To Serve the Interests of the Empire?
British Experiences with Zionism, 1917-1925

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This thesis titled

To Serve the Interests of the Empire?

British Experiences with Zionism, 1917-1925

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ABSTRACT

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The Balfour Declaration of 1917 committed the British government to supporting the creation of a Jewish homeland in Palestine, but it also represented key shifts in the empire as a whole in the wake of World War I. Political changes enacted after the war, such as the creation of the League of Nations and later the British Commonwealth, were mirrored by a shift in the rationale for Britain’s imperial holdings and allowed Zionist supporters to institutionalize their ideology. Many in Whitehall believed that the Zionist program would aid in creating a stable Middle East friendly to British interests; policies originating from the Colonial Office often reflected this belief. These edicts did not always translate into viable policies on the ground in Palestine, however, as the High Commissioner had to reconcile them with complex regional tensions. British rule in Palestine underscores both the power and pitfalls of an ideologically-motivated grand strategy.

Approved: _____________________________________________________________

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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Abstract</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acknowledgments</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 1: Zionism in the Context of Liberal Internationalism</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 2: Whitehall and Zionism</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 3: The Limits of Zionism in Palestine</td>
<td>64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conclusion</td>
<td>83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bibliography</td>
<td>87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td> Primary Sources</td>
<td>87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>  Memoirs, Publications, and Speeches</td>
<td>87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>  Government Documents</td>
<td>87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td> Secondary Sources</td>
<td>88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix: Text of the Balfour Declaration</td>
<td>91</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
INTRODUCTION

World War I marked a turning point for Britain. The Empire, by the turn of the century had reached the zenith of its power and influence, encountered a different reality in the post-war world. The brutality of the war in Europe caused more and more Britons to question the moral superiority of their nation, while the rise of American power and the genesis of the League of Nations signaled a shift in international thinking about the morality of the imperial project. The war also witnessed the beginnings of a new alliance between Britain and the Jewish community in Europe. The 1917 Balfour Declaration publicly announced Britain’s support for the establishment of Jewish homeland in Palestine, and it signaled the start of a partnership that would fundamentally alter the ways in which Britain administered the Palestine Mandate.

Britain’s agreement with the World Zionist Organization and the institution of the League Mandates highlighted the evolving role of morality in foreign policy. Prior to World War I, Britain viewed its empire as a vehicle through which moral values could be spread. It emphasized that Britain brought these benefits to its possessions; empire was vital to the spread of good governance. The entrance of the United States into the war marked a shift in this thinking within the international community. Woodrow Wilson believed that self-determination made for good governance, and he publicly spoke out against the unchecked power of European empires which contributed to the destructive power of World War I. Although this rhetoric grated on Conservatives and arch-imperialists within the British government, they had little choice but to publicly agree with the leader of the nation who came to their aid during the war effort. The British
acceded to the formation of a League of Nations as a safeguard to peace and liberty among member nations. It also accepted responsibility for a number of League Mandates and agreed to administer these territories as a trustee, not as a colonial master. In doing so, it appeared that the government had stepped back from the guiding principles that had given rise to its power and prestige in the first place.

Postwar political developments did not mark as sharp of a break from previous British policies as it may first appear, however. Although the Mandates system of the League of Nations formally committed the international community to the idea of trusteeship for the first time, the concept had played a significant role in the development of the British Empire well before 1919.¹

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The idea of trusteeship originally emerged in the British Empire in an Indian context; it provided a moral justification for Britain’s presence in the subcontinent. Economic and strategic considerations often dominated the debate in Parliament as to Britain’s rationale for assuming the charter of the British East India Company, but moral considerations framed the terms of the debate. During the high point of the British Empire, the government and people of Britain thought of empire as an inherently moral project. This point of view held that Great Britain, which considered itself to be the bastion of liberty and good governance, extended these benefits to the colonies over which it ruled. In this conception, upholding morality was part and parcel of the reasons

for empire and not at all inconsistent with the strategic and economic benefits that Britain acquired from its overseas territories.

Generally, Britons believed that Parliament should intervene in India for one of two overarching reasons. The first school of thought came to be known as Anglicism. Anglicist supporters of the Empire held that Britain should integrate India into the Empire to replace an ancient culture which had collapsed. Anglicists claimed that British culture, which prided itself on being the supreme moral authority in the world, had an obligation to share its sense of morality with those states that did not have a strong moral compass. The eighteenth and nineteenth century Britons who subscribed to an Anglicist viewpoint saw empire as a way to extend the benefits of British culture; in their eyes, a strong sense of moral obligation fueled the strength of the British Empire and propelled it across the globe.

The other major worldview contested that Anglicist thinkers were too pushy and arrogant; they failed to understand the complexities of each individual state that Britain controlled. This school of thought, which was called Orientalism, held that instead of replacing weakened native values and belief structures with British ones, the British Empire had a duty to protect and uphold these native values until such time as the state was able to recover and advance native culture on its own. In an Indian context, the Orientalists believed that while ancient Indian customs had declined following the collapse of the Mughal Empire, it could and would recover with the proper guidance and support. Britain’s presence in the region concerned not just the acquisition of money and
strategically important territory; it also concentrated on protecting ancient Indian culture and helping it to flourish again under British tutelage.

Anglicist and Orientalist outlooks on the nature and purpose of empire often coexisted with one another, and the dominant strain of reasoning varied with the extension of the Indian Empire. Before the Sepoy Rebellion of 1857, an Orientalist viewpoint tended to dominate the rationale for Britain’s presence in India. The rebellion caused such a shock, however, that from 1857 until the end of the First World War, Britain governed both India and the rest of its empire on the basis of “right-of-conquest”: it presided over native peoples because it had won the right to do so by virtue of its military.

The atrocities of World War I brought about the League of Nations, but it also convinced many high-level officials within the British government to reassess their own rationale for Britain’s imperial holdings. Very few suggested liquidating the empire or committing to a Wilsonian ideal of self-determination; on the other hand, it was widely recognized that right-of-conquest did not align with the political realities of the post-war world. If Britain were to maintain its empire, it would need to reframe its justification for doing so. Trusteeship again resurfaced as a way to explain the relationship of Britain to its Dependent Empire in a way that focused less on politics and economics than it did on bringing good governance to these territories.

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The framers of the League of Nations institutionalized this system of trusteeship into the League Covenant and used it as a way to provide structured governance to
territories captured from Germany and the Ottoman Empire during the war. The Allies considered these territories, which were located in Asia and Africa, to be too “backwards” or unsteady to be left to self-governance. The Mandates system would assign each state a European power that would administer their government and guide them along the way to responsible self-government. Territories administered by a trustee would, in theory, be given control of the government when they were deemed “ready” to do so. The League Covenant left many of these terms vaguely defined but set guidelines within which the Mandates were to operate. Trusteeship as embodied by the Mandates system in the League of Nations was meant to promote the advancement of the mandated territories while protecting them from abuses by the Mandatory powers. Wm. Roger Louis characterized this use of trusteeship as a middle ground between annexation of these territories by individual nations, such as France and Britain, and giving responsibility for their governance entirely over to an international body, such as the League.

The justification for the League mandates resonated with many British Colonial officials, especially Leo Amery, William Ormsby-Gore, and Alfred Milner. These men believed that Britain had a positive role to play in facilitating the development of the Mandates. This role included development of infrastructure, economic development, and most importantly, promoting the importance of education.

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Another Colonial Official, Frederick Lugard, who served for almost fifteen years as High Commissioner and later Colonial Governor in British Nigeria, outlined a new conception of trusteeship in his 1921 work *The Dual Mandate in British Tropical Africa*. Lugard argued while the Mandatory power had an obligation to govern the territories in its charge, it can also gain some benefit for itself by the relationship. For example, Britain could justify its presence in a colonial territory “for the mutual benefit of her own industrial classes, and of the native races in their progress to a higher plane; that the benefit can be made reciprocal.”\(^7\) Lugard emphasized both a moral and practical rationale for British rule over others and concentrated on developing a mutually beneficial relationship between both territories, despite an imbalance of power between them. This book provided a rationale to Parliament for Britain’s presence in sub-Saharan Africa and it also redefined Britain’s mission in humanitarian terms.\(^8\) Lugard’s message applied as much to Palestine as it did to Sub-Saharan Africa: the Colonial Office believed that establishing a Jewish homeland in Palestine would benefit international Jewry, but they also recognized that it provided important strategic benefits to Britain as well. In many instances, Cabinet officials supported Zionism more for Britain’s benefit than the Zionists.

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The Dual Mandate and Britain’s use of its Mandates for its own benefit called into question the idea of trusteeship; did it mean simply another word for naked imperial conquest? One could argue that British accepted the Mandates in Palestine, Iraq, and

\(^7\) Lord Frederick Lugard, *The Dual Mandate in British Tropical Africa*, as quoted in Robinson, *The Dilemmas of Trusteeship*, 22

\(^8\) Robinson, *The Dilemmas of Trusteeship*, 24.
Transjordan to protect the routes to India, guard the Suez Canal, and gain influence in the region at the expense of its European rivals; Elizabeth Monroe argues as much in her book *Britain’s Moment in the Middle East, 1914-1956*. Other authors have also argued that the pitfalls of trusteeship may render the concept less useful than its framers intended. For example, although trusteeship became institutionalized in the wake of World War I, the war itself called the assumptions behind trusteeship into question. Trusteeship was premised on the notion that European nations were culturally superior to, or more advanced than, the territories they governed. Kenneth Robinson notes that the destruction and brutality of World War I called this premise into question. In a series of lectures in 1963, Robinson also argued that economic, political, and social factors of a particular region could hamper the effectiveness of trusteeship as a means of governance. This evaluation pertains aptly to Palestine, where the clash between Zionists and Arabs came to dominate Britain’s time in the Mandate and limited the effectiveness of any government structure that either the Colonial Office or High Commissioner tried to establish. As a result, Britain had to use considerable force to maintain order in the Mandate. It could not establish a democratic system because the size of the Arab population would prevent the Zionists from securing an interest in the region. During Samuel’s time as High Commissioner, he tried to form a local government under several different guises; each one was rejected by either the Jews or the Arabs. As a result, Britain left the people of the Mandate out of the decision making

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10 Robinson, *The Dilemmas of Trusteeship*, 68.
process, a problem that compounded itself because it led both Jews and Arabs to mistrust the British. Robinson also identified this paradox as a limitation of trusteeship.\textsuperscript{12}

William Bain presents a similar argument to Robinson in his book \textit{Between Anarchy and Society: Trusteeship and the Obligations of Power}. He notes that although trusteeship emerged out of a sense of obligation by more-developed nations, the relationship between a trustee and its charge “always entails a loss of liberty; for a ward must be coerced, just as parents coerce their children, towards some good for the sake of his own happiness.”\textsuperscript{13} According to this argument, trusteeship involves good will of one nation to another, but it also is premised on an assumption of cultural superiority. Bain’s book looks at whether this model can be employed effectively in the international community as a viable method of governance.\textsuperscript{14} Both Whitehall and the High Commissioner’s office continued to believe in the inherent virtue of British rule in Palestine, but they also enacted polices that privileged Jewish values over Arab ones. In doing so, Britain laid the groundwork for a Jewish state in Palestine, but it also sowed seeds of conflict between the two populations living in the region.

Colin Newbury suggests a different model to explain the relationship between Britain and its Dependent Empire. He likens it to the Roman model of patrons and clients, much like Rome had with the far-flung parts of its empire in antiquity. A patron-client relationship applies to the Dependent Empire in that the relationship between local rulers and the British ruling elite was a complex system whereby both parties may have

\textsuperscript{12} Robinson, \textit{The Dilemmas of Trusteeship}, 73; 79-83
\textsuperscript{14} Bain, \textit{Between Anarchy and Society}, 2
achieved some advantage, but where Britain was always assumed to have more power.\textsuperscript{15} The difference between a patron and a client “was predicated on differences in status and on reciprocal access to resources, not simply on degrees of affinity.”\textsuperscript{16} In other words, the differences between a patron and client was also a matter of moral standing, not just raw power. He argues that “a patron-client model fits the wide variety of cases of diplomacy, conquest, accommodation, and subordination better than a prescription for a method of ‘local government.’”\textsuperscript{17} Although a patron-client relationship can benefit both parties, it is a relationship based fundamentally on inequality: the patron holds ultimate control, while the client, however independently it may act, is indebted to the patron for protection or some other favor.

Newbury’s argument particularly addresses Britain’s relationship with India, territories in Northern and Sub-Saharan Africa, and various Pacific Islands. Although he does not specifically address the Mandates in the Middle East, similarities between Britain as trustee and Britain as patron can be identified easily. Both analytical models assume that Britain has some advantage to offer the dependent territories, whether economically, politically, militarily, or otherwise; however, the patron-client relationship has a less magnanimous connotation to it than does trusteeship. In a trusteeship, Britain presumably wants to lead less-developed lands under its tutelage on the path towards self-government; there is no such implication in a patron-client relationship. Yet the imagery of patron-client may be closer to describing reality than an ideal. When Britain

\textsuperscript{16} Newbury, \textit{Patrons, Clients, and Empire}, 6.
\textsuperscript{17} Newbury, \textit{Patrons, Clients, and Empire}, 261-262.
interacted with less powerful states, it did so nearly always for its own strategic advantage in some respect; altruism did not drive the policy of the Empire. The difficulty with using a patron-client model comes in that clients presumably know and accept the power difference between themselves and the patron. With respect to Britain and Palestine, this model may not prove entirely accurate, especially with the Zionists. While Britain may have wanted the Zionists to act always with Britain’s best interests in mind, the Zionists acted primarily to promote their own cause, that of establishing a national homeland for the Jewish people. It may be more accurate to assert that some officials in the Colonial Office may have viewed the relationship between Palestine and Britain as a patron-client relationship, but this assumption ultimately proved to be false.

Despite its weaknesses, trusteeship greatly influenced the formation of British policy in the early twentieth century. Kenneth Robinson argues that the most fundamental issue surrounding trusteeship concerned its purpose: was the purpose of trusteeship to “modernize” native societies, or was it to prop up and stabilize native institutions?18 In other words, should Britain as trustee subscribe to Anglicist or Orientalist ways of thinking of empire? Did the solution lie outside of the concept of trusteeship? Robinson has a mixed assessment of the value of trusteeship as a guiding principle in British colonial rule. On one hand, he notes that trusteeship provided a better basis for a relationship between nations with unequal power.19 It did have its shortcomings as an organizational model, however. Robinson asserts that “the principle of trusteeship…did not provide any unambiguous answer to the actual problems of

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colonial government…neither did it provide very specific guidance in the sphere of politics.”  In other words, while trusteeship may have been a model to conceptualize the relationship between Europeans and native peoples, it did not give the Europeans a framework in which to govern. This difficulty applied particularly to Palestine. The first years of the Mandate were marked by a discrepancy between the policies promulgated in London and their utility on the ground in Palestine. Samuel reached out repeatedly to the Colonial Office to clarify their policy positions and alert them to the difficulties that the tensions in the region presented when trying to adopt a Zionist-friendly position.

Robinson’s final assessment of trusteeship is mixed. He leaves his readers with a final thought that

the problems of trusteeship were the problems of power, of the responsibilities of the strong towards the weak…The idea of trusteeship could not, any more than any other general principle, supply a clear and definite prescription of the proper role of a colonial power in the enormous variety of actual situations which confronted British rulers in the Colonial Empire.  

Trusteeship provided some clarity in the organization of British rule in the Mandates, but it could not solve the problems that arose from an unequal distribution of power.

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This thesis explores the idea of Britain as a trustee within the context of British rule in Palestine during the last years of World War I through the mid-1920s. It is neither a treatise on the origins of the modern Arab-Israeli conflict nor a survey of the work of Zionist lobbyists in Britain after the war. Instead, it explores the political, cultural, and intellectual factors that contributed to the successful spread of Zionist ideology in Britain.

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during the interwar years. It examines the effects of this ideological shift on the personal beliefs of British statesmen in the Cabinet and in Whitehall and seeks to understand how they transformed these ideas into concrete policies. This thesis also looks how the edicts that originated in London translated into actions on the ground in Palestine during the administration of Herbert Samuel, the first High Commissioner of Palestine. To accomplish this task, it centers on government actions and policies at the highest levels: Prime Ministers, Colonial Secretaries, Members of Parliament, and the first High Commissioner to Palestine. It focuses on Britain’s time in Palestine not for what it reveals about the origins of the modern state of Israel but for what it reveals about fundamental changes to the British Empire during the years after World War I. In so doing, it seeks to understand how the idea of Zionism interacted with shifting conceptions about the nature of the British Empire as a whole during the 1920s.

The focal point of the first chapter is the shifting intellectual and moral climate that emerges out of World War I. It looks at the ways in which structural changes to the British Empire allowed Zionists such as Chaim Weizmann to present their goals as compatible with these new changes. It also explores how the development of the League of Nations and the Mandates program both helped and hindered British and Zionist ambitions in Palestine. Finally, it considers the impact of the Mandates system on the political views of other MPs outside of the Cabinet to gauge the range that Zionism had within the British government.

Chapter two scrutinizes the impact of these new ideas on high-ranking officials within the British Cabinet: David Lloyd George, Prime Minister from 1916 to 1922, and
three successive Colonial Secretaries, Winston Churchill, the Duke of Devonshire (Victor Cavendish), and Leo Amery. The term of each secretary reveals a particular aspect of the relationship between Zionism and the British Empire. Churchill’s time in office shows the tension between Zionism and British grand strategy that often muddled the relationship between the Zionists and British statesmen. Zionist success during the Secretariat came through William Ormsby-Gore, the Permanent Undersecretary; this experience discloses the power of the official mind in formulating British policy. Amery’s experience mirrors Churchill’s in many ways, but it is during Amery’s tenure that Britain first runs into conflict with the Permanent Mandates Commission of the League of Nations (PMC). His efforts to influence the PMC expose the frustration that many in the government felt for the very organization that assigned them the Palestine mandate in the first place.

Ideas propelled the Zionist project forward in London and Geneva, and these advances were made possible by a renewed focus on morality in the aftermath of World War I. At the same time, however, these ideas did not hold the same sway on the ground. Political pronouncements from Whitehall did not always survive the chaos and disorganization of a post-Ottoman Palestine during the early years of the Mandate. Chapter three explores the ways in which political pronouncements from the Colonial Office became adoptable policy on the ground in Palestine. Samuel, who was a Zionist, also recognized that Arab grievances would hinder the advancement of British political objectives if they were not addressed. Samuel worked to implement the entire Balfour Declaration; he paid special attention to the clauses that guaranteed Arab rights while
trying to bring about the realization of a Jewish homeland. This policy made him unpopular with both Zionists and Arabs, but his efforts embodied the spirit of trusteeship that supposedly guided Britain’s administration in Palestine.

Britain’s time as a Mandate in Palestine affected the future of both the region and the Empire. Palestine provides a lens through which to view the changing British Empire and evaluate how well it evolved with the shifting moral landscape during the interwar period.
CHAPTER 1: ZIONISM IN THE CONTEXT OF LIBERAL INTERNATIONALISM

In 1919, prior to his appointment as the first High Commissioner of Palestine, Herbert Samuel gave a speech to the English Zionist Federation on the second anniversary of the Balfour Declaration.\(^1\) Samuel, who was Jewish by birth, had spent his adult life in service to the British government, and he also supported the Zionist movement. Lord Rothschild, the man to whom Foreign Secretary Balfour had issued the Declaration in a November 1917 letter, attended this dinner, as did a number of Zionist supporters in London. In his speech, Samuel reaffirmed the British government’s support of the establishment of a Jewish homeland to the delight of the crowd. This assertion was not surprising coming from Samuel, but the rest of his speech was surprising. He reminded his audience that to turn all of Palestine into a Jewish state would be impractical.\(^2\) He also asserted that the Zionists “desire only to live on terms of the utmost goodwill with all the neighbouring Powers and Principalities,” even the Arabs already living in the land, because the “Jews have suffered too long and too often…under the hand of the oppressor to wish themselves to oppress.”\(^3\) Samuel’s speech is remarkable in that he spent some time defending the rights of Arabs and the willingness of the Zionists to work with them in Palestine. According to the published text of this speech, the audience assented to these claims.

Samuel’s speech is also remarkable for the fervor with which he asserted the compatibility of Britain’s interests with that of Zionism. Samuel declared on no

uncertain terms that a Jewish Palestine would help Britain, because “it is essential for the Empire which is responsible for Egypt to be secure on the side of Palestine.” To that end, Samuel pledged that “Jewish brains, Jewish enterprise, Jewish wealth, Jewish population” will develop Palestine “and so serve the interests of the British Empire as a whole.” His speech reveals the core beliefs of a man whose confidence in Zionism was surpassed only by his confidence that its interests fell perfectly in line with Britain’s own strategic well-being.

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The Balfour Declaration had a profound impact on the way that Britain administered Palestine in the years following World War I. Part of the Declaration’s effectiveness had less to do with its content than from the moral climate in which it was formulated and implemented. The destruction left by the Great War caused many in Britain and across Europe to reevaluate the role of morality in foreign policy, while the rise of American power and Wilsonian idealism as embodied in the League of Nations codified a commitment to self-determination and limits on unchecked imperial expansion. Widespread press coverage of the Zionist movement and an increasing focus on the American Jewish community allowed Zionism to become more visible during the 1920s and allowed Zionists to gain supporters, both within the international Jewish community and among non-Zionist statesmen. Although the movement remained contentious, these factors ensured that the British promise of support for a Jewish homeland in Palestine did not fade from the public conscience during the 1920s.

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Chaim Weizmann, arguably the most influential Zionist in the early twentieth century, contributed in large measure to the successes of the Zionist movement from its earliest days. Weizmann, a chemist by trade, was born in Russia in the late 1800s. Although his family was poor, he received an education in the sciences and travelled first to Germany and later to Britain to pursue research opportunities in the early 1900s. Weizmann’s life, work, and ideology made him ideally suited to negotiate with the British on behalf of the Zionists, and he proved remarkably effective in playing to British sympathies to advance the Zionist cause beyond the Balfour Declaration. He recognized the utility of both idealism and strategic influence and sought to use these schools of thought to the advantage of Jewish nationalists.6

Part of Weizmann’s success was due to the fact that his education and work experiences made him easy for British officials to relate to. He appeared and acted British, which helped him to not be perceived as a threat. He also knew how to appeal to the sensibilities of the men with whom he worked. For example, during the early years of the First World War, Weizmann worked to convince prominent British Cabinet officials to support the fledgling Zionist cause. In doing so, he appealed to both the moral and political sensibilities of the official mind of Whitehall, which ultimately concluded that Zionism both worked to the advantage of British interests in the Middle East and

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constituted an absolute moral good.\textsuperscript{7} As President of the World Zionist Organization, he made important connections with several men intimately involved with regional post-war planning, such as Mark Sykes, David Lloyd George, and Leo Amery. Weizmann was able to use both political and moral rhetoric to influence the promulgation of the Balfour Declaration.

The relationship between the British Cabinet and Zionist leadership involved a complex political discourse that evolved over the twenty-plus years that Britain remained in power in Palestine. Despite the strong wording of the Balfour Declaration, Weizmann and his allies had no guarantees in the first years after the war that they would be able to fulfill their objective of establishing a Jewish homeland in Palestine. They worked diligently to form useful political relationships in Whitehall, but these relationships did not immediately translate into positive political developments on the ground in Palestine. Issues concerning immigration, land ownership, and the structure of Palestine’s postwar government required that the Zionists maintain a close working relationship with the British in order to ensure that the Balfour Declaration did not become obsolete. For example, immigration proved to be a major point of contention not only between the Zionists and the native Arab population of the region but also between the Zionists and the British government. Only 85,000 Jewish immigrants lived in Palestine at the beginning of World War I in 1914, and successive British governments maintained heavy

restrictions on the number of Jewish immigrants allowed in the region after the end of the war.  

The guidance of Weizmann, who became President of the World Zionist Organization in 1920, helped the Zionists to navigate these difficulties. He understood that in order to affect real political change, the Zionists needed to frame their appeal to the British government in a way that showed the Zionist project as part of a wider movement. A shifting ideological landscape in post-war Europe helped them to do so. In the aftermath of the destruction of World War I, political ideologies took on a moral dimension, and decisions about the future world order emphasized such self-determination for oppressed peoples, building new international connections between governments, and restraining militaristic foreign policies. Weizmann positioned the WZO to take advantage of these changes. He understood that these new ideologies allowed motivated interest groups to stake a claim in an evolving world-order. A renewed emphasis on the role of morality in politics gave the Zionists the opportunity to align their own political goals with this new postwar rhetoric. Even the charismatic and well-liked Weizmann could not have succeeded without these hallmarks of the liberal internationalist movement which pervaded international discourse during the 1920s.

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Liberal ideas dominated international discourse after World War I. The Treaty of Versailles and League of Nations charter articulated such ideals as self-determination and democracy, particularly for the nations of Eastern Europe that were formerly under German or Ottoman rule. But these ideas, which Wilson promoted in his Fourteen

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8 Fieldhouse, *Western Imperialism*, 123.
Points, affected more than just former territories of the Central Powers. They, along with the sheer brutality of World War I, forced Britain to re-evaluate the motivations and justifications behind its empire.\textsuperscript{9} Britain had gained many of its overseas territories by force of arms, and during the high Victorian era it enforced its policies not out of a sense of goodwill but from a position of strength. The idea of moral prestige played some role in the formation of the Empire from its earliest days, but the amorphous nature of the concept makes its description difficult by definition. One way to conceptualize the role of morality in the British Empire is to view the system through the lens of the British Commonwealth.

The term “commonwealth” had a long history in British history and was used to describe many complex political and moral relationships. For example, Henry VIII and Elizabeth I both used it as a rationale for their extension of power across the British Isles, and it was later used as a justification for the creation of the United Kingdom of England, Scotland, and Wales. In this early context, commonwealth meant uniting seemingly-disparate states to secure the common good of all parties involved. The idea of a commonwealth also applied to extension of British power throughout its empire. As early as the 1860s, strategists referred to the relationships between Britain and its colonies as a commonwealth.\textsuperscript{10} In this context, the term described the projection of British power from London for the betterment of all peoples across the lands it controlled. A more complex formulation of empire emerged in the years immediately

\textsuperscript{9} For a thorough treatment of liberal internationalism from the late Victorian era through the mid twentieth century, see Casper Sylvest, \textit{British liberal internationalism, 1880-1930: Making Progress?} (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2009).
following World War I. The 1920s saw a transition in the nature of the relationships between London and its colonies of settlement, and the idea of commonwealth was invoked to help explain and structure this transition.

Historian W. David McIntyre suggests that the transition from a British-based empire to a commonwealth-centered system can best be understood by conceptualizing both systems as a network of relationships between London and its various dependencies.¹¹ These relationships emphasized Britain as the dominant force during the high point of its empire during the late 1800s and a more equal relationship between London and the Dominions by the mid 1900s. Key moments in this transition occurred in the aftermath of World War I, such as the 1926 Imperial Conference, where the Dominions gained effective independence from direct British political rule. These changes took effect via the 1931 Statue of Westminster, which officially integrated Canada, Australia, New Zealand, South Africa, and Ireland into members of a formal British Commonwealth. Although the new structure only officially took effect with the Statue of Westminster, the idea of a commonwealth informed their interactions with Whitehall long before the statue made the term a legal category.

The concept of commonwealth provides an important analytical tool to assess the state of the British Empire after World War I. On one hand, there were numerous strategic advantages to forming a Commonwealth within the British Empire. By allowing the Dominions to choose to remain within a wider British system, it reinforced the strength of that system. Britain also remained influential in the administration of widespread territories at a reduced cost and with little resistance. Strategically, the

members of the Commonwealth could help to secure common defense. For example, in
the aftermath of the Boer War, Colonial Secretary Joseph Chamberlain to invite the heads
of the Dominions to London for a 1902 meeting to create the Committee on Imperial
Defense. The purpose of this committee was to draft a plan to share resources among the
Dominions for common defense of the Empire. Britain itself would gain in this plan, as it
allowed them to use fewer resources to secure their interests across the globe. This
arrangement benefitted the Dominions as well, as it gave them a stake in their own
defense and showed their commitment to protecting the common good of a wider British
world.

Commitment to a common good also revealed the moral side of commonwealth.
It suggested that the purpose of empire was not only for the benefit of the center, Britain,
but also took into consideration the needs of other less powerful members of the system.
The conception also provided a justification for the existence of a wider British-
dominated world in the context of a shifting moral landscape after World War I. It is
significant that these changes took place during the post-war period. Whitehall came
under increasing pressure within its own system to conform to the changing moral
landscape of the 1920s, particularly from Canada and Conservative MP Andrew Bonar
Law, who became Prime Minister in October 1922. The result of this pressure was
recognition from London that old conceptions of empire could not last in the new
political and moral climate of the 1920s.

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Moral considerations factored heavily into the Allies’ deliberations on how to structure the peace agreements following World War I. U.S. President Woodrow Wilson used the increased prestige that America had gained during the war effort to lobby for a specific vision of what the international political scene should look like after the war. He emphasized that morality had to play a part in postwar foreign policy and went so far as to suggest that it should also play a role in the governing of Britain’s empire. A new international body, the League of Nations, stood at the heart of this conception. The League was intended to serve two important functions. First, it would act as a deterrent to war by securing and enforcing international commitments to peace. Secondly, it introduced a set of moral standards by which states were supposed to act in their relations with one another. The League’s main goal was to ensure that the utter devastation caused by the First World War never happened again. Wilson led the negotiations that created the League Covenant during the Paris Peace Treaty in 1919, and the League formally took effect in January 1920.

Some Britons, such as historian Alfred Zimmern, embraced the idea of establishing a formal body to represent the international community. Zimmern, who was one of the first scholars to refer to the British Empire as a British Commonwealth of Nations, believed that the term “commonwealth” could also apply to a specific kind of relationship between nations. Zimmern was a classicist by trade who focused his studies on ancient Athens. This study convinced him that while British policy of the early twentieth century reflected a tension between internationalism and empire, he did

not believe that the two ideas were necessarily at odds with one another. Zimmern was internationalist in his outlook; he firmly believed in the idea of an international community of nations and the need for a supranational body to oversee it. He conceived of the League as a larger Commonwealth of Nations similar to the British Commonwealth: member states would work together voluntarily for the betterment of all member nations.

Zimmern engaged these issues in his copious writing and lobbying on behalf of the League. Along with H.G. Wells and others, Zimmern helped to found The League of Free Nations Association, a group committed to studying the proposed League of Nations to assess its utility and practicality. Zimmern, Wells, and their colleagues concluded that since conflict was an inevitable part of the human condition, an organization was needed to mediate its effects. The group’s 1919 study of the proposed League noted that a “negative peace [the absence of war] is not our permanent aim [in the establishment of a League of Nations]. It is something…to have a rest from suffering and the infliction of suffering; but it is a greater thing to be set free, and peace sets people free.”\textsuperscript{13} The study goes on to conclude that “permanent world-peace must necessarily be a great process and state of affairs, greater, indeed, than any war-process.”\textsuperscript{14} In other words, Zimmern, Wells, and their co-authors believed that a League of Nations would not only act defensively to prevent the outbreak of hostilities but would also take proactive measures to actively promote peace among member nations. The study also addressed several opposing arguments to the establishment of a League of Nations but found each of the


\textsuperscript{14} Wells, \textit{The Idea of a League of Nations}, 44.
arguments lacking. It concluded that while peace may have seemed over-idealistic, the
goal of a peace-seeking organization was not fundamentally at odds with foreign policy.
Instead, Zimmern argued that the League would allow nations to prosper more than a
state of constant military conflict would. These ideas were not unique to the League of
Free Nations Association; many pro-League of Nations groups formed in Britain in the
immediate aftermath of the war. Although they differed in focus and methodology, these
groups represented the strength of internationalist thought prominent in Britain in the late
1910s and early 1920s.15

A new focus on morality, both within the British Empire and internationally,
provided the ideal intellectual climate for Zionist leaders to garner support for their cause.
The ideology of liberal internationalism suited their purposes well because it focused
both on self-determination and a commitment to international connections between like-
mined groups of people. Zionist leaders also used the League of Nations Covenant as a
way for the Allies to clearly and definitively articulate and institutionalize their
commitment to a Jewish homeland in a more public and formal way than the British had
done in the Balfour Declaration.

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One important issue that spanned both the Treaty of Versailles and the creation of
the League concerned how to administer the territories captured from Germany and the

15 For example, Helen McCarthy’s monograph The British People and the League of Nations:
Democracy, Citizenship, and Internationalism, c. 1918-45 (Manchester: Manchester University Press,
2011) follows the League of Nations Union, the largest pro-League association in Britain after the war.
She attributes the success of the LNU to the organizations’ use of the press to garner support and the
fundamental similarities between the League and the moral sensibilities that drove the creation of the
British Empire.
Ottoman Empire. Wilson’s Fourteen Points articulated a commitment to an international community where nations would be free to determine their own government by democratic processes. In this new moral climate, right-of-conquest was no longer a sufficient reason to occupy a territory. Wilson insisted that these former colonies could not be held by any one nation for its own benefit; instead, they must be administered in such a way as to help them on the way to responsible government. The Mandates system emerged from postwar peace negotiations as the appropriate middle ground for what to do with the territories captured from the Triple Alliance during the war. Under the new system, one of the victorious Allied powers would act as a trustee for the conquered territory and aid it in establishing self-rule. Three categories of Mandates evolved, labeled the A, B, and C Mandates; the label assigned to each territory depended on the Allies’ assessment of how long it would take to establish a viable native system of government. The Permanent Mandates Commission of the League of Nations would oversee the administration of the Mandates and had some power for corrective action, should the trustee act inappropriately in its governance.

The Allies developed the structure of the new Mandates system at a conference in San Remo, Italy in 1920. In the months leading up to the conference, Weizmann worked to ensure that Britain would be assigned the Palestine Mandate; this arrangement would allow the Zionists to maintain political pressure on Whitehall to uphold the terms of the Balfour Declaration. Weizmann led fact-finding missions to Palestine and met with David Lloyd George, then Prime Minister of Great Britain, to encourage him to uphold the terms of the Declaration in the Mandate. He courted Churchill, then Colonial
Secretary, as the Colonial Office assumed jurisdiction over the Mandates, and tried to influence Churchill’s views as Arab delegations lobbied him to reverse course on the Mandate. Weizmann tried to hold Britain to its 1917 statement even as the High Commissioner, the Heycraft Commission, and even the House of Lords questioned the wisdom of these commitments. In the end, the terms of the Mandate passed by the League of Nations satisfied most of the Zionist objectives. Palestine became an “A” mandate, and the League assigned its administration to the control of Great Britain. Britain also gained control of the Iraq and Transjordan as mandates in the Middle East, as well as several “B” mandates in Africa and “C” mandates in the Pacific.

Britain’s assignment as the administrator in Palestine afforded Zionist leaders the opportunity to advance their claims for a Jewish homeland directly on the ground in the region. With the institution of the Mandate under the auspices of the League of Nations, Zionist leaders could continue to press for Britain to fulfill its promise, but it would have an additional ally in the League and the Permanent Mandates Commission (PMC). The new basis for international relations which the League tried to establish proved to be very advantageous for advancing Zionist ambitions in the Middle East. Weizmann recognized the power that this new organization gave to the Zionists, and he played a significant role in formulating the terms of the new Mandate. In his biography of Weizmann, Norman Rose reflected on Weizmann’s role in the formulation of the Mandate. Rose noted:

Of course, Weizmann hardly acted alone in drafting the mandate. He was well served by experienced advisers and draftsmen of the highest calibre…But Weizmann was the mainspring, and his was the final word. He resolved the problems, unraveled the knots. Lloyd George, Balfour, Churchill, Smuts, Milner, 

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16 Rose, Chaim Weizmann, 212-220.
even Curzon, paid attention when he spoke. They listened to his pleadings with respect and consideration, out of an esteem and admiration that they bestowed on no other Zionist leader.\textsuperscript{17}

Weizmann had earned the respect and the ear of the most powerful Cabinet Secretaries, and he used this influence to position the Zionist movement for long-term success by his work on the terms of the Mandate.

Although Weizmann’s work helped to institutionalize an international commitment to the establishment of a Jewish homeland in Palestine, the League Covenant and Britain’s responsibility to the Mandate in Palestine also reflected other political and strategic considerations. In particular, South African statesman Jan Smuts worked to ensure that the League’s formulation did not contradict with the wider strategic goals of the British Empire; on the contrary, Smuts helped to institutionalize these imperial ambitions in the League charter as well.\textsuperscript{18} In many ways, controlling the administration in Palestine benefitted the British strategically almost as much as it aided the Zionists. Britain also gained administrative duties Transjordan and Iraq, which aligned closely with many of its long-term strategic objectives. As was often the case in post-war peace conferences, decisions concerning the division of the Mandates reflected European political rivalries as much as any other factor. Britain sought the control of these former Ottoman territories to maintain strategic advantages over their European

\textsuperscript{17} Rose, \textit{Chaim Weizmann}, 218-219.
counterparts, especially Soviet Russia. This strategic context always provided the backdrop against which other concerns, such as Zionism were evaluated and acted upon. Many Zionist allies in the British Cabinet, such as Winston Churchill and Leo Amery, supported the movement because it aligned well with British strategic goals in the Middle East.

Jewish Zionists did not consider these British objectives to be their endgame, however. They were perfectly happy to use strategy to gain support among British policymakers, but in the end, their objective was the establishment of a Jewish homeland, and eventually a Jewish state in Palestine. As the movement gained strength and international support during the course of the Mandate, it became increasingly clear to the Cabinet that Zionism had a life of its own quite apart from British objectives. This dichotomy formed the basis for substantial disagreements and violent confrontations during the last years of the Mandate, but its roots extend all the way back to the first years of British rule in Palestine.

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The postwar intellectual climate of liberal internationalism and the assignment of Britain as the Mandatory power in Palestine contributed to the Zionists’ success in keeping the idea of a Jewish homeland at the forefront of public discourse. Some members of the British public seized on the idea of establishing a Jewish homeland and became vocal proponents of the Zionist project. One such man was Herbert Sidebotham, a British journalist who wrote for The Manchester Guardian as a war correspondent.

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19 Anglo-French rivalries also played a role in the division of this territory, though not to the extent that Anglo-Russian tensions did. British statesmen happily acceded Syria to the French, but they insisted on control of Palestine once it was clear that it would not fall under direct international control.
during the First World War. Sidebotham’s views reflected both a respect for Zionism and a liberal interpretation of the British Empire. He believed that Britain should build up the Zionist movement in Britain in order to extend Dominion status to the territory.\textsuperscript{20} He wrote many articles and two books expounding on these views, one in 1918, \textit{England and Palestine: Essays towards the Restoration of the Jewish State}, one in 1937, \textit{Great Britain and Palestine}.\textsuperscript{21} Although Sidebotham’s advocacy represented views outside of the mainstream of the British public, they revealed the ideological flexibility of both the Zionist project and ideas about its place within a wider British system.

In introduction to \textit{Great Britain and Palestine}, Sidebotham intimated that his argument was “Zionist in sentiment…[but]…not written from a Jewish point of view.”\textsuperscript{22} Instead, Sidebotham “advocate[d] a close alliance between [Britain] and the Zionists as a prime interest of our Imperial policy of peace and progression in the East.”\textsuperscript{23} His motivation for writing mirrored the outlook of an influential faction within the British government whose philo-semitic outlook often translated into policy. Winston Churchill, Leo Amery, William Ormsby-Gore, and their allies were sometimes referred to as “the gentile Zionists,” but this worldview was not confined only the highest levels of government.\textsuperscript{24} Sidebotham used his experiences reporting on the First World War for \textit{The Guardian} to garner support for the Zionist cause among the British populace. He approached the subject with an eye for Britain’s long-term strategic interest, a point-of-

\textsuperscript{20} Fieldhouse, \textit{Western Imperialism}, 197.
\textsuperscript{22} Sidebotham, \textit{Great Britain and Palestine}, v.
\textsuperscript{23} Sidebotham, \textit{Great Britain and Palestine}, v.
\textsuperscript{24} The label “gentile Zionists” most often referred to the actions of the British Cabinet in the later years of the Mandate. For a full account of their actions, see N.A. Rose, \textit{The Gentile Zionists: a Study in Anglo-Zionist Diplomacy, 1929-1939} (London: Cass, 1973).
view that also resonated with many in the government. And although the Zionists did not ever subordinate their own cause to the well-being of the British, they were happy to have allies within Britain, whatever the reason.

Sidebotham’s advocacy also reflected a long-standing tradition of citizen activism in British foreign policy. Often, this advocacy took on a life of its own, even if its net effect on policy was moderated by other factors. For example, the emergence of a widespread free press and improved levels of literacy across the populace led to increased lobbying to the British government on behalf of humanitarian interventions in the 1800s. These movements often used religious and moral arguments in an effort to sway the British government to action. In addition, some advocacy was based on a romanticized view of the victims of atrocity. Romanticism played a large role in public cries to intervene on behalf of the Greek nationalists against Ottoman rule in the 1820s. The plight of the Greeks captured the imaginations of a substantial sector of the British populace and attracted the support of a number of prominent Englishmen, such as Lord Byron. The pan-hellenists focused their activism on a sentimental notion of Greek culture as the cradle of Western Civilization. Byron, who wrote prolifically in order to gain support for the Greek cause, even went so far as to go to Greece to fight side-by-side with the rebels. He was killed while abroad, but his death did not lessen support for the movement. However unlikely these popular causes may have been to effect real change,

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25 For a description of British humanitarian campaigns in the nineteenth century, see Gary J. Bass, *Freedom’s Battle: The Origins of Humanitarian Intervention* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2008). Bass describes British humanitarian campaigns on behalf of Greeks and Bulgarians as well as the American and British attempts to stop the slaughter of Armenians in World War I. He argues that the news media brought increased awareness to these atrocities and created connections, whether real or perceived, among Britons and the victims of these military campaigns. These connections persuaded many citizens to lobby the British government to intervene militarily on behalf of those being oppressed.

26 Bass describes the scope of international aid to the Greek rebels in *Freedom’s Battle*, p. 47-151.
one cannot discount the power of their ideology. The free press in Britain popularized these campaigns and infused them with a sense of moral purpose. Advocates of humanitarian intervention intentionally fused morality with foreign policy and worked to convince the government that Britain, which prided itself on upholding the moral good, could not sit idle in these military campaigns.

The work of Sidebotham and other philo-semites on behalf of the Zionist cause had another trait in common with the pan-hellenists of the 1820s: both groups employed a highly-simplified, overly-romanticized view of the people whose causes they tried to advance. Just as Byron viewed the Greeks as the cradle of Western Civilization, so did many in Britain view the Jewish people in that same light. Such a view reduced a complicated issue to a simplistic mantra that could become the rallying point for a broad base of popular support. It also caused problems, both for the government and for the Jewish Zionists, as it relied on a flawed understanding of the Jewish people and the Zionist agenda in Palestine. Nevertheless, it did bring increased awareness to a Zionist movement that looked for whatever allies it could find during its formative years.

A number of Zionist supporters came from other unlikely places. The House of Commons included a number of these unlikely Zionists. MPs became attracted to Zionism for a number of reasons; some supported it because they felt a genuine connection to Judaism or the Jewish people, while others found that the goals of the Zionist movement aligned with other projects about which they felt impassioned. Two MPs in particular illustrate the broad base of support that the Zionist movement gathered during the Mandate. Although the work of Josiah Wedgwood and Eleanor Rathbone on
behalf of the Zionists came during the late 1920s and the early 1930s, their careers and public diplomacy on behalf of a Jewish homeland represent key elements of the Zionist movement in Britain during the first years of the Mandate.

Josiah Wedgwood, an “individualist”-minded MP with unorthodox views, used Sidebotham’s views as the basis for a political movement to formally make Palestine the part of the British Empire by offering it Dominion status.27 The Seventh Dominion movement began as a political cause in 1926, and Wedgwood articulated the tenets of the movement in his 1928 book, The Seventh Dominion. In the book, Wedgwood reflected that the inclusion of Palestine would cement the moral superiority of the British Commonwealth and present it as a viable alternative to an international body like the League of Nations. Wedgwood’s biographer Paul Mulvey noted that Wedgwood envisioned the future British Commonwealth “to be a superior version of the League of Nations, in that it would be a voluntary association of freedom-loving peoples rather than the remnants of an empire gained by conquest.”28 In this formulation, Palestine’s inclusion as a Dominion would demonstrate to the international community that Britain was committed to promoting peace and self-determination within a larger British world.29 Wedgwood’s ideas held sway with the Revisionist branch of the Zionist organization, particularly its leader Vladimir Jabotinsky, and The Jewish Chronicle, the largest Anglo-Jewish newspaper in print in the 1920s, often provided press coverage to garner support for the movement. In the end, however, Wedgwood failed to gather a large base of

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28 Mulvey, Wedgwood, 183.
29 Mulvey, Wedgwood, 183.
support for his movement, as most mainstream Zionists did not want to create a Jewish Dominion within the British Empire but rather an independent Jewish state.

Nevertheless, Wedgwood’s movement reveals important characteristics about the wider Zionist movement in Britain.

Wedgwood often adopted unorthodox views during his time in Parliament. His niece, Dame Veronica Wedgwood, noted that her uncle was “a passionate lover of freedom, a fighter for lost causes, and a great Parliamentarian.”\(^\text{30}\) This type of idealism drew him to the Zionist cause, a movement which attracted many idealists within the British government. He also embodied romanticism when it came to support for the Jewish people. The unique characteristic with respect to Wedgwood was that he was neither a member of the Cabinet nor part of mainstream party politics within the House of Commons, yet he saw no inconsistency between support for a Jewish homeland and the long-term survival of the British Empire in some formulation. It can be inferred from this movement that the Zionist project did benefit from the discussions of a moral basis for Britain’s power throughout its empire. The popular appeal of the notion of Commonwealth allowed British Zionists to build on this idea for the benefit of their own ambitions of a Jewish state in Palestine.\(^\text{31}\)

Josiah Wedgwood’s Seventh Dominion Movement demonstrated the ability of the Zionists to use the shifting justifications for empire in Britain to their own advantage.

The work of Eleanor Rathbone, on the other hand, revealed the ability of the Zionist


movement to gather supporters from other popular causes in Britain during the early 1900s. Although Rathbone became involved with the Zionist movement in the mid-1930s, her work illustrates important characteristics about the movement as whole that apply equally well to the 1920s. Rathbone was an ardent feminist and staunch supporter of the women’s suffrage movement in Britain. She made her career by advocating for the rights of women and families. She argued on behalf of constitutional reform for India and for the advancement of women’s rights across the empire. This advocacy brought her into contact with the Zionist movement for the first time during a trip to Palestine in September 1934. By this time, the Zionist movement had advanced beyond the initial stages of advocacy and development, and the situation on the ground in the Mandate was more chaotic and tense than in the early 1920s. Rathbone’s visit is significant for the early years of the Zionist movement, however, when considering the process by which she became a Zionist supporter.

Rathbone framed her understanding of empire within a wider feminist context; she always viewed women’s rights as the most important ones to focus on.\(^\text{32}\) This worldview also colored her opinion of Zionism. She admired the Zionist women that she met in Palestine because she believed that they were helping to bring prosperity to a barren land, a view which mixed both feminism and romanticism. She also advocated that the Jewish women living in the region reach out to empower the Arab women there, whose lives they could improve by their example.\(^\text{33}\) She believed that Zionism would spread progress to the Arab world, but she did not understand that for the most part, the
Jewish women were not interested in aiding their Arab counterparts. She saw Zionism, as other issues, through the lens of gender, and she could not fit ethnic or religious differences into her worldview.

Rathbone’s career and interactions with Zionism reveal the flexibility of the movement. Despite her misunderstanding of the issues, Rathbone became a passionate defender of the Jewish refugees that flooded Western Europe in the wake of Adolf Hitler’s rise to power in Germany in 1933. Her feminist outlook and concern for families led her to advocate on behalf of displaced refugees and work to advance Zionist objectives by allowing them into Palestine. She is an example of a British politician who discovered that Zionism aligned at least in part with domestic issues that they focused on. The Zionist movement had a broad appeal, not just to Jews and imperialists. It attracted Rathbone, a feminist, and Wedgwood, an idealist, both independent-minded politicians whose motivations came from deep-seeded convictions. The political and moral climate in Britain during the 1920s and 1930s allowed these types of ideologically-motivated politicians to flourish and provided a broad populace from which the Zionists could draw their supporters.

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The Zionist movement faced many challenges during the first years of British rule under the League of Nations Mandate. Weizmann and his allies worked to secure Zionist objectives not only with the British high command but also with League of Nations itself. The development of a British Commonwealth and the introduction of the League of Nations provided the political opportunity for the Zionists to advance their cause for a

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34 Pedersen, Eleanor Rathbone, 263.
Jewish state, while the changing relationship between empire and morality in the years led many in the government to be open to the idea of a Jewish homeland in Palestine. Both political figures and private citizens subscribed to the Zionist movement, even if they themselves were neither Jewish nor initially inclined to support it. These changes allowed the Zionists to draw a broad base of support and gave them leverage to use when attempting to influence policy at the highest levels in London.
CHAPTER 2: WHITEHALL AND ZIONISM

The year 1917 marked an important turning point in the relationship between Great Britain and the former Ottoman territory of Palestine. Months of intense negotiations in the Foreign Office led to the November 2 release of the Balfour Declaration and committed Britain to a policy of aiding Zionist leaders in their quest to establish a Jewish homeland in the region.¹ A military invasion followed in December under the leadership of General Edmund Allenby. Despite previous promises to the French government that Palestine would be placed under international administration after the war, British troops occupied and established a government in the region following the invasion.² Both the military actions and the policy developments of 1917 contributed to a complex situation. Britain had established a military government in Palestine to oversee the region during the final years of the war, but it faced increasing pressure to honor its Zionist commitments. At the same time, however, wartime strategists foresaw the need for a long term British grand strategy to include Palestine in it in order for Britain to maintain a strong position in the Middle East.³ Inter-European rivalries also factored into Britain’s decision-making process. Allenby, the most senior British military official on the ground in Palestine after the invasion, remarked that

¹ For a comprehensive history of the political maneuvers that led to the Balfour Declaration, see Jonathan Schneer, The Balfour Declaration: The Origins of the Arab-Israeli Conflict (London: Bloomsbury, 2010).
² In 1916, British MP Sir Mark Sykes had negotiated a treaty with French diplomat Francois Georges Picot to divide Ottoman territory in the Middle East between the two powers after the war. Under this agreement, which has come to be known as the Sykes-Picot agreement, Palestine would not fall into either the French or British regions but would rather become an internationally-administered territory. A Russian delegate originally participated in these negotiations as well, but forfeited its role in administering former Ottoman territories upon its withdrawal from the war in 1917. For a more detailed description of these negotiations, see Roger Adelson, Mark Sykes: Portrait of an Amateur (London: Cape, 1975).
³ Keith Jeffery, The British Army and the Crisis of Empire, 1918-22 (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1984), 123.
“[Politics in Palestine] are not going to be too easy in the future. Jews, Arabs, French, Italians, English & other nations, all think they have special interests and special claims and rights; and every known religion asserts itself, and adds knots to the tangle.”

His assessment highlighted the myriad considerations that had to factor into the formulation of a cogent British policy in Palestine following the developments of 1917. Keith Jeffery argues that Allenby’s appraisal accurately characterized the task facing British policymakers:

The British…in 1918 had the unenviable (and impossible) task of sorting out from their war-time tangle of political and moral commitments a viable Middle Eastern policy that might not entirely alienate the Arabs, nor irrevocably antagonize the French, and which, perhaps, might go some way towards satisfying the Zionists.

Both descriptions recognize that political, strategic, and ideological considerations had to guide the course of action that the Cabinet set with respect to Palestine. Often, these factors buttressed one another and allowed policymakers to work towards several goals at once. Occasionally, however, Zionist and British aims contradicted one another, and policymakers had to decide which concern to emphasize more. The worldview of individual Cabinet members and his predispositions with respect to Zionism factored heavily into the policy decisions that Whitehall devised for Palestine during this time.

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From 1916 to 1922, the Liberal party held power in Parliament, led by Prime Minister David Lloyd George. Lloyd George sympathized with the Zionists and supported them throughout his premiership. The Balfour Declaration was promulgated during his time in office, and he actively pursued a Zionist-friendly policy in his

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4 As quoted in Jeffery, The British Army and the Crisis of Empire, 122.
5 Jeffery, The British Army and the Crisis of Empire, 122.
government. He did so not because he himself was a Zionist, though he did support their project. Instead, Lloyd George dealt with Palestine in the context of a wider British rule in the Middle East. He had a very clear notion of the strategic value of the Levant to the wider British Empire, but he was concerned with more than that. He viewed the Middle East as a “prize in itself,” an area that was more important than just its value to an overarching British strategy. Lloyd George represents a break from earlier British thinking in the region because “unlike British ministers of the nineteenth century, whose aim was limited to excluding other European powers from the region, Lloyd George…sought British hegemony in the Middle East.” His premiership represented the primacy of strategy within British thought, but he was also sufficiently ideological that Weizmann was able to convince him that support for Zionism would aid British goals in the region. Lloyd George became convinced of both the utility and moral correctness of the Balfour Declaration, and he actively advocated for its implementation in the post-war era. Weizmann also lobbied him for Britain to accept the League Mandate for Palestine and pushed him to ask for increased Jewish immigration into the region. While Lloyd George did not directly participate in the day-to-day governance of Palestine, his ideology made him an indispensable Zionist ally within the British government.

Lloyd George’s tenure witnessed two major changes to British governance of Palestine. In 1920, the military government established under Allenby was replaced by a

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9 For a selection of Lloyd George’s writing on the Palestine question, see Martin Gilbert, ed, *Lloyd George* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall, Inc., 1968), 69-72. This edited version contains his writings on a variety of subjects; the highlighted section contains a long passage on his romantic notions of the Jewish people as a race and their importance to the Levant.
civilian government headed by a High Commissioner; this structure would remain, even after the League Mandate took effect in 1923. Additionally, in 1920 responsibility for Palestine passed from the Foreign Office, from which the Balfour Declaration had been pronounced, to the newly-created Middle East Department of the Colonial Office. This shift signified that the Cabinet viewed Palestine as part of a wider British world, however unique its circumstances may have been.

It also meant that the Colonial Secretary would play a more active role in articulating how Palestine was to be governed. Although the structure of Whitehall moderated the influence of these men by way of the Permanent Undersecretary, the official mind of the Colonial Office largely favored Zionist ambitions to establish a Jewish home in Palestine, whereas the Foreign Office often tempered their support because of concern over the Arab response to the initiative. Additionally, powerful and articulate Colonial Secretaries could still steer policy in ways that aligned with their own particular worldviews. Two secretaries in particular, Winston Churchill and Leo Amery, felt strong personal connections to Zionism and worked to ensure that the content and tone of Colonial policy pronouncements aided the Zionists as much as possible.

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Winston Churchill served as Colonial Secretary from February 1921 to October 1922; during this time, he profoundly influenced the way that the British government interpreted and implemented the Balfour Declaration. Churchill felt a strong personal connection to the Zionist cause; nevertheless, he often struggled to balance this affinity

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with a worldview predominantly concerned with British strategic interests. An examination of his views elucidates the tension that existed between ideology and strategy during the 1920s.

Like Lloyd George, Churchill’s support of the Zionist movement had strong ideological roots. Many of these beliefs on both politics and the Jewish people derived from Victorian-era influences. For example, Churchill embraced the Liberal ideals of progress and moral order; he believed that Britain was uniquely situated to advance these values in a new world order. Additionally, history profoundly influenced Churchill’s thinking. An historical ideology and Victorian romanticism informed Churchill’s views on Zionism and the actions he took in support of it during his time in government service. Churchill’s conception of the Jewish people convinced him that they would best be able to improve and develop the Holy Land. Some of these beliefs stemmed from Churchill’s personal experience with Benjamin Disraeli, one of his father’s close friends. Disraeli, a Conservative politician whose aggressive support of British imperialism colored his tenure as Prime Minister, was a British-born man of Jewish heritage. Churchill saw Disraeli as emblematic of the entire Jewish people. He firmly believed that Jewish nationalism was a positive force and that a Jewish state would promote progress in Palestine, a view that embodied Whig principles in its origin. Churchills Zionism also contained some anti-Arab sentiment. He did not have faith that the Arabs would be a sufficient trustee of the Holy Land, which put him in line with earlier British thought that the Holy Land should be in the possession of a non-Muslim, non-Arab people. Later in

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12 Makovsky, *Churchill’s Promised Land*, 262.
his career, Churchill also came to believe that Middle Eastern Arabs represented a significant threat to British interests and security in the region.\textsuperscript{13}

However sympathetic Churchill may have been towards the Zionist cause, he always weighed it against larger British concerns in the region. Churchill advocated for a Jewish homeland only when it was politically and strategically advantageous for Britain to do so in her own right; he never elevated it to a cause that he was willing to fight for over and above Britain’s own strategic concerns.\textsuperscript{14} Churchill believed that the survival of the empire represented the most important strategic interest for the Empire during the early 1900s. For Churchill, Zionism was a piece of the strategic puzzle that had “no direct impact on British survival or power and only intermittent bearing on British strategic or imperial interests.”\textsuperscript{15} Churchill would only advance Zionist objectives when they did not contradict with wider British objectives; however, he was not afraid to embrace the movement at times when it failed to garner widespread public support.

During the First World War, however, his favorable predisposition toward Zionism came into conflict with Britain’s wartime interests. One reason for the conflict concerned the Ottoman Empire. The Ottomans did not immediately enter the war, and Britain tried to persuade the Turkish government that it should enter the war on the side of the Triple Entente if it broke neutrality. However, the Ottomans controlled much of the Levant, and Jewish nationalism threatened to destabilize their rule of the region. Churchill believed that all measures must be taken to shore up Ottoman rule, even if it meant opposing Zionism. His shift in thinking about Zionism during World War I related

\textsuperscript{13} Makovsky, \textit{Churchill’s Promised Land.}, 68, 139.
\textsuperscript{14} Makovsky, \textit{Churchill’s Promised Land}, 7.
\textsuperscript{15} Makovsky, \textit{Churchill’s Promised Land}, 7.
directly back to his worldview: British strategic interests always held the most important place in his mind. Therefore, when the two issues contradicted each other, Churchill did not support Zionism to a degree he may have otherwise.\footnote{Makovsky, \textit{Churchill’s Promised Land}, 96.}

Churchill’s concern over the survival of the Ottoman Empire related directly to the long-standing rivalry between Britain and Russia, the so-called “Great Game,” which only intensified with the Russian Revolution and Russia’s withdrawal from World War I. In addition to losing a valuable, though at times strained, ally, Russian Bolshevism represented a significant threat to Britain and her interests.\footnote{British government documents from the 1910s and 1920s confirm the centrality of Russia to British strategic planning before, during, and after the war. For example, a report circulated by the India Office in October 1920 notes that Russian expansion in Central and Eastern Europe crippled British influence in the region to such a degree that it threatened to remove Britain from the area almost entirely. The report goes on to describe Russian interests as “self-centered” and declare that “she is openly the enemy of civilization.” (See “Mesopotamia, Causes of Unrest, Report No. II,” secret, 18 October 1920, CAB 24/112 (TNA), 5).}

Churchill worried about Jewish Bolsheviks influencing their co-religionists across Europe and Britain in a negative way; therefore, he distanced himself from Jewish thought and influence during this time.\footnote{Makovsky, \textit{Churchill’s Promised Land}, 96.} He continued this line of thinking after the war as well. Churchill authored an article in the Sunday Herald in 1920 entitled “Zionism versus Bolshevism: A Struggle for the Soul of the Jewish People” in which he explained how Jews who were committed to advancing the cause of a worldwide revolution were a threat not only to Britain but to everyone. However, in this same article, he does express support for the idea of a Jewish homeland for those nationalists who opposed revolution.\footnote{Makovsky, \textit{Churchill’s Promised Land}, 96.} This article shows that he did not completely abandon the idea of Zionism even when it appeared to contradict Britain’s
strategic interests. However, he did not advocate for it without heavy qualifications to ensure that Britain’s interests always came first.

Churchill entered the Colonial Office at a time when the state of the British rule in Palestine was very much in flux. A series of riots in the territory during May 1921 increased the tensions that had grown between recent Jewish immigrants and the Arabs already living in Palestine as a result of previous rioting in April 1920. The 1920 riots had caused Lloyd George to re-evaluate British policy and resulted in the establishment of a civilian government to replace the military regime. Arab leaders hoped for a similar reassessment of policy as a result of the 1921 riots; they sent a delegation to London to meet with Churchill in the hopes of convincing him to reverse course on the Balfour Declaration. Samuel and the Arab Delegation did receive an answer from Churchill, but it did not satisfy the Arabs nor provide much clarity to Samuel. Churchill did not abandon Zionist policy as the Arabs had wished; instead, he tried to placate them by negotiating for a representative body to have some say in the governance of the region. In doing so, Churchill hoped to placate the Arab demands, but it only made them, angrier and more rioting ensued in November.

The November riots and resulting chaos precipitated a May 1922 trip to London by High Commissioner Samuel “to press upon the Government what I regarded as an imperative need—that their intentions should be clarified.” He did not necessarily want to repeal Balfour but hoped to receive more guidance from Churchill as to how he should

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manage the chaos that had enveloped the Mandate. The result of Samuel’s visit was a June White Paper which further articulated the government’s intent with regard to Arab and Jewish relations. This document stated that the British aim in Palestine was to increase Jewish immigration in Palestine and create an internationally-guaranteed Jewish home there, but it was not the government’s intent to make all of Palestine into a Jewish state. The memorandum, which has come to be known as the Churchill White Paper, had a tremendous impact: it guided British policy in the Palestine Mandate for almost ten years. It emphasized Britain’s role as a trustee for both the region and the Jewish people in language that connected the Zionist movement with the new post-war emphasis on self-determination. It also reinforced that the Jewish home in Palestine should be “internationally guaranteed,” which was a reference to the Mandates system of the League. One month later, on July 24, 1922, the League of Nations officially assigned the Palestine Mandate to Britain, and it took effect on September 29, 1923. By that time, Britain had already established itself as the primary government in the region for the better part of six years, and a commitment to a Jewish homeland became inextricably linked with British rule there.

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In October 1922, David Lloyd George’s Liberal coalition government collapsed, and, as a result of the ensuing elections, a new Conservative government took its place.

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27 Wasserstein, *The British in Palestine*, 120.
Churchill did not take part in the new government, and his views temporarily passed from relevance at the highest levels of government. At this time, the Duke of Devonshire, Victor Cavendish, became Colonial Secretary. Additionally, a new official, William Ormsby-Gore, rose to the rank of Permanent Undersecretary for the Colonies. The new Conservative government, headed by Bonar Law, did not support the Zionist movement as enthusiastically as its predecessor had. Therefore, Zionist leaders and Colonial officials sympathetic to their cause worked furiously to ensure that the Balfour Declaration remained the most influential document with regards to Palestine policy in the new government.29

The Duke of Devonshire, who did not embrace Zionism with the passion of either his predecessor or successor in the Colonial Office, remained more ambivalent towards the policy that Britain ought to take with respect to the question of a Jewish homeland.30 This ambivalence did not sit well with the bureaucracy of the Colonial Office, however, especially the new Permanent Undersecretary. Ormsby-Gore, the new Undersecretary, also fervently supported the Zionist movement and is mentioned as an important gentile ally to eventual success of the larger Zionist movement.31 He would go on in the 1930s to make significant political contributions to the eventual success of Jewish aspirations, but his role during Devonshire’s secretariat deserves mention as well and took the lead in crafting Palestine policy for the Duke of Devonshire. Zionist activists also supported his efforts to set the tone and content of the Colonial Office agenda, for they believed the

Balfour Declaration to be in danger in the hands of the new administration. As a result, they worked furiously with the Middle East Office and Ormsby-Gore to put off any decision on repudiation of the policy long enough for it to be formalized in the League of Nations Mandate.\textsuperscript{32}

Ormsby-Gore’s work in setting the policy agenda in the Colonial Office underscores the importance of the official mind to the daily workings of Whitehall. Most often, the Permanent Undersecretary made the most important policy decisions by virtue of the fact that he controlled the information that the Cabinet Secretary received. This process made it very difficult to either outshine or disagree with the official mind. The expertise and size of the bureaucracy often provided too formidable a challenge for most men to overcome. Some charismatic and outspoken officials, such as Alfred Milner, Churchill, and Leo Amery, used their influence to rise above the bureaucracy and implement their own policies. In the case of Zionism, it also helped that both Churchill and Amery naturally sympathized with the movement. Devonshire, on the other hand, was neither impassioned by the Zionist cause nor a well-known politician. On the other hand, his Permanent Undersecretary did have the connections and convictions to continue to pursue Zionist-friendly policies in Palestine. These circumstances combined to make it very difficult for Devonshire to conduct an open and honest assessment of Britain’s policy in the region.

Ormsby-Gore and his Zionist allies worked to steer policymaking in support of Zionist ambitions in a number of subtle ways. The Undersecretary, along with the Middle East Department of the Colonial Office, began by circulating a history of the

\textsuperscript{32} Huneidi, “Was Balfour Declaration Reversible?”, 37-38.
Balfour Declaration to the Colonial Office.\textsuperscript{33} This project allowed them to influence the ways that the bureaucracy in general and Devonshire in particular understood the context of the document. In Ormsby-Gore’s version of the history, he noted that the Balfour Declaration was a wartime measure concerned with keeping Russia involved in World War I as well as enlisting the support of the United States in the conflict.\textsuperscript{34} They also worked to discredit the visiting Arab delegations by openly questioning their motives in Whitehall. Additionally, they allied with the popular presses in an effort to avoid coverage of Balfour in the British press during 1923. The press had taken to openly questioning the direction of British policy in the region, and Ormsby-Gore wanted to limit Devonshire’s exposure to any anti-Zionist or pro-Arab arguments. He did so in an effort to steer Devonshire towards a pro-Zionist policy during a year when the future of Britain’s commitment to the Balfour Declaration was very much in doubt.\textsuperscript{35} Despite numerous challenges to the Declaration in 1923, particularly in the House of Lords, an analysis of the memoranda circulated by the Colonial Secretary during his tenure indicate that Ormsby-Gore’s efforts appear to have worked.

In a February 1923 memorandum to the Colonial Office staff, Devonshire re-opened the question of whether or not the British policy of pursuing a Jewish homeland in Palestine should be reconsidered. He acknowledged that “we are, in fact, committed to the Zionist policy before the whole world in the clearest and most unequivocal fashion”

\textsuperscript{33} “Palestine and the Balfour Declaration,” memorandum, secret, January 1923, CAB 24/158 (TNA).
\textsuperscript{34} “Palestine and the Balfour Declaration,” memorandum, secret, January 1923, CAB 24/158 (TNA), 2.
\textsuperscript{35} Huneidi, “Was Balfour Policy Reversible?”, 32-35.
because of the Balfour Declaration, but he also expressed enthusiasm for an exploration of ways in which that policy might be altered.\textsuperscript{36} The memo traced the history of the Balfour Declaration, the McMahon pledge to Sharif Hussein, Churchill’s response to the policies in his 1922 White Paper, and the pro-Zionist policy pursued by the Lloyd George government. He also stressed that

\begin{quote}
\textit{it must always be remembered that the Declaration was made at a time of extreme peril to the cause of the Allies… The policy is a legacy…of the Great War. The Balfour Declaration was a war measure, taken by the War Cabinet (of which Mr. Churchill was not a member) after full deliberation at a time when the military situation was exceedingly critical, and designed to secure certain tangible benefits which it was hoped would contribute to the ultimate victory of the Allies.}\textsuperscript{37}
\end{quote}

In his view, the Balfour Declaration, and all its subsequent consequences, had to be viewed in a wider European context. This memorandum also alluded to the fact that a pro-Zionist line was deeply unpopular with the British public in 1923, and that the policy exacerbated British relations with the Palestinian Arabs.\textsuperscript{38} Devonshire believed that a good deal of this ill-will towards the Zionist project stemmed from an anti-semitic bias.\textsuperscript{39} Nevertheless, prudence dictated that such a divisive policy should be re-examined to determine whether a new course of action would be wise.

Part of the problem that the British government had with implementing the Balfour Declaration stemmed from its ambiguity; it identified British support for a Jewish national home but failed to clarify how that home would be constituted. This left successive governments to interpret the meaning of the passage, sometimes in widely different ways. For example, Devonshire did not support an independent Jewish \textit{state in}

\begin{footnotes}
\item[37] “Palestine,” memorandum, secret, 17 February 1923, CAB 24/159 (TNA), 3.
\item[38] “Palestine,” memorandum, secret, 17 February 1923, CAB 24/159 (TNA), 11.
\item[39] Palestine,” memorandum, secret, 17 February 1923, CAB 24/159 (TNA), 12
\end{footnotes}
Palestine. His February memorandum concluded that while the Zionists had accomplished “excellent work” in Palestine, there was no possibility of an independent Jewish state for them because “apart altogether from our pledges to the Zionists or to anybody else, there are Imperial considerations that favour the retention of Palestine for Great Britain.”

Devonshire, like Churchill before him and Amery after him, recognized that maintaining a strong British presence across a global network required British control of strategic lands. In this instance, the duty of the Colonial Secretary was to subordinate the desires of the Zionists and the complaints of the Arabs to a wider British strategy that contributed to the maintenance of the Empire.

Devonshire did challenge Zionist ambitions in Palestine, but he also conceded that other factors were at play when determining British policy towards the Mandate. Apart from strategic concerns, the memorandum also recognized the importance of political considerations. Devonshire acknowledged that although the Declaration was articulated in a particular political context, its appeal among the Jewish community made it difficult to rescind without Britain facing disastrous political consequences.

This section of the memorandum revealed the influence of Ormsby-Gore most clearly because it painted the reversal of British support for Zionism as an impossible dilemma with no solution. It posited an impossible question: should the British government withdraw and face the disastrous political consequences, or should it continue the old policy?

No Colonial Secretary, who was himself an elected Member of Parliament, could look at the options when presented in that light and decide to change course, no matter how much one

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40 “Palestine,” memorandum, secret, 17 February 1923, CAB 24/159 (TNA), 12.
disagreed with the Balfour Declaration. The Colonial Secretary had virtually no chance of reorienting policy away from an overtly-Zionist bent when it was presented in the stark terms of the February memorandum. The official mind of the Colonial Office allowed Zionist policy to continue uninterrupted during the time of Devonshire’s secretariat.

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Leo Amery became Colonial Secretary in 1924, and he viewed Zionism in a very different light than did Devonshire. Amery rose to the Colonial Secretariat after serving as the Parliamentary Under-Secretary for the Colonial Office under Alfred Milner and a tenure in the Admiralty. Amery, who had served with Milner during his early years in government service, thought of the Empire and its relationship to Zionism in much the same way as Churchill did. Amery, who deplored the idea of a League of Nations interfering in the internal affairs of the British Empire, believed that the idea of a Jewish homeland in Palestine served a vital national purpose. In a letter dated 4 September 1917, Amery wrote that “the Jews alone can build up a strong civilization in Palestine which could help that country to hold its own against German-Turkish oppression; and by enlisting their interest on our side in this country, we will gain a very great deal.”

Amery believed that Jewish and British interests did not contradict each other insofar as a strong Jewish presence in the Middle East would provide Britain with a helpful ally. As a young civil servant, Amery was in a unique position to affect Britain’s policy with respect to Zionism: in 1917, at the request of Milner, Amery helped to craft the official

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43 Wm. Roger Louis, *In the Name of God, Go!: Leo Amery and the British Empire in the Age of Churchill* (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 1992), 78.
44 Louis, *In the Name of God, Go!,* 76.
wording of the Balfour Declaration. In doing so, he believed that he was also helping to secure a defensible land route to both Britain’s African and Asian territories and secure the route to India.

Amery’s Zionism also had a moral element to it as well. Like Churchill, Amery had a romantic conception of the Jewish people and overestimated the international coherence of the movement. During World War I, Amery believed that British support for a Jewish homeland would allow prominent Jewish leaders in America to persuade the United States to enter the war. This romanticism, which proved false in 1917, remained consistent with the policies that Amery undertook while at the Colonial Office. His five years as Colonial Secretary proved to coincide with a term of relative peace on the ground in Palestine, and it allowed Amery to continue with many of Churchill’s policies with regards to immigration and a nominal commitment to Arab protection. Amery never shied away from the Balfour commitment, but he never fully subscribed to the establishment of a Jewish state in Palestine. Instead, he viewed the region as one link in a larger British system that should be more fully integrated in order to for the whole system to function more effectively. Amery architected the Colonial Development Act of 1929, which sought to strengthen these connections between parts of the Empire, and he approached Palestine with a similar mindset. He believed that a Jewish homeland would bring prosperity to the region, but he also recognized the inherent benefits of British presence there as well.

\footnote{46 Louis, \textit{In the Name of God, Go!}, 90.}
Amery also realized the difficulties of establishing a viable government in Palestine. During the first years of the Mandate, Amery did not believe that a Jewish homeland in a predominantly Arab state proved incompatible. His immigration policies sought to maintain this British presence while acknowledging that the Jews would most likely remain a minority in an Arab-dominated region. The solution to this problem would be dictated by other experiences Britain had of managing a territory with two clashing groups, such as in Canada and South Africa. Amery believed that creating an allegiance to an overarching state among both groups would allow the British to maintain control of the region while still supporting its commitment to the Balfour Declaration. He did not understand until later in the Mandate that the Arab and Jewish communities had objectives in Palestine that would fundamentally be at odds with one another. Amery’s belief structure meant that he spent his tenure as Colonial Secretary trying to integrate Palestine into a British system by the same guidelines that had worked elsewhere. Although it did not become evident until after Amery’s tenure, this attempt was not successful.

Amery did not approve of the Mandates system or the role of the League of Nations in Britain’s administration of Palestine. Instead, he believed that the British government was best suited to handle affairs in the Middle East in the best way possible. Amery’s experiences in South Africa and his tutelage under Milner, an

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47 This description of Amery’s colonial policies on Palestine relies on the descriptions found in Louis, In the Name of God, Go!, 89-92. Louis focuses on the imperial implications for Amery’s views on Palestine and notes that they followed Churchill’s thinking on Palestine closely in nearly all respects. One difference concerned the level of trust that Churchill had for T.E. Lawrence, the leader of the Hashemite revolt, which Amery did not share.

48 Louis, In the Name of God, Go!, 77-79.
avowed imperialist, convinced him that Whitehall’s goal must be the preservation of the Empire, and the League of Nations and the rise of American power after World War I put both of these goals in jeopardy. Amery believed in the moral authority of the British Empire and fought to preserve its strength at a time when many in the government felt that internationalism would best secure peace and stability in the future.⁴⁹

Despite his opposition to the League, Amery’s tenure as Colonial Secretary witnessed the beginning of Britain’s relationship with the Permanent Mandates Commission, the regulatory arm of the League that was set up to oversee the administration of League Mandates.⁵⁰ The PMC believed that the Mandatory powers should cultivate a system of representative government in the Mandates, and their insistence on this policy brought them into direct conflict with the British government. Ormsby-Gore, who had served on the PMC before becoming Permanent Undersecretary in 1922, attended a meeting of the Commission with Herbert Samuel in 1924 to explain to the Commission that a strictly representative government in Palestine would rend null Britain’s commitment to a Jewish homeland.⁵¹

At this summer session, the League intervened in a substantive way in British policy in the Mandate for the first time. The Commission, which tended to sympathize with Arab claims in the region, scolded the British representative at these sessions for not complying with the terms of the Mandate by their treatment of the Arab population in

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⁵¹ The account of this meeting comes from Pedersen, “The Impact of League Oversight,” 43-45.
Palestine. These summer meetings evoked the ire of Weizmann, who feared that Arab lobbying in Geneva would overturn the pro-Zionist policy that he had labored to establish in London. Weizmann immediately reached out to his allies in London to make sure that the commission would not publish a report which admonished the British for adhering to a Jewish-centric policy in the Mandate. He was successful in amending the report, and Susan Pedersen notes that in doing so “the British made clear [that the Zionist project] was not open to revision at the behest of the PMC.”\textsuperscript{52} The gentile Zionists emphasized that while the PMC may have had oversight capacity, they could not change the policy that Whitehall set out in London. This arrangement worked to the benefit of the Zionists and ensured that the establishment of a Jewish homeland remained a top priority in the British Mandate.

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The policies pursued by Lloyd George, Churchill, Devonshire, and Amery in the Palestine Mandate demonstrate the difficulties that the government in London had in formulating concrete ways to implement the Balfour Declaration. Lloyd George, Churchill, and Amery were all ideologues who felt some level of respect and admiration for the Zionist objectives apart from their utility to British policy. Devonshire did not feel this same level of connection to a Jewish homeland in Palestine, but his Permanent Undersecretary, William Ormsby-Gore, did, and the nature of his position allowed Ormsby-Gore to orient Colonial Office directives so as not to lose momentum on implementing the Balfour Declaration.

\textsuperscript{52} Pedersen, The Impact of League Oversight,” 50.
Despite their inclination to sympathy for the Zionist movement, both Churchill and Amery had fundamentally misguided understandings of the Jewish people. Both romanticized their virtues and assigned the international movement much more clout than it actually had. Nor did either statesman embrace the idea of Zionism as part of the wider trend towards liberal internationalism. Both Churchill and Amery always prioritized the maintenance of the British Empire above the establishment of a Jewish state in Palestine, and to some extent both men viewed the Zionist movement as an ideology to be used by the British to their own advantage. Neither man believed that the League of Nations should have any role in the inner workings of the British Empire, and neither believed that the establishment of the Mandate in Palestine meant anything other than empire by another name. Amery’s early experiences with the League also revealed the profound distrust that many Cabinet secretaries had for the Permanent Mandates Commission and exposed the limits of the League’s ability to regulate the government in the Mandates that it had chartered.

Zionism had real limits on its effectiveness within Whitehall during the early 1920s, but it did have support among ideologues like Lloyd George, Churchill, Ormsby-Gore, and Amery. These slow beginnings would accelerate through the later years of the 1920s and into the 1930s, particularly as Weizmann and other prominent Zionists gained access and influence to the inner workings of the British bureaucracy. Weizmann also worked to change the outlook of the Permanent Mandates Commission in Geneva to a more pro-Zionist attitude.53 The Mandates system created a complex government structure in Palestine, but this structure and the worldviews of the statesmen who ran it,

allowed the Zionists to effectively press for continued support of a Jewish homeland in Palestine.
CHAPTER 3: THE LIMITS OF ZIONISM IN PALESTINE

When Herbert Samuel became High Commissioner in Palestine in 1920, he entered a tumultuous situation. He described the region as a scene out of a war zone:

Villages had been destroyed; the stock of cattle and horses had been depleted; olive trees had been cut down in great numbers for fuel for the Turkish troops and military trains; many orange groves, left without irrigation, had ceased to bear fruit; there was a general air of poverty and depression.¹

The physical damage of the war made governing difficult; Samuel knew, however, that material destruction would not be the only challenge that he faced during his time as High Commissioner. The political situation in Palestine in the aftermath of World War I was equally as unstable as the region’s infrastructure. The High Commissioner said this of the political landscape:

The political expectations, both of the Arabs and of the Jews, had been raised to a high pitch; it appeared to many at the time as though those expectations must clash; racial feelings were inflamed, and, as the outcome war-time habits of mind, there was a readiness to flout the control of law and to resort on small provocation to violence. The political future of Palestine seemed uncertain…²

The British government in London charged Samuel with governing a land that had been consumed by destruction during war and political turmoil afterwards. Samuel’s task was to re-establish order and implement the Balfour Declaration by establishing a Jewish homeland in the region. His appointment as a High Commissioner suggested that Palestine was to be governed as a trusteeship, not a colony, even before the Mandate officially came into effect. Samuel’s five years in Palestine represented a time of relative peace in the region; nevertheless, his job was not an easy one.

As the highest representative of His Majesty’s Government in Palestine, Samuel had considerable influence in determining the ways in which the territory was governed. He inherited a complex political situation, however. While Samuel implemented the policies in Palestine, the Colonial Office developed them with some input from Parliament, the Foreign Office, and the Zionist lobby. Additionally, the Permanent Mandates Commission of the League of Nations oversaw the administration of the Mandate, and Samuel also had to answer to it. This multi-layered administrative structure existed in Britain’s other Mandates, but the active role played by Zionist supporters made the situation in Palestine more unusual and complex.

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A wide base of support had developed in London for the Zionist project in Palestine, not least among the political establishment. Both left- and right-leaning politicians subscribed to this line of thought, but for different reasons. Some on the left, such as Eleanor Rathbone, advanced a moral argument: they identified the Jewish people as a vanguard of Western influence that would bring their civilizing mission to Palestine and better the region for the benefit of all. Policy makers on the right, such as Winston Churchill and Leo Amery, believed that a Jewish homeland would act as a spearhead in promoting British interests in a wider Middle East and that support for Zionism would most effectively promote British interests in the area.

Regardless of the reason, the view from London can be considered an outgrowth of 19th century Anglicist thought. As previously mentioned, Anglicism developed in conjunction with British rule in India, and Anglicists held that Britain should use its
empire to improve the territories over which they ruled. In the case of Palestine, many Colonial Officials believed that the promotion of Jewish culture would be the best thing for both Palestine and British interests in the Middle East. Their ideas mirrored that of Lord Lugard’s “Dual Mandate” and reflected a wide-spread belief on the part of colonial administrators that Britain’s responsibility to the territories in its charge also came with the right to use those territories to secure strategic advantages over other European rivals. This rationale followed the basic tenets of Anglicist thought.

As High Commissioner, Herbert Samuel’s charge in Palestine was to implement the policies that the Colonial Office developed. Putting ideas into action, however, did not always live up to the ideal of spreading universal values. The Ottoman policies that governed Palestine at the onset of British rule did not align well with the aspirations of the Colonial Office, nor did Samuel think it prudent to abolish them all and start from scratch. Additionally, Samuel and the officers on the ground had to factor in the realities of the Arab population already living in the region. However much the Colonial Office wanted to promote Zionist objectives, Samuel had to reconcile them to the population of his region.

As a result, Samuel and his advisors often implemented policies that in practice resembled an Orientalist worldview much more than an Anglicist one. Nineteenth century Orientalist thought, which also originated in an Indian context, asserted that Britain should act as a trustee of the civilization placed in its charge in hopes of guiding it to realize its full potential. Britain was supposed to guide a less-developed, and therefore less mature, civilization into a mature, reliable, self-governing society that would
eventually come into its own given proper tutelage. This meant protecting native institutions and practices wherever possible and reforming them to allow the culture to modernize and flourish. Palestine’s amorphous and complex political realities meant that Samuel had to allow the situation on the ground to dictate his policy. In theory, Samuel may not have planned to implement a strategy resembling Orientalism, but political obstacles meant that Anglicist-leaning policies that originated from the Colonial Office often evolved to resemble Orientalism in practice.

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Samuel, a Jew by upbringing, had to balance these interests which were often at odds with each other. He was a Zionist supporter, but Samuel had a wider vision of his mission in Palestine than did either the Zionists or the Colonial Office. In his memoirs, Samuel noted that “although I had been appointed with full knowledge on the part of His Majesty’s Government of my Zionist sympathies, and no doubt largely because of them. But I was there to administer the country, not for the benefit of one section of the population only, but for all.” By “all,” Samuel meant the Arab population living in Palestine as well as the Jews who wished to make the region their home. He wrote that “as a Jew I would have counted it a shame to the Jewish people if the renewal of their life in the ancient land of Israel were to be marked by hardship, expropriation, injustice of any kind, for the people now in the land.” By his own account, Samuel believed that while the Jewish people should have some claim to Palestine, it would be a disgrace to

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displace those already living there in order to take possession of it. Though not all Zionists shared this sentiment, Samuel did have an appreciation for the wider context in which they operated.

The day-to-day governance of the Mandate proved a formidable task for Samuel and his assistants on the ground. The region was poorly developed and ill-equipped to support the number of immigrants who wished to settle there permanently. Additionally, the local government structure left in the wake of the Ottomans was insufficient to meet the purposes of the British government. Despite these challenges and tensions, British officials on the ground did not have an overly pessimistic view of the Mandate. In a December 1922 report to then Colonial Secretary Devonshire, Samuel outlined the various development projects that the Mandatory government had undertaken during the two years it had been in office: establishing a public health service; increasing primary education by building schools; establishing the police force; building networks of roads and railways to connect major commerce centers; creating a telephone service, draining swamps and planting forests; extending farmable land; creating both Commerce and Agricultural Departments within the government to increase trade and agricultural production; extending loans to farmers to bolster crop and agricultural animal production, to name a few. 6 He also noted that increasing Jewish immigration was a priority for the government, though not at the pace that many Zionist supports would have hoped. 7 Politics aside, Samuel’s policies were aimed at increasing the overall population of Palestine.

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7 “The Situation in Palestine,” memorandum, secret, 30 December 1922, CAB 24/140 (TNA), 5.
These basic tasks modernized the infrastructure of Palestine and took some pressure off of farmers who had suffered from two years of poor crop yields. Additionally, Samuel noted that these “better conditions under which commerce and industry can now be conducted now have rendered possible the commencement of a marked economic revival.”⁸ The goals in Palestine reinforced one another: infrastructure allowed the territory to become more prosperous, which would allow the cities to grow and support a larger population. The motives of the Mandatory government were not entirely altruistic, however. Samuel argued that any improvements in the day-to-day lives of the inhabitants had a positive effect on the Mandatory government. He noted that “the improvements, limited though they are…have conduced to the popularity of British rule in many quarters.”⁹ The popularity of its government was important to British administrators. Although Samuel may have governed under the auspices of the League of Nations, his everyday tasks became easier with the cooperation of the local residents.

In addition to reforming the infrastructure, the administration found that the law codes which governed the region were insufficient to manage a modern state. When Samuel became High Commissioner, many of the existing laws that governed Palestine were remnants of the Ottoman system that had been in place before World War I.¹⁰ The British administration began to reform the legal system in the mold of a modern European legal state.¹¹ Although it is difficult to measure the impact of this change, the transition to a more European-like system of law and justice likely aided the Zionists in

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¹¹ Thomas, Empires of Intelligence, 231.
their efforts to gain more leverage within the government. As opposed to the Arabs, the Zionist organization was well structured and had many allies both in Europe and the United States, which would allow them to more easily navigate and exploit the new government configuration to their own advantage.

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Part of the difficulty that the British faced in governing Palestine concerned the wide gaps between the different populations that lived there. The different communities, primarily Zionist Jews and Arab Muslims, but also some non-Zionist Jews and Arab Christians, came from vastly different backgrounds and had different reactions to the Mandate. Also, the makeup of the populations significantly impacted the ways in which they were governed. It is important to remember that the majority of the Jewish population was made up of immigrants who entered the territory in hopes of establishing a national homeland for the Jews. This constant immigration meant that the demography of the Jewish population in Palestine was oriented in a particular way. In 1937, the Royal Institute for International Affairs characterized the incoming Jewish population of the 1920s as “unusual” because of the “remarkably high percentage of newcomers of independent means who entered Palestine in the inter-war period; this…has supplied them with the financial means for the development of their own agricultural and industrial economy.”\(^{12}\) The influx of support that these immigrants received from international backers meant that the Jewish community in Palestine had the resources to not only survive but thrive, even when initial attempts at agricultural production failed.

\(^{12}\) *Great Britain and Palestine*, Information Papers No. 20., Royal Institute of International Affairs Information Dept, (London: Royal Institute of International Affairs, 1946), 33.
Any efforts to aid or bolster Arab agricultural production on the part of the British could not match the willpower and resources that the Jewish immigrants brought with them. Nevertheless, at the beginning of the Mandate period, the number of Jewish immigrants that entered the region by 1925 numbered only 34,000.¹³ Not all of these immigrants came legally through the new system of controlled immigration set up by the British, but they created far less controversy than later waves of Jewish immigration. Additionally, the climate and poor farming techniques utilized in Palestine meant that most of these recent immigrants remained in debt through most of the 1920s.¹⁴ The dream of a lucrative Jewish National Homeland remained an elusive goal in the early years of the Mandate.¹⁵

Immigration constituted one piece of the puzzle, but land ownership became an even more difficult issue to resolve. Many Arabs resented the transfer of land to new Jewish immigrants, and this issue contributed in no small measure to the 1920-1921 rioting. But further complications in Ottoman land ownership laws and the overall economic downturn in the agricultural sector of Palestine added to these difficulties. Even when Arab landowners were willing to sell land to Jewish immigrants, the Ottoman laws confused land transfer and complicated existing relationships between landowners and tenants, when the landowners chose not to sell.¹⁶ In 1921, Samuel enacted a Land

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¹⁴ Shepherd, Ploughing Sand, 105.
¹⁵ Churchill’s White Paper of 1922 established the premise of “economic absorptive capacity” to determine the number of Jewish immigrants allowed into Palestine. The principle held that there was a certain number of Jewish immigrants that Palestine could sustain without exhausting its resources, and immigration quotas were to be based on that number. “Economic absorptive capacity” remained the standard for Jewish immigration until the 1930s.
¹⁶ Shepherd, Ploughing Sand, 110.
Ordinance and formed a Land Commission in order to solve the issues that arose from the complicated Ottoman system. Both the commission and the ordinance sought to “promote the closer settlement of the country, but at the same time to secure the present cultivators from the danger of eviction and loss of livelihood.”

These legal issues proved to be the biggest stumbling block at the beginning of Samuel’s tenure, but by 1925, other challenges rose to the forefront. Samuel’s final report upon leaving office in 1925 outlined these other difficulties in promoting the growth of agriculture in Palestine and the steps that the Mandatory government had taken to resolve the issues.

The first striking aspect of Samuel’s agricultural report in 1925 is the tone that he takes with respect to Arab agriculture and respect for the land. He noted that many Arab farmers do not till much of their soil and calls their agricultural methods “primitive.” Additionally, he cited a lack of trees in Palestine as a major flaw of the agriculture pursued under Ottoman policy. Samuel applied several corrective measures to these situations, such as establishing a Department of Agriculture and Forests and loaning £E562,000 to Arab farmers to encourage them to modernize their farming practices. Samuel asserted that the work of the government helped to assuage the level of poverty among Arab farmers.

His report treated Jewish farming under the section he labels “Politics,” which is a distinction worth noting. This label indicates that the decisions that the Mandatory

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government made with respect to Jewish farmland was intimately connected with Jewish land policy and the establishment of a Jewish National Homeland in addition to being a matter of economic importance. His descriptions of the tactics used with respect to Jewish farmers also give the farmers agency, which was not the case with his description of Arab farming in the region.

The issue of representative institutions further divided the population of Palestine and made governance difficult. The outline of the Mandate as passed by the League of Nations guaranteed that both the Arab and Jewish populations in Palestine were entitled to a representative body to advocate on their behalf to High Commissioner. Samuel notes in a 1921 report to Parliament that he had formed an Advisory Council of Arab, Christian, and Jewish residents of Palestine, as well as ten members of the British administration. According to Samuel, the purpose of this council was to allow residents to have a greater say in the way in which Britain was governed; he does admit, however, that the Council represented “no more than a first step in the development of self-governing institutions.” The Zionists accepted this provision readily and established the Jewish Agency for this purpose. This task was fairly easily accomplished due to the unity of purpose that Jewish immigrants had with respect to their goals with the British government.

The Arab population, however, did not have such unity of purpose and rejected the formation of an Arab Agency. Among other things, the Arab leaders refused to form this agency because they fundamentally disagreed with any political arrangement

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23 Great Britain and Palestine, Information Papers No. 20, 25.
whereby the Jewish immigrants would be granted a share in land they deemed to be rightly theirs. The Muslim population was governed by a Supreme Muslim Council, which was formed in 1921 and enjoyed considerable influence within the Arab community. Additionally, the Arab Executive, which led the nationalist movement of the Arab population in Palestine, also exercised influence within the community. This body, elected by the Palestine Arab Congress, refused to comply with the Mandate until 1925, since it believed that Britain had no right to exercise power in Palestine. After 1925, however, this organization began to demand a parliamentary system of government and an end to Jewish immigration so that the Arab voice in the territory could exert maximum influence over its governance.

The political system built by Britain in the Middle East required close collaboration between officials on the ground and local elites. While these two groups worked closely with one another, however, the relationship was never one of equals. The British always maintained the power in the relationship, even if it did depend on the cooperation of local elites for information or cooperation in implementing new laws. The relationship between Samuel’s government and the Jewish population, in particular, can be characterized as a patron-client relationship, whereby Britain assisted and protected the community as it tried to take root in the region.

The British-Arab relationship, on the other hand, did not function in this way. In his final report upon leaving office in 1925, Samuel details the reasons why he believes

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24 Great Britain and Palestine, Information Papers No. 20, 25.
25 Great Britain and Palestine, Information Papers No. 20, 27.
26 Great Britain and Palestine, Information Papers No. 20, 27.
27 Thomas, Empires of Intelligence, 3.
that the Arab population acted so aggressively against British implementation of the Balfour Declaration. A chief reason for their hostility stemmed from their belief that they could not trust the British to uphold the second half of the Declaration, the clause that guaranteed rights to those already living in the land. These doubts and fears led some to fear “that the Jews were coming at once in masses, that they would take away the lands of the Arabs and rob them of their Holy Places.”

Samuel cites this fear as the cause of the 1920-1921 riots and outlines the process by which the Colonial Office sought to clarify Balfour by his own request. The 1922 Churchill White Paper served this purpose and sent the message that Britain would honor its pledge in the Balfour Declaration. It also emphasized, however, that the administration would not renege on its promise to protect Arabs in the region as well.

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The British government in London used official pronouncements to clarify their policy as the situation warranted, but they also employed other tactics to maintain order in the Palestine Mandate. An aggressive program of intelligence gathering helped to give Britain the upper hand with locals. An intricate network of intelligence operations had allowed the military government to maintain its power in 1918-1919, and this same network of informants kept the civilian government engaged in the territory as well. In theory, this information guided policy-making decisions and allowed the Mandatory government to keep a close eye on potential sources of trouble on the ground and curtail them before they became an unmanageable threat to stability and British rule.

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Information is not always perfect, however, and in practice, the intelligence sometimes proved inadequate.  
Still the advantages outweighed the shortcomings, and so Britain built up a system in Palestine which often resembled a police state.  

Palestine presented a unique challenge to British intelligence operations. The profound divide between Arab and Jewish settlers in the Mandate necessitated that Britain maintain a security organization that could spot potential uprisings. As Jewish settlers continued to gain favor with the administration at the expense of Palestinian influence, vigilance on the part of the British ensured that tensions did not boil over into violence. At times, however, events on the ground convinced the colonial officials that the use of extreme force was not only warranted but necessary to prevent Palestine from descending into chaos. The Arab riots in Jerusalem, Ramla, and Jaffa produced such instability that Herbert Samuel felt that he had no choice but to declare martial law. The primary grievance that spurred these riots concerned Jewish immigration and land grants given to the new immigrants. As a result of the riots, Jewish immigration was temporarily suspended and land surveys were conducted to address Arab grievances. While these acts placated Arab leaders for a short time, tensions over land allotment continued to plague British rule throughout the Mandatory period.

The overuse of brute force by British authorities on the ground in Palestine did not endear the administration to the general population that it was trying to control. Nevertheless, Samuel believed that the tensions between Arabs and Jews had eased in the aftermath of the riots. A December 1922 memorandum from Herbert Samuel to the Duke of York is cited.

30 Thomas, *Empires of Intelligence*, 42.
of Devonshire, then Colonial Secretary, remarks that “there has been observable, particularly during the last twelve months, a decrease in the tension that previously prevailed” in the Mandate.\footnote{31} This decrease in tensions allowed Samuel to ease the martial law restrictions placed on Palestine in the aftermath of the 1920-1921 rioting. Additionally, Samuel remarked that both a local and British led police battalion, or gendarmerie, were being filled to maintain the peace in the region.\footnote{32}

There were two police forces in Palestine during the first years of the Mandate: one civilian, which was primarily staffed by native Palestinians with British captains; and one military. The military force was much stronger and staffed entirely of British officers, many of whom came from the Royal Irish Constabulary.\footnote{33} The Constabulary force brought with it the experience of fighting against an insurgency and proved to be effective, if not ruthless.\footnote{34} Eventually, however, Samuel acknowledged that it was not in Britain’s best interests for the police to be militarized, and this organizational structure was reformed in 1925 by a committee headed by Samuel.\footnote{35} Their primary goal was to ensure the separation of the civilian from military forces when it came to police activity.\footnote{36}

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\footnote{31} “The Situation in Palestine,” memorandum, secret, 30 December 1922, CAB/24/140 (TNA), 1.
\footnote{32} “The Situation in Palestine,” 2.
\footnote{33} Thomas, Empires of Intelligence, 230.
\footnote{35} Thomas, Empires of Intelligence, 232.
\footnote{36} The Royal Air Force was responsible for Palestine’s defense. The RAF, which was established in 1918 as the world’s first air force, provided Britain with an easy, relatively inexpensive way to defend the Mandate. The RAF also helped to maintain order in the Mandate during times of crisis. For a detailed analysis of the role of the RAF in the Dependent Empire, see David Omissi, Air Power and Colonial Control: The Royal Air Force, 1919-1939 (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1990).
\end{footnotes}
Although both the Colonial Office and the League of Nations took an active interest in the administration in Palestine, neither London nor Geneva profoundly influenced the day-to-day business of running the Mandate.

As High Commissioner, Samuel also found the government’s articulation of the Balfour Declaration confusing when it came to formulating specific policies. After the Arab revolt of 1921, Samuel made his May 1922 trip to London “to press upon the Government what I regarded as an imperative need—that their intentions should be clarified.”37 The resulting Churchill White Paper confirmed Britain’s strategy in the region, but it did not elaborate on how Samuel was supposed to implement it. The riots forced Samuel and his advisors to confront the most difficult realities of a government in Palestine, as they brought ethnic and religious differences to the forefront. Therefore, Samuel had to use the political atmosphere on the ground as a barometer for any laws that he implemented. He could only do what was feasible, and his primary goal was to stabilize the region. Samuel imposed martial law in the Mandate after the riots, which was an extreme measure prompted by the violence.38 Additionally, he restricted Jewish immigration, a move which “was to set the tone for successive administrations,” and moderated his Zionist rhetoric with a public pronouncement that Arab concerns had to inform government policy as well.39

This incident reveals another dichotomy between policy in London and administration in Palestine. Samuel used the political statements issued by the Colonial Office to guide his actions, but it was not always feasible for him to implement their

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37 Samuel, Memoirs, 169.  
38 Shepherd, Ploughing Sand, 59.  
39 Shepherd, Ploughing Sand, 59-60.
directives. The same held true for the League of Nations. Samuel believed that it was simply not possible to fulfill many of the pledges set forth in the Mandate during his time in office. In his assessment, war-torn Palestine needed to be rebuilt before political considerations could direct policy there. He attributed most of the success in Palestine not to the work of the official mind in Whitehall but to the dedication of his staff on the ground, who were a mixture of Britons and Palestinians. He asserted that these men worked for the benefit of the people and that through their hard work “acquired in the minds of the people a reputation for justice and goodwill.”

In Samuel’s estimation, this attitude, not abstract political pronouncements, was vital to the success of the Mandate.

It also comes across in Samuel’s final report that he became incredibly frustrated with the Arab refusal to participate in the political establishment in Palestine. He meticulously detailed the ways in which he reached out to the Arab community on three different occasions in an effort to convince them to participate in advisory councils to the government. He also described how he sought clarification from the government in London as to the meaning of the Balfour Declaration, often because of the concerns of the Arab population. At no time, however, did he acquiesce to their demands that Balfour be abandoned, and he concludes that if the Arabs would not accept Balfour, then they would not have a say in the government.

One does not get the sense, however, that Samuel thought a blind acceptance of Zionism without consideration of its practical implications was a wise course of action. His final report concludes that “it is to be regretted that the participation of the Arabs has

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not been secured. Whether their attitude will change cannot be foretold…”

He goes on to reflect that he does not believe that all Arabs living in Palestine ultimately reject Zionism and the Mandate, but he cannot tell whether the more radical elements will ultimately prevail in the Arab community. His words and actions reveal that he did want to modernize Palestine and uphold the Balfour Declaration, but he also had a respect for the cultural complexities that the region presented. Whether he fully understood the inconsistencies of British policy at the highest levels, he had the sense in his governing that pushing unpopular policies too hard would cause more trouble than it was worth.

Samuel’s time as High Commissioner also affected the way he interacted with the Zionist movement. While Samuel considered Zionist leader Chaim Weizmann a friend and ally, he also realized that the British administration in Palestine had to confront a complex reality in the Mandate. One of the primary goals of the Zionists, Jewish immigration, caused considerable problems with the Arab community, which feared that they would be overrun and summarily dismissed. As the primary official on the ground, Samuel witnessed firsthand the discontent that these policies produced. The British policies exacerbated, rather than calmed, inter-religious tensions, in part because they pursued different types of goals. Naomi Shepherd notes that on one hand, the British, at the urging of the Zionists, tried to create a national home for the Jews, which is an active goal; in the meantime, the British were charged with protecting the Arab population, a passive goal. This line of reasoning holds that the goals with respect to both Jews and Arabs were fundamentally different and inherently at odds with one another. Samuel’s

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42 Shepherd, Ploughing Sand, 15.
administration only saw these differences erupt into violence early in his tenure; this violence would consume policy planners from 1929 until the British left almost 20 years later.

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In his speeches, official reports, and writings, Samuel comes across as a Zionist supporter, but not at the expense of the Arab and Christian communities living in Palestine at the time of his appointment. He approached his role as High Commissioner practically; the directives from Whitehall and the League had to be interpreted to accommodate the situation on the ground in Palestine. He encountered religious and ethnic tensions, but these rivalries did not dominate his five years in the region. Rather, he tasked his administration with rebuilding a broken land. The political tensions came soon enough after Samuel’s departure, and it may be that his time as High Commissioner was not representative of Britain’s overall time as a Mandatory power in the region. Samuel’s work, however, very much represents the spirit of the Mandate. He acted as though he were entrusted with revitalizing Palestine and worked to do so through his policy. This does not mean that he ignored or disliked the Zionist ambitions that were also part and parcel of the Mandate. He did support Zionism and encouraged Jewish immigration and sought to make Jewish life an integral part of the Mandate. But he never did so without considering, at least in theory, what the practical ramifications of this policy would be on Palestine as a whole. In this way, Samuel can be seen as
representative of the spirit of the Mandate, a trustee of the trusteeship he was entrusted to carry out.\textsuperscript{43}

The end result of Samuel’s time as High Commissioner was an administration in Palestine that deviated, in some places quite substantially, from the vision laid out in London. Zionist ambitions remained largely unfulfilled by 1925, but Samuel had begun a process of modernization in the region and made significant changes to the government, legal system, agriculture, and immigration. He approached these reforms with moderation, as he realized that the Anglicist-leaning policies coming from the Colonial Office could not be implemented without causing more turmoil in an already chaotic region. The end result was that Samuel’s policies approached Orientalism in that they sought to protect what native institutions they could and worked impartially for the betterment of both Jewish settlers and native Arab inhabitants of the region.\textsuperscript{44}

\textsuperscript{43} Some scholars disagree sharply with this conclusion. For example, see Sahar Huneidi, \textit{A Broken Trust: Herbert Samuel, Zionism, and the Palestinians, 1920-1925} (London: I.B. Taurus, 2001). Huneidi asserts that Samuel’s policies laid the groundwork for decades of Zionist rule in Palestine and that he betrayed the trust of the Arabs living in the region by catering to these openly pro-Zionist policies. She argues that while Samuel’s rhetoric catered to the Arabs, his actions belied his true intentions of establishing a Jewish state in the region.

\textsuperscript{44} Bernard Wasserstein agrees with this conclusion in his work \textit{The British in Palestine: The Mandatory Government and Arab-Jewish Conflict, 1917-1929}, 2\textsuperscript{nd} ed. (Oxford: Basil Blackwell Ltd., 1991), which was explored in Chapter 2 of this paper.
CONCLUSION

The years between 1922 and 1929 proved to be some of the last peaceful years that Britain would enjoy in Palestine. Rioting ensued again in 1929 over an incident involving Jews and Arabs at the Wailing Wall and from that point on, inter-religious violence would consume British energy and time in the Mandate. The 1930s and the rise of totalitarianism introduced another complication into the administration of Palestine as Jews from across Europe sought to enter the Holy Land to escape Hitler’s Final Solution. Zionism had been popular in Britain before religious tensions exploded and the refugee crisis threatened Britain’s rule in the region; nevertheless, Zionists used these opportunities to further entrench their movement in the public consciousness across Europe and in America. The number of gentile Zionists in public and private sectors as the humanitarian crisis grew in anticipation of World War II.

To the British, the question of how to govern Palestine had far-reaching complications beyond the scope of a Jewish homeland in the region. Although Palestine was unique in some ways, British officials viewed the region as part of their wider world system. Most never lost sight of the fact that Palestine occupied a vital strategic position, and part of their reason for being there concerned protecting the routes to India. This strategic assessment does not discount the power of Zionist thought in administrative and public perceptions, however. Many prominent policymakers conceptualized of the movement and the Jewish people in a romantic way; they believed that the Jews would bring prosperity to a barren desert land. This romanticism allowed many gentiles to support this Jewish movement. Zionist supporters often acted out of a sense that all
parties could be satisfied with British policy. As the next twenty years would demonstrate, however, neither the Jewish nor the Arab inhabitants of Palestine eventually felt that British rule was sufficient to achieve their own ends in the region.

As an evaluation of Britain’s strength as an empire after World War I, the results of the Palestine Mandate are mixed. Britain started on a path to rule in Palestine with the Balfour Declaration and invasion of the region by General Allenby’s troops in 1917; these two events represent the dichotomy of British rule in the region during the early 1920s. On one hand, Britain committed itself to the support of a Jewish homeland with the Balfour Declaration; on the other, the Declaration must be seen for what it was: a political tool that reflected the complexities of the European political landscape as much as it did a commitment to the Zionist movement. The League of Nations Mandate also reflects Britain’s dual purpose in the Mandate: it could be seen to implement the Balfour Declaration while at the same time securing its own interests in the region. Despite Britain’s pursuit of its own interests in the region, authorities in London did recognize that World War I had changed the British Empire and the political context in which it operated. Britain had been weakened by the war, and it could not afford to keep hold of all of its colonial possessions by force of arms. The new commitment to liberal internationalism as embodied by the League also caused Britain to rethink its justification for adding new territories to its empire. Palestine represented one of the first times that this new justification for empire was combined with new way of enforcing British governance in a territory. Palestine was not occupied by British troops for more than two years, and after the transition to a civilian government, the RAF provided support, not the
British or Indian Army. More important than either of these factors, however, were the
differences in the populations that lived in Palestine and the popular appeal of Zionism,
both in Britain and in Palestine.

Ideas provided the major stumbling block to British rule in Palestine. British
officials in London failed to recognize the unchecked potency of Zionist ideology and
instead believed that its power could be harnessed and used to British advantage. On the
contrary, Zionism had an appeal all its own, and Zionists firmly believed in the moral
correctness of their cause. They continued to gain followers, and as they did so, British
aims and governance became less important to the success of the movement as a whole.
This growth was countered by an equally strong negative reaction from the Arab
population in Palestine. While the Arabs may not have understood the potency of
Zionism or the depth of British commitment to it, neither did the British adequately
recognize and address the acrimony that existed between Arabs and Jews in the region.
High Commissioner Samuel did try to temper the directives issued by the Colonial Office
with respect to the pace of developing a Jewish homeland, but he was a Zionist at heart.
He was unusual in that he felt strongly that the Jewish movement should not overtake the
Arabs who called Palestine home, but he was one of the few who advocated for such
restraint. The Colonial Office consistently failed to adequately address the growing
tensions in the region, and British rule suffered as a result.

British rule in Palestine demonstrates the power of an ideology that evoked deep,
if not misguided, sympathy among a wide cross-section of the population and through all
level of government in London and Geneva. This international movement created its
own momentum and studiously lobbied the British government for support during a time where political changes allowed it to plant deep roots. The post-war intellectual climate also contributed to the success of the Zionists within the British government, as ideas about liberty and self-determination became in vogue following the establishment of the League of Nations. Any resistance that British statesmen felt towards these new ideas had to be tempered because of the dearth of British strength following the war. Britain’s inability to recognize these challenges to the very structure of their empire contributed to the confusion that surrounded their rule in Palestine from the beginning. Although Palestine proved a unique case among territories that Britain governed, it revealed some fundamental weaknesses of the empire. It may be fair to question whether Great Britain lost control of Zionism and their rule in Palestine; then again, it may also be fair to ask whether they ever had it in the first place.
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APPENDIX: TEXT OF THE Balfour Declaration

Foreign Office, November 2nd, 1917.

Dear Lord Rothschild,

I have much pleasure in conveying to you, on behalf of His Majesty's Government, the following declaration of sympathy with Jewish Zionist aspirations which has been submitted to, and approved by, the Cabinet.

“His Majesty's Government view with favour the establishment in Palestine of a national home for the Jewish people, and will use their best endeavours to facilitate the achievement of this object, it being clearly understood that nothing shall be done with may prejudice the civil and religious rights of existing non-Jewish communities in Palestine, or the rights and political status enjoyed by Jews in any other country”.

I should be grateful if you would bring this declaration to the knowledge of the Zionist Federation.

Yours sincerely,

(Signed) Arthur James Balfour ¹
