“IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE BEST TRADITIONS OF AMERICAN DEMOCRACY”: ARAB AMERICANS, ZIONISTS, AND THE DEBATE OVER PALESTINE, 1940-1948

A dissertation submitted
to Kent State University in partial fulfillment of the requirement for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

by

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December 2017

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This project has been a long time coming and would not have been possible without the help and support of many, many people, who I cannot possibly thank enough.

I am incredibly fortunate to have been surrounded by amazing teachers who always encouraged me, from elementary through graduate school. In particular, though, I am very grateful for my committee members, Timothy Scarnecchia, Janet Klein, and Julie Mazzei, who were always willing to discuss my work, ask insightful questions, and point me in the right direction. My advisor, Ann Heiss, never let me settle for good enough and without her keen eye, this project would be significantly poorer (although perhaps richer in examples of passive voice). More importantly, she has always been supportive of me and, as a grad student who was trying to balance professional responsibilities with being a parent, that meant more to me than I can adequately put into words. It was an honor to work with her. Any mistakes that remain in this project are mine and mine alone.

Financial and logistical support came from a variety of sources. Grants from the Society for Historians of American Foreign Relations, the Harry S. Truman Library Institute, the Immigration Research Center of the University of Minnesota, and the Kent State Graduate Student Senate allowed me to travel to archives across the country and around the world. The help of librarians and archivists at the Truman Library, the Immigration Research Center, and the National Archives was greatly appreciate, particularly the archivist at the National Archives in College Park, who took pity on a grad student whose schedule did not allow her to wait for the next pull time and retrieved the requested newsreels himself. Joy Totah Hilden graciously welcomed me into her home, fed me wonderful food, and let me take over her dining room table to go through her father’s collection of documents regarding the Institute of Arab American
Affairs and its activities, without which this project could not have been done. To her and her husband, Robert Hilden, thank you. Likewise, I want to thank Karl Vick and Stacy Sullivan for their hospitality in Jerusalem, the wonderful conversations, and showing me the sights and sounds of the area, allowing me to experience the places I read so much about.

The camaraderie and support of my friends and colleagues in the Kent State graduate program were and continue to be a great joy in my life and essential to completing this project. Special thanks to Erika Briesacher, Mathew Brundage, Monika Flaschka, Bryan Kvet, Julie Mujic, Jeffrey O’Leary, Matthew Phillips, Melissa Steinmetz, and Emily Wicks. I especially want to thank Sarah O’Keeffe for always being there, cheering me on, and encouraging me whenever I wasn’t sure I could do this. You are an amazing person and I am incredibly lucky to have you as a friend.

Family has been essential to me. Thank you to my in-laws, Eric and Nancy Jenison, for welcoming me into the family and all the love, support, and childcare you have provided over the years. I am truly grateful for you. To my parents, Chuck and Cindy Laszewski, thank you for always believing in me, instilling a desire to keep learning, and the examples you both set. I owe you more than words can express. To my brother, Rick Laszewski, sorry that once again you are not the first person mentioned in acknowledgments, but you are a wonderful brother and thank you for all your support and kind words over the years.

My children, Ronan and Tristan, have literally grown up with this project. You both mean the world to me and I love you with all my heart. My deepest thanks to my husband, Tom Jenison, for his unshakeable faith that I would finish this and his love and support throughout the years. It is to the three of you that I dedicate this work.
Introduction

“A land without a people for a people without a land.” So went the ubiquitous Zionist slogan calling for a Jewish state in the land of Palestine, conjuring up visions of an empty country, just waiting for the right people to come and develop it. In reality, of course, the land already had a people; for centuries, Arabs called Palestine home. Likewise, the historiography of the U.S. decision to recognize Israel has long been devoid of Arab American voices. When it comes to the history of the United States and Israel, the general understanding is that U.S. recognition was a foregone conclusion. The pro-Zionist lobby had powerful allies, large numbers, and overwhelming support among both the general public and politicians. For decades, scholars largely ignored or dismissed the possibility of a concerted Arab American effort to change U.S. policy toward Palestine in the 1940s, arguing that it was the disastrous result (for the Arabs) of the June War of 1967, when Israel demolished the armies of Egypt, Syria, and Jordan in six days and gained control of the Sinai Peninsula, the Gaza Strip, the West Bank, and the Golan Heights, that spurred Arab Americans into action. This dissertation proves that Arab Americans were politically active prior to 1967, particularly when it came to the debate over Palestine, and that they sought to create a common bond between Arabs and Americans through their choice of messages. By the end of World War II, the United States played a dominant role in determining the future of Palestine, and as the Arab and Jewish residents of Palestine struggled for control of the territory while the British prepared to withdraw, Zionist and Arab organizations battled to sway American public opinion.
This dissertation examines the rhetoric, imagery, and messages of Arab American groups and their supporters in comparison with those of Zionist organizations and their proponents. Of primary importance is the work of the Institute of Arab American Affairs, which formed in 1944 and worked tirelessly over its approximately five-year existence to inform Americans about the Arab position. Institute members published pamphlets, engaged in radio debates, wrote numerous letters to politicians and newspapers, testified at the Anglo-American Committee of Inquiry on Palestine, and traveled around the United States and Latin America to raise money and support. The Institute’s activities were complemented by the work of the Arab Office in Washington, D.C. Unlike the Institute, which was created by Arab Americans and Arabs living in the United States, the Arab Offices (including branches in London and Jerusalem in addition to the Washington office) were the creation of Arab governments looking to provide information (or, to use the New York Times’ description in 1945, “propaganda”) about the Arab position in Palestine.¹ The messages and rhetoric of Arabs and Zionists mirrored each other as both sides sought to tap into long-standing American ideas about religion, democracy, national interest, and modernization. Rather than change the terms of the debate, Arabs and Zionists often chose to reframe the issues to highlight their group’s achievements in an attempt to get Americans to associate them with preexisting national ideas.

The language the Institute used can be divided into three distinct categories. The first is what I have labeled the “friendly educator” style. The Institute often took the position that the reason Americans generally sided with the Zionist argument was simply due to a lack of knowledge and a misplaced loyalty to biblical stories learned in Sunday school. If the Arabs could properly present their side, the reasoning went, Americans would be compelled by their

sense of fairness and commitment to democracy and national self-determination to support an independent Arab-controlled Palestine. This language can be found throughout the time period under consideration, but was most prominent from 1944 until the United Nations’ vote to partition Palestine in November 1947. After the United States voted in support of partition, the language shifted to a sense of betrayal and righteous indignation. Institute publications and speeches were then filled with dire warnings of the fallout from the vote and condemnations of U.S. actions in the United Nations. As U.S. policymakers publicly began to hint at their uncertainty about partition, however, the Institute’s language shifted once more. By the spring of 1948, the third phase, Cold War conspiracy, dominated the pages of the Institute’s monthly newsletter, *The Bulletin*. Allegations and assertions of Zionist links to communism served as a last ditch effort to show Americans the dangers of supporting the creation of Israel, an effort that ultimately failed.

**Historiography**

The historiography of U.S.-Israeli relations during the 1940s and 1950s is filled with a variety of perspectives, from the politics surrounding U.S. domestic and foreign policy regarding Palestine, to the various groups of experts on the Middle East, both inside and out of the government, to the cultural influence on U.S. diplomatic history surrounding the debate over Palestine.² Despite this wealth of scholarship, Arab American perspectives have long been left

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out. Any challenge or disagreement over that policy was largely attributed to the State Department, often with the suggestion, if not outright accusation, that anti-Semitism motivated such opposition, with almost no discussion of Arab American efforts to sway public opinion and make their voices heard. The general wisdom held that the Arab American population in the 1940s was too small and fragmented to present a unified voice; even if they had managed to coalesce around an issue, the reasoning went, they simply did not care enough about politics to take an active role until the 1967 June War between Israel and its Arab neighbors. A quote from political scientist Richard Cottam succinctly captures this attitude: “throughout the interwar period, and indeed up through 1948, so little was heard from this group [Arab Americans] that [one] is in fact justified in ignoring them.”¹⁴ Scholars such as Michael Suleiman, Alixa Naff,

¹³ For more on the issue of anti-Semitism and the State Department, see Kathleen Christison, Perceptions of Palestine: Their Influence on U.S. Middle East Policy (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999). Christison notes that the charges of anti-Semitism often leveled against the State Department in the 1940s were largely unfair. While acknowledging that some level of anti-Semitism probably existed at State (as it did in the society in general), she argues that the primary and overwhelming motivation behind the department’s resistance to a Jewish state in Palestine was the effect it would have on U.S. strategic interests. (Christison, 86-87).

Gregory Orfalea, and Hani Bawardi have made significant contributions to fill this gap, providing a strong foundation of who Arab Americans were, the obstacles they faced, and the ways they affected American society.  

When it comes to U.S.-Middle East relations at large, one avenue of discussion goes directly to questions of identity. One of the most strongly contested arguments is the clash of civilizations. Samuel P. Huntington’s controversial article, “Clash of Civilizations,” proposed that, in the wake of the Cold War, the next series of conflicts would go beyond the nation-state, back to an almost primordial cultural identity among the major civilizations, especially between those of the West and Islam (which, it should be noted, Huntington largely conflated with the Arab world). In his view, the chasm between Western and Islamic civilizations was so great and so ingrained, a clash must occur. A staunch supporter of Huntington is Bernard Lewis, professor emeritus at Princeton University, who issued a similar warning about the threat of Islam in his

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1990 article, “The Roots of Muslim Rage.” While many scholars, especially those who specialize in Islam or the Middle East, criticized and rejected these arguments, the most visible debates were between Lewis and Edward Said. Said is most widely recognized for his book Orientalism, in which he deconstructed the Orientalist departments in European universities and the wider Orientalist school of thought (essentially Western ideas and understandings of the East), arguing that the West’s power over the Orient allowed Western thinkers, writers, politicians, and the public to create their own version of what the Orient was, without any concern for the realities of the people or place. The knowledge circulated by Western culture about the Orient, therefore, was “not ‘truth’ but representations.” In Said’s view, Lewis, Huntington, and their supporters were primary examples of the Orientalist mindset, seeking to perpetuate this image of an unchanging East, incompatible with the West.

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7 Edward W. Said, Orientalism: 25th Anniversary Edition (New York: Random House, 1979, afterword, 1994), 21. As groundbreaking as Orientalism was, it was certainly not without faults and received a great deal of criticism in addition to praise. The most common critique is of Said’s tendency to lump all Orientalists together and that he generally follows the same flawed process as the Orientalists he critiques. In general, many of the reviewers making this critique are largely favorable to Said’s ideas but have legitimate concerns about his techniques. For historians of the United States in particular, Said’s lack of historical context and differentiation between European and American experiences also proved problematic. For critiques and interpretations of Said, see Alexander Lyon Macfie, ed., Orientalism: A Reader (New York: New York University Press, 2000); Andrew J. Rotter, “Saidism without Said: Orientalism and U.S. Diplomatic History,” American Historical Review, Vol. 105, No. 4 (October 2000); Susan Nance, How The Arabian Nights Inspired the American Dream, 1790-1935 (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2009); Douglas Little, American Orientalism: The United States and the Middle East since 1945, Third Edition (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2008); Melani McAlister, Epic Encounters: Culture, Media, and U.S. Interests in the Middle East since 1945 (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005).

While strongly challenged by many historians of the Middle East and the United States, the idea of a clash of civilizations caught the attention of the general public, including politicians and journalists. Many saw Huntington’s and Lewis’ theories justified with the terrorist attacks of 9/11. The persistence of the clash of civilizations view is best represented in President George W. Bush’s “they hate us for our freedoms” explanation for why terrorists attacked the United States. There was no discussion of the historical, political, or economic complexities surrounding U.S.-Arab relations. It was a simplistic answer – the civilizations were (and always had been) fundamentally opposed, destined to clash, with little hope of peaceful reconciliation.

A growing body of work, including from historians, embracing this civilizations idea has proliferated since 9/11, along with greater scrutiny of academics who specialize in the Middle East. This dissertation falls solidly in line with works that refute the clash of civilizations idea while also bringing in the long-neglected political activities of Arab American groups in the 1940s, specifically the Institute of Arab American Affairs. Examining the efforts of Arab Americans to influence the debate over Palestine makes clear that rather than foreseeing a clash

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10 For an overview on this phenomenon, see Ussama Makdisi, “After Said: The Limits and Possibilities of a Critical Scholarship of U.S.-Arab Relations,” *Diplomatic History*, Vol. 38, No. 3 (2014), 673-76. In the aftermath of the 9/11 attacks, a new website was created by the conservative think tank Middle East Forum called Campus Watch, designed to monitor Middle East Studies programs in U.S. colleges and universities and encourage students to report professors who they felt were not fair in their discussions regarding the United States or Israel. In the beginning, Campus Watch maintained “dossiers” of professors it felt required greater scrutiny; after that information came out, numerous other academics began emailing Campus Watch, asking to be added to their list. The dossiers were discontinued in 2002, but the website still has a “Keep Us Informed” section where students (or others) can send their complaints or concerns about a professor or program. Currently, the quote used for this section comes from a student who was outraged that a professor “suggested I take classes in the political science department to ‘open my mind’ – in other words, to CHANGE my views No thanks.” (accessed January 30, 2015, [http://www.campus-watch.org/incident.php](http://www.campus-watch.org/incident.php). Capitalization and punctuation errors in original). Campus Watch built off the ideas of Martin Kramer, whose book *Ivory Towers in the Sand: The Failure of Middle Eastern Studies in America* (Washington: The Washington Institute for Near East Policy, 2001) outlines his critiques of Middle Eastern Studies and led to Congressional action for government oversight of Middle Eastern Studies programs as a condition of retaining their Title VI funding. See Zachary Lockman, “Behind the Battles over US Middle East Studies,” *MEIRP* (January 2004), accessed January 30, 2015, [http://www.merip.org/mero/interventions/lockman_interv.html](http://www.merip.org/mero/interventions/lockman_interv.html).
of civilizations, Arab Americans strongly believed that both sides shared many cultural traits and beliefs that should have created a strong bond and alliance between Arabs and the United States. Analyzing the rhetoric and arguments used by the Institute shows that members viewed the United States as a reference culture and sought to convince Americans that the Arabs of Palestine were the best reflection of American identity and ideals. While Arabs had long been presented as exotic and foreign to the West, the Institute’s published materials show that Arab Americans believed there was a common bond that, if the American public could see it, would move the United States to enact what the Institute saw as the fair and just answer to the question of Palestine – an independent Arab state. This dissertation demonstrates that not only were Arab Americans politically active prior to 1967, they had a sophisticated understanding of what issues and ideas were important to a (white, Christian) American audience and sought to win that audience’s support in order to influence policy makers. The failure of the Institute and other Arab organizations during this time period to secure U.S. recognition of an Arab state in Palestine was not, therefore, due to inaction or indifference by the Arab American community, but rather to its inability to break through the dominant frames promoted by Zionists and their supporters that a Jewish state in Palestine would be best able to take up the American mantle in the region.

Bawardi, in his analysis of the creation of Arab American identity, argues that the events around World War II witnessed the maturation of that identity, as Arab Americans “consciously decided to maintain their status both as Arab nationalists and American citizens,” a transformation period, Bawardi continues, that holds significant potential for additional study.11 This dissertation builds on that literature and takes it further by examining how Arab Americans

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11 Bawardi, 33.
specifically attempted to reframe the debate over Palestine. Analyzing the arguments the
Institute used shows how it worked to meld Arab and American identities to create a message
that would allow the rest of the American population to recognize themselves and their values in
the Arab cause. This analysis of the how and why takes this dissertation into the next step of the
historiography, as the groundwork of who and what the Arab American community was and
became gives way to more in-depth examinations of their activities, actions, and goals.

An analysis of the discourse the Institute and other Arab American groups used shows a
persistent pattern in language and rhetoric. One way to think about this language is through
frame analysis. In their study on peace movements in the United States, political scientists Lynn
M. Woehrle, Patrick G. Coy, and Gregory M. Maney identify frames as “specific instances of
identifying and contextualizing ‘a view’ of a particular situation” within the larger discourse. In
other words, framing is a way for groups to take dominant ideas that are largely accepted and
disseminated by the general population and “fashion alternative meanings that are potentially
persuasive precisely because they have broad cultural resonance, even while they also support
oppositional claims.”¹² This is seen time and again in the Institute’s publications. For example,
the issue of modernization dominated many of the discussions of Palestine. Much of the early
travel literature, including Mark Twain’s famous travel narrative *Innocents Abroad*, frequently
noted the lack of development in Palestine. While the way Arabs lived was described as a living
connection to biblical times, writers were thoroughly shocked and disappointed by the dirtiness,
poverty, and lack of modernity they found. The challenge for Arab Americans was to reframe
the issue of modernization to shine a positive light on Arab efforts and downplay the seemingly
magnificent successes of Jewish immigrants in Palestine. This process repeated itself time and

again, from the nineteenth century onward, to challenge and reorient American thinking about the larger issues of Palestine.

Complementing this theory is the emerging concept of reference cultures, which explores the ways in which certain cultures gain a hegemonic presence in international exchanges, offering “cultural references that others can adopt, adapt, or resist” and that “can facilitate collective identity formation.” I propose that the United States served as a reference culture for both Arab American and Zionist organizations attempting to gain U.S. public support for their position. This is demonstrated in the following chapters, where the discourse of the publications analyzed held up U.S. culture (in terms of religion, democracy, and modernization, among others) as the ideal model for Palestine to emulate. The debate then centered on which group was better able to implement this model: Arabs or Zionist Jews. Modernization again provides one of the clearest examples of the United States as a reference culture in play. The Institute occasionally did challenge the idea that how well (or poorly) a people measured up to Western senses of progress should be a deciding factor in granting self-determination. By and large, though, the Institute’s arguments about modernization agreed that the United States was the pinnacle of achievement and strove to demonstrate how Palestinian Arabs were working toward that goal and highlighting their successes.

**Background of the Institute of Arab American Affairs**

By 1944, it was obvious to those who supported an Arab Palestine that Zionists and their supporters already had a clear advantage in shaping the debate and that Arabs needed to take

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13 Jaap Verheul, Toine Pieters, and Joris van Eijatten, “TS Tools: Using Texcavator to Map Public Discourse,” *Tijdschrift voor tijdschriftstudies* No. 35, (July 2014): 59-60. The idea of reference cultures is currently being explored through the University of Utrecht’s Translantis research program, which analyzes how the United States came serve as such a reference culture for the Netherlands. For more information, visit the project website at http://translantis.wp.hum.uu.nl/program/
greater unified action to give voice to their position, especially in the United States. That year witnessed an increased burst of movement among Arab governments and Arab Americans to reframe the conversation and provide a counterweight to pro-Zionist messages. In October 1944, representatives of Arab governments agreed to create an Arab Office branch in Washington, D.C. It opened in July 1945 and was to serve as a “propaganda office,” as opposed to its more politically focused counterparts in London and Jerusalem.14 The focus on public relations in the United States further emphasizes the significance of gaining the support of the American public. While political lobbying was important as well, it was clear by 1944 that the American public was much more invested in the Palestine situation than the British, and as a result, in order to gain American political support, public opinion would first need to be reshaped. In November 1944, the speakers at the American-Arab Convention of New York similarly noted a distinct lack of understanding in the United States about the Arab world in general and the Arab side of the Palestinian issue in particular. The reasons for this were three-fold: “adverse propaganda by the Zionists, indifference on the part of the American public, and neglect on the part of the Arabic-speaking community itself.” The convention’s solution was the creation of an organization designed to teach and “enlighten” the country about the Arab world: the Institute of Arab American Affairs.15

Though created at nearly the same time and for similar purposes, there were significant differences between the Arab Office and the Institute. According to its constitution, the Institute was to “serve as a medium of good will and mutual understanding between the United States of

14 Miller, 307.

15 “American-Arab Convention of New York, Nov. 26, 1944. Khalil Totah Archives, Berkeley, CA, 1. Note on Totah Archives: This is a private collection held by Totah’s daughter, Joy Totah-Hilden of Berkeley. There are no box or folder numbers.
America and the Arabic-speaking countries and peoples everywhere.”

While its overwhelming focus was the question of Palestine, the Institute also published pamphlets designed to introduce Americans to their Arab neighbors and more generally challenge the view of the Arab as a stranger. The Arab Office, in contrast, was more specifically designed to aggressively promote the Arab side of the Palestine issue. The most significant difference between the two organizations, however, was their backers. The Arab Office was the product of Arab governments, with funding coming predominately from Iraq, and was registered in the United States under the Foreign Agents Registration Act. In contrast, the Institute emphasized its American identity and relied heavily on donors, memberships, and subscriptions to its monthly newsletters for funding. The Institute’s Advisory Board soon included the names of prominent Americans, notably Virginia Gildersleeve, Dean of Barnard College, and in 1947, Kermit “Kim” Roosevelt, Jr., grandson of President Theodore Roosevelt and one of the nation’s leading Arabists, working first for the OSS and then the CIA. While Gildersleeve and Roosevelt were


18 A month after the Institute was proposed, the Egyptian government made offers to help financially support the fledgling organization. The founding members rebuffed this idea; as an American organization, it could not accept financial assistance from a foreign government, though they proposed working with the (as yet unformed) Arab Office to enhance both groups’ effectiveness. There was already an awareness of the potential problems from such a working relationship with a foreign government organization; contacts at the State Department advised the Institute to keep such work “under cover” while also warning that the Office of Strategic Services (OSS) had an informer among the Institute who was reporting on their every move. “Letter to Hitti and Malouf, Dec. 8, 1944.” Philip Hitti Papers, Box 12, File Folder 6, Immigration History Research Center, University of Minnesota. Unfortunately, while the author of this letter claimed to know who the informer was, he refused to put it in writing, saying that he would discuss it only in person. It is unclear at this time what the nature of the information was or if there were any long term affects.

19 Gildersleeve and Roosevelt also formed the Committee for Justice and Peace in the Holy Land in 1948, another pro-Arab lobbying group, which served as the forerunner to the American Friends of the Middle East (AFME) and, as Hugh Wilford has recently uncovered, had secret ties to the CIA. Despite the overlap in board members, there is no evidence that the Institute was ever a front for the CIA or connected with the Agency in any way. For more on the CIA’s connection with private groups in the United States dealing with the Middle East, see Hugh Wilford’s America’s Great Game. Wilford also includes a brief discussion about the Institute in which he also concludes that it
important figures who brought a level of prestige and legitimacy to the Institute, the bulk of its work was undertaken by its Arab American leaders: Faris Malouf, who served as president; Dr. Philip K. Hitti, professor of Semitic Literature at Princeton, who took the role of executive director on an interim basis at the Institute’s founding; and Dr. Khalil Totah, a Quaker from the Palestinian city of Ramallah, who replaced Hitti as executive director and tirelessly led the Institute until it closed in 1950. Under this leadership, the Institute was quite active, publishing its monthly newsletter, pamphlets, and translations of prominent works from their original Arabic, as well as writing to government officials, testifying before Congress, and sending members to give speeches. Through all of these public offerings, the Institute hoped to fulfill its mission as a bridge between two cultures, creating a lasting bond between the Middle East and the United States, manifested in American support for an independent Arab Palestine.

**Organization and Arguments**

The issue of identity permeates the arguments put forth in the debate over Palestine. An examination of the Institute’s public offerings demonstrates an on-going effort to address issues of identity in terms of race, religion, and Americanness; to combat the perception that Arabs were an exotic and foreign group, the Institute sought to emphasize the similarities between the two cultures. Historians have long grappled with the issue of identity and its use as a category of analysis. A post-structuralist approach highlights how identity is not simply a way in which an individual sees him- or herself, but rather is made up of influences from various power structures.
and culture. Foucault argued that identity was produced via “specific discourses and technologies,” and often imposed from above, while other theorists, such as Erving Goffman, proposed that identity was largely the “product of individuals and social groups themselves.”

When it comes to the debate over Palestine, and specifically the efforts of Arab Americans to express their own identity for public consumption, the creation of that identity draws from two main sources: the attempts by Arab American organizations (in particular the Institute of Arab American Affairs) to establish an identity for themselves, and the preexisting identity many non-Arab Americans held regarding both the Holy Land and the Arab world more generally. In addition to these specific attempts at creating an Arab American identity, these organizations often relied on another form of identity: providing an idealized picture of the United States and what Americans stood for. As will be demonstrated in this dissertation, both sides of the debate over Palestine drew on well-established ideals of what Americans cherished (ideas like liberty, justice, and democracy) and held that idealized version up as a mirror, asking the American public to think about how well their current views on the Palestine situation reflected that identity. The idea of a nation plays an important role in understanding the actions of various actors. As Israeli historian Ilan Pappe explains, “the nation is born as an ideal that becomes a reality that must then be maintained and protected.”

While Pappe focuses on the efforts of the new Israeli historians to challenge the Zionist idea surrounding Israel’s creation and existence as

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a model of democracy and modernity in the region, the idea also helps deepen our understanding
of the Institute’s appeals to American conceptions of the country as exceptional and a model for
the rest of the world. By seeking to position the Arab case for Palestine as in line with American
ideas of justice and democracy, the Institute sought to convince Americans that the best way to
“maintain and protect” the idea of United States was to take a firm stand in support of an
independent Arab Palestine.

The concept of identity, particularly as a category of analysis, has come under increased
scrutiny over the years, as it is continually reinterpreted and forced into new contortions to cover
an ever-expanding definition until it gets to the point where “identity” means everything and
nothing, thus losing its usefulness. In their article “Beyond ‘Identity,’” Rogers Brubaker and
Frederick Cooper deconstruct the issues inherent in using “identity” as a category of analysis
and, even more helpfully, propose alternative methods. Of particular use for this study is the
idea of “identification,” which focuses on how individuals or groups identify themselves or
others in a particular situation. Unlike “identity,” which suggests a core constant, “identification”
suggests a more active process, requiring both actors who are participating in the identifying as
well as acknowledging the particular context in which that action takes place.23 Throughout the
Institute’s publications, several forms of identification were at work: an effort to create an
identity for Arab Americans and Arabs in Palestine (emphasizing the idea that Arabs shared a
common heritage with white Americans, a shared religious tradition between Christianity and
Islam, and a similar commitment to U.S. security issues), identifying Americans as the
exceptional protectors of justice and democracy in the world (and portraying the Arab position in
Palestine as the logical one to support and protect), and placing Arabs as disciples of U.S. ideas

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23 Frederick Cooper in particular has been in the forefront of these debates. See Frederick Cooper, *Colonialism in Question: Theory, Knowledge, History* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005); Rogers Brubaker and Frederick Cooper, “Beyond ‘identity,’” *Theory and Society* 29, (2000).
on modernization and development. Meanwhile, Zionists and their supporters engaged in an identification process along similar lines, though with the added benefit of having a much stronger public voice and a more receptive audience. Both Arab Americans and Zionists had to contend with a long legacy of American interactions with the idea of Palestine that came not from firsthand experiences, but rather from books like the Bible or *The Thousand and One Nights* and the stereotypes that resulted.

The first chapter of this dissertation thus works to set the stage by examining a sampling of the travel literature about Palestine from the nineteenth century in order to understand the stereotypes and ideas Americans imbibed about Arabs, Jews, and the Holy Land, whether intentionally or not. The importance of travel literature in perpetuating the ideas of empire and/or Orientalist ideas is widespread in the historiography, and the travel literature on Palestine in particular helped create an image that often stuck with the public as they contemplated the future of Palestine. These works, predominately written by missionaries or travelers interested in viewing the land of the Bible, provide insights into how Americans viewed Palestine, in terms not only of religious ties but also impressions on the development of the land. While the main focus of this travel literature related to how a particular author felt seeing the places of the Bible, numerous authors remarked on the lack of progress or development among the population,

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observations that resurfaced in the 1940s debates. As Douglas Little notes in his book *American Orientalism*, the literature of the nineteenth century created a sense that “Arabs, Africans, and Asians . . . [were] backward, exotic, and occasionally dangerous folk who have needed and will continue to need U.S. help and guidance if they are successfully to undergo political and cultural modernization.” Nineteenth-century travelogues thus played an important role in setting a foundation for twentieth-century debates over Palestine by promoting negative stereotypes of Arabs (predominately as underdeveloped, dishonest, lazy, dirty, diseased, and followers of a strange and exotic religion) while encouraging the association of Palestine with literal readings of the Bible, further cementing the idea of Palestine as the promised homeland of the Jewish people. In general, the travelogues of this period meshed nicely with later Zionist arguments about the need for Jewish control in Palestine, while creating an almost insurmountable challenge for the Institute in its attempts to present a more realistic view of the Arab people.

Chapter 2 transitions from religious travelogues to religious and racial arguments for control over Palestine. Religion was inescapable when dealing with the Holy Land. Zionists found allies in American Christians who believed that returning Jews to Palestine was a necessary step to bring about the return of Christ. Even Christians who did not necessarily follow the pre-millennialism debates still had a tendency to link Palestine with the Bible stories they learned as children. These cultural/religious ideas contributed significantly to what

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Matthew Jacobs identifies as the sacred and secular mission to create a modern Middle East. For the question of Palestine in particular, we can see the sacred mission many Christians felt in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries to “restore” Palestine to the Jewish people in accordance with the Scriptures combined with a secular mission to modernize the land and create a reliable ally for the United States (particularly once the Cold War began). The Zionist movement in particular was quite adept at combining these two aspects (the religious connection of Jews to Palestine with the desire to rebuild and modernize the land).\(^{28}\) Arab Americans, in contrast, faced an uphill battle in their efforts to reframe those positions, calling attention to the strong ties between the Arabs of Palestine and American Christian missionaries. While building on the idea of a shared Christian identity, however, the Institute understood that most Americans would continue to associate Arabs with Islam, a religion they neither understood nor trusted. As a result, there was an undercurrent in many of the Institute’s works that sought to place Islam in the family of Abrahamic faiths, related to Christianity and Judaism, rather than considering it an exotic and sinister mindset. The friendly educator language dominated these points, befitting the educational background of both directors of the Institute (Hitti and Totah). The emphasis was to break down the superficial understanding Americans had regarding the Bible, Palestine, Arabs, and Islam and rebuild them with a deeper understanding that forged connections between Arabs and Americans.

Another roadblock for Arab Americans in gaining support for the Arab position was how Americans perceived Arabs in terms of race. Rising nativism in the United States hampered Arab immigration in the early twentieth century, and many Arabs who did make it to the United States faced significant barriers. This nativism was often based on a simplistic understanding of Arab culture and religion, which the Institute and similar organizations sought to correct through education and dialogue.

\[^{28}\text{Jacobs, 194.}\]

States found it difficult to become naturalized citizens, due to immigration laws that limited naturalization to whites, dating back to the founding of the country and lasting well into the twentieth century. A spate of court cases arose to challenge the classification of Arabs as “Asiatics” ineligible for naturalization. While the courts eventually ruled that Arabs were indeed white, this did little to change the public perception of Arabs as lower on the racial hierarchy. More specifically, as the chapter explores, Arab Americans often found themselves in the role of American Indians in opposition to the Jewish pioneers reenacting U.S. western expansion in Palestine. This equation of Arab as “native” was particularly frustrating for members of the Institute, who consistently sought to remind Americans of the contributions of the Arab empires to world civilization. Another line of argument combined the racial and religious heritage issues by connecting modern Palestinians with the Canaanites, Assyrians, and other peoples American Christians would recognize from the Bible, thus reestablishing Arab claims to long and continuous presence in the Holy Land.

Jewish identification was also in a period of flux in the 1940s, especially the ways in which Americans perceived Jewishness as both a racial category and a companion religion to Christianity. Michelle Mart’s *Eye On Israel* examines the ways in which Israelis cultivated, and Americans responded to, a new image of Jewishness as strong, masculine, staunch ally.30

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29 Ironically, while the Institute sought to firmly disassociate Arabs from American Indians and other “natives,” Palestinian and American Indian activists grew to find support and allies between their movements. For more, see Steven Salaita, *Inter/Nationalism: Decolonizing Native America and Palestine* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2016).

30 Michelle Mart, *Eye on Israel: How America Came to View Israel as an Ally* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2006). In chapter one, Mart traces the evolution of the depiction of Jews as weak victims following the Holocaust to strong pioneers in American popular culture (especially movies). This mirrors the intentional cultivation of the sabra identity among the founding generations of Israel with the goal of shedding the diaspora’s weakness and submissiveness (which they saw as partly responsible for the lambs-being-led-to-slaughter mentality in the Holocaust) and replacing it with the toughness, determination, and fight of the sabra. The sabra is a cactus with a tough and prickly exterior but that also contains a sweet fruit under the thorns. For more on this struggle and the ways in which the yishuv dealt with the legacy of the Holocaust, see Tom Segev, *The Seventh Million: The Israelis and the Holocaust* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1991).
Importantly for this work, Mart demonstrates that during World War II and its aftermath, stereotypes and beliefs about Jews and Arabs alike were not static, but rather in a period of transition. This helps provide a framework for understanding the context and importance for vast propaganda or education (depending on one’s viewpoint) efforts undertaken by Arab Americans and Zionists alike during the 1940s. The sense that the American public’s attitude was malleable at this stage drove both sides to develop rhetoric that reframed dominant ideas about things like democracy, modernization, religion, and American interests to promote a specific response to the question of Palestine. Mart also traces how traditional anti-Semitic stereotypes about Jews transferred to Arabs, as Jews “became white” in the American mind after World War II, a designation that Arabs won in the courts but one they struggled to gain with the public.  

American ideals of justice and democracy and, more importantly, Americans’ identity of themselves as exceptionally devoted to the defense of those ideals, proved an important battleground for the Institute. Chapter 3 examines these appeals to democracy and justice and the attempts by both Arabs and Zionists to frame their position as the one most “in accordance with the best traditions of American democracy.” Once again, the idea of identification plays a key role in these arguments. In this case, Arab Americans were not trying to create an identity for themselves or the Arab people in general. Rather, they engaged in a process of identification of what it (ideally) meant to be American – committed to justice and democracy, standing as an

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31 Mart, 4.

alternative to the imperialism and colonialism of Europe, and serving as an embodiment of benevolent uplift for the rest of the world. Arab Americans used this powerful identity as a way to reorient American thinking about Palestine, while also emphasizing that their critiques were based on their own identity as Americans of Arabic-speaking stock. While the Zionist camp often made appeals to the horror of the Holocaust, claiming a Jewish state in Palestine as the only just solution, Arab Americans reminded the United States of its anti-colonial stance while framing the situation in Palestine as one of resistance (Arab) against foreign imperialism (Zionism). Concurrently, the Institute found some of its most successful lines in arguing for an immediate democratic vote in Palestine over its future, open to all Jews and Arabs currently living in the country and taking it out of the hands of the United States. In this scenario, the Institute portrayed the Zionist camp as being openly hostile to democracy (since it refused to hold elections until Jews were the majority of the population) and the Arabs as the rightful heirs of American values. In these debates, we see a mixture of the friendly educator language, as the Institute sought to balance knowledge of the Balfour declaration with promises to the Arabs, along with a sense of righteous indignation, as American policy seemed to continually betray the ideals the Institute lauded.

U.S. national interests also played a significant role in the arguments both sides marshaled as Zionists and Arab Americans each sought to promote the other as untrustworthy and, as the Cold War deepened, more likely to support Soviet goals. Chapter 4 focuses on the battle to define the stakes for U.S. national security in the region between having a Jewish nation that was already Western in nature and would be a close ally to the United States versus the negative consequences of losing Arab support throughout the region. This chapter also explores the growing influence of the Cold War, examining how views of the Soviet Union shifted as the
Cold War escalated, and the Institute’s publications shifted toward Cold War conspiracy. Before World War II ended, Zionist groups discussed the importance of gaining both U.S. and Soviet support, and in the initial years of the Institute, there were occasional references in its writings regarding how support for a Jewish state might negatively affect U.S.-Soviet relations. Fairly quickly, though, those arguments changed to accusations that the other side was in league with the Soviets and/or could become a potential Trojan horse for communism to infiltrate the region. For Arab Americans, the Jewish kibbutz (communal farm) project was an ideal example of the dangerous, pro-Communist plans the Zionists had in mind. Between that and the reminder that Arab oil was a significant resource, Arab American groups hoped to supplement the rightness of their cause with practical risks and benefits to the United States.

While this chapter is the most realpolitik of this dissertation, it cannot be divorced from the cultural arguments that were put forth at the time. Recent additions to the historiography continue to demonstrate that foreign policymakers did not and do not live in a world divorced from their cultural surroundings and that to at least some degree, even the experts are influenced by the ideas around them. Melani McAlister’s *Epic Encounters: Culture, Media, and U.S. Interests in the Middle East since 1945* analyzes popular culture’s effects on American perceptions and U.S. foreign policy by examining everything from movies like *Ben-Hur* and *Not Without My Daughter* to traveling exhibitions on ancient Egypt, all of which helped to create “the parameters of U.S. national interests in the region.” Michelle Mart focuses on the way movies and books helped perpetuate the idea that the Jews of Palestine were little David, facing the big bad Goliath, a long-standing theme in discussions about Israel’s creation that still holds sway in some sectors. Additionally, Kathleen Christison strongly suggests that U.S. policymakers from the Wilson to Clinton eras were constrained in their views by their Judeo-

33 McAlister, 2.
Christian background, which made them particularly accepting of the Zionist narrative.\textsuperscript{34} This tension between self-interest and cultural constructions of the Holy Land is evident in the division within the Truman administration, with the State Department generally arguing against U.S. support for a Jewish state in Palestine due to the risks to U.S. interests in the Arab world while many of Truman’s advisers (such as Clark Clifford, Special Counsel to the President and administrative assistant David Niles), along with Congress, lobbied hard for unconditional U.S. support. Even if key architects of U.S. foreign policy did focus exclusively on national self-interest arguments, they still found themselves running up against a wall of public opinion that based its position on a wide range of issues.\textsuperscript{35} We can also see this interaction in the rhetoric and devices used by the Arab Americans, who strongly stressed the risks to U.S. interests in the region if the nation supported a Jewish state, but often supplemented those arguments with more cultural appeals.

Finally, chapter 5 tackles the most prevalent topic in the public debates between Zionists and Arabists: modernization and progress. Although the Institute noted that a people’s right to govern itself should not be based on Western perceptions of development, it nonetheless accepted that this was the paradigm in which it had to operate. Members thus spent the bulk of their effort pushing the idea that Arabs were modernizing while simultaneously casting doubts on the sustainability and stability of Jewish settlements in Palestine. Meanwhile, Zionists and their supporters continued to portray Palestinian Arabs as “backwards” and in need of Jewish/Western ideas, science, and technology.

\textsuperscript{34} Christison, \textit{Perceptions of Palestine}

\textsuperscript{35} Matthew Jacobs further analyzes this point in his book, where he shows on intellectual networks of Arabists had a great deal of success in implementing their views on other parts of U.S.-Middle East policy, but failed when it came to Palestine. He theorizes that this was due largely to the fact that the American public cared very little about U.S. policy in, say, Iran, but was very involved in, and had strong opinions about, the debate over Palestine.
Much of the modernization debate predates the rise of official modernization theory, which gained prevalence in the 1960s as the Kennedy administration sought to use the ideas of academics like Walt Rostow to create policy that would improve global growth.\(^{36}\) Modernization theory held that all societies developed in near-identical stages, making it possible for states farther along this path to reach back and help less developed countries catch up. Michael Latham’s books demonstrate how the United States used modernization theory throughout the Cold War to guide foreign policy; the idea was that because the United States led the world in development, it could help underdeveloped societies avoid some of the pitfalls and rapidly move through the various stages to become successful, highly developed societies.\(^{37}\) While social scientists have largely discarded modernization theory, the historiography surrounding modernization demonstrates that such ideas have an exceptionally strong place in U.S. thought, stretching back long before the 1960s and influencing how Americans perceived other cultures. David Ekbladh, in *The Great American Mission: Modernization and the Construction of an American World Order*, places the U.S. policy of “guiding progress” as a defining characteristic of American thought that, by the end of the nineteenth century, was combined with the idea of “the ‘big plan’” – using government authority to gather and use resources for a particular goal.\(^{38}\) The biggest example of this movement in the United States was the creation of the Tennessee Valley Authority, a program that quickly became the model for


many other projects. In the widely read book *Palestine: Land of Promise*, author and geologist Walter Lowdermilk paints a grim picture of Palestine left to Arab cultivation and contrasts it with glowing reports about Jewish activities and efforts to “restore” the land. As a solution, Lowdermilk heavily championed a JVA – Jordan Valley Authority – that would be essentially a re-creation of the TVA in Israel.

By the 1940s, a common theme in Zionist publications was that the Jewish immigrants had already made significant improvements by bringing Western modernity, technology, and science to the Holy Land, doing in a few decades what Arabs had been unable to accomplish in centuries. This tapped into and built upon the preconceptions many Americans may have gathered from previous generations’ reports on the condition of Palestine. Rather than try to downplay the importance of modernization or debate what modern/modernity/modernization meant, the Institute focused instead on reframing the issue: the Turks were to blame for the lack of development, and since becoming free of the Ottoman yoke, the Arabs (in Palestine and elsewhere in the Middle East) were quickly developing on their own. Arab American critiques of the Ottomans aligned with the growing trend among Arab scholars at that time, who were much more critical of the Ottoman Empire and using those criticisms to disassociate Arab identity from the Ottomans. By World War I, the United States viewed the Ottoman territories as the center of need for “humanitarianism,” as described by Keith David Watenpaugh. For Americans, this humanitarianism, whether helping survivors of the war (and particularly the Armenian genocide), famine, or the plagues of locust that periodically swarmed the region, “functioned as an ethical and moral vessel in which to place the politics of an American presence

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in the region.” Just as importantly, for many Arab Americans during the interwar years, “advocating for relief produced a venue from which to advocate for Arab independence from Ottoman rule – that rule being, in their estimation, the cause of suffering as much as the locust were.”

Arab Americans argued that with the Ottomans out of the picture, and with help from and the example of American missionaries, Arabs were now making substantial progress. Likewise, the Institute challenged Zionist claims of being the champion of progress, arguing that the Zionist experiment’s success thus far owed much more to the generous donations of world Jewry than any inherent or self-supporting effort by the yishuv (as the Jewish community in Palestine was known). Thus, modernization remained a critical part of the criteria for determining who should control Palestine, but instead of favoring the Zionist claim, it should be marked in favor of the Arabs.

Though the Institute was ultimately unsuccessful in its endeavor to change U.S. policy toward Palestine, it served as an important link in Arab American activism. The Institute closed its doors in January 1950, and Arab American activism limped along until the 1960s. This new burst of activism built on many of the same ideas that formed the bedrock of the Institute’s messaging, particularly its emphasis on education of the American public as the way to influence policy. This dissertation serves as a link to that growing body of literature. As the following chapters show, there was a great deal of overlap in how Arab and Zionist supporters approached the public. Both represented a segment of the American populace that white, Christian Americans had long viewed with suspicion or outright hostility and had to navigate a complex web of preconceived notions regarding Jews, Arabs, Muslims, and Palestine. Both sides fell back on common religious narratives, appeals to justice and democracy, risks and rewards for

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American security, and promotions of modernization efforts. Yet while Arab organizations felt their side was the best reflection of these points, they were unable to overcome Zionist advantages in establishing the dominant frame of reference. For while Americans still harbored a great deal of anti-Semitism, the creation of a Jewish state aligned neatly with many Americans’ (largely limited) understanding of the region. Palestine was the natural home for God’s “Chosen People,” with some Christians strongly believing that Jewish control over the land was a prerequisite to Christ’s return. Arabs were more likely to be seen as simply an obstacle to that goal, much as American Indians had been an obstacle in U.S. western expansion. The revelations of the Holocaust and the resulting questions over where to send the survivors made a Jewish state even more attractive, especially for Americans who might still be wary of an influx of Jews into their country. Zionist programs to “revitalize” the land and the images of Western-looking Jews in modern cities played up the idea of Jewish Palestine as a new California and neatly completed a cycle of American conceptions of the pilgrims as being the new Israelis to the Israelis becoming the new American pioneers. These messages were picked up and disseminated in the news, in churches, and in the halls of government.

Despite the overwhelming odds, Arab Americans and their supporters endeavored to reframe these ideas, emphasizing Arab Christians and the Christian missionary ties to the Arab world, and the largely identical feelings of Arab Christians and Arab Muslims toward a Jewish state as evidence that the Arab position was much closer to American Christian ideas than Zionism, which sought domination over all of Palestine and its religious significance. Arab Americans attempted to reintroduce Arab actors into those well-known Bible stories to counter the idea that Arabs in Palestine were relative newcomers, reframing those stories to show Arabs as a constant presence, while the Hebrews only occasionally appeared and even then, only for a
short time. Rather than being seen as Indians in the way of pioneers, the Institute and its supporters sought to reframe the situation as 1776, with Palestinian Arabs as the plucky and determined fighters seeking to overthrow British colonial rule and implement a democratic government in the style of the United States. Such a country would not only reflect American values but would also cement U.S. standing in the region, protecting American interests and giving the United States an advantage in the Cold War. Though unsuccessful at gaining U.S. recognition of a Palestinian state, these efforts helped build a foundation for groups to come, continuing to believe that education would eventually open American eyes to the injustice of the situation.

Ussama Makdisi, a professor at Rice University who has written prolifically about U.S.-Arab relations, often calls on historians engaging in transnational histories of the United States and the Middle East to be truly transnational. He praises American transnationalists for providing deeper layers of understanding when it comes to how Americans saw themselves in and interacted with the world but laments the tendency to continue valuing American sources and perspectives at the expense of non-American voices.42 While this dissertation does not claim to be transnational, as it focuses specifically on American actors engaging with the American public (though about a transnational issue), it does serve as a way to reintroduce the voices of Arab Americans, who have been forgotten for too long. By analyzing the language and images of the arguments made by various groups, this dissertation demonstrates the importance of religious identity, democracy, national security, and modernization to the American public from the nineteenth century through the Cold War and how the groups associated with the debate over Palestine attempted to use those ideas to sway public opinion.

Chapter One
From Idleness to Industry: American Images of the Middle East and its Challengers

“Dreamy idleness is dear to the Orient.” – Cunningham Geikie, 1888¹

Introduction

When the members of the Institute of Arab American Affairs set out to educate Americans about the Middle East, and specifically the Arab case for Palestine, they were working from a disadvantage. Despite a supportive contingent within the executive branch (specifically in the State Department), the Institute struggled to convince the U.S. government to support an independent Arab Palestine. In his book, America’s Great Game, Hugh Wilford demonstrates the strong pro-Arab sentiment among the CIA officials working in and with the region, while Matthew Jacobs’ Imagining the Middle East goes beyond the CIA to show the creation of an informal network of Middle East specialists who, like their CIA counterparts, generally took a stance more favorable to the Arab world or at least were more suspicious of the benefits of supporting Israel. Despite these networks and their warnings about the national security risks in backing the creation of a Jewish state, the Zionist message that Jews had a strong and legitimate claim to Palestine based on their historical ties to the land, the need for a Jewish state in light of the horrors of the Holocaust, and the modernization and development Jewish settlers brought to the region, resonated strongly with the majority of Americans and many of their elected officials. Jacobs proposes that the Arabists and their networks had a freer hand in dealing with the larger Middle East because the American public did not have much

knowledge of the issues; that changed dramatically when it came to anything concerning Palestine/Israel.¹ In that case, Americans already had an image of the land, the people, and the issues involved, which made them much more active in policy debates, overwhelming the experts on the region and their warnings of what such support might mean for U.S. relations with the Arab world. This also meant that, in contrast to other policy debates, the various positions regarding the question of Palestine during the 1940s, particularly the Arab side, had to reach out beyond government officials and engage with the American public directly, building on or challenging the images and identity Americans already created about the region and its peoples.

But where did those images come from? By the nineteenth century, the Ottoman Empire had gained the label of the Sick Man of Europe, viewed in Europe and the United States as a state on the verge of collapse. After centuries of expansion, the eighteenth century saw Ottoman rule challenged and chipped away, whether through the invasion of Egypt by Napoleon and the subsequent ascension of Muhammad Ali (and then the British invasion in 1882), the rising nationalism and rebellion in the eastern European territories (Greece, the Balkans, Bulgaria, etc.), or the increasing influence of Europe, especially France, in Mount Lebanon. Lebanon in particular is a study in the variety of nationalist ideas that were competing for supporters throughout the nineteenth century. While one dominant narrative focuses on the efforts of Maronite Christians and their work to build relations with the French, other Lebanese nationalists were looking to an Ottoman identity, or a Syrian one, or an Arab one. As these nationalist debates wore on, the Maronites of Mount Lebanon sought to rewrite their history to help solidify their ties to France, portraying the Christians of the region as an island community surrounded by a hostile Muslim population. When fighting did break out between Christians and Muslims in

the region, culminating in the 1860 massacre, French and British leaders put heavy pressure on
the Ottoman government to do more to protect Christian minorities in the Empire. The status of
Christians, as Ussama Makdisi described it, “had become yardsticks of the modernization of the
Ottoman Empire,” and from the American and Western European perspective, nothing had
changed in the East for over a thousand years. In reality, however, the Ottoman government was
continually restructuring itself and its rule and nationalism itself did not always equal a desire to
leave the empire. The Tanzimat reforms of 1839-1876 made far-reaching changes to the
bureaucratic systems of the empire, including the passage of the Hatt-i Humayun edict, which
declared all Ottoman subjects, regardless of religion, to be equal, with equal rights and
responsibilities, and which many missionaries welcomed, envisioning a greater acceptance of
their work in the region. Aside from this, however, the internal workings of the Empire made
little impression on Americans, who continued to see the land as stuck in darkness and in dire
need of the light of Christianity.

Throughout the nineteenth century, travelogues played a significant role in shaping
American attitudes toward the Middle East. By 1944, as the debate over Palestine began to take

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Press, 2013); Ussama Makdisi, *The Culture of Sectarianism: Community, History, and Violence in Nineteenth-

3 Makdisi, *The Culture of Sectarianism*, p. 5.

4 Rifaat ‘Ali Abou-El-Haj, *Formation of the Modern State: Ottoman Empire Sixteenth to Eighteenth Centuries*
(Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 2005); Heath W. Lowry, *The Nature of the Early Ottoman State,*
minority Nationalism and the Dissolution of the Ottoman Empire, 1908-1909,” *Nations and Nationalism* 13 (1),

5 Mehmet Ali Doğan and Heather J. Sharkey, eds., *American Missionaries and the Middle East: Foundational

6 Hilton Obenzinger, “American Palestine: Herman Melville, Mark Twain, and the Holy Land in the Nineteenth-
Century American Imagination,” in Abbas Amanat and Magnus T. Bernhardsson, eds., *U.S.-Middle East Historical
Encounters: A Critical Survey* (Gainesville, FL: University Press of Florida, 2007), 52. See also Burke O. Long,
*Imagining the Holy Land: Maps, Models, and Fantasy Travels* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2003);
on greater urgency in the United States, both Zionists and Arab supporters had to contend with a long legacy of American interactions with the idea of Palestine and the people of the former Ottoman Empire. Those interactions came not from first hand experiences, but rather stemmed primarily from books like the Bible, The Thousand and One Nights, and a host of travelogues. These books, the latter of which were written by missionaries or travelers to the region, cultivated an image of the Holy Land as a backward, exotic locale, left to waste under the control of Muslim Arabs; a place where Christian pilgrims could forge a deeper connection with the Bible, but where they could also be fooled and swindled by the array of false shrines; a land, in essence, that called out for aid in development and rehabilitation. Generally speaking, the travelogues of this period meshed nicely with later Zionist arguments about the need for Jewish control in Palestine, while creating an almost insurmountable challenge for Arab Americans arguing the opposite. Nineteenth-century travelogues thus played an important role in setting a foundation for twentieth-century debates over Palestine by promoting negative stereotypes of Arabs (predominately as underdeveloped, dishonest, lazy, dirty, diseased, and exotic) while encouraging the association of Palestine with literal readings of the Bible, further cementing the idea of Palestine as a home for the Jewish people.

In addition to the images Americans already faced, both Zionists and Arab Americans had their own communities with which to contend. Immigration in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries altered the composition of the American Jewish community, as Jews escaping persecution in eastern Europe and Russia brought a greater commitment to Zionism.


This created tensions with the established Reform Jewish community, which worried about how calls for a Jewish state could open the door for charges of disloyalty and give anti-Semites in the United States ammunition for charges that Jews were not truly American. Meanwhile, Arab Americans, particularly those involved in creating and maintaining the Institute, had to deal with the fact that the Arab American population was smaller and less politically connected than its Zionist opponents. While World War II galvanized Jewish Americans to become more active regarding the Jewish question, the Institute did not form until late 1944 and had to build both its internal structure as well as its public outreach, while Zionists were able to transition their efforts from general calls to rescue Europe’s Jews to a more specific program to create a Jewish state in Palestine. As a result, the Institute found itself engaged in a multifaceted battle, both in terms of getting its voice heard while also seeking to overturn centuries of negative images of Arabs and Palestine.

**Creating Images of the Other**

Once source of impressions of contemporaneous Palestine was missionary accounts. American missionaries saw the Ottoman Empire as an important opportunity; unlike missions to India, Americans would not have to compete with the British Empire and there were a great number of people to convert, including the existing Christian communities, which many Americans viewed as only “nominally Christian.” The American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions (ABCFM) sent its first two missionaries, Pliny Fisk and Levi Parsons, to Jerusalem in 1819, and the missions they established soon began sending home reports of the

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8 Cemal Yetkiner, “At the Center of the Debate: Bebek Seminary and the Educational Policy of the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions (1840-1860),” in Doğan and Sharkey, 70.
territory, which were published in the *Missionary Herald* and widely read by Americans.\(^9\) These reports, seeking additional funding and staff for their mission, often painted an image of a land in dire need, not only of the Gospel but also basic development. The 1837 report of the Mission of Syria and the Holy Land opened with the writers’ desire to make the American church “acquainted with the wretched condition of the people.”\(^10\) It then went on to describe the unfortunate slew of missionary deaths, including those of Fisk and Parsons due to illness; the difficulty of the region’s languages; and the lack of conversions, which was blamed in part on the deaths of nearly every missionary shortly after they finally learned the language. Later articles continued to emphasize the “poverty, misery, and false religions” of the land and its people.\(^11\) Such reports created an image of Palestine as a strange and dangerous land, its language difficult to learn, its environment deadly (though the report did not include the cause of death for the various missionaries lost, Parsons and Fisk both died of illness), and its people largely uninterested in converting (or, as a biographer of Fisk put it, a land where “Satan from ancient times has held undisputed possession of his strong holds, and erected his mightiest bulwarks.”\(^12\))

While the missionary reports contained a great deal of obstacles, there was also a sense of hope that, with the right work, the region could be greatly transformed. The Mission reported success in terms of building a printing press, which produced Bibles and other books in Arabic,

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\(^12\) Alan Bond, *Memoir of the Rev. Pliny Fisk, A.M., Late Missionary to Palestine* (Boston, MA: Crocker and Brewster, 1828), v.
and was credited with awakening a “spirit of inquiry” among the inhabitants. Thus, despite “mourn[ing] over the dreadful spiritual apathy which still prevails to an awful extent,” the missionaries reported they “s[aw] enough to encourage [their] hearts.”\textsuperscript{13} The printing press was key, as missionaries reported that a “frivolous and corrupting literature” was already being spread and thus it was essential to counter it with copies of the Bible and other religious works. Not only was literature on the rise in the Middle East, but so too was capitalism, with “Beirut . . . becoming a great commercial city,” placing the mission in a “commanding position in the East.” The people of the region, the missionaries explained, were, “physically, a noble-looking race, and when the gospel shall bring them peace, education, and a Christian civilization, they will lack no element of a high nationality.”\textsuperscript{14}

It was thus easy for Americans to embrace the idea that it was their missionaries who brought modernization, education, and a growing sense of nationalism to the Middle East, whether it was accurate or not. As will be seen later in this dissertation, the Institute often highlighted American missionary work focused on education, which it credited with being instrumental in the growing nationalism of the Middle East.\textsuperscript{15} There was little patience among some of the American Christian audience, however, for anything less than complete gratitude from Arabs and Arab Americans toward American efforts in the region. In response to an essay written by Dr. Philip Hitti, a renowned Arab scholar at Princeton, the executive vice-president of the ABCFM criticized him for paying “poor tribute to an enterprise – Christian missions – without which probably your own racial heritage would be much poorer and your personal life

\textsuperscript{13} “Syria and the Holy Land,” 492-493.

\textsuperscript{14} “Annual Meeting of the Board,” 356.

\textsuperscript{15} See for example, “Philip Hitti Cable by OWI, March 30, 1945,” Papers of Philip Hitti, Box 5, File Folder 3, Immigration History Research Center, University of Minnesota, Minneapolis, Minnesota.
impoverished.”

By the time World War II came around, members of the Office of War Information argued that the main theme of Arab-American relations was the “seeds of American democracy, planted as long ago as 1835 in the Near East, have born the fruits of goodwill between Americans and Arabs.”

Yet debates over nationalism and modernization were occurring outside the missionary sphere. Around the turn of the century, various competing ideologies fought for dominance in the Ottoman Empire: Islamist, Westernist, Turkist, Ottomanist, and a variety of nationalist movements. The Islamist group argued that the decline of the empire was due in large part to the “abandonment of Islamic institutions and laws.” While the Islamists acknowledged that some of the Western imports had value, such as technological advances, they abhorred the idea of Western culture being accepted by the people. Women “represented the touchstone of such contamination” and as such, issues like marriage, family, and veiling became issues of passionate debate. Westernists, on the other hand, blamed religion and superstition for holding the empire back and used the same issues regarding women to prove their point. In 1899, a member of the Egyptian upper class, Qasim Amin, published a book entitled The Liberation of Women and the New Woman. This work sparked a debate among his contemporaries, which continue through the present. Amin argued that in order for Egypt to survive and compete with the growing Western powers, Egyptian society needed to undergo real reform. The focus of that reform

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16 Fred Field Goodell to Philip Hitti, March 28, 1945, Papers of Philip Hitti, Box 4, File Folder 5, Immigration History Research Center, University of Minnesota, Minneapolis, Minnesota.

17 James Batal to Philip Hitti, March 30, 1945, Papers of Philip Hitti, Box 4, File Folder 6, Immigration History Research Center, University of Minnesota, Minneapolis, Minnesota.


19 Kandiyoti, 32.
should be the status of women, especially their education. Educated women would be better able
to run their households; provide love and support for their (presumably) educated husbands; and
most importantly, raise intelligent and nationalistic children, especially their sons who would
become the next generation of leaders.\textsuperscript{20} In addition to arguing for women’s education, Amin
also called for an end to veiling and seclusion, which he saw as holdovers from social traditions
and customs from pre-Islamic times. It was better for women to mix with men and be educated
than to stay at home, in “forced” purity, and ignorant.\textsuperscript{21} The Turkist version attempted to create a
new sense of nationalism that relied heavily on neither religion nor Western culture. Turkist
proponents often emphasized Turkish culture and successes long before imperial conquest by the
Byzantines and the Ottomans, while others sought an empire-wide Ottoman identity (that was
largely based on a Turkish identity). Meanwhile, nationalist movements in the Balkans, Greece,
Egypt, and among the Arabs fought for followers as well. The increase of printed materials, to
which American missionaries referred in alarm, included journals and newspapers carrying on
debates over modernity, nationalism, and capitalism, outside the frame of American ideas of
what was best for the Middle East.\textsuperscript{22} The American public, however, remained largely ignorant
of these discussions.

In addition to the official missionary reports, Fisk and Parsons’ work touched off a wave
of travelogues, as other Americans made the journey to the Holy Land and wrote books about
their experiences, allowing Americans who could not travel to Palestine to experience it

\textsuperscript{20} Qasim Amin, \textit{The Liberation of Women and the New Woman: Two Documents in the History of Egyptian
Feminism} (1899), translated by Samiha Sidhom Peterson, (Cairo: Cairo University Press), 12, 17, 22, 23. In many
ways, Amin appears to be promoting a version of the American concept of Republican Motherhood. This was an
argument made by women in 18th and 19th centuries to promote female education, by claiming it was necessary for
women to be education in order to teach their sons to be good and effective leaders.

\textsuperscript{21} Amin, 43, 51-52.

\textsuperscript{22} Keith David Watenpaugh, \textit{Being Modern in the Middle East: Revolution, Nationalism, Colonialism, and the Arab
nonetheless. Generally speaking, these works went beyond a mere recounting of the author’s travels or adventures. Instead, the goal was to acquaint readers with the land in order to better help them understand the Bible. As a result, these works formed the basis of American readers’ ideas about Palestine and the people who inhabited it. This chapter examines the writings of four American travelers to Palestine: William M. Thomson, Cunningham Geikie, Henry M. Field, and E. J. Hardy, based on their influence and representation of common themes. Thomson, an American Protestant missionary who served forty-five years in Syria and Palestine, published his multi-volume set *The Land and the Book* in 1859 and it became one of the best selling books of its kind throughout the nineteenth century, with Thomson serving as a great influence to future writers in the genre. Geikie, vicar of St. Martin’s in Norwich, England, was another prolific religious writer. The *New York Times* praised his book, *The Holy Land and the Bible*, noting that Geikie was writing not only as a “sincere” Christian believer but also in a way that would appeal to and move readers. Henry M. Field, whose book *Among the Holy Hills*, went through at least seven editions, spoke for many in expressing extreme disappointment regarding the state of the Holy Land. Field was part of a prominent American family – one of his brothers served as a Justice of the Supreme Court and another laid the Atlantic telegraph cable; Henry himself was a

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noted clergyman and writer and thus a name Americans may have recognized.27 The Rev. E. J. Hardy’s book *The Unvarying East: Modern Scenes and Ancient Scriptures*, represents a slightly different take on the travelogue genre. Where most of the other authors covered here wrote profusely (several took multiple volumes to cover the entire Holy Land), Hardy was much more succinct, stating in his introduction that the book was not “long-winded.” What is interesting about his book, however, is the seemingly contradictory assertion that the East (which in his definition included the Middle East, China, and Japan) was both unchanging and modernizing. Published in 1912, Hardy’s book came out later than the others examined here and hinted at various changes the Middle East underwent at the time.

At the same time, one cannot talk about Holy Land narratives without including Mark Twain’s *Innocents Abroad*.28 While not written with the missionary zeal of the others, Twain’s chronicle of his voyage through Europe and the Holy Land in 1867 became an instant classic and an “unofficial” tour guide, along with the Bible, with even such notables as General (and later U.S. President) Ulysses S. Grant bringing a copy along when he visited the region. The most famous example of Twain’s influence was the rising fashion of visiting the purported Tomb of Adam. When describing his visit to the Church of the Holy Sepulchre (the church in Jerusalem said to house the places where Jesus was crucified, died, and was buried), Twain noted the multiple holy sites and relics held within, exaggerating the pious faith it took to believe such things. When he arrived at the Tomb of Adam within the Church, he wrote that he was so grateful to find a “blood relation” in a strange land that he was moved to tears, weeping over the

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28 Mark Twain, *The Innocents Abroad or the New Pilgrims’ Progress* (Hartford, CT: American Publishing Company, 1869), iBook.
grave of his “poor dead relative.” Once his book was published, the Tomb of Adam became a major destination for pilgrims; not so much because of who was allegedly buried there, but because it marked the spot that had so moved an American legend.29

Twain applied his acerbic wit to the traditional travelogue, providing a different take on the Holy Land, but one that often confirmed the feelings of disappointment at the state of the land, its people, and its religious monuments. As literary scholar Hilton Obenzinger notes, even though *Innocents Abroad* was largely fiction and highly exaggerated, Twain’s descriptions of Palestine as a terrible wasteland remained popularly cited by others “not because of their accuracy, but because of the authority of Mark Twain.”30 Together with the more religious travelogues above, these books provide a glimpse into the prominent themes and impressions of the Holy Land that shaped American views in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Though neither policymakers nor the American public may have specifically referenced these works in the 1940s, the frame of reference created or strengthened by these books and others like them remained a significant factor in how Americans conceptualized Palestine, something with which Arab groups would later be forced to contend.

The most common theme among the travelogues of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries was that the Bible was the literal word of God and Palestine could only truly be understood in its relationship to the Book and vice versa. One of the most successful books of this nature was William Thomson’s *The Land and the Book*, a three-volume set in which Thomson set out to aid the public in understanding the Bible through its “scenes and [its] scenery” as well as the “living manners and customs of the East which illustrate that blessed

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29 Twain, 1850 (iBook, horizontal); for more on the story of how Twain’s work impacted the American public, particularly those wishing to visit the Tomb of Adam for themselves, see Hilton Obenzinger, *American Palestine: Melville, Twain, and the Holy Land Mania* (Princeton University Press, 1990), 176.

book.”  Thomson opened by stating that the Bible could only truly be understood in the context of the land in which its events took place, or, in his words: “Palestine may be fairly regarded as the divinely prepared tablet whereupon God’s messages to men have been graven in ever-living characters by the Great Publisher of Glad Tidings. That this fact invests the geography of the Holy Land with special importance, needs neither proof nor illustration.”

Other authors of the period referred to the land of Palestine serving as “commentary” on the Bible. Rarely did anything seem to exist in Palestine outside of its ties to the Bible. For example, when giving the history of the city of Jaffa, Thomson wrote that it was one of the oldest cities in the world, “given to Dan in the distribution of the land by Joshua, and it has been known to history ever since.”

Nothing is mentioned of anyone living in region prior to the ancient Israelites; the history of the region simply begins with the Old Testament. By choosing the ancient Israelites as the starting point of history, Thompson and his fellow writers effectively erase all previous inhabitants, reinforcing a growing sense that Palestine was a “land without a people for a people without a land,” as later Zionist slogans would characterize it.

One of the greatest disappointments for the writers was the lack of genuine markers for the most important sites of Christianity. Few, if any, believed that the Church of the Holy Sepulchre truly marked the place where Jesus was crucified or that the Garden of Gethsemane was really the Garden of Gethsemane. Thomson in particular was quite incensed by the “Church of the Ascension” on the Mount of Olives, which claims to contain the footprint left by Christ

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33 See, for example, Geikie, Vol. 1, v-vi; Hardy, 15; Field, preface. Commentaries are writings designed to explain and/or interpret the Bible. Generally, a commentary focuses on a specific book of the Bible and interprets it verse by verse to help the reader better understand the context and the meaning.

34 Thomson, 8.
when he ascended into Heaven (see Fig. 1). He wrote, “It has no resemblance whatever to a human foot; and it is humiliating to see the pilgrims bowing to, praying before, and covering with kisses, a forgery so manifest.”

![Figure 1: The footprint of Jesus, Church of the Ascension](image)

Such descriptions and warnings to future travelers to beware the deceit of the locals only added to the negative stereotype of all Arabs being untrustworthy and reliant on trickery rather than honest labor. When Thomson arrived at the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, he bemoaned the site’s lavish decoration and gave thanks that “no amount of learning or research can establish the remotest connection between any act of our Saviour and these so-called holy places.”

Twain similarly noted that when one reached the place where Jesus was crucified,

he finds it all he can do to keep it strictly before his mind that Christ was not crucified in a Catholic Church. He must remind himself every now and then that the great event transpired in the open air, and not in a gloomy, candle-lighted cell in a little corner of a vast church, up-stairs – a small cell all bejeweled and bespangled with flashy ornamentation, in execrable taste.

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36 From author’s collection.
38 Twain, 1864-1865 (iBook, horizontal).
Likewise, Thomson warned that places like Bethany no longer held anything worthy of respect, as they contained nothing but “fanatical” Muslims. Instead, Thomson and others encouraged villagers to make their way to the countryside, to walk the land as Jesus must once have and ignore the false shrines in the cities.

Nineteenth-century travelogues also set the stage for twentieth-century debates over modernization in Palestine. The emphasis on Palestine serving as a commentary created conflicting pressures on American desires for Palestine and its inhabitants’ development. On the one hand, in order to serve as a “living commentary,” Palestine needed to remain as close to biblical times as possible. In many ways, the fact that Arabs seemed incapable of modernizing was a bit of a blessing to visitors, as they could then serve as a living museum, a real-life version of biblical times. The dress, the camels, the way work was done, even the leprosy with which some people suffered, allowed the traveler to experience Palestine as Jesus did. On the other hand, however, the dirtiness, squalor, disease, and generally agreed upon poor condition of Palestine shocked Americans, who wished to see it brought up to “modern” standards. As will be shown, this posed problems for Arabs seeking to overturn American stereotypes about them: while Americans might see Arabs as links to the biblical past, that link served only to condemn them as pre-modern relics, rather than secure their claim to the region. Americans also saw Jews as connected to Bible times, but Zionists used that in combination with descriptions of Jewish modernization efforts in Palestine as a positive argument in their case for Palestine.

Time and again, authors noted (or lamented) the poor state of the Holy Land, from its destitute and sick inhabitants, to fraudulent shrines making fools of unwary pilgrims, to the very landscape itself. Thomson expressed his disappointment with the Jordan River, which he noted did not deserve the adjective of “stormy” that was often applied to it in the hymns he sang as a

boy.\footnote{Thomson, Vol. I, 346.} Henry Field’s first reaction upon seeing Jerusalem was to exclaim, “it was not the Jerusalem of my dreams!” He then noted that another venerable missionary feared “that the sight of so much that was far from sacred, would jar painfully on his cherished impressions of the land where our Saviour lived and died.”\footnote{Field, 9-10.} Many writers also emphasized the amount of disease, especially leprosy, which served the dual purpose of demonstrating the lack of progress and development in the region (one author noted that if Palestine had a “respectable” government, the disease would be eradicated) as well as giving readers a living example of the types of people the New Testament described Jesus healing.\footnote{Geikie, Vol. I, 530. See also Thomson, Vol. I, 530-534; Hardy, 18; Thomson, Vol. II, 11-12, 52, 283; Geikie, Vol. I, 331, 530; Vol. II, 505; Field, 110, 147.}

By and large, the blame for this situation was squarely located on the Arab residents and the Turkish government. Throughout the travelogues studied here, the Arabs were largely described as lazy, idle, and ignorant and the Turks as wretched and intolerable governors.\footnote{Hardy, 18; Thomson, Vol. II, 11-12, 52, 283; Geikie, Vol. I, 331, 530; Vol. II, 505; Field, 110, 147.} Thus, for the reader back home, the growing picture of Palestine was of a place that God specifically chose to be the setting for interaction with humanity, but much of the splendor and wonder that should have been there had disappeared after centuries of misrule and lack of development. There were signs of hope, however, that Palestine could be rehabilitated – if the right people were put in charge. Just who fit that description, however, was a bit harder to determine.

While there was a great deal of uniformity among the travelogues when it came to the importance of Palestine for understanding the Bible or decrying the problems of the Holy Land, ideas diverged when it came to judging the local Christian and Jewish populations. Generally speaking, most Protestant Christians felt that the Eastern Orthodox churches that populated the
Holy Land did not count as “true Christians.” Early missions to the Holy Land focused primarily on converting these faiths to Protestantism, though such attempts ended in nearly complete failure. Many writers attributed the gaudy shrines to the Orthodox and Catholic churches and sought to dissociate such sites from the “real” places where New Testament events must have occurred. Henry Field, after watching the Greek Orthodox celebrating Easter in Jerusalem, wrote that he was “in a sad mood at such a representation of Christianity in the cradle of our religion.” Despite the sense of revulsion they felt about this version of Christianity, Field and Geikie in particular saw the Christians of the Holy Land as the only oases of industry and modernity in the region. When describing Bethlehem, Geikie noted how everything was well cared for and numerous signs of industry and hard work. The reason for this “unusual” situation? “The people of the district [were] Christian.” Field was more reserved in his appraisal of local Christians, but did note that Nazareth had a Christian majority and their “superior character” was evident by their stone houses (compared to the largely mud homes seen elsewhere). Where Thomson bemoaned Bethany’s Muslim inhabitants, Geikie noted that the area between it and Jerusalem was now in the hands of Christians and the “industry which . . . characterizes our religion – has made the wilderness blossom like the rose.” The idea of making the desert bloom later became a defining part of the Zionist message, echoed by American supporters who felt that only the influx of European Jews to Palestine could rehabilitate the land (as will be discussed in depth in chapter 5), while the work of Arab

44 Makdisi, chapter one.
45 Field, 51.
47 Field, 122-123.
Christians would fade away from public memory, harkening to the growing acceptance of a Judeo-Christian identity among Americans in the twentieth century.49

Travelers to Palestine in the nineteenth century, however, had mixed views of Jews and their ability to change the status of the Holy Land. Few had anything positive to say of the native Jewish population. One year after Theodor Herzl published The Jewish State (which served as the starting point of the modern Zionist movement), Field wrote that the Jews of Jerusalem were impoverished and only survived through the support of European Jews.50 Thomson also felt that the best hope for Palestine lay in foreign Jewish hands, writing that a railroad in Palestine would be unlikely until “the great Hebrew capitalists of the world purchase Palestine from the Sultan.”51 Despite their misgivings about the Jewish community, Thomson and Field both seemed to rate it slightly above Muslim Arabs. Geikie took the opposite track. In his view, the streets of the Jewish quarter were “the filthiest in a filthy city” and the poorest of the poor; this, he noted, despite the fact that their situation was greatly improved by donations from Western Europeans. He saw no hope for any kind of mass return of Jews to Palestine, falling back on traditional anti-Semitic stereotypes to describe “the Hebrew” as a stranger to agriculture, preferring to use financial cunning rather than the hard work of the hand to make a living. Instead, he placed his hope for Palestine’s future in the Arabs (Christian and Muslim alike), should they ever be able to rid themselves of Turkish rule.52 While few authors shared his opinion, blaming the Turks for the state of Palestine and the current position of the Arabs

50 Field, 29.
became a common theme among Arabs and their supporters as the debate over Palestine heated up in the twentieth century.

**Rise of Zionism**

In terms of travel literature, by the turn of the twentieth century it was possible for Americans to picture the Holy Land as a place of living spiritual history, where one could trod the same path as Jesus and more fully understand the Bible, while at the same time regretting the lack of development and the moral, political, and economic failings of the current inhabitants. Palestine also held promise for the future, as the idea of millennialism swept through the country. Millennialism refers to the belief that Jesus will someday return to rule the world for a thousand years. Before that could happen, however, certain things needed to occur, primarily the “restoration” of Jewish control over Palestine. As a result, many evangelical Christians in the United States became strong supporters of Jews returning to Zion. As the ABCFM announced the deployment of Parsons and Fisk to Jerusalem, there was great excitement that Americans were taking up the mission to bring the Gospel to the Jews of the Holy Land.53

This did not mean that millennialist Christians embraced the Jewish people as brothers; on the contrary, many still condemned Jews for killing Christ and rejecting the message of salvation Christians brought. The Syrian Mission emphasized that when it came to converting Palestine’s Jews, it was important to “fix them on their individual character and condition, as sinners against God and exposed to the curse of his law.”54 Many Christians assumed Jews would face God’s judgment upon Christ’s return. But in order for that to happen, it was

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necessary for those same Christians to support the downfall of the Ottomans and the rise of a Jewish state.\textsuperscript{55} A subgroup of millennials, the Christian Zionists, made their own attempts to ready Palestine for the necessary Jewish migration. In 1867, Pastor George T. Adams led 156 congregants from their home in Maine to settle near Jaffa with the goal of revitalizing the land to prepare for the coming waves of Jewish immigrants. They failed miserably, suffering from disease, internal conflict, and no understanding of the land or its people. Within a year, the project collapsed and the Americans returned home.\textsuperscript{56} Other attempts followed, but with similar results. Despite these failures, the efforts of Christian Zionists in the late nineteenth century illustrated that fertile ground existed in the United States for the message of political Zionism.

As Christian Zionists attempted to build support for their cause, Jewish intellectuals in Europe debated among themselves what the future held for them. While a new wave of anti-Semitism rolled through Europe – from the 1881 pogroms in Russia, leading to a mass exodus of Russian Jews, to the 1894 Dreyfus affair in France – Jews found themselves once again debating the limits of assimilation and the potential of a Jewish state. Theodor Herzl, an Austro-Hungarian Jew living in France, followed Dreyfus’ trial closely, becoming more and more convinced of Dreyfus’ innocence in the espionage case and that anti-Semitism had turned him into a scapegoat. It was this case that Herzl later said turned him into a Zionist.\textsuperscript{57} Herzl published his thoughts on the “Jewish question” in his 1896 book \textit{The Jewish State}, in which he laid out the argument that assimilation was no longer a viable option for the Jewish people. History, in his mind, had demonstrated time and again that no matter where Jews went or how

\textsuperscript{55} Makdisi, 20-21.

\textsuperscript{56} Makdisi, 110.

well they assimilated into their new culture, the seed of anti-Semitism always came with them and soon took root.\textsuperscript{58}

Whereas Christian Zionists were driven by religious prophecies and beliefs, the political Zionism that followed Herzl’s work had a greater secular emphasis. Palestine was the natural Jewish home and to which Jews long held a religious connection, but Jews needed to return to Zion because they would never find peace or security anywhere else. Early proponents of a Jewish state were open to a variety of locations for this new home, but soon Palestine became the goal.\textsuperscript{59} As support grew for Palestine, Herzl and his followers had to contend with the issue of the current Arab inhabitants of Palestine. In public, Herzl largely ignored the issue, stating that Zionism would bring nothing but benefits for the Arabs – new technology, improved agricultural techniques, education, etc. But in private, he called for the removal of Arabs, by urging them to take jobs elsewhere in the Middle East while refusing to employ them within the Jewish state.\textsuperscript{60} Though the Zionist venture struggled during the early decades, these plans for the Arabs (both the public assurances and the private strategies) would re-emerge in the aftermath of the world wars.

\textbf{Arabs in America and Americans Among the Arabs}

Meanwhile, Arab immigration from the Syria region to the United States was increasing, setting the stage for an Arab American political response to issues concerning the Middle East. Arab immigration is often divided into two waves, the first dating from 1870 until World War II

\textsuperscript{58} Herzl, 75-76.


\textsuperscript{60} Morris, 21-22.
and the second beginning after the war and continuing through the present. While post-World War II immigrants varied greatly in terms of home country and were predominately Muslim, Christians from the Greater Syria (composed of present-day Syria, Lebanon, and Israel/Palestine) region overwhelmingly made up the first wave. Although specific numbers are difficult to determine, due to inconsistencies in how immigration officials identified Arabs, it is estimated that approximately 125,000 Arabs migrated to the United States before 1940. They left their homeland for a variety of reasons, but economics and religious persecution drove the majority and shaped their attitudes toward the United States. World’s fairs and national expositions (such as the American Centennial Exposition of 1876) served as an introduction to the United States for many Arabs, who used these opportunities to sell their goods and then encouraged their fellow countrymen to come and do the same. Arab immigrants often came to the United States, like so many others, in search of wealth and hoped to return home eventually. Michael Suleiman refers to this as the “sojourner” mentality, identifying oneself as “in, but not part of, American society.”61 This sojourner mentality meant that in the beginning, there was little incentive for Arab immigrants to take a vocal or active stance in American politics, though this would change as more shed their sojourner identity.

Just as Americans had a particular idea about Palestine, Arab perceptions of the United States were formed by their interactions with American missionaries and impressions of Arab immigrants and travelers to the United States. Whereas American views of Arabs were largely negative, though, Arab views of Americans were generally positive. In the early part of the

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nineteenth century, the United States was relatively unknown; Europe served as the representative of the West and its culture while the United States “remained an abstraction” at best.\textsuperscript{62} The primary contact Arabs had with Americans was through missionaries rather than “sailors, merchants, or soldiers,” which resulted in a much less negative experience and as American missionaries turned their focus to building schools and universities, that positive feeling grew.\textsuperscript{63} While American missionaries did bring their own biases and theories about cultural superiority, and while not every Arab viewed them in such glowing light, having missionaries as the primary point of contact created a significant differentiation in Arab perceptions of Americans versus Europeans.

These positive portraits were bolstered further by the descriptions sent back from Arab immigrants and travelers to the United States. Arab immigrants wrote of the luxury and immensity present in New York City – skyscrapers, elevators, bridges, traffic, the wide variety of people, nearly universal and continuous electricity. The poor in America, they contended, lived better than the rich in the Arab world.\textsuperscript{64} Such positive images helped create a sense of American support and friendship for the Arab world that was absent in its relationship with Europe. Many references were made to this positive Arab-American relationship and what it meant as the debate over Palestine intensified. For many Arabs who became American citizens, there soon became a disappointing disconnect between the idealized version of the United States they held and the reality of American policy toward their homeland.

In addition to travelogue descriptions of the Holy Land for American idea about Arabs, the rise in Arab immigration did create an additional source for stereotype, against which later

\textsuperscript{62} Makdisi, \textit{Faith Misplaced}, 56.

\textsuperscript{63} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{64} \textit{Crossing the Waters}, 40.
Arab Americans would struggle: the Wild West shows. The vast majority of Arab immigrants worked as peddlers, but a significant minority found careers in portraying their culture for American entertainment. This came in the form of the “Bedouin Horseman” that demonstrated the immense skill of the “free sons of the desert.” Arab Horsemen featured in Buffalo Bill’s Wild West show next to the 1893 Columbian Exposition in Chicago as part of the “Congress of Rough Riders.” Many Americans quickly drew comparisons between the nomadic Bedouins and their own country’s experience with Native Americans, who were also represented in these shows. This comparison between Arabs and American Indians also appeared in Twain’s *Innocents Abroad*, where he noted the ways Arabs reminded him of the various tribes he observed in his travels through the United States. Twain’s voyage to the Holy Land also had the side effect of challenging his cherished vision of the Arab horseman. Twain was disgusted by how starved and covered in saddle sores the horses were; seeing the treatment and state of the horses acquired for their journey in Syria forever destroyed the idealized version he had held since boyhood about the Arabs and their dedication to their horses. Writing about his Arab guides, he noted, “if these Arabs be like the other Arabs, their love for their beautiful mares is a fraud.” As the next chapter will explore, these connections between Arabs and American Indians proved problematic for the Institute, and its members worked diligently to disabuse Americans of this perception.

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65 Nance, 112, 115, 118.


67 Twain, 1489, 1499 (iBook, horizontal).
Zionism in United States

Immigration also affected the development of Zionism in the United States. Prior to World War I, global Zionism counted few Americans among its ranks. American Jews were predominately Reform Jews of German origins who advocated assimilation. Largely successful in their own lives, they believed that the United States provided the best way forward and feared that Zionism would lead to questions about Jewish citizens’ patriotism and loyalty to the United States. Rising anti-Semitism in Europe, however, especially the pogroms occurring in Russia, led to an influx of eastern European Jewish immigrants, who were much more open to Zionism.  

This led to conflicting views between and within Jewish denominations, as many of the old guard rejected the idea of Jews as a separate “race” or nationality in need of a home, while the newer immigrants promoted Herzl’s argument that anti-Semitism followed Jews wherever they went and the only solution to such long-standing hatred was the creation of a Jewish state. In response to these debates, the American Jewish Committee (AJC), founded in 1906, sought to promote an alternative view to Zionism. Instead of emphasizing Jewish difference and promoting “special privileges” for Jews, the AJC called for integration within the various countries Jews called home and an emphasis on Judaism as a religious, rather than national, identity. For this generation of Reform Jews, “America was Zion,” and talks of creating a new Jewish state posed a threat. 

World War I and the Balfour Declaration gave Zionism in the United States a new sense of purpose. Supreme Court Justice Louis Brandeis became a prominent spokesperson for

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American Zionism, promoting the idea that Zionism was compatible with American ideals. Brandeis supported the notion of the United States as a “salad bowl” rather than the melting pot; instead of encouraging the complete assimilation and homogenization of immigrant groups, the salad bowl promoted an American society wherein different groups maintained their uniqueness while also holding fast to their American citizenship. This definition of Zionism called on American Jews to financially support the creation of a Jewish state, without any expectation that they would uproot their lives and move there. More significantly, the emerging Zionist sentiment, coalesced in the Zionist Organization of America (ZOA), led to victory in Congress with the passage of the 1922 resolution in support of the Balfour Declaration. Thus, American Zionism served as “more a support system for a nationalist ideology than a nationalist ideology itself.” Congressional support for Palestine remained strong from that point on, yet the Jewish community itself remained divided. The AJC continued to walk the line between supporting voluntary Jewish immigration to Palestine while still opposing the creation of a Jewish state. During the 1920s, anti-immigrant sentiment flourished in the United States, leading many American Jews to warily regard any political philosophy that might open them up to charges of “disloyalty.” American support for Zionism faded, with membership in the ZOA falling drastically.

With the rise of the Nazi regime in Germany, however, a new crop of Reform rabbis challenged the old guard, ushering in an era of intense public campaigns to bring Americans on board with the Zionist program. Rabbis Stephen Wise and Abba Hillel Silver saw the rising

70 Naff, 10-11.
violence against and persecution of Jews in Germany as a clarion call for more direct action in support of a Jewish state. The British White Paper of 1939, which effectively closed Palestine to any future Jewish immigration, served as further evidence that the Jewish people could not rely on the rest of the world to help them. In May 1942, Zionist delegates from Europe and the United States met at the Biltmore Hotel in New York City to create an organized, unified outline for Zionism. The resulting Biltmore Program consolidated the Zionist platform, putting forth the call for a “Jewish Commonwealth” in Palestine. The question then became how to best implement it. Chaim Weizmann, a British Jew who was instrumental in producing the Balfour Declaration and head of the World Zionist Organization, and American rabbi Stephen Wise opted for a more cautious course focusing on politicians. Rabbi Abba Hillel Silver, however, soon became the most prominent and outspoken figure. He helped create the American Zionist Emergency Council (AZEC), which soon became a significant lobbying group for the creation of an independent Jewish state. Members wrote letters, visited Congressmen, and funded a vast publicity campaign to garner support for the new Jewish state. As the horrors of the Holocaust became widely known, the anti-Zionist Jewish voices quieted. The end of World War II thus witnessed a significant change compared to the end of the First World War: the center of Zionism shifted dramatically toward the United States and so too did the public relations campaign.

73 Lawrence Davidson, America’s Palestine: Popular and Official Perceptions from Balfour to Israeli Statehood, (Gainesville, FL: University Press of Florida, 2001), 157-158. The language surrounding Zionist ideas continually changes – “national home,” “state” “commonwealth,” etc., blurring the issue as each held different meanings to different groups.

74 Naff, 23.
Arab American Political Action and the Creation of the Institute of Arab American Affairs

Contrary to popular belief, the Arab American community in the United States had not been inactive during the early twentieth century. Groups like the American Syrian-Lebanese League of North America strongly petitioned the Paris Peace Conference. The Palestine National League sent Palestinian-American Fuad Shatara to testify before Congress when it debated the 1922 resolution to support the Balfour Declaration. The Palestine National League, along with groups like the New Syria Party and the Young Men’s Moslem Association, worked to counter anti-Arab stereotypes and put rising violence in Palestine into context, especially during the riots of 1929. Other prominent Arab American scholars, writers, and activists met with members of the State Department throughout the 1930s, attempting to bring an equal amount of attention to the Arab cause as was given to the rising Zionist voices.

After its initial formation in 1944, the Institute took steps to organize itself in preparation for the tasks ahead. Members of the Institute included Faris Malouf, Peter George, Joseph Sado, Hamdan Ghannam, Fayyed Jabara, E. J. Audi, and I. R. Khalidi, with Malouf unanimously chosen to serve as President. Malouf had also served as the president of the Syrian and Lebanese American Federation of the Eastern States during the 1930s, giving him experience both in organizing and interacting with political leaders. Dr. Philip K. Hitti, a professor of Semitic Literature at Princeton and a renowned expert on the history of the Syrian people, was elected by

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76 Davidson, *America’s Palestine*, 50, 102, 120-121.

77 Davidson, *America’s Palestine*, 120.
a unanimous vote to the Executive Director post on an interim basis.\textsuperscript{78} Hitti completed his temporary tenure in October of 1945, and was replaced by Dr. Khalil Totah, a Palestinian Quaker from Ramallah who became an American citizen in 1946. With the basic organization thus taken care of, the Institute soon began to tackle the logistics of reaching its goals of serving as a common voice for Arabic-speaking Americans and introducing themselves to the rest of the country.

The first significant opportunity for the Institute to introduce itself came at the San Francisco Conference for the formation of the United Nations in April 1945. Malouf attended as the Institute’s representative, with instructions to also assist the delegations from the Arab states. With help from the State Department, he set up an office to conduct Institute-related business. Very quickly, though, he also became an official advisor to the Iraqi delegation. In his capacity as both the President of the Institute and a member of the public relations committee for the Iraqi delegation, Malouf gave interviews, worked as a liaison among the Arab delegations and between them and the State Department, made connections, and sent packages of Institute-related literature to all of the over six hundred delegations from around the world.\textsuperscript{79}

Even with Malouf’s work at the conference, however, the Institute still faced a number of daunting obstacles. The founding members understood that it was imperative to create a sense of solidarity and organization among a “hopelessly divided” and “scattered” Arab American community.\textsuperscript{80} As such, the two tasks preoccupying much of its resources were raising money and creating branches across the country. Throughout its existence, the Institute relied on


\textsuperscript{79} Malouf, Faris S. “Report of the President of the Institute, Covering the Period February 17 to June 2, 1945,” 3-5. Khalil Totah Archives.

membership fees and contributions to pay for the staff, office, and publications of pamphlets and the monthly newsletter, *The Bulletin.* Additionally, by June 1946, the Institute established eleven branches, from Boston to Los Angeles. The subsequent annual report noted that circulation for the *Bulletin* increased to 5,000 (compared with 2,000 in October 1945), four more branches had been established, and Totah (now Executive Director) was contemplating a trip to South America to raise funds and educate people there. Yet despite these improvements, Totah warned that much work remained, especially regarding the condition of the branches. Many essentially were branches in name only, due to only a “tepid” interest in the cause, lack of strong leadership, and constant infighting among members. Thus, two years after its establishment, the head of the Institute was forced to devote precious time and resources to maintaining branches across the country. Despite these limitations and obstacles, the Institute was quite active during its six-year tenure, publishing *The Bulletin*, a variety of pamphlets, and translations of prominent works from their original Arabic, as well as writing to government officials, testifying before Congress, and sending members to give speeches. Through all of these public offerings, the Institute hoped to present a new image of Arabs and Arab Americans to themselves and the American population at large.

**Conclusion**

By 1944, the two prominent sides of the debate over Palestine (Arab and Zionist) had their respective organizations in place in the United States – the AZEC and the Institute. Though

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81 According to the progress report for July, 1945, the Institute sent literature, including but not limited to the Bulletin, out to approximately 4,000 individuals, organizations, politicians, and libraries, in addition to its 1,000 members. Through fees and contributions, it raised $1,945. “Monthly Report of Progress on the Activities of the Institute of Arab American Affairs, July 1-31, 1945,” 1, 3. Khalil Totah Archives.


by no means the only spokespeople for these sides, these two groups produced a large volume of publications and made numerous public appearances. The goal of these publications and appearances was to affect U.S. policy by reaching out to the American public. Some of these arguments were specific to the current events of the 1940s, such as the Holocaust and the plight of its survivors, the role of Arab governments in World War II, and the impact on U.S. national interests in the region in the face of the nascent Cold War. As the following chapters will demonstrate, however, both groups relied on images and arguments that had largely been set up during the nineteenth century, such as issues of religion and race; democracy and justice; and modernization in the Holy Land. Regardless of whether these arguments directly referenced the travelogues of the nineteenth century, there remained a great deal of overlap with the ideas and images they put forth. The overwhelming perception of Arab Palestine was of an inhospitable land, full of disease, deception, and disrepair, in need of an outside power (be it missionaries or Jewish colonizers) to reinvigorate it. While anti-Semitism was still rife throughout the United States, there was a strong connection among Americans between Jews, Palestine, and the Bible stories with which they had grown up, making it seem natural that Jews belong in Palestine and Palestine belonged to the Jews. Since these images largely consisted of negative characterizations of the Arab population, Arab Americans found themselves facing an uphill battle. While Zionists could tap into this legacy and move forward with their arguments from there, Arab Americans had to first attempt to deconstruct or reframe the common conceptions held by their audience before they could progress to the actual issues at hand.

Chapter Two
What’s in a Name? Race and Religion in Identifying Palestine

Introduction

The Institute of Arab American Affairs understood that in order for Americans to accept Arab claims to Palestine, they had to see Arabs as a reflection of American identity. This chapter focuses on the ways in which the Institute sought to redefine Arabs in the minds of Americans as white and, if not Christian, then at least connected to the Christian tradition. At the same time, the Institute had to counter Zionists’ arguments that they were the true reflection of American identity in the Holy Land. Thus, while Arab Americans sought to define themselves as white and downplay the idea of an Arab “race,” the Institute also engaged with the ideas of whether Jews constituted a separate race or if Jews and Arabs shared a common heritage, simply divided by language and religion. By removing race as a dominant factor (and one that squarely placed Arab Palestinians as the “other”), the Institute sought to create a new picture of Arab identity in the minds of the American public in which Americans would see themselves reflected. As the Institute organized itself, one of the primary problems it faced was the fact that Americans really had no idea who the Arabs were outside of stereotypical images of Bedouin riders racing through the desert or beggars and lepers in the streets of Jerusalem. Nor did they understand the history, beliefs, and practices of Islam, or that a significant number of Arabs were actually Christians. They were also ignorant of their Arab American neighbors, even though Arab immigrants began arriving in the United States during the latter half of the nineteenth century.
The “race” question was one of the first issues Arab immigrants had to address, particularly if they made the decision to permanently settle in the United States. Due to naturalization laws dating back to the 1790s, citizenship was only available to whites, and anti-Asian sentiment was particularly noticeable. Through cases like Dow v. the United States, Arabs in the United States successfully challenged the legal classification of “Syrians,” allowing naturalization to go forward. Despite favorable court rulings, however, Arab Americans had a much more difficult time convincing their fellow Americans of their white status and the perception of Arabs as belonging to a lower racial classification continued. This pre-existing negative image of Arabs gave Zionists a distinct advantage when it came to pushing their narrative of Palestine’s past, present, and future as a Jewish state.¹

Questions of racial identification took on additional importance as the debate over Palestine heated up. As the Institute formed, its members debated the proper label for themselves. Arab Americans? Americans of Arabic-speaking stock? Was “Arab” even a race or was it a term drawing on the common language shared by a wide range of people in the region? As this chapter will show, the Institute’s members worked to promote the idea of Arab as a linguistic identifier rather than a racial category, which also allowed them to try to co-opt the Zionist narrative that Arabs in Palestine were a (relatively) recent arrival following the Muslim conquest and that the long-standing claim to the land belonged to the people of Israel. Instead, the Institute and its members promoted the view that Arabs living in Palestine were the descendants of biblical peoples like the Canaanites. They were Arab only inasmuch as they had adopted the language of Muslim invaders in the 600s. The goal of such arguments was to weaken the ties between Zionism and the American imagination of Palestine as the natural home of the Jews, devoid of any previous occupants. Instead, following this argument, the Arabic-

speaking peoples of Palestine had a much longer, uninterrupted presence in the land, while the Hebrews were only temporary inhabitants.\(^2\)

In addition to questions about racial identity, the Institute also had to address religious identity. Unlike the majority of Arabic-speaking Palestinians, the leaders of the Institute were Christian (as were most of the first-wave immigrants from the Middle East to the United States). Khalil Totah, who became the executive director of the Institute after its first year, was a prime example of the influence of Christian missionaries in the region. His family joined the Society of Friends when American Quaker missionaries came to Ramallah. Totah himself was enrolled in the Friends Girls School, then became the first student to join the Friends Boys School (FBS) when it opened a few years later. He continued his higher education in the United States and eventually returned to FBS to serve as its first Palestinian principal. While his tenure at FBS ended on a rocky note due to friction between Totah and the American missionaries running the board, his identity as Quaker Palestinian remained strong and his respect for American missionary activity continued to show through.\(^3\) Despite their personal religious identity, however, members of the Institute understood that Americans still largely visualized Palestine as dominated by “Mohammedans.” The fact that Americans referred to Muslims as Mohammedans demonstrates how little they knew about the Islam, with the implication of the name being that Muslims worshipped the Prophet Muhammad, not God. Such ignorance did not stop them from forming an opinion of the religion, of course. For many Americans, Islam conjured feelings of “fear, suspicion, and hostility.”\(^4\) Instead of exclusively building on the Christian heritage of its


\(^3\) Thomas M. Ricks, *Turbulent Times in Palestine: The Diaries of Khalil Totah, 1886-1955* (Jerusalem: Institute of Palestine Studies, 2009), 17-18, 24, 36-42.

members, the Institute focused on educating Americans about Islam, in the hopes of erasing the exotic/heathen identity commonly associated with it and replacing it with a sense of familiarity, as one of the Abrahamic faiths.

The Institute clearly felt that identity was at a malleable point for Americans and that it needed to look no further than the changing attitudes of Americans toward Jews to prove it. Anti-Semitism had a long history in the United States, as in Europe, but the horrors of the Holocaust marked a distinctive shift in most Americans’ ideas of Jews in general, and Zionists in particular. Appeals to a common Judeo-Christian heritage gained ground, crowding out Arab American attempts to include Islam in that tradition. The old stereotypes of cunning Shylock, or the weak Diaspora Jew, were slowly changing, though they did not disappear. Soon the image of Palestine as a new iteration of the American colonial experience took firm hold in the minds of many Americans, with the Zionists cast in the role of American pioneers and Arabs as the untrustworthy and dangerous “natives.”

A key concern for the Institute, then, was to halt the spread of this image and replace it with an alternative discourse in which the Arabs could reflect the American role.

Cowboys and Indians: Writing the American Pioneer Experience on Palestine

As the previous chapter demonstrated, the idea of Arabs as the equivalent of American Indians had deep roots in the United States, aided by numerous travelogues and depictions of the Middle East as a land seemingly forgotten by time and waiting for a new group of pioneers to develop it and further cemented with the appearance of Arab horsemen in Buffalo Bill’s Wild West show. This equation of the two groups was quite problematic for Arabs. In the shows,

Arab Bedouin riders attacked caravans as they made their way through the deserts, much like the attacks of Indians on the covered wagons, further identifying Arabs as a dangerous threat lashing out against the bringers of civilization. Even positive views about American Indians, however, posed a threat to Arab aspirations for independence, as both groups were seen as historical relics, rather than peoples with a dynamic culture and equal right to unimpeded lives of their own choosing, free from outside interference. As the nineteenth century drew to a close, there was a rising sense of romanticism about the “vanishing” Indian, especially on the East Coast. Similarly, there was a growing romanticism attached to the Bedouin – a nomadic desert rider, free from the tyranny of civilized, modern life. Yet at the end of the day, these curious relics, both Indian and Bedouin, would have to make room for modernity. Additionally, if the Arabs were the equivalent of American Indians, then those who struggled against them to settle and develop the land must be a new incarnation of American pioneers. By the 1940s, Americans were starting to see the Zionist experience in Palestine as the story of “a modern people . . . tam[ing] a wilderness of ‘savages,’” a group of “chosen people,” independent and self-reliant, unwilling to submit to the harshness of the land.

A related problem with the growing view of the Bedouin as the standard Arab image in the United States was the fact that Bedouin and Arab were and are not interchangeable. The Bedouins of the Middle East were distinctly different from the majority of Arabs who lived in towns or villages and whose primary occupation was farming. Many Arabs had close ties to the

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land they worked, having lived there for generations (whether they directly owned the land or not). Thus, when it came time in the twentieth century for new boundaries to be created, many naturally desired to remain with their homes and fields. From the outsider perspective, though, assuming that Arabs were nomadic Bedouins made it easier to suggest that they could simply take their nomadic ways to another part of the Middle East and allow the Jews to have “a small sliver” of land in the region. Suggesting that Bedouins could simply pick up and move elsewhere of course ignored Bedouin traditions and territorial connections, but it appears that the overriding idea of many Americans was that all land was interchangeable for the Bedouin and it was simply selfish of Palestinians to insist on keeping “Jewish” land. A notable proponent of such an idea was former president Herbert Hoover, whose 1945 “Iraq Plan” proposed simply relocating Palestinian Arabs to Iraq, where they could find more fertile soil, leaving the “modern” Jews to reclaim the “wasted” lands of Palestine. Iraq would also gain by an increase in its population. Everyone came out a winner. Except, as Totah pointed out in a letter to the New York Times, no one bothered to consider whether Palestinian Arabs even wanted to go.8

The Jewish experience in Palestine did indeed play strongly on American conceptions of their own early history, fighting a “savage” native population on the one hand while struggling for independence from colonial government on the other. The Jews were seen as taming a “wild” frontier, bringing Western values and knowledge to a land long left to waste. In his popular, 1944 pro-Zionist book, Palestine, Land of Promise, Walter Lowdermilk declared that the “colonization of Palestine” was like that of the United States, filled with “hardships and dangers in both cases,” including a pre-existing population determined to hold on to their land. This equivalence was so prevalent that a British member of the 1946 Anglo-American

Committee of Inquiry noted with frustration that “the American will give the Jewish settler in Palestine the benefit of the doubt, and regard the Arab as the aboriginal who must go down before the march of progress. After all, he only achieved his own freedom by a war of independence against George III and if the Jew in Palestine comes into conflict with George III’s successors in colonial administration he is bound to win an instinctive American sympathy.”

Arab supporters attempted to reframe the debate by encouraging Americans to see the Arabs as the natural inheritors of the spirit of 1776, reminding the American public that they too were a colonized people, fighting the British for their independence. Such a reversal of the common perception, however, was unlikely, and views of the Arab-as-Indian remained strong. By 1937, Totah noted that Americans, while familiar with Jews, still saw the “A-rab” as a curiosity and a nomad.

The Institute’s leaders understood that the Indian/pioneer association was a powerful one; but rather than try to do away with it, they sought to reframe it. The Institute did not attempt to rewrite American ideas of U.S. history by arguing that European settlement of North America was a crime against the original inhabitants. It agreed with the idea that Americans had built a great nation and the weaker race simply gave way before that greatness. Likewise, it continued to promote an association between U.S. settlement and Indian failure. The reality, though, the Institute argued, was that it was the Jews, not the Arabs, who represented the American Indian in

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the current debate. The Arabs had long ago conquered the land of Palestine and driven out the majority of Jews. Arab language and culture reshaped the country and built its own identity there. The Arabic-speaking peoples settled the land, farmed it, and created their own lives there. Then suddenly, centuries later, the descendants of the old inhabitants returned and demanded the land back, and for some reason, the international community supported them. It would be as though the American Indian tribes suddenly demanded that the United Nations force the United States to give back all the land that once had been theirs, suggesting that Americans could simply return to their place of origin — certainly their true home was Europe as there was no such thing as an “American” race. They all came from Europe, so why not return there and allow the American Indians, who had close ties to the land, retake what was sacred to them? The point of this argument was to show the utter ridiculousness of it, not to try to shame Americans about the history of theft. If Americans would naturally respond negatively to such a scenario, why would they support it simply because the two peoples involved were Jews and Arabs? If American Indians could not come back after only a generation or two and demand the return of their land, what right did Zionists have to claim a land Jews had not controlled for millennia and had not even been a majority in for centuries? Totah, making the theft analogy more explicit, wrote in a letter to the New York Times that Zionism was like “an intruder breaking into a house, making himself comfortable on the main floor and relegating the owner to a corner of the attic.”

From its inception, the Institute sought to separate Arabs from the American Indian stereotype, not by redeeming the standing of American Indians as fellow human beings and equal to white Americans, but by demonstrating that Arabs were far superior to the “natives.”

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While still facing a significant battle, fighting a specific categorization was much more manageable than attempting to overturn centuries of American racial hierarchical thought. An article written by Totah serves as a fitting example of how the Institute handled the “Indian question.” Noting that it was common to see the Arabs equated with American Indians or “the Australian native,” Totah encouraged anyone making such a mistake to review history and “recall what the Arab has contributed to medicine, science, mathematics and general culture,” for “such a people cannot be put in the class with primitive ‘natives.’” ¹³ This reference to a proud and progressive Arab/Islamic culture and history returned again and again throughout the Institute’s publications. In the 1946 pamphlet, *Arab Progress in Palestine*, the Institute provided an overview of the many economic and cultural developments happening in Palestine, such as the orange industry. The Institute made sure to point out that Arabs introduced the fruit to Europe, “just as they did Arabic numerals.” Though a seemingly off-handed remark, the mention of Arabic numerals was a pointed one, reminding readers of Arab contributions to civilization long before the rise of Europe. ¹⁴ This history, however, was not enough to conquer decades of negative stereotypes.

The battle to disassociate Arabs from Indians largely focused on culture, development, and ideas of civilization. No one made the case that the two groups were from the same race, but the perceived lack of development lumped them together, with negative implications for the Arabs. Separate from this, however, was an intense debate over the precise racial classification of Arabs, which played out in both public perception and the courts.


Light or Dark? Race and Categorizing Arab Immigrants

A significant battle for the Institute was to convince the American public that Arabs were not a strange and less civilized Other, but a group that shared many of their own traits, beliefs, and ideals. However, Americans had little exposure to Arabs, thus drawing much of their understanding from second- or third-hand sources, and could not even agree on what racial classification Arabs should be ascribed. By the 1940s, Arab Americans were still relatively recent arrivals and small in number, with roughly 125,000 Arabs migrating to the United States before 1940.\textsuperscript{15} Many such immigrants found work as peddlers, tapping into existing networks of earlier Syrian immigrants and faring well for themselves. World’s fairs and national expositions (such as the American Centennial Exposition of 1876 in Philadelphia) served as an introduction to the United States for many Arabs, who used these opportunities to sell their goods and then encouraged their fellow countrymen to come and do the same. As previously discussed, those same fairs also helped cement American ideas of Arabs as nomadic warriors.

The First World War and its aftermath changed life for the Arabic-speaking communities in the United States. The war severed connections to the homeland and severely limited the number of immigrants from Ottoman controlled territories. This isolation led to a growing assimilationist sentiment, a transition from “sojourner to permanent settler.” As a result, Arabs increasingly worked to shed their Arab identity and encouraged their children to fully embrace American culture, learn English, and understand American politics. Nevertheless, many Arabs remained tied to their homelands and used their growing involvement in politics to lobby for

\textsuperscript{15} Samir Khalaf, “The Background and Causes of Lebanese/Syrian Immigration to the United States before World War I” in Eric J. Hooglund, ed., Crossing the Waters: Arabic-Speaking Immigrants to the United States before 1940 (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1987), 1. Exact numbers on Arab immigrants to and population in the United States has long been difficult to pin down, in part due to poor records by immigration officials along with imprecise census questions.
their liberation from the Ottomans. It is important to note that politics at this stage often did not refer to running for or holding political office, but rather actively working to educate Americans about Arabs and the Arab world. Likewise, the early Arab immigrant’s idea of “good citizenship was to obey the law and be patriotic,” with patriotism defined as “unquestioning loyalty. . . . Any aspects of dissent or new ideas were attacked as perhaps undermining the American system. Thus, American democracy was greatly admired and staunchly, often blindly, defended. The system was almost too sacred to be tampered with.”\(^{16}\) The influence of such a definition will be seen in the language the Institute used in its publications, as praise for the American system or the intentions of politicians coexisted with disagreements regarding American policy or government officials. As a result, the majority of Arab associations within the United States at that time focused on helping fellow Arab immigrants negotiate life in the United States. By the turn of the twentieth century, and especially after World War I made travel between the United States and Ottoman territory incredibly difficult, the sojourner mentality gave way to a desire for permanent citizenship.

At the same time, nativism in the United States created obstacles for Arab immigrants who sought to become naturalized citizens. Since the nation’s early days, naturalization was reserved for whites; yet no law or ruling specified what constituted “whiteness.” Judges ruling on the issue determined whiteness based on a range of factors including “skin color, facial features, national origin, language, culture, ancestry, the speculation of scientists, popular opinion, or some combination of these factors.”\(^{17}\) While some cases were generally more direct, especially

\(^{16}\) Suleiman, *Arabs in America*, 5, 8; Michael W. Suleiman, “Early Arab-Americans: The Search for Identity,” in Hooglund, 47-49. Suleiman also notes that first wave immigrants were often suspicious of any political activity that “involved a challenge to specific laws or opposition to authority figures,” “Early Arab-Americans,” 50.

regarding the Chinese, immigrants from the Middle East posed a more complex problem. In 1899, the Bureau of Immigration initially identified “Syrians” and “Palestinians” as Caucasians, but by 1906 Arabs were classified as “Asiatics” and thus ineligible for naturalization. The most high-profile case to deal with the issue was the naturalization of George Dow, a Syrian immigrant living in Charleston, South Carolina. Dow’s application first appeared in February 1914 before Judge Henry Smith, who ruled that Dow’s “skin was ‘darker than the usual person of European descent,’” making him ineligible for naturalization. The Arab immigrant community responded with zeal to raise awareness and money for an appeal, which went before the 4th Circuit Court of Appeals the following year. The appeals court overturned Smith’s decision, ruling that “‘Physically the modern Syrians are of mixed Syrian, Arabian, and even Jewish blood. They belong to the Semitic branch of the Caucasian race, thus widely differing from their rulers, the Turks, who are in origin Mongolian.’” The racial standing of Arabs thus appeared settled, at least in the eyes of the law.

Decades later, members of the Institute built on this idea that Arabs shared a common ancestry with Jews and were a race distinctly different from the Turks, whom most Arabs blamed for the conditions of the Holy Land. For centuries, Americans identified the Ottoman Turks as the fanatic Muslim enemy to the Western Christians. In order to move past such a strongly engrained negativity, it was essential for the Institute to paint the Arab world as separate from the Ottomans and as a group who also suffered under their misrule. Furthermore, identifying Arabs and Jews as a people sharing a common heritage provided several counterarguments. First, it served as a potential rebuke for charges of anti-Semitism (i.e., Arabs cannot be anti-

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19 Naff, 256-57.
Semitic as they are Semites themselves). Second, it negated the argument that Palestinian Arabs were recent invaders; instead, they too had ties to the land stretching back to biblical times and were suffering under Turkish oppression. Third, as Jews’ racial standing improved in the American mind, Arabs could hope that their classification as white might finally shift from legally granted to commonly accepted.\(^20\)

**Defining “Arab” for the Institute**

The history of Arabs in America, and the Dow case in particular, clearly demonstrated that the racial categorization of Arabs had to be addressed: what was the best way to define Arabs that created a positive view in the minds of Americans, linking Arabs with a more white, Christian identity, rather than as a “backward native” or menacing Turk? One of the first questions Institute members had to answer was how to refer to themselves and their community. Minutes from early meetings provide some sense of the level of debate over the issue, as members pondered the pros and cons of “Arabs” or “Arabic-speaking” when referencing “[their] people.” Dr. Phillip Hitti, the temporary first executive director, strongly objected to the use of the term “Arabs,” though without specifying why. Consequently, the Institute’s literature overwhelmingly used the terms “Arabic-speaking” or “Americans of Arabic-speaking stock.”\(^21\)

There are several reasons why the Institute may have chosen to use the phrase “Arabic-speaking” rather than “Arab.” First, “Arabic-speaking,” and especially “Americans of Arabic-speaking stock,” suggested that the Arab aspect of the group’s identity was secondary and a

\(^{20}\) H.I. Katibah, ed. *The Case Against Zionism* (New York: The Palestine National League, 1921), np. For more on the changing racial status and American perceptions of Jews, see Mart.

\(^{21}\) “Minutes of the Executive Committee Meeting, Aug. 2, 1945.” Khalil Totah Archives; “Fortnightly Meeting of the Office Staff, Aug. 9, 1945.” Khalil Totah Archives.
feature of language rather than race or ethnicity. This point was emphasized in the Institute’s pamphlet, *Introducing the Arabs to Americans*. The opening page reiterated the idea that the Arabs “belong to the Caucasian branch of the human family” and, like the Jewish people, were Semites, connected to the ancient Hebrews, Phoenicians, Babylonians, and Assyrians. Arab, in this view, was not a racial category, but simply a linguistic characterization. As a result, “Arabic-speaking Americans” suggested an assimilated group of the same racial category that happened to retain another language, while simply using the term “Arab” would only continue to highlight the otherness of the organization and its members.\(^2\) This serves as another example of how members engaged in the process of identification. The Institute’s publications specifically tailored the idea of “Arab” to align with identities to which Americans may have been more receptive.

Secondly, such terminology may have helped differentiate the Institute and its American status from the Arab Office in Washington, D.C. The Arab Office, which opened in July 1945, was the outgrowth of a meeting of Arab governments looking to create a lobbying group in the United States to combat Zionist propaganda. Unlike the Institute, the Arab Office was clearly a foreign organization, registered under the Foreign Agents Registration Act. Though the Institute was an American organization founded by and made up of American citizens, opponents did periodically accuse it of being a foreign propaganda group, and it was often confused with the Arab Office. The more the Institute could emphasize its American roots, the better. When calling for subscriptions and memberships at the end of each issue of the *Bulletin*, the Institute framed itself as a “free democratic organization” speaking “in the name of American

In his letters to government officials such as President Harry S. Truman or Secretary of State George C. Marshall, Totah emphasized that Institute leaders critiqued U.S. positions on Palestine as American citizens. Likewise, when Zionists and their supporters challenged the Institute or Totah himself, he nearly always situated his position as an American citizen, having gained that designation in 1946. Totah’s appearance on a radio debate, *Town Meeting*, provides an example of this, as well as the hurdles to getting the Arab view across. The debate took place on August 15, 1946, and was broadcast across the nation. Four speakers were present: Dr. James G. McDonald, an American who served on the Anglo-American Committee of Inquiry in 1946; Dr. James C. Heller, the vice-president of the Zionist Organization of America; Mr. Philip Jordan, the first secretary of the British Embassy; and Dr. Totah, representing the Institute. The transcript of the debate makes clear that the crowd was largely receptive to the Zionist side, applauding often during McDonald’s and Heller’s speeches, with no applause for either Totah or Jordan during their opening remarks. Even the “Speaker’s Column” insert in the published transcript implied a pro-Zionist sympathy: both McDonald’s and Heller’s biographies contained several paragraphs each, describing the men’s education, jobs, and activities. Totah and Jordan, meanwhile, received one sentence apiece; Totah was listed simply as “executive director of the Institute of Arab American Affairs” and Jordan was described as “Formerly chief foreign correspondent and war correspondent for the *London News-Chronicle*, Philip Jordan is a First Secretary at the British Embassy in Washington, D.C.” Throughout the


25 Convened in Dec. 1945, the Anglo-American Committee of Inquiry was a joint effort by the United States and Great Britain to discuss the issue of Jewish immigration into Palestine and find a solution for the Displaced Persons (DP) problem in Europe.
debate, McDonald and Heller repeatedly dismissed the Arab world as lacking in democracy and progress. Totah replied by first pointing out developments in the Arab world and then critiquing American racial standards, stating that the United States should let the Arabs “look after their own democracy and let us here – I speak as an American citizen – look after our own democracy in Georgia, for example.”26 His emphasis on his status as an American citizen exemplified the ways in which Totah sought to serve as a bridge between the United States and the Arab world, by educating Americans about Arabs, while also pointing out the hypocrisy in American policy (lecturing Arabs on democracy while refusing to practice it at home27), but from the position of a concerned citizen, not a radical outsider. The statement created an “us versus them” binary, but the “us” with whom Totah identified was not the country of his birth, but the country of his adoption – the United States.

Third, the terminology of Arabic-speaking Americans reflected the fact that there was no overarching consensus of what being Arab in America meant. Statistics about the number of Arab immigrants had long been distorted due to immigration officials’ inability or unwillingness to properly identify the ethnicity of arrivals from the Near East; “Turk,” “Arab,” and “Syrian” were all used interchangeably. Organizations formed around World War I faced growing battles between those who wanted to differentiate Syrian and Lebanese identity, rather than remaining under the umbrella of Syrian/Greater Syria. The Arab-American community itself seemed

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“hopelessly divided,” a fact Totah bemoaned often as he attempted to organize branch offices. In addition to introducing Americans to the Arab world, the Institute also sought to create a “consciousness of solidarity” among Arabic-speaking Americans.²⁸

Perhaps more importantly, consideration had to be given to how Americans would interpret the word “Arab.” Upon hearing it, would they imagine a dynamic people with a long history of contributing to civilization, a mix of Christians and Muslims who praised the work of American missionaries and saw themselves as the inheritors of American ideals in the Middle East, marching forward on the path to progress? Or would they picture a Bedouin nomad riding through the Arabian desert as a relic of a bygone era, or a follower of a “strange” and “exotic” religion to which no American could relate? The Institute called on its community to demonstrate to Americans that they were “neither beggars nor gypsies but people of an ancient culture, civilization and a glorious past.”²⁹

Reducing the emphasis on Arabs as a distinct race posed a number of opportunities, but it also carried risk. On the one hand, for the Institute, it served as a method of diminishing the “otherness” of Arab Americans and Palestinians in general. By emphasizing the idea of Arabic-speaking, rather than Arab, the Institute could help Americans transition their views of Arabs into any more positive group – those listed in the Bible, who dominated Palestine before the Hebrews; as part of the “white race”; or even as brothers of the Jewish people Americans were


²⁹ “Our Job at the Institute.”
so dedicated to supporting. On the other hand, Zionist supporters used a similar idea to negate the Arab position. In a 1945 article in the Zionist publication *Palestine*, author Wendell Phillips argued there “is no such thing as ‘The Arabs.’ I suppose the nearest thing to an Arab is the person who lives in Arabia. . . . He is not against Zionism. He does not know what Zionism is.” Instead, it was the “masses of Moslems in Palestine itself” who were the most anti-Zionist (though, he continued, it was precisely this group that benefited the most from the Zionist project, reaping the fruits of the civilization). Framing the race question in this manner allowed the Zionist side to portray non-Jewish Palestinians as a group without any particular cultural or national heritage to tie them to the land. They were simply wanderers who could either stay and be absorbed as part of the Zionist project or, if they identified as Arab, they could return to the home of Arabs, Saudi Arabia. When speaking of Arab Palestinians, Phillips and others chose instead to refer to them as “the Moslems,” reducing their position to religion, and an unfamiliar one at that. The Muslim claim to Palestine, according to this line of thinking, had little standing, since Islam was a relatively new religion and one that had few direct ties to the land of Palestine itself. Jerusalem might serve as an important setting, but it was not the heart or center of Islam. Judaism, in contrast, was intimately tied to the land itself. It was not simply a spiritual connection, but a physical one as well. Under this perception, Jews constituted a race unto themselves and that race had a state – Palestine. Despite their long exile, the land continued to call to them; Muslims, according to this line of argument, had no such equivalent tie. This position also ignored the significant minority of Christian Arabs, either out of ignorance of their existence or because to recognize Arab Christians risked providing a sense of commonality between Arabs and Americans that could be used to the Arab advantage.

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The Institute sought to use similar questions to divide and weaken the Zionist claim, most directly by tapping into the question of what a Jewish state meant for Jews in the United States. Many Jews, especially those connected with the American Council for Judaism (ACJ), feared that the creation of a Jewish state would leave American Jews vulnerable to charges of divided loyalty, just as they were starting to feel more secure in their American assimilation. Writing in 1945, Rabbi Elmer Berger argued that the whole idea of “Jews as a nation” came not from Jews, but rather the early Catholic Church, seeking to stamp out the threat of a competing universal religion. This was an attitude Jews sought to overcome for centuries as they tried to assimilate and join other nations, and just as it seemed they were on the brink of success, with their countrymen seeing them as “Englishmen or Frenchmen or Americans of Jewish faith,” the Zionist movement entered the scene “demanding recognition of Jews as a separate, unintegratable [sic] nation.” American Jews, he argued, were the greatest example of the “efficacy” of integration “as the solution to the so-called ‘Jewish problem.’” Should the Zionist program win out, and Judaism become a nation with a geographic location, then Jews not living in that state would be forced to choose between becoming “resident aliens or forswear[ing] their Jewish nationalism.”

The Institute built on that divide by publishing and highlighting cases where prominent Jewish voices raised the question of what a Jewish state meant for Jews worldwide. Finding Jewish voices to raise these concerns was essential. The Institute’s goal was to create goodwill between the United States and the Arabic-speaking world. That would be difficult to accomplish.

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by trading in accusations of disloyalty. So instead, the Institute simply reprinted the soul-searching of other Jewish voices, which also presented a way to counter the assumption that all Jews were Zionists. One method consisted of highlighting examples of American Jews who argued against Zionism in order to paint Zionists as a small minority who simply had access to a loud bullhorn (namely, a friendly press). In its monthly *Bulletin*, the Institute extensively quoted a letter to the *New York Times* by a Jewish woman who wrote that most Jews were simply afraid of the Zionists but hated to give an impression of “‘disunity.’” Other Jewish writers agreed, stating that American Jews were confused and hid their ignorance by remaining silent, allowing the small minority to make the most noise.34 A 1945 Institute pamphlet quoted a Christian preacher and writer who called on Jews to decide if Judaism was a nation or a religion, for if it was a nation, with a geographic location, “then the Jews in American (and other lands) must either choose to be resident aliens or forswear their Jewish nationalism and become citizens in the lands where they live.”35 In addition to bringing up examples in the *Bulletin*, the Institute dedicated an entire booklet, *Papers on Palestine III*, to articles by “distinguished Jews who oppose political Zionism.” Published in 1947, this pamphlet, the third and last of the *Papers on Palestine* series, was unique among the Institute’s publications in being exclusively filled with Jewish writers. The goal of the pamphlet was to demonstrate how Zionism was really a corruption of the “ethical and universal” form of Judaism, which was the “first great religious impetus to the emancipation of mankind from tribalism and to lay the foundations for a world in which all men shall be brothers.”36 Zionism posed a threat to that great tradition, according to the


Institute, and supporters of that universal vision were “at last aroused and alarmed” by it. The contributors emphasized that Jews were not a race nor were they “homeless,” as Zionism declared. They had made themselves homes across the world, in the United States, in Russia, in Canada, in Scandinavia, and elsewhere. As Rabbi Reichert explained, the hope of “national restoration” was religious, not worldly. It could only come through the return of the Messiah, not through human hands.\(^3^7\) By insisting on a racial identification of Jews, Zionists were only adding to the risks faced by Jews around the world, who simply wanted to practice their religion in peace, wherever they might live.

**Christians and the Issue of Palestine**

These questions about Judaism as a race versus religion exemplify the interconnectedness of racial categorization debates and religion. It was not enough for Arabs to be considered white. For the Institute to truly connect with Americans and gain their support, it was necessary to divorce the Arabs of Palestine from the negative stereotypes Americans had of Islam. The Institute followed a dual-prong approach in this regard by both emphasizing the Christian ties to Palestine and building up Islam as a brother religion to Christianity. Arab supporters in particular often brought up the issue of Arab Christians, who were closely aligned with the Muslim Arab population in rejecting Zionist aspirations. Again and again, publications from the Institute and the Arab Office reminded Americans of the position of the 140,000 – 150,000 Arab Christians in Palestine and emphasized that these Christians strongly identified with the Arab position on Palestine. Church leaders in Palestine denounced partition and called for Arab rule.


which challenged the idea that Christians should fear Muslim rule as a threat to Christian religious sites and practices in the Holy Land. In addition to presenting a close bond between Arab Christians and Muslims, Arab writers also planted seeds of doubt concerning how well Zionists could be trusted to maintain Christian holy places, publishing rumors of Zionist plans to destroy the Church of the Holy Sepulchre. When former U.S. president Herbert Hoover proposed to simply relocate Palestinian Arabs to Iraq, the Institute responded in a *New York Times* letter, reminding Hoover and his supporters that Christians lived in Palestine too and it was just as holy to them as to Muslims. When testifying before the Anglo-American Committee of Inquiry, Hitti continually referenced the Christian community of Palestine, Lebanon, and Syria, a point the *New York Times* made sure to highlight. While the Institute’s writers continued to defend the rights of Muslim Arabs in Palestine, it was clear that they recognized Americans would be more likely to identify with and support fellow Christians. In a letter to Hitti, Faris Malouf (one of the founders of the Institute) wrote of the importance of Christian clergy testifying against Zionism in front of the Senate, as it would help counter the belief that only “fanatic [Muslim] Arabs” were opposed to the Jewish state.

Proponents of an Arab state also held up the Christian community as an example of how religious minorities should fit into Arab Palestine. First, they should not expect political domination. As one Institute pamphlet noted, Christians all over the world saw Palestine as their “spiritual home,” but did not use that to demand changing Palestine to a Christian state (ignoring the Crusades). The fact that Palestine was home to Judaism and gave birth to its prophets did not

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40 Faris Malouf to Philip Hitti, December 6, 1944, Box 5, File Folder 8, The Hitti, Philip Khuri Papers, Arab American (Near Eastern) Collection, IHRC Archives, University of Minnesota.
grant Jews exclusive rights anymore than Jesus’ birth in Bethlehem gave Christians the right to rule. Second, the Christian community demonstrated that minority religious rights were respected; otherwise, would not Palestinian Christians be clamoring for Zionist rule? But instead, they were standing in support of Arab independence. As one writer put it, were American Christians really willing to see the “children of the early Church, who have kept the faith through peril, toil and pain, to be transferred to other lands in order to make room for Zionists”? Christian and Muslim Arabs had lived together in peace for centuries and Christian holy sites had long been protected and respected. Were the Zionists truly interested in doing the same? Were American Christians really willing to take the risk?

Another connection between Christians and Palestinian Arabs was the role of Christian missionaries. In his famous book, *The Arab Awakening*, George Antonius described Arab nationalism growing out of the work of American (and to an extent, European) Protestant missionaries. These missionaries set up schools, brought in an Arabic printing press, and encouraged a renaissance of Arabic literature. Newspapers were published and literary clubs formed among the intellectuals of the Syrian region. As Benedict Anderson explained in *Imagined Communities*, the proliferation of the printed word was an important catalyst for nationalism, and Arab nationalism was no different. After the Young Turk Revolution in 1908 and a stronger movement toward an Ottoman identity, those literary circles became much more nationalistic, laying the groundwork for the eventual Arab Revolt during World War I. That nationalism only increased after the war and the imposition of the mandates on Syria and


As Antonius saw it, the Arab world owed its independence to American Christian missionaries. The Institute largely supported the Antonius view of missionary nationalism. This made sense considering Totah’s Quaker heritage. The Institute dated Arab friendship with the United States to the arrival of American missionaries in 1834, who “brought the first printing press” to the Arab world. Instead of “exploit[ing]” the Arabs, as the Europeans had, Americans worked to “plant the seeds of democracy.” Totah reminded Americans that American missions, universities, schools, and hospitals had built and strengthened a deep friendship between the United States and the Arab world. Even the Arab Office echoed this sentiment, writing that contact with American schools served as “one of the chief factors contributing to the tremendous spiritual and cultural reawakening” of the Arab people. By giving American missionaries credit for Arab nationalism, they also implicitly gave Americans the responsibility for fulfilling that vision. The Arab world was not some far-off, exotic location to which the United States had no ties. Instead, under this interpretation, Americans were the midwives to the birth of Arab nationalism, especially in Palestine. Arabs looked up to the United States as a role model and valued the close relationship between the two. But by allowing Zionists to blind the public, Americans

43 George Antonius, *The Arab Awakening* (New York, NY: Simon Publications, 1939). It is important to note, however, that Antonius’ version has come under critical review since its publication in 1939. While Antonius had access to rare and important documents, especially surrounding the McMahon-Hussayn correspondence, his political commentary did not hold up under academic scrutiny. Two significant criticisms of the missionary narrative are that it hides or erases Arab efforts, completely independent of missionary work, in fighting for a national identity and that Antonius mixed his scholarly work in the book with an activist journalist tone in his effort to influence the debate over Palestine as it was playing out. See James Gelvin, *Divided Loyalties: Nationalism and Mass Politics in Syria at the Close of Empire* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1999); Carol Hakim, *The Origins of the Lebanese National Idea, 1840-1920* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2013); Rashid Kalidi, “Arab Nationalism: Historical Problems in the Literature,” *American Historical Review* Vol. 96, No. 5 (Dec. 1991): 1363-1373.

risked losing that special standing, not only with the Arab world but also with the global Muslim community.

**The Third Abrahamic Religion: Defining Islam**

Despite these appeals to American Christians, the issue of religion, like that of race, posed potential roadblocks for the Institute’s hope of building a stronger bond with the general American public, as most Americans viewed Islam negatively and with great suspicion. American missionaries to the Middle East in the nineteenth century wrote home that the Arabs were of a much higher racial standing than other groups, specifically the Hawaiians and Africans, but that Islam kept the Arabs from progressing any further. By the twentieth century, the perception of Islam as completely dominating the lives of the Arab people and being an enemy of modernization still held sway. This posed a significant problem. Like many of the first wave immigrants and their descendants, the members of the Institute were largely Christian, and their Christian ties were reflected in the Institute’s monthly *Bulletin*, which recognized Christian holidays (wishing readers a Merry Christmas or Happy Easter, for instance) while omitting Muslim ones. Articles predicted that American Christians would fully support the Arab perspective on Palestine once they were able to shake off the blinders of Zionist propaganda. Even so, it was clear that in order to have a chance at connecting with the American public, the Institute had to address the issues and stereotypes surrounding Islam.

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The primary strategy, based on the Institute’s publications, was to place Islam in the same religious tradition as Christianity and Judaism, with an emphasis on how both Muslims and Christians in Palestine were under threat from the Zionist project. It was evident that Islam played a significant role in Arab life, and the Institute did not shy away from that fact. In his pamphlet, *Introducing the Arabs to Americans*, Totah repeated the idea that to many Muslims, Islam meant “more than Christianity does to present-day Americans” in terms of informing daily life. To further illustrate this fact, he took a quote from the New Testament, writing, “St. Paul’s words ‘in whom we live and move and have our being’ are a good illustration of the place of God and religion in the minds of Moslems.” He concluded his pamphlet by drawing connections between American ideals and Islam, claiming that “to perhaps a greater extent than any other people, the Arabs share with Americans a passionate love of freedom. They are completely democratic; according to the Koran [*sic*], all men are absolutely equal, and none can suffer discrimination.”

Totah’s words subtly challenged stereotypes of Islam in several ways. First, the reference to Christianity’s role to “present-day Americans” suggested that contemporary Muslims shared a religious devotion on par with previous American generations. Instead of creating an image of fanatics, it proposed a shared kinship with devoted Christian pilgrims coming to America and building their city on the hill. Secondly, and more directly, Totah’s use of the New Testament to explain Muslim religious devotion worked to place Islam in the family of the Abrahamic faiths. Thirdly, by connecting the Qur’an and equal rights, Totah flipped the traditional view of Islam as an impediment to democracy to portraying Islam as a template for democratic rule and protection of minority rights. Following the discussion of Islam in the life of Arabs, Totah went on to note the large number of Christian Arabs living in Palestine, building

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on previous speeches and publications by Institute members. In testimony to Congress, Dr. Philip K. Hitti explained the significance of Palestine in the Islamic faith, with Jerusalem as the third holy city and also the first direction toward which Muslims faced when praying before turning to Mecca. He concluded by noting that the land was “even more sacred to the Christians,” who composed a significant minority in Palestine, with a larger population at that time than the Jews. These points together served to downplay the sense of foreignness of Islam and Arabs while emphasizing a closer relationship between Christian Americans and Christian and Muslim Arabs.

Another concern when it came to religion was challenging the strong connections many Americans made between the current debate over Palestine and the Bible stories that they learned as children in Sunday School. Those stories seemed to clearly mark the Jews as the Chosen People and Palestine as their promised land. The Arabs did not appear in these stories and thus were easily dismissed as late arrivals or usurpers of the region. It was then up to the Institute and its supporters to bring the Arabs back into the story. Part of this strategy appeared in the debate over race, as mentioned earlier. By designating “Arabness” as being related to language and culture, not a specific ethnicity or race, the Institute could ascribe the ancestry of the current inhabitants to a variety of ancient peoples that appeared in the Bible, such as the Assyrians, the Babylonians, and even the ancient Hebrews themselves. More often than not, however, it was the Canaanites to whom the Institute compared modern Arabs. The Institute’s Manifesto reinforced this idea, describing the “so-called Arabs of Palestine” as the descendants of “the early native


stock which inhabited the land of Canaan before the advent of Joshua, or even of Abraham.” Once again, it was the adoption of the Arabic language, not any change in the ethnic makeup of the people, that brought the designation of Arab. This connection to the Canaanites was present among supporters of an Arab Palestine prior to the Institute’s founding. In February 1944, the U.S. House of Representatives held hearings regarding a proposed resolution that would commit the United States to pressure Great Britain to end the restrictive quotas on Jewish immigration into Palestine in order to provide a “full opportunity for colonization, so that the Jewish people may ultimately reconstitute Palestine as a free and democratic Jewish commonwealth.” This was a significant departure from the language of the Balfour Declaration, which only allowed for a “national home,” generating great concern among Arab Americans, some of whom Congress invited to testify. Dr. Hitti presented the Arab case and, in a style befitting a renowned scholar, he began his testimony by giving the committee a brief lesson in Arab Palestine’s history, the “exotic” nature of the Zionist program, and the promises made to the Arabs, and oppressed people generally, by the League of Nations, Wilson’s Fourteen Points, and the Atlantic Charter. His focus, however, quickly became religion. The fifty million Arabs in Palestine, he explained, were the descendants of the Canaanites who lived in Palestine long before “the Hebrews entered [it] under Joshua.” By invoking a biblical story that would be instantly recognizable to a Christian audience, Hitti not only connected the Arabs to the Bible but also showed that they were a solid presence in Palestine, unlike the ancient Hebrews who appeared and disappeared from the landscape throughout history. The resolution ended up being shelved, not as result of the arguments put forth by Hitti, but rather due to pressure from the War Department, which


51 Hitti Testimony, 1-2.
feared it could have a negative impact on the war effort. This emphasis on a long Palestinian history, reaching further back in time and maintaining a constant presence in the land as the ancient Hebrews came and went, maintained its place in the Institute’s public messages.52

While the focus on the presence of Arabs in the Old Testament context continued, the Zionist side sought to limit its importance, as revealed in a pair of articles the New Leader ran in 1946. The journal invited Totah and M. Z. Frank, a Zionist supporter, to each write an article for his respective side in the Palestine debate.53 In his, Totah brought up the biblical references as one part of his argument, stating early on, “if possession is nine-tenths of the law, then, surely, Palestine is Arab. The Arabs took Palestine by conquest as did Joshua and Allenby.”54 In his rebutting article, Frank remarked that Totah’s references to biblical history were “charming,” but claimed “the Jews have long outgrown the concept of Joshua. Has Mr. Totah?"55

This same exchange is also notable for the way in which it demonstrates the lack of consistency in these various arguments and the willingness of both sides to change their positions to find the one with the most resonance. Totah’s emphasis on conquest seems to contradict other statements by Institute members (including Totah himself) that Palestinian Arabs were descendants of the Canaanites and that their claim to the land went beyond the ancient Israelites. Yet by introducing the Arabs as invaders whose rights stemmed from conquest, Totah could

52 The belief that Palestinians were a new creation continues to hold sway. During his brief bid for the Republican presidential nominee, Newt Gingrich claimed that the Palestinians were an “invented” people who had no claim to the land and could just as easily move to other parts of the Arab world. “Palestinians are an Invented People, Says Newt Gingrich,” The Guardian Dec. 9, 2011. http://www.theguardian.com/world/2011/dec/10/palestinians-invented-people-newt-gingrich accessed 2/2/16.

53 It’s unclear exactly how the journal approached both men, or when each article was commissioned. When reading both, it appears that Frank received an advance copy of Totah’s article, as he frequently quotes Totah and then rebuts him, while Totah makes no mention of Frank or his article, taking on the more generalized Zionist arguments.


appeal to American views of their own history, in which strong and righteous conquerors took land from a primitive and less worthy group. Frank’s remark about the Jews having “long outgrown” Joshua was a way to dismiss Totah’s arguments as focusing too much on ancient history instead of the present, even while other Zionists continued to emphasize the religious history and Bible stories with which so many Americans were so familiar.

**Zionist and Arab uses of Religion and Race**

The religious argument, while powerful, also posed difficulties for Zionists. Relying too much on ancient biblical promises could detract from the modernization message that Zionists wanted to promote. As chapter 5 will explore in more detail, the Zionist position heavily emphasized the idea that Jewish immigrants brought advancement and development to Palestine, while the Arabs of the land clung to old-fashioned methods and ideas, including their religious beliefs. Zionists wanted to present themselves as heirs of the Enlightenment and scientific processes. Relying on religion too much could harm that image – thus the condescending tone taken in response to Totah’s account of biblical history. As the Institute was aware, for many Americans religion was a foundational aspect of the debate. The general public might not be that aware of the specific issues and debates over Palestine, but the conflation of Jews and the Holy Land was a powerful force that could not be overlooked. Additionally, the historical and religious ties of Jews to the land served as a rebuttal to suggestions that the Jewish people simply create their state somewhere else.\(^{56}\)

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\(^{56}\) Suggestions ranged from Alaska to Kenya. See FDR’s Chair of the Advisory Committee for Political Refugees response to the various suggestions printed by the American Zionist Emergency Council in James G. McDonald, “The Refugee Question: A Survey and a Program,” *Palestine* Vol. 1, No. 12 (Dec. 1944): 3-5. The argument that basing the Jewish claim on religious grounds contradicted statements of being a modernizing force appeared as early as 1921 in Katibah.
In the early 1940s, that religious argument appeared often, but it diminished over time. Supporters of Jewish rule in Palestine often reminded readers of Judaism’s long attachment to the land, emphasizing that it was “impossible to understand Jewish colonization of Palestine without realizing that the Jewish people have never lost their attachment to the country of their origin.”

Articles in the American Zionist Emergency Council’s newsletter *Palestine* emphasized the indivisible nature of the Jewish State with the land of Palestine, as did the opening statement of the Jewish Agency in its appeal to the United Nations. Even Albert Einstein gave the House Committee on Foreign Affairs a brief lesson on biblical history and ancient peoples. Yet by the time the Jewish Agency presented its case to the United Nations in 1947, that religious/historical tie was simply a preface, garnering only a single line in the introduction as one of the many factors contributing to the Jewish case. The rest focused on the legality (or illegality) of international rulings such as the Balfour Declaration, the Mandate, or the 1939 British White Paper limiting Jewish immigration to Palestine, as well as the benefits and achievements of Jewish colonization in Palestine, lending credence to Frank’s statement in the *New Leader* that the Jews had outgrown Joshua.

It should be noted that for Zionists and their supporters, using “colonization” to describe Jewish immigration to Palestine did not contradict their argument that Palestine rightfully belonged to the Jews. A wide range of pro-Zionist authors repeatedly used colonization and its variants in their writings, while Arab Americans bemoaned the “imperializing” nature of the Zionist project. Though describing Jewish settlement of Palestine and the creation of Israel as a

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colonial enterprise today is seen as a negative statement, there was clearly very little issue with the term in the 1940s.\textsuperscript{59} This can be traced to the fact that for many supporters of Zionism, the Jewish situation, particularly concerning Palestine, was unique in history. Writing for the American Zionist Emergency Council, lawyer Ernst Frankenstein conceded that “bas[ing] a claim to a land on possession [over] two thousand [years ago] may seem preposterous,” but, he continued, “the case is unique, without precedent, and will probably never occur again.” What set it apart was that the nation of Israel “lost its land without obtaining any other, has yet survived, and now reclaims its old possession.” Frankenstein claimed that all other groups that had lost their lands either settled somewhere else and “formally renounced their old rights or tacitly acquiesced in their loss” or perished and thus could not reclaim their land anyway. But for the Jews, who ended every Seder with the hopeful “Next year in Jerusalem,” the loss of Palestine was never accepted. Thus, they could re-colonize the land, in the sense that people who had not physically lived there were entering the country, buying land, and settling with the intention of creating a new system, but still view it as a homecoming. All the past conquerors of the land who had pushed out the Jewish community – the Romans, the Byzantines, the Crusaders – had fallen. The most recent, the Turks, had renounced their claim. For Frankenstein, and the organization of Zionists he represented, the issue was clear. Only the Jews had a legitimate claim to the land. It was time for the world to recognize that.\textsuperscript{60}

This, however, is where defining the Arabs held critical importance for both sides. As shown above, the Institute heavily emphasized the Palestinian Arabs’ connection to the ancient Canaanites. They took the name Arab as a result of the integration with the Arab conquerors of


\textsuperscript{60} Ernst Frankenstein, “The Legal Claim to Palestine,” \textit{Palestine} Vol. 1, No. 6 (May 1944): 5.
634, but this was a linguistic, rather than racial, designation. The Arab Office made a similar
case before the 1946 Anglo-American Committee of Inquiry, stating that the Arabs of Palestine
“are descendants of the original inhabitants of the country, who have been in occupation of it
since the beginning of history.” Under this definition of Arabness, the Jews were the original
conquerors and interlopers, who periodically attempted to control Palestine but never managed to
maintain it for long, while the Arabs were the original claimants who not only never conceded
their land, but never left it in the first place. Different rulers may have come and gone, but the
people remained. As the Institute noted in one pamphlet, the Arabs could claim four thousand
years of inhabiting the land, and assert that they were the overwhelmingly dominant group over
the last two thousand – a stronger claim than Americans had to the United States or even the
Anglo-Saxons to Britain. Additionally, it countered, simply longing for the land was not a
justification for one people to seize the territory of another. If so, then Mexico and Canada
should be wary, for the United States had long wanted their land as well.

Yet despite the Arabs’ long historical connection to Palestine, the general population
continued to see them as nomads and passers-through. The Balfour Declaration famously
referred to them only as the “non-Jewish community” (the word “Arab” was never used). In
Paramount newsreels about the situation in Palestine, the Arabs were referred to as “Arab
dwellers in the Holy Land.” In a memo submitted to the United Nations, a group of Zionist
supporters went through ancient history, explaining that Palestine had ceased to be independent
in 63 B.C., with the Roman invasions. Since then, it had gone through numerous invasions and

61 The Arab Office, “The Problem of Palestine: Evidence Submitted by the Arab Office, Jerusalem, to the Anglo-
63 Natl. Archives PN 7.29, emphasis added.
occupations, from the Byzantines to the Muslims to Christians and finally the Turks and the 
British. But at no time, they argued, was it ever an Arab state. For them, religion, not race, 
defined the occupier when it came to the conquest of 638 C.E.

One writer for the American Zionist Emergency Council also considered the implications 
of the Arabacized nature of Palestine. Arab Americans had long argued that the facts on the 
ground in Palestine proved that it was an Arab state – the language was Arabic, even for the 
majority of “native Palestinian Jews” – and none of the preceding occupiers, particularly the 
Turks, had left any “permanent mark of their civilization.” As the Institute and other Arab 
supporters pointed out, these realities gave weight to the Arab claim to Palestine. Not only that, 
but even when the Jews did rule Palestine, they were largely failures, continually overthrown by 
the Assyrians, the Babylonians, and Rome and divided by civil war. One Zionist counter 
argument to the dominance of Arab names was to make connections to the United States, 
pointing out that while many places still had American Indian names, it was the “English strain” 
that dominated the land (again, equating the Arabs with American Indians). Beneath a “thin 
layer” of Arabic was the long-standing “Hebrew stamp” over Palestine. Regardless of the 
changes, none of the subsequent groups reached a level that overpowered the Jewish heritage of 
Palestine.

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65 Katibah, no page.

66 Totah, “Palestine Triangle,” 748.

67 H. Bar-Deroma, “Sermons in Stones,” *Palestine* Vol. 1, No. 9 (Sept. 1944): 8-10. It’s worth noting that this issue of language and names is still a point of conflict between Israeli Arabs and the Israeli government today. Street signs in Israel, for example, only include the names of Israeli towns and villages, ignoring nearby Arab ones. Though Arabic is recognized as an official language, signage in Israel simply writes the Hebrew name of places in Arabic, rather than using the Arabic name for places like Jerusalem.
But the Zionists did not always have a clear strategy to respond to Arab historical claims. In Frankenstein’s article, he attempted to counter potential Arab arguments in a variety of ways. First, he argued that none of the Arab states could make a claim to Palestine and that none “can pretend to be the legal successor of those who in 634 conquered Palestine.” He also wrote of Palestine’s historic union with Syria as not a “voluntary” one, but one of conquest, which would not apply to the Jewish claim anyway, because the Jews had “never acquiesced in the conquest.” Thus, Arab arguments that Palestine had long been a part of Greater Syria had no value, since it had not been a voluntary association. Then he claimed that the “Arabic-speaking inhabitants of Palestine” were not the descendants of the Arab conquerors either, but “even if they were, they would have lost their alleged rights” since they “submitted to every [subsequent] conqueror” and “thus tacitly renounced their hypothetical rights to the land which they did not even trouble to claim.” In other words, the Palestinian Arabs never officially claimed the land, but even if they had, it would not matter any more because they allowed themselves to be conquered. The fact that they remained on the land, even under these new occupiers, was irrelevant because they “did not ‘keep up protests and claims,’” like the Jews.68

Drawing on Palestine’s history, both ancient and modern, was certainly not a new tactic. In the aftermath of the Arab Revolt from 1936 to 1939, the British Royal Commission (known as the Peel Commission) traveled to Palestine to determine the cause of the growing friction between Arabs and Jews and to find a solution to prevent such violence from occurring again. In its official report, the Commission rightly noted that the “present problem of Palestine, indeed, is unintelligible without a knowledge of the history that lies behind it. No other problem of our time is rooted so deeply in the past.” To that end, the authors offered a “brief historical

68 Frankenstein, 6.
introduction,” and then proceeded to go all the way back to Abraham. Yet such reliance on ancient history obscured the much more recent roots and political decisions that led to the conflict over Palestine. The arguments presented by both Zionists and Arab Americans demonstrate the conflicting desire to rest their case on the past while remaining wary of being painted as relics beholden to it. Of greater importance was identifying with the present and its powers.

Conclusion

Throughout its tenure, the Institute actively constructed an identity for Arabs designed to create closer ties between Arabs and Americans and increase support for an independent Arab Palestine. The emphasis on language as the defining characteristic of being Arab allowed Arab Americans to present themselves as members of the same racial group as the majority of Americans, while also suggesting a common heritage with ancient peoples connected to the Holy Land. This dovetailed nicely with a similar effort to reframe the dominant religious narrative that the Jews had long lived in Palestine while the Arabs were recent arrivals with no real historical claim to the land. By linking the current Arab inhabitants with the ancient Canaanites, the Institute could tap into the same biblical stories American Christians used to fill in their understanding of the Holy Land and chip away at the Zionist hold over it. At the same time, the Institute worked to place Islam itself in the same family as Judaism and Christianity, challenging the idea that Islam was a foreign religion to which no American could relate and that stood in the way of progress and democracy. Likewise, by emphasizing the role American Christians played

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in developing Arab nationalism, the Institute and its allies hoped to further cement ties between the groups.

Even though Zionists began to move away from the religious narrative by the mid-1940s, it still played a significant role in the efforts to solidify American support for their position. Zionists did not have to spend much time or effort on explaining Jewish historical claims to Palestine; Americans’ general knowledge filled in those details for them. Although anti-Semitism was still a problem in the United States, in some ways that could work in Zionists’ favor, as it might translate into support for a Jewish state so Jews did not come to the United States. Unlike Islam, many Americans were familiar with Judaism, at least in as much as they needed to understand their own faith’s heritage. While by no means a deep or comprehensive understanding, it provided a natural connection between the two groups and, as the next chapter will explore, as the consequences of the Holocaust played out, that connection only deepened. Despite Arab Americans’ attempts to drive wedges between Jews and Christians by highlighting the needs of Arab Christians and the relationship between American Christian missionaries and the Arab population in the Middle East, they had little success.
Chapter 3  
Righteous Indignation and the Bounds of Democracy

Introduction

American ideals of justice and democracy and, more importantly, Americans’ perception of themselves as exceptionally devoted to the defense of those ideals, proved an important battleground for the Institute of Arab American Affairs. While issues of race and religion served as significant ways to identify Arabs more closely with the American majority, appeals to the United States to uphold its values of self-determination, democracy, and justice by supporting an Arab Palestine were a bedrock of the Institute’s public message. In these arguments, the friendly educator style played a significant role. If the Arabs could properly present their side, the reasoning went, Americans would be compelled by their values to support an independent Arab-controlled Palestine. In other words, the friendly educator sought to remind Americans of their idealized identity and encouraged them to consider whether their actions lived up to their beliefs. It was the members’ unique position of being both American and of Arabic-speaking stock that allowed the Institute to fulfill its role as a bridge between the two worlds, challenging the United States to live up to its identity as defender of justice and democracy when it came to Palestine.

Self-determination and democracy were a common refrain as a way to draw connections to President Wilson and tap into the idea that Americans had joined World War I to make the world safe for democracy. While self-determination did not necessarily have to mean democracy, for the Institute, the two ideas were used interchangeably, implicitly promoting the
idea that Arabs agreed that democracy was the best form of government and thus should be
granted self-determination. Throughout the Institute’s writings, self-determination for the Arabs
of Palestine could be attained through democracy (putting the issue to the population of Palestine
for a democratic vote) and would result in a democratic system. Jewish control over Palestine
would be an affront to both these principles: it would thwart self-determination by allowing an
outside power to decide on the country’s future and destroy democracy by installing a minority
government over and against the will of the majority population.

Justice was a complex topic when it came to the question of Palestine. The 1939 Royal
Commission (more commonly referred to as the Peel Commission) characterized the situation in
Palestine as “fundamentally a conflict of right with right,” lacking an easy or clear-cut
resolution.¹ Both sides had historical claims to the land, a strong religious identification, and
international promises for self-rule (the Husayn-McMahon correspondence for the Arabs and the
Balfour Declaration for the Zionists). As the Institute repeatedly pointed out, the Palestinian
Arabs were the current inhabitants, having lived on the land for generations. Ignoring every
other argument, possession as nine-tenths of the law seemed to clearly settle the point. By 1939,
it looked as though the British government was heading toward a similar conclusion. The Peel
Commission’s recommendation of partition had been brushed off as unworkable, and the 1939
White Paper put strict controls on Jewish immigration, essentially ending any further influx.
Restrictions on selling land were enacted. There was a great deal of protest by Zionist groups,
but their influence in Great Britain was waning and the American Zionist movement was still
struggling. Arabs had welcomed the 1939 paper as a step in the right direction, but their ultimate

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¹ “Palestine Royal Commission Report, Presented by the Secretary of State for the Colonies to Parliament by
goal was independence and thus for immigration policy to be decided by an independent Arab
government.

World War II and its aftermath changed all of this. While the Allies were unwilling to do
much to stop the slaughter in Europe, upon the liberation of the camps, the plight of Jewish
survivors could not be ignored. The Institute quickly recognized the power of images of
emaciated concentration camp survivors still trapped behind barbed wire, waiting for news of
where they could start to rebuild their lives, and sought to separate the Displaced Persons (DP)
issue from Palestine. At the same time, there was a strong movement on the other side to declare
Palestine the natural refuge for any and all Jewish survivors, while the United States began to
take greater interest in opening Palestine for them.

Along similar lines, the question of wartime behavior became another battleground for
Arabs and Zionists. Most problematic for the Institute was the well-documented support of the
Mufti of Jerusalem, Hajj Amin al-Husayni, for Nazi Germany, and the less-than-enthusiastic
military effort of the Arab states during World War II on behalf of the Allies. To counter the
narrative of Arabs-as-collaborators, the Institute and its supporters emphasized the Arab revolt
and its role in World War I. This led to another aspect of justice: upholding past promises,
namely the Husayn-McMahon correspondence and the Balfour Declaration. Both the Institute
and Zionist organizations seized the claims made to their respective sides, arguing that justice
and common sense required the world to recognize their position.

During World War I, Britain sought to limit the influence of the Ottoman Sultan by
to the Sharif of Mecca, Husayn ibn Ali, to deduce whether the
Arabs could be convinced to join the Allies against the Turks and Germans. The Sharif was the
key figure in the potency of a call to *jihad*. If the Sultan issued such a call, and the Sharif...
endorsed it by affirming that the holy cities faced great danger, Muslims throughout the world, including India (an important concern for the British), would respond at once. If the Sharif withheld his support, the call would be “rob[bed]” of its “principal thunderbolt.” The resulting series of letters between Sir Henry McMahon and Sharif Husayn promised independence for certain Arab territories in return for the Arabs’ siding with the Allies. In a key letter written on July 14, 1915, the Sharif outlined the Arab position: Great Britain would recognize the independence of an Arab state, the borders of which would be north to the thirty-seventh degree latitude to the border of Persia (present-day Iran), east to the border of Persia, south to the Indian Ocean, excluding the city of Aden in present-day Yemen, and west to the Red and Mediterranean seas. McMahon tried to avoid commitment by initially proposing that the discussion of borders wait until after the war; when Hussein refused, McMahon finally proposed an alternate set of borders in an October 24, 1915, letter, which became known as the McMahon pledge. The British agreed to the Sharif’s proposals, with a number of caveats surrounding the areas composing present-day Lebanon, in which France had a great deal of interest, and the areas around Basra and Baghdad, where British interests lay.

The British made yet another promise with the 1917 Balfour Declaration, in which they supported “with favour the establishment in Palestine of a National Home for the Jewish people” and pledged to work with the Zionists to achieve this goal, as long as this project did not “prejudice” the rights of the “non-Jewish community.” Once again, wartime exigencies played a deciding factor in the release of the document. The situation in Europe was quite grim. Trench

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3 *Palestine Royal Commission Report*, 37-38. These borders included the entirety of the Arab Middle East as it stands today, with the exception of Aden.

4 *Palestine Royal Commission Report*, 42.
warfare relegated the opposing armies to fight for inches of land, rather than making large scale advances. The French, British, and Russian armies all faced exhaustion, disease, and low morale. Though the United States had officially joined the war, its troops had not yet arrived at the front. The British prime minister at the time, David Lloyd George, told the Peel Commission in 1936 that, while British sympathy for the Zionist cause existed prior to 1917, the government released the declaration then largely due to “‘propagandist reasons.’” The government believed that, just as Arab sympathies for or against the Entente powers would change the tide of war, so too would the loyalties of Jews throughout the world. The anti-Semitic belief that Jews ran the world still had an influence among many individuals, and part of the goal of the Balfour Declaration was to convince “international Jewry” to put that power to the use of the Entente. While the promises of both McMahon and Balfour may have aided the British during the war, they laid the foundation for an unstable peace.

In addition to justice, both sides claimed to reflect the democratic values of the United States. While Zionists boasted of bringing western ideas of democracy to a “backward” land, the Institute’s members focused on the inherently undemocratic nature of allowing a minority (the Jewish population in Palestine) to dictate the shape of the country, its government, and its immigration policy against the will of the majority. Institute publications quoted American presidents, from Abraham Lincoln to Franklin D. Roosevelt, in an effort to remind Americans of their ideals. For example, the first major publication of the Institute, its “Manifesto” distributed to delegates gathered at the United Nations Conference in San Francisco in 1945, opened and closed with quotes from two American documents: Woodrow Wilson’s Fourteen Points and the Atlantic Charter, with both selections emphasizing U.S. commitments to national self-

5 Ibid., 43.

Two years earlier, the American Zionist Emergency Council wrote that the Americans who supported the Balfour Declaration recognized that the right of the Jewish people to create a homeland in Palestine was “in accord with the principle of the self-determination of nations; it was regarded as an act of historic justice.” For both Zionists and Arabs, portraying their respective side as defenders of justice and democracy was essential to gaining American support.

**The Impact of the Holocaust**

The Holocaust provided American Zionists with a new rallying point. The extermination of Europe’s Jews became a central topic in speeches by American Zionist leaders like Rabbi Abba Hillel Silver as early as 1942, and already, the question arose as to where the survivors would go upon the war’s end. While the American Council for Judaism (ACJ) continued to question the wisdom of the Zionist program and argued against the creation of a Jewish state, the Holocaust and its horrors significantly weakened the ACJ’s ability to get its message out, as Jews in the United States began rallying around Zionism. The American Zionist Emergency Council (AZEC), led by Rabbi Silver, was much more vocal and emotional, garnering greater support and coverage. In the summer following V-E Day, Truman dispatched special envoy Earl G. Harrison to investigate and report on the situation of Jewish DPs. Harrison’s report, released on September 30, 1945, painted a grim and depressing picture of life for these Jewish survivors.

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7 Institute, *Manifesto*, n.p.


Many remained in the same concentration camps where they had witnessed the destruction of their families and faced a lack of food and clothing, with some survivors forced to wear the uniforms of the SS men who had once ruled the camps. Harrison recommended settling these people as quickly as possible and the desired destination was Palestine. The Holocaust nearly obliterated most Jewish communities, and the report noted that many of the survivors desired to escape the graveyard of Europe and immigrate to Palestine, where they believed they would be safe and could pick up the tattered remains of their lives. Keeping these DPs trapped in their current situation, in Harrison’s view, was akin to “condoning Nazi policy” and hampered Allied efforts to eradicate Nazism in Germany and elsewhere.11 The ACJ argued that survivors should be allowed to go wherever they wished, whether it was Palestine, the United States, or somewhere in Europe, while AZEC passionately declared that Palestine was the only logical choice. AZEC, the ACJ warned, was simply using American compassion and desire to help victims of the Holocaust as a Trojan horse to “inject Zionism’s political-nationalism into every crevice of the American scene.”12 Members of the Jewish Agency and its supporters seemed to confirm this, noting that President Truman largely saw the issue of Palestine “purely as a humanitarian problem” with “little or no conception of the deeper meaning of the National Home idea, the passionate desire of so many of the Jews to be a people like other peoples and to re-establish Palestine as a specifically Jewish country.”13 Yet if sympathy was enough to allow the


12 Elmer Berger, The Jewish Dilemma, (New York, NY: Devin-Adair Company, 1945), 163. Rabbi Berger was the Executive Director of the American Council for Judaism at the time.

Zionist movement to reach its goals, it mattered less whether Truman, or Americans in general, fully understood or even supported the larger picture.14

The Holocaust was quite problematic for the Jewish communities within Palestine, however, both before and after the creation of Israel. On the one hand, the Holocaust proved to be a strong argument for why Jews needed a state of their own. Before the war, Germany had often been held up as an example of how well Jews could integrate into Europe, a model of civilization, and yet the Holocaust began there, proving that integration and assimilation had failed. The closed doors that Germany’s Jewish citizens met at every turn as they tried to flee during the 1930s demonstrated that Jews could not rely on other countries to come to their aid should another tyrant arise. On the other hand, however, the Holocaust was also seen as a source of shame. The idea that Diaspora Jews went willingly into the cattle cars, like sheep to the slaughter, contrasted with the idea of the sabra Jew of Palestine (named after a fruit that grows on a cactus in Palestine), tough and strong on the outside, though tender on the inside. Thus, while Diaspora Jews were welcomed to Palestine/Israel and the Holocaust narrative was used as a justification for increased immigration, those immigrants were urged to forget the horrors of Europe and move on with a new identity, especially during the first decade or two of Israel’s existence.15

This tension also played out in the posters created by the organizations like Keren Hayesod (the United Israel Appeal) and the United Jewish Appeal encouraging aid for Jewish immigration to Palestine following the war, in which the Holocaust and its survivors played heavily. In Figures 2 and 4, we see dark images of Jewish survivors, trapped behind barbed

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wire, while Figure 3 shows a mother holding her child to her chest, superimposed over Eastern Europe. All three images evoke the feeling of helplessness and despair of the Diaspora Jews and their hope for a better future somewhere else (Palestine). The man in Figure 2 is specifically asking the viewer – the American viewer – for help to get “home,” which was no longer the graveyard of Europe, but a Jewish state designed to prevent such terrible things from happening again.

Figure 2: Help Me to Get Home Brother (1945). ¹⁶

Figure 3: For the Rescue of the Survivors (1946)

¹⁶ Photos from author's collection. These posters were hung on the hallways of the Ben Gurion International Airport during the author’s trip there in 2011.
In Figure 4, however, hope is coming from the sea, as the family stares at a small ship that could possibly carry them to freedom. Following the war, the 1939 British White Paper remained in place, preventing legal Jewish immigration into Palestine. But that did not stop thousands of Jews from attempting to make the journey, cramming into whatever vessels they could find. Those journeys served as the focus of their own posters, demonstrating both the perils of the sea as well as the fierce determination of refugees to do whatever it took to reach Palestine. These posters also demonstrate a changing emphasis from the people as helpless victims to individuals with agency over their lives. Instead of waiting and pleading from behind barbed wire, these Jews were ignoring British directives and challenging nature itself to start their new lives.
Figure 5 focuses on the family, while in Figure 6, a storm-tossed boat makes its way to the Palestine coast. Printed in 1943, Figure 5’s use of a close up of the family reminds viewers that no one was safe from Hitler’s reign – old and young, men and women - all faced extermination. Additionally, there was no clear image of where these refugees were going. At this stage in the war, any port would suffice, as long as they were out of the storm. By 1946, however, the emphasis had shifted from the individuals to the destination. Palestine looms large, a steady refuge in the face of the stormy and uncertain seas. If the refugees could reach it, they would be safe. As the story of the *Exodus* showed, however, reaching land was no easy task.

On July 18, 1947, the *SS Exodus*, a former passenger ship bought and outfitted by the Haganah, reached the coast of Palestine, loaded with Jewish DPs of all ages (including a baby born on the trip). The British Navy quickly surrounded the ship and, upon boarding, a firefight broke out between the refugees and the sailors, killing three passengers and wounding dozens

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17 The Jewish Agency’s armed force during the Mandate period, which became the Israeli Defense Forces after statehood.
more. An infant died soon after and was buried at sea. The rest of the people on the *Exodus* were divided onto three different British ships and returned to France, the ship’s point of departure. An additional standoff ensued, as most of the refugees refused to disembark. After three weeks, the British settled on a final location for the DPs: camps set up in the British zone of occupied Germany. Though the British intercepted scores of ships like the *Exodus*, its extreme treatment in this case launched it to infamy.\(^\text{18}\)

While the organizers of the *Exodus* voyage could not have predicted the British reaction, these types of illegal immigration operations were designed with public relations in mind, and the *Exodus* proved invaluable, as the story of Holocaust survivors being attacked just off-shore of the promised land and eventually being returned to camps in Germany flashed across the newswires.\(^\text{19}\) In its July 30, 1947, newsreel, *Paramount News* related the story of the “bloody battle” with the British while showing film of the dead and wounded being transferred to prison ships. *Paramount* had covered the issue of refugees being denied entry into Palestine the year before, featuring shots of women crying and British ships carrying the would-be immigrants back to Europe. These ships, the voice-over explained, were ringed with barbed wire to prevent their “unwilling cargo” from jumping overboard. On September 20, 1947, *Paramount* broadcasted what it claimed were the first pictures of *Exodus* refugees in Germany, showing the ship being intercepted and men carrying a wounded passenger on a stretcher from the *Exodus* onto a prison ship. From there, the image shifted to trains with barbed wire over the windows as

\(^{18}\) There are numerous sources on the *Exodus* and its impact. This retelling is based on Segev, *The Seventh Million*, 129-131. It is also interesting to compare the case of the *Exodus* to the voyage of the *St. Louis* in 1939 (though I am currently unaware of any such comparisons). The *St. Louis* carried nearly 1,000 German Jewish passengers heading to Cuba, with the intent to then immigrate to the United States. The ship, however, was barred from docking in Cuba and eventually sailed to the United States, which also refused entry. Eventually, the ship returned to Europe and the passengers were divided between various European nations, most of which soon ended up under Nazi control once the war began.

the announcer reminded viewers that six million Jews were killed in an “attempted extermination of their people.” The clip ended on a defiant note, as viewers were told that the refugees proclaimed to the world, “they will yet reach Palestine!”

While Americans witnessed these desperate struggles by Jewish DPs to reach Palestine, they also had their own fears of refugees turning up on U.S. shores. Polling data published in Public Opinion Quarterly (a compilation of both national and international polls) showed that in July 1947, the same month as the Exodus incident, 71% of Americans opposed the statement that the United States should “let some of these people [the 800,000+ homeless people in Europe] come here now.” At the same time, Americans were often genuinely moved by the plight of DPs. Truman expressed this sentiment to Frank Gannett (of the Gannett media corporation), writing that he had “always been sympathetic with the desire of the many Jews in Europe who would wish to settle in Palestine. No people have suffered as much from the Nazi and Fascist regime as the Jews, and every instinct urges that some provision be made for settlement in Palestine of those who wish to go there.” Palestine proved a convenient option for those who pitied Jewish refugees but did not want them to come to the United States. By calling for an end to the immigration restrictions imposed by the 1939 White Paper and allowing unlimited Jewish immigration into Palestine, the United States could help solve the refugee crisis without having

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22 Harry Truman to Frank Gannett, July 6, 1945; OF 204, Folder 1945 – Apr. 1946; Truman Library.
to share the responsibilities of integrating a foreign population, let alone a Jewish one, into its own populace.  

The Institute recognized the danger in framing Palestine and the refugee situation as connected. Members did not argue against helping refugees or propose leaving the DPs in their current situation. When President Truman issued a call for more Jewish immigration into Palestine in late 1945, the Institute first commended his desire to solve the humanitarian problem facing Jewish survivors of the Holocaust. While his heart was in the right place, however, the Institute wanted Truman to recognize that such a policy would completely contradict American values of justice and democracy. The Zionists, the Institute explained in a telegram to Truman, would not allow democracy until they constituted the majority. Such a position meant creating a government without the “consent of the governed,” an affront to the principles upon which the United States was built. Though ultimately unsuccessful, the purpose of the friendly educator language was to show Americans an ideal version of themselves and ask them how their attitudes and policies toward Palestine compared to that ideal.

As such, the Institute explained, the United States should recognize that the problems facing the survivors were wholly separate from the issue of Palestinian independence. At the end of the day, the Holocaust was the West’s creation; it should be the West’s responsibility to deal with its consequences. Immigration restrictions should be reconsidered, but in the United States, not Palestine. The United States had plenty of room, while Palestine was roughly the size of Vermont and had already accepted thousands of people. Fairness and justice required the United States and Europe to do their fair share in redistributing the burden. Jabir Shibli, a Christian

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23 Michelle Mart explains that while public expressions of anti-Semitism fell out of favor following World War II, private sentiments took longer to change. See Mart, 4-13.

Arab professor of mathematics at The Pennsylvania State College, wrote for the Institute that it was “hypocritical to express sympathy for the Jews and force their acceptance in Palestine, while refusing to admit them into one’s own country.” He compared the “easy-going Protestant clergymen and toady ing politicians [who] love the Jews so much that they are willing to send them to Palestine” to a man who “loved his country so much that he was willing to have all his wife’s relatives go to the war,” especially considering that “the Jews themselves would prefer to come to America.”

This idea that Zionists were manipulating both survivors and American observers into thinking that Palestine was the first or only option for refugees was a significant argument for those against the massive relocation of Jews to Palestine. Rabbi Elmer Berger, the Executive Director of the American Council for Judaism, wrote that as of July 1945, 6,000 Jews were living in Berlin, trying to rebuild, but “‘official’ Jews” would not leave them in peace, as they disrupted the narrative that Jews no longer wanted to live in Europe, only Palestine. In its reply to the State Department regarding the Institute’s position on the Anglo-American Committee of Inquiry’s recommendations, notably the recommendation to allow 100,000 Jewish refugees to enter Palestine, the Institute argued that as Europe recovered, Jews would want to rebuild there. In support of this position, it referenced a New York Times brief about 2,000 Austrian Jews who settled in Palestine, but then changed their minds and petitioned the Austrian government for permits to return. Arthur Hays Sulzberger, the (Jewish) publisher of the New York Times, in a speech to the Mizpah congregation in Tennessee, worried that the “unfortunate Jews of Europe’s

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26 Berger, 228-229. Berger went so far as to compare Theodor Herzl, to Hitler, stating both were “impatient with parliamentary procedures.” (Ibid.)

D.P. Camps [sic] are helpless hostages for whom statehood has been made the only acceptable ransom.” The Institute published this speech (with permission) in its third volume of *Papers on Palestine*, which was devoted exclusively to Jewish voices against Zionism.\(^{28}\) The *Arab News Bulletin*, published by the Arab Office, included statistics on Jewish refugees who, after arriving in Palestine, decided to return to their countries of origin, like Poland and Hungary.\(^{29}\) Regardless of the actual numbers, these stories were intended to challenge the dominant narrative that refugees wanted to go only to Palestine and to convince Americans that they could continue to refuse entry to Jewish survivors with a clear conscience, as those survivors did not want to come to the United States anyway.

Once again, competing interpretations regarding ideals and history were a key battleground. The Institute and its supporters emphasized the foreign nature of Zionists coming into Palestine and called on Americans to consider the application of the Golden Rule. How would they feel if another country could dictate what U.S. immigration policy would be, determined who would be admitted, and encouraged such a huge influx of foreigners that the Americans would soon become a minority in their own land? Allowing Zionists, an outside group, to take control of Palestine against the wishes of the majority was a “negation of the Golden Rule” that could not be morally justified.\(^{30}\) A significant block to this line of reasoning, though, went back to the frame from which many Americans operated. The movement of European Jews to Palestine simply did not feel like traditional colonialism, imperialism, or

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conquest. By conceptualizing Palestine as the Jews’ Promised Land, it was far easier to see this as a case of returning home, rather than a land grab. Time and again, supporters of the Zionist program echoed this refrain, asking why the Arabs had to be so selfish in preventing Jews from taking their little sliver of land, their home, while the Arabs had the entire region to choose from.31

Even without explicitly relying on the religious narrative, the connection between Jews and Palestine proved formidable. In an article originally published in Harper’s Weekly, and then republished by the Institute, Kermit “Kim” Roosevelt, Jr., grandson of Theodore Roosevelt and a leading Arabist in the CIA, tried to illustrate the situation by creating a “hypothetical parallel case,” devoid of the “emotional and religious significance” of Palestine. In his hypothetical, the United States was committed to assisting the Filipinos “to self-government,” but then decided to give the islands to another group, who had suffered greatly under Japanese oppression. Even if the second group had once lived in the Philippines centuries ago, even if Great Britain and other powers endorsed the decision to give the islands over to this second group, and even if the Filipinos agreed that “victims of Japanese oppression should be given every possible aid and comfort, they would not admit the right of the United States to make such a promise. They would resist all efforts to fulfill it.” Most importantly, “American public opinion would surely

support” the Filipinos’ position.\textsuperscript{32} Thus, Americans should understand the Arab position in Palestine and fully support it. The reality, however, was that the “emotional and religious significance” of Palestine could not be easily erased or dismissed.

Supporters of an independent Arab Palestine also recognized this. The second line of attack was to agree that Palestine, in concert with the rest of the world, would do its part to allow additional immigration, with the explicit understanding that Palestine would not be a Jewish state. It would be a democracy, with an Arab majority, and a government that would set its own immigration policy, like any other country. One unknown group or individual took it even farther by drafting a UN resolution proposing that New York be turned into a Jewish state, using the most common elements of the Zionist platform, in an attempt to demonstrate how Zionist arguments would be utterly rejected if applied to the United States:

\begin{quote}
WHEREAS, the total population of the area known as Palestine is 2,000,000; of which 1,400,000 or 70 percent are Arabs and 600,000 or 30 percent are Jews; and
WHEREAS, the total population of the area known as New York City is 7,500,00; of which 4,500,000 or 60 percent are Christians, and 3,000,000 or 40 percent are Jews; and
WHEREAS, the total number of Jews now living in New York City is 5-times greater than the number of Jews now living in Palestine, and 7-times greater than the number of Jews that lived in all Judea at the peak of Solomon’s glory; and
WHEREAS, throughout four thousand years of recorded history the Jews have been hated and despised and unwanted in every country in which they sought to live; and
WHEREAS, the Jews are “God’s chosen people”, and therefore by divine right should and must receive preference over every other minority race in every country of the world; now, therefore,
BE IT RESOLVED, by the Assembly and Council of the United Nations Organization:
1. That the City of New York be partitioned from the State of New York and from the United States of America; and
2. That the City of New York be set up as a separate, independent State, to be known as “New Jerusalem”; and
\end{quote}

3. That all the Jews now in Palestine, and all the Jews not wanted in other countries of the world, be transported at public expense to the City of New York, which hereafter shall be their exclusive homeland; and

4. That all Christians now living in New York City shall be required to migrate at their own expense to other parts of the United States of America; and BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the United Nations Organization shall use its full civil and military powers to accomplish the objectives and to enforce the purposes of this Resolution within one year from the date hereof.\textsuperscript{33}

The proposed resolution sought to demonstrate how ridiculous it was to take land from the Arabs and give it to the Jews based on the ideas of a Jewish minority already living in the area and religious and ancient-historical ties, and that expecting the existing population to just move somewhere else violated American values of democracy and justice. This point of view had some support among sectors of the American public. A telegram sent to Truman’s press secretary, Charles G. Ross, noted that every “un-prejudiced American” would drop their support for the partition of Palestine if Truman or General George Marshall “repeatedly” stated that partition meant dividing a state against the wishes of the majority of its inhabitants, “for nothing could be more offensive to all of the people of this country than a mere suggestion of partition [of] one of its states without the consent of a majority of its voters.” Another telegram from a person in Pennsylvania echoed the sentiment of the proposed UN Resolution (though it is doubtful he or she ever saw it), writing that “When the US [sic] will agree that the UN has a moral right to make us give New York State back to the Seneca Indians we can then dictate what the Arabs do in Palestine.”\textsuperscript{34}

\textsuperscript{33}“A Resolution”; Papers of Clark M. Clifford, Subject File, 1945-54 Palestine – Releases and Clippings, Box 14, folder Palestine – UN Papers on Palestine; Truman Library.

\textsuperscript{34}Glendy B. Arnold to Charles G. Ross, March 22, 1948; OF 204, Folder March 1948; Truman Library; L.F. Obulander to Harry Truman, March 29, 1948; OF 204, Folder March 1948; Truman Library.
International Agreements/Wartime Actions

The plight of refugees and hypothetical situations were not enough, however, to solidify either side’s position. In addition to believing in the rightness of their cause, each side had to show that others also recognized it, by highlighting the actions of the international community. For Zionists, this lay largely in reminding Americans of the Balfour Declaration, which their government had supported since Woodrow Wilson. For the Arab position, there was the Hussayn-McMahon agreement, but that carried its own problems: the agreement was never formally recognized; it was negotiated in secret; the details were never fully explained; and it did not involve the United States. Thus, while the agreement did come up from time to time, the Institute focused instead on highlighting American pronouncements that committed the country to defend the rights of others, such as Woodrow Wilson’s Fourteen Points and Franklin Roosevelt’s Atlantic Charter.35

Similarly, the November 1945 issue of the Bulletin triumphantly covered the release of a letter from Franklin Roosevelt to King Ibn Saud of Saudi Arabia, dated April 5, 1945 (one week before Roosevelt’s death), in which, The Bulletin reported, Roosevelt wrote that he would “take no action . . . which might prove hostile to the Arab world.” This letter, the Institute jubilantly argued, “was added proof of the fundamental rightness of the Arab cause” and vindicated the idea that once Americans became aware of the facts about Palestine, “there can be but one attitude possible for a great democrat and a great American as the late President Roosevelt”: support for Arab Palestine. Roosevelt’s expressed sympathy with the Zionist cause was simply incompatible with “himself and with the great American traditions,” which were in line with the Arab cause. In addition to Woodrow Wilson’s Fourteen Points and their support for national self-

determination, this letter became a key example of presidential assurance to the Arabs “of the application of the principles of democracy in their countries.” The Arab Office also ran a full-page ad in the New York Times after the release of Roosevelt’s letter. The ad, according to the Institute’s coverage, not only reiterated the Arab position, listing and refuting eight Zionist claims, but also took quotes from the aforementioned writings of Wilson and Roosevelt, as well as Truman’s Navy Day speech on October 27, 1945. The Institute reported that others referred to the ad as “the first big gun of enlightening publicity fired by the Arabs in the United States.”

The Roosevelt letter made up for a number of the failures of Hussayn-McMahon in terms of its usefulness for the Arab position. In it, President Roosevelt wrote that it was his “desire that no action be taken with respect to the basic situation in that country [Palestine] without full consultation with respect to both Arabs and Jews.” Perhaps more importantly was Roosevelt’s assurance that, as president, he would take “no action . . . which might prove hostile to the Arab people.” These sentiments were echoed in similar letters to other Arab rulers from the day of Roosevelt’s death. This letter thus assured Arabs they were going to be treated as a full partner in U.S. policy decisions regarding the situation. Unlike the Balfour Declaration, with its dismissive reference to the “non-Jewish” population, the Arabs were named and identified, and their concerns given equal weight.

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38 See President Roosevelt to the Regent of Iraq, 12 April, 1945, FRUS 1945, Vol. VIII, 703-704 and President Roosevelt to the President of the Syrian Republic, 12 April, 1945, Ibid., 704. Additionally, Secretary of State Edward R. Stettinus, Jr. sent a similar letter to Lebanon. See The Secretary of State to the President of the Lebanese Council of Ministers, 11 April, 1945, Ibid., 703
Once again, however, the letter was not a binding promise, and it remains unclear how (or if) it would have influenced Roosevelt’s Middle Eastern policies. This promise meant only that the sides needed to be *consulted* prior to making changes, not that both sides had to *agree* before such changes could be implemented, something both the Jews and the Arabs at times contested. Roosevelt was more sympathetic to the Arab argument than the Zionist case, especially since the Arabs played a much larger role in U.S. war aims. He was not immune, though, to domestic pressures, and during the 1944 campaign, hinted his openness to further Jewish immigration and declined to exclude the possibility of a Jewish state.\(^9\) Regardless of his position, one week after he penned the letter to Ibn Saud, Roosevelt died in Warm Springs, Georgia, and his thoughts and plans for the region died with him. Dubbed “the Juggler,” Franklin D. Roosevelt himself claimed that “‘I never let my right hand know what my left hand does. . . . I may be entirely inconsistent, and furthermore I am perfectly willing to mislead and tell untruths if it will help win the war.’”\(^10\) While this tactic helped him navigate the choppy waters of Middle East diplomacy, it left a tangled web for his successor, Harry Truman, to unweave. Within days of taking office, Truman received a letter from Secretary of State Edward R. Stettinus, Jr., warning him that, soon, Zionist leaders would be pressuring him to commit to Zionist-friendly policies. While acknowledging the sympathy held for the suffering of European Jews, Stettinus strongly urged Truman not to make any public statements on the issue without first consulting him. A few weeks later, Acting Secretary of State Joseph Grew echoed Stettinus’ suggestions, sending Truman a copy of Roosevelt’s letter to Ibn Saud and explaining

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that Roosevelt promised the King that he would make “no move hostile to the Arab people and would not assist the Jews as against the Arabs.”

Another problematic issue with the letter was that it was directed to non-Palestinian leaders. The growing importance of oil to the war effort and a general desire to maintain a positive image in the region led Roosevelt to meet with Arab leaders in 1943. Palestine remained a key concern for those leaders, especially the fear that, much like at the end of World War I, the Arabs would face a de facto Jewish state at the conclusion of the current conflict. German propaganda in the region fed off this fear, associating an Allied victory with the creation of such a state. As Ibn Saud explained to Roosevelt, it was not that the Arabs wished for the destruction of the Jews, but rather demanded “that the Arabs should not be exterminated for the sake of the Jews.”

There was no indication that Roosevelt’s promise to consult Arabs included Palestinians in general or the Arab Higher Committee, the Mandate-era ruling power for Palestinian Arabs. By addressing his letter to Ibn Saud, rather than the Palestinians, Roosevelt indicated his interest in the region, notably the newly discovered Saudi oil reserves, and his view that Palestine needed to be addressed within that frame of U.S. interests, rather than committing himself specifically to the creation of an independent Arab Palestine or the desires of the Palestinian people.

Part of this emphasis on a regional focus stemmed from the lack of a clear leader with whom Americans could work. The most prominent Palestinian figure was the Grand Mufti of Jerusalem, Hajj Amin al-Husayni, who was widely known for his support of the Nazis. This made him quite problematic, to say the least. While the Arab countries did not formally ally

41 Edwin Stettinius, Jr. to Harry Truman, April 18, 1945; Truman Papers, President’s Secretary’s Files; Box 161, File Folder “Palestine 1945-1947;” Truman Library. Joseph C. Grew to Harry Truman, May 1, 1945; Ibid.
with the Axis powers during the war, anti-British sentiment was high. The mufti was particularly critical of the British after 1936, leading the British to try to assassinate him. The mufti eventually fled to Nazi Germany, where he encouraged Hitler to publicly support Arab independence and issued repeated calls for Arabs to rise up against the British. After the war, Zionists in particular made much of the mufti’s alliance, which undoubtedly explains why Arab-Americans did all they could to reaffirm their democratic loyalties. 43 A 1944 issue of AZEC’s *Palestine* reported a German broadcast from Turkey claiming that the mufti had issued a call to Muslims in Yugoslavia to pray for Hitler’s success. 44 In a *Herald Tribune* ad in 1946, the Non-Sectarian Anti-Nazi League linked Hitler to the mufti and then to the Institute of Arab American Affairs (see Fig. 6), building on the idea that all Arabs were fascists and had supported the enemy during the war, warning Americans that they would be just as guilty as former British Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain if they were to support the other side. In a memo sent to President Truman three months after Roosevelt’s death, Zionist leaders told him the 1936 Arab Revolt had been fomented by “Nazi Germany and Fascist Italy,” but Chamberlain followed his policy of appeasement, leading to the 1939 White Paper, a “capitulation to the demands of Arab terrorists.” The unspoken warning to Truman was not to allow himself to fall victim to a similar lack of forceful action in the face of Arab demands. 45

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By and large, the Institute tried to avoid engaging in the debate over the mufti’s role. In his radio appearance on *Town Meeting*, discussed in chapter 2, Totah was questioned specifically about the mufti and his actions during the war. Totah attempted to evade the issue by insisting it had nothing to do with the topic of who had the right to rule Palestine now. When James McDonald, who had asserted that the mufti worked “hand in glove with the Nazis” during his own remarks, pushed Totah on the issue by claiming that the mufti was raised as an “Arab hero,” Totah was forced to respond. He insisted that “the Mufti question has nothing to do with the argument of whether Palestine belongs to the majority of its inhabitants or not. The Mufti is a

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patriot, is a gentleman, and he was just as patriotic and had a right to his opinion as Jefferson and Franklin had to theirs when they were fighting for American liberty.”

Totah’s comparison of the mufti to Thomas Jefferson and Benjamin Franklin was an attempt to highlight the nationalist impulses behind his actions, while also continuing his attempts to reframe the Arab position in an American lens. In other words, the mufti had not worked with the Nazis because he agreed with their genocidal program against the Jews, but rather because his primary focus was on freeing Palestine and his people from unlawful British rule. It was an anti-colonial struggle, much like the American Revolution, that required the Palestinians to seek aid from the enemy of their enemy. This answer also tied back to Totah’s opening remarks in the program, in which he stated that the Arabs had helped the Allies in both world wars, but were still struggling to gain their independence and be recognized as such.

Yet the question of Arab efforts during World War II continued to dog the Institute and a strong, clear answer continued to elude members. In another radio debate, broadcast on WTMJ Milwaukee, Totah was again asked about the war and why Palestinian Arabs did not do more. In response, Totah attempted to counter this argument by divorcing wartime behavior from a people’s right to independence. Positing that Arab action or inaction during the war were irrelevant, Totah insisted that the question of Palestine concerned a more fundamental debate about the rights of a majority to self-determination. He asked if the world had a right to take away Sweden from the Swedes or Switzerland from the Swiss because of their neutrality during the war, again demonstrating the type of double standards being applied to Palestine. While European nations were free to choose neutrality, and even countries that had fought against the

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Allies, such as Italy, maintained their independence, the perception of Arab indifference or hostility toward Allied war aims was being used against the Arab world in general and the Palestinians in particular. It also ignored the actual contributions made by the Arab countries, which Totah highlighted by referring to President Truman’s recent decoration of King Feisal for the “great and splendid loyalty and effort which the Arabs rendered to the Allies.” Yet the reigning view of the Arabs was they had not done enough during the war to help the Allies and probably would not be much of a threat otherwise.

The Milwaukee radio debate was billed as presentation of the Arab and Zionist positions regarding Palestine. Dr. Totah was introduced as “upholding the Arabian viewpoint” and Reverend Karl Baehr, a Chicago Unitarian minister and Secretary of the Midwest Christian Palestine Committee, was “upholding the Jewish viewpoint.” The description of Rev. Baehr highlights several issues with which the Institute had to deal when it came to American perceptions of Palestine. First, Rev. Baehr’s arguments were pro-Zionist: Palestine should be re-created as a Jewish state and Jewish refugees should be allowed unfettered access to the country. While there were still significant groups of Jews in the United States and elsewhere who disagreed with the Zionist platform, Baehr was presented as representing the “Jewish” position, further cementing the idea that Zionism had the full and unconditional support of Jews, while the Arabs were being intransigent and unreasonable in denying them their home. Second, despite being a Christian minister representing a Christian organization, Baehr was still seen as a reliable expert on the Jewish position, further demonstrating the close ties between American Christians and Jews when it came to the issue, a difficult bulwark for the Institute to breach.

Totah pushed forward with the Institute’s standard arguments in an attempt to weaken Baehr’s position. He reminded listeners that Palestine was sacred not exclusively to Jews, but

49 “What Should be Done with Palestine?” Milwaukee Speaks! WTMJ, Milwaukee, March 9, 1947, 12.
also to Muslims and Christians; why should Zionists be able to claim full control over the land at the expense of the other religions? Rather than accept the narrative of Zionism as a religious or humanitarian movement, Totah framed it as a colonizing mission, no different in its intent or justification than British rule in India or Japanese expansion in Asia during World War II. If creating a democracy was truly the goal, he continued, why did it have to wait until the Zionists were able to drive the Arabs into a minority of the population? The democratic solution was the Arab position.\textsuperscript{50}

Once again, Totah commended Americans on their intentions. In his view, Americans were the clear champions of democracy, which was further demonstrated in the central role democracy and self-determination played in the United Nations’ charter. The problem was they had been misled to believe that the Zionists best reflected that tradition when it came to Palestine. As an educator, Totah sought to show Americans that their frame of reference was incorrect. His first question to Baehr was whether “[his] Jewish terrorists, or [his] Jewish Zionist program in Palestine, which is trying by means of force to bring in a majority in order to rule Palestine, believe in democracy?”\textsuperscript{51} If so, why did they refuse to submit to majority rule now? This line of questioning served two purposes. First, it clearly framed the issue of democracy as one of majority rule. The question was whether majority rule should be implemented as the population stood or delayed until an outside force had realigned the population. Which was more aligned with American conceptions of justice, fairness, and democracy? Second, this question also raised the issue of Zionist methods, particularly the rise of terrorism. Less than a year before this program, on July 22, 1946, the Jewish terrorist organization Irgun (led by future Israeli Prime Minister Menachem Begin) blew up the King David Hotel in Jerusalem, which

\textsuperscript{50} “What Should be Done with Palestine?” 6-7.

\textsuperscript{51} Ibid., 9.
served as the British military headquarters. The resulting loss of British, Arab, and Jewish lives shocked and angered many in both the United States and Great Britain and had a “polarizing” effect concerning Palestine: for some Zionists, the bombing was an effective guerrilla tactic, pushing the British to quash terrorism but also to consider leaving Palestine altogether.\textsuperscript{52} The use of terrorism, however, was not a unified position among the Jewish Agency. In a memo to Nahum Goldmann, who represented the Jewish Agency in New York, Benjamin Akzin of the American Zionist Emergency Council warned that if the American public began to think of some “Jewish resistance groups” as terrorists or “gangsters,” they would apply that label to all Jewish resistance groups.\textsuperscript{53} By linking terrorism to the Zionist program, Totah sought to reframe the situation in Palestine as pitting the rightful inhabitants against colonizers and criminals.

Unfortunately, as the \textit{Bulletin} later reported, the press seemed to be endorsing the opposite narrative, in which the actions of the “native population in defense of their country” were described as the “work of ‘assassins,’ but the murders and kidnappings of an immigrant minority of political Zionists [were] performed by ‘groups’ with high sounding names struggling for ‘freedom.’”\textsuperscript{54}

Baehr’s response sought to avoid the issue by falling back on the Balfour Declaration, claiming that Totah’s question was only valid if the Balfour Declaration was an illegal document. Before Totah could respond that it was, Baehr continued to say that if Britain did not have the authority to give away Palestine, then it also did not have the authority to promise Arabia or Iraq to the Arabs. In this way, Baehr sought to tie the legitimacy of McMahon to

\textsuperscript{52} Wm. Roger Louis, \textit{The British Empire in the Middle East} (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1984), 430. Future Israeli Prime Minister Menachem Begin was the leader of Irgun.


Balfour, forcing Totah and Arab supporters at large into an all-or-nothing position regarding the international agreements.⁵⁵

Baehr’s main argument, however, centered on the issue of how much land each side currently possessed. Again and again, he stated that the Arabs had a lot of land in the Middle East, while the Jews had nothing. All the Zionists sought was a small slice of land for the promised Jewish state. It would not be detrimental to the Arabs, as they could move to one of the many other Arab states in the region, building again on the idea of Arabs as nomads without ties to the land, for whom one country was just as good as the next. This echoed a common Zionist argument regarding the unfairness of Arabs holding all the land. In a 1943 article for the American Zionist Emergency Council’s newsletter *Palestine*, James McDonald (with whom Totah debated in the radio town hall) wrote, “A second point that should be stressed is that the Arabs have large adjacent territories which belong to them exclusively. The Jews have no other land to which to go. In the case of the Jews in the Nazi-dominated lands of Europe, it is not a question of their preference for this or that point of refuge. Quite simply and literally, the question remains the life-and-death query as to whether the one place to which they can go will receive them.”⁵⁶ In addition, Baehr argued that Jews deserved a reward for helping the Allies during the war. A sliver of land, 1% of the Arab total in the Middle East, was not too much to ask.

To counter that position, Totah put the request in terms Americans could understand, pointing out that the United States had 48 states and suggesting that the Jews be brought to Wisconsin and the current residents be moved to Kansas or Oklahoma. If such an idea seemed

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⁵⁵ “What Should be Done with Palestine,” 10.
preposterous to Americans, then they understood how the Arabs of Palestine felt about these suggestions: Arabs living in Palestine were Palestinians, not Saudis or Iraqis. Their homes and their histories were tied to their land, and it was ludicrous to expect them to simply pick up and move somewhere else.\textsuperscript{57} In the end, Totah and other members of the Institute realized that the Balfour Declaration, the League of Nations Mandate for Palestine, and U.S. declarations (official and non-official alike) in support of such agreements all proved significant hurdles to overcome, requiring a different tactic. The July 1946 issue of \textit{The Bulletin} laid it out thusly: “The difference between Zionism and Arab nationalism is the reliance which the former places on promises, treaties and secret agreements and the reliance which the latter places on principles, ideals and inalienable rights.”\textsuperscript{58} Which did the United States want to support?

\textbf{Democracy and Justice}

The larger issue surrounding the issues of race, religion, refugees, international agreements, and wartime actions was the idea of American virtues. To provide its critique, the Institute felt it necessary to emphasize its loyalty to the United States. While not overt, each volume of \textit{The Bulletin} had at least one reference to the Institute as “a free democratic organization,” or “an American organization, speaking . . . in the name of American democracy.” Likewise, in calls for contributions, found at the end of most issues, the Institute reminded readers that contributing “render[s] a patriotic duty to your country – the United States of America.”\textsuperscript{59} The Institute sought to place Arab Americans firmly as supporters of the United

\textsuperscript{57} “What Should be Done with Palestine,” 10, 12.


States and its ideals, while pushing Americans to re-evaluate their position in light of the values they held dear and teach them of the important role they had played in the Arab world’s development. As Dr. Philip Hitti, the first executive director of the Institute, told the Senate, “No Westerner is more highly respected and more implicitly trusted by the Arab and Moslem people than the American.” This was due to the Arab experiences with American “teachers, preachers, physicians, archeologists, pilgrims and philanthropists” who represented a Western power interested in “giving rather than taking and with no imperialistic designs.” These comments differentiated the United States from the hated imperialists of Great Britain and France and also fit with the American mythos that it was better than Europe, which had succumbed to the temptations of empire and generally left trouble and conflict in its wake.\(^6\) The United States was instead portrayed as a country populated by good, moral people, concerned only with spreading the benefits of its experience. This language brought to mind the Puritan image of the City on the Hill, a beacon for the rest of the world. The United States, Hitti averred, should be proud of this legacy and do its utmost to preserve it. “The word ‘American,’” he explained, was synonymous in “the minds of Arabs and Moslems with fair play, honorable dealing and democratic conduct. All this reservoir of good-will accumulated through generations of unselfish and hard working Americans will be threatened with destruction” should the United States choose to back the Zionist agenda. Once more, Hitti tapped into powerful American images of identity: fairness, democracy, and hard work. Support for a Jewish state would not simply be a betrayal of the Arabs of Palestine, who for so long had admired and hoped

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to follow the United States; it would also be a betrayal of this important image and legacy, of the very core of what it meant to be American.\(^{61}\)

The first policy recommendation the Institute challenged were calls for the British to remove restrictions on Jewish immigration to Palestine, and the emphasis of its argument was the risk of betraying the country’s ideals. On July 4, 1945, thirty-seven governors approved a petition to Truman requesting mass Jewish immigration to Palestine and the “transformation of that country into a Jewish commonwealth.” The Institute responded, not with outright condemnation (which would have been adversarial), but by reminding the governors that such an action was “contrary to the moral principles for which our Government has consistently stood.” It would result in the “complete domination” of the majority population and “possibly their eventual eviction” by a minority, outside group.\(^{62}\)

Reactions to such educational attempts were mixed, at best. The Institute printed excerpts of five replies received from the governors, none of which showed a conversion to the Arab point of view. Two (the governors of Florida and Georgia) simply stated that they “did not concur in the petition” to Truman. The other three (the governors of Pennsylvania, Virginia, and Indiana) acknowledged the “merit” of the Institute’s point and the general lack of understanding of the Arab position. While these responses validate the Institute’s contention that Americans needed to be educated about Palestine and the Arab cause, they do not show that the recipients of such knowledge fundamentally changed their position regarding Palestine. The Institute publicized any instance of American politicians, religious leaders, news organizations, or general citizens promoting the Arab side. The fact that none of these governors was mentioned again, and that the responses published were non-committal, suggests that the majority remained allied

\(^{61}\) Ibid.

to the Zionist cause. As for Truman, he never responded to any of the Institute’s telegrams, letters, or other outreach attempts. The best the Institute got was State Department acknowledgment that its messages had been received.⁶³

To the dismay of the Institute, Arabs, and the British government alike, Truman continued to promote immigration to Palestine as a solution to the deplorable conditions faced by Jewish survivors of the Holocaust, mainly by calling for the British to allow for the immediate entrance of 100,000 refugees into Palestine, something the British adamantly refused to do. They were quickly souring on the Mandate and the netting of the United States did not improve their outlook. The British knew they needed a new policy, and in December 1945, the Anglo-American Committee of Inquiry formed. This was partly a British attempt to push the United States into action, rather than simply criticizing British policy, but the stated goal of the committee was to find a solution for the DP problem in Europe. The committee invited members of the Arab and Jewish communities to testify, and four representatives from the Institute responded: Dr. Hitti; Mr. Faris S. Malouf (President of the Institute); Dr. Khalil Totah (Executive Director); and Dr. John Hazam of the City College of New York (member of the Executive Committee). While the Institute was pleased with its members’ testimony, it remained concerned about how the Committee would eventually rule.⁶⁴

That concern proved well founded. The Committee’s report supported Truman’s call for 100,000 DP immigrants to enter Palestine and stated that since partition was not feasible neither a Jewish nor an Arab state should be established. Until an independent state could be formed without leading to violence (be it Jewish, Arab, or neither), the territory should remain under trusteeship. The Institute pointed out the absurdity of such a position and warned that


implementation of those recommendations would require U.S. military intervention, something at odds with U.S. interests in the region. The most Zionists could “legitimately expect” was the rights of Jews as a religious community being guaranteed in an Arab state of Palestine – “when they demand more – a Jewish state – they go beyond the bounds of democracy.”65 As Albert Hourani, a leading scholar on Arab history at Oxford and a member of the Arab Office, testified before the Committee, Arab opposition to a Jewish state was “unalterable.” But this opposition came not from simple stubbornness, small-mindedness, or anti-Semitism. Instead, he argued, it was based upon the unwavering conviction of unshakeable rights and a conviction of the injustice of forcing a long-settled population to accept immigrants without its consent being asked and against its known and expressed will; the injustice of turning a majority into a minority in its own country; the injustice of withholding self-government until the Zionists are in the majority and able to profit by it. The Arab opposition is based also upon the situation of the dangers of Zionism which threatened to distort the whole natural development of Arab peace – social, economic, political, and intellectual – and threatens also, if not to dominate the Arab world, at least to disturb its life for generations to come.66

In other words, the Arab populations sought to uphold the principles and ideals the United States claimed to cherish: self-determination, democracy, and peace.

The release of the Anglo-American Committee’s report marked the beginning of a shift in The Bulletin from critical but friendly, to angry and betrayed, language. In the months following the Committee’s report, the Institute focused more on the hypocrisy of the U.S. position. In July 1946, the Institute sent a memo to the State Department in which it challenged the government to admit that suggestions that the United States or Great Britain rescind their territory to an outside group and become a minority in their own land would be seen as “so


heinous a violation of natural, God-given rights that it would justify taking up arms in the face of the aggressor’’ yet somehow, in the Arabs’ case, “‘there is a feeling that these rights do not apply to them as fully as to the British, Americans, the Dutch or the Norwegians.’’” The Institute also quoted a note sent to Truman by the Arab Higher Executive Committee (the Arab leadership of Mandatory Palestine), that questioned why Truman, if he was so concerned about the fate of Jewish refugees, did not welcome them to the United States, “‘which can absorb not only 100,000 but millions of them?’” Such a statement, The Bulletin acknowledged, might not “be very diplomatic, but it reflects the mood of righteous indignation.”67

That spirit of “righteous indignation” found further expression after Great Britain announced its intention to turn the Palestinian question over to the United Nations. A special session convened on April 29, 1947, and the Institute found no shortage of outrages. “From the start,” it reported, “the dice were loaded against the Arabs” and perhaps more disturbingly, “power politics was the gargantuan invisible delegate dominating the whole proceedings.” The recognition of power politics showed a distinct turn from earlier characterizations of the United States as above the self-interested imperialism of Europe. The United States was now in danger of repeating the same mistakes Britain had made in Palestine, especially if it allowed itself to be guided by petty self-interest, rather than the “ideals of democracy, self-determination, and Christian teaching” that made it exceptional. The answer could not be to force a reconciliation of the irreconcilable, as the Institute characterized the U.S. delegate’s stance. Instead, the question was “Which of these two sides [Arab or Zionist] is consonant with those universal principles of law and morality and which is not?” The Institute no longer made any reference to the good intentions of American politicians, who operated from a lack of knowledge. That strategy failed to promote Arab interests and simply showed Arabs and their supporters “how

littles they can expect in the way of sympathetic understanding from the United States.”

This was a significant change from the attitude of Dr. Hitti during his congressional testimony three years earlier, which focused on the positive views Arabs had of Americans based on their experiences with American missionaries. But, from the Institute’s perspective, worse was yet to come.

The UN Special Session concluded with a vote to form a special committee (UNSCOP) to investigate the situation in Palestine and find a solution. It was a difficult task. The Arabs launched a boycott against the committee, due to fears that it was biased against their position. On UNSCOP’s first day in Palestine, the British handed down death sentences against three members of Irgun responsible for a prison break that had allowed over two hundred prisoners to escape. Despite these ominous beginnings, the members of UNSCOP toured the country and interviewed as many individuals as possible. After spending four weeks in Palestine, they traveled to Lebanon to meet with Arab representatives from other countries.

Upon the completion of its fact-finding mission, UNSCOP was unable to reach a unanimous plan, instead offering two options. The majority recommendation called for the partition of Palestine into Arab and Jewish states, bound by an economic union, with two separate, independent states emerging after a two-year transition period. Jerusalem would be administered separately as a UN trusteeship. The minority report called for an independent federal Palestine. A debate thus commenced in the General Assembly over which plan to adopt. As the vote over partition


70 Jorge Garcia-Granados, *The Birth of Israel: The Drama as I Saw It* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1948), 30. Granados was a member of UNSCOP and a representative from Guatemala.
neared and the Institute’s fear of American support grew, it listed important questions for Americans to consider in the November 1947 issue of The Bulletin:

1. If Americans have a right to undisturbed possession of the United States after a continuous settlement here of about 300 years, why have the Arabs of Palestine no equal right to undisturbed possession of their country after a continuous settlement of at least 1300 years?
2. Abraham Lincoln said the land belongs to the people who inhabit it. Why is this not as true for Arabs as for anybody else?
3. If you believe in democracy and majority rule, is it possible to justify the political Zionist minority of Palestine in imposing its will upon the native Arab majority?
4. By what logic does America fight against a communist minority trying to take over Greece, and at the same time give active support to an alien Zionist minority trying to displace the native Arab majority in Palestine?
5. If our government is sincerely interested in the fate of Jewish displaced persons in Europe why does it refuse them entry into our own country which is 300 times as large as Palestine?
6. Political Zionists have often accused Great Britain of being imperialist and dealing in lands and people as though they were so much merchandise; yet is it not true that political Zionism is, in Palestine, the beneficiary of the crudest sort of imperialism?

After intense debates, negotiations, and politicking, a two-thirds majority of the General Assembly voted for the majority plan on November 29, 1947. The Institute’s worst fears were realized. “AN AMERICAN TRAGEDY” read the headline of the December issue of The Bulletin. The vote for partition “sealed the doom of the deeply-rooted friendship between the Arab world and the United States. . . . Here was a friendship – built up slowly and solidly over more than a century of time by non-imperialistically minded Americans – wrecked within the span of half a dozen minutes.” The bitterness, anger, and sense of betrayal were palpable throughout the issue, though the Institute took care not to blame the entire American population, but rather directed its indignation specifically at one group: “vote-minded American politicians.”

The opening article juxtaposed images of selfless American citizens who went to the Middle East as “unselfish, ideistically minded” missionaries and teachers, “noble expounders of that great Christian principle of doing unto others as you would have others do unto you,” with politicians willing to sacrifice those ideals for the sake of “forty-seven electoral votes” (the electoral votes of New York, a important state for Democratic presidential ambitions and home to a significant Jewish population). The Institute did not want to wholly condemn the United States, risking its ability to gain support from the public, so it tried to shame politicians while still upholding a virtuous image of ordinary Americans.

The United States had a powerful and impressive history, which the Institute continually argued should serve as a reference culture for the rest of the world. By supporting partition, however, the United States had done serious harm to its reputation and the way it was viewed by the rest of the world. A year before the partition vote, the Counsel General of Iraq, Abdullah Bark, noted that Arab and American civilizations were natural allies: “Both were democratic in which various races, colors, and religions were fused into a homogenous whole, . . . both were characterized by freedom of thought and religious tolerance, and . . . both encouraged scientific research and spent liberally on knowledge.” If Americans were looking for a country to serve as a model for the American way, an Arab Palestine was the answer.

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73 *The Bulletin*, Vol. III, No. 6 (December 15, 1947): 1-2. This is not the first time the Golden Rule appears in *The Bulletin*. It is often included whenever the Institute is listing the core values of the United States, such as democracy and justice. Likewise, it is always referred to as a Christian principle, even though variations of the Gold Rule are found in numerous religions and cultures. The forty-seven votes is a reference to New York and the importance of the Jewish vote there. While the historiography continues to debate whether or how much the vote-aspect influenced Truman’s decisions, the Institute clearly believed it was a dominating factor.

Conclusion

The Holocaust served as a potent rallying point for Zionists and their supporters, while simultaneously creating difficult roadblocks for the Institute and other Arab supporters. As the world grappled with the question of what to do with survivors, Palestine seemed to be the perfect answer. The underlying sentiments and beliefs of many Americans that Palestine was the natural and historical home for the Jews, combined with a fear of Jewish refugees showing up on American shores, enhanced their instinct to support the Zionist position, regardless of whether they were paying attention to the issue. A 1946 poll showed that, of the 55% of respondents who said they were following the “discussion about permitting Jews to settle in Palestine,” 76% favored the idea. Even including people who had not been paying attention, 49% approved of Jewish people settling freely in Palestine, with an additional 20% supporting a “limited number” of settlers. Only 7% felt no more Jews should be allowed, while the rest were undecided.\(^75\) The DP situation also affected those in charge of deciding policy, from President Truman to the members of UNSCOP, who were moved by the plight of the *Exodus*, which occurred as they were visiting Palestine, possibly influencing their recommendations for partition.\(^76\)

The Institute attempted to decouple the DP issue from Palestine by broadening the scope to issues of justice, democracy, and fairness. By situating Palestine as an opportunity for Americans to demonstrate their commitment to these ideals, the Institute and its supporters hoped to reframe Arab control of Palestine as the natural solution in line with American democracy, rather than an obstacle for suffering refugees. The emphasis on hypothetical situations, like Roosevelt’s Philippine analogy or Totah’s suggestion of moving the people of


Wisconsin to other parts of the United States so the Jews could create their national home there, sought to reduce the pull of religion and emotion.

Interestingly, while the Institute and other Arab groups emphasized the issue of fairness and justice, advisors to the American Zionist Emergency Council warned that group away from making similar arguments. Benjamin Akzin, a political advisor to AZEC, warned that the Zionists put too much emphasis on the “fairness of the Zionist cause.” He argued that, when dealing with President Truman, the argument must be based on three grounds: fairness to DPs, the alignment of Zionism with U.S. foreign policy goals, and “refuting the objections stemming from the Arab question, Anglo-Russian relations, and OIL [caps in the original].” Of these, the second was more important than the first, and the third more important than the second. This call to refute national security issues suggests the Arabs and their supporters were gaining some success on that front. If Americans could not be moved by calls to claim the moral high ground, perhaps the Institute could succeed by moving to a third type of language and framing: Cold War conspiracy.

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Chapter Four
In the Country’s Best Interest: Palestine and National Security

Introduction

While the Institute of Arab American Affairs faced an uphill battle to convince Americans that Palestinian Arabs shared a common heritage when it came to issues of race and religion and were the best reflections of American ideals, the ground began to even out when it came to issues of national security. The Institute and other pro-Arab groups found a great deal of support among policymakers in the State Department’s Division of Near Eastern and African Affairs and the nascent Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) and American diplomats and businessmen in the Middle East, all of whom held varying degrees of concern over such issues as oil, military bases, transportation routes, and the potential for another war coming so soon after the end of World War II. When it comes to the U.S. relationship with Israel, the general sentiment is that the special relationship between the two countries was inevitable. Digging deeper into the debates, however, reveals that members of the State Department, missionaries living in Palestine and the surrounding area, businessmen working in the region, particularly those in the oil industry, and especially Arab Americans felt considerable ambivalence about whether the United States should support the creation of a Jewish state. As the political situation around Palestine evolved, culminating in the UN partition plan and eventual recognition of Israel, the Institute’s language shifted from the friendly educator to that of righteous indignation and Cold War conspiracy (as discussed in the introduction), all in an effort to
convince Americans that national security was dependent on supporting Arab control of Palestine.

The Institute emphasized four areas where Arab support and cooperation would be essential for U.S. national security: oil, adherence to prior agreements and the success of bilateral negotiations, the status and prestige of the United Nations, and the containment of communism. Though Palestine itself was not an oil producer, the oil fields of Saudi Arabia and the energy needs of postwar reconstruction made the United States acutely aware of the strategic importance of maintaining good relations with the Arab states.¹ It also highlighted the closeness with which the Arab world was watching the Palestine issue and reminded Americans that their actions would not only affect the people of Palestine but also risked turning the entire region, and even the larger Muslim world, against the United States. Along those lines, the Institute sought to warn Americans of the dangers of going back on previous promises. As seen in chapter 3, the Institute’s publications often highlighted the ways in which the United States was different from the imperial powers of Europe, particularly when it came to the Middle East. To further that message, the Institute emphasized the exceptional nature of American proclamations like Woodrow Wilson’s Fourteen Points, the Atlantic Charter, and Franklin Roosevelt’s pledge to King Ibn Saud not to make any changes in U.S. policy toward Palestine without first consulting the Arabs. Should the United States turn its back on these promises, the Institute warned, it would be no different from Britain, which had betrayed the Arabs’ trust by promising independence in return for Arab help fighting the Ottoman Empire during World War I, only to turn around and secretly carve up the region with France through the Sykes-Picot agreement.

Instead, the United States should include Arab representatives (such as the Institute) in any international negotiations regarding Palestine’s future and listen to their insights.

Both the Arab and Zionist sides of the Palestine debate also emphasized the threat posed to the United Nations of supporting the other side. As responsibility for Palestine moved to the United Nations, the Institute reframed these arguments to encourage Americans to consider the damage to the United Nation’s prestige if it failed to find a peaceful and sustainable solution to the problem. Zionists also found the prestige argument compelling, particularly after the United Nations voted for partition of Palestine into Jewish and Arab states. Violence continued to beset Palestine under British rule, as Jewish groups attacked British targets and civil war broke out between Arabs and Jews, with the Jewish Agency’s Plan D focused on destroying Arab villages and “cleansing Palestine” of its Arab inhabitants going into force in April 1948. The British government continued to pour men and money into Palestine as violence and unrest continued: roughly 100,000 soldiers and £30,000,000 or £40,000,000 per year, according to Winston Churchill, and by February 1947, it began evacuating British women, children, and non-essential civilians in light of kidnappings by Jewish terrorist organizations. That same month, Great Britain announced that it would end its Mandate in Palestine and, in the interim, turn the problem over to the United Nations, without any recommendations of how to solve the issue of who would control the territory in its stead. It also refused to take any responsibility for enforcing whatever decision the United Nations came up with, unless the plan had the full backing of both the Jewish and Arab residents of Palestine – a very unlikely possibility.

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Following the UN partition vote, the Institute issued warnings that the Arabs would not allow their land to be taken from them and that such a plan would have to be implemented with force, a potent argument for a society wary and weary of war. To counter that argument, Zionists brought up the specter of appeasement, arguing that if the United States should change its mind and oppose partition or refuse to uphold the ruling of the General Assembly, it would show that the United Nations was weak and could be overruled with the mere threat of violence.\textsuperscript{4} As a result of these fears, each side of the Palestine debate sought to convince the American public that it was well suited to protect American interests in the region and the prestige of the United Nations, while at the same time painting the opposition as secretly backed by the Soviets. Meanwhile, conflicting pressures in the U.S. government, with the State Department strongly against partition and the White House largely for it, led to a muddled policy and an opportunity for Zionists and Arabists alike to get their views across.

Finally, tapping into mounting fears over Soviet intentions, the Institute began a sustained campaign to link the Zionist project with communism, portraying the waves of refugees heading toward Palestine as a 5\textsuperscript{th} column for the Soviet Union, ready to turn Palestine into a beachhead for Soviet expansion into the strategic region. One of the first issues the newly constituted United Nations faced was the Soviet refusal to leave the province of Azerbaijan in Iran; combined with fears of communism in Greece and Turkey, the Azerbaijan situation created a sense of a growing Soviet menace that needed to be contained. U.S. concern centered on how the Palestine issue could affect its relationship with the Arab nations, which was vital for resources such as oil and for military bases and installations. Even more importantly, the Arab countries could serve as buffer states and remain under the American sphere of influence, tipping the Cold

\textsuperscript{4} Mart, 46.
War balance of power in favor of the United States at the expense of the Soviet Union. As Bruce Evenson put it, by 1947, “each of the major parties to the dispute [over Palestine] would be compelled to speak the language of the Cold War,” for which the State Department was well suited, creating a strong ally for the Institute.5

**Oil and Palestine**

The Institute knew it had a strong argument in the risks the United States would take in terms of its national security by backing a Jewish state in Palestine against the wishes of the Arabs. Oil, bases, and a potential bulwark against Soviet incursions all hung in the balance. Zionists were no strangers to these arguments, having used similar points in their own propaganda, even before World War II ended. During the war, the American Zionist Emergency Council (AZEC) proclaimed Jewish support for the British, arguing that only a Jewish state would welcome British troops in the region, allowing the Empire to continue to control the Suez Canal.6 The Arabs had a strong position when it came to oil, however, and the Zionists were aware of it. As the war neared its end, AZEC tried to downplay oil’s importance, calling on the United States not to allow oil to dictate its position on Palestine, claiming that the oil reserves in Saudi Arabia were “greatly exaggerated,” and advising the United States to focus on its domestic production. AZEC’s publications argued that the “‘oil generals,’ who are usually inspired by both financial and political interests,” should not be allowed to detract from the “moral considerations” of the Jewish National Home. In fact, AZEC wrote, by focusing on oil, the United States risked devolving into the shameful power politics of profit over morality, a type of

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argument we saw the Institute often make in the previous chapter. Whether Arab or Zionist, the arguments regarding morality often seemed to play more heavily when the respective group felt its position was weakest. For example, when Dr. Khalil Totah testified before the Anglo-American Committee of Inquiry, it was clear that, by the numbers, Arab progress in Palestine could not match Zionist modernization efforts; thus, he attempted to steer the conversation away from production numbers to questions of right and wrong. For the Zionists, as much as they attempted to downplay the importance of oil, it was clear that they understood the power of the issue and thus fell back on moral exhortations.

Zionists also decried the influence of the press, which they saw as quite biased against them, something that would have come as a surprise to the Institute. The newspapers, AZEC argued, were “amenable to the influence of the State Department” and thus unquestioning of the idea that the wishes of King Ibn Saud should be given weight when it came to the issue of Palestine. What the papers failed to note, it continued, was that Ibn Saud did not have control over Palestine, that his religious views were extreme and could be problematic for Christians as well as Jews, and that the Mandate, with its international recognition, had already provided for Jewish rule in Palestine. The State Department’s support of Ibn Saud’s position, it explained, was a way for it to fight against the Jewish state without coming out in open opposition. This was another strategy for supporters of Zionism to downplay issues of national security. Rather than argue outright that there were no relevant issues, or concede that the Arabs might have a stronger standing, this line of argument framed State Department national security concerns as merely a front for their anti-Semitic narrative against a Jewish state.

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At the same time, the Institute readily acknowledged the importance of oil and the fact that while Americans might not respond to appeals on the natural rights of Arabs, they would be drawn to arguments involving business. The Institute’s first volume of *Papers on Palestine* included testimony from an American engineer who worked with the Saudi Arabia Mining Syndicate, K. S. Twitchell, before the Congressional Committee on Foreign Affairs in 1944. In it, Twitchell warned that Muslims across the world (in India, the Philippines, North Africa, and the Middle East) would not react well to U.S. support of a Jewish state in Palestine. Should this happen, angry Muslims in North Africa might sabotage U.S. air transport routes in the region. Even worse, should a pipeline be built to bring “American-controlled oil” from the Persian Gulf, Arabs “would be a constant menace and might involve American troops.” Thus, American support for a Jewish state against Arab wishes brought a variety of threats to larger American projects, such as the rebuilding of Europe (which depended, at least in part, on energy from the Middle East), as well as risked throwing the United States back into war.

But perhaps the most authoritative voice the Institute had was Kermit “Kim” Roosevelt, Jr., who had a long political career and was a leading Arabist in the Office of Strategic Services and then the CIA. In January 1948, his article “The Partition of Palestine: A Lesson in Pressure Politics,” appeared in *The Middle East Journal*, and the Institute reprinted it as a pamphlet titled *Partition of Palestine*. The Institute’s introduction to Roosevelt’s piece harkedened back to an idealized time when “Arabs had faith and respect for American democratic intuitions, our national character and our spirit of fair play.” All that was now at risk, due to U.S. support of partition. Roosevelt recognized that World War II changed everything, but not simply in terms

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of the Jewish refugee question. Roosevelt connected the necessity of Arab oil, the threat of Soviet expansion, and the debate over Palestine. After the war, the Middle East grew in strategic importance, in the eyes not only of the United States and Great Britain but also the Soviet Union. Roosevelt alleged that the Soviets had considered signing a peace agreement with the Nazis that would have given the Russians greater influence in the region, with only the “determined opposition” of the United States and Great Britain preventing this outcome. Yet that desire for control had not disappeared from the Kremlin and, in Roosevelt’s view, the Middle East was “essential to winning the peace against Soviet Russia.” But Roosevelt was talking about a greater fight than just keeping the Russians out of the region. Maintaining good relations with the Arab nations was essential to preventing Soviet incursions into Europe. The Marshall Plan relied heavily on Middle Eastern oil reserves, for those deposits, if “properly developed . . . could provide Europe with cheap power for the next century.” Should the United States fall to Zionist pressure, he argued, it would not only destroy American prestige but also risk the safety and security of Western Europe.11

In addition to his writings, position on the Institute’s Board, and the creation, with fellow Institute Board member Virginia Gildersleeve, of a separate organization called the Committee for Justice and Peace in Palestine, Roosevelt carried significant weight in Washington, and both he and his allies reached out to the president and members of the State Department in an attempt to get public recognition of his views. As American policy in Palestine faltered in the spring of 1948, Major General Harry H. Vaughan, military aide to the president, met with Roosevelt and subsequently advised Truman to meet with members of the Committee for Justice and Peace in Palestine, who would then lend their support to Truman’s recently announced trusteeship plan.

11 Roosevelt, 6-8.
Vaughan was subsequently informed, however, that the president was not seeing any groups in relation to the Zionist issue.\(^\text{12}\)

Additionally, numerous people reached out to Dean Acheson, who was the Under Secretary of State until 1947, for his public support. Like Truman, Acheson seemed unwilling to publicly voice his support for Roosevelt’s position to support an Arab state at the expense of Zionist goals. When the American Council for Judaism asked him to lend his support to the Committee for Justice and Peace in Palestine, Acheson replied that he had talked with Roosevelt, but ultimately decided that he could be “more helpful in other directions.” Roosevelt sympathized with Acheson regarding the difficulties of taking a stand against the Jewish state, but called on Acheson to remember that the “unpleasantness” of Zionist pressure and criticism they faced was nothing compared to Jewish figures like Lessing Rosenwald of the ACJ, who were publicly contradicting their co-religionists.\(^\text{13}\) Yet despite the lack of public support for pro-Arab groups in 1948, the Institute had opportunities to put its arguments in front of government officials, particularly through its participation in the Anglo-American Committee of Inquiry.

**Bilateral Attempts to Address Palestine**

Despite Truman’s sympathy for Jewish survivors of the Holocaust and support for the idea of a Jewish state, he initially kept to the long-standing position of the U.S. government regarding Palestine: offer suggestions and ideas for how Palestine should be handled, but leave

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\(^{12}\) “Memorandum for the President from Major General Harry H. Vaughan to President Harry S. Truman, March 31, 1948,” OF 204 Misc (Feb. 1948) 2 of 2 to OF 204-B, Box 916, file folder 204-Misc (March 1948), Truman Library. Nor was this the first attempt to get Truman to meet with/publicly support the Committee. A similar request had been made earlier that month from Garland Evans Hopkins, which was also turned down (“Letter from Matthew J. Connelly to Garland Evans Hopkins, March 10, 1948,” ibid.).

the British in charge of actually implementing policies and maintaining the situation. The key policy change Truman advocated concerned the admission of 100,000 Displaced Persons (DP) into Palestine. Following General Harrison’s report regarding the state of the DPs, Truman increased pressure on the newly elected British Labour government to facilitate the granting of entrance certificates. The Labour party, prior to its election, had made promises to Jewish interests. But once in office, it gravitated toward the Arabs in order to protect national interests. Strategic considerations in the Middle East for Britain included oil fields, communications, and bases, as well as the reaction of India’s Muslim population should Britain support further immigration of Jews against the wishes of the Arabs. Great Britain’s patience with the United States grew thin as it became obvious that the U.S. position allowed it to “criticise and influence without responsibility.” There was a growing frustration in Britain regarding Palestine and the multiple outside actors trying to influence policy, though the United States, and later, the members of the United Nations, failed to notice. This sentiment had not yet reached a point where Britain seriously planned to simply renounce its claim to Palestine, but instead favored a move to a bi-power regionalism. Great Britain would remain primarily responsible, but there was a push to get the United States to be more actively involved with implementing solutions. With this in mind, the Anglo-American Committee of Inquiry was formed.

In an attempt to push the United States out of its role of “irresponsible critic,” the goal of the committee was to recommend a solution for the DP problem in Europe, preferably by resettling refugees in the United States or throughout Europe. The Institute worked to ensure

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15 Cab. 95/14. p. (m) (45) 15, “Memorandum by Foreign Secretary Bevin, 9 October 1945,” found in *The Anglo-American Committee*, 63-64.
that the Arab point was properly represented in the Committee’s work. On November 19, 1945, representatives of the Institute met with members of the State Department to gain insight on the formation of the Committee, concerned that pro-Zionist members would dominate it and push for the creation of a Jewish state to take in the refugees. The State Department assured the Institute that the Committee’s make-up would come from an “impartial list,” giving members some hope that the Arab side would get a fair hearing.\(^1\) The following month, the Anglo-American Committee of Inquiry on Palestine sent a request to the Institute, asking it to appear before them. The Institute held an emergency meeting and elected six members to represent it: Faris S. Malouf, President; Khalil Totah, Executive Director; Philip Hitti, the former Executive Director; and John Hazam; William Hocking, and Wilbert Smith of the Advisory Board.\(^2\) Due to illness and other engagements, Malouf and Hocking were unable to appear, but Totah and the rest made an impassioned plea for the Arab position.

Totah approached his testimony as a chance to bring together the Institute’s main arguments and succinctly outline for both American and British audiences what Arabs wanted, what they feared, and how they were the best chance for both the United States and Great Britain to create a strong, stable ally that reflected their views and ideals.\(^3\) He opened his testimony by dismissing the question of modernization and arguing that the heart of the issue was that Arabs feared their expulsion and eradication from Palestine, a land in which they had lived for

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\(^1\) “Monthly Report of Progress on the Activities of the Institute of Arab American Affairs, Month of November, 1945,” 1 (Khalil Totah Archives).

\(^2\) “Monthly report of Progress on the Activities of the Institute of Arab American Affairs, Month of December, 1945,” 1 (Khalil Totah Archives).

\(^3\) In late 1945/early 1946, when this testimony took place, the British were still attempting to hold onto their position as the Mandatory power and the one in charge of Palestine’s future. By the end of 1946, it was becoming clear that the United States was in ascendance, in terms of global power, and British influence was waning. Accordingly, language and efforts by both Jews and Arabs shifted toward pressure on the U.S government, rather than the British.
millennia. As Arabs saw it, their future was being decided by outsiders, a situation that Americans would find intolerable and not in line with American ideals of national self-determination or the basic tenets of justice. From a national security standpoint, he warned that, as the past twenty-five years had shown, the Arabs of Palestine would fight any foreign influence that attempted to take their home from them, and the trouble would spread across the Arab world. This position, Totah continued, was based on a moral right. Arab opposition was not incited by the Nazis, nor was it an example of the effendi (land-owning) class of Arabs tricking the lower classes, as Zionist supporters claimed. Zionism was “universally oppose[d]” by the people of Palestine, who were “alarmed” and feared “the very existence of Zionists.”

No outside-imposed solution would remove this fear or anger. More importantly, it would imperil Anglo-American influence in the Middle East. While not specifically mentioning the Soviet Union, Totah implied that Anglo-American support for the Zionist position ran the risk of alienating the entire region, stating that he “would be very much disappointed if America and Great Britain could not devise some scheme whereby they could keep and maintain the friendship of the people of the Middle East on the Western democracy side instead of allowing it to go in some other direction.”

Totah followed his warnings with a solution, a common refrain in the Institute’s public messages that sought to demonstrate how an Arab Palestine would be a reflection of Anglo-American culture. The solution, he said, was the same as it would be in the United States or Great Britain – the ballot. The world should allow Jews and Arabs living in Palestine to vote on the future of their country. “What is wrong with that?” he asked. “The Jews are clamoring for democracy; England has suffered and bled in two bloody wars for democracy. I say let the

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19 Dr. Totah’s Testimony,” January 3, 1946, 3 (Khalil Totah Archives).

20 Totah’s testimony, 4.
people of Palestine, including the Jews, vote.”21 From Totah’s point of view, this was the clearest and most just solution, and the only one “in accordance with the best traditions of American democracy.”22 Yet this call for democracy was quickly met with questioning from the Committee. Sir John Singleton referred to Hitti’s earlier testimony, in which he predicted war or bloodshed, regardless of the path taken, and asked how the Arabs of Palestine would stop Jewish immigration if it continued. Totah avoided specifics in his answer, saying only that the Arabs “would like to help” in such situations. Another witness called by the Committee, Chaim Weizmann of the Jewish Agency, had already addressed this issue in a letter to President Truman, writing that the Jews of Palestine would be happy to choose their own government, but only once they formed a majority in Palestine. In his mind, the suffering of European Jews in the Holocaust meant that justice would be served by allowing Jews to immigrate freely to Palestine. Once the foundation of the National Home was laid, then democracy would be enacted, an argument already debated and repudiated by the Institute in earlier publications.23

The Committee delivered its report on May 1, 1946, with ten largely pro-Zionist recommendations. One supported Truman’s call to allow 100,000 DPs immediate entrance into Palestine and noted that since the United States showed “such keen interest” in this point, it would surely willingly and “generously” aid Great Britain in fulfilling this recommendation. Additionally, the report stated that since partition as recommended by the Peel Committee was not feasible, neither a Jewish nor an Arab state would be established but rather a state wherein

21 Totah’s testimony, 5.


“Jew shall not dominate Arab and Arab shall not dominate Jew in Palestine.” Neither side was yet ready, though, to be trusted with an independent state, so in order to prevent civil war, Palestine needed to remain under a trusteeship until the hostility between Arabs and Jews dissipated.\(^{24}\)

Demonstrating the Institute’s visibility with the State Department, Dean Acheson sent a copy of the report to the Institute on May 20, 1946, along with a short letter informing its leaders that the president sought to consult with Jewish and Arab representatives regarding the report and asking for their feedback. In its accompanying memo, the State Department outlined the main interests of the United States upon which its support of the report was based:

(a) Compassion for and a desire to assist victims of Nazi and Fascist persecution, both Jews and non-Jews.
(b) The fact that for a number of years American citizens have been contributing substantial assistance to the upbuilding of the Jewish National Home in Palestine, and that there is every reason to expect that their interest will continue.
(c) The deep interest which the American Government and its citizens have in maintaining and promoting mutually beneficial and harmonious relations between the United States and the countries of the Near East in the political field, in education and other cultural activities, in trade and in economic development.
(d) The value placed by the United States upon the contributions which the Near Eastern countries have made and will doubtless continue to make to the cause of world peace and prosperity and to the upbuilding and effectiveness of the international organization created for these purposes.\(^{25}\)

Despite its dismay at the Committee’s conclusions, the Institute still had a chance to show the government how its views aligned with U.S. goals, which were not being supported by

\[^{24}\text{Cmd. 6808, Report of the Anglo-American Committee of Enquiry regarding the problems of European Jewry and Palestine (London: His Majesty’s Stationery Office, 1946), found in The Anglo-American Committee, 140-141; the committee pointed out that a trusteeship in Palestine was different than other trusteeships, as it “is not the case of a backward people going through a period of tutelage: the issue lies between Jews and Arabs,” 182.}\]

the Committee’s recommendations. While the Institute’s public message often utilized the friendly educator language, by and large, the memo its members wrote in response to the State Department’s request heavily emphasized the language of righteous indignation, while also emphasizing the risks to American national security and standing in the region. First came the challenge to the Committee’s impartiality, with the Institute’s opening statement “regret[ting]” its inability to “share the Department of State’s views that the members of the Committee ‘were entirely free to arrive at any conclusions which to them were fair and reasonable’” and noting that Institute members were “not impressed by the ‘standing of the members of the Committee,’” or by “the fact that the report was unanimous.”

Of particular concern for the Institute was the inclusion on the Committee of James G. McDonald, a former member of the New York Times editorial board and vocal supporter of Zionism. The inclusion of such an individual tarnished the objectivity of the Committee as a whole, and built on the Institute’s overarching argument that too many Americans were misled by Zionist propaganda, while insinuating that Zionist pressure made it impossible for the Committee to arrive at any conclusion other than one favorable to the Zionists.

As would be seen in the UN debates over Palestine, one of the most significant problems for the Institute was the insistence by other countries, particularly the United States, on tying the problem of Jewish refugees to Palestine’s future. The recommendation to allow the immediate entrance of 100,000 Jewish immigrants into Palestine was the clearest demonstration that the Committee did not recognize the validity of Arab claims and was not reflecting U.S. values of justice, democracy, and self-determination. Once again, the Institute called on the United States and Great Britain to lead by example, opening their own doors to Jewish immigration, rather

26 Memo on the Anglo-American Committee, 10.

than foisting the problem onto “a mandated country, denied the fundamental right of determining its own immigration policy.” Palestine was and should be recognized as a separate issue from the status of Jewish refugees.

This was not to say that the Institute was unsympathetic to the plight of Holocaust survivors. In fact, the Institute took advantage of the opportunity to condemn the United States and Great Britain for their absolute failure to solve the problem of Jewish refugees in Europe, crediting the Committee for identifying the problem of survivors stuck in “concentration centers” but adopting a tone of righteous indignation regarding its proposed solution. Palestine, they wrote, should not be made to “suffer for the sins of Poland, Romania, Germany or even Great Britain and the United States[.] If the Committee had insisted on a firm policy looking forward to the removal of those [DP] camps, it would have offered a positive contribution to a tragic human problem.” Instead, the current report “only creates false hopes in the hearts of those wretched refugees and postpones indefinitely any equitable and lasting solution.” This was not, the writers reminded the State Department, the first time Eastern European Jews had been persecuted. The solution to the pogroms of the nineteenth century was not the creation of a Jewish state, but the distribution of the persecuted throughout the world through “normal immigration.” There was no reason, in their view, why the same should not hold true for Holocaust survivors. The Institute’s report concluded that the “Palestine question is essentially a political one,” while the refugee crisis was “a world problem and must be solved on a world-wide basis.”29

The Institute’s pleas to decouple the refugee problem from Palestine went unheeded and the Committee’s recommendation to admit 100,000 Jewish refugees stood. The Institute was not alone, however, in its disappointment with the Committee’s decision. The State Department


29 Memo on the Anglo-American Committee, p. 19.
reported that all the feedback from U.S. missions in the Near East showed that “publication of the report of the Anglo-American Committee of Inquiry provoked a violent reaction in the Arab world,” particularly in Iraq. As the State Department feared, there was also a growing sense that Arabs might turn to the Soviet Union, with a Soviet minister visiting the Lebanese Foreign Minister. India was largely critical of the Committee’s report and supportive of the Arabs.  

Meanwhile, at home, an American by the name I. B. Rosengarten encouraged Truman to admit 400,000 DPs into the United States, which “would show the Arabs the way to do the unselfish thing, and make the relations between Arabs and Jews in Palestine more friendly.” Mr. Rosengarten, however, apparently had a secondary motive for requesting the admission of DPs: it had taken his tailor six months to fill his order for a new suit and he was pretty sure there were tailors among the DPs, or at least individuals who could become tailors. Since the president was a former haberdasher and, based on the photographs Mr. Rosengarten had seen, a “clothes minded” individual, Mr. Rosengarten was confident he would see the value and importance of bringing the refugees to the United States. While Truman agreed there were most likely shortages of acceptable tailors in the United States, the thought of bringing 400,000 DPs to the country was “of course beyond our wildest dreams.”

Meanwhile, Truman continued to push for the immediate admission of the 100,000 DPs into Palestine, without any plan for how to handle Arab reaction to such a large influx of Jewish immigrants. While the British expected this stance, Truman’s Yom Kippur statement of October

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30 “Memo For the President from Acting Secretary – Reaction in Near East to Palestine Report,” (undated) pp. 1-2; Truman Archives, Dean Acheson papers, OF 204B – Anglo American Committee of Inquiry, Folder 1.

31 Letter from I.B. Rosengarten to President Truman, April 3, 1947; Truman Archives, Paper of David K. Niles, Israel File 1940-1945 to 1948, June-July, Box 29, Folder 1947. Mr. Rosengarten adds as a postscript that there were probably good stenographers over there too. The letter apparently amused a number of people. David Niles sent it to Matthew Connely, the President’s appointment secretary, with a note that the President would, he was sure, enjoy this letter. Truman wrote back to Niles that he “appreciated very much” reading the letter and he “imagine[d] there is a shortage of coat makers.”
4, 1946, introduced a surprise addition to U.S. policy. Released on the important Jewish holiday and in anticipation of the upcoming November election, Truman acknowledged possible U.S. support for the partition of Palestine and the creation of an independent Jewish state. In response, Great Britain convened another conference between the Arabs and Jews of Palestine in London in hopes of finding some solution to an increasingly costly problem, as terrorist attacks like the bombing of the King David Hotel and kidnappings of British soldiers and civilians by Jewish groups continued. The State Department warned that it expected the British government, as the Mandatory Power, to “bear the primary responsibility for putting into actual operation any plan for Palestine which might be adopted.” The conference quickly broke down, and the British decided they had no choice but to go to the United Nations. On February 14, 1947, at 7:00 p.m., the Chargé in the United Kingdom sent an urgent message to Secretary of State George C. Marshall informing him that Prime Minister Ernest Bevin had announced that the Palestinian question would now be referred to the United Nations “without British recommendations.” The Palestinian question had moved onto the global stage and the nascent United Nations now had the opportunity to test its power.

The United Nations

The goal of the participants in the April 1945 UN conference had been to avoid the mistakes that had plagued the League of Nations. Of key importance was the agreement of the great powers, as permanent members of the Security Council (Great Britain, the United States, the Soviet Union, China, and France), to act together against violators of world peace. Without

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32 Louis, 439, 442.

33 FRUS ’47, 1015, 1047.
the combined efforts and resources of these powers, the United Nations would be incapable of enforcing any decisions made. Yet there were still fears over military commitment in the United States, which the Institute sought to exploit. During the planning stages, Franklin Roosevelt promoted an idea of regional enforcement. The entire Security Council would make agreements together, but if there were a problem in, for example, a British territory, by Roosevelt’s logic, the British would be responsible for providing the necessary personnel to resolve it.

This regional enforcement sentiment survived Roosevelt and became a guiding principle for the United States during the debate over Palestine in the United Nations. Despite growing evidence that Great Britain no longer felt responsible for the security of Palestine, the United States and others persisted in planning a solution that required Great Britain to enforce, in line with the ideas of regionalism, a plan strongly approved by the American public. While Americans had largely supported the Anglo-American Committee’s recommendation to allow 100,000 more Jews to enter Palestine, when asked if they supported using American troops to keep order there, 74 percent reported they did not. At the same time, 72 percent believed it was a good idea to turn the problem over to the United Nations, suggesting that few believed the United States would be called upon to enforce any decisions made by the United Nations.35

The Institute built on this sentiment by warning Americans of the likelihood of war should either immigration or partition be forced upon the Arabs of Palestine. Arabs would fight to maintain their homes and land, the Institute warned, much as Americans would defend their country under similar circumstances. In addition to the Palestinian Arabs, the Arab League


35 Public Opinion Quarterly, Fall 1946, 418. In the same poll, 78% of Americans who said they had been following the “Palestine question” thought it was a good idea to admit 100,000 Jews into Palestine.
would join in that fight, forcing Americans to choose a side and commit more than words and resolutions. Not only would Americans have to commit troops, they would also be forced to show the world whether they truly stood for the ideals of justice and democracy. Should the United States send troops in support of foreign invaders (Zionists), the prestige and reputation it enjoyed throughout the Arab world would be irrevocably damaged.\textsuperscript{36}

The State Department agreed with this line of reasoning, as its main concern regarding Palestine was the issue of American national security. While many pro-Zionists at the time dismissed State Department opposition as the result of an abundance of anti-Semitism, the Department’s analyses of the issue strongly focused on the foreign policy implications of angering such a significant portion of a strategically important region. As Great Britain neared its decision to turn the issue over to the United Nations, Cold War concerns began to play a role in U.S. considerations, as Fraser Wilkins, the desk officer in charge of Palestinian affairs for the Near Eastern Affairs office, demonstrated. In January 1947, he outlined the current American policy toward Palestine, warning that “continued agitation and uncertainty regarding the Palestine question, by weakening the Anglo-American position in the Near East, permits a more rapid extension of Soviet Russian objectives.”\textsuperscript{37} The State Department was less concerned with the moral or ethical aspects of a Jewish state versus an Arab one; its concern was the fact that creation of a Jewish state would throw a strategic region into turmoil, a situation the Russians were bound to exploit.

Throughout the Palestine debate, the United States found itself continually pulled between its interests with Arabs and Jews. U.S. concern, particularly in the State Department, centered on how the Palestine issue could affect its relationship with the Arab nations, which


were vital for resources such as oil and for military bases and installations. Even more importantly, the Arab states could serve as buffer states and remain under the American sphere of influence, tipping the Cold War balance of power in favor of the United States at the expense of the Soviet Union. This had not gone unnoticed by Arabs and their supporters. As the Arab Office wrote in 1945, “a newly awakened America, deeply conscious of its heightened responsibilities as a world leader, can no longer afford to be indifferent to the strategic and political reawakening of its seventy million people.”

All of this was at risk, however, should the United States continue to support Jewish immigration and the creation of a Jewish state, as the Arab nations would fight to defend Palestine. Zionists and their supporters, however, dismissed these arguments by claiming that they overestimated Arab abilities and willingness to fight. David K. Niles, Administrative Assistant to President Truman, dismissed fears of reprisal against the United States for supporting the immigration of 100,000 Jewish refugees, writing to Truman that Muslims would not unite against the United States because most followed Gandhi’s “philosophy of non-resistance,” and the “Arab Chiefs” had privately reassured American officials there would be very little opposition. Most importantly, he noted, even if a war were to begin, those 100,000 Jews would be staunch allies, just as the Jews of Palestine had been during the war, echoing the arguments seen in chapter 3 regarding the Arab role during the war. A Jewish state would reflect American values and serve as an oasis of Western-style democracy in the strategic region.

Beyond this debate over the reflection of American ideals, there was a secondary argument regarding the standing and prestige of the United Nations and the risks thereto


39 David K. Niles to Harry S. Truman, 27 May, 1946; OF: Box 913, OF 204 (May 1946-1953); Truman Papers, Truman Library.
depending on the outcome of the Palestine question. Despite the hopes and goals for the United Nations, trouble and conflict dogged it from the start. Debates over alleged Soviet interference in Iran came first, followed by Soviet complaints about the British in Greece and the Dutch East Indies, and Syrian and Lebanese charges against France. Before the issue of Palestine even surfaced, Trygve Lie, the first UN Secretary-General, sensed a growing rift between the West and the Soviet Union “like a crevasse in a glacier which might spread wider beneath the bridge of soft surface snow that was called great-power unity.”

When Sir Alexander Cadogan, the United Kingdom representative to the United Nations, requested that the Palestine question be placed on the General Assembly’s agenda and that a special session be called to form a committee to handle the preliminary investigation, Lie committed his office to the problem.

Unfortunately, Lie did not appear to recognize the lack of influence that office held; without an independent military at its disposal, the UN Secretariat relied on the will of the great powers to furnish the force necessary to implement solutions. If the United Nations failed to find a solution, or worse, the parties ignored the United Nations’ ruling, it could destroy any hope the powers had of finding peaceful solutions to global problems. The great powers, however, had to contend with growing public pressure both at home and abroad.

While the Institute initially continued with its friendly educator language regarding U.S. policy, as the United Nations moved forward with the creation of the United Nations Special Committee on Palestine (UNSCOP), the Institute’s public voice shifted again to that spirit of righteous indignation it had utilized in the aftermath of the Anglo-American Committee’s


42 James Barros, Trygve Lie and the Cold War (DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 1989), x.
recommendation. “From the start,” it reported on the UN Special Session on Palestine, “the dice were loaded against the Arabs” and perhaps more disturbingly, “power politics was the gargantuan invisible delegate dominating the whole proceedings.” The creation of UNSCOP was indeed filled with great power maneuvering over its composition. Both the United States and Great Britain felt strongly that their presence would do more harm than good and impede the committee’s work. This is not to say that they had no interest in the committee; they simply did not overtly interfere. Originally, the British wanted a seven-member committee made up of Canada, the Netherlands, Sweden, Czechoslovakia, India, Peru, and Uruguay. Iran replaced India, and then the Soviets wanted to add another four countries: Australia, Yugoslavia, Guatemala, and India.43 Each of the great powers did its best to protect its interests, even while it distrusted the other members. For example, the British believed that Enrique Rodriquez Fabregat, the delegate from Uruguay, “‘was in the Soviet and Zionist pockets,’” and that the other Latin American member-states’ delegates considered Guatemala’s Jorge Garcia Granados “a Soviet stooge.” They also considered the latter’s “anti-British bias” another reason to oppose his inclusion.44 The final group, as described by Granados, was composed of mostly “jurists and diplomats” but also a few men, like himself, who “lived through political persecution in the battle for freedom, perhaps undisciplined, perhaps scorners of convention, but convinced that the line of justice lies somewhere between the truths of heart and head.”45

While the Institute did not publicly comment on the make-up of the committee, there was a sense that Latin America could be a potential ally. During its June 7, 1947, Annual Meeting, members suggested translating the group’s publications into Spanish, and Totah began making


44 Ibid., 261.

trips to Mexico, where Palestinians had already been following American debates over the issue, with a visit to South America also proposed.\textsuperscript{46} Regardless of the potential support of the Latin American members, however, the Institute understood that the great powers were still the ones who needed to be persuaded, and the United States most of all.

UNSCOP was commissioned to investigate the situation in Palestine and find a solution. It was a difficult task. Palestinian Arabs launched a boycott against the committee, due to fears that it was biased against their position, refusing to allow members of the Arab Higher Committee to speak with members of UNSCOP or turn over any information to the committee. Arab leaders based this decision on the idea that they should not have to convince foreigners of their right to their own land, and the Institute echoed this view, writing that the “facts of Palestine are available to all, and have been so for the last quarter of a century.”\textsuperscript{47} In reality, though, the boycott meant that UNSCOP only spoke to Zionist and British officials, creating an incomplete picture of what the Mandate meant to Palestine and hampering its ability to find a mutually agreeable solution, if one existed. Of primary concern for the Arabs was the fact that UNSCOP’s mission had a second purpose: find a solution for the Jewish refugee problem, and upon the completion of its trip to the Middle East, the committee would visit DP camps in Europe. Arab groups and countries voiced their outrage that the two problems were linked, suggesting that it was already a foregone conclusion that Palestine was part of, if not the solution to, the DP problem. UNSCOP’s chairman, Chief Justice Emil Sandstrom of Sweden, issued a radio plea to the people of Palestine to remember UNSCOP’s neutrality and desire to hear from

\textsuperscript{46} “Minutes of the Annual Meeting of Board of Directors,” June 7, 1947, Khalil Totah Archives, 1; Untitled document, showing travel expenses for Khalil Totah, Khalil Totah Archives, 1; Juan Canavati telegram to Philip Hitti, Nov. 11, 1944, IHRC, Philip Hitti Papers, Box 4, File Folder 8; “Third Annual Report,” June 7, 1947, Khalil Totah Archives, 1.

all sectors, but the boycott remained in place. UNSCOP quickly set about its work, interviewing various representatives of the Mandatory government and the Jewish Agency, including Dr. Chaim Weizmann, and touring various areas of the country, and eventually presenting two potential plans for Palestine’s future, as discussed in the previous chapter.

Partition did not satisfy the wishes of the Arabs or the Jews. The Jewish Agency, while willing to accept partition as the only practical solution, saw it as an additional sacrifice that the Jewish people must endure. The Agency claimed that the Balfour Declaration implied all of Palestine would be part of a Jewish state; the separation of Transjordan had already reduced the promised territory, and carving an Arab state out of the remainder left the Jewish people with less than an eighth of the original territory. The Arab Higher Committee condemned the plan as “an excess of injustice to Palestine” and a “flagrant violation of the natural rights of the Arabs in their own county,” as well as a violation of the UN Charter. The only satisfactory solution was a single, unified, independent Palestine. Despite no clear idea on how to enforce such a plan, with both the United States and the Soviet Union in agreement, a two-thirds majority of the General Assembly voted to adopt the partition plan on November 29, 1947.

While the efforts of the Institute, Arab Office, and the State Department failed to stop the plan from passing, the Institute’s members and supporters of the Arab position continued to argue against U.S. support for partition. The Institute bemoaned that the only reason Zionists were able to triumph was because politicians did not want to risk losing Jewish support in the 1948 elections and the Arabic-speaking population in the United States was neither large enough

48 Granados, 15.
49 UN Yearbook, 233, 234.
nor concentrated enough to hold any political sway.\textsuperscript{51} Not wanting to wholly condemn the United States, it tried to shame politicians while still upholding a virtuous image of real Americans, as seen in the previous chapter. Nor was the Institute alone in its stand against partition. A group of “private American citizens” who were “primarily concerned about the best interests of the United States” penned a letter to the \textit{New York Times} shortly before the vote, warning that partition was not practical, would damage trade relations, was unenforceable, would lead to immense bloodshed, and would play into the hands of the Soviets.\textsuperscript{52} The State Department likewise kept up its opposition to partition.

U.S. policy soon began to waver. Truman could not ignore the Cold War implications of partition. The UN plan could not be implemented without force. The British adamantly refused to expend any more time, energy, blood, or money on Palestine, leaving the United States and the Soviet Union as the most likely candidates to enforce the resolution. The United States, however, did not want to be militarily involved and it certainly did not want the Soviet Union to establish a foothold in the Middle East. Polls showed that Americans were not supportive of American troops being sent to enforce partition, and the White House received much correspondence from the public on the issue, such as a telegram from 200 veterans in Miami pleading with Truman not to “send our American boys to the powder keg of the Holy Land.”\textsuperscript{53}

Meanwhile, Truman was reaching the end of his patience with Zionist pressure, refusing to meet

\begin{footnotesize}
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\item \textsuperscript{51} \textit{The Bulletin} Vol. III, No. 6 (December 15, 1947): 1-2. This is not the first time the Golden Rule appears in \textit{The Bulletin}. It is often included whenever the Institute is listing the core values of the United States, such as democracy and justice. Likewise, it is always referred to as a Christian principle, even though variations of the Gold Rule are found in numerous religions and cultures. The forty-seven votes is a reference to New York and the importance of the Jewish vote there. While the historiography continues to debate whether or how much the vote-aspect influenced Truman’s decisions, the Institute clearly believed it was a dominating factor.

\item \textsuperscript{52} \textit{The Bulletin}, Vol. III, No. 6, Supplement (December 15, 1947), reprint of letter which appeared in the \textit{New York Times} on November 21, 1947. It should be noted that one of the signatories was Virginia C. Gildersleeve, who was a member of the Institute’s Board.

\item \textsuperscript{53} Ed Boyar, Paul Giller, and Bill Miller telegram to Harry S. Truman, April 20, 1948, OF Papers, OF 204, Box 916, Folder 204, Truman Library.
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with Chaim Weizmann about the subject, even though Truman’s close friend Edward Jacobson asked him to do so, complaining that “the Jews are so emotional, and the Arabs are so difficult to talk with that it is almost impossible to get anything done. The British, of course, have been exceedingly noncooperative [sic] in arriving at a conclusion,” while reaffirming that he would “continue to try to get the solution outlined in the United Nations resolution.”

In an attempt to prevent either U.S. or Soviet troops being sent to Palestine, Warren R. Austin, the lead U.S. delegate to the United Nations, announced a U.S. proposal on March 19, 1948, for temporary trusteeship of Palestine. He presented this suggestion as an attempt to give the parties involved more time to find an agreeable substitution. Due to the rapidly deteriorating situation, this “emergency action” could save lives and create a more workable solution. In a follow-up statement, Truman informed the country that it had “become clear that the partition plan cannot be carried out at this time by peaceful means. We could not undertake to impose this solution on the people of Palestine by the use of American troops, both on Charter grounds and as a matter of national policy.” This was not supposed to be seen as a change in U.S. policy, or a negation of the will of the United Nations, but rather an attempt to allow the United Nations to find the best possible way to implement its decision.

Those opposed to the creation of a Jewish state saw the trusteeship proposal as their last chance to change U.S. policy. Lessing J. Rosenwald, president of the American Council for Judaism (ACJ), called on Zionists to end “the abuse of, and political threats against, the President

54 “Letter from Truman to Jacobson, Feb. 27, 1948,” Truman Archives, Papers of Edward Jacobson, Box 1, WWI File.


56 “Statement by the President, March 25, 1948,” Truman Archives, Clark M. Clifford Papers, Subject File, 1945-54 Palestine, Box 14, Palestine Folder.
of the United States, the Secretary of State and the Secretary of Defense.” Acknowledging the argument that changing positions would delegitimize the United Nations, he called on his fellow Americans to recognize that the United Nations would not be weakened, but rather “emerge the stronger for having the courage to admit and correct its mistake.”

Even a political opponent of Truman sent him a message of support, writing that “as an American first and a Republican secondly, I wish to commend your recent action in reversing the United States Policy [sic] with respect to the Partition of Palestine . . . The civil rights of the Arabs must be observed.” The Institute saw the trusteeship proposal as a positive sign, and its language turned to a tone of reconciliation. The first few months of 1948 included articles and editorials in magazines such as Reader’s Digest, Harper’s, and Life, and local papers like the Houston Chronicle and Arizona Daily Star, questioning the wisdom of partition and asking whether it was truly in the best interest of the United States. An “avalanche” of Zionist propaganda simply blinded the United States, but now, thanks to the “courageous or independent thinking” of the media, Americans could see the “‘other side of the story,’” marking a return to the friendly educator language and a hope that education would enable Americans to make the right decision regarding Palestine.

For Zionists, however, the trusteeship announcement was nothing short of betrayal. Supporters of the Jewish state bombarded Truman’s office with letters and telegrams of outrage, accusing Truman of weakness and indecision, putting at risk the standing of the United States,

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58 “Letter from Congressman McConnell Jr. to President Truman,” March 25, 1948; Truman Archives, Dean Acheson Papers, OF 204, Misc. (March 1948). It’s worth noting that the Congressman followed up his statement about respecting Arab civil rights by informing the President that he was “completely opposed” to his “U.S. Civil Rights program” as it was being used by “Communist agitators” to further division in the country and world.


the prestige of the United Nations, and the lives of Jews in Palestine. Representative Jay LeFevre (R-NY) told Truman that many of his constituents were daily protesting the trusteeship proposal and that if his administration did not stop “floundering around” on the issue, his actions would “defeat the United Nations and bring about a loss of respectability and prestige of the United States in the eyes of other nations.”61 Less than a week later, Weizmann made a similar argument to Truman, suggesting that the standing of the United Nations and the United States would be forever damaged if the Arabs were allowed to believe that “an international decision has been revised in their favor purely because they dared to use force against it.”62

The goal of such arguments was to reframe the debate to focus on the impact of changing policy on the prestige of the United Nations. Even before the move to trusteeship, Jewish leaders had warned Truman that giving in to Arab demands would be the equivalent of appeasement and risked condemning the United Nations to the fate of the League of Nations. In January 1948, the Jewish Agency predicted that if UN partition policy failed, the “prestige and the future prospects of the United Nations will suffer a grave blow.”63 Following the U.S. announcement of its trusteeship policy, Rabbi Silver blasted the United States for “incalculably hurt[ing] the prestige and authority of the United Nations.” Silver argued that the United States was giving in to the threat of violence by the Arab nations, which would “be a fateful capitulation on the part of the world organization to threats and intimidation which will completely destroy all of its [the United Nations’] future effectiveness as an instrument for the settlement of international disputes

61 Letter from Rep. Jay LeFevre to President Harry Truman, April 1, 1948; Truman Archives, Dean Acheson Papers, OF 204 Misc., Box 916, Folder 204-Misc. Folder 2.

62 Letter from Chaim Weizmann to President Truman, April 9, 1948; Truman Archives, Dean Acheson Papers, OF 204 Misc., Box 916, Folder 204-Misc. Folder 2.

and for the maintenance of world peace.\textsuperscript{64} These arguments helped move the debate away from concrete issues like oil and bases, where the Arab position was stronger, toward a more abstract idea that held powerful emotional resonance. Framing the move to trusteeship as an exercise in appeasement strengthened the connections being made and/or implied by Zionists and their supporters that the Arabs had collaborated with the Nazis and worked against the Allied war effort. Allowing Arabs to undermine the authority and moral standing of the United Nations through threats of violence would mean allowing fascism to maintain a place in the world.

While fascism was still a concern, however, by the time Palestine moved to the center of the UN debate, another ideology had eclipsed it.

**Cold War Conspiracy**

Initially, as the United Nations began to grapple with the question of Palestine, Cold War fears remained on the back burner in both Arab and Zionist arguments. As both the Soviet Union and the United States wielded veto power in the Security Council, it was clear that neither side wanted to risk too much in terms of completely offending the Soviets, even as they worked hard to gain the support of the American public and political establishment. The Institute emphasized the Arab world’s commitment to a “one-world policy” and claimed that Arabs were “not interested so much in the ideological differences between democracy and communism as in the honest implementation of democracy by the Western powers and of the spirit of Communism in Russia and its satellites,” urging both sides to live up to the ideals they professed, rather than focusing on self-interest. The Institute further editorialized that if the United States was concerned about the spread of communism in the Middle East, it simply had to approach the

myriad issues in the Middle East (French rule in North Africa, Egyptian self-determination, Palestine, etc.) “in accordance with the principles of justice and self-determination,” at which point, “the danger of communism to the Middle East, if such danger exists, will vanish into thin air.”

American fears of Soviet expansion continued to mount, however, particularly after Harry Truman’s 1947 speech regarding the situation in Greece and Turkey, in which he laid out the so-called Truman Doctrine: the United States would “support free people who are resisting subjugation by armed minorities or outside pressures.” By 1948, the Institute began highlighting specific Communist threats in conjunction with partition. The January issue of The Bulletin began with a report on Representative Lawrence H. Smith’s (R–WI) address to the House of Representatives on December 18, 1947, in which he alerted his colleagues to the dangers the United States had exposed itself to by supporting partition: it had “sabotaged” the United Nations, given the Soviet Union a “highly strategic position,” and alienated Muslims across the world. Worst of all, the United States had “played into the hands of godless, Communist Russia . . . [and] foolishly play[ed] its game in this partition proceedings [s]sic.”

The United States could not allow itself to be a pawn of the Soviet Union. The best way to prevent such a situation, the Institute argued following the passage of the partition plan, was to


66 A July 1946 poll showed that American attitudes toward Russia had shifted significantly since the end of the war, comparing answers to questions asked in September 1945. In 1945, 22.7% of Americans surveyed said it was important to “keep on friendly terms with Russia” and the United States should “make every possible effort to do so.” By July 1946, that number had decreased to 15.4%. Meanwhile, those saying that it was “important for the United States to be on friendly terms, but not so important that [it] should make too many concessions” rose from 49.2% to 52.3%. Public Opinion Quarterly, Fall 1946, p. 417


drop support of partition and work toward an independent Palestine.\textsuperscript{69} The Institute reported that the Soviet Union was allowing Jewish immigrants from the parts of Europe it controlled into Palestine, as long as they included 1,000 Jewish communists.\textsuperscript{70}

Finally, should the United States need one more reason to support Arab independence, the Institute devoted the entire May issue of \textit{The Bulletin} to links between communism and Zionism, questioning why the Soviet Union remained committed to partition. Soviet interest could be explained in part by the idea that “the spread of Communism feeds primarily on trouble,” which partition certainly promised to bring, serving as fertile ground for Communist infiltration. The issue also noted that the collective settlements (kibbutzim) the Jewish Agency so strongly promoted clearly “fit into [a] pattern of Soviet ideology.” The kibbutz was a collective farm, in which the community, not individuals, owned all property, profits, and equipment. Children often lived in a dormitory setting, rather than with their parents, to encourage a communal identity, rather than an individualistic one.\textsuperscript{71} \textit{The Bulletin} also reported that a Soviet diplomat in Cairo was urging collaboration with Zionist cells, and that Soviet propaganda sought “to stir Arab enmity against Americans and the British.” More damning, the Institute argued, was a Soviet bulletin accusing “the Pan-Arab movement [of] making it difficult for Russia to gain any foothold in the Middle East.” Such an attack, the Institute editorialized, “amount[ed] to an admission by Moscow that there [was] a unifying spirit among the Arab states that stands as a bulwark against Communist infiltration in that region.”\textsuperscript{72} Should the United States continue to


\textsuperscript{70} \textit{The Bulletin} Vol. III, No. 8 (February 15, 1948): 4-5


\textsuperscript{72} \textit{The Bulletin} Vol. III, No. 11 (May 15, 1948): 2, 4-5, 6-8.
support the creation of a Jewish state, it would not only destroy its standing with the Arab world (allowing a chance for the Soviet Union to sweep in and gain favor), but would also be hoodwinked into supporting a state filled with Soviet sympathizers.

**Conclusion**

The Institute’s timing could not have been much worse. Its May issue detailing the alleged Zionist links to communism came out on May 15, 1948, the very day the Mandate ended. Jewish leaders proclaimed the State of Israel within the boundaries established in the UN partition plan, and Truman issued a statement recognizing “the provisional government as the *de facto* authority of the new State of Israel.” By this point, things were so badly fractured regarding U.S. policy that the country’s UN delegation did not know the United States had granted recognition, and was in fact still maintaining that the U.S. position remained support for UN trusteeship over Palestine. As the press explained that President Truman had recognized the State of Israel minutes ago, pandemonium broke out in the General Assembly. Secretary of State General George Marshall sent Dean Rusk, the director of the Office of United Nations Affairs, to New York at once to prevent the U.S. delegation from resigning in protest. The argument that U.S. policy on Palestine could damage the prestige of the United Nations, or destroy it altogether, nearly came true, as delegations claimed treachery by the United States, or at the very least, underhanded dealing. Rusk heard that one of the U.S. Mission staff “literally sat on the lap of the Cuban Delegate to keep him from going to the podium to withdraw Cuba from the United Nations.”73 The following day, the combined armies of Egypt, Syria, Lebanon, Iraq, and Jordan invaded Israel and the first of numerous Arab-Israeli wars began. The United Nations had failed.

73 *FRUS ’48*, 992-993. Dean Rusk notified UN Ambassador Warren Austin of the situation; according to Rusk, Austin “made the personal decision not to return to the Assembly or to inform other members of our Delegation – he
Despite the failure of the Institute and other supporters of an Arab state to prevent the creation of Israel, the changes in U.S. policy regarding partition and trusteeship demonstrated that their arguments regarding national security issues found fertile ground. There was no denying that the Middle East held important strategic value and Muslim and/or Arab (the two often being conflated) reaction to U.S. policy regarding Palestine could potentially damage U.S. interests. In the end, however, outside events overtook U.S. policymakers and the state of Israel was created anyway. The remaining decision for the United States was whether to recognize it or not, and Truman’s natural sympathy for the Jewish position, along with outside pressures, led him to acknowledge the de facto reality. Despite the seeming finality of recognition, however, the Institute continued its mission to publicize the Arab side of the story in the hopes that U.S. policy would change once again. While the United States placed an arms embargo on both sides, the military situation soon proved that the Jewish state would not disappear, and the debate over Palestine had entered a new phase, which the Institute was unable to overcome.

simply went home.” As a result, the U.S. delegation at the U.N. was unaware of the announcement until it was mentioned by members of the press and was unable to answer any questions put forth by other representatives.
Chapter Five
Making the Desert Bloom

Introduction

Modernization and progress were the dominant arguments concerning Palestine. Using the United States as a reference culture, both Zionists and Arabs sought to demonstrate that their side held the best potential to develop Palestine in the Western style. Zionists and their supporters pointed to Jewish settlements and successes as evidence that a Jewish state would uplift Palestine to modern standards, a strong counterpoint to Arab arguments regarding national security. When the Institute and other supporters pointed out that Arabs were the majority in Palestine and had been for centuries, Zionists turned that fact against them by asking why they had not done anything with the land in all that time, comparing the lack of Arab development over the centuries to the accomplishments of the Jewish community in Palestine over a few decades. Over and over, poverty and lack of development were used to describe the Arab population, in contrast to the “almost superhuman accomplishments of the Jewish pioneers.”

Supporters of Arab rule did not overtly challenge the modernization rhetoric, but rather sought to reframe the situation. The approach to modernization in many ways reflected the arguments of Arabs being lumped in with “natives”; instead of attempting to challenge racial attitudes and hierarchies, the Institute and its supporters sought to recondition their fellow Americans to see the Arabs as superior to American Indians, Aboriginals, and other colonized peoples. When it came to modernization, they argued that, contrary to popular belief, the Arabs had already begun

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the process, following the fall of the Ottomans, without the aid of Jewish settlers, and were the true heirs of the Western system.

Modernization rhetoric, from both Arab and Zionist supporters, demonstrated the importance of the United States as a reference culture. The goal for both sides was to show how closely their group reflected American standards and ideas of progress and what made a civilization “modern.” As seen elsewhere in this work, members of the Institute attempted to redirect the argument and refocus on other issues, but modernization overshadowed it all. If the Institute hoped to prevail, it had to overturn decades (if not centuries) of stereotypes and find a way to discredit the repeated images and reports of Jewish successes in “making the desert bloom,” an oft repeated slogan, along with the idea of “a land without a people for a people without a land” that created an image of Palestine as barren and empty, waiting for “the Chosen people” to return and bring it back to life.

As such, it is necessary to understand how deeply engrained the idea of modernization as a key to independence and respect has been throughout American history. From John Winthrop’s famous City Upon a Hill sermon to Woodrow Wilson’s Fourteen Points to the modernization theories that informed John F. Kennedy’s foreign policy, the U.S. impulse to remake the world in its image has a very long history and groups looking to establish their independence understood that reflecting that image was key.¹ The anthropological exhibits of the various world’s fairs in the United States created, as Robert Rydell explained, an “updated synthesis of progress and white supremacy.”² The Columbian Exposition of the 1893 Chicago’s

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World Fair demonstrated this path to progress by arranging its exhibits of the world’s various peoples by their distance from the epitome of Western civilization, the White City. While Muslim lands were largely grouped in the middle, behind the Germans and Irish but above the Africans and American Indians, as we saw in chapter 2, Arab horse riders often participated with American Indians in the Wild West show, creating an image of Arabs as being on the same developmental level as depictions of American Indians. Even countries that had already gained their independence could be deemed to have forfeited that right if they did not follow U.S. ideas about progress. Having taken over fifty years to even recognize Haiti’s political existence, by the turn of the twentieth century, the United States sent troops to the island nation, supposedly to bring about stability and progress, touting the improvements in medical treatment and infrastructure created as a result.

As this chapter shows, Zionists and their supporters made similar claims regarding the medical, economic, and technological advances Jewish colonization brought to the “backward” Arabs, further promoting the idea that Jews deserved statehood in Palestine, while the Institute attempted to downplay Jewish successes and remind Americans of their ideals of democracy and justice. Mark Philip Bradley’s book, Imagining Vietnam & America: The Making of Postcolonial Vietnam, 1919-1950, demonstrates how such “an imagined America” played a central role in the discourse of Vietnamese revolutionaries. The opening line of Vietnam’s Declaration of Independence, delivered by Ho Chi Minh in 1945, was quite recognizable to Americans: “All men are created equal. They are endowed by their Creator with certain

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3 Ibid., 65.

inalienable rights; among these are Life, Liberty, and the pursuit of Happiness.” Yet even as Ho received help from U.S. OSS officers in properly translating that language, Americans generally saw the Vietnamese as “backward and primitive,” a people that required assistance in modernizing.⁵ Americans likewise deemed Muslim societies incapable of self-rule, as Islam was seen as incompatible with modernization, which had to be brought from the outside, an idea American Jews latched onto to promote Zionist expansion as a way of accomplishing that task.⁶ When Ottoman territories like Greece and Bulgaria broke away, many Americans supported their move toward independence, as Christians would undoubtedly be better at ruling themselves than an Islamic empire.⁷ At the meetings in Versailles following World War I, however, representatives of the former Ottoman territories in the Middle East extolled the many virtues of the United States and urged it to live up the ideals put forth by President Wilson in regards to national self-determination, yet most ended up under the mandate of European powers, deemed unready to rule themselves. This was the central component for U.S. support. Without modernization, independence would have to wait.

John Gast’s iconic painting, “American Progress,” (Fig. 8) captures this mentality visually. In it, the spirit of America brings light and progress to the American West. Below her are the American people, starting with the pioneers. Each successive wave brings greater technological prowess and more light, from men on horseback to the covered wagon, the stagecoach, and surging behind them, the train. Columbia herself strings along telegraph wire as

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she pushes the darkness away. While Manifest Destiny often played out in violence and upheaval, Gast’s choice of a woman to represent that progress creates a sense that it was a “benign domestic influence” that drove American conquest.8

Just as important as the light shining down on the American bearers of progress are the figures in the darkness. Unwilling, or perhaps unable, to change, the American Indians are driven out before the light of progress. Their semi-nomadic ways and lack of technology caused them to forfeit their land. Their place was in the shadows, for they had chosen the darkness and as such, would flee the light. As discussed in chapter 2, Americans could easily transpose the Zionists and Arabs into these categories of pioneer and “native,” and thereby inspiring an intense battle between Arab Americans and Zionists to associate themselves with the “light” of progress and modernization, not the “uncivilized” “dark.”

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Modernization was a clear example of how the United States could be used as a reference culture. To Americans, modernization was a linear path upon which all cultures traveled. Defining modernization is somewhat tricky, however. As Frederick Cooper argues in *Colonialism in Question*, words like “modernity” and “identity” are largely overused and rarely clearly defined, ceasing to function well as categories of analysis.\textsuperscript{10} For Americans of the 1940s, however, there was little debate over the definition: modernization was what the United States (and Western Europe) had achieved and the rest of the world had not. There was a focus on “grand plans that endeavored to lay down great technological monuments, alter nature, and, most important, to transform human perceptions,” seen especially in the attempts to export the model of the Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA).\textsuperscript{11} By the 1950s and 1960s, modernization theory had come into vogue as a specific area of study and theory, which argued that, while they might move at different rates, all societies “ultimately traveled toward the same destination,” of which the United States was the prime example. According to Michael Latham, these modernization theorists described modern societies as focusing on individual achievement (in contrast to the “received authority” of “traditional” societies); capitalism, with an emphasis on “expanded production and future investment”; and bureaucracies and other institutions, which “provided avenues for social mobility and responsible, democratic authority.” If a newly independent state

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\textsuperscript{11} Ekbladh, 3-4, 8.
(or a group hoping to become independent) wanted to be recognized as such, it was in that state’s interest to present itself as closely as possible in the image of U.S. modernization.\textsuperscript{12}

Those who could not demonstrate a sufficient level of modernization and development would thus have to submit to those above them. Again, this was a commonly accepted idea in American history, which gained even more credence in the United States following the Spanish-American War and the acquisition of formal U.S. colonies – Puerto Rico, Cuba, Guam, and the Philippines. The magazine \textit{Puck} demonstrated this in a cartoon rich with imagery and symbolism. Entitled “School Begins” (Fig. 9), Uncle Sam the teacher begins to lecture his new, unruly students – Cuba, Puerto Rico, Hawaii, and the Philippines – about “Civilization,” telling them they must “learn these lessons whether [they] want to or not,” but encouraging them with the promise that one day they will be happy they did so.\textsuperscript{13} While the cartoon dates to the 1890s, it is significant for the debate over Palestine because it shows how the underlying views of colonization had already begun to change. While the Institute’s messages harkened to an ideal American belief that colonization/imperialism was unacceptable, the reality was American foreign policy was already quite open to the idea of certain groups needing to be colonized “for their own good.”

\begin{flushright}
12 Latham, 2, 3, 19.
\end{flushright}
The printed materials within the classroom are telling. On the blackboard, the top line reads: “The consent of the governed is a good thing in theory, but very rare in fact.” It then goes on to note that England’s rule over its colonies (whether they consented or not) “greatly advanced the world’s civilizations.” Now it was time for the United States to govern its “new territories with or without their consent until they can govern themselves.” The idea of order and progress over consent is reinforced in the placard over the American Indian student’s head. It reads: “The Confederate States refused their consent to be governed; but the Union was preserved without their consent.” While the Institute and other Arab American groups relied on Wilson’s Fourteen Points and the Atlantic Charter as proof that national self-determination was one of the highest American values, this cartoon clearly demonstrates that it would not be granted to those deemed unworthy.
This cartoon also does an excellent job of capturing American attitudes about race and citizenship. Behind the new students are American territories and states, studying quietly – California, Texas, New Mexico, and Arizona. The sole non-white student there is Alaska. Of the new students, only Hawaii would eventually be able to join the Union. Hawaii was different from its companions, having a longer legacy of American interference, as the sugar industry boomed and the Hawaiian government was forced to adopt greater private ownership of land (which was then often put under control of sugar plantations) and eventually was overthrown.\footnote{Amy Kaplan, \textit{The Anarchy of Empire in the Making of U.S. Culture} (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2005), 65.}

The book for their lesson, sitting on Uncle Sam’s desk, is \textit{U.S. First Lessons in Self Government}. Eventually, the students might gain independence (or not), but they had a long way to go before they got there. In the meantime, they were expected to gratefully receive Uncle Sam’s tutelage, though they do not look happy about it. Outside the classroom door is a young student who does look eager to join and learn. He has his book and is ready to enter. Unfortunately, he cannot. He is Chinese (evidenced in part by the queue and hat) and due to the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882, he must sit outside and try to glean what lessons he may. The lone American Indian sits off by himself, in the class but not a part of it. He remains dressed in his traditional fashion and holds a book upside down. This gets to many contradictions white Americans held regarding American Indians. On the one hand, Americans saw the Indians as less advanced and of lower racial standing. On the other hand, they were higher than African Americans, and held the possibility for assimilation (while African Americans in the South dealt with the newly established Jim Crow regime, American Indians at this time endured the assimilation program, including boarding schools created to teach Indian children to become white-ish). The artist captures much of this. The American Indian is given the chance – he is a student, unlike the
African American who is only allowed in the classroom as a servant – but there does not seem to be much hope that he can overcome his cultural deficiencies, as he cannot even understand which way the ABCs go.

This depiction of the American Indian is important because it again shows the entrenched mindset against which Arab Americans fought. As discussed earlier, Arabs and Indians were practically interchangeable for many Americans. The idea that American Indians were destined to lose out if they could not adapt to American-style progress thus bled over to the debate surrounding Palestine. If Americans believed Jewish settlers could “make the desert bloom” while Arabs were content to wallow in subsistence-level systems, then it followed that they would support Jewish control “with or without [Arab] consent,” as the Puck cartoon suggested. The modernization battle was high stakes, and both sides were determined to come out victorious. Before the Institute even formed, Zionist organizations were lauding the benefits of Jewish rule for the “generations” of Arabs who “lived in dire poverty and ignorance” in a country with a “primitive” “economic and social life.”

The Institute once again had to come from behind, as American media coverage of Arabs in the press “often depicted [them] as inferior to the Jews and alien to all that [was] Western and modern.” Arab countries were seen as undeveloped due to their “poor decision[s], incompetence, or the fact that Arabs weren’t Western.” Meanwhile, the research of Frank Boas, an anthropologist from Columbia University from 1896-1937, began to move scientists and social thinkers away from the “scientific racism” of “fixed biology and racial destiny” toward an “understanding grounded in the malleability of culture,” which led to a growing sense after World War II that “contact with modernity would


16 Mart, 28, 61.
not eliminate deficient races, but it would utterly transform deficient culture,” an argument Zionists pushed heavily.¹⁷

When it came to the modernization question, three distinct types of arguments are found. One is the pro-Zionist argument, which promoted the dominating view of most Americans that Palestine was long neglected and its potential wasted under Arab control. Jewish settlers were portrayed as pioneers, bringing the light of Western civilization to a dark land. Through their actions, the economy in Palestine developed along modern lines, and even the “backward” Arab began to adapt. As a result, the argument went, Jews should be granted at least part of the land as their own state, if not the entire territory, in order to continue this march of progress. The countervailing pro-Arab argument dismissed or downplayed the effect of Jewish settlement, showing instead that Arabs, inspired by American missionaries, had already begun to walk the path of modernization before and without Zionism. It highlighted modern Arab buildings, industry, and farming practices and accused the pro-Zionist rhetoric of ignoring these advances. There was also an attempt to show that in reality, Jews were dependent on either philanthropic support from other Jews or the markets and production of the neighboring Arab states for any success they might have had. While the pro-Zionist and pro-Arab arguments were the most common by far, there was a small but significant third approach, which I describe as “anti-Zionist.” The anti-Zionist argument falls between the other two. As the name implies, proponents of this line of reasoning did not support a Jewish state and often reiterated the pro-Arab claims that current Zionist progress was unsustainable. Rather than argue that Arabs were in the process of modernization, however, the anti-Zionist literature claimed that no group could, or should, modernize Palestine due to its size, lack of resources, and historical and religious importance. An offshoot of this argument was the longstanding debate over Palestine’s

¹⁷ Latham, 22.
“absorptive capacity.” This referred to questions (often brought up by British Mandate officials) about how many people Palestine could realistically absorb and support. Zionists spent a great deal of time attempting to convince doubters that under Zionist control and modernization techniques, Palestine’s absorptive capacity was quite high and would only increase as more Jews entered and began to contribute to that modernization. Anti-Zionists doubted these claims. As far as this group was concerned, modernization should not factor into any decisions about the future of Palestine, aside from the absorptive capacity question. For the pro-Arab side, absorptive capacity was at times a useful argument, as it sought to demonstrate that Palestine had already absorbed more Jewish refugees in relation to its size than the rest of the world. But the more important point was to pull back the curtain on alleged Jewish successes and show instead that the Arabs of Palestine were the best reflection of U.S. ideas regarding modernization.

**The Pro-Zionist Argument**

The image of Palestine from earlier travelogues had created a sense that it was stuck at subsistence levels of development, an idea British Mandate officials continued to promote as they sought to limit Jewish immigration in the form of debates over “absorptive capacity” of Palestine. How many people could the land hold, both in terms of space as well as industry and agriculture? The absorptive capacity question created layers of debates between and among Zionists and Arabs (and their respective supporters). From the Zionist perspective, the most important point was to demonstrate that Zionist ingenuity and Western background allowed Jews to reinvent Palestine into a land of plenty, which could easily support as many Jews as chose to immigrate there. As the American Jewish Conference outlined in 1943, not only were “greater modernization and intensification of farming” and “reclamation work” of the land key features of
Jewish colonization, so was the “human element – the enterprise, inventiveness and adaptability of the Jewish immigrant” capable of “turn[ing] the wheels and turbines of the industrial and commercial machinery, and creat[ing] the facilities for expanded colonization.”18 British formulations of absorptive capacity, in other words, were based on the Arabs’ outdated methods and inability to use Palestine to its fullest potential, and thus the resulting restrictions on Jewish immigration such as the 1939 White Paper were invalid. According to the American Zionist Emergency Council (AZEC), the British were not concerned over Palestine’s ability to support Jewish immigration. Their real fear was how the Arabs would react. In response, AZEC argued in its newsletter Palestine that “Jewish reclamation [of the land], health and industrial projects in Palestine” conferred great “economic advantages” on the Arab population.19

Subsequent issues of Palestine further reinforced the idea that Jewish abilities were creating more arable land, once again seeking to reduce the power of the absorptive capacity argument. In the January 1944 issue, AZEC wrote that “half a million Jews have been successfully settled in Palestine, on some twelve per cent of the soil not ranking as cultivable, of which a great part was previously waste.” Were the Zionists allowed to continue their development, even more land could become productive and profitable.20 In addition to agriculture, “brains and skills are the foremost requirements in modern production,” and Jewish immigrants brought plenty of both, setting the foundation for a growing manufacturing and industrial sector in the country, if only they could be given free reign to develop as they saw fit. References to Palestine’s absorptive capacity and “the argument that Palestine is too small for

18 The American Jewish Conference, 83.
20 A similar mentality was seen among European colonizers in Zimbabwe, who often described land as empty, “implying a right of discovery.” David McDermott Hughes, Whiteness in Zimbabwe: Race, Landscape, and the Problem of Belonging (Palgrave Macmillan U.S., 2010), 52.
the Jews,” AZEC asserted, “usually came from people bent on denying them access to what it offers.”21 The issue also included an article entitled, “How Many People Can Palestine Maintain,” which opened with Mark Twain’s observations of Palestine as broken down and wasted, then contrasted that assessment with its view of a Jewish-created land of milk and honey, capable of supporting even more immigrants and a plan to develop a Tennessee Valley Authority-style irrigation scheme.22 In its February issue, AZEC started by explaining how the Jews of Palestine were “the backbone of the industrial and agricultural organization of the country,” paid the larger part of the Palestine Administration’s budget, organized a large labor force, “built up” the cities of Haifa and Tel-Aviv, “transformed and enlarged the Holy City of Jerusalem,” developed the Dead Sea concession, and “introduced electrical power throughout Palestine,” all while also spending the previous five years supporting the Allied war effort. Meanwhile, the “Arabs of Palestine maintained during the same five years exactly the same recalcitrant, treacherous and sullen relationship to the land, its administration, and their neighbors.”23 Absorptive capacity, in other words, was no match for the ingenuity and modernization efforts of the Zionists.

One of the most prominent voices in the pro-Zionist camp was American geologist Walter Clay Lowdermilk. His 1944 work, Palestine, Land of Promise, was the epitome of the modernization argument and why the Jewish settlers deserved to control Palestine, reaching the best-seller list, and going through fourteen printings and translation into seven languages.24


22 Ibid., 5.


Though the stated focus of the book was to recount Lowdermilk’s trip to the Near East to “study the land record,” the book painted a grim picture of Palestine left to Arab cultivation and contrasted it with glowing reports about Jewish activities and efforts to “restore” the land. Lowdermilk, when describing Arab control, used words and phrases such as: “backwardness and resulting weakness of its peoples,” “the helpless position of the Near East,” “the long neglected Holy Land,” “wasted and depleted lands of Palestine,” and “desolate condition.” Jewish settlements, in contrast, provided “hope” for the land. They were “an inspiration and splendid achievement,” “show[ed] the way for the resurrection of the Near East,” “reclaim[ed]” the land, were “modern,” used machinery, and the people were “pioneers.”

Even chickens served as an example of the immense gulf between Arabs and Jews. Lowdermilk reported that the “native Arab hen is a scrawny fowl,” but Jewish settlers, with their scientific minds and modern methods, crossbred that poor little bird with the leghorn. The “resultant new strain [was] heavier,” laid twice the average amount of eggs as the Arab version, and soon was “found all over Palestine.”

Although such a report might seem benign, in many ways it served as an analogy for how Zionist supporters viewed the situation. The Arabs who currently controlled the land were “scrawny,” and while they may have produced something, it was a pittance compared to the output of the strong, capable, Western colonists. This outside influence (Jewish settlers) would not only produce more, but they would also soon flourish across the land.

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25 Lowdermilk. The examples quoted are found throughout the book. See for example: 5, 6, 12, 14, 79-80.

26 Lowdermilk, 92. Lowdermilk describes the Jewish chicken breeders as former doctors and lawyers, applying their scientific methods to agriculture. While it is true that many European Jews who immigrated to Palestine were from the professional class and became farmers, it is incorrect to assume or imply (as Lowdermilk does), that they were satisfied with this arrangement. It was important to Ben-Gurion and other early leaders of Jewish Palestine (later Israel), that immigrants should work the land, regardless of their experience (or desire to do so). For more on these early conflicts, see Tom Segev, *1949: The First Israelis* (New York, NY: Henry Holt & Company, 1998) and *The Seventh Million: The Israelis and the Holocaust*, (New York, NY: Henry Holt & Company, 2000).
When Arabs appeared in Lowdermilk’s work, they served only as an opposition to Jewish settlers; otherwise, they were invisible. The land of Palestine was often portrayed as empty and neglected until Jewish settlers arrived. Arabs did not even get credit for things done well. Lowdermilk conceded that citrus was a pre-existing export, reporting that when “Jewish settlers came, they found Palestine producing a high-quality orange.” The key word in this sentence is “Palestine.” The land, not the Arab people, produced the oranges. Lowdermilk concluded by claiming that “if the forces of reclamation and progress Jewish settlers have introduced are permitted to continue, Palestine may well be the leaven that will transform the other lands of the Near East,” making Palestine “the example, the demonstration, the lever, that will raise the entire Near East from its present desolate condition to a dignified place in a free world.” Such descriptions and explanations harkened back to the idea of the United States as a reference culture, suggesting that Jewish control of Palestine would not only reflect American methods, but further export those ideas to the rest of the region.

The overarching message was that the Arabs had their chance and they allowed the Holy Land to fall into disrepair. If they could not cultivate and care for the land, then it was time to allow someone else to take over. Once again, attitudes toward Arabs mimicked long-held views regarding American Indians, who “failed to capitalize on natural resource potential,” which then was used as “justification for taking over ‘vacant’ lands for cultivation” by whites. But Jewish settlement did not have to be a bad thing for Arabs. In fact, Lowdermilk argued, Arabs should welcome the newcomers, as “under ordinary circumstances, centuries would have to pass before

27 Lowdermilk, 94-95.

28 Lowdermilk, 228-229.

the more primitive people could reach an equal stage with their advanced neighbors.” The presence of “Jewish colonies [however] may very possibly cut short this transition period.” Only Western influence, in the form of immigrating Jews from Europe, would allow Arab Palestine (and perhaps from there, the rest of the Middle East) to move along the stages of development.\textsuperscript{30} The best way to encourage this development, according to Lowdermilk, was the creation of a “Jordan Valley Authority,” modeled after the New Deal’s Tennessee Valley Authority and designed to bring power and irrigation to Palestine and the surrounding areas, further increasing the land’s productivity and aligning neatly with Jewish efforts.

Zionist reaction to Lowdermilk’s book was enthusiastic. AZEC’s review in \textit{Palestine} emphasized Lowdermilk’s theory that “the abuse of the soil leads to the blight of the people dwelling thereon. Conversely, the quality of the people may give a clue as to the health of the soil,” and the Zionist project in Palestine was a prime example of how this theory worked.\textsuperscript{31} Lowdermilk’s support also had the benefit of coming from someone who was not specifically related to the political debate over Palestine. He was a geologist, whose extensive travels and understanding of the land allowed him to see the distinct difference between Arab- and Jewish-controlled Palestine and that the Jewish sections were clearly more modern and a better reflection of U.S. culture. Once again, the image of American pioneers conquering land that had lay wasted under American Indian control came to the fore, with Lowdermilk explicitly drawing connections between the “hardships and dangers” in both the “colonization in America” and the “colonization of Palestine.” More importantly, for proponents of increased Jewish immigration, Lowdermilk assured readers that concerns about absorptive capacity were greatly misplaced. If Jewish immigration was allowed and their modernization work continued unimpeded, Palestine

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{30} Lowdermilk, 80.
\item \textsuperscript{31} Palestine, Vol. I, No. 4, March 1944: 10.
\end{itemize}
would become the “example” that would transform the entire Middle East and allow “twenty to thirty million people [to] live decent and prosperous lives where a few million now struggle for a bare existence.” Absorptive capacity was thus only a problem if it was based on Arab levels of development.

The Institute was much less enthusiastic about Lowdermilk’s ideas. As Lowdermilk continued to promote his vision of a JVA, the Institute sought to remind Americans that despite Zionists’ claims to the contrary, Palestine could not be developed in isolation. Ismail Khalidi, Secretary of the Institute, took to the New York Times editorial page to inform Americans that such a project could only work with the assistance and consent of the neighboring Arab states, particularly Jordan, and they would only agree if such a project was owned by the Palestinian government “to benefit all parts of the population and not as a means for Zionist political expansion.” It was difficult for the Institute and other Arab supporters to challenge the perception of Jewish advances in Palestine, forcing them to instead find ways to question the permanency of those advances, highlight Arab advances, and reframe the issue away from modernization and toward issues of morality. By pointing out that the JVA dream would require the consent and participation of neighboring Arab states, the Institute hoped to show that Zionist reliance on outside assistance, in addition to foreign donations from Jews around the world, included the Arab region for cooperation in building projects, markets for goods, and of course, peace and security. Instead of a Jewish state bringing development and growth to the region, it would be the region that allowed (or prevented) the Jewish state to thrive. Totah recognized the widespread proliferation of Lowdermilk’s ideas, and often prefaced his discussions about modernization with the view that the debate over Palestine should not be approached from the

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32 Lowdermilk, 15, 228-229.

question of how many “eggs which [J]ewish hens produce, or the quantity of milk or butter which Jewish cows produce, but from the standpoint of right and wrong.”\(^{34}\)

The ideas Lowdermilk expressed, however, continued to surface in other works from the period, including books that claimed a much more objective viewpoint. *Palestine: Problem and Promise. An Economic Study* by Robert R. Nathan, Oscar Gass, and Daniel Creamer, is a 634-page tome full of economic statistics, tables, and charts examining in great and exhaustive detail the economic situation in Mandatory Palestine. The goal of the book, according to its introduction, was to provide “an authoritative and objective appraisal of the economic potentialities of Palestine.”\(^ {35}\) Yet despite claims to be interested solely in economics, the authors included a great many observations about the effects of Jewish settlements on the Arabs and often echoed Lowdermilk’s book, though in perhaps a drier tone more befitting of economists.

Early on, the authors stated their admiration for the Zionist project and reaffirmed the idea that, left to their own devices, Arabs could not measure up to Western standards. They reported that “Zionist reconstruction has brought the Arabs of Palestine a higher standard of living than is found elsewhere in the Arab Middle East. . . . The Arabs are healthier, longer-lived, and more numerous because of Jewish accomplishments.” But Arab reaction confused the authors, who felt they “ought to be grateful for the benefits brought them by Jewish immigration. In fact they are not grateful. . . . They are prepared to forego economic benefits to accomplish

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\(^{34}\) “Dr. Totah’s Testimony,” January 3, 1946, 1 (Khalil Totah Archives).

\(^{35}\) Robert R. Nathan, Oscar Gass, Daniel Creamer, *Palestine: Problem and Promise. An Economic Study* (Washington, D.C.: Public Affairs Press, 1946), v. The authors have a confusing definition of “objective.” They write that “funds were not accepted from any groups with commitments concerning political Zionism” (v), but on the next page, they noted that some contributors “have been associated with such organizations as the American Council for Judaism, the Jewish Agency for Palestine [the Jewish authority in Palestine under the Mandate], the Zionist Organization of America” and others (vi).
these objectives [ending Jewish immigration and establishing an independent Arab Palestine].”

Arab willingness to sacrifice economic gains, inconceivable to these authors, highlighted a common problem when it came to modernization. The Western architects of development programs often seemed unwilling or unable to view their proposals from the perspective of the people who would be forced to endure them. They assumed that all countries (and people) wanted to emulate the Western model and should thus gladly accept the wisdom of countries that had already trod the path of modernization. As mentioned previously, Boasian ideas of cultural relativism were supplanting ideas about racial determinations regarding progress. One of the bases of cultural relativism was that each culture had its own set of “values and practices” that were “perceived by members of a society as uniquely satisfying and superior” to others. It then followed that cultures could not “be ranked on an evolutionary scale.” Americans certainly adapted the first part, in terms of viewing their system as superior to others, but because of their beliefs that societies were supposed to all end at the same destination, they disregarded the second aspect, dismissing “local history and culture” as temporary problems to be solved by “administration and technical expertise,” provided by a culture further down the path of modernization. Concepts like nationalism or local traditions simply did not have a place in this line of thought.

Despite Arab opposition, Jewish progress dominated the narrative. Jews were referred to as “a great progressive force,” “a progressive, Westernizing influence in the development of modern industry,” and “progressive and Western in technique,” bringing the benefits of Western industrialization to a land forced into “disorder and backwardness” by centuries of Turkish violence.

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36 Nathan, 4.
38 Latham, 4.
Unlike Lowdermilk, Nathan and his coauthors did give credit to the Arabs where they thought credit was due. For example, they noted that “both Arab and Jewish agriculture have made great progress during the past quarter century.” Such a statement, though, did not go unqualified. They followed up by noting that, “even in the best years, the Arab peasant has enjoyed a standard of living that is good only in contrast with the brutish poverty common in the Arab Middle East.” Jewish settlers were criticized for their obsession with matching Arabs in terms of population numbers, rather than focusing on a “smaller population with better equipment and a higher standard of living.” But even this shortcoming was predicted to only last a decade.

Arab shortcomings, however, were more permanent, according to the authors. Perhaps the most damning argument of the book, in terms of Arab ability to rule their country, was the pervasive theme that Arabs simply lacked inherent traits necessary for progress. The authors noted that “industrial workers’ skills, scientific technology and modern management capacity” were rarities for Arabs, and they did not see that situation changing any time in the near future. Arabs lacked the “requisite entrepreneurial ability” that could lead to industrialization. Like Lowdermilk, these authors felt that Jewish influence could “accelerate Arab progress,” but warned that even such an impressive example could not “eradicate the consequences of centuries of backwardness.” Finally, the authors recognized that the Arabs had clearly stated their desire to end Jewish immigration and not allow the establishment of a Jewish state or majority in Palestine. But, they added, “the political aims of the Palestinian Arabs – while not unintelligible

39 Nathan, 6, 8, 15, etc. Quote about the Turks on p. 48. As discussed in Chapter 1, the idea of the Ottoman Empire being stagnant and unchanging was widespread, even if it was not accurate. The idea that the Ottoman had destroyed Arab civilization was a key point for many Arab nationalists. Albert Hourani, The Emergence of the Modern Middle East (Berkeley, CA: The University of California Press, 1981), 1-2.

40 Nathan, 8, 15.
– are extravagant and unreasonable.”\textsuperscript{41} Rhetoric of national self-determination and democracy had to give way before progress. Since the Arabs were unable to turn Palestine into a productive, modern land, they forfeited the right to rule.

These two books, both published in the 1940s, represent the dominant discourse that appeared in numerous other books, articles, and government reports on Palestine: The Holy Land was long-neglected and in need of restoration. Arabs were “backward” and “uncivilized” and had allowed Palestine’s deterioration to occur in the first place. The Jewish settler, conversely, echoed American pioneer mythology, having “opened up a virgin country and conquered it for the white man. In so doing, he has had to fight a long battle against the aboriginal.”\textsuperscript{42} The Council on Foreign Relations noted that Jewish settlers in Palestine “built new cities and settlements and introduced twentieth century, Western institutions and techniques into the backward Near East,” something “the Arabs profited from,” though “nationalism transcended these factors.”\textsuperscript{43} This statement reflected the sentiment in \textit{Palestine: Problem and Promise}: Arabs should have recognized the myriad benefits Jewish settlement brought, but instead stubbornly chose to cling to nationalism, despite the economic risks.

It is notable that throughout these pro-Zionist arguments, there was little to no discussion of non-European Jewish communities in Palestine. As was seen in chapter 1, travelogue writers in the nineteenth century had few positive views of the local Jewish communities, viewing them as largely the same as the non-Jewish Arab population. By the 1940s, Ashkenazi Jews (Jews of

\textsuperscript{41} Nathan, 10, 15, 91.

\textsuperscript{42} Richard Crossman, \textit{Palestine Mission: A Personal Record} (New York and London: Harper & Brothers Publishers, 1947), 33. Crossman was a British M.P. appointed to serve on the Anglo-American Committee of Inquiry on Palestine, formed in December 1945. He wrote that he had a difficult time understanding the American commitment to Zionism until he remembered the American pioneer sentiment.

European descent) were championed as a Western force of civilization, bringing modernization to the land, while the Mizrahi Jews (those from Northern Africa and the Middle East) were largely absent from the debate. The policies and preferences of the Jewish Agency prior to World War II further promoted this set up. While Jewish immigration was a top priority, the kinds of immigrants mattered greatly, with preference aimed particularly toward the “halutzim” or “pioneers” who could lend their skills and labor to building the agricultural settlements, though this philosophy ended with the Holocaust, as the effort than changed to getting as many Jewish refugees to Palestine as possible, regardless of their skills. Ironically, prior to the Holocaust, the Jewish Agency had been largely skeptical about the influx of professionals and sought to move them toward agriculture. As German doctors insisted on using their skills outside the confines of collectivist hospitals, the medical situation in Palestine improved dramatically, which was then used to explain the benefits of Jewish immigration for the local Arab population.44 The ultra-Orthodox Jews, with their distinctive hair and clothing, and the Mizrahi population in general, were not seen in propaganda posters, newsreels, or photographs. What white Americans saw were people who looked like them, reclaiming an ancient land for modern purposes.

**Anti-Zionist Arguments**

While the pro-Zionist argument was the dominant narrative, counterarguments also strove to gain a hearing. In 1948, *Palestine Dilemma: Arab Right Versus Zionist Aspirations* used the information from Lowdermilk and Nathan and his coauthors to argue that Palestine

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44 Segev, *The Seventh Million*, pp. 42-43, 48-49. Following the creation of statehood, Israel began more targeted campaigns to get Jews living in the Arab world to immigrate to Israel. For more, see Segev, 1949, specifically chapter 6.
simply could not support the modern economy that Zionists claimed, and Arab wishes regarding
the land should be respected. The author, Frank C. Sakran, was a Christian Arab born in
Palestine, who moved to the United States in 1914, becoming a citizen while serving in the U.S.
Army during World War I. His background gave him a different perspective than Westerners
whose knowledge of Palestine came only from brief visits, and his stated goal for the book was
to counter the lack of “adequate” depiction of the Arab side. He criticized the “flood of literature
on the subject” as being “written by Zionists or Zionist sympathizers, [who] ignore or minimize
facts favorable to the Arabs.”

Sakran began by noting the tendency of people interested in Palestine to overestimate its
importance, especially in “proportion to its size and its resources.” Palestine, he explained, had
almost no mineral deposits (with the exception of salt from the Dead Sea), no coal, metals, or oil,
and of its 10,429 square miles, only one-third was fertile. Some industry was possible, as
evidenced by the manufacturing output by Arabs prior to the First World War and its growth
after the Second, but without any natural resources of its own, Palestine could not support the
development of Western-style economies. This sentiment was echoed in an article by Henry
Morgenthau, Jr., Secretary of the Treasury under President Franklin D. Roosevelt, printed by the
Institute. Morgenthau wrote that a “great industrial Palestine” was not feasible, since the land
lacked raw materials and people with the needed skills. Furthermore, even if those obstacles
could be overcome, he argued, Palestine could not compete with countries like the United States
and Great Britain, with their seemingly infinite resources.

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Press, 1948), v, vi.

of Articles by Distinguished Jews Who Oppose Political Zionism*, (New York, NY: Institute of Arab American
Affairs, 1947), 34, 42. While the italics are in the original copy of the pamphlet, they were added by the editors and
were not Morgenthau’s.
Sakran essentially proposed an alternative reason for why Arabs had not “developed”: they had already found the right balance between development and what the local environment would allow, an idea he illustrated with tractors. Sakran noted that tractors and other farming machinery grew in popularity among Arabs throughout the Middle East, but “power farming” in Palestine faced severe limitations in the hill country “since the fields here are too small and too rough to permit the efficient use of tractors.”

The word “efficient” fit with modern, Western economics: Arabs were not ignoring technology because they were “backwards” or unable to recognize the benefits; rather, Arabs made the cost-benefit analysis and rationally concluded that such methods simply were incompatible with their local situation.

In order to make this argument, however, Sakran had to explain why Jewish settlements were thriving on the same land. His answer: Jewish successes were a façade. They depended “upon increasingly larger gifts from the outside,” using those funds to create industries and farms that “often operated at a loss” and “were established for political reasons.” British records noted that Jewish schools like the Hebrew University were “mainly financed by contributions from abroad” and by the end of 1936, valued the import of Jewish capital at £80,000,000. By the 1940s, “the American Jewish community alone contributed at least $445 million to its counterpart in Palestine.” The “vaunted success of Zionist endeavors and the progress they have made in Palestine,” he concluded, was “largely evidence of the generosity of Jews outside the country.” Regardless of how nice they looked, Jewish endeavors were not and could not be

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47 Sakran, 13.

48 “The Political History of Palestine Under British Administration: Memorandum by His Britannic Majesty’s Government presented in 1947 to the United Nations Special Committee on Palestine” (Jerusalem: British Information Services, 1947), 8, 15. While the Palestinian pound was pegged to the British pound, it was not clear what the rate was in 1936.

The U.S. State Department similarly argued that the only reason Jewish Palestinian industry had succeeded was because of the exigencies of wartime, as the British government relied on Jewish industry to help with the war effort. As the markets contracted in peacetime, Palestine would be awash with unemployment, making it illogical and disastrous to allow additional immigration. Morgenthau simply dismissed the Zionist argument that it would make Palestine prosperous as "preposterous," while Hitti condemned Zionists as "parasites living on charity," using the donations of world Jewry to support their colonial mission, which would otherwise be unsustainable. Since Zionists could not bring real progress or development to Palestine, there was no reason to grant them statehood in a land already inhabited and tended by Arabs, who, despite centuries of Ottoman domination, were making their own, lasting, progress.

Another aspect of the anti-Zionist argument was that Palestine should not be developed because it would upset the historical nature of the land. For proponents of this argument, it was less a question of "could" Palestine modernize, and more whether it "should." As the American Peace Society explained, Palestine was "a pathetically small and arid country," which could only sustain a larger population by "high industrialization." Such a program, however, would be "sacrilege in a land so crowded with sacred memories." Much like early travelogue writers who marveled at how Palestine seemed to be a living memorial of biblical history, individuals in the

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50 Sakran, 217. Nathan, et. al., challenged this view, stating that the "established population of Palestine is fully self-sustaining." (Nathan, 3). While this sentence is in a paragraph talking about the role of outside Jews in Palestine’s development, they do not actually specify if “the established population” refers just to Jewish settlers, or includes Arabs as well, which could skew the picture.

51 “Memo from Gordon Merriam to Loy Henderson and Secretary of State, August 31, 1945,” Papers of Harry S. Truman, President’s Secretary’s Files, Box 161, Folder Palestine 1945-1947, Truman Library; Morgenthau, 42 (italics in the original); Philip K. Hitti, “Zionist Claims and Arab Rights,” World Affairs Vol. 109, No. 1 (March, 1946): 10, Hitti Papers, Box 9, File Folder 17, IHRC.

twentieth century were concerned that something could be irrevocably lost if Palestine was simply transformed into the California of the East. Reflecting on his first trip to Palestine in 1913, Nahum Goldmann, a prominent member of the Jewish Agency who was active in many Zionist organizations, wrote how in Palestine’s “atmosphere lingered something of the prophets and the great Talmudists, of Jesus and the Apostles, of the Safed kabbalists, and the singers of bygone centuries.” When he returned during the Mandate period, he felt they “had done the country a wrong. . . . Modern Zionism and all it brought inevitably destroyed this dreamlike feeling of the untouched.” 53 These nostalgic arguments had less to do with questions of statehood, and more a general sense of something being lost to the march of progress. While Goldmann may have regretted the destruction of “the untouched,” it was not enough to justify the end of the Zionist project or a reason to turn statehood over to the Arabs.

Such anti-Zionist opposition to a Jewish state was not necessarily helpful to the Arab position. While allies were hard to come by, there were a number of risks to aligning too closely to this view. Though critical of Jewish development, it continued to largely ignore the agency of Arabs and their own progress. From this perspective, the Arabs were still underdeveloped, and, particularly for those lamenting the loss of a more biblical landscape, backwards and stuck in the past. There was nothing connecting the Arabs of Palestine to the United States or the larger West; instead, their connection was to the ancient world. By portraying Palestine as a land that time forgot that must stay that way, either because it was incapable of supporting modernization or due to general nostalgia and religious connections, Palestinian Arabs continued to risk domination by some outside power, as the Arab condition rendered them just as incapable of supporting modern government as modern agriculture. For Arabs to control their own destiny, it

was essential that they show the world they were not only capable of modernization in reflection of the United States, but that they had already begun down that road, without Zionist help.

**Pro-Arab Argument**

The Institute could not ignore this emphasis on modernization and production, though it did try to undermine its importance by focusing on other measures, as seen in the previous chapters. Likewise, the foreword to the Institute’s pamphlet *Arab Progress in Palestine* attempted to remind readers that even if a group was labeled “‘unprogressive’” it should not follow that it must forfeit its land and give up the promise of self-determination. Despite attempts to reframe the debate, the Institute understood that the issue of development was not going to disappear and therefore focused on promoting Arab achievements. It was difficult to deny, though, that Palestine and the Arab world as a whole were not at the same level of development as the United States. Instead of debating definitions, the Institute focused on shifting the blame. According to the Institute’s rhetoric, Palestine’s underdevelopment was not the fault of its Arab inhabitants, but rather that of the Turks, who had controlled the region for centuries. Since Turkish rule ended, following the collapse of the Ottoman Empire, Arabs had begun making great progress in developing themselves and their countries. The spark for development came from American missionaries, however, not Jewish colonizers. Missionary schools and hospitals “fertilized the Arab mind with the new concepts of progress, democracy and the rights of man,” allowing Arabs to shake off the “darkness” of Turkish oppression.⁵⁴ By connecting Arab progress with American influence (rather than Jewish settlements), the Institute

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hoped to create a clear tie between the two peoples and promote a sense of duty among Americans to the Arabs.

The most direct example is the Institute’s pamphlet, *Arab Progress in Palestine*, designed to demonstrate that the Arab population in Palestine was marching on “the path of progress,” following in the footsteps of the United States. Published in 1946, the booklet opened with two photographs. One was of Al-Hambra, an “Arab cinema in Jaffa designed by an Arab architect and built by an Arab company.” The design is quite Western in appearance. The second photograph was a blind man teaching a blind child how to use a Braille typewriter. The man is wearing a three-piece suit and a wristwatch; the child is also wearing Western clothes. Neither of these pictures included any visual identification as to their location. American readers could thus imagine they were looking at an American movie theater or an American school for the blind. Only the captions alerted them to the fact that these familiar images came from an unfamiliar land.\(^{55}\) Much like how Zionist propaganda avoided images of Orthodox Jews, who could suggest a sense of otherness and difference, most of the images the Institute used avoided pictures of men in keffiyehs or women wearing the hijab, opting instead to cultivate a reflection of American style to further build a sense of connection between the two countries and downplay the idea of Arab exoticness.

After this brief introduction, the pamphlet gave an overview of the various industries in which Arabs engaged. First came the orange industry. While Lowdermilk may have referred to Palestine producing oranges, the Institute made sure to point out that Arabs introduced the fruit to Europe. Other industries included soap, textiles, cement, salt, mother-of-pearl, cigarette factories, and “motor transport,” which the Arabs “took to . . . at once, much to the surprise,

\(^{55}\) *Arab Progress in Palestine*, no page number.
chagrin, and disappointment of those who believed the East never changes.”

But Palestinian Arabs did not limit themselves simply to industry. The service sector also witnessed growth and spoke to the changing Arab lifestyle and mindset. Insurance was one such example: “In the past, the Arabs have not dealt with insurance, as the principle of the business has been foreign to their nature of generous hospitality, their trust in God’s providence and ‘taking no thought for the morrow.’ But a new generation of educated and enlightened Arabs is emerging.” This is an interesting description, because it first portrays Arabs almost as “noble savages,” people of a less “modern” or “civilized” culture who had no need for things like insurance because of their innocence and belief in their god. The Arabs, however, were not so set in their ways that they could not be open to new ways of thinking. Once introduced to a new idea, they were quick to assimilate it into their own culture. Another example was aviation: though “equally novel to the Arab experience” as insurance, Arabs were delighted with air travel. The Institute warned that “those who have always associated Arabs with the camel will soon have to revise their thinking,” because of the “new romance of modern aviation.”

Banks, chambers of commerce, and telephones also spread rapidly across the Middle East, and none of it, to judge from this pamphlet, had anything to do with Jewish settlement.

A series of pictures broke up the list of accomplishments, often as a visual representation of the progress and development of Arabs. There were pictures of “Modern Arab Houses in Jerusalem,” “An Arab Boy at a Threshing Machine,” “An Arab Machine Shop – The Palestine Iron and Brass Foundry Co., Ltd., in Jaffa,” and the “Municipal Park at Gaza” (a “purely Arab

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56 Arab Progress in Palestine, 4-11. When discussing the soap industry, the pamphlet noted that unlike European manufacturers, Palestine’s soap makers did not use “unclean” animal fats, thus making them more competitive in Muslim countries. (5).

57 Arab Progress in Palestine, 8.
town” the caption informed readers).\footnote{Arab Progress in Palestine, between pages 10 and 11.} As with the pictures at the beginning of the pamphlet, most of these photographs showed only Western-styled “modern” people and places. The workers pictured next to their machines at the Iron and Brass Foundry, for example, all wear Western clothing. The park at Gaza could in places be mistaken for a golf course in California. The one exception is the “Arab Boy at a Threshing Machine,” who alone is wearing traditional Arab dress. Yet he is working with a piece of modern farming equipment, showing that there was a place for the traditional to co-exist with development.

Finally, the pamphlet highlighted Arab progress on one other front: women. While acknowledging that “much remains to be accomplished” when it came to social advances, the situation of women in Palestine was not one of captive and downtrodden women secluded in a harem, as Westerners may have imagined. Women were being educated, attending junior college and university. “These girls are progressive,” the pamphlet proclaimed, listing the various activities in which women and girls partook: writing articles and books, swimming, playing sports like baseball and basketball (again, a specific tie to the United States), and driving cars. Like their American counterparts, “they frequent beauty parlors and follow the pattern of what may constitute up-to-dateness.”\footnote{Ibid., 19.} In other words, women in Palestine enjoyed many of the same activities and opportunities as women in the “developed” world. They were not portrayed as an exotic species, veiled and secluded from the world, but as active and participating members of society.

The pamphlet’s conclusion included many of the key phrases of modernization discourse. The Palestinians, the Institute declared, “desire to march forward” on the “path of progress.” With “understanding and direction” from Americans and Europeans, Palestine could take its
place among the developed, industrial nations as an independent state. Most importantly, this would all be done by the Arabs and for the Arabs, without need of Jewish colonization or settlement.\textsuperscript{60} Just as the Arab was absent from pro-Zionist arguments, Zionism was never mentioned in this pamphlet, nor was reference made to existing Jewish communities.

At the same time, the Institute used its monthly \textit{Bulletin} to highlight the development of the Arab world in general, while also questioning Zionist progress in the region. Between September 1945 and October 1947, almost half of the issues of the \textit{Bulletin} (eleven out of twenty-five) contained at least one story about Arab progress, modernity, or industrialization. Some noted the formation of new corporations, such as the August 1946 issue, which included the headline: “Industry Takes a Leap in Syria.” The story told of Syrian entrepreneurs’ visit to the United States to “consult technicians” and buy machines for a variety of companies, including a dyeing plant. The dyeing plant was significant, it explained, because at that time, 80 percent of the textiles dyed at the current plant in Tel-Aviv came from Syria and Lebanon. Once the Syrian plant was fully operational, it could have dire effects for the “Zionist venture.”\textsuperscript{61} This story thus served two purposes. First, it countered claims that Arabs were not interested in modernization or industrialization. Second, since the corporations were Syrian (not Palestinian), it showed that Arabs did not need Jewish immigration to spur development; in fact, it showed that Zionists were actually dependent on their Arab neighbors to provide materials and markets for their own industry.

Just as “progress” was the theme of the pamphlet, “modern” was the word of choice for \textit{The Bulletin}. The October 1945 issue reported the opening of a “modern Arab orphanage” near

\textsuperscript{60} Ibid., 19-20.

In December of the same year, *The Bulletin* announced that 112 acres in Jerusalem would “shortly be converted into a modern commercial quarter,” which would house a hotel, a six-story office building, a bank, and several other buildings all “in uniform style of architecture.” In October 1946, Dr. Hitti remarked that throughout the Arab world, one saw “macadamized roads, streamlined modernistic buildings, schools, and hospitals.” These references to modernization once again highlighted Arab American attempts to use the language of development and modernization to further cement their case for an independent Arab Palestine.

Other publications refuted the image of the Zionist pioneer working to reclaim a wasted land by pointing out that the vast majority of Jewish land was purchased and existed in already fertile and well-tended areas. In its 1947 book, *The Future of Palestine*, the Arab Office turned the table on the development argument, claiming that it was Jewish immigrants who came from “primitive and sometimes degraded conditions” and found “in Palestine a higher standard of life than they had enjoyed at home.” In other words, the land in Palestine had already been in good shape, but the Zionists, with overwhelming resources on their side from international donors, simply took it away from the Arabs who had been doing the actual work. Even the Zionist claim that Arabs were behind in terms of modernization was turned around to argue that Arabs’ progress was all the more impressive: though starting from much farther behind, and without any of the “Zionists’ advantages of unlimited capital and great resources of technical skill,” the Arabs of Palestine had made significant advances in the past thirty years. Arab farmers produced more, the textile industry grew, and banks had been established, all in the previous thirty years,

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in Palestine alone. The rest of the Middle East, it claimed, progressed even faster, further disproving the Zionist stimulus theory that the presence of Jewish settlements was the key to lifting Arabs out of their current situation.\textsuperscript{65} The future of Palestine, according to this argument, was in the Arabs, who had brought civilization to the world thousands of years before and who were again on the cusp of reclaiming that heritage, after centuries of disruption from outside powers.

**Images of Palestine**

Despite the Institute’s efforts, Americans largely saw the Zionist program as the best reflection of themselves. Lowdermilk’s suggestion that the Zionists could and should create their own version of the Tennessee Valley Authority (a crowning achievement of the New Deal) quickly caught on and served as another way for Zionists to demonstrate their emulation of American culture.\textsuperscript{66} The media also worked against the Institute’s attempts to portray the progress of Arabs. In 1946, *The New Leader* published two articles about Palestine. Totah wrote the first one, promoting the Arab claim to Palestine. A rebuttal written by M. Z. Frank followed, arguing the case for Zionism. While the contents of the article followed fairly standard arguments, as discussed earlier, it is worth noting that the images and captions used by *The New Leader* spoke volumes as well. There were three pictures accompanying Totah’s column. The largest picture, under the headline, was of the Old City of Jerusalem, with the Dome of the Rock serving as the focal point (Fig. 10).

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\textsuperscript{65} The Arab Office, *The Future of Palestine* (Westport, CT: Hyperion Press, Inc., 1947), 29-31; Jabir Shibli, *The Palestine Reality* (New York, NY: The Institute of Arab American Affairs, April 1946), 12, 17. The argument often went that unscrupulous Arab landlords (who often didn’t even live in Palestine) sold the land to the Jews in the early decades of the Zionist movement, at which point the Arab tenants who had lived and worked on that land for generations were displaced.

On the lower left hand corner, a picture captioned “Children Load Water Containers on Donkey” showed three young Arab children in robes and headscarves loading up a small donkey (Fig. 11). On the opposite corner was “Market in Jerusalem,” depicting a narrow, crowded street market with women wearing the hijab (Fig. 12).

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Frank’s article included only one photograph – an aerial view of Tel-Aviv with the caption “Zionists claim Tel-Aviv is World’s Most Modern City” (Fig. 13).

The comparisons were hard to miss. The Arab population of Palestine were something out of the travelogues of the nineteenth century: old, exotic, and lacking any sense of modernity. The Zionists, conversely, were the reflection of the United States: modern cities, growth, and development. Totah’s argument, referencing biblical figures, only confirmed that the Arabs were trapped in the past. Contrary to Arab Progress in Palestine’s description of the modern Arab woman playing sports, driving, and going to beauty parlors, the picture chosen showed a veiled woman walking through the marketplace. The children were using a donkey to carry water, again indicating a lack of modern conveniences, such as running water or non-animal based transportation.

Figure 13: “Modern” Tel Aviv

The images used in *The New Leader* were similar to those used in *Paramount* newsreels regarding the Palestine situation. In an update regarding Britain’s decision to end its rule in Palestine, viewers saw a line of Jews standing under a sign in Hebrew, all dressed in Western clothing (again, Orthodox Jews did not make an appearance). The next shot showed a couple of Arab men, one of whom was missing several teeth, wearing robes and washing their hands in a little stream with livestock standing in the water next to them, drinking. After a brief look at the military preparations in light of Britain’s upcoming exit, the segment ends with the question, “What shall be Palestine’s future?”

Based on the images used, viewers could imagine a Palestine reflective of U.S. modernity and progress, should the Jewish state be created, or a movement backward to a people who washed alongside animals. Such imagery also reinforced the idea that the Arabs were a less-developed people, who could only benefit from an influx of Westernization in the form of colonization. In this case, however, unlike with the Philippines or Cuba, the United States would not have to commit much to the cause. The Jewish state would be responsible for Palestine’s development, and would be less a colonial project and more of a return.

The *New York Times* feature on Zionist building efforts in its May 18, 1947, issue further developed this idea. Under the headline “New Oases in Palestine Desert,” the article, spanning five pages, presented an image of a building bonanza, “making the wastelands bloom” in a triumph of modernization. The Zionists were portrayed as not only making the desert bloom, but doing so in a fast, “meticulously organized” way. Truck convoys “rushed” to the Negev desert, and “three settlements were set up in a matter of hours.” The Zionists had every detail mapped out, “even providing sufficient kitchen utensils” for the population. The land was repeatedly

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described as a “wasteland,” “desolate,” and “long-neglected” (echoing the words of Lowdermilk), until the settlements arrived. Afterwards, the land was thriving, and culture abounded, with orchestras, lectures, and even screenings of Hollywood movies. All of these communes, the author reported, “came into being as the result of a fervid pioneering spirit, a devotion and fanatic determination to make the uncompromising soil pay dividends.”

Though the article’s focus was on Jewish settlements, it ended with a brief report on the impact of the settlements on the Arab population. It was an overwhelmingly positive summation, with the only hint of potential discord a single sentence referencing “dispute[s] over ownership of the land,” which the writer assured readers only “sometimes occur.” Instead, the focus was on how the “Arab rustics” benefited from the medical services provided by Jewish clinics, with lines of Arabs “squatting” outside, waiting for their turn to get their eyes treated. The use of the word “squatting” insinuated a lower status, and, connecting back to the issue of land disputes, suggested an image of a transient group with no real rights to the land. Not only did local Arabs benefit from Jewish medical care, the article continued, but the settlements also taught the locals how to use modern farming techniques and machinery; the Arabs, it claimed, were so “impressed” by the California citrus growing techniques the Jewish settlers used that they “copied” them. Much as Lowdermilk had refused to give credit for the citrus industry in Palestine, this article suggested that Arab citrus production prior to Zionist colonization had been haphazard and subsistence-level, requiring the impartation of knowledge from outsiders to truly prosper. In truth, however, citrus production, particularly around Jaffa, had been a well-established and profitable industry since the end of the Crimean War of the 1850s. By 1873, “there were already 420 orange groves in the vicinity of Jaffa, yielding 33.3 million oranges

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annually. . . . The yield of 1880 was 36 million oranges.” British agents noted that orange groves in Palestine were an excellent investment, with annual net returns of 10 percent expected. Yet none of that information was included in the article, and the Arab citrus industry was dismissed as having succeeded despite the Arabs, not because of them.

While the article largely ignored any potential conflict between Arab and Jewish ownership of the land, it devoted two pages to explaining how the communes were utterly distinct from Soviet collective farms, which, in light of the Cold War, many Americans understood were bad and at complete odds with American values. Ironically, the first argument was that Zionist communes were different from the Soviet version because they were started by a “group of young Russian university intellectuals” in Palestine in 1908, thus preceding the Russian development. The only similarity between the two systems was the absence of private land ownership. Aside from that, there was no comparison. The Zionist model was “wholly voluntary,” unlike the Soviet model, which was imposed from above. What also made the Zionist communes superior, according to the author, was the lack of wages. The Soviet collective paid wages on the “basis of individual output. But in the kibbutz no wages are paid and each member receives the same measure of maintenance and community services, whatever his or her production.” The kibbutz was thus an ideal merger of “communal responsibility combined with complete freedom of the individual.”

The article continued to critique the Soviet collective by noting that its members “do not eat communally, but in individual homes.” While there was no private property on the kibbutz, Russian farmers had “their own farmsteads and a limited amount of individually owned livestock.” Though this small level of private


72 Meltzer, 55.
ownership would seem to be more in line with U.S. economic and cultural ideals, the article made clear this was a negative trait, praising the Zionists for their “synthesis of communism and Western social democracy,” emphasizing again that the “Palestine system is a free and self-chosen association of individuals banded together for communal existence.”

This article thus demonstrates the difficulties the Institute faced in its attempts to link the proto-Jewish state to communism. Everything the Institute pointed out in its comparison of the kibbutz movement to the Soviet Union was presented here as an example of the Zionists’ impressive, modern progress. Ten years after this article’s publication, Ayn Rand’s book, *Atlas Shrugged*, made the slogan “from each according to his ability, to each according to his need” a prime example of communism’s threat. Yet here, the kibbutz was lauded for the fact that “[n]o matter what his or her productivity, each worker member of a Palestine commune – and, what is more important, each dependent parent, child, or disabled and incapacitated member – receives a scrupulously similar share in the housing, food, clothing and services and amenities.” Thus, as the Institute sought to convince Americans that the kibbutz was simply an extension of Soviet ideology, with its lack of private ownership and individual homes, the *New York Times* had already lauded those qualities as being a reflection of progress and Western democracy.

**Conclusion**

From its earliest days, the Institute operated from the position that Americans rarely questioned whether their standard of living and their ideas of what “modern” meant should be the reference point for the rest of the world. This sentiment had been a feature of American

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73 Ibid.
74 Ibid., 56.
identity since the arrival of the Pilgrims and had influenced American policy for centuries, most notably when it came to questions of who should rule a given land, be it American Indian nations, Filipinos, Cubans, or Palestinians. As the Cold War progressed, modernization theory would become more fully developed and applied as another weapon in the arsenal of democracy. Those who could not or would not modernize were at risk of forfeiting their rights to self-rule and having a more “modern” power come in and direct their progress for them.

The modernization debate was thus one of the most prolific arguments in the debate over Palestine and the one most difficult to escape. The Institute certainly tried to reframe the issue, reminding Americans of their stated commitments to democracy, national self-determination, and anti-imperialism; the connections between Christianity and Palestine that could be at risk with the creation of a Jewish state; and the long and beneficial relationships between Arabs and Americans. Despite this reframing effort, the Institute’s members recognized that the modernization argument could not be ignored. Zionists had found a rich vein in this line of argument and if the Arab view was to break into American consciousness, it needed to demonstrate that Arabs were just as capable of developing the land as Zionists, if not more so. They had to explain and justify why they had not already reached American levels of development, challenge the Orientalist image of shiftless nomads in the desert, and show that Zionist successes were a mirage.

Meanwhile, Zionists flooded the public with examples of rapid development and reports of near-miraculous change, crediting these advancements to the introduction of Western ideas and methods Jews were bringing back to their homeland. Non-Jewish writers built on these ideas, lauding the Zionist pioneer spirit. Where American pioneers had viewed themselves as the new Israel, with God’s blessing to conquer the new world, Americans in the 1940s could see the

Jewish return to Palestine, armed with American methods and ideals, as a completion of the circle. Against that backdrop, the Institute’s efforts to divorce Arabs from American Indians in the minds of the American public were even more important.

Unfortunately for the Institute, not only was it unable to erase those connections, it failed to bring Arab accomplishments to the forefront of American discourse on Palestine. For far too many, the images propagated by newspapers, newsreels, books, speeches, and decades – if not centuries – of discussion of the Arab world remained one of a people mired in primitive circumstances, unwilling or unable to let go of their traditions to embrace the modern world. The Jewish people, by virtue of their history, their near-extermination, and their dedication to making the desert bloom, had claimed the land and made it theirs.
Conclusion
Catastrophe and Change

Prior to the creation of Israel on May 15, 1948, the American public was not fully committed to the idea that U.S. support of a Jewish state was in the best interest of the country. A Gallup poll in March 1948 found that while more Americans supported Jews than Arabs in the fighting in Palestine (28 percent to 11 percent), 44 percent chose “neither.”¹ The arguments made by both Jewish and Arab supporters regarding damage to the prestige of the United Nations seemed to bear out, however, with half of Americans polled in February 1948 stating they were dissatisfied with the progress of the United Nations, though 62 percent felt the United States had done all it could. Of the 24 percent who felt the United States should have done more, 20 percent criticized the Palestine policy, the largest response, followed by 15 percent stating the United States should have been more decisive generally.² A potential opening for the Institute of Arab American Affairs to convince the United States to alter its policy toward Palestine remained, even as chaos surrounded the issue.

Despite the Institute’s sustained efforts to educate Americans about the Arab world and the problem of Palestine, however, it was unable to overcome the Zionists’ advantage in framing the debate. Though Arab hopes had been raised when the United States announced support for trusteeship in April 1948, the end of the British Mandate, the creation of Israel, and the

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subsequent U.S. recognition dashed those hopes. The *New York Times* article announcing Israel’s creation, which Arabs referred to as the *Nakba* or catastrophe, touched on many of the issues examined in this dissertation – justice, democracy, and modernization – with the Jewish state being the embodiment of these ideals, not the Arabs. Writing that U.S. recognition allowed the Jewish people to give a “sigh of relief” and take “a new hold on life” in this “most hopeful period of their trouble history,” the *Times* then summarized Israel’s declaration of independence as pledging to “develop the country for the benefit of all its inhabitants . . . and . . . based on the precepts of liberty, justice and peace taught by the Hebrew prophets.”1 While the Institute sought to frame the Arab side of the debate as being the only rational choice for those interested in upholding the ideals of justice, democracy, national security, and modernization, it was clear that the Zionist version dominated the discourse. Editorials praised Zionist development and pioneer spirit, while portraying the Arabs as obstacles to those efforts, and even papers that were critical of Truman’s policy choices surrounding the Palestine issue still wished Israel well.2 Though many Americans may not have followed the Palestine issue closely or had a preference regarding who should rule, those who supported the Jewish state were quite vocal in their support and made sure the government knew. Letter writing and telegram campaigns flooded the White House, praising the administration when it promoted policies favorable to the Jewish state and condemning it for non-supportive policies, such as the trusteeship plan or the arms embargo placed on both Jews and Arabs in Palestine.3 The Institute organized no similar mass campaign,


3 Michelle Mart, *Eye on Israel: How America Came to View Israel as an Ally* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2006), 40. Examples of some of the telegrams received can be found at the Truman Library, OF Papers, Box 916, OF 204 Misc (Feb. 1948) 2 of 2.
adding to the sense of political consequences for going against the Jewish position and little fear of an Arab American backlash.

As the Institute warned, violence quickly escalated between Israel and its Arab neighbors. The day after Israel’s announcement of statehood, the combined armies of Egypt, Syria, Lebanon, Iraq, and Jordan invaded Israel and war officially began. Palestinian Arabs and Jews had already been fighting an undeclared civil war, but the entrance of foreign armies signified a new stage of the conflict.4 In response, the UN General Assembly named Count Folke Bernadotte of Sweden as a mediator and authorized him to find a way to end the violence. Bernadotte took the basic partition plan passed by the United Nations in 1947 as the basis for a potential peace and proposed changes in the borders to create Jewish and Arab states that were more “contiguous and homogenous.”5 A short-lived ceasefire was negotiated in the summer of 1948 and Bernadotte and his advisers continued to modify a potential peace plan. But on September 17, 1948, members of the Jewish terrorist organization Lehi (the Stern Gang) ambushed Bernadotte’s convoy and opened fire on his car, killing him and another member of his team.6 Dr. Ralph Bunche, an American academic and diplomat who had been working closely with Bernadotte (and only avoided assassination himself due to a last-minute change in travel plans), took over the role of mediator.

As the war went on, the Institute utilized the same arguments it had promoted before Israel’s creation to continue the battle against the Zionist narrative. The June issue of The Bulletin, the first published after Israel’s creation and the ensuing war, rejected the “pro-Zionist

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6 Ibid., 264.
press” reports of Arab damage to Christian shrines and churches and insisted that it was “armed Zionists” who “caused or instigated the causing of major desecrations,” tying back to older reports that Zionists had plotted to destroy the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, and suggesting that American Christians had sacrificed the sanctity and security of their holy places out of misguided support for Zionism. Cold War language also continued, as the Institute claimed that communists dominated Irgun and the Stern Gang. It further warned readers that Zionism was an enemy of free speech, shutting down critics of American support for Zionism by labeling them anti-Semitic. Clearly, the Institute argued, Zionists were not reflective of American values if this was how they treated the exchange of ideas. Political action continued, with Khalil Totah issuing a protest on behalf of the Institute against the Republican Party’s inclusion of a pro-Zionist plank in its 1948 party platform. In a statement sent to Senator Henry Cabot Lodge, Jr. (R-MA), chairman of the Resolution Committee of the Republican National Convention, Totah reminded Republicans that, “according to American tradition, the wishes of the Arab majority should be respected,” and that “American interests require stability, peace and friendship in the Arab world. Antagonizing the Arabs wrecks hopes of that peace.” This protest, only a paragraph in length, represented many of the Institute’s key positions, such as its standing as an American institution (with an opening line stating that the Institute was an “American organization representing thousands of American citizens), holding up American ideals as seen in chapter 3, and warning of national security risks in continuing support for the Zionist program. The Institute also reframed the Holocaust imagery. Writing about the state of Arab refugees, it

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9 Institute of Arab American Affairs, untitled document, June 25, 1948, Khalil Totah Archives.
reported that “Nazis are not the only people skilled in executing atrocities,” noting that many Palestinian refugees died of thirst, were lined up and robbed, and even babies “searched for valuables . . . even though they were civilians and had never borne arms.”

It was difficult to sway opinions on the issue, however, as Totah’s attempt to change the views and actions of the American Society of Friends regarding Palestine demonstrates. Totah, a Quaker himself, struggled with the decision of the Friends to call for support of UN “efforts toward peace.” He took the group to task, explaining that it was power politics, not peace, that were the motivating factors behind the United Nations’ and great powers’ decisions regarding Palestine. Continued injustice toward the Arab population, he warned, would not and could not bring peace, and if the Friends were truly committed to their beliefs, they would not allow sympathy for Jewish refugees to justify injustice against the Arabs. Totah wrote that “as a birth right member of the Society of Friends, descended of Christian ancestry dating back to the days of St. Paul and now American citizen, [he] felt grieved and ashamed of what the United States and the U.N. have done to the Arabs,” illustrating the points regarding race, religion, and American identity seen in chapters 2 and 3. Totah expressed his disappointment that the Quakers, in an effort not to appear anti-Semitic or unduly influenced by Arab members, had held those members “at arm’s length” from committee work regarding Palestine, preventing those who knew the situation best from joining or speaking to those committees. Because of the dominance of the Zionist narrative of Israel as the best solution to the Jewish refugee problem and in line with the ideals of justice, Totah was unable to gain the support of his co-religionists, who played an important role in his life and education in Palestine. If the Arab argument was

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11 Khalil Totah to Clarence Pickett and Henry Cadbury, April 1, 1949, 1, 3. Khalil Totah Archives.
unable to succeed there, it looked increasingly unlikely that it could succeed in swaying U.S. policy as a whole.

Meanwhile, the war was going badly for the Arabs and it became clear that the terms for a cease-fire would largely followed the facts on the ground, which greatly favored Israel. Aided by Czechoslovakian arms sales, the Israeli army controlled 22 percent of the land originally designated for the Arab state in the UN plan and roughly 78 percent of the former British mandate territory, leaving approximately 700,000 Palestinians as refugees. In January 1949, talks began between Israel and Egypt on the island of Rhodes and, on February 24, 1949, resulted in an armistice between the two countries. Israel soon entered into similar agreements with Jordan, Lebanon, and Syria. The Gaza Strip and the West Bank fell under Egyptian and Jordanian rule, respectively. An independent Arab Palestinian state was dead before it had ever lived and now the question of refugees changed from Jewish survivors of the Holocaust to Palestinian Arabs driven from their homes to make room for them.

Other pro-Arab groups in the United States struggled as well. The Arab Office in D.C. closed in December 1947 due to its failure to prevent the United Nations from passing the partition plan and a general lack of funds. Kermit Roosevelt, Jr.’s Committee for Justice and Peace in the Holy Land sent Totah a letter in August 1948, pleading for contributions, warning that without “additional support,” the Committee would not be able to continue operations the following month. Yet the Institute itself faced significant financial difficulties. It even appealed to readers to consider giving a membership with the Institute as a solution to “the

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perplexing Christmas shopping problem,” but it appears readers opted for other gifts.\(^{14}\) While the Institute continued its activities, writing letters to the editors and increasing the size of the

_Bulletin_, money remained an issue and funding decreased significantly in 1949. Whereas the Institute reported receiving roughly $24,000.00 from fundraising trips and visits to the Institute’s branches across the United States in 1947, and a similar amount in 1948, by October 31, 1949, it only had $2,171.45 on hand.\(^{15}\) Finally, on January 26, 1950, Totah sent a letter to the Institute’s members and supporters, informing them that because of “the lack of financial support,” the Institute was suspending operations effective January 31, 1950.\(^{16}\) They never resumed.

Totah, however, continued to travel, write, and speak about the Palestine situation. In 1952, he returned to the Middle East, visiting Lebanon, Gaza, Egypt, Iraq, Syria, and Jordan. He turned his experiences and observations into a book, _Dynamite in the Middle East_, to once again attempt to help Americans understand the region and its people, as well as the risks they ran by continuing to promote the Zionist perspective. Totah did not live to see it published, however, passing away during the process. His wife, Eva Marshall Totah, oversaw the final preparations and the book was published in 1955. Writing in the foreword, Millar Burrows, a Yale Professor of biblical Theology, emphasized Totah’s strong belief that the “tragic injustice” of U.S. policy toward the Arab world, particularly Palestine and its Arab inhabitants, was “the result of ignorance, not of ill will.”\(^{17}\) Yet as the history of the Institute made clear, educating the American public was no easy task.

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\(^{16}\) Khalil Totah to Institute members/supporters, January 26, 1950, Khalil Totah Archives.

Cultural histories of U.S. foreign relations in the Middle East, such as works by historians like Melani McAlister and Michelle Mart, help deepen our understanding of how the political cannot be divorced from the cultural. Images and narratives from movies, novels, art exhibits, religion, and more impact the ways in which Americans, including policy makers, perceive the players and issues of the Middle East. These histories provide a reservoir of how images of Arabs were created and consumed, but are missing Arab American voices. This dissertation helps fill that void, showing that Arab Americans actively attempted to reframe dominant narratives and push back against the negative stereotypes around them. Whether it was challenging the equivalence of Arabs with American Indians, demonstrating the common bonds between Islam and Christianity, showing how Arab rule in Palestine was the true democratic solution, highlighting the national security benefits in supporting the Arab position, or drawing attention to Arab modernization efforts, the Institute was an active participant in the cultural discourses of the 1940s. While this work focuses on the interplay between Arab Americans, Zionists, and the messages for public consumption, future works would benefit from the inclusion of Arab-language sources and a truly transnational focus that could add how messages in Palestine were being framed to local audiences and how those compared to the efforts of their Arab American counterparts.

Clearly, the Institute and its companion organizations failed to achieve their goals: the Jewish state exists and an independent Arab Palestine does not (at this time). And yet, analyzing the Institute’s messages demonstrates that there was and is a great deal of potential for closer Arab-American ties. Despite a sense of the Arab world as foreign and hostile to Western ideas, the Institute showed that Palestinian Arabs could, and in some cases did, see the United States as
a reference culture and hoped that by promoting shared histories and values, the United States would offer its support. Arab anger and disappointment was not the result of an inevitable clash of civilizations, but stemmed instead from a sense that the United States had failed to recognize the Arab world as a reflection of what the United States purported to value. As this dissertation has demonstrated, the Institute emphasized common ideas in terms of religion, democracy and justice, national security goals, and modernization between the United States and the Arab world. Those values seemed to be betrayed by U.S. recognition of Israel and then further tossed aside in the name of containment during the Cold War.  

As civil rights protests and Third World politics expanded throughout the 1960s and 1970s, and particularly in the aftermath of the 1967 June War, Arab Americans once again took up an active role in challenging the United States to confront the realities of its politics in the Arab world and its treatment of Arabs at home. Despite the failure of Arab Americans to gain U.S. support for Palestine, the efforts of the Institute and other Arab American organizations refused to allow Arab voices to be silenced, challenged Americans to see Arabs as partners, and contributed to a long line of activism in “accordance with the best traditions of American democracy.”

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