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A Land with a People: Palestine under British Mandate

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**A Land with a People:
Palestine under British Mandate**

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Introduction

While Great Britain ruled Palestine after World War I, the lives of the Palestinians changed dramatically for the worse. A variety of factors led to this result, but the most important among them was British policy. Her Majesty's Government embraced a Zionist policy which ostensibly aided Jews in Palestine. This policy resulted in a rate of Jewish immigration that the Palestinian economy could not bear; encouraged the seizure of Arabs' land to give to the Jewish immigrants; and ultimately devastated the community of Palestine.

The goal of this project is to evaluate the quality of life in British mandated Palestine by using the positivist principles found in Martha C. Nussbaum's Central Human Functional Capabilities. According to Nussbaum, these are universal principles to which everyone is entitled by virtue of their humanity. There are ten Central Human Functional Capabilities: Life; Bodily Health; Bodily Integrity; Senses, Imagination, and Thought; Emotions; Practical Reason; Affiliation; Other Species; Play; and Control over One's Environment.¹ This paper will discuss three of these: Control over One's Environment, Affiliation, and Life. This is not because these three are the most important—to Nussbaum, all ten are equally important—but because of a combination of factors including space and time constraints on the author, and the sheer paucity of available data on capabilities like Play and Other Species in mandated Palestine.

¹ Nussbaum pp. 179-180

Without a discussion of each capability, I cannot, according to Nussbaum, provide a complete picture of life in Palestine. I acknowledge the wisdom of this statement and regret the limits of my research. I hope that the reader will remain aware throughout the course of this paper that the whole story is not contained herein. I hope it will become clear at the end that I chose to discuss Control over One's Environment, Affiliation, and Life because the three are ultimately complementary concepts in the Palestinian situation. Each of the three influenced the others, and therefore, these three were the most logical choices for a relatively brief discussion of mandated Palestine.

This positivist approach will provide a much-needed contrast to the typical present-day scholarship on mandated Palestine. As I will explain at more length below, the prevailing philosophy in current historiography is post-colonialism. Its epistemology is idealistic and assumes, without reference to a concrete context, knowledge of a priori right and wrong. Post-colonialism tends to take as its starting point the belief that colonialism is exploitative and negative. It establishes a Manichean dichotomy between colonial power (bad) and indigenous people (good). By contrast, Nussbaum's schema seems to me a more realistic approach to colonialism. Nussbaum assumes only that a government which provides the Central Human Functional Capabilities for its people is good, and one which does not is bad.

If the British had created an environment in which the people of Palestine could enjoy all the Capabilities to which they were entitled, then the British would have been good rulers.

They did provide excellent health care to Palestine, creating one of the healthiest areas in the Middle East.² They also improved education and spread knowledge about a variety of subjects from Shakespeare to irrigation techniques.³ Thus they fostered the Capabilities of Bodily Health and Sense, Imagination, and Thought, the Capability which Nussbaum links to education. Alas, as this paper will demonstrate, the British had less success with Control over One's Environment, Affiliation, and Life.

This paper will cover the period of British rule from 1917 to 1939. Britain did not relinquish Palestine until 1948. I chose not to discuss the latter nine years of the Mandate, because time and space did not allow a comprehensive survey, and, had I undertaken a project on the entire period, then I would have been forced to be more general and less specific. The time frame I selected was not arbitrary. I wanted to explain the motivating forces behind the actions of the British, which to me make more sense when viewed in this historical context. This is because, in the early years of the Civil Administration, Britain was still formulating its official policy. As the following three sections will demonstrate, the process of policy-making is relevant to Control over One's Environment, Affiliation, ultimately, Life.

I would like to provide an explanation of the sources and terminology I used. This topic is controversial, and some of the scholars who study it have a tendency to demonize

² Pappe p. 101

³ Smith p. 55-57, Sherman p. 44

those who disagree with their conclusions. Some scholars, defending the British, claim that the Mandate was just. They ignore or downplay the destruction which Britain wrought on the economy and society of Palestine. Others, who take the side of the Zionists, denounce both the Arabs for attempting to prevent Jewish settlement and the British for, a few times, acquiescing to Arab wishes. They generally fail to consider the bitter consequences which Jewish land settlement and immigration had on the urban and rural native residents of Palestine. Scholars who defend the Arab position tend to believe that neither Zionists nor Britain belonged in Palestine, which should never have been divided from Syria, but they err in discounting the intentions of the British in Palestine—although the British failed, they had attempted to improve the lot of the Palestinians.

Many of the present-day scholars who condemn the British label themselves post-colonialists. Post-colonialism is an interesting and important study. It focuses on the subaltern, or people who are ruled, and employs an idealist framework for discussing colonial rule. This is the most common approach in the study of colonial history today.

In the heat of their rhetoric, these scholars, many of whom I either consulted or cited in this paper, often inflate statistics that support their cause, or only mention the events which prove their theses. A very prestigious scholar whom I cited several times in this paper, Ilan Pappé, has a pronounced tendency to inflate his statistics. For example, if Arab unemployment were 8.9%, he might say it was 10%. I verified his numbers whenever

possible, but, where he is cited in this paper, the reader should be cautious of this tendency.

He is otherwise an excellent scholar. I have not observed this tendency among other post-colonialists, but I have noticed among them attempts to blame British actions and policies for unfortunate occurrences for which Britain cannot be held responsible without stretching the imagination a breaking point. On the other hand, scholars who endorse the British administration refuse to hold the British accountable for disasters which they clearly caused.

As for terminology, I have endeavored to be as specific as possible in my references to ethnic and political groups. Here is a brief survey of some pertinent terms:

Ashkenazi (pl. Ashkenazim) A Jewish Northern (including Eastern, e.g. Polish) European

Mizrahi (pl. Mizrahim) a) A Jewish Arab; b) A very religious Jew

Sephardi (pl. Sephardim) a) A Southern European Jew; b) A Jewish Arab

Bedouin (p. Bedouins) A member of a tribal, nomadic, (or, less frequently, agrarian, depending on the location) culture in the Middle East, of North African descent

Arab (pl. Arabs) In this paper, I use this term to refer to the indigenous peoples of Palestine.

They are more closely related to Mediterranean Europeans like Greeks or Turks than they are to Arabs (by which I mean the dominant ethnic group of the Arabian Peninsula). However, they often self-identified as Arabs, and were referred to by all factions as Arabs, so it seemed sensible to refer to them that way. Unless otherwise specified, this term includes Bedouins as well. I will not use it to refer to Mizrahim or Sephardim in this paper without specification.

Zionist (pl. Zionists) Unless otherwise specified, this term denotes Jewish Zionists. There were British officials who supported Zionism, but for the purposes of this paper, I will use it to refer to Zionist Jews in Palestine.

Palestinian (pl. Palestinian) A resident of the area of the Levant which Britain designated as Palestine. This term refers to both Jews and Arabs, unless otherwise noted.

Nussbaum is primarily concerned with individuals over abstractions. The concrete situation of, for example, having sufficient nourishment is more important than having an indigenous ruler instead of a foreign ruler. This is in contrast to the typical post-colonialist, whose ideals permit only an indigenous ruler. Nussbaum argues that a good life is not necessarily marred by a sense of humiliation stemming from living under foreign rule. She is a positivist: if a person is healthy and happy under foreign rule then academic abstractions about subalternity and objectification are inconsequential.⁴ In my opinion, this is the correct order of priorities. Foreign rule may be imperfect, but first living conditions should be evaluated, and, if they are met, then the status quo should be allowed to remain. If they are not, then alternatives should be considered.

While living conditions are paramount, I feel that it is still helpful to understand the motivations behind British actions and policy. I have not provided a complete explanation, because that would be another paper unto itself. The next two paragraphs should suffice for

⁴ While happiness is impossible to quantify, Nussbaum believes that the fulfillment of the Central Human Functional Capabilities will enhance the capacity for happiness.

our purposes:

The British government supported Zionism for a variety of reasons. It was partly an ethical/moral issue: Jews throughout Europe and throughout history had been forced sporadically into exile, wandering from one hostile place to another. It was high time, some Britons felt, that the Jews were given a permanent home, where there would be no more pogroms, and whence Jews never would be driven. There was a religious dimension as well. Some devout Christians in Britain believed that Palestine was the rightful, biblical home of the Jews, and that they belonged there as a birthright. In addition, wealthy, influential Jews, including Lord Rothschild, had provided financial support to Great Britain during the First World War in exchange for a promise that Britain would help develop a home for the Jews. To refuse to fulfill this promise would, the government stated, be unmanly and inconsistent.

Especially given its fragile, post-war position, Britain did not want to risk the appearance of weakness or unreliability. Those members of the government who were wary of the effects which Jewish immigration would have on the native population of Palestine were assured, somewhat ingenuously, that Jews from Europe would bring modern resources and technology to Palestine. Who better to bring modernization to the Arabs, after all, than their fellow Semites? In short, Palestine would be good for the Jews, and the Jews would be good for Palestine. Of course, even the most naïve officials were aware of the strategic geopolitical significance of maintaining control of a section of the Levant: it prevented

French hegemony, and provided access to North Africa, the Near East, and India.

Keeping all the above information in mind, I hope that the reader will find the following information valuable and pertinent. Each of the three sections (Control over One's Environment, Affiliation, and Life) will begin with the definition for the capability discussed in that section, followed by an assessment for how well Britain fostered that capability in Palestine. I described the positions of both Jews and Arabs insofar as such descriptions were relevant to the section.

Control over One's Environment

Nussbaum provides two definitions for Control over One's Environment. The first is "political. Being able to participate effectively in political choices that govern one's life; having the right of political participation, protections of free speech and association." The second is "Material. Being able to hold property (both land and movable goods), not just formally but in terms of real opportunity; and having property rights on an equal basis with others; having the right to seek employment on an equal basis with others; having the freedom from unwarranted search and seizure."⁵

This is an area in which the British fell short of the ideal for both Arabs and Jews. In both the political and material senses of Nussbaum's definition, the British denied to the Palestinians control over their environment. While some administrators and ministers advocated for the rights of the Palestinians, both Arab and Jewish, to self-

⁵ Nussbaum p. 79

determination, representative government, and equal employment opportunities, they were precious few. In the political sense, both Arabs and Jews were unable to participate effectively in the political choices that governed their lives. This trend began even before the period of Military Administration, and it carried on throughout the Civil Administration. In May 1916, foreign ministers from France, Russia, and Britain met to divide among themselves the Middle East.

Their agreement, known as the Sykes-Picot Treaty, gave Istanbul, both shores of the Bosphorus, and parts of Armenia to Russia. France received Lebanon and Syria. Both Russia and France agreed to recognize Britain's claims in Iraq and Trans-Jordan. Palestine was to be separated from Syria and governed by an international administration.

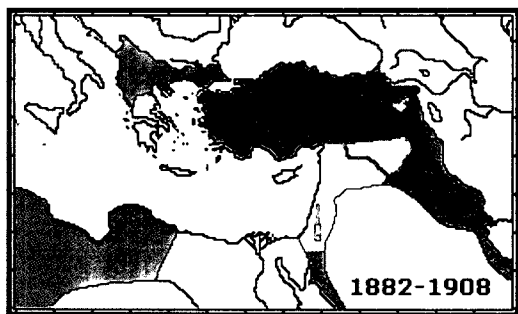


Figure one: The region of Syria under the Ottoman Empire © Zentrale für Unterrichtsmedien im Internet.

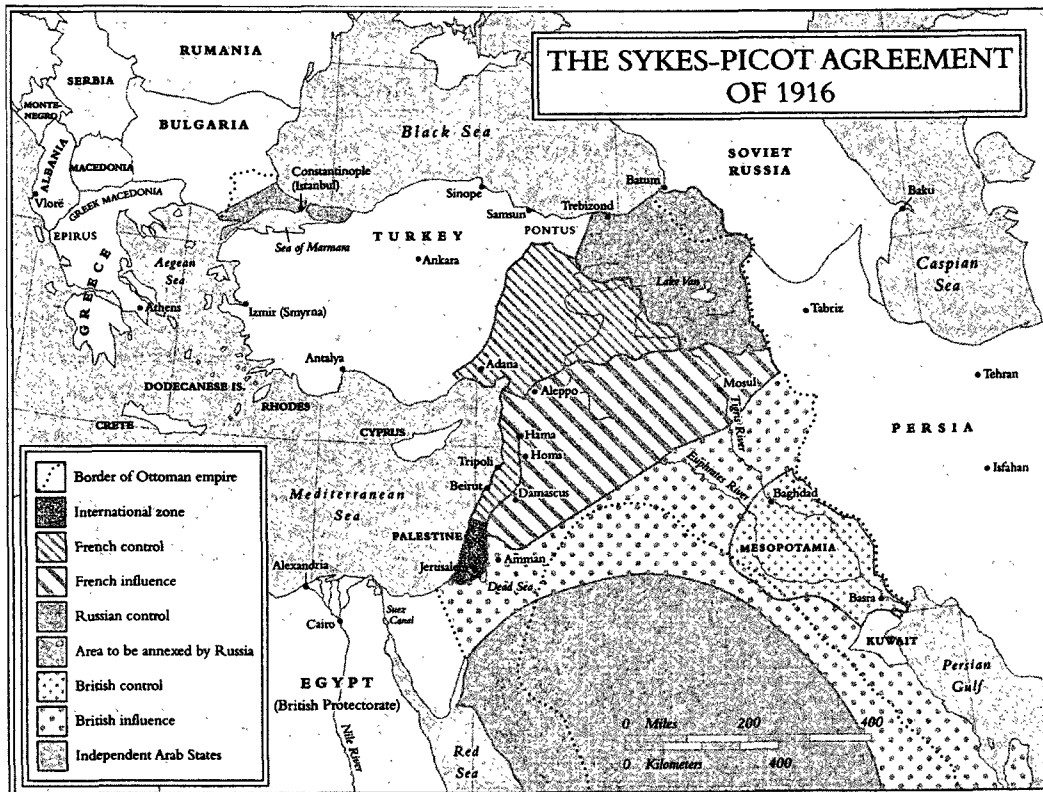


Figure 2: The division of nations under the Sykes-Picot Agreement. © *A History of Israel*, Knopf, 1979.

Representatives from none of the Middle Eastern countries were present at the signing of the treaty, nor were they invited. Also, the terms of the treaty were kept secret from them for two more years, until the end of World War I.⁶

This behavior was in keeping with the terms of the Mandate, which stipulated that “The Principal Allied Powers have agreed, for the purpose of giving effect to the provisions of Article 22 of the Covenant of the League of nations, to entrust to a Mandatory selected by the said Powers to administration of the territory of Palestine,

⁶ Smith pp. 40-41

which formerly belonged to the Turkish Empire, within such boundaries as may be fixed by them.”⁷ The people of Palestine were not allowed to participate in the political decisions which governed their lives.

In the spring of 1920, rioting between Arab and Jewish factions broke out in Jaffa. An inquiry into the cause of the violence revealed that the British were “faced with a native population thoroughly exasperated by a sense of injustice and disappointed hopes, panic stricken as to their future and as to ninety per cent of their numbers in consequence bitterly hostile to the British Administration.”⁸ As a result, President Woodrow Wilson also sent a commission of inquiry to Palestine. The commission learned that the Palestinians wished to remain part of Syria and vehemently opposed the Balfour Declaration. Furthermore, if there were to be any foreign guardianship, the Palestinians would prefer the United States over Britain.⁹ Because America was at that time withdrawing from international affairs, and had never been a major actor on the Middle Eastern stage before, the Wilson commission was largely disregarded. Sadly, the expressed preferences of the Palestinian people were disregarded also.

Next came the Balfour Declaration, which guided the course of British policy throughout the Mandate period. The declaration was published in England in 1917, but

⁷ British Mandate for Palestine p. 164

⁸ Palin Commission Report, qtd. In Kayyali pp. 76-77

⁹ Pappé p. 81

was not published in Palestine until 1920.¹⁰ Throughout the course of the drafting of both the Declaration and the Mandate, the British ministers involved downplayed to size of the Arab-Palestinian community. They painted a mental image of vast swaths of uninhabited land, sparsely populated by nomadic hunter-gatherers.¹¹

While this depiction accurately described a proportionately small number of Palestinians, it was favored by the British as a tool for furthering their Zionist policy. It went well with the Zionist slogan, “A land without a people for a people without a land.” Churchill stated this explicitly when he declaimed that it was the duty of Britain, in tandem with the Zionists, to “transform waste places into fertile.”¹² By ignoring the major cities of the region, such as Gaza City and Jerusalem, the British allowed themselves to pretend that the Arabs were primitive nomads with limited or no knowledge of agriculture or civilization. Therefore, the goals of the Arabs could be dismissed as “the pipe-dreams of a backwards people.”¹³ In the words of then-Minister Curzon, “The interests and rights of the Arab majority were ignored.”¹⁴

During the process of writing the mandate, Curzon commented bitterly that “every draft of the mandate has been shown to Zionists,” but not a single draft was shown

¹⁰ Smith p. 43

¹¹ Smith p. 47-48

¹² Ingrams p. 120

¹³ Smith p. 40

¹⁴ Ingrams p. 102

to Arab Palestinians.¹⁵ Nonetheless, the British made it clear that Britain, and not the Zionists, ruled Palestine. One of the first major decisions which H.M.G. made respecting Palestine, the appointment of Herbert Samuel to High Commissioner, dissatisfied the Arabs of Palestine, and a good many Jews as well.¹⁶

Samuel was Jewish, and an avowed Zionist, so the Arab community feared he would favor the Jews in their midst. Orthodox Jews¹⁷, who, as a general rule were anti-Zionist for religious reasons, worried that the creation of a Zionist state, which Samuel desired, would be bad for Judaism. Even Zionists were disgruntled by Samuel, because they were concerned that Samuel would try to overcompensate for his prejudices by favoring the Arab community wherever possible. Nevertheless, the British government did not waver in its decision, and so a head of government who was not only not chosen, but also not favored by, the vast majority of the subjects whom he was about to govern, took office in Palestine.

This disregard for the wishes of the people of Palestine remained constant. It soon became clear that some Jews opposed Zionism, specifically, the Orthodox Jews mentioned above, as well as Mizrahim who had dwelt alongside Muslims and Christians for hundreds of years, and had no desire to disrupt the status quo. Churchill noted with

¹⁵ Smith p. 99

¹⁶ Smith pp. 106-7

¹⁷ I do not know the size of this section of the population, but scholars Segev and Watzman describe it as “many” and imply that it comprises a large part of the older generation of Mizrahim. (Segev and Watzman p. 16)

perplexity in 1920 that “the Zionist policy is profoundly unpopular with all except the Zionists.”¹⁸

By the early 1920s, even Zionists were outraged by the terms of the Balfour Declaration and Draft Mandate, because they felt that the protections given to the Zionist cause were insufficient. At this point, it was impossible for the British to satisfy any Palestinians without deviating from their policy. Regardless, the British refused to waver in their policy. In winter of 1921, the Chief Political Officer of Palestine, Colonel Richard Meinertzhagen, insisted that one “of the main points on which we should concentrate in Palestine [is]...a firmer policy and an insistence that our policy shall not be interfered with by either Arabs or Jews.”¹⁹

Britain’s government had so little regard for the wishes of its Palestinian subjects that they regarded their attempts to influence policy as interference. Local administrators were rarely as dismissive. The orders which they were bound to enforce came from London, however, and so it was officials like Meinertzhagen and his ilk who made the policy decisions for Palestine. The Arab community rejected British rule from start to finish. Jews, even Zionists, became disenchanted with Britain as well by the mid-1930s, thanks to a series of administrative decisions, in particular the White Paper of 1939, which attempted to curtail Jewish immigration. As the Nazis in Europe began to harry

¹⁸ Smith p. 143

¹⁹ Smith pp. 152-3

and arrest their fellow Jews in Europe, the Jews of Palestine fought against imposing strictures which could lead to the misery and demise of countless co-religionists. By 1939, “the mandatory ruled in Palestine without the consent of either section of the population.”²⁰

The British denied the Palestinians a representative, elective government, on the grounds that Arab candidates would win, thanks to the number of Arab voters, and this would surely derail British Zionist policy. The Government feared, and not without cause, that a representative government would result in a legislative body with a majority of Arab legislators. A mostly-Arab legislature could not be expected to pass laws in favor of Zionist policy, which was anathema to almost all Palestinian Arabs. The British preferred to deny Palestine an elected government than to allow for the possibility that British policy would be thwarted. The Government refused to waver in its policy, on the grounds that:

(i) The honor of the Government was involved in the Declaration made by Mr. Balfour, and to go back on our pledge would seriously reduce the prestige of this country in the eyes of Jews throughout the world:

(ii) The Prime Ministers of Canada and South Africa had recently stated that our Zionist policy had proved helpful in those Dominions:

²⁰ War Cabinet, August 1921. qtd. in Hurewitz, J.C. *The Struggle for Palestine* (New York, 1950) p. 106 qtd. in Sherman p. 126

(iii) It was not expected that the problem could be easily or quickly solved, especially in view of the growing power of the Arabs in the territories bordering on Palestine:

(iv) On the other hand, it was urged that peace was impossible on the lines of the Balfour Declaration, which involved setting up a National Home for the Jews and respecting the rights of the Arab population. The result of this inconsistency must be to estrange both Arabs and Jews, while involving us in futile military expenditure. Against this position it was argued that the Arabs had no prescriptive right to a country which they had failed to develop to the best advantage.²¹

The essence of this list is that the administration's priority was Britain. Zionism was a convenient tool which the British could exploit to command the respect of the rest of the world. The cabinet members acknowledged that Zionism would have disastrous consequences for both Arabs and Jews, but that was less important than the might of Great Britain. It would be better to damage the lives of millions of Arabs and thousands of Jews, and to stimulate needless violence, than to allow Britain to fall in the world's esteem. It is not without cause that many scholars, politicians, and Arab citizens of neither profession profess that all the Britons who played a role in Palestine were committed to serving Great Britain first in Palestine.²²

As I mentioned in the introduction to this section, the British failed to fulfill the

²¹ Ingrams p. 144

²² Pappé, p. 72

requirements of not only the political sense of control over one's environment, but also of the material sense. Separating Palestine from Syria dramatically altered Palestine's trade with the rest of the Middle East. Customs barriers and import taxes, installed by both Britain and France, impeded previously heavy trade. Traditional trade routes were severed, and new regulations regarding citizenship and nationality left many Syrians and Palestinians living abroad stateless. Landowners with property on both sides of the Jordan Valley suddenly had to pay taxes to two governments.

For hundreds of years before the arrival of colonial powers, lucrative trade connected Palestine with the pilgrimage route from Damascus to Mecca and Medina. Whereas before the division, a denizen of Jerusalem could impulsively travel to visit friends and family in Damascus, he now required a visa and passport before he could cross the newly-created border into Syria.²³

The administration took hold of the Palestinian economy, which was, in a very real sense, the property of the people of Palestine. After taking control of the economy, the British followed policies which devastated the finances of urban and rural, skilled and unskilled, Arabs alike. Article 18 of the Mandate forbade Britain from imposing tariffs against any member state of the League of Nations, and suppliers took advantage of the increasing demand created by Jewish immigrants in Palestine. The value of imports,

²³ Smith pp. 48-49

mostly industrial machinery, consumers goods and foodstuffs, rose two hundred percent between 1923 and 1935, from LP4.9 million to LP 17.9 million.²⁴ Germany, Poland, Romania, and several other Eastern European countries exported goods worth more than LP4.8 million to Palestine in 1935. Alone, these accounted for a quarter of Palestine's total imports from 1934 to 1937.²⁵

For the European exporting countries, Palestine helped sustain economies during post-war depression, when the erection of tariff barriers in other nations had led to widespread unemployment and bankruptcy. For Palestine, the result was devastating. The proliferation of Western goods, often sold below cost, both eliminated the possibility of developing local industries and led to a massive imbalance in Palestine's trade. In 1922, the annual deficit stood at LP4.1 million; by 1935 it reached 13.3 million.²⁶ All this was made possible by the influx of Jewish capital, which covered the trade deficit while transferring Palestine's resources from the Arab to the Jewish sector.

The effect which Britain had on Palestine's economy was even more pronounced in the country's exports. When Britain arrived in Palestine, it found an economy which, while it enjoyed the benefits of trade with what later became Transjordan, and that which remained Syria, was largely a subsistence economy. In the interests of both drawing

²⁴ LP is the abbreviation for "Palestinian Pound," the official unit of currency under the Mandate.

²⁵ Smith p. 50

²⁶ Smith p. 51

Palestine into the modern international market, and also of making a profit for themselves, administrators guided the transition of Palestinian agriculture from subsistence crops to cash crops.

Before, wheat, cereals, and olives had been the most common products of the land; now, citrus fruits became far more common. In 1914, before the arrival of the British, the export of oranges, lemons and grapefruit totaled 1.5 million cases. In 1937, it rose to 10.8 million. In the mid-1930s, citrus fruits comprised almost eighty percent of Palestine's export revenue (Britain alone imported two-thirds of the crop). A drop in world prices dropped, which happened in the 1930s depression, a bad harvest, or the closure of the British market, which happened in World War II, caused first stagnation in Arab agricultural exports, and second a dramatic blow to the farmers of Palestine.

Another way in which Britain failed to give Palestinians Control over their Environment in the Material sense was a series of policies which made it difficult for many and impossible for more Arabs to hold land. The taxes imposed particularly on the *fellahin*²⁷ by the administration were often so high as to force them to sell their land. A letter from a farmer, published in the newspaper *Falastin* in 1930, explained that

I sell my land and property because the Government compels me to pay taxes and tithes at a time when I do not possess the necessary means of subsistence for myself and my family. In the

²⁷ Arabic for peasants; singular is *fellah*

circumstances I am forced to appeal to a rich person for a loan which I undertake to refund together with an interest of 50% after a month or two...I keep renewing this bill and doubling the debt...which eventually forces me to sell my land in order to refund my debt out of which I took only a meager sum.²⁸

The British were not the first colonizers to impose high taxes on the peasants of Palestine. The Ottomans had done so, also. When the British arrived in the Levant, the average *fellah's* income was LP25-30, but his annual debt was LP27.²⁹ This state of affairs came about because of exorbitant taxes, which trapped the peasantry in a cycle of debt and poverty. Thanks to public works projects instituted by the British to modernize, taxes on the peasants increased even more.

The British administrators not only indirectly made it difficult for peasants to own land by imposing high taxes, but also directly seized land from them so that Jewish immigrants could settle. Article 6 of the Mandate dictates, "The administration of Palestine...shall encourage...close settlement by Jews on the land, including state lands and waste lands not required for public purposes."³⁰ Thus did the Zionists become partners with Britain in empire-building.

"Close settlement" proved to be no easy task. The system of land division pre-existing in Palestine was a huge impediment to land acquisition. For hundreds of years,

²⁸ Kayyali pp. 158-159

²⁹ El-Eini p. 109

³⁰ British Mandate for Palestine pp. 165-6

villages in the rural Middle East operated on a communal system of land ownership.

Each farmer, or family of farmers, was assigned a plot of land every two years to sow and harvest. It also served as grazing-land for livestock. This *musha 'a*, or common land, was owned by nobody. It was not the temporary property of the farmer who worked on it; it was essential but unalienated land.

The Government saw the *musha 'a* system as an impediment to modernization.

A Government Report in 1920 claimed that

Biennial redistribution hinders progress by discouraging personal initiative and preventing the expenditure of capital and by stereotyping the methods of cultivation...places a serious obstacle in the way of an exact determination of the boundaries and the acquirement of a clear and valid title. The consolidation of such lots into continuous properties is a condition of the satisfactory economic development of the country.³¹

And so, in 1923, the *Mesha'a* Land Committee developed plans to enforce partition of *masha 'a* into *mafruz*, or permanently fixed parcels.³² This was intended, and had the effect, of facilitating land purchases. Absentee landlords living in Syria and Lebanon, as well as independent peasant proprietors, sold *masha 'a* shares to Zionist purchasing agents, while granting a temporary lease to villagers still on the land. Arab owners were then required to vacate the land before the final payment, and to initiate

³¹ Government Report 1920: 250-251 qtd. in Atran p. 725

³² Atran p. 625

partition proceedings against the few independent peasant landowners. Arab landowners, both present and absentee, often performed this task by taking a fictitious mortgage and defaulting.

The administration would then foreclose and offer the land at public auction to the highest bidder. It was in this way that the Jewish National Fund (JNF) acquired land in the village of Zar'in.³³ The Director of Lands explained in 1924 that "a proper land settlement was...the only way to make lands available for the Jews without political complications."³⁴

Yet political complications sometimes arose in connection with land sales to the JNF. In October 1928, the heirs of the absentee landlord of Wadi el-Hawareth arranged a sale with the JNF, and served eviction notices to the inhabitants. The Jewish Agency acknowledged eighty-four "legal tenants, and offered compensation to only some of these, on the grounds that "some people...received compensation in respect of their relatives."³⁵

Most of the villagers refused to vacate. Not only were they angered by the forced and sudden change, but also by the fact that their population comprised, not eighty-four, but (a government estimated) twelve hundred residents. At every step of the eviction process, the JNF was found by the court to have been disingenuous, and to have

³³ Atran pp. 725-6

³⁴ Atran p. 725

³⁵ 13 March 1932, Shertok to Web, CZA S25/7620 qtd. in Atran p. 732

attempted to cheat the tenants and to perjure themselves in court. Yet the transaction was ultimately ruled “legal.”³⁶

The administration offered to transport the tenants and their belongings to a settlement at Beisan, approximately fifty miles away, where the JNF had set aside five thousand *dunams* of irrigable land on a three-year lease against rent in kind: one-fifth of the produce.³⁷ The tenants still refused, and the Jewish Agency accepted a few-months’ delay on eviction until the crop was fully harvested. In spite of this eminently reasonable concession, the administration did not agree because, as the District Commissioner of Haifa explained, “it is essential finality is reached.”³⁸

In 1933, the inhabitants were evicted. There were 336 families in all, and they brought their livestock and crops. Their compensation totaled LP6,154, which was paid to 1,500-2,000 former tenants. The administration estimated that each family needed about 130 *dunams* to subsist, but the compensation would have allowed the purchase of hardly more than one *dunam* of *masha’a* land per person (at a cost of LP2.5 per *dunam*), assuming that *masha’a* shares would be sold to outsiders at all. In the regions where land had already been partitioned via land settlement, each person’s compensation might buy one-fourth of a *dunam* or less.³⁹ Moving to Beisan, as the Zionists had proposed, was

³⁶ Atran pp. 732-3

³⁷ Atran p. 733

³⁸ 29 May 1933, DC Haifa to DO Tulkarem qtd. in Atran p. 733

³⁹ 31 July 1933, DO Tulkarem to Development Dept. qtd. in Atran p. 733

ultimately infeasible. It would have required the peasants to learn irrigation techniques in a short time, and there was no room there for their flocks.

Four years later, the peasants of Wadi el-Hawareth remained. After a fictitious mortgage, foreclosure, and auction, such as I previously described in the case of Zar'in, the tenants were finally evicted. Having nowhere else to place them, the government moved the population of the village to a public road. Some found new homes elsewhere, but others did not. Half of the livestock of those who remained died within months, and, with no land to harvest and limited animal resources, the itinerant peasants were now threatened by starvation.⁴⁰

A section of the tribe petitioned the High Commissioner for "a village to be constructed near" the remains of a Sheikh "we hold...in great veneration." The petition asked also for a loan "in order to enable us to improve our economic and agricultural standing."⁴¹ The District Officer in Tulkarem recommended the proposed settlement "as a conversion in residence from tent to a house reflect in the refinement and improvement of the Bedouin character." But he rejected the loan proposal, explaining, "I propose that their engagement on public services work such as road work etc. is more preferable as this will teach them to earn their living by the sweat [sic] of their foreheads."⁴²

⁴⁰ Atran pp. 733-4

⁴¹ 25 May 1934, Mukhtar of Wadi Hawareth Shemali to HC qtd. in Atran p. 734

⁴² 29 June 1934, DO Tulkarem to DC Nablus

The notion of employing the half-starved former peasants of Wadi el-Hawareth in roadwork had also been suggested by the Assistant District Commissioner in Nablus. He doubted “whether there are many of the Arabs sufficiently energetic to apply for work on this [Jaffa-Haifa coastal] road but if they refuse the offer of employment it will be impossible for them to claim that they are completely destitute.”⁴³ A few months later, he complained that they refused to offer themselves for work draining the malarial swampland on which they were now forced to live, “preferring apparently the easier conditions available at [the Jewish settlement of Hedera]” where some of them had found work.⁴⁴ He agreed with the District Officer that “agricultural loans or any assistance in the form of cash” would be a waste “of the tax payers’ expenditure.” Unlike the District Officer, he did not see that a settlement should be built for them because

These simple tribesmen if left alone and unaided, will never be able to cultivate the reclaimed area under any intensive system or to operate an irrigation scheme...I see no reason why Government should build houses for these Bedouin...I feel very strongly that nothing should be done to encourage the permanent settlement of these people in this area. Though they must be provided for at the moment, a tendency among them to drift away has been noted. The area is surrounded by Jewish Settlements and in my opinion this pocket of primitive Semi-negroid Beduin [sic]...is a nuisance and only serves to impede the

⁴³ 23 April 1934, Acting ADC Samaria to DC Haifa qtd. in Atran p. 734

⁴⁴ 17 July 1934, to DO Tulkarem qtd. in Atran p. 734

proper development of a very valuable area.⁴⁵

Sadly, this lengthy description of the plight of the Wadi el-Hawareth *fellahin* is intended not to demonstrate an exception to British policy, but to provide an example of a common trend. Zionist policy, rooted in the Balfour Declaration, the Mandate, and British prejudice, privileged the rights of Jews to own land over the rights of Arabs. Whether or not these rights were in conflict is impossible to determine, but it is clear that through fraud, forgery, and sheer callousness, the rural Arabs of Palestine were systematically deprived of their land.

Another tactic that the British used to seize land was to simply re-define it. Because *masha'a* had no clear owner, the administration sometimes chose to view it as public land, and therefore seized it, designating it Government land. Because it was now the property of the Government, the land was used to further the Zionist mission: it was sold to the Jewish Agency, and the hundreds of thousands of peasants who had sown and reaped on *musha'a* for nine generations or more received notice of eviction, just like the tenants of Wadi el-Hawareth.⁴⁶ Clearly, Arabs did not have property rights on an equal basis with Jews.

In addition, Arabs and Jews were unable to seek employment on an equal basis. In order for this condition to be met for any, it must be met for all. Nussbaum is in

⁴⁵ 23 July 1934, to DC Haifa, ISA 22/33/3372/Wadi Hawareth qtd. in Atran p. 734

⁴⁶ Furlonge p. 90

agreement with the adage, "If any man is not free, then I too am not free." The British favored the Zionists, but the Zionists still could not exercise Control over their Environment unless their situation was equal to that of the Arabs.

The inability of Arabs to seek employment on an equal basis with Jews led to widespread Arab unemployment. Of the employment opportunities made available by the administration, in particular public works projects, the Jews received preferential treatment in employment. They were far more likely to be employed in the first place, and, once employed, the average wage of a Jewish worker was double the average wage of an Arab worker.⁴⁷

In addition to landless peasantry, craftsmen and skilled workers swelled the ranks of the urban Arab community. Their traditional occupations had become casualties of the decline of the Arab economy and the influx of cheap European imports. Those who remained in the countryside watched their trade decline—while the price of their raw materials rose—to the point where they could no longer make a living. A few who came to the cities, who were either clever, lucky, or both, managed to profit from the new economy, and became members of the rising bourgeoisie. But they were exceptions. Most skilled workers and craftsmen had one option: to join the bloated "pool of surplus labour and to seek unskilled work in the cities."⁴⁸ In 1931, the number

⁴⁷ Smith p. 54

⁴⁸ Smith p. 55

of skilled Arab workers and craftsmen had dropped to fewer than 19,000, or about nine percent of the work force.⁴⁹

While Arabs who managed to secure employment were more fortunate than their unemployed countrymen, they still experienced increasing poverty and financial instability. A worker in the woolen industry, for example, saw a wage decrease from an average of 250 to 600 *mils*⁵⁰ per day in 1919 to 80 to 130 *mils* per day in 1930. In 1919, a worker in the soap industry earned 250-500 *mils* per day, but in 1930, he would earn 120 *mils* per day, on the high end—including overtime.

In cities such as Jaffa and Haifa, where swarms of landless peasants were especially large, wages were even lower. In November 1936, a government survey revealed that 935 Arab workers earned less than LP6 per month. The majority earned less than LP2.75 per month, and among the higher paid, ninety-eight percent earned less than LP10 per month. According to government estimates at that time, the minimum cost of living in Jaffa was LP11.5 per month per household. The vast majority of Arab workers and their families in Jaffa lived below subsistence level, despite the fact that wives and children were often employed, at low wages, as domestic servants, street vendors, and porters.⁵¹

⁴⁹ Smith p. 55

⁵⁰ A *mil* is 1/1000 of a Palestinian pound

⁵¹ Smith p. 55

While the standard of living of the rural and Arab workers degenerated, the standard of living of Jewish workers improved. This fact, among other considerations, encouraged them to form more exclusive communities and to shun the shanty-towns of impoverished Arab workers.⁵²

At first glance it would appear that this improved the lives of the Jews. In reality, it helped to drive home a pre-existing wedge between the Jewish and Arab communities. This provoked the Arabs to violent rioting, and decreased security for the Jews, who soon became targets of random violence carried out by desperate Arab militants.⁵³

Although British policies favored Zionist interests, all citizens of Palestine were ultimately robbed of Control over their Environment. In the political sense, Arabs and—to a lesser extent—Jews were denied the right to effectively participate in politics. In the material sense, a huge number of peasants lost their land and livelihood, and those who did not still had to pay very high taxes (and, once they paid their taxes, they had no say in the uses to which their money should be put). Arabs and Jews also could not seek employment on an equal basis with others, because preference was given to Jews over Arabs. In the economic realm, Jews benefitted, but because they benefitted at the expense of Arabs, their community was damaged. Arabs and Jews could not live in peace while one group was favored extensively over the other. Whatever ideological or political

⁵² Smith p. 55; Pappé p. 205

⁵³ Pappé p. 173

motivations guided administrative decisions, withholding Control over One's

Environment from the people of Palestine was ultimately beneficial to neither Arabs nor

Jews.

Affiliation

Nussbaum provides a two-pronged definition of Affiliation. The first prong is being able to live with and toward others, to recognize and show concern for other human beings, to engage in various forms of social interaction; to be able to imagine the situation of another and to have compassion for that situation; to have the capability for both justice and friendship. (Protecting this capability means protecting institutions that constitute and nourish such forms of affiliation and also protecting the freedom of assembly and political speech.)

The second prong is

having the social bases of self-respect and non-humiliation; being able to be treated as a dignified being whose worth is equal to that of others. This entails, at a minimum, protections against discrimination on the basis of race, sex, sexual orientation, religion, caste, ethnicity, or national origin. In work, being able to work as a human being, exercising practical reason and entering into meaningful relationships with other workers.⁵⁴

The British failed to create conditions necessary for the fostering of Affiliation.

⁵⁴ Nussbaum pp. 79-80

They created conditions in which Jews and Arabs could not live together. As this section will demonstrate, they did not treat their Arab Palestinian subjects as dignified beings whose worth was equal to that of others. The British also discriminated and permitted discrimination on the basis of ethnicity and religion, and helped create a situation in which many Arab Palestinians were unable to work as human beings. They did not protect institutions that constitute and nourish Affiliation, and sometimes even allied themselves with institutions which opposed Affiliation.

The first point I will discuss here is Britain's failure to treat their subjects as dignified beings whose worth was equal to that of others. To fully grasp the implications of this section, it is necessary to note that in the first few years of British rule, the Jewish population of Palestine numbered less than 50,000, while the Arab population was at least 650,000.⁵⁵ The following information which I will present would not paint the British in a better light if these numbers had been exchanged. I list these data specifically to highlight the fact that the British were not feebly bowing to majority rule, but instead were deliberately crafting an unequal society. In the course of this crafting, they exacerbated a new and rising racial tension in Palestine, one which had not been formed by them, but one which they fostered.

From the inception of the Mandate, and throughout Mandate rule, British policy

⁵⁵ Furlonge p. 76

downplayed the size of the Arab community to justify their preference for the Zionist movement. In documents which were crucial to directing British policy, the Arabs were referred to as “the non-Jewish communities” (the Balfour Declaration), or as “the other sections of the population” (the Mandate).⁵⁶ These terms at first appear innocuous, but a second reading will show their innate focus on the betterment of and sympathy with the Zionist cause. The vast majority of the Palestinian community is relegated to the role of “other”, while the Jewish population, which at this point in time was increasingly composed of Ashkenazi immigrants, was allowed to become the accepted insider who were most to benefit from the Mandate.

Instances of British administrators disregarding the wishes and needs of the Arabs abound. Sir Mark Sykes, co-author of the Sykes-Picot Agreement, asserted during the period of Military Administration (1917-1920) that a metaphorical “crowd of weeds” was growing up around potential British policies in the region; the first weed on his list was “Arab unrest in regard to Zionism.”⁵⁷ This phrase, offensive though it may seem, was merely an extension of the language in the Mandate: Zionists belonged in Palestine, and the rest of the society was foreign to it.

In 1920, the editors of the Palestinian paper *al-Karmal* forcefully rejected the pro-Zionist terms of the Mandate: “We do not understand how the making of a national

⁵⁶ Smith p. 47

⁵⁷ Kayyali p. 46

home for strangers in our country can be without prejudice to our religious and civil rights... We strongly protest against separating Palestine from its mother, Syria, and making it a national home for Jews and we appeal to the British Government and to the liberal British Nation for Justice.”⁵⁸ The Arab-Palestinian community was not blind to the implications of Zionism or a Jewish state. Despite the fact that they comprised the vast majority of the population, the British adhered to a Zionist policy regardless.

Dr. Chaim Weizmann, the chair of the English Zionist Federation and World Zionist Organization during the Military Administration and head of the Zionist Commission during the Civil Administration, had the ear of the British Government. It was he who discouraged Balfour from instituting a democratic government in Palestine on the grounds that it “does not take into account the superiority of the Jew to the Arab, the fundamental qualitative difference between Arab and Jew.”⁵⁹ It is unclear whether the general Jewish-Palestinian community was in accord with Weizmann’s sentiment.

In the summer of 1917, Lord Balfour asked Weizmann to collaborate with fellow Zionist Lord Rothschild to “submit a formula” for British policy in Palestine.⁶⁰ The pair obliged, and concluded by providing these stipulations:

1. His Majesty’s Government accepts the principle that Palestine should be reconstituted as the National Home for the Jewish people.

⁵⁸ Kayyali p. 87

⁵⁹ Kayyali p. 52

⁶⁰ Ingrams p. 9

2. His Majesty's Government will use its best endeavors to secure the achievement of this object and will discuss the necessary methods and means with the Zionist Organization.⁶¹

The Government agreed to this formula (with miniscule semantic modifications) and allowed it to guide their actions in Palestine.

The same respect was by no means accorded to Arab wishes. Near the end of World War I, Lord Balfour helped set the tone for Anglo-Palestinian relations with the remark, "The four Great Powers are committed to Zionism, and Zionism, be it right or wrong, good or bad, is rooted in age-long tradition, in present needs and future hopes of far profounder import than the desires and prejudices of the 700,000 Arabs who now inhabit that ancient land."⁶² Balfour made it clear in this statement that his priority was ideology, not people. He and the British policy which his declaration determined intended to not harm the Arabs, but the possibility that the Arabs would be harmed was by no means a deterrent. Another British official, somewhat more harshly, stated that Zionism was far more important than the "pipedreams of backward peoples."⁶³ The dreams of the Zionists were simply far too pressing.

The Balfour Declaration was published in Britain in 1917, and subsequently distributed throughout Europe and the United States. It was not until 1920, however, that

⁶¹ Ingrams p. 9

⁶² Smith p. 210

⁶³ Smith p. 40

the document which would dictate the future of the Palestinian Arabs was published in Palestine.⁶⁴

In 1921, an Arab delegation went to London to contest the terms of the Mandate. The members informed the few officials who deigned to grant them an audience that the “Draft Mandate was quite repugnant to them.”⁶⁵ Their protestations fell on deaf ears. Their presence in London for the space of one year could not compensate for the prior influence which Weizmann and Balfour wielded in British politics. The British officials whom they contacted mostly refused to grant them an audience. During their infrequent meetings with government officials, the members of the delegation encountered indifference, superciliousness, and arrogance.

Upon their return to Palestine, they met with Musa ‘Alami, the advisor to the Head of the Administration in Palestine. ‘Alami served as private secretary and primary advisor to the High Commissioner, and made great efforts to reconcile the divergent interests in Palestine.⁶⁶ ‘Alami had been educated at Cambridge, and many of his friends were British. He had a reputation in his community for reasonableness and he was rare among Palestinian Arabs in that he retained some of his Jewish friends during the period of the Mandate, and won the respect of the local British administrators.

⁶⁴ Smith p. 43

⁶⁵ Mills, Eric (Colonial Officer from the Palestine Administration, Nov. 11, 1921, qtd. In Ingrams p. 149

⁶⁶ Furlonge p. 52

‘Alami was very discouraged when the members of the delegation informed him that their visit had been unsuccessful and that they had been “treated like backward children.”⁶⁷ Surely, this was not a good way to nurture friendship and justice between the Arabs and Jews of Palestine.

‘Alami wrote the following bitter summary of the delegation’s activities:

A group of former Suffragettes, who, having much energy left after winning their own battle, and not knowing what to do with themselves, had adopted good causes, two by two. One of these militant pairs, the Misses Farquaharson and Broadhurst, took up the cause for the Palestinian Arabs for want of a better, and for the next year or so after the return of the delegation, whenever the Arabs were disturbed about an Ordinance and could obtain no satisfaction, they would send these ladies a telegram reading something like this:

“To the Misses Farquaharson and Broadhurst, London. Government today promulgated law seriously damaging our interests in that it does so-and-so. Help!”

Next day the Arab press would announce in banner headlines that the Muslim-Christian Committee had sent a protest “to London”, but no one knew to whom. A day or two later, the press would announce that the Committee had received a reply, generally on these lines:

“To Muslim-Christian Committee, Jerusalem. Appalled at your news. Be patient. Justice will prevail. God be with you (signed)
Farquaharson Broadhurst.”

⁶⁷ Furlonge p. 81

This was all that would happen; but the Arabs would be jubilant, believing that someone was working on their behalf in London and so naïve that they really thought that they were combating the Zionist influence there.⁶⁸

While there is a chance that ‘Alami’s rendering is an exaggeration, there is an equal chance that it was accurate. ‘Alami was disappointed to see that his *raison d’être* was making no advances in London, the place where it mattered most for policy reasons. On the other hand, he did have a reputation for reasonableness and pragmatism—he was valuable to the Head of the Administration because he had a realistic grasp of the situation in Palestine. It is therefore not a stretch of the imagination to suggest that ‘Alami knew whereof he spoke, and that his account of Anglo-Palestinian relations was fairly accurate.

Soon, the lack of respect accorded to the Arab community by Britain became apparent to the rest of the Arab community. The Palin Report Commission of 1920, which examined the causes of rioting in Jerusalem earlier that year, stated that the British were “faced with a native population thoroughly exasperated by a sense of injustice and disappointed hopes, panic stricken as to their future and as to ninety percent of their numbers in consequence bitterly hostile to the British Administration.”⁶⁹ The report concluded that the Arabs of Palestine were sophisticated enough to realize that, while the

⁶⁸ Furlonge pp. 85-86

⁶⁹ Smith p. 77

Zionists appeared to be the direct cause of their troubles, the British encouraged the Zionists and exacerbated conflict between the two groups. They ultimately held the British responsible for their strife.

The second point of discussion in this section is: British administrators failed to nurture Affiliation by discriminating and permitting discrimination on the basis of ethnicity and religion.

Britain did not make any effort to protect its subjects from discrimination on the basis of religion or ethnicity. Britain itself was guilty of such discrimination in fact, with disastrous results. British favoritism of Zionist policy crippled Arab finances, thereby harming the Arabs' ability to hold property, both land and movable goods.

According to a Cabinet Paper of April 1922,

At Acre and Shefa Amr business is at a standstill. At Haifa nearly all trades which are profitable to the Arabs show a decline...The Customs barrier with Syria is evidently killing transit trade...the non-Jewish shopkeeper is being "frozen out" of the retail business. Even porters and other casual labour are beginning to be affected by the preference shown by Jewish firms and employers towards immigrant labour...all classes of townspeople suffer from the high cost of living...Higher up in the social scale the merchants and the effendi class are in a state of mind bordering on despair; they find it increasingly difficult to live by the proceeds of trade or other employment...many of them are faced with the alternatives of bankruptcy or emigration. The case of the

large landed proprietor is little better; he is heavily in debt, and can obtain no more credit; the price of cereals is low; foreign markets, for one reason or another, are practically closed to him, he is even finding it difficult to dispose at a fair price of lands he may have to sell.

To the Arab dweller in town, his disabilities and distress appear to be the direct consequence of the present British policy and its corollary the Jewish immigration.

The Bedouin, of course, will have either to become *fellahin*⁷⁰ or quit the country as it becomes settled and populated.⁷¹

As this passage shows, the British were well aware that their policies were not only repugnant, but also detrimental to the Arab-Palestinian community.

This knowledge prompted the Government to pass the White Paper of 1922, in which it established Britain's interpretation of the Mandate for Palestine. The White Paper was intended to allay the fears of the Arabs that they would be displaced by waves of Jewish immigrants. To address this fear, the White Paper stated that

For the fulfillment of [Britain's policy as outlined in the Balfour Declaration] it is necessary that the Jewish community in Palestine should be able to increase its numbers by immigration. This immigration cannot be so great in volume as to exceed whatever may be the economic capacity of the country at the time to absorb new arrivals. It is essential to ensure that the immigrants should not be a burden upon the people of Palestine as a whole, and that they should not deprive any

⁷⁰ Agricultural laborers; also spelled *fellaheen*

⁷¹ Kayyali p. 108

section of the present population of their employment.⁷²

Despite the reassurances given to the Arabs of Palestine in the White Paper, the hundreds of thousands of new immigrants put an immense burden on the people of Palestine. It descended upon the Palestinian community like a wrecking ball against a house.

Originally, the White Paper limited Jewish immigration by prohibiting any potential immigrant from becoming a citizen unless he could prove that he could prove either that he could support himself or that he had secured a job in Palestine. In the latter half of the Administration, the Government bowed to pressure from the Zionist Organization and Dr. Weizmann, and the terms of the White Paper of 1922 were re-interpreted to mean that foreign Jews applying for immigration would be admitted to the country automatically as long as a "Jewish enterprise could show that it had a reasonable prospect of creating vacancies for labour in the near future [and that] Jews would be admitted to fill them, whether or not there were Arab unemployed capable of doing so."⁷³ Over the course of its two-decade administration, Britain admitted an average of 17,140 Jewish immigrants per year. This policy led to a cumulative Jewish population of 445,457 in 1939, or nearly thirty percent of the total population of 1,501,698.⁷⁴ This was one of the main factors which led to sky-rocketing unemployment among Arabs in major

⁷² Ingrams p. 165

⁷³ Furlonge p. 96

⁷⁴ Smith p. 44

cities, especially port cities like Jaffa and Haifa, which had high immigrant populations.

The rural population of Palestine grew increasingly impoverished throughout the period of British Administration, thanks to the government's encouragement of Zionist settlement. The peasantry, who enjoyed little esteem from the British, comprised seventy percent of the Arab population.⁷⁵ By 1935 Jews and Jewish organizations owned five percent of the country's land, and their holdings included 1 million *dunums*⁷⁶, or nearly 12 percent of the total arable land. The remaining land, about 8 million *dunums*, had to provide crops for export in addition to supporting an Arab population that grew from 668,258 in 1922 to 952,955 by 1935. This division of arable land meant that in 1935, each Jewish resident had, on average, 28.1 *dunums* of arable land, while only 9.4 *dunums* remained for each Arab. The minimum amount of land needed to sustain a family of six was between 100 and 130 *dunums*.⁷⁷

Meanwhile, the improved medical knowledge which Britain brought to Palestine resulted in longer life spans and lower infant mortality rates.⁷⁸ These were both positive attributes, but at the same time, they exacerbated the land crisis by putting increasing pressure on the already-insufficient land that remained in the hands of Arabs.

The pressure on Arab lands was even greater than the above-mentioned facts

⁷⁵ Swedenburg p. 27

⁷⁶ 1,000 square meters

⁷⁷ Smith p. 52

⁷⁸ Pappé p. 76

relate. The majority of the land belonging to the “Arab community” took the form of a few large land-holdings owned by a small number of families or as *waqf*.⁷⁹ In 1930, a survey commissioned by the Government showed that in the 104 villages surveyed, only twenty-eight percent of households had access to land. Of the households who owned land or worked on land as tenants, only two-fifths owned one *feddan*,⁸⁰ or enough to support their families.⁸¹

The British also failed to foster Affiliation because they created a situation in which many Palestinians were unable to work as human beings. While one could easily argue that the actions of Jewish industrialists in Palestine were not under the total control of the British administration, it is clear regardless that the British made no effort to prevent discriminatory hiring practices.

The British Government itself discriminated in both the hiring and compensation of Arab labor versus Jewish labor. It gave a greater number of government jobs to the Jewish sector than its numbers warranted. The average wage in unskilled government employment (e.g., guards, dockers, laborers, and porters) was 100 *mils* per day or less for Arab workers compared to 200 or 300 *mils* per day for unskilled Jewish workers.⁸² Arab workers, unlike Jewish workers, often had to work 16 hours per day and enjoyed neither

⁷⁹ Islamic concept; unalienable land held in a religious/charitable trust

⁸⁰ 1 *feddan* = about 120 *dunums*

⁸¹ Smith p. 52

⁸² 1 *mil* = 0.001 Palestinian pounds

social security benefits nor job security.⁸³

Britain was bound by Article 11 of the Mandate to “arrange with the Jewish agency...to construct or operate...any public works, services and utilities, and to develop any of the natural resources of the country, in so far as these matters are not directly undertaken by the administration.”⁸⁴ The result of this stipulation was that government contracts for provisions of supplies and equipment, construction of roads, bridges, and military buildings, and the maintenance of existing installations were given to Jewish firms who refused to employ any Arabs. This refusal stemmed in large part from a policy from the Histadruth (Jewish Federation of Labor). The Histadruth insisted that Jewish companies could only hire Jews, and enforced this policy by means of organized picketing of violators. While this was not a policy of the British Administration, it was not discouraged by the administration, either. In fact, ‘Alami discovered that the government had “specifically exempt[ed] such inter-communal picketing from the scope of an Ordinance which made picketing illegal.”⁸⁵

These conditions made life almost unbearably difficult for the urban Arab, and his situation was worsened by the flock of his newly-landless countrymen who had been displaced from the countryside by Jewish settlers. Thanks to British discriminatory

⁸³ Smith p. 54

⁸⁴ British Mandate for Palestine p. 167

⁸⁵ Furlonge p. 94

policies, as well as British failure to discourage discriminatory policies among Jewish employers, the rural Arab was evicted and the urban Arab was either unemployed or underpaid.

In spite of the pitiable situation described above, the government did little to improve the plight of the Arabs. In 1930, a full eight years after the findings listed in the above Cabinet Paper, the position of Palestine was similar but worse. The Simpson Report, a publication following an examination of Palestine's problems, concluded that

1. If the entirety of the cultivable land in Palestine were divided among the Arab peasant families, there would not be enough to provide them with a decent livelihood;
2. "There is no room for a single additional settler if the standard of life of the *fellaheen* is to remain at its present level."⁸⁶

Simpson also stated that Arab unemployment was a serious and widespread problem, and that Jewish immigrants should not be admitted to fill job vacancies while unemployed Arabs were capable of doing the work.⁸⁷ If the Simpson Report was correct, then little had changed in the past decade, sans the deterioration of the Arab situation.

This was in part because the policy espoused by Balfour remained intact throughout most of the administration, and in 1930, Sir Evelyn Shuckburgh of the Middle East department of the Foreign Office remarked,

⁸⁶ Kayyali p. 159-60

⁸⁷ Kayyali p. 160

We have there to consider (or are always being told that we ought to consider) not merely the existing population, but the 14 odd millions of Jews all over the world who regard themselves as potential Palestinians. The embarrassing results of this position are obvious. But they are inherent in the Zionist policy, and must be faced.⁸⁸

Like Balfour, Shuckburgh shared a commitment to ideology, regardless of human tragedy. When Balfour voiced the earlier-cited quote, the future of the Arab Palestinians was vague. It was possible, or may have seemed possible, at that time, that a homeland for the Jews could be created within Palestine without excessive disruption to the native population. By the time Shuckburgh spoke, the lives of native Palestinians had been turned upside down. At the hands of British government officials and Zionists, Arabs suffered embarrassment and financial ruin. They lost their homes and livelihoods, and were often given nothing to replace what they had lost. Nonetheless, Zionism remained Britain's priority.

The third and final point which this section intends to prove is that the British did not protect institutions that constitute and nourish Affiliation, and sometimes even allied themselves with institutions which opposed Affiliation. The preferential treatment which the Zionist cause received from the government strained personal relationships between Jews and Arabs. There were also additional factors at play which made it difficult for members of either group to sympathize with the other. During the period of

⁸⁸ Kayyali p. 168

Military Administration, the Zionist Organization (headed by the above-mentioned Weizmann) forbade its members to associate with Arabs. When Musa 'Alami returned to his native Palestine after spending a term at Cambridge, his Jewish foster-brother "[dove] down a side-turning instead of running to greet him."⁸⁹

This was by no means an isolated incident. It was the nationwide policy of an institution whose leader the British cultivated as an ally. According to Article 4 of the Mandate, "An appropriate Jewish agency shall be recognized as a public body for the purpose of advising and cooperating with the administration of Palestine in such economic, social and other matters as may affect the establishment of the Jewish national home...The Zionist organization...shall be recognized as such agency."⁹⁰ The administration, while it did not itself forbid cross-cultural friendships, made no effort to encourage them, and instead backed a powerful organization which labeled such relationships anathema.

Britain was compelled to do some of these things by the terms of the Mandate. The administration had to facilitate Jewish immigration and settlement on the land. It was instructed to give public works and building projects to Jewish firms. At any rate, it is likely that in the latter case, few Arabs would be as qualified to conduct modernization projects. Their interaction with the West was limited relative to the Ashkenazim, who

⁸⁹ Furlonge p. 77

⁹⁰ The British Mandate for Palestine p. 165

had immigrated recently from Europe. One of the justifications for Jewish immigration to Palestine was that Jewish Europeans would bring technology to Palestine. Their contribution to the original inhabitants would improve the economy and industry of the country. The Jews would be good for Palestine, and, once they Westernized it, the Arabs would learn to be grateful. Zionism and the Mandate were not good for Palestine, and the Arabs did not learn to be grateful. Clearly, the British failed to foster Affiliation among their subjects in Palestine.

Life

Nussbaum defines the Central Human Functional Capability of Life as “being able to live to the end of a human life of normal length; not dying prematurely, or before one’s life is so reduced as to be not worth living.”⁹¹ This definition is vague compared to those for Affiliation and Control over one’s Environment. It leaves important questions unanswered, such as, at what point is life not worth living? It is not a stretch of the imagination, I feel, to infer that Nussbaum left this definition deliberately vague, to allow for assessment on a case-by-case basis. For the purposes of this section, I use the following definition of life so reduced as to be not worth living: conditions of such extreme poverty that poor sanitation and/or malnourishment render death imminent; or, exposure to violence such that the possibility of death is high.

⁹¹ Nussbaum p. 78

The British do not appear to have desired the deaths of either Arabs or Jews, at least initially. The Zionist program, as far as Britain was concerned, would be completed through immigration, procreation on the part of Zionists, and, in the extreme case, the removal of Arabs to elsewhere in the Levant (some members of the Government discussed the possibility of a partition plan, but the notion was so unpopular with all parties that they were forced to abandon it). It was to be, from the British viewpoint, a gradual “war” of demographics, culture, and modernization. The Jews, if they helped to develop Palestine and imbue it with “superior” Western culture and technology, would surely win the admiration and gratitude of the Arab masses. The Arabs, then, would come to welcome the Jews with open arms.

Instead, as the previous two sections have demonstrated, Arab Palestinians resented Zionist policy. It resulted in the seizure of their lands and in their increased impoverishment. It robbed them of their national identity and hampered their access to their relatives and friends. It placed them in a position of constant subordination to the needs and desires of another, much smaller, and generally far wealthier and more powerful group. The Arabs regarded “the benefits accruing to their countrymen from Zionist investments as unwelcome gifts from foreign intruders.”⁹²

On the other hand, the “foreign intruders” had little choice but to intrude. The

⁹² Sherman p. 62

life of Jews in Europe, particularly in Germany, grew increasingly difficult in the 1930s.

Their lives under Hitler's regime were either not worth living or prematurely terminated.

Their third option was to leave Germany, and to immigrate elsewhere. But to where?

What country would accept a swarm of desperate refugees, many of whom—especially in the latter half of the decade—had been stripped of their wealth and rendered completely destitute?

Those “lucky” souls who secured passage to Israel rejoiced at their good fortune.

Anything, they knew, would be better than Nazi Germany.

Upon their arrivals at port cities like Haifa and Jaffa, the hopeful immigrants were swiftly disillusioned. They had not escaped victimhood, but had merely exchanged one form of victimization for another. Instead of the clear-cut brutal enemy which they had in Hitler, the new immigrants discovered a more complex situation in which they were both victim and victimizer.

While individuals reacted differently to this discovery, the majority appear to have maintained a sense of entitlement: first, this was their ancestral land, and second, they had been told repeatedly by Zionist propagandists that Israel was a “Land without a People for a People without a Land.” Besides, returning to Germany was not an option; they had to make a home for themselves in Israel now, even if that meant displacing the Arabs. As a result of these factors, the Zionist movement became far more militaristic

and belligerent than it had been before.

This section will be divided into two parts: first, the miserable living conditions into which the Arab Palestinians were forced by British policy, and second, the resulting riots which endangered the lives of both Arabs and Jews. Thanks to the activities of the JNF, which seized land from the Arabs so that the Jews might have a living space and natural resources, and the Histadruth, which blocked Arabs from employment so that Jews might have jobs, the Jewish community fared comparatively better than the Arabs, at the expense of the Arab community.

Land seizure, in conjunction with high taxation, disrupted the lives of innumerable Arab peasants. By the 1930s, 60% of the peasantry was financially ruined. Between twenty-five and thirty percent of peasants had become *harath*⁹³, and this number grew steadily around 1936.⁹⁴ Those who managed to find labor were the lucky ones, although their lot was always hard. Those who did not, either starved or migrated to the cities.

Life in the cities was not much better. Because of the discriminatory hiring and labor practices which I discussed in prior sections, it was still difficult for Arabs to find work. Those who had jobs in the cities were forced by their low wages to work sixteen

⁹³ Pappé defines *harath* as “former peasants, no longer tenants, [who] became a rural proletariat, offering their labour, agricultural or not, to any takers.” p. 102

⁹⁴ Kayyali p. 205 and Pappé p. 102

hour days. Sometimes, entire families—father, mother, and children had to work to support themselves. Even with all the family working, a large number of Arabs were compelled to live in hovels and shanty-towns in major cities like Jaffa.⁹⁵ They were so impoverished that they could hardly subsist—in short, their lives had been so reduced as to be not worth living.

The Arab community was outraged by the treatment it received at the hands of British administrators. Before long, Arabs began to express their rage in violent rioting. In fact, as early as the Military Administration, virulent anti-British and anti-Zionist sentiment rose to a fever pitch. On March 1, 1920, two Jewish settlements were attacked by armed Arab bands. They killed seven Jews, including a prominent Zionist army officer, Captain Joseph Trumpler.⁹⁶ Ten days later, the Chief Administrator prohibited demonstrations, an action which further incensed the malcontents. According to the Palin Commission Report, the situation in Palestine in the spring of 1920 stood as follows:

The whole native population, Arab and Christian, was in a condition of active hostility at once to the Zionists and the British Administration, their sentiment influenced by a sense of their own wrongs, their fears for the future, and the active propaganda of various anti-British and anti-Zionist elements working freely in their midst. The signs and warnings had not escaped either the Zionists or the Administration.⁹⁷

⁹⁵ Kayyali p. 196

⁹⁶ Kayyali pp. 74-75

⁹⁷ 10 November 1938 CO 733/386 qtd. in Kayyali p. 75

Despite the warning signs, administrators did not take sufficient measures to prevent further violence. During the week from April 4 to 10 (Easter Week) 1920, Arab agitators rioted sporadically. In addition to looting and arson, these outbreaks led to 251 casualties, of whom nine died, twenty-two were seriously wounded and 220 were slightly wounded. Of these, Jews comprised five killed, eighteen seriously wounded and 193 slightly wounded—a vast majority. The Palin Commission suspected that there were more, unreported casualties: “a number of *fellahin* suffering from slight wounds may have escaped to the country.”⁹⁸ Hypothetically, the police might have been able to prevent the violence, but Arab members defected and joined the rioters, while the British police were deployed outside the city. The violence, mostly against Jews and Zionists, carried on largely unchecked.⁹⁹

The Palin Commission uncovered more disturbing data about unrest in Palestine. It found that the Hagana, Jewish Self-Defense units, had been raised without the knowledge of the administration, and “were openly drilling at the back of Lemel School and on Mount Scopus.”¹⁰⁰ The Arabs knew about the Hagana, and viewed it with dismay.¹⁰¹

While the administration may have been unaware of the Hagana, the illicit

⁹⁸ Kayyali p. 76

⁹⁹ Sherman p. 53

¹⁰⁰ Kayyali p. 77

¹⁰¹ Kayyali p. 76

paramilitary group was receiving arms from British soldiers: “there were numerous cases in which weapons, ammunition, and other material were ‘lost’ from military stores, and courts martial convicted only a fraction of those involved in the lucrative arms traffic with both Arabs and Jews.”¹⁰² Britain, by largely failing to discipline those members of its ranks who sold weaponry to both sides of the conflict, increased the possibility of violence and death. They armed the Arab militants and the Hagana, and then stationed troops outside the city while the two factions fought each other on the inside.

To even the unbiased, there is something horribly cynical about this behavior—the government first encouraged violence with their policies, then facilitated violence with the arms trade (and the failure to prosecute), and then failed to control it when they deployed police outside the city. There may have been any number of reasons for this: maybe administrators and the army did not think that the illegal arms trade was a significant enough problem to justify the effort of prosecuting offenders. In the worst case scenario, they hoped that the Arabs and Jews might duel it out together, simultaneously deflecting hatred away from the administration and thinning the ranks of militant opponents whom the Civil Administration would eventually have to face. Whatever their reasons, it is clear that even under Martial Law, the British could not “keep Arabs and Jews from mutual slaughter.”¹⁰³

¹⁰² Sherman p. 61

¹⁰³ Sherman p. 12

The next year, 1921, during the Orthodox Easter Sunday, a skirmish in Tel Aviv between Jewish Communists and Socialists led to rioting and looting in Jaffa. The rioting devolved into attacks by Arabs on Jews, and spread to the rest of Palestine. This round of violence lasted for a week, and required the intervention of the Royal Air Force, and resulted in significant deaths and destruction of property.¹⁰⁴

After these conflicts, the 1920s proved to be a fairly calm decade. Immigration continued and the plight of the *fellah* worsened. It was a tense time, but not a violent one. Passions seethed behind the façade of relative peace, but they flared up again in 1928 with a vengeance. While the causes of the violence at this time were convoluted, this much, at least, was clear: a dispute arose on the eve of the Day of Atonement in September 1928 over a screen which the Jewish community erected to separate men from women praying at the Western Wall below the Muslim holy place Haram ash-Sharif in Jerusalem. Muslims were enraged, and the British removed the screen, which in turn enraged the Jews.

The incident was followed by an entire year of agitating, during which the Mufti of Jerusalem sought to stir the anger of the Muslims to the point of rioting. The Jews were both frightened by the Mufti and indignant about the British government's use of the term "Wailing Wall" to refer to the Western Wall, the holiest Jewish site in Jerusalem.

¹⁰⁴ Sherman p. 62

Christian Arabs, although they had no readily apparent role in the controversy, wholeheartedly sided with their fellow Arabs, against the Jews, whom they saw as a common enemy.

The dam burst in August 1928. On the 14th, Jewish agitators organized a large-scale demonstration in Tel Aviv, in which Zionist groups raised their flag, shouted Zionist slogans and sang the Jewish national anthem. On the 16th, Muslims retaliated. They had their own agitators, who harangued them and incited them to destroy Jewish prayer books as well as the petitions left between the stones of the Western Wall. On the 17th, a fracas left one Jew dead and several Jews and Arabs injured. A week later in Jerusalem, Arab riots broke out, consisting of looting and random assaults on individuals.

Anti-Jewish violence spread throughout the country that week. The slaughter of Jews was massive, and especially brutal in Hebron and Safad, where religious Jews had lived in safety and relative harmony for hundreds of years. Jewish communities in the cities of Jerusalem, Jaffa, and Haifa were attacked as well. Six Jewish agricultural villages were destroyed. Ultimately, 133 Jews died and 339 received non-fatal casualties. Of the Arabs, 116 died and 232 were wounded, mostly by police and British troops who had been rushed in from Egypt to stop the violence.¹⁰⁵

Another point which is clear from these events is that the British can only be

¹⁰⁵ Sherman pp. 78-80

held partly responsible for the riots and violence of August 1928. By removing the screen at the Western Wall, they ostensibly incited demonstrations and riots. However, it is apparent that members of both the Arab and Jewish communities were itching for a fight. After all, the Arabs had got their way in the Western Wall controversy. The following year of agitation had been a response to the fact that the Jews had dared to alter a Jewish holy site below a Muslim holy site. As for the Jewish community, while its members had the most cause for anger, they were playing with metaphorical fire when they provoked Arabs by flaunting Zionism on the 14th of August. Of course, the British were responsible for the violence insofar as they killed and wounded 348 Arabs. They also had a responsibility, as governors, to maintain a monopoly on violence. This they failed to do, in 1928 and throughout the years that followed.

During the early 1930s, Arab groups rioted in the cities and in the countryside, and randomly murdered Jews. They undertook occasional, violent efforts to discourage and prevent illegal Jewish immigrants from entering Palestine.¹⁰⁶ Yet they did not lose sight of the fact that Britain was primarily responsible for their sufferings. This caused them to unleash their rage on those members of the hated administration with whom they had the most frequent contact: the British police.

The first large-scale attack which the Arab militants launched against the British

¹⁰⁶ Sherman pp. 84-85

police occurred in the 1933 Revolt. The revolt occurred in Jaffa, a city teeming with unemployed or underpaid shanty-dwelling Arabs. More than seven thousand Arab demonstrators armed with sticks swarmed the streets. In the course of the riot, one policeman was killed and twenty-five wounded, while twelve demonstrators were shot dead and seventy-eight wounded. News of the so-called Jaffa Massacre spread like wildfire, and inflamed already desperate souls in Jerusalem, Safad, Nazareth, Tulkarem and Haifa. In Haifa, “scores of casualties were inflicted by police fire.”¹⁰⁷ Shortly afterwards, Humphrey Bowman, the Director of Education wrote in his diary, “the attacks have been anti-Govt., not anti-Jew: not that the Arabs love the Jews any more, but they hate the Govt. more.”¹⁰⁸

A month later, Bowman predicted, “the Arabs have a genuine fear of hordes of Jews coming in—as they are coming in now—& no palliative will quiet those fears except limitations of numbers...a desperate people will not hesitate to take desperate measures.” This sentiment was shared by S.J. Hogben, a recently-arrived officer in Palestine: “the Arab [lived] with absolute feelings of desperation about what the future held for him if more and more Jews were going to come into the country.”¹⁰⁹

Such fears were not dispelled with time. As the 1930s wore on, Arab individuals

¹⁰⁷ Kayyali p. 173

¹⁰⁸ qtd. in Sherman p. 92

¹⁰⁹ S.J. Hogben, transcript of interview with A.H.M. Kirk-Greene, RH. qtd. in Sherman p. 93

as well as political groups united in a common, radical, anti-government, anti-Zionist policy. There were still squabbles about how best to carry out their policy, but they all agreed that both the British and the Zionists had to leave Palestine. Boycotts, shootings, assassinations, and the sabotage of telephones and railways became so common that public safety became threatened in large areas of Palestine.

On the night of April 15, 1936, two Jews were murdered on the Tulkarem-Nablus road. Two Arabs were murdered the next night in retaliation. Rioting and more anti-Jewish attacks broke out in Jaffa and Tel Aviv, prompting the imposition of curfews. Curfews did not eliminate the Arabs' fury, however, and on the 21st of April the Arab Higher Committee called strike which spread to all Arab laborers and shopkeepers. The Committee pledged to continue the strike until the administration met their demands: "an outright ban on Jewish immigration and land acquisition, and for establishment of a national, representative government. The High Commissioner, who received his instructions from London and not from the people of Palestine, was forced to reject the Committee's demands."¹¹⁰

In July of 1936, Bowman confided to his diary,
affairs here have got worse instead of better: assassination, bombs,
shootings, sabotage continue...tho' force can quell riots & sabotage in
time, it cannot kill feeling: & that will continue until the cause is

¹¹⁰ Sherman p. 94

settled...immigration: and it is obvious to all of us that unless immigration is reduced to a trickle from the present flood, troubles in one way or another will continue.¹¹¹

Bowman's forebodings proved once more to be correct. The Arab community of Palestine was irate that its demands were not met, and its members were desperate about the state of affairs in their country. Throughout the decade, militant Arabs planted bombs intended both to kill and to sabotage. They destroyed telephone poles and electric wires, cutting off communication from the major cities to the country side, and increasing their scope for havoc in the absence of any centralized authority. Their violence was directed partly against the Jews, but primarily against the British police and military, and the latter two began to suffer growing casualties.¹¹²

The police began to retaliate with excessive violence, by randomly attacking Arabs, looting, and damaging property during searches. They directly retaliated against the families of terrorists: in the aftermath of terrorist attacks, homes in the villages which had housed the perpetrators would be burned at random, as Brian Gibbs, a British officer recounted: "We decided we had about enough and would start a little frightfulness against the villagers, so we arranged with the army to blow up four houses in two villages along the road."¹¹³ This was official policy, and, although it was destructive and

¹¹¹ H.E. Bowman, Diary, 7 June 1936, StAP. qtd. In Sherman p. 100 Emphasis in original.

¹¹² Sherman p. 102

¹¹³ B.C. Gibbs to fiancée, 12 April 1938, StAP, qtd. in Sherman p. 112

ultimately pointless in that it had no proven deterrent effect whatsoever, it at least resulted in no civilian deaths, as the houses were evacuated before the government-sanctioned torching would commence.¹¹⁴

However, the official, legal response to terrorist attacks was often unsatisfying to many soldiers and policemen. In 1937, Sydney Burr, a British policeman, wrote home to his family: “The military courts started off well but as we expected are being to [sic] lenient and want to [sic] much evidence to convict on, so any Johnny Arab who is caught by us now in suspicious circumstances is shot out of hand. There is an average of a bomb a day thrown in Haifa now.” Next in his letter, Burr described a Christmas celebration interrupted by an attempted bombing of a café popular among British police:

We then decended [sic] into the sook¹¹⁵ [sic] & thrashed every Arab we saw, smashed all shops & cafés, & created havoc & bloodshed...The last thing I remember doing is hitching a cart horse & racing some one on a donkey down the main street...I myself drive quite a lot...most accidents out here are caused by police as running over an Arab is the same as a dog in England except we do not report it.¹¹⁶

Even in police brutality, there was evident discrimination against Arabs. A soldier named Morrison explained after the end of the Mandate that at this time

¹¹⁴ Sherman p. 113

¹¹⁵ I infer from the context that, by sook, Burr meant *souq*, the Arabic word for market.

¹¹⁶ Sydney Burr to parents, 19 December 1937, 88/8/1, IWM. qtd. in Sherman p. 209

a curfew operated from five in the evening till five in the morning and if Arabs broke the curfew they could be shot. Arabs carrying knives over four inches long were shot, but not the Jews doing the same...Many of our blokes used to say, "If you run over an Arab make sure you kill him, even if you have to reverse over him. If you injure him you've got to pay his hospital bills."¹¹⁷

The accounts of Burr and Morrison are highly disturbing. They portray police and army overreactions to attempted attacks with discrimination and racial profiling of an extreme form, including random assaults and killings of Arabs. It is tempting to write off these accounts as either exaggerations or aberrations. However, it was official police policy at that time to shoot curfew breakers. It was a discriminatory policy: the curfew only applied to Arabs, because most of the violence at that time was caused by Arabs.

The narratives of Burr and Morrison are supported by other observers. In October of 1938, A.T.O. Lees, a junior officer in the British army wrote to the local District Commander,

The raiding, robbing and wounding carried out...by three unknown, but traceable, British Policemen in plain clothes...followed by the killing, apparently premeditated and in cold blood, of an unknown hand cuffed Arab by four British Policemen in uniform...are matters which I feel should be brought in detail to your notice.¹¹⁸

Attacks on Arabs by the police were not only familiar to policemen and officers

¹¹⁷ A. Morrison, "One the Road to – Anywhere!", 75/75/1, IWM, qtd. in Sherman p. 111

¹¹⁸ A.T.O. Lees to District Commissioner, Southern District, 25 October 1938, StAP, qtd. in Sherman p. 115

like Morrison, Burr, and Lees, but also to the distraught physicians who had to treat the victims. E.D. Forster, a doctor at the Church of Scotland mission hospital in Hebron, wrote in his journal in August 1938:

From the small hours of Sunday morning, I received at this hospital a series of casualties inflicted by the British, presumably on curfew breakers...I have the greatest sympathy with individual members of the Forces and the Police, subjected to great strain and provocation for months on end. But I bitterly deplore as much the folly as the immorality of such indiscriminate retaliation.¹¹⁹

Based on the testimony of five witnesses, it is safe to conclude that the brutality of the British police caused the deaths, harassment, and wounding of many Palestinians, although there are no precise statistics. The accounts given above are conclusive, nonetheless. Just as the Jews and Arabs murdered each other, and then retaliated back and forth in the early 1930s, the police and army retaliated against the Arab community in the late 1930s for the trouble and deaths of policemen that militant Arabs had earlier caused.

There is an ironic, though not humorous, twist to this situation: the weapons which the Arabs used to kill both Jews and British policemen and soldiers often came from British policemen and soldiers. Just as they had during the Military administration, British soldiers and policemen reported their weapons as “lost” and sold them to both

¹¹⁹ E.D. Forster, Journal, 19-20 August 1938, StAP, qtd. in Sherman p. 115

Arab and Jewish militants. Burr confessed in another letter to his family that “one bright spark...offered me a good price for my 45. I would have let him have it if I had a spare one but they are keeping a check on arms since they discovered one of the chief gun runners in the town was a B.P. [British policeman].”¹²⁰ It was also Burr, of course, who also advocated reversing over Arabs to ensure their certain demise. Clearly, employees of the administration were not overly concerned with the wellbeing of their subjects and citizens, and were in fact actively making their lives intolerable, or killing them outright.

In spite of harsh police action, Arabs and Jews continued their interethnic warfare. Burr reflected in a letter to his parents, “what I dislike about this war is that more often than not it is the innocent who suffer. Our hospitals here are filled with women & children maimed & blinded for life.”¹²¹ The women and children of which Burr wrote were not victims of the police, but instead victims of Arab and Jewish rioting. In 1935, a Jewish paramilitary group, the Irgun Zvai Leumi (National Military Organization) formed under the auspices of Zionist extremist Ze’ev Jabotinsky. Between the Irgun and relatively unorganized Arab military groups, the police were hard-pressed to maintain order, despite the fact that their ranks were increased throughout the decade.

Ivan Lloyd-Phillips, a British national in the Colonial Administrative Service, described the situation as it stood in October 1938: “The country is just crawling with

¹²⁰ Sydney Burr to parents, 24 February 1938, IWM, qtd. in Sherman p. 110. Brackets in original.

¹²¹ Sydney Burr to parents, 1 June 1938, IWM, qtd. in Sherman p. 115

troops at the present moment...violence & sabotage, battle, murder & sudden death continue unabated as before.”¹²² The carnage continued for the rest of the decade.

During the 1936-1939 Rebellion, Arab casualties alone accounted for 5,032 killed and 14,760 wounded.¹²³

For two decades, from 1917 to 1939, British policy encouraged, stimulated, and facilitated violence in Palestine. British agents themselves committed brutal acts in Palestine. More commonly, the aggressors were desperate Jews and Arabs, both of whom were devastated by their lack of power, by their inability to legitimately direct their own destinies. As a result of not having Control over their Environment, both Arabs and Jews fought against the British. As a result of the failure of the British to nurture Affiliation between Jews and Arabs, the two groups fought against each other. Clearly, the British failed to maintain an atmosphere in Palestine that was conducive to the Central Human Functional Capability of Life.

Conclusion

According to Nussbaum’s rubric, the British failed as rulers of Palestine. They did not foster Control over One’s Environment, or Affiliation, or Life. They denied their Palestinian subjects political Control over One’s Environment by refusing to let them participate effectively in the political choices that governed their lives. British officials were

¹²² Ivan Lloyd-Phillips to father, 20 October 1938, StAP qtd. in Sherman pp. 120-121

¹²³ Khalidi, W. *From Haven to Conquest*, Beirut, 1971, pp. 848-9, qtd. in Kayyali p. 231

especially dismissive of Arab protestations. Jews fared better insofar as Zionists had the ear of the government. However, it is important to note that Chaim Weizmann was not elected by the Jews of Palestine. He was a leader in a movement, but he was not chosen by a popular vote. He and the Zionist interests which he represented were respected and deferred to by Britain. Weizmann even helped draft British policy in Palestine. This does not necessarily mean that the Jews of Palestine enjoyed Control over One's Environment; it means only that they were less oppressed than the Arabs.

Britain denied the Palestinians material Control over One's Environment by preventing Arabs from holding land in terms of real opportunity and from having property rights on an equal basis with others, and they denied them the right to seek employment on an equal basis with others. They prevented Arab peasants from holding land in terms of real opportunity when they removed them from their land—sometimes under harsher conditions than even the Zionists desired—and placed them on swamp land. They now had land, but it was land with which they could produce nothing, which could not sustain them. The British seized control of the Palestinian economy and often making trade decisions which crippled local economies. They also did not allow Arabs to have property rights on an equal basis with others when they re-defined the common land which sustained agrarian Arab villages and distributed it to the JNF. The British denied Arabs the right to seek employment on an equal basis with others by permitting unhindered the practice of overt discrimination against

Arabs.

Britain also failed to provide Affiliation for the people of Palestine. Through discriminatory practices, the British government made it impossible for Jews and Arabs to live with each other peacefully, to socially interact and to have the capability for justice and friendship (with exceptions such as Musa 'Alami). Instead of protecting institutions that constitute and nourish such forms of Affiliation, the government allied itself with the Jewish Organization, an institution which forbade its Jewish members to fraternize with Arabs.

The British also did not treat their subjects, particularly the Arabs, as dignified human beings whose worth was equal to that of others (the Zionists). In the words of a member of the Arab delegation, the British treated their Arab subjects as "backward children." The British did not protect against discrimination on the basis of religion or ethnicity: They altered labor laws to permit the picketing of Jewish firms which hired Arabs, and did not interfere with the decision of the Histadruth to ban Arab labor. Britain also re-invented the concept of economic absorptive capacity as outlined in the White Paper of 1922 to permit the immigration of Jews while Arab unemployment skyrocketed, thanks to the discriminatory policies of the Histadruth. In addition to allowing private organizations and businesses to discriminate against Arabs, the British discriminated against Arabs by paying them half of the wages which Jewish workers received.

Britain permitted the flourishing of conditions which made it difficult or impossible

for Arabs to work as human beings. Thanks to low wages and the scarcity of employment (which limited their choices and discouraged them from striking or quitting), Arabs in urban areas worked sixteen hours per day to feed themselves and their families. Meanwhile, the Jewish community hoarded land and jobs, to the increasing resentment of the Arab community.

In addition, the British failed to foster Life. Urban Arabs lived in such abject poverty that even small children had to work to maintain a home in a shanty-town, while their country cousins were forced off their land to starve on the roads or in swamps. For these people, their lives had been so reduced as to not be worth living. Their misery rose into a swell of violent rebellion. They killed their Jewish neighbors at random, as well as the British police. The police retaliated by killing and beating Arabs at random. The British failed as a state in that it failed to maintain a monopoly on violence and protect its Jewish subjects. It also, through its policemen and soldiers, committed acts of violence and brutality on the Arabs of Palestine. Therefore, many Palestinians, both Arabs and Jews, were unable to live to the end of a human life of normal length, and died prematurely.

The actions of the British government, both directly and indirectly, destroyed the Palestinian community. However, they did not do this out of rampant cruelty. Britain was constrained by the terms of the Mandate, which projected a Zionist future with an eventual Arab minority. It is true that British diplomats had drafted this treaty, but, once the League of

Nations had rubber-stamped it, Britain lost a great deal of flexibility in the governance of Palestine. If the British had deviated from the terms of the Mandate, they might have had to relinquish Palestine, and, if it had gone to France instead, the life of the Palestinians would have been unlikely to improve (this is merely a conjecture based upon the conditions under French-ruled Syria and Lebanon).

Another factor beyond Britain's control was the rise of National Socialism in Germany. No matter how sophisticated their policy might have been, the administration could not have foreseen Hitler and the resulting waves of Jewish immigrants. This was one of the major factors contributing to violent unrest, but it was not something over which the British had any command.

It is also important to acknowledge that tensions between Arabs and Jews had begun to arise before the British came to power, near the end of Ottoman rule. This was a recent phenomenon which can only partly be attributed to the actions of Great Britain. The Zionist movement was gaining increasing acceptance in Jewish communities across the world, and Palestine was no exception. 'Alami's foster-brother was not the only Jewish Palestinian to know that Zionism would be made far easier without the presence of the Arabs, and many Jews and Arabs severed their friendships before the arrival of Great Britain. To a certain extent, the widespread knowledge of Britain's acceptance of Zionism, even before the civil administration, fueled the fire of inter-group tensions. However, Britain invented neither

Zionism nor Jewish-Arab conflict, and cannot be held responsible for their existence.

After taking all relevant factors into account, I conclude that British failed to rule Palestine in such a way that the lives of its inhabitants conformed to Nussbaum's ten Central Human Functional Capabilities. Nussbaum states that, in order for life to be decent—or, as I use the rubric in this paper, in order for the British to have been good rulers—all ten must be met. As I demonstrated here, however, at least three were not met, and therefore the British failed.

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In the fall of 2007, I examined more than one hundred documents from the British National Archives. I did not include these individual documents in my bibliography, and I have not cited them in my paper. However, they helped influence the direction of my further research, and thus deserve acknowledgement.

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