Israel & Palestine: From Mandate Era to 1948

Saeed A. Khan
Wayne State University
British Empire in 19th Century
Origins of British Mandate Palestine during World War I
Husayn-McMahon Correspondence
July 1915- March 1916

Sharif Husayn
Sir Arthur Henry McMahon
Sykes-Picot Agreement (May 1916)

Sir Mark Sykes

Francois George-Picot
Sykes-Picot Agreement for Middle East
The Balfour Declaration (Nov. 2, 1917)

- Concluded b/c:
  1. Influence US, Russian & German Jewry
  2. Secure land adjacent to Suez Canal
- Declaration proclaiming help to set up/support for Jewish community in Palestine
- Arthur Balfour (Foreign Minister)- letter to Baron Rothschild (prominent British Zionist)
- Not to undermine Jewish rights in other countries
- Not to disrupt existing non-Jewish religious communities in region
- Culmination of Zionist-nationalist activities in Europe in response to “Jewish Problem”
- Industrialization created unemployment which led to pogroms (e.g.1882)
The Correspondents

Lord Walter Rothschild

Lord Arthur Balfour
The Letter

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 which 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,

[Signature]
The British “Conquer” the Arabs

- Ezra Belboul (Lev) MBE
- Captain Glub,
  later Commander of Jordan’s army
- The British High Commissioner
- King Feisal of Iraq
- King Abdul Aziz Ibn Saud of Arabia
- Najj al Sewaidi, Iraqi
  Minister of Interior
The “Big Four” at Paris Peace Conference

(l-r):
David Lloyd George (UK)
Vittorio Orlando (Italy)
George Clemenceau (France)
Woodrow Wilson (US)

Other attendees:
Nguyen Tat Thanh (Ho Chi Minh)
W.E.B. Du Bois
Mao Ze Dong
Jawaharlal Nehru
Charles DeGaulle
Felix Frankfurter
Chaim Weizmann
Faisal at Paris Peace Conference

(l-r):
Rustum Haider
Nuri al-Said
Faisal (f)
Capt Rosario Pisani
T.E. Lawrence
Capt Tahsin Qadri
Faisal’s servant (b)
Weizmann & Faisal
TEXT OF THE FAISAL-WEIZMANN AGREEMENT
(3 January 1919)

His Royal Highness the Amir FAISAL, representing and acting on behalf of the Arab Kingdom of HEJAZ, and Dr. CHAIM WEIZMANN, representing and acting on behalf of the Zionist Organisation, mindful of the racial kindship and ancient bonds existing between the Arabs and the Jewish people, and realising that the surest means of working out the consummation of their national aspirations, is through the closest possible, collaboration in the development of the Arab State and Palestine, and being desirous further of confirming the good understanding which exists between them, have agreed upon the following Articles:

Article I

The Arab State and Palestine in all their relations and undertakings shall be controlled by the most cordial goodwill and understanding and to this end Arab and Jewish duly accredited agents shall be established and maintained in their respective territories.

Article II

Immediately following the completion of the deliberations of the Peace Conference, the definite boundaries between the Arab State and Palestine shall be determined by a Commission to be agreed upon by the parties hereto.

Article III

In the establishment of the Constitution and Administration of Palestine all such measures shall be adopted as will afford the fullest guarantees for carrying into effect the British Government's Declaration of the 2nd of November, 1917.

Article IV

All necessary measures shall be taken to encourage and stimulate immigration of Jews into Palestine on a large scale, and as quickly as possible to settle Jewish immigrants upon the land through closer settlement and intensive cultivation of the soil. In taking such measures the Arab peasant and tenant farmers shall be protected in their rights, and shall be assisted in forwarding their economic development.

Article V

No regulation nor law shall be made prohibiting or interfering in any way with the free exercise of religion; and further the free exercise and enjoyment of religious profession and worship without discrimination or preference shall for ever be allowed. No religious test shall ever be required for the exercise of civil or political rights.
• Article VI
The Mohammedan Holy Places shall be under Mohammedan control.

Article VII
The Zionist Organisation proposes to send to Palestine a Commission of experts to make a survey of the economic possibilities of the country, and to report upon the best means for its development. The Zionist Organisation will place the aforementioned Commission at the disposal of the Arab State for the purpose of a survey of the economic possibilities of the Arab State and to report upon the best means for its development. The Zionist Organisation will use its best efforts to assist the Arab State in providing the means for developing the natural resources and economic possibilities thereof.

Article VIII
The parties hereto agree to act in complete accord and harmony in all matters embraced herein before the Peace Congress.

Article IX
Any matters of dispute which may arise between the contracting parties shall be referred to the British Government for arbitration.

Given under our hand at LONDON, ENGLAND, the THIRD day of JANUARY, ONE THOUSAND NINE HUNDRED AND NINETEEN.

[Translation]
Provided the Arabs obtain their independence as demanded in my Memorandum dated the 4th of January, 1919, to the Foreign Office of the Government of Great Britain, I shall concur in the above articles. But if the slightest modification or departure were to be made [sc. in relation to the demands in the Memorandum] I shall not be bound by a single word of the present Agreement which shall be deemed void and of no account or validity, and I shall not be answerable in any way whatsoever.

(signed) FAISAL IBN HUSAIN (in Arabic)

(signed) CHAIM WEIZMANN
King-Crane Commission

- Appointed by Pres. Wilson in Summer 1919 to explore prospects for self-determination in Middle East per Wilson’s 14 Points
- Henry Churchill King (Pres. Oberlin College) and Charles Crane (major Democratic contributor)
- Recommendations:
  1. Foreign administering power must be by mandate; NOT colonizing force
  2. Unity of Syria must be preserved
  3. Syria to be placed under a single mandatory power
  4. Faisal be head (Emir) of unified Syrian state
  5. “Serious modification of the extreme Zionist Program for Palestine of unlimited immigration of Jews, looking finally to making Palestine distinctly a Jewish State”
  6. Recommend that America be the mandate power
  7. Armenia should be established as an independent state
Ottoman Partition from Treaty of Sevres
British Mandate of Palestine
Herbet Samuel

Appointed British High Commissioner for Palestine- 1920 (before League of Nations granted Mandate to Britain)
Served July 1920- June 1925
### British Mandate Immigration Quotas

#### Table 1.

**Number of Immigrants Annually by Race.**

**Total Number of Persons Registered as Immigrants.**

( Including persons who entered as travellers and subsequently registered as immigrants. )

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Jews</th>
<th>Christians</th>
<th>Moslems</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1920</td>
<td>5,716</td>
<td>5,514</td>
<td>202</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Sept.-Dec.)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>1921</td>
<td>9,339</td>
<td>9,149</td>
<td>190</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>1922</td>
<td>8,123</td>
<td>7,844</td>
<td>284</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>1923</td>
<td>7,991</td>
<td>7,421</td>
<td>402</td>
<td>168</td>
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<tr>
<td>1924</td>
<td>18,553</td>
<td>12,856</td>
<td>510</td>
<td>187</td>
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<tr>
<td>1925</td>
<td>34,641</td>
<td>28,801</td>
<td>741</td>
<td>99</td>
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<tr>
<td>1926</td>
<td>13,910</td>
<td>13,081</td>
<td>611</td>
<td>218</td>
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<tr>
<td>1927</td>
<td>3,595</td>
<td>2,718</td>
<td>758</td>
<td>124</td>
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<tr>
<td>1928</td>
<td>3,086</td>
<td>2,178</td>
<td>710</td>
<td>198</td>
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<td>1929</td>
<td>6,566</td>
<td>5,249</td>
<td>1,117</td>
<td>200</td>
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<td>1930</td>
<td>6,438</td>
<td>4,944</td>
<td>1,296</td>
<td>193</td>
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<td>1931</td>
<td>5,523</td>
<td>4,075</td>
<td>1,245</td>
<td>213</td>
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<td>1932</td>
<td>11,289</td>
<td>9,553</td>
<td>1,524</td>
<td>212</td>
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<td>1933</td>
<td>31,977</td>
<td>30,327</td>
<td>1,307</td>
<td>343</td>
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<tr>
<td>1934</td>
<td>44,143</td>
<td>42,359</td>
<td>1,494</td>
<td>290</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Jews</th>
<th>Arabs</th>
<th>Others</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1935</td>
<td>64,147</td>
<td>61,854</td>
<td>903</td>
<td>1,390</td>
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<td>1936</td>
<td>31,671</td>
<td>29,727</td>
<td>675</td>
<td>1,269</td>
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<td>1937</td>
<td>12,475</td>
<td>10,636</td>
<td>743</td>
<td>1,196</td>
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<tr>
<td>1938</td>
<td>15,263</td>
<td>12,868</td>
<td>473</td>
<td>1,922</td>
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<td>1939</td>
<td>18,433</td>
<td>16,405</td>
<td>876</td>
<td>1,652</td>
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<tr>
<td>1940</td>
<td>5,611</td>
<td>4,547</td>
<td>890</td>
<td>671</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1941</td>
<td>4,270</td>
<td>3,647</td>
<td>280</td>
<td>343</td>
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<td>1942</td>
<td>3,052</td>
<td>2,194</td>
<td>423</td>
<td>435</td>
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<tr>
<td>1943</td>
<td>9,567</td>
<td>8,507</td>
<td>508</td>
<td>857</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1944</td>
<td>16,476</td>
<td>14,464</td>
<td>680</td>
<td>1,382</td>
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<tr>
<td>1945</td>
<td>18,984</td>
<td>12,032</td>
<td>714</td>
<td>1,288</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Total**          | 401,149 | 387,845 | 33,304 |
Jewish Immigration: First Aliyah (1882-1903)

- 35,000 immigrants
- From Russia and Yemen
- Established agricultural communities
Second Aliyah (1904-1914)

- 40,000 immigrants
- Mainly, from Russia
- Established Kibbutzim system
- Revival of Hebrew
Third Aliyah (1919-23)

- 40,000 immigrants
- Former Soviet Union; Poland, Romania
- Agricultural sector
- Establishment of Histadrut (labor federation)
- Elected representative assembly
- National council
Nabi Musa Riots

• April 4-7, 1920 in Old City of Jerusalem
• Violent assault on city’s Jewish population after speeches by clerics
• 5 Jews, 4 Arabs killed; 21 injured
• Petition by Sheikhs condemning violence
• Palin Commission
  – Acknowledged Arab violence directed at Jewish community
  – Determined cause was Arab frustration over non-fulfillment of self-determination; Balfour Declaration and its impact on economic and political realities
  – Placed blame on Zionists, but singled out both Amin Al-Husayni and Vladimir Jabotinsky
• Establishment of Haganah (underground militia)
Haj Amin al-Husayni       Vladimir Jabotinsky
Churchill White Paper (1922)

- Clarification of British position on Balfour Declaration
  - Recognition of efforts by Zionist community in establishing a community with “national characteristics”
  - British did not support a Jewish national home, but merely a continuation of community within Palestinian region
  - Balfour did not specify boundaries of Palestine

- Denial of promise to establish an independent national Arab government immediately after World War I, per Husayn-McMahon Correspondence, claiming area south and west of Damascus and west of the Jordan River were excluded from any agreement

- Statement that British government did to want to see Palestine become “as Jewish as England is English”, but supported necessity of existence of a Jewish national homeland in Palestine formally based on ancient historic connection
  - Considered both Arabs and Jews in Palestine to be Palestinian

- Support for immigration quota on Jews to not exceed economic absorption capacity in mandate

- Partitioning of mandate into Mandate of Palestine (west of Jordan River) and Transjordan (east of Jordan River)
  - Excluded from Jewish immigration
Creation of Transjordan (1922)

- Arguably, an artificial state created to accommodate interests of foreign power (Britain) and an itinerant prince (Abdallah) in search of a throne
- Britain: Decided useful to place dependent regime to bring order to tribal regions east of Jordan River rather than direct control or occupation
- Britain’s primary interest in Transjordan - preserve Anglo-French postwar settlement in Middle East
King Abdallah I of Jordan

- r. 1921-1952
- Felt his brother Faysal had stolen his rightful throne in Iraq - made prince of new region
Transjordan and the British

- Abdallah: 1928: Anglo-Transjordan Agreement- clarified mutual rights of Britain and Abdallah
- British rule indirect, but protected their interests
- British resident had final word regarding foreign relations matters, armed forces, budget and all other essential government activities
- Constitution proclaimed but generally insignificant; called for small legislative council, but was completely subordinate to royal authority
- 1930: Britain established armed forces- Arab Legion- led by John Glubb (Glubb Pasha)
- Recruits mostly from local population (e.g. Bedouins)
Fourth Aliyah (1924-1929)

- 82,000 immigrants
- Poland & Hungary
- Mostly, middle class
- Small business & industrial sector
Palestine Disturbances (1929)

- Tensions over access to Western Wall and holy sights
- Jerusalem Riots (Aug 23)
- Hebron Massacre (Aug 24)
- Nabi Akasha Mosque Destruction (Aug 26)
- Safed Massacre (Aug 29)
Shaw Commission (1929)

Causes of Disturbances:

1. Western Wall tensions
2. Provocative reportage in Arab and Jewish newspapers
3. Incitement of impressionable Arab population
4. Expansion of Jewish Agency
5. Limited security and police presence to handle disturbances
6. Suspicion of Palestine Government being influenced by political considerations
Hugh-Simpson Commission

• 1. "They [Jews] paid high prices for the land, and in addition they paid to certain of the occupants of those lands a considerable amount of money which they were not legally bound to pay."
• 2. Arab fears of the destructive impact of Zionist colonization were well-founded, and thus called for controls
• 3. Zionist labour policy extending to all Jewish enterprises, the displaced Arab farmer could not find non-agricultural employment, making the problem of unemployment among the Arabs "serious and widespread"
• 4. The Zionist contention that the Arab worker benefited from Jewish immigration was therefore refuted by the report
• 5. Acknowledgement of illegal immigration by both Arabs and of Jews across Mandate borders and need to discourage such incursions
Passfield White Paper (1930)

• Development of a Jewish National Home in Palestine is a consideration, which would enjoy continued support, but it was not central to mandate governance.

• Reiteration of British intention to fulfill mandate obligations to both Arabs and Jews

• Commitment to resolve any conflicts that might surface as a result of respective needs of both Arabs and Jews
Fifth Aliyah (1929-1939)

- 250,000 immigrants
  - 174,000 between 1933-36
- Mostly, Eastern European
- Professionals: Doctors, lawyers, academics from Germany
- British reacted by restricting immigration
- By 1940, Jewish population: 400,000
Aliyah Bet: Illegal Immigration (1933-1948)

- 110,000 immigrants
- Jewish organizations facilitate travel
- “Immigrant smuggling”
- British quotas restrict immigration, per 1939 White Paper
- Further restrictions during World War II
“Great Arab” Revolt (1936-1939)

- Nationalist revolt against British Mandate rule and mass Jewish immigration
- Increase of weapons smuggling into Mandate
- Development of Haganah (paramilitary) and cooperation with British security forces
- Development of Irgun (Jabotinsky)
- ~5000 Arab deaths (~3500 by British; 1500 by Jewish groups)
- Jewish deaths: ~100
- Loss of confidence in British abilities to maintain order, security and impartiality
Peel Commission Report (1936)

- Recommendation for partition
- Abolition of Mandate EXCEPT maintenance of a “corridor” around Jerusalem extending to Jaffa on Mediterranean
- Mandate land to be apportioned between an Arab and Jewish state.
  - Jewish state from Mount Carmel to Be’er Tuvia, plus Jezreel and Galilee
  - Arab state in southern and eastern area, with “west bank of Jordan River, and Negev Desert
- Population exchange of 225,000 Arabs and 1250 Jews
- Rejected by Arab leaders
- Mixed reaction among Jewish leaders
Peel Partition Plan (1937)

The Royal Commission (Peel) Plan for Partition of Palestine, 1937
White Paper of 1939

- Departure from Peel Commission Report recommendations for end of Mandate and partition of lands
- Call for independent Palestine within 10 years, governed jointly by Arabs and Jews
- British restrictions on Jewish immigration (75,000 max. 1940-1944)
- Additional immigration subject to permission by Arab leaders
- Restrictions on Jewish purchase of Arab lands
- Rejected by both Arabs and Jews
US Policy, Politics and Israel
Pres. Franklin D. Roosevelt (1933-1945)

Henry Morgenthau, Jr. Secretary of Treasury
King Saud and FDR (Feb. 1945)
Dewey Beats Truman??

[Image of man holding a newspaper with the headline "DEWEY DEFEATS TRUMAN"]
Thomas E. Dewey
Governor, NY (1943-54)

Dewey w/David ben-Gurion, 1955
Shifting Demographics

- 1920: 700,000 (“100% Palestinian” [Arab + Jewish])*
- 1922: 752,000 (88% Arab; 11% Jewish; 1% Other)**
- 1931: 1 million (83% Arab; 17% Jewish)**
- 1945: 1.7 million (68% Arab; 31% Jewish; 1% Other)**
- 1948: 1.9 million (68% Arab; 32% Jewish)**
- Land Ownership: (1943): 26,185 sq.km***
  - Arab/Non-Jewish Owned: 24,670 sq km (94%)
  - Jewish Owned: 1514 sq km (6%)

*British Mandate Records
**UNSCOP (UN Special Committee on Palestine)
***Survey of Palestine, prepared for British Mandate for the UN
Shifting Maps
Recognition of State of Israel

- May 14/15, 1948: Declaration of Independence
- May 15, 1948: Application to United Nations
- May 15, 1948: US *de facto* recognition
  - Iran, Guatemala, Iceland, Nicaragua, Romania, Uruguay
- May 17, 1948: Soviet Union *de jure* recognition
  - Poland, Czechoslovakia, Yugoslavia, Ireland, South Africa
- January 31, 1949: US *de jure* recognition (after 1st Israeli elections)
- March 4, 1949: UN Security Council vote: 9-1 (Egypt), 1 abst.(UK)
- May 11, 1949: UN General Assembly (37-12, 9 abst.)
Recommended Reading List

• A Peace to End All Peace by David Fromkin
• The Israeli-Palestinian Conflict by Beverley Milton-Edwards
• A History of Modern Palestine by Ilan Pappe
• The Fall of the Ottomans by Eugene Rogan
• Lawrence in Arabia by Scott Anderson
• The Iron Wall by Avi Shlaim
• Jerusalem by Karen Armstrong