encroachment on their influence, and made the Mufti seem like an equal leader in the Arab world.⁷⁶⁴ Ibn Sa'ud's prestige was boosted such that now Shakib Arslan and Ihsan Jabri cabled him from Geneva, asking him to become involved in negotiations over Syria and Alexandretta.⁷⁶⁵ Yet, despite his assistance to Britain, all that was achieved was a temporary cease fire – Palestinian rebel preparations continued; attacks were less frequent and directed against Jewish more often than British targets.

Ibn Sa'ud continued his involvement in Palestinian affairs. One intercept in December of a message from Wahba to Ibn Sa'ud revealed his discussions with the British government, which said that the Palestine policy was now in the hands of the Royal Commission. The FO told Wahba it was concerned about prematurely announcing results before publication, lest it be accused of bad faith. Wahba assured them that Ibn Sa'ud's 'sole object was complete understanding with the British and the prevention of any possible impression that may be created by the presentation of any proposal not acceptable to the British government.' They replied so that 'so long as this firm friendship continued as present [? They were under an]

⁷⁶³ IOR L/PS/12/3343. *CID 16/36*. 28.9.1936.

⁷⁶⁴ IOR L/PS/12/3345. *GSI no2*. 6.10.1936.

⁷⁶⁵ HW 12/211. 67463. *Arslan and Jabri to King*. 11.12.1936.

obligation to [? Meet your majesty's] friendly desires, and they are prepared to discuss everything you present and give it full consideration...'⁷⁶⁶

The FO promised Ibn Sa'ud more than was openly known at the time: a permanent voice in Palestine policy. When Rendel visited Ibn Sa'ud in early 1937, the King reiterated Arab alarm at the Zionist policy. He argued it was against British interests to let Palestine affect Muslim feeling, or give an opening for Italy to make overtures in that world. The British Minister in Jeddah, Sir Reader Bullard, felt Ibn Sa'ud's attitude was 'reasonable.' British policy after the Commission report would have to 'safeguard Arab interests' in order for Ibn Sa'ud to 'continue to exercise his influence in direction of moderation. He might well remind us that he risked unpopularity in Arab world by assisting us...'⁷⁶⁷

By June, when the report came out, the War Office had revised its own appreciations of Britain's strategic position in the Middle East. This review led to more support within the government for the FO position on Palestine. It warned that Ibn Sa'ud might have to change his policy towards Britain if the commission findings were unfair to Arabs.

Actually, there is little doubt that neighbouring Arab rulers would welcome a firm and prompt settlement, which would remove a source of embarrassment to them in their own internal politics. I think much will depend on the speed with which we put down disturbances if they happen, and here, of course, we are in a better position when the rebellion broke out last year... One thing is certain, and that is that we shall require an increased garrison in Palestine for some time and that the country will be a thorn in our flesh... until the situation there becomes stable.⁷⁶⁸

⁷⁶⁶ HW 12/211. 67348. 17.12.1936.

⁷⁶⁷ CAB 104/7. *Bullard to FO*. 24.3.1937.

⁷⁶⁸ WO 106/1594b. *MA conference, June 1937. Statement by MI2*. 22.6.1937. p.6.

Now, at the cabinet, there were military reasons to support Rendel's proposed policy for Palestine.

When Wahba was shown the forthcoming Royal Commission report, disappointment at this 'blow to Arabs' was deep. British intercepts reveal Ibn Sa'ud's reaction. He was urged by his ministers to openly support the Palestinians' rejection of partition. Qassab cabled him, expressing the ASC's anxiety while awaiting his response.⁷⁶⁹ He was cautious, met Bullard face-to-face and bluntly asked him whether partition was a closed matter, or whether 'any representations concerning it were invited.' Bullard replied in the negative. Now Ibn Sa'ud raised three matters, concerning Amir Abdullah, the territory around Aqaba and Maan in Transjordan, and the Syrian border. He also instructed Wahba to ask the British government whether any representations might be made in London. That reply also was negative, although more nuanced. 'The government's decision was definite and unalterable, but that the nature of the partition has not yet been decided by the government...'⁷⁷⁰

Simultaneously, it would appear that Ibn Sa'ud took steps to negotiate with Britain. He pressured Britain to open the Palestine question to negotiation by threatening territorial claims in Transjordan and intervention regarding Alexandretta. He also was under pressure to raise Jihad against Palestine. Sigint intercepts revealed that various Sheikhs offered their willingness to participate.⁷⁷¹ Ibn Sa'ud cabled the Mufti via intermediaries, and asked what his plans were. 'We have never spared any

⁷⁶⁹ HW 12/218. 69021. 13.7.1937.

⁷⁷⁰ HW 12/217. 68756. Various ics. *Palestine report- ibn Saud views*. 20.7.1937.

⁷⁷¹ S25/22776. 2 tels. *from Alexandretta*. 13.9.1937.; *minute by OAG* 16.9.1937.; HW 12/219. 69255. 13.8.1937.

efforts and we will never slacken in our endeavour until the end. But making a show about things which will come to nought is a mistake. They can have the utmost trust in us... our brothers in Syria and Palestine must all know that our greatest interest is that they should attain the objects which will safeguard the interests of the country and the honour of the Arabs.⁷⁷² The reply defined the minimum demands of the Mufti, as related by Qassab: abrogation of the mandate, Palestinian independence, and a willingness to make ‘adequate provision guaranteeing the rights of the Jews as a minority in the land, and to conclude a treaty on this basis with the British government on the lines of the Iraqi and Syrian treaties. They all say “death or life with honour.”⁷⁷³ Britain possessed the minimum bargaining position of the Mufti, on the eve of the Bludan congress and renewed revolt. This helps to explain its disinclination to reach compromise.

In private conversations, the Saudis told Qassab their position on partition, since it had remained secret. ‘We replied to Sheikh Qassab that we, in accordance with our invariable policy towards HMG, have dealt with them direct and have not published anything and do not wish to make our attitude public.’ Wahba had been recalled to Jeddah to receive further instructions on how to proceed with negotiations in London. They asked Qassab for all information which they could communicate. As for Bludan, they wished to avoid it altogether since it might pose more problems for Britain. The message finished, ‘We wish HMG to be informed of this under

⁷⁷² HW 12/219. 69279. *King to Damascus*. 13.8.1937.

⁷⁷³ HW 12/219. 69216. 23.8.1937.

the usual conditions of strict secrecy.’⁷⁷⁴ Qassab even attempted to prevent the Bludan conference, but was too late.⁷⁷⁵

A GSI report, based on access to signals intercepts, explained Ibn Sa’ud’s opposition to partition as being primarily motivated by his fear that it appeared to ‘secure the aggrandisement of his hereditary foe the Hashemite Abdullah, he would endeavour to employ only constitutional means to assist the Arabs in Palestine.’ The writer also felt that in the event of renewed rebellion in Palestine, Ibn Sa’ud could not control his tribes who might try to participate. There had been many recent rumours about the arming of tribes in Saudi Arabia, including a false one that Fawzi Qawuqji was there to prepare a renewed rebellion. Little importance was attached to such reports, since the tribes remembered how they were defeated easily by Britain in 1924 (and probably on other occasions). Ibn Sa’ud was known to be determined to avoid conflict with Britain.⁷⁷⁶ This assessment was shared by John Glubb, commander of the Arab legion in Transjordan.⁷⁷⁷

Sigint records reveal that there was arms traffic through Ibn Sa’ud’s territory, and that he had been receiving arms shipments from Italians, which he mostly used to supply his own forces. One intercept showed that Ibn Sa’ud instructed a local governor to tell Glubb that Saudi Arabia could not admit arms reception, but that ‘even if the people of Palestine are dear to us we do not wish to increase the difficulties that confront the British government.’ In response to rumours, Glubb’s forces closed routes

⁷⁷⁴ S25/22768. *from Jeddah*. 28.8.1937.

⁷⁷⁵ S25/22776. *Jeddah to FO*. 13.9.1937.

⁷⁷⁶ HA 115/97. ‘*I*’ *Summary*. 1.10.1937.; CO 732/79/4. *Glubb to Amman*. 15.8.1937.

⁷⁷⁷ S25/22776. *Extract from Major Glubb’s report*. 19.1937.

northwards from Saudi Arabia, but the situation was resolved through open, honest communication, verified by sigint.⁷⁷⁸

Ibn Sa'ud made every effort to align his policy with Britain, but not at the expense of his own standing. When he dealt with the Mufti's faction, he passed every word of those exchanges to the British who were in a position to verify what he said using sigint. Interestingly, by the end of September 1937, Rendel had told Hafez Wahba that he did not think British policy on partition would change, given recrudescing violence in Palestine.⁷⁷⁹ Wahba later encouraged the Ibn Sa'ud to keep strategic issues in mind: 'Palestine is but a small section of the great Arab Fatherland.'⁷⁸⁰

Ibn Sa'ud's response to British measures in Palestine was pragmatic: While he objected to certain matters, he felt the need to explain his situation. He blamed Lewis Andrews' murder on Jewish intrigue, and described Jews as 'a plague in Arab lands.' He defended the Mufti, and the religious sensibilities which had excited renewed violence. He pleaded for more talks, and for Britain to consider how to satisfy Arab demands.⁷⁸¹ Yet again British policymakers worried that Ibn Sa'ud might turn against them. An FO memo to the cabinet emphasized Ibn Sa'ud's more belligerent expressions which threatened territorial expansion. On the other hand, Ormsby Gore was unconvinced that pan-Arabism should matter to British policymaking, and rejected a fixed demographic ratio proposed by the FO

⁷⁷⁸ HW 12/221. 69763. 5.10.1937.; S25/22776. *HC to Jeddah*, 28.9.1937.; HW 12/219. 69307. 18.8.1937.; HW 12/220. 69590. 20.9.1937.

⁷⁷⁹ HW 37/1. *London to King*.30.9.1937.

⁷⁸⁰ HW 12/220. 069576. *Saudi Minister to the King*. 15.10.1937.

⁷⁸¹ HW 12/220.69533. 7.10.1937

and Ibn Sa'ud.⁷⁸² He may not have appreciated pan-Arabism, but Ormsby Gore was convinced of the need to buy the friendship of Ibn Sa'ud.⁷⁸³ Gilbert MacKereth observed that the suppression of terrorism was a condition for friendly Anglo-Arab relations.⁷⁸⁴

Percy Loraine, the former HC of Egypt and the only British official in the Middle East to warn his superiors in 1929-30 about concentrating too much power in the Mufti's hands, also spoke about Britain's policy problem. Speaking from experience, he explained that British policy towards 'the Islamic Middle East' had not been coordinated between the Foreign, Colonial, and India offices. Despite many divisions, there was 'a sort of solidarity amongst Moslems, and a sort of common instinct vis-à-vis the outside...' He did not want to underrate the 'importance of a friendly Jewry; but in the present state of effervescence of Asia... the goodwill of Islam must at the lowest valuation be a no less precious asset.' He advised against partition, which would jeopardize Britain's relations with Muslim states which had made 'rapid and really astonishing progress' since the last war.⁷⁸⁵

Even Ibn Sa'ud learned of the inter-departmental debates. Wahba related that 'high officials in the foreign office say: "partition and the use of force will lose us the Arabs and Moslems"'. The colonial office says that the Arab states are not to be feared... it is believed that should the Arab States again advance towards (sic: ? confront) the British government owing to

⁷⁸² CAB 24/273/6. cp281/37.FO. *Palesitne*. 19.11.1937. p.6.; CAB 24/273/14. cp289/37. 1.12.1937.

⁷⁸³ Said Zahlan, *Palestine and the Gulf States*, 22.

⁷⁸⁴ FO 684/10. *MacKereth to Rendel*. 16.11.1937.

⁷⁸⁵ CO 733/381/5. *Loraine to Eden*. 28.12.1937.

the employment of force this would strengthen the position of the Foreign Office officials here.’ Nowhere else in the record is there a clearer example of how the FO advanced its own vision by encouraging Ibn Sa’ud to continue doing what he had been all along: articulating a pro-British policy, but a firm and vocal opposition to partition. The king replied, ‘Your description of the situation at the Foreign Office and Colonial Office in regard to Palestine is useful to us. Let me know what has been verified to you.’ The British government had asked Ibn Sa’ud to keep out, but now he wanted to see whether they would be opposed to a joint note from himself and other Arab kings for a second time.⁷⁸⁶ Records of Bullard’s discussions with Ibn Sa’ud reveal the king’s anxieties about the region. He could not understand how Mussolini had become so popular despite his bad treatment of Arabs in Libya. He worried about his own fate and popularity, citing the Palestine problem and his hate for the partition proposal. He also worried that Britain might change policy without consulting him. Bullard reassured Ibn Sa’ud of Britain’s friendship, and their mutual trust and openness.⁷⁸⁷

Later in January 1938, Ibn Sa’ud communicated his policy to Imam Yahya of Yemen. He did not want to harm British policy or to let any Arab do so. He would not object to Britain holding Palestine until it had stabilized, but that if partition, Jewish immigration, and land sales were stopped, Arabs could come to terms with Britain. He also expressed skepticism of pan-Arabism – Egypt stood apart from Arab affairs, Iraq was suffering internal troubles, and generally, states were promoting their own

⁷⁸⁶ HW 12/223. 70266. *Minister London to King*. 31.12.1937.; 70295. *King to London*. 2.1.1938.

⁷⁸⁷ IOR L/ps/12/3346. 8414. *Bullard to FO*. 15.12.1937

interests over the general good.⁷⁸⁸ Simultaneously, SIS reported that Ibn Sa'ud had crossed Palestinian leaders when he told them that he could only intervene in Palestine if they left the entire matter to his hands.⁷⁸⁹

This pro-British position certainly helped inch towards the abandonment of partition, which was not yet certain. By the Munich crisis, in September 1938, it had become so. Sigint records from that month are unavailable to researchers, but much can be gleaned from existing records, and the prevailing pattern of Anglo-Saudi relations. The CO hosted a conference on 7 September 1938. There, reinforcements for Palestine were discussed. Palestine had been told it would have to wait for these forces, given the European situation, although alternate proposals for the equivalent of a division for reinforcement, to be drawn from Egypt and India, were discussed. It was in this context that the partition policy was revisited. Of great concern was the cost-balance assessment between moving units to Palestine at the expense of deployment at home, Europe or elsewhere. Also at stake was the cost of the blow to British prestige which might arise from military failure in Palestine, or even the rise of a worse emergency. Thomas Inskip, Minister for Coordination of Defence, felt the problem was 'fundamentally political not military.' MacDonald, the Colonial Secretary, agreed and hoped that the Woodhead Commission report would allow for a policy to end disorders. Shuckburgh, of the FO, doubted whether the immediate result of the decision to abandon partition would be as good as assumed. Terrorists might declare victory and continue

⁷⁸⁸ HW 12/223. 70422. 25.1.1938.

⁷⁸⁹ KV 2/2084. 11a. *miscellaneous Arab information*. 4.21938.

their work ‘of driving the Jews into the sea.’ MacDonald countered that the knowledge that partition was dead would favourably affect the Arab states, and ‘would definitely result in easing the situation.’ Sir Lancelot Oliphant agreed, saying that ‘the mere decision to give up partition would have an enormous effect upon Ibn Sa’ud as well as upon Egypt and other Arab states. There would be a great détente.’⁷⁹⁰

The crisis at Munich was important in the decision to abandon partition. Equally important was British consideration for the position of Arab states. From the end of September, Britain’s diplomatic strategy at the FO Middle East committee focused on ‘Measures to influence Minor Powers and Arab states.’ These discussions addressed how to preserve the friendliness of these states. Some, like Saudi Arabia, might need a bribe, and nothing more. Egypt’s position was more complicated.⁷⁹¹ By October, Whitehall resolved to reinforce the army in Palestine, and defeat the rebellion through ‘military control’. Yet now it also entertained restricting land sales and immigration. It resolved to avoid discussing restrictions on Jews, but suddenly that topic was being considered at inter-departmental meetings.⁷⁹² By November, the cabinet was planning the St. James conference for early 1939. Arab states would be invited. Ibn Sa’ud was disposed to participate, and ‘had no use for the Mufti, and would not be troubled by his exclusion.’⁷⁹³ MacDonald was clear that in the long run, Ibn

⁷⁹⁰ IOR L/Mil/7/10827. *Conference at CO*. 7.9.1938.

⁷⁹¹ FO 371/21838. *Measures to influence minor powers and Arab states*. 61st meeting. 23.9.1938.

⁷⁹² CO 733/386/13. Palestine discussions- first meeting 7.10.1938. 9th meeting. 12.10.1938.

⁷⁹³ CAB 104/8. Committee on Palestine. 3rd meeting. 14.11.1938.

Sa'ud's friendship would be 'worth more... than the friendship of the other Arab princes.'⁷⁹⁴

The JIC and chiefs of staff adopted the same view. These meetings firmed up the measures required to influence Arab states leaders, especially Ibn Sa'ud. His support in a future war was not expected, but his 'benevolent neutrality' was seen as crucial in the face of potentially 'lavish territorial offers from the enemy'. Bribery might be the only antidote – Ibn Sa'ud already was inclined to support Britain, although a German legation had just arrived at Jeddah. The JIC's position on Palestine is not well recorded beyond the fear that Arab hostility could materialize if the St. James conference did not produce an acceptable policy.⁷⁹⁵

At the St. James conference, British sigint observed the reports of all diplomats on the proceedings back to their home countries. Even Weizmann's cables were intercepted. Probably the most important signal was a response to Faysal, Ibn Sa'ud's son and delegate to the conference. Faysal described the breakdown of the conference, and his father directed his attention to his desire that Jewish immigration be stopped. 'The important matter is that of immigration, and if the British insist on continuing immigration and do not stop it this indicates a lack of good will on their part and I perceive no good in it. It also shows they are departing from the views previously held by them.' Ibn Sa'ud was only willing to accept a temporary limitation to Jewish immigration which might lead to ultimate stoppage.⁷⁹⁶ Two days after the close of the conference, Anglo-

⁷⁹⁴ Ibid.

⁷⁹⁵ CO 732/85/1. *Measures to influence Arab states...* draft. 24.1.1939.; 2nd draft, 30.1.1939; Hollis. *Attitude of the Arab World*. 6.1.1939;

⁷⁹⁶ HW 12/237. 74058. *King to Faysal*. 17.3.1939.

Arab talks continued. Ibn Sa'ud defined his position to Faysal. 'It is no secret to them [Britain] what effect this failure will have in Islamic and Arab countries; nor are they unaware of the scorn of their enemies who are exploiting the situation.' Propaganda was working in Egypt and Iraq against both Britain and Ibn Sa'ud. He could not deceive the British, but the Palestine question would have fallout throughout the Islamic world. His prime interest was his relationship with Britain, 'This is an essential matter that may cause injury to my country. I therefore want to be quite certain regarding Britain's moral and material support to me in everything that may cause harm to my country from any direction whatever.' He also wanted to preserve the status quo of borders.⁷⁹⁷

This position was very familiar – it followed a pattern which had emerged years earlier and had served British interests since the Abyssinian crisis. The next day Faysal met MacDonald and Butler (of the FO) for two hours. The British government communicated proposals to Faysal and asked him to secretly meet with each delegation to the conference. Faysal failed to cause all the delegations to agree on a proposal. It was impossible to define a transition period for independence; or to achieve independence without Jewish-Arab cooperation, and the Jews would not cooperate without immigration guarantees from Arabs. Faysal returned the next day, with the Iraqi and Egyptian delegates, who offered a new proposal– the transition period would be limited regardless of Jewish cooperation.⁷⁹⁸ Ibn Sa'ud added that the question of transition period to independence was

⁷⁹⁷ HW 12/237. 74115. *King to Faysal*. 19.3.1939.

⁷⁹⁸ HW 12/237. 74093. 21.3.1939.; 74094. 22.3.1939.

secondary in importance to a stoppage of immigration and land sales.⁷⁹⁹ Chamberlain, the Prime Minister, apparently accepted, having invited the Saudi, Iraqi and Egyptian delegates to redraft his proposal. The exact text of Chamberlain's letter to Ibn Sa'ud is unavailable, but is believed to be the main substance of what became the 1939 White Paper policy.⁸⁰⁰ The Iraqi delegate reported one version of it: That independence would be granted upon the end of the disturbances, that there will be a legislative assembly, and the mandate would terminate. Immigration would continue with limits, and would end after the five-year period.⁸⁰¹ According to Tom Segev, Jewish Agency chairman David Ben Gurion claimed that Chamberlain told him that this policy would not outlive the war. Regardless of the truth of that claim, Ben-Gurion never believed it would be implemented.⁸⁰²

The War Office's military intelligence directorate was satisfied with the results of the conference. While many questions remained 'fluid', 'a great factor in our [Britain's] favour is that Arabs have achieved one of their main objects in that fear that HMG would facilitate ultimate Jewish predominance has been removed.'⁸⁰³ By April, 1939, the cabinet had accepted the proposals and prepared the White Paper.⁸⁰⁴ The Zionist policy was dead, the White Paper was published on 17 May, and the future of Palestine had been reshaped. The 22 year-old Zionist policy had been scrapped in consultation with Arab statesmen, and against the wishes of

⁷⁹⁹ HW 12/237. 74144. 22.3.1939.

⁸⁰⁰ HW 12/237. 74117. 23.3.1939.; 74145. 24.3.1939.

⁸⁰¹ HW 12/237. 74163. 24.3.1939

⁸⁰² Segev, *One Palestine, Complete*, 449.

⁸⁰³ WO 106/1594B. 13a. MI2. *Note on probable attitude in the event of Great Britain being involved in A European war...* 21.4.1939.

⁸⁰⁴ Cohen, *Palestine, Retreat from the Mandate*, 80–87.

Britain's traditional negotiating partners who had been accustomed to influencing high-level policy decisions. It was for the Arab statesmen, especially Ibn Sa'ud, that this change was made. This evidence debunks arguments made by historians such as Joseph Kostiner, who said that 'Ibn Saud was not interested in strategic cooperation with Britain.'⁸⁰⁵ If anything, Anglo-Saudi cooperation improved throughout the 1930s as Ibn Sa'ud was open about his relations with the Mufti, Nazis, Italians and his views on the Palestine problem. The policy change was also made in spite of the Mufti. His rejection was irrelevant to British considerations. The British attempted to cause some Jewish-Arab cooperation, but could not have hoped for much. They knew the Mufti had instructed his delegate, Jamal, via the Iraqis, to reject British proposals.⁸⁰⁶

A New Narrative

Ibn Sa'ud, 'Bismarck of Arabia', had mastered *realpolitik*. His concern with the security of his own state, and his leadership therein, drove his partnership with Britain. British diplomacy used sigint to confirm Ibn Sa'ud's position: that he was hostile to Britain's enemies, but maintained considerable prestige in the pan-Islamic and pan-Arab worlds. During 1937-39, against tough opposition, sigint was perhaps Britain's most important intelligence asset. It guided British diplomacy to a policy which maximized benefit to Britain during a war. Ibn Sa'ud's importance in shaping Palestine's future has been ignored by the literature, which also has misconstrued his close collaboration with Britain. Any study of Palestine must account for the politics of the independent Arab states, especially pan-

⁸⁰⁵ Kostiner, "Britain and the Challenge of the Axis Powers in Arabia."
⁸⁰⁶ HW 12/237. 74072. 17.3.1939.

Islam and pan-Arabism. Ibn Sa'ud's prestige and power were based in these two ideas.

The international situation forced Britain to ensure that in a future world war it would have a reliable base of support outside its own mandated territories, protectorates, and semi-independent client states. Anglo-Saudi relations became a partnership of shared interest. Ibn Sa'ud's willingness to tolerate his Hashemite enemies – Britain's longstanding partners – also facilitated this partnership. This partnership stemmed from an old pattern where Ibn Sa'ud could accept British guarantees over his borders in exchange for his ongoing support for their policy. It was driven by his own nervousness about military defeat – he only began to build a modern standing army in 1938. However this support could not last forever. It was more important to British strategy to deny enemy access to the Red Sea, Gulf, or even the frightening weapons of pan-Islam and pan-Arabism. By courting the most popular standard bearer of those movements in the region, British policy was able to maintain important interests. Strategists knew the military threat was low, but the political threat had much more potential.

Conclusion – The ‘Intelligence State’ in Palestine

Early on, intelligence officers such as Gilbert Clayton and T.E. Lawrence believed that Britain had to provide some form of self-government to Palestine to placate nationalist demands. This was not possible, so Clayton, Symes, Deedes and others simply improvised. The failure to provide self-government equipped the Mufti with more power, proportionately speaking, than was usual in most colonies. It is misleading to identify this conflict with the Zionist policy as the main stumbling block. In Palestine, Britain lacked alternate power brokers with whom to work in order to reach terms. Elsewhere in the Empire, colonial control could rely upon various elites. In Egypt, the Wafd party eventually agreed to the 1936 Anglo-Egyptian treaty as Britain continued to influence Egypt through its king, and even through Wafd, which now faced some popular opposition for its acceptance of the treaty. In India a similar pattern occurred once the diarchal system of the 1935 Government of India Act was at play and the Congress party engaged in constitutional politics and abandoned mass agitation. Britain expected that Egypt and India would remain dependant. In both cases Britain traded autonomy for time.⁸⁰⁷

Britain never achieved this in Palestine because it had nurtured only one elite collaborator, the Mufti and his faction. It turned out that the Mufti was bent on abrogation of the Zionist policy and supported popular demands for independence. Whereas in Egypt and India there existed a more robust and stratified network of elites, in Palestine the Mufti was so central to these networks that Britain could only turn to the Nashashibi-led

⁸⁰⁷ Darwin, *The Empire Project*, 473–475; Johnson, *British Imperialism*, 155–156.

opposition as an alternative. It only did so when it was too late, at the height of the rebellion.

The issue of self-government became tied to Jewish immigration as Arabs attempted to reverse the Zionist policy and Britain and the Yishuv made a legislative council conditional upon Arab acceptance of Jewish immigration. The Jewish-Arab conflict in Palestine had already become irreconcilable and zero-sum since both groups demanded control over this single issue. This conflict affected other colonial norms, since as early as 1921, plans for a binational defence force were abandoned. This increased both the cost of defence, but also the demand for it. In the 1920s, Britain failed to invest enough in order to meet that demand.

Britain faced unusually large constraints in its aim to provide good government. In particular, financial constraints limited British security and British policymakers never reconciled their contradictory commitments to self-government and the Balfour Declaration. No form of 'intelligence state', however strong, could have resolved this conflict without a firm policy commitment to Palestine's future.

Intelligence could not compensate for bad policy, but it did manage to help British administrators avoid policy commitments during the 1920s. The sponsorship by ex-intelligence officers and their Zionist partners of the opposition factions was part of a series of improvisations which rejected Arab demands for a legislature. In the 1930s, this pattern changed into one where CID intelligence willfully supported the government's attempts to co-opt the Mufti despite all evidence that the Mufti supported the Istiqlalist and popular demand to end Jewish immigration.

Intelligence was fundamental to British power in Palestine. Staff intelligence was largely responsible for turning Palestine from a military occupation to a mandated territory. It helped to convince the Peace Conference to grant Britain that responsibility using the Feisal-Weizmann agreement, the suppression of revolt, and the censorship of dissidents. Intelligence also was key to British power after 1919. When Intelligence officers mishandled security threats in 1920, the resulting riots hastened the replacement of military government with a civil government. Centralized intelligence also left Palestine at that time. By 1927, there was no intelligence expertise left in Palestine and no intelligence state existed until reforms in 1930 introduced two. The civil intelligence state was thought to be more appropriate for a mandated territory and for British values, but was not enough to secure the country. It never was independent, and its intelligence was always coloured by government interest. The military intelligence state had better political surveys, but less influence. Yet, as violence grew worse in 1936, this state grew, absorbing both military and civil government. This process was complete after the CID, which had collapsed in 1938, was rebuilt and militarized. The possibility for civil government was destroyed and British rule depended on the exercise of its hard power.

The Mufti's role as a driving force has been argued in this thesis. The SNA demonstrates the smallness of the anti-colonial movement in Palestine, and the Mufti's key place in it. His networks were religious, administrative, and political. His experience during and before the war

shaped his outlook, which was shared by leading Salafists who sought to revive and restore the prestige of Islam and the Arab nation. These leaders, especially Shakib Arslan and Rashid Rida, played a role in shaping the internationalist politics of the movement. They coordinated with a supportive base in England, advocated for Arab independence at the League, and led Syrians, Palestinians, and Iraqis towards unity. By the 1930s, this movement included many Palestinian Istiqlalists who had come to lead a much broader base of support at home through the youth movements. This force was mobilized towards demonstrations, strikes, and eventually, revolt. The Mufti was the key link in this network, and tied its various communities together. He did so forcefully – through patronage, inspiration, and even intimidation.

The reformed security regime was only partly equipped to deal with this problem. The CID understood the key issues, but never gave complete intelligence assessments. Its reportage tended to provide facts, but withheld insight which would have illuminated these social, political and religious connections. When such connections were made, doubt was consistently cast on their meaning. The CID was politicized. It followed the government's approach to the Mufti and viewed him as a notable, interested in his personal power and prestige. It believed he needed Britain for that power, and so overlooked his connections to nationalist political activity. The Mufti encouraged this view and his negotiations with the government were founded on that assumption. This view held until the rebellion was in full swing during the summer of 1936, when Wauchope conceded a need for change in policy. British security successfully tackled

key problems during the early 1930s. It struggled, but eventually succeeded in dealing with the political murder of Jews by Arabs. However, the CID failed to tackle the problem of assassination and intimidation of Arabs by groups such as the Black Hand. The Government and CID assumed that blood feuds did not affect government, when in fact, they masked assassinations and the enlargement of the Mufti's power.

The police used intelligence to prevent major disturbances in 1933. The next year the government held major drills simulating a disturbance with the army, police, intelligence, and RAF. This produced confidence, and probably prepared the system for the coming revolt. Yet the government did not grasp the politics of the matter. As the pan-Arab movement sought to leverage international crises for the cause of independence, the ground was prepared for disturbance. The defeat of Qassam caused nationwide solidarity, and unstoppable momentum towards general strike. The nationalists were unprepared for rebellion in April 1936, although the steps taken by the movement to organize force under Qawuqji came to fruition in August. The rebellion did not end until Britain occupied Syria and Iraq in 1941. Incredible force was needed to secure the country during that time, which witnessed the complete shattering of civil government, and any illusion of its future possibility.

Centralized intelligence was critical to the counter-rebellion during its second phase. This accelerated in its most effective form upon the arrival of Tegart and Petrie. They coordinated MacKereth's work in Syria with intelligence in Palestine and security measures which they were designing. This included irregular forces, such as that under Faiz Idrissi, the

“Peace Bands,” and SNS, but also Tegart’s Fence and police construction programme. He integrated police and military operations, and Petrie made Secret Service funds available to useful sources such as MacKereth or Faiz Idrissi. The army could not have accommodated Tegart’s reforms or operations without a joint service GSI. Fakhri Abdul Hadi’s “peace band” might have been destroyed by the army had this system not accommodated that covert operation, led by MacKereth, with Zionist cooperation. The irregular forces of the counter-rebellion were controversial. The ‘Peace Bands’ posed such an ethical problem that they were never officially acknowledged. Idrissi’s irregulars were less controversial, but still, little is known of the social composition of his force. Cooperation with the Jewish Agency intelligence was controversial for its political implications. This cooperation improved as Whitehall backed away from the Zionist policy. Meanwhile Wingate’s incorporation of Haganah fighters into his SNS was acknowledged by the army as useful, but received no political attention.

While centralized intelligence was key to military operations, it never supported civil government. The civil state resisted this centralized machinery because it was embodied by the military and challenged its authority on political matters. Military involvement in politics was seen to be contrary to British liberal values. Under normal conditions, civilian police were supposed to fulfil this role, as they did in other British territories. Yet in Palestine the police were never at a strength sufficient to fulfil this function. CID staff lacked basic professional skills until Dowbiggin’s reforms. Yet by then, the political decision had already been made to equip the Mufti with increased power, which he in turn used

against British authority. This disconnect was important. Even if Wauchope was willing to use intelligence from a competent CID, he inherited and supported Chancellor's political decision to enhance the Mufti's position.

One of the most important arguments in this thesis revolves around revelations which led to the 1939 abandonment of the Zionist policy. Britain used signals intelligence to commandeer Ibn Sa'ud's elevated status in the pan-Arab movement. In 1936, the FO and Palestine government realized that they could exploit his influence and use it to put an end to the rebellion. The next year, disappointed with the results of the Royal Commission, Ibn Sa'ud reacted as he normally did when confronted with a security dilemma. The prospect that Abdullah's kingdom might be enlarged caused him to demand a corridor to Syria, and other measures to counter his neighbour's influence. He also maintained open, honest, and friendly communication, verified by British sigint. The FO again included him in the Palestine issue. Sigint revealed the Mufti's minimum demands, and as the rebellion renewed, Ibn Sa'ud proved his ongoing leadership in the pan-Arab movement as the Mufti and the pan-Islamic world pressured the Saudi king to raise Jihad and provide material support. After the Munich crisis, Britain planned to impose a solution. The one they chose sought to prop up Ibn Sa'ud as pan-Arab leader who caused Britain to modify its support for Zionist immigration. At the St. James Conference, sigint read each delegate's traffic, and ensured that the 1939 White Paper policy gave as much to Ibn Sa'ud as possible, without harming Britain's position, but compromised its commitment to the Yishuv.

Despite the White Paper, Britain expended considerable resources in its ongoing confrontation with Arab nationalism throughout the Second World War. This had been anticipated to some extent – the White Paper was not aimed at appeasing rebels. With that in mind, the success of the counter-rebellion was limited. It achieved no political victory, although this might have been secured by 1942. Further research is required to understand what degree of control British security exercised over Arab nationalists.

Appendix I – Social Network Analysis

The figure below was created using the freeware ‘Gephi’ version 0.8.2. I entered the nodes and edges into a table, based on the research in this thesis.⁸⁰⁸ I used the ‘radial axis layout’ model, designed by Matt Groeninger.⁸⁰⁹ The Radial Axis Layout groups nodes and draws the groups in axes (or spars) radiating outwards from a central circle. Nodes are grouped in axes according to Modularity Class, a metric which discovers the decomposition of a network into communities. Each class is colour coded. These communities were grouped by algorithm. The results are revealing, but limited by the data which I entered. For instance, it most closely associated the Mufti with the pan-Arab movement. To augment the automated grouping of nodes, I have manually created four groups, colour coded as background shading. Finally, within each axis, nodes are ordered according to ‘centrality’ – or relative influence of a node in a network. The more ‘central’ nodes are larger, and positioned near the centre.

Figure 6 Manually Grouped Nodes by Colour

Supreme Moslem Council	Ottoman Era Movements	Al-‘Urwa al-Wuthqa (represents both membership and influence)	The Pan-Arab/Independence Movement
Mu’in al-Madi	Daud al-Dabbuni	al-‘Urwa al-Wuthqa (node)	Old Istiqlal
Jamal al-Husseini	Salim al-Jazairi	Jamal al-Din al-Afghani	Syro Palestinian Congress
Rashid al-Hajj Ibrahim	Black Hand (Ottoman era)	Mohammad ‘Abduh	1931 pan-Arab “national pact”
‘Izz al-Din al-Qassam	Al-Qahtaniya	Ibrahim al-Shanti	Syrian National Bloc

⁸⁰⁸ Main secondary sources included Tauber, *The Emergence of the Arab Movements*; Cleveland, *Islam against the West*; Matthews, *Confronting an Empire, Constructing a Nation*; Kupferschmidt, *The Supreme Muslim Council*.

⁸⁰⁹ Groeninger, “Circular Layout.”

Kamil al-Qassab	Green Flag	Akram Zuaiter	Pan-Arab Movement (node)
Ya'aqub al-Ghussein		Rashid Rida	
Supreme Moslem Council (node)		Shakib Arslan	
'Ajaj Nuwayhid			
Auni Abdul Hadi			
Subhi al-Khadra			
Izzat Darwaza			

The graphic has limits, namely, the data which I entered. A more complete structure, with hundreds of nodes might provide more inferences about Palestinian politics. Moreover, any research is limited by available data. That said, upon analysis of the automated and manual groupings, the most important observations are that the Mufti, Shakib Arslan, the Istiqlal movement, and to a lesser extent, the Ottoman military academies, are the most influential nodes in this social network. Figure 7 is a general overview of the network. Notice the overlapping influence of Islamism, pan-Arab nationalism, and the SMC. Nodes how nodes from certain individuals, such as Rashid Rida, or the Damascus government of 1919-20, reach across multiple axes. The influence of these nodes, as well as the prewar Islamic and National movements, span generations, geography, and ideology. Islamists shape nationalists, and vice-versa.

Figure 8 isolates the Mufti and his direct connections in this network. Importantly, this reveals why he was the captain of the Palestinian national craft. His influence and relationships reach into every single community axis on this graph. He was a key figure locally, in pan-Arab and

pan-Islamic affairs. Chapter five, and to some extent nine, discuss how he used these vehicles to further their common aims – independence from foreign rule, and an end to the Zionist policy.

The Mufti is connected to almost every community, including those which historians had alleged were critical of him, and even drove him to rebellion. In fact, these channels for influence allowed him to advance his aims, while appearing locked in constant political struggle with other Arabs. This confused British observers. The contrary is obviously true. The Mufti's channels of influence over nationalist youth, Istiqlal, and YMMAs were never long. He affected Istiqlal via negative pressure, or positive encouragement via the youth. As mentioned in chapter five, this influence went both ways, but in general, the Mufti's policy benefited from and encouraged mass mobilization through the youth movements and the SMC.

Figure 9 shows the influence over the key figures of al-'Urwa al-Wuthqa. It centralizes that movement, plus its founders, revealing their influence over their students who became prominent later on. There can be no doubt how deeply this ideology penetrated Palestinian politics by the 1930s, affecting influential nationalists. One of their students was Shakib Arslan, isolated in Figure 10. This graph shows explicitly that he was the main hub connecting pan-Islamic, pan-Arab, and anti-Colonial politics. It illustrates his deep influence over Palestinian politics through both the pan-Arab movement, and through his relationships with key figures in the SMC, especially the Mufti.

The role of Shakib Arslan and Rashid Rida is critical – they were important intellectual, social and political links between Palestinians and the rest of the Arab world. They transmitted the anti-colonial ideology of al-‘Urwa al-Wuthqa, which became the key point of agreement between nationalists and Islamists after the First World War. Their social and political links within the pan-Arab movement facilitated events such as the 1931 pan-Islamic congress, its pan-Arab meetings on the side, and the National Pact which followed.

Similarly, al-Fatat and Old Istiqlal (the latter derived from the former once Feisal’s government came under threat in 1920) had widespread influence in this network, as shown in Figures 11 and 12. These senior politicians were instrumental in organizing resistance during the 1930s, and it is clear here that their common aims with the Mufti were much deeper than their divisions. For instance, when the Mufti alienated Auni Abdul Hadi, accusing him of land brokerage, he went and co-founded the Palestine Istiqlal party. Its network was of similar composure to that of the Mufti: Islamists, senior nationalist politicians with Ottoman roots, and young radical activists were part of the makeup of both the Mufti’s faction, including the SMC, and Istiqlal.

Finally, Figure 13 shows the influence of the military academies. The graph suggests this may have been less important than other issues, but it is highlighted here to demonstrate another common link, which may in fact have been the channel through which both pro-Saudi and violent anti-collaborationist ideologies were transmitted.

These points suggest that research on Palestinian nationalism has been narrow in scope, and limited agendas which focus on issues particular to Palestine while neglecting equally important individuals and events across borders. Arab nationalism has often been portrayed as secular – probably due to the influence of Nasserism and Ba’ath parties. It is clear that Islam and Arab nationalism have deep roots which go back into the Ottoman period, and deserve more scholarly attention.

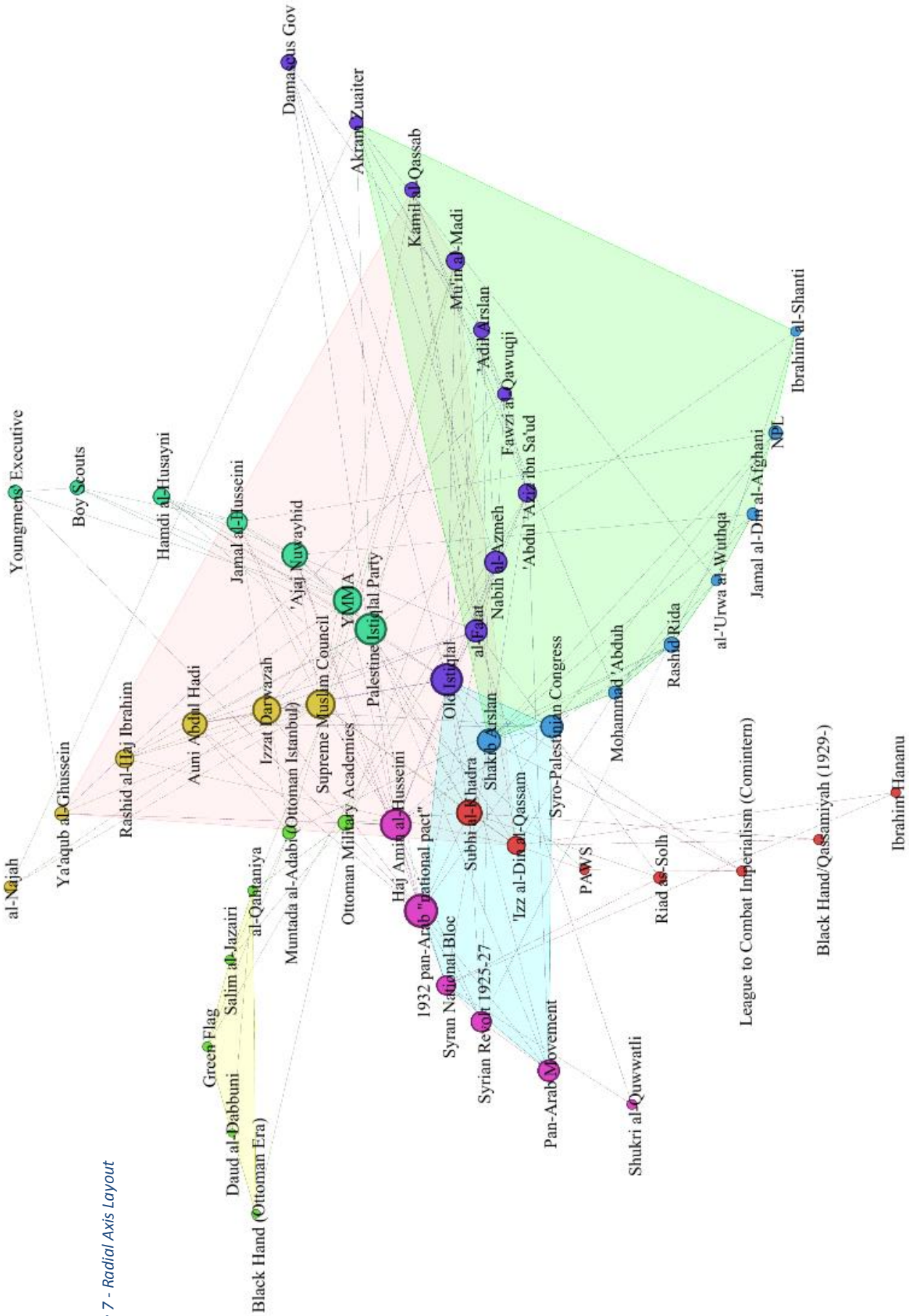


Figure 7 - Radial Axis Layout

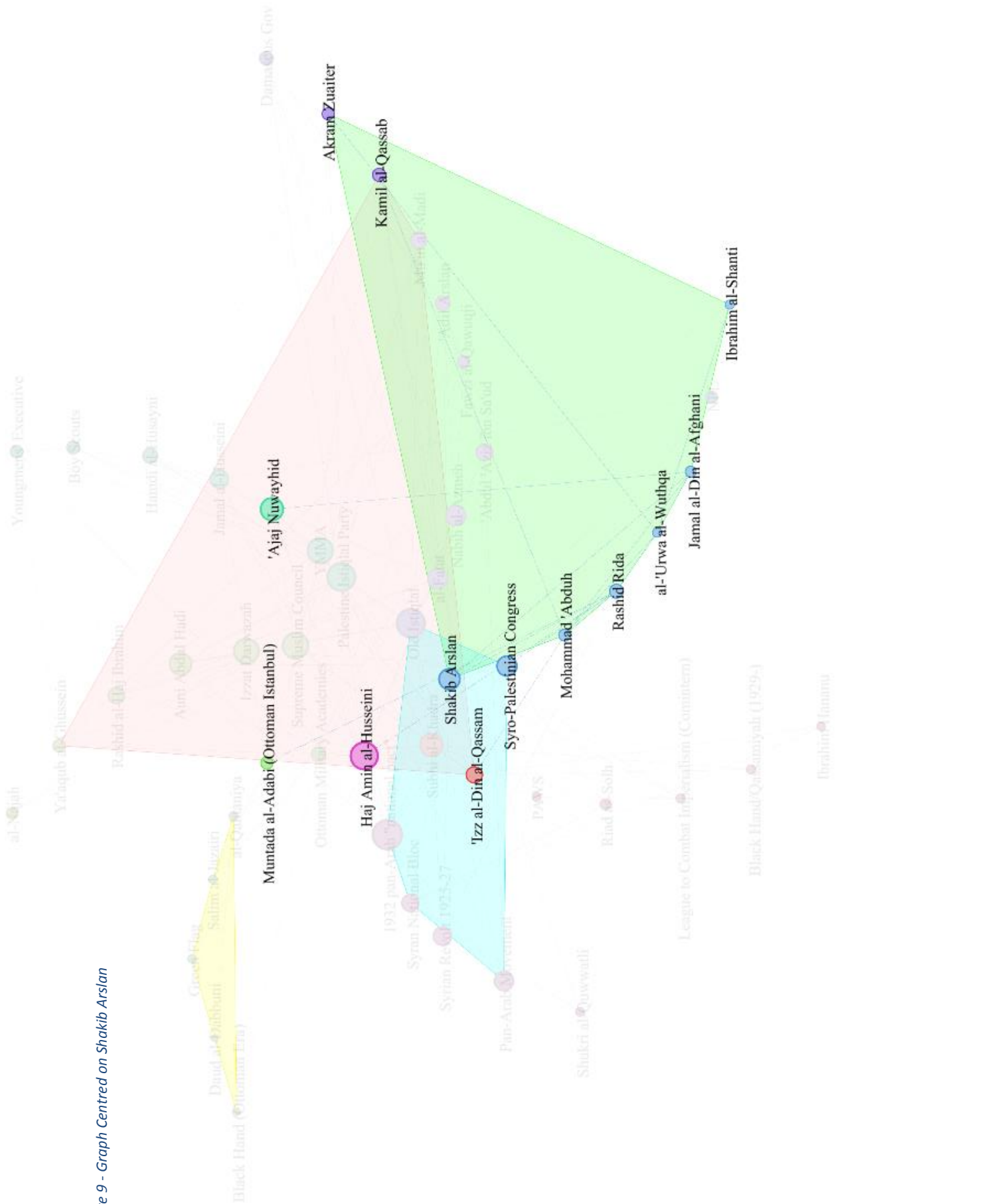


Figure 9 - Graph Centred on Shakib Arslan

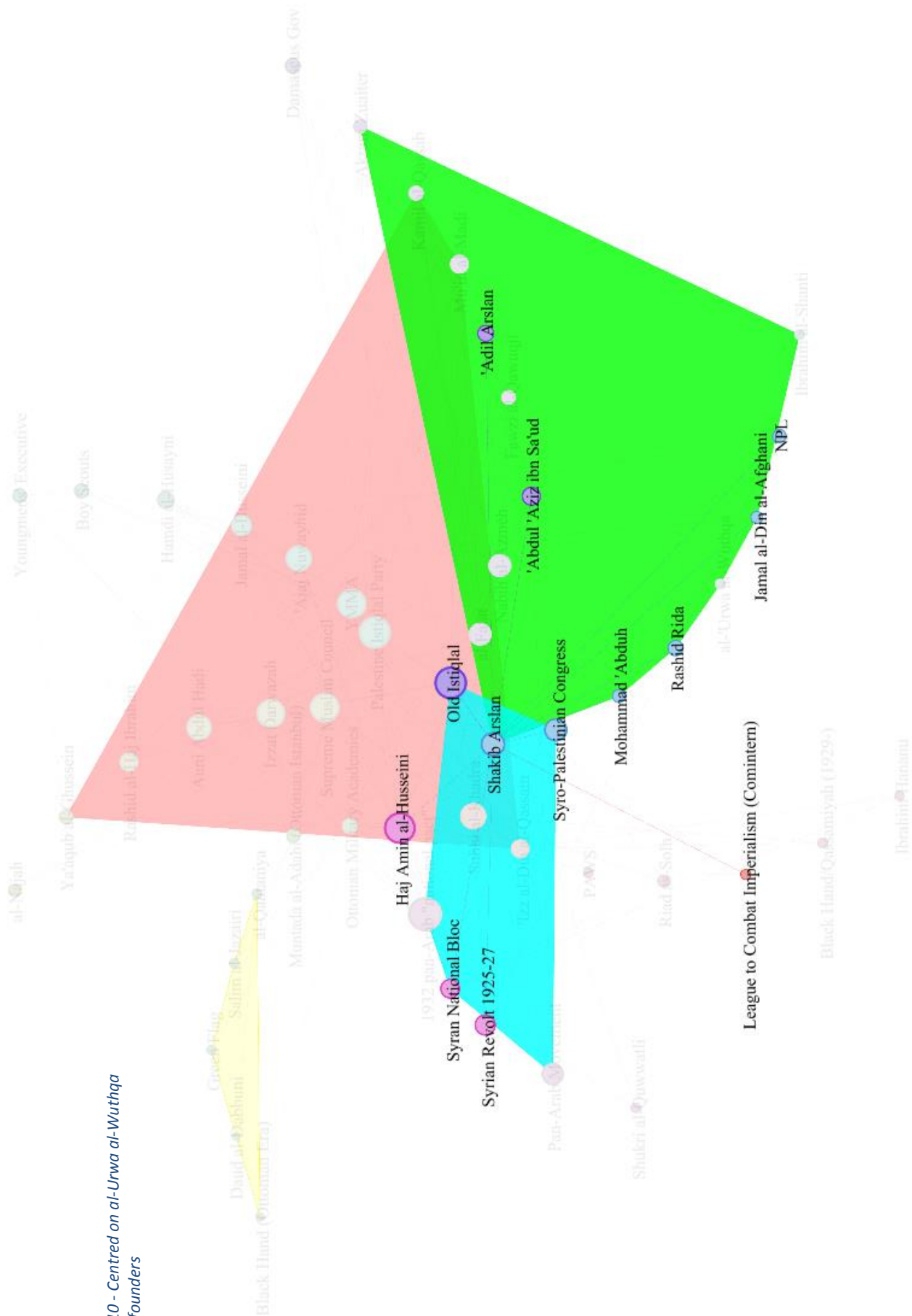


Figure 10 - Centred on al-Urwa al-Wuthqa and its founders

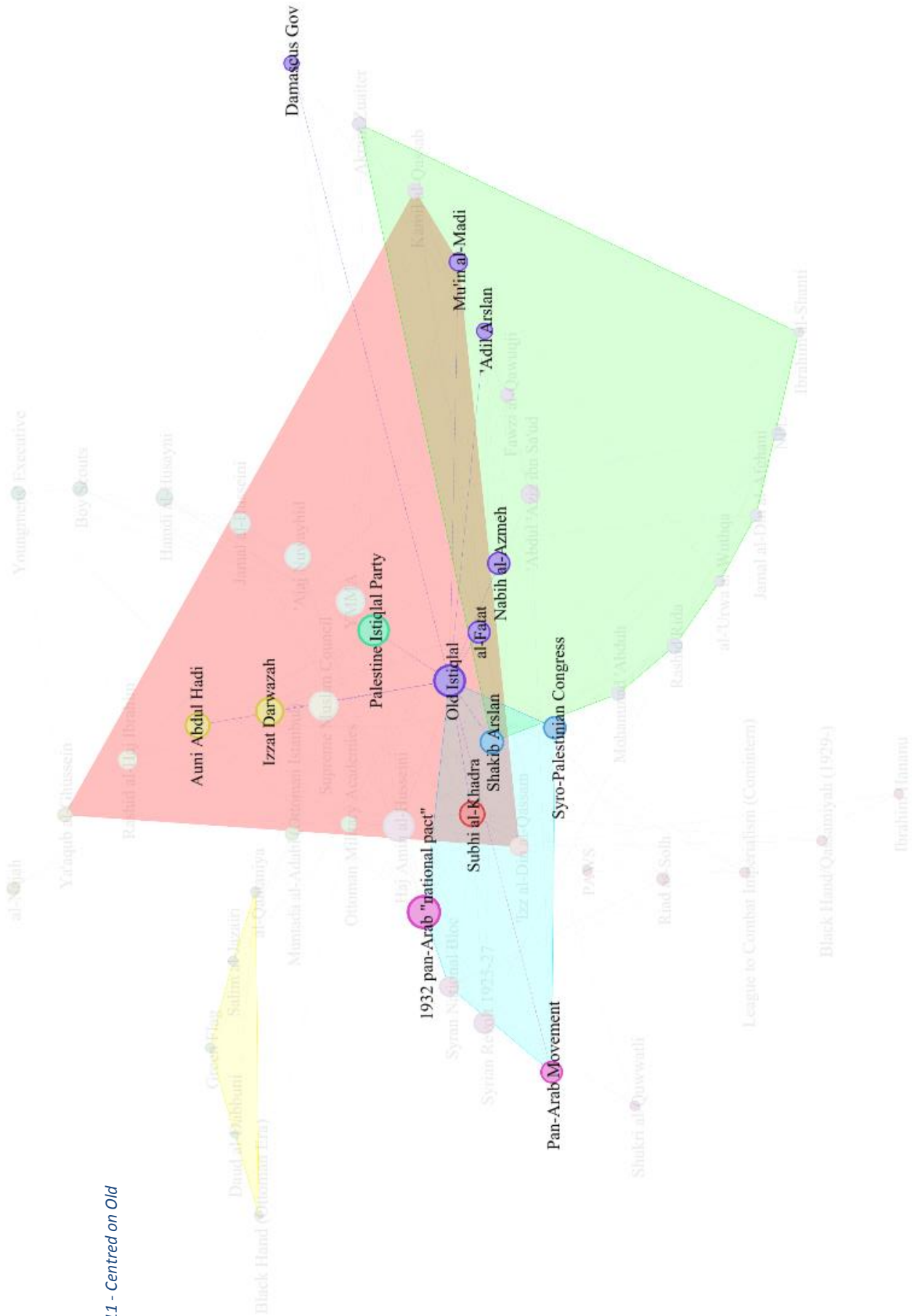


Figure 11 - Centred on Old Istiqlal

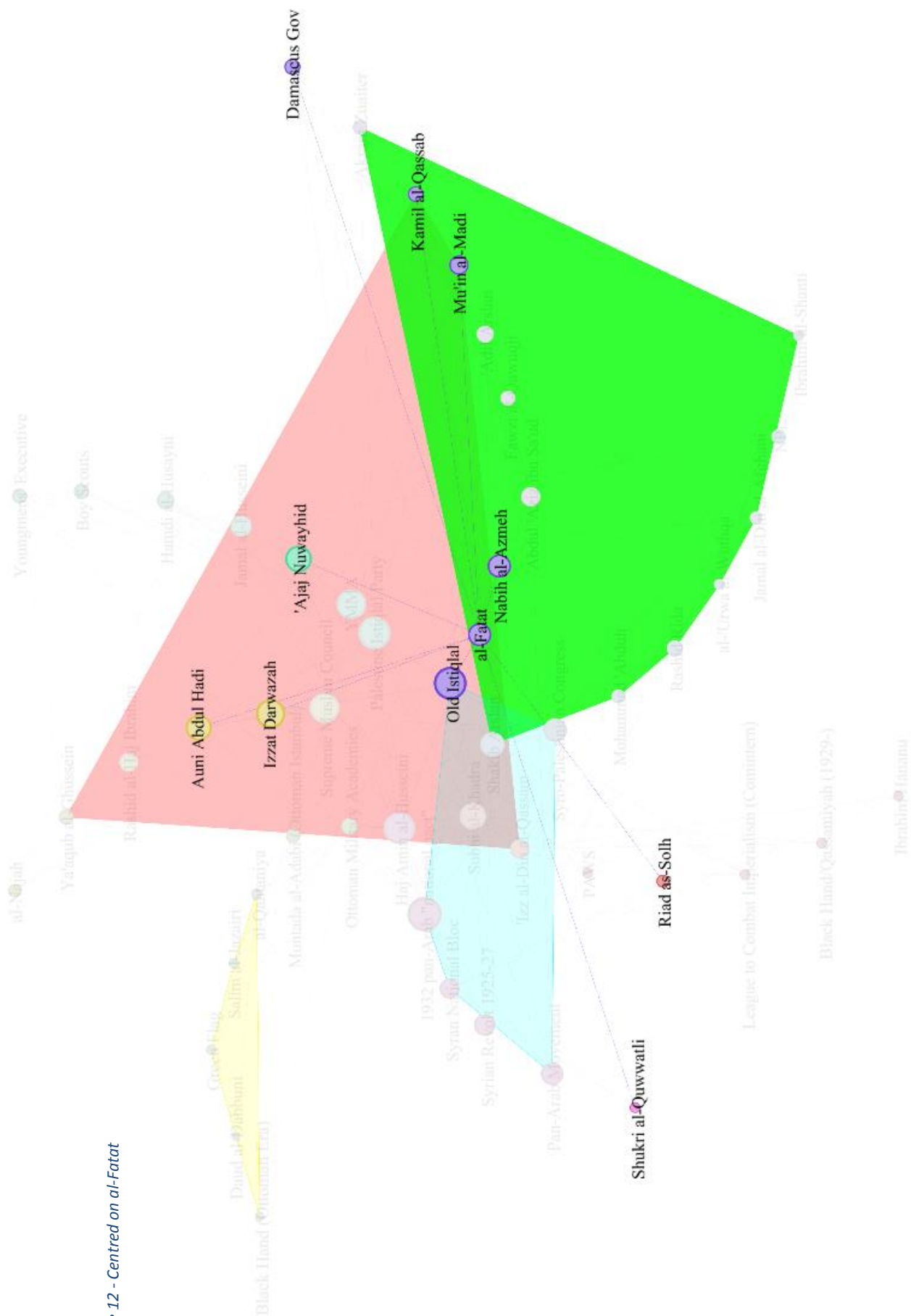


Figure 12 - Centred on al-Fatat

Appendix I(a) – Modularity Report

Parameters:

Randomize: On

Use edge weights: Off

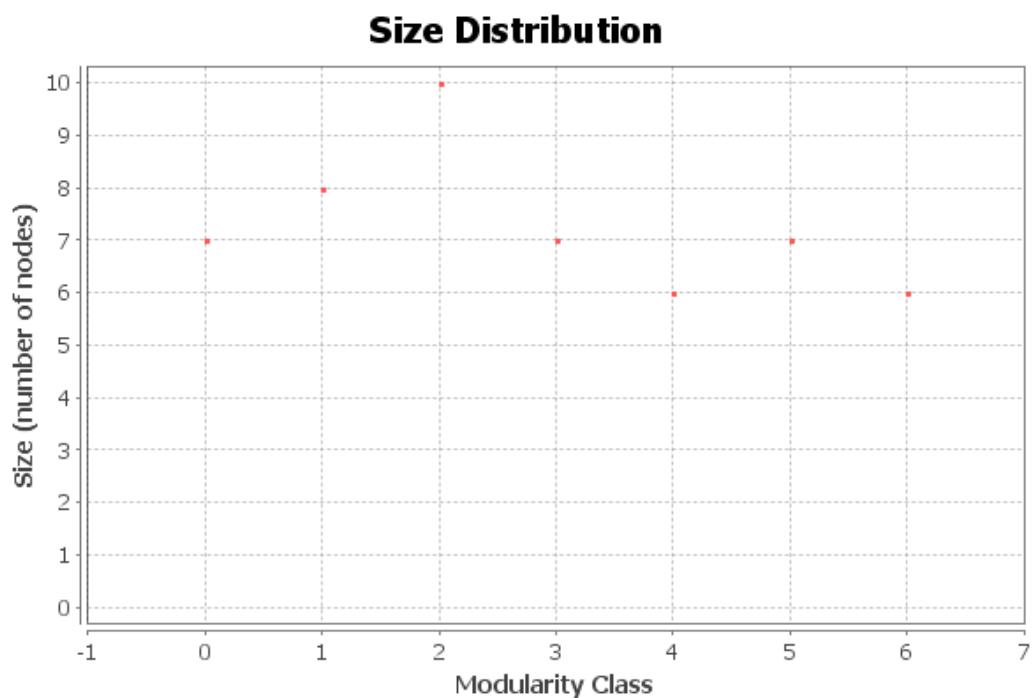
Resolution: 0.8

Results:

Modularity: 0.337

Modularity with resolution: 0.239

Number of Communities: 7



Algorithm:

Vincent D Blondel, Jean-Loup Guillaume, Renaud Lambiotte, Etienne Lefebvre, *Fast unfolding of communities in large networks*, in *Journal of Statistical Mechanics: Theory and Experiment* 2008 (10), P1000

Resolution:

R. Lambiotte, J.-C. Delvenne, M. Barahona *Laplacian Dynamics and Multiscale Modular Structure in Networks* 2009

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 Davidescu Papers

 Alexander Aaronsohn Papers

Central Zionist Archives (CZA)

 J15 – Jewish Colonization Association

 J105 – Joint Bureau

 S25 – Political Department of the Jewish Agency

 Z4 – Central Office for the World Zionist Organization and Jewish

Agency, London

Haganah Archives, Tel Aviv (HA)

 8 – Intelligence Service (territorial)

 19 – Notarim, Jewish Settlement Police, and SNS

 47 – CID Microfilms

 80 – Private Archives

 87 – Documentation from other Israeli Archives

 115 – Intelligence Service (British department)

Middle East Centre Archive (MECA)

 GB165-0101 JAM Faraday papers

 GB165-0188 Luke papers

 GB165-0224 Palestine Police Old Comrades Association (PPOCA)

 GB165-0281 Tegart Papers

 GB165-0298 Geoffrey Wheeler papers

 GB165-0279 Teague papers

National Archives and Records Administration (NARA)

 RG 165 - Administrative Files of the War Department, Military

Intelligence Division

The National Archives at Kew, London (TNA)

 AIR – RAF and Air Ministry

 2 – Registered files

 5 – Air Historical Branch

 8 – Department of the Chief of the Air Staff: Registered

Files

 9 – Directorate of Operations and Intelligence and

Directorate of Plans

 20 – Papers accumulated by the Air Historical Branch

 23 – RAF overseas commands: reports and correspondence

 CAB – Cabinet Office

 1 – Miscellaneous

 16 – Committee of Imperial Defence

 19 – Special Commissions to Enquire into the Operations of

War in Mesopotamia (Hamilton Commission) and in the

Dardanelles (Cromer and Pickford Commission)

 24 – War Cabinet and Cabinet: Memoranda

 67 – War Cabinet Memoranda

 104 – Supplementary Registered Files

 CO – Colonial Office

 323 – Colonies, General: Original Correspondence

- 448 – Honours: Original Correspondence
- 537 – Confidential General and Confidential Original Correspondence
- 732 – Middle East Original Correspondence
- 733 – Palestine Original Correspondence
- 935 – Confidential Print Middle East
- FO – Foreign Office
 - 141 – Embassy and Consulates, Egypt: General Correspondence
 - 371 – Political Departments
 - 608 – Peace Conference, British Delegation
 - 684 – Damascus Consulate
- HO – Home Office
 - 144 – Registered Papers, Supplementary
- HS – Special Operations Executive
 - 3 – Africa and Middle East Group: Registered Files
- HW – Government Code and Cypher School
 - 12 – Decrypts of Intercepted Diplomatic Communications
 - 37 – Diplomatic Decrypts Passed to the Secret Intelligence Service for Distribution
- KV – Security Service
 - 2 – Personal Files
 - 3 – Subject Files
 - 4 – Policy Files
 - 5 – Organization Files
- WO – War Office
 - 32 – Registered Files
 - 33 – Reports, Memoranda and Papers
 - 95 – First World War and Army of Occupation War Diaries
 - 106 – Directorate of Military Operations and Military Intelligence
 - 191 – Peacetime Operations Abroad, War Diaries and Headquarters Records
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 MSS Eur C235/2. Sir Charles Augustus Tegart papers.

Israel State Archives

RG 2 Mandatory Government
 RG 15 Propaganda administration
 RG 28 rail and port administration
 RG 65 Abandoned Documents
 RG 69 Jewish Lawyers
 RG 100 Herbert Samuel Archive
 RG 130 Israeli foreign office
 RG 160 Yitzhak Ben Zvi Collection

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