British Colonial Policy "Divide and Rule": Fanning Arab Rivalry in Palestine

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Abstract

The 2nd November 2017 is the centenary of the Balfour Declaration which is Britain's public acknowledgement and support of the Zionist movement and the commitment to a Jewish National Home. The Declaration is identified by the Palestinian narrative as the source of their tragedy whilst the British side its motive was the consideration of who would be most useful to the British interest under the given circumstances. The main characteristics of the Palestinian politics and society after the Balfour Declaration and during the Mandate period was the pervasiveness of factionalism. These divisions were based on family, kinship, and clan. As for their politics, they were mainly shaped by the notable families who helped to intensify this fragmentation in the Palestinian society. The notable families pervaded local politics during the Ottoman period and continued to do so in the early part of the British administration. The mandate administration, although denied the effective Palestinian self-government, it toughened the notability stratification by giving it recognition and legitimacy in social and religious affairs. The British administration refused to accept or recognize the Palestinian Arabs as a national entity, because of the lack of a central authority, Palestinians did not have the social resources to organize and unite themselves. Although the British did not recognize the Palestinians as a national entity they accepted its notables as the leaders and representatives of the Palestinians. The British policy of alliance with the notables helped those notable families achieve decisive pre-eminence in the Palestinian politics. The notability was at the forefront of the nationalist sentiment. They suppressed the existence of independent nationalist parties and groups. The same traditional elite helped intensify fragmentation in the society, especially as the external challenges became more severe. They became an impediment to the wider national integration. Following the historical background of the area until the establishment of the Mandate, this paper will focus on the analysis of the British policies feeding the inter-Arab rivalries and animosity between the notable families and conclude with the study of the valuation of the Palestinian Arab leadership until 1936-1939 Arab revolt.

Keywords: British colonialism, factionalism, arab rivalry, palestine, notable families

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Historical Background Of The Palestinian Question Early Interest In Palestine And The Mandate Period

Zionism ideology was initiated by Theodor Herzl, after the publication of his DerJudenstaat in 1896. Herzl defined the Jews as a people whose assimilation was impracticable and whose social and economic condition would continue to deteriorate in these conditions. The solution was to be found in a Jewish state "granted sovereignty over a portion of the globe large enough to satisfy the rightful requirements of a nation" (Herzl, 1946). The programme of the first Zionist Congress in 1897 was to create "a home for the Jewish people in Palestine to be secured by public law." (Vital, 1987). During the Second Congress which was held in Basle in August 1898 it was decided to establish a bank under the name of the Jewish Colonial Trust to serve as the financial instrument of the organization (Herzl, 1960).

Palestine, which became the focus of the Zionists, was neither unpopulated nor free of an existing sovereignty. It was part of the Ottoman Empire, inhabited by the subjects of the Sultan. Herzl (1960) himself admitted that the "decision is in the sole hands of His Majesty the Sultan." Herzl paid several visits to Istanbul, during which he had numerous meetings with key palace officials. Knowing the debt-stricken state of the Ottoman economy, his strategy to convince the Sultan was to make him a financial offer he would not dare to refuse. Herzl had a meeting with Sultan Abdul Hamid on May 15, 1901 and "he directed the conversation towards the financial help that he insinuated his access to Jewish capital could obtain to alleviate Istanbul's public indebtedness."(Khalidi, 1993). But the Sultan was inflexible (Oke, 1982; Ottoman Foreign Ministry Archives, 1897).

Prior to the First World War eleven Zionist congresses were held. On the eleventh congress in 1913, Dr. Arthur Ruppin, director of the Palestine Office in Jaffa pointed out that the prevalent opinion in the early days of the Zionist movement was that Palestine was an unpopulated land. He suggested that this incorrect assumption may have guided the movement's entire policy from its early beginnings. However despite Ruppin's ominous warning, the Zionist Congresses between 1911 and 1913 deliberately avoided addressing this situation (Huneidi, 2001). At this stage nothing much came out of the Zionist movement, and Herzl's dreams were kept in check until the advent of the First World War and the Balfour Declaration in November 1917, which the Zionists consider their charter for colonizing Palestine (Huneidi, 2001).

Four days after Britain declared war on the Ottoman Empire, in November 1914, Britain abandoned its traditional Eastern policy of maintaining the integrity of the Ottoman Empire. Prime Minister Asquith announced that the dismemberment of the Empire had now become a war aim.

A plan for the dismemberment of the Ottoman state was drawn up after long and tortuous negotiations mainly between England and France, known as the Sykes- Picot Agreement (1916). The provisions of the Agreement accepted certain commitments made to the Sharif Hussein of Mecca (the Hussein-McMahon correspondence, 1915-1916). Sharif Hussein of the Hashimite family was appointed Sharif of Mecca in November 1908. Gudrun Krämer points out: "McMahon asserted that the British hoped to bring about 'the independence of the Arab countries,' and were prepared to recognize a caliphate under 'a genuine Arab of blessed tribe of the Prophet' (i.e., the Hashemites, a requirement that the Ottoman sultan-caliph did not meet)....

For Britain, a pro-British caliphate held its distinct attractions, given the millions of Muslim subjects in India and other parts of the Empire." (Krämer, 2008). While it became expedient to promote insurrections, the interests of Islam had to be protected in an independent political unit centred in Arabia under the leadership of the Sharif of Mecca. In 1915, as the scope of the war expanded and reached the Middle East, the British entered into negotiations with the Sharif Hussein of Mecca, with a view to persuading him to ally himself with them and to call for a revolt against the Turks and to expel them from the Arab territories. In return, the Allies would recognize the Arabs' independence after the end of the war.

The year 1917 marks a turning point in the history of Palestine. This is not only because of the end of Ottoman rule, but also because of the Balfour Declaration on November 2, 1917 wherein the British government declared its commitment to the establishment of a 'Jewish National home' in Palestine, which constitutes the root cause of the Palestinian Question. Britain's commitment had proved to be a continuous history of protest, disturbances, and rebellions, as the Palestinian Arabs made clear their fears and objections to its implementation and their demands for national self determination.

In December 1917 the British captured of Jerusalem. As a result Palestine was placed under the British military occupation ending the Ottoman rule and it became part of what was known as Occupied Enemy Territory Administration (OETA). Palestine comprised of OETA South, the Levant coast (West), inland Syria (north), and Trans-Jordania (East) making up the other parts of this area. However, the latter three were relinquished very quickly, with the Levant coast and Syria being turned over to the French in 1919 and Trans- Jordania being left to de facto Arab control; leaving only Palestine subject to a long period of British military rule.

By the early part of 1917, the British had come to realize that if they supported Zionist aspirations in Palestine, this might make it easier to overthrow the Sykes-Picot Agreement and substitute it with some form of British control (Gillon, 1969). As Monroe points out "... 1917 is also the year in which the British climbed on the shoulders of the Zionists in order to get a British Palestine, issued the Balfour Declaration, began to set aside the Sykes Picot Agreement, and to make promises that were incompatible beyond remedy."(Monroe, 1963). The Declaration letter which speaks of a 'Jewish people'; Arab Muslims, Christians, and Durzes in Palestine were referred to as 'non-Jewish communities' as a whole. Krämer (2008) states: "the Declaration was motivated by the consideration of who would be most useful to British interests" at that time and circumstances.

At the beginning of 1918 the future of Palestine seemed more at stake than that of any Arab country outside the Peninsula. The British policy enshrined in the Balfour Declaration was too vague and open to widely different interpretations. The Arabs, who were aware of the Zionist ambitions, were shocked and alarmed by the declaration, and their reaction was no surprise to a government that took little or no account of their national rights (Tibawi, 1978).

The Zionists seized on this Declaration and proceeded to make the most strenuous efforts to secure wider recognition for it; eventually they succeeded in inducing France and Italy, and then the U.S. to declare their approval. It was in San Remo that the future of the Middle East was decided. During the deliberations of the peace conference, the Zionists seized every opportunity to persuade the conference to agree to the establishment of a British Mandate over Palestine. The British Prime Minister Lloyd George and the French Prime Minister George Clemenceau decided that Palestine's internationalization was impractical and that the mandate over Palestine would be entrusted to a single power. In April 1920 the Supreme Council of the Paris Peace Conference granted France the Mandate for Syria and Lebanon; and Great Britain

the Mandate for Palestine and Iraq. The boundaries of the mandates were settled; France agreed to abandon Palestine and Mosul to the British acquiring only the 25 per cent share of the Mosul oil (Andrew & Kanya-Forstner, 1981). Thus on April 25, 1920, it was agreed that the Mandate for Palestine would be assigned to Great Britain. For the Zionist movement which had lobbied hard to secure a British mandate over Palestine, the San Remo decision was a great victory (Sykes, 1973).

The Mandate for Palestine included the entire text of the Belfour Declaration and was binding under international law (Krämer, 2008). The acceptance of mandate and initiation of civil government were truly decisive moves. Lord Curzon reminded Lloyd George in October 1920 that the inclusion of the Balfour Declaration in the Treaty of San Remo was "the Magna Charta of the Zionist" (Foreign Office (FO) 800/156).Years later Tuchman in her book wrote that it had indeed been the mandate not the Balfour Declaration which had given "a footing in public law to the restoration of Israel in Palestine" She pointed out that the declaration was " simply a statement of policy that any subsequent government could have ignored, allowed to lapse, or even repudiated."(Tuchman, 1968).

It is remarkable that although the mandate speaks of "Jews", "the Jewish people" and "the Jewish population of Palestine" it does not once namely mention "the Palestinians" or "the Palestinian Arabs" who constituted 92 per cent of the population (Cattan, 1988). While the Mandate's twenty eight articles included nine on antiquities, not one related to the Palestinian people per se: they were variously and vaguely defined as a " non-Jewish community", "section of the population", "natives", or "peoples and communities". As far as Great Britain and the League of Nation were concerned, they were not 'a people' (Khalidi, 2009).20 As later events shows during the implementation of the Mandate this omission was not an unintentional.

The principal provisions of the mandate are contained in Articles 1, 2 and 6.

> *1-Whereas the Principal Allied Powers have also agreed that the Mandatory should be responsible for putting into effect the Declaration originally made on November 2nd, 1917, by the Government of His Britannic Majesty, and adopted by the said Powers, in favour of the establishment in Palestine of a national home for the Jewish people, it being clearly understood that nothing should be done which might prejudice the civil and religious rights of existing non-Jewish communities in Palestine, or the rights and political status enjoyed by Jews in any other country.*
>
> *2-The Mandatory shall be responsible for placing the country under such political, administrative and economic conditions as will secure the establishment of the Jewish national home, as laid down in the preamble, and the development of self-governing institutions, and also for safeguarding the civil and religious rights of all the inhabitants of Palestine, irrespective of race and religion.*
>
> *6-The Administration of Palestine, while ensuring that the rights and position of other sections of the population are not prejudiced, shall facilitate Jewish immigration under suitable conditions and shall encourage, in co operation with the Jewish Agency referred to in Article 4, close settlement by Jews on the land, including State lands and waste lands not required for public purposes (Parliamentary Papers, 1923).*

The terms of the Mandate were formulated by the World Zionist Organisation and were settled by the British government "in consultation with Zionist representatives" (Temperly, 1924). Under the Treaty of Mandate the British had a dual obligation in Palestine: to develop self governing institutions in Palestine, and to secure the establishment of a Jewish national home. This imposed unequal treatment of the Jews and Palestinians. The Jews were given an advisory and cooperative role in the Mandate Government through a public body to be known as the Jewish Agency, which represented not only the Yishuv (the Jewish community in Palestine) but also the world Jewry, hence bringing a large, somewhat ill-defined partner into all the discussions and policy decisions on the running of the country. Rashid Khalidi states this as a significant

factor for the failure of the Palestinians states: "The significance of the quasi-official status accorded to the Jewish Agency by Britain and the League of Nations through the Mandate cannot be overemphasized. It gave the Zionist movement an international legitimacy and guaranteed access in London and Geneva which were invaluable". The Palestine Arabs were denied the same national recognition and institutional framework, they were not seen as a discrete historical or political community neither by the League of Nation nor by the British, thus had no such representation (Khalidi, 2001).

2.0 THE SOUTHERN SYRIA STAGE OF ARAB NATIONALISM

The First World War was to be a turning point for Arab nationalism. First there was the Arab revolt, targeting the Ottoman Empire and led by the Sharif of Mecca Amir al-Hussein in the hope for a self-governing Arab state. This dream was to be smashed with the Sykes-Picot Treaty and then the Balfour Declaration. The Balfour Declaration was often referred to by the Palestine Arabs as 'sinister, and 'a black spot' in the history of the British government in particular and the Allies in general. It was contrary to the previous pledges given to the Arabs during the war. The Arab leaders pointed out that the declaration created a 'strange form of Government in Palestine, which is rather Zionist than British', and the Mandate government worked 'day and night' in order to fulfil this declaration and to 'kill the national spirit'. They furthermore pointed out the intrinsic contradiction in the declaration where foreign Jews enjoy political rights in Palestine without prejudicing the rights of the local Arabs (The Colonial Office (CO) 733/52, 1923).

The nominal ruler of Syria was Amir Faysal ibn Hussein who led the Arab striking force on the right flank of the Allied armies in the Palestine and Syrian campaigns (Damascus was 'liberated' from the Ottomans not only by British and French troops, but also by the 'Northern Arab Army' with its Sherifian flags and banners). On 5 October1 918 Amir Faysal claimed in Damascus an 'independent Arab constitutional government with authority over all Syria', that will provide equal rights to its Muslim, Christian and Jewish subjects. Local British military officers, including General Allenby, seemed to support the move and perceived it in the same spirit as McMahon's promise to the Sharif of Mecca; however, in even greater harmony with British interests (Kedourie, 1956). The French were ready to recognize the partial independence of the 'Syrian nation, if it remained under French control and influence, which was agreed after long negotiations in Paris with Premier George Clemenceau and officials of Quai d'Orsay. Their agreement allowed Faysal to reign over an independent Syria over which France would exercise only a loose trusteeship. From the point of view of Clemenceau, these were generous terms "no other French politician would have agreed to let Arab Syria retain a certain measure of independence or offered to let the pro-British Faysal remain in Damascus let alone as Syria's monarch" (Andrew & Kanya-Forstner, 1981).

Britain sought to reconcile the conflicting aspirations of Zionism and Arabism by facilitating discussions between Amir Faysal and Weizmann the president of the World Zionist Organization. Faysal reached a controversial agreement with Weizmann in January 3, 1919 (Antonius, 1938). Weizmann pledged that the Jewish community would cooperate with the Arabs in the economic development of Palestine. In return, Faysal would recognize the Balfour Declaration and consent to Jewish immigration, provided that the rights of the Palestinian Arabs were protected and the Arab demands for the independence of Greater Syria were recognized. As Krämer states: " to all appearances, Faisal was thus prepared not only to open Palestine to Jewish immigration, but to allow the establishment of a 'Jewish national home'" (Krämer, 2008).

Faysal's agreement was attacked by his own supporters and considered by some as a betrayal of the Arab cause; it was an original political move with the aim of freeing himself from complete dependence on British and French control, through with a limited cooperation with the Zionist movement (Kimmerlin, 2000).

In Amir Faysal's short-lived Arab State in Syria (1918-1920) the internal power configuration was dominated by three nationalist extra governmental organizations: the predominantly Palestinian Arab Club (al-Nadi al-'Arabi and Jam'iiyyat Fatat Filastin) (Porath, 1974; Khoury, 1983), the Syrian-led al-Fatat fronted by The Arab Independence Party (Hizb al-Istiqlal al-'Arabi), and the Iraqi-run officers' association, al-'Ahd (Khoury, 1981). The Arab Club was dominated by members from the Palestinian area and was set up as an anti-Zionist organisation devoted to forcing Faysal to abandon his commitment to Zionism. Palestinians also achieved leadership positions in the broad based Istiqlal Party, established by the most prominent of the nationalist clubs al-Fatat. Al-'Ahd, the organisation of Arabic officers in the Ottoman army. It was dominated by members from the Mesopotamian provinces (Iraq), whose main interest was in the future of their own provinces.

On June 3, 1919 the General Syrian Congress assembled in Damascus and included, in addition to the above mentioned groups, delegates from Lebanon, the Druze Mountains and al-Karak (Transjordan). Faysal's major aim was to exchange the French protectorate with the English mandatory power, however the Congress majority was more extreme and rejected any idea other than an independent Greater Syria (including Palestine, Lebanon and the East of the Jordan territories), and declared Faysal as its king (Kimmerlin,2000). Arab nationalists in the General Syrian Congress voted down the terms of the Faysal-Clemenceau agreement. Following that, Faysal seemingly changed course and began to talk as though he meant to follow them.

The second Syrian General Congress assembled in March 1920, and immediately passed a resolution proclaiming Syria to be independent within her "natural" boundaries, including Lebanon and Palestine, under the kingship of Faysal as its constitutional monarch (Nevakivi, 1969). At the same time an Arab delegation in Palestine confronted the British military governor with a resolution opposing Zionism and petitioning to become part of an independent Syria; while other groups of Iraqis met to proclaim the independence of their provinces (Basra and Baghdad) under the kingship of Faysal's brother, Abdullah (Fromkin, 1989). Membership of a newly established Arab state was a solution to the desperate situation of the Arab inhabitants of Palestine. Implementation of the Syrian Congress's aims meant nullification of the Balfour Declaration and the hope of freedom from British colonial rule. During the short period of Faysal's rule in Damascus, thousands of Palestinian notables, teachers, professionals and intellectuals signed and sent petitions to the British rulers as well as to the representatives of the great powers, expressing their willingness in the name of the local population, to be included under Syrian rule and their belief that the territory is a part of Syria, namely Surya al-Janubiyya (Southern Syria).

Because of the British position in Palestine and Iraq, where no native administrations comparable to the one in Damascus had been set up, the immediate British reaction to the Damascus declaration was more violent than the French. The Syrian nationalist failed to realize how much their position and Faysal's had depended on British support; their proclamations attacking British claims to govern Iraq and Palestine. This effectively forced Britain back into an alliance with France in the Middle East. On 13 March the two governments agreed on informing Faysal that they regarded the proceedings of the "self-constituted" congress as null and void and

that the future of Syria, Palestine and Iraq must be "determined by the allied powers acting in concert" (Tibawi, 1969).

The Arab State of Syria was formed under the protection of the British policies and their armies in the area. The Syrian government was forced to evacuate Damascus (Knox, 1981) once this protection was withdrawn after a clash between French and Arab troops on the 24 July.

This caused deep shock and widespread disappointment in Palestine, and brought an end to the first stage of the Palestinian nationalist movement, known as the Southern Syria stage. As a result, Syria was to fade rapidly as a focus of identity for Palestinians. Less than a month after the fall of Faysal's government in Damascus, Musa Kazim Pasha al-Husayni, who was the preeminent nationalist leader in Palestine until his death in 1934, declared: "Now, after the recent events in Damascus, we have to effect a complete change in our plans here. Southern Syria no longer exists. We must defend Palestine."(Porath, 1974).

With Syria and Iraq out of the picture, the Palestinian national movement, facing the threat of Zionism and the British mandate, found itself in an unenviable position. The San Remo Conference awarded Britain the Mandate for Palestine, and the military government was replaced by civilian administration. The Palestine Arabs found themselves under the direct British rule with a Jewish and a Zionist high commissioner: Sir Herbert Samuel. From 1920 to 1925 Palestine was under his 'Civil Administration'. Upon assuming office he entrusted the three most important posts in the administration to three Zionists civil servants. Wyndham Deedes, who was not Jewish but was a devoted Zionist. Was to become his civil secretary (later his chief secretary), Norman Bentwich his the legal secretary (later converted to attorney-general) and Albert Hyamson, his head of immigration (Knox, 1981). On July 7, 1920 he spoke to the assembly of notables from Jerusalem and read out the King's message in Haifa, promising "absolute impartiality" of administration and assuring them that the "gradual establishment in Palestine of a National Home for the Jewish people" would in no way affect their "civil or religious rights or diminish the prosperity of the general population of Palestine." (FO 406/44; Samuel, 1945)39

After the fall of the Ottoman Empire, the Palestinian notable class, facing the reality of British authority in Palestine, found it necessary to temperate its position in order to convince the British that they were the traditional spokesmen of their society thus continuing their roles as intermediaries between the government and the people. They accepted administrative posts, and discretely opposed the policies of the occupier without provoking its wrath (Muslih, 1988). However, the pressure created by the incoming Zionists and the nature of the relationship between the British and Zionists immensely complicated and undermined the position of these notables.

3.0 DIVIDE AND RULE: FANNING INTER-ARAB RIVALRIES

British mandate administration in Palestine was operating on the basis of a worldview rooted in their earlier colonial experiences, notably in Ireland and India, with a crucial Egyptian condominium. This was a worldview that almost invariably perceived colonized societies in religious and communitarian rather than in national terms. Rather than trying to unify them under a nationality banner they continued to divide them internally. As Khalidi (2009) asserts; many members of the Palestinian upper and middle classes had lived, studied, worked in, or visited Egypt, therefore they were aware of the Egyptian precedents, and of Britain's notorious predilection for the politics of divide and rule, generally on a religious basis. Thus, early after the

British occupation, Palestinian political figures set up the Muslim-Christian Associations (MCA), the first organizational expression of Palestinian Arab nationalism, in almost every city, town and major locality as a means of countering an attempt to use this approach to divide the Palestinian Arabs along religious lines.41 The aim of these MCAs was to express an Arab-Muslim and Arab-Christian solidarity in face of the new ruler. Most of the local notables, but also considerable segments of the younger, educated professionals and intelligentsia, were recruited to the MCA. The MCA launched petitions and formed delegations to represent their concerns to the representatives of the new rulers, demanding an alteration of the pro-Zionist policy of Britain, and to pay heed to the political rights of the country's Arab majority. The simultaneous, spontaneous and grass roots creation of these MCA exhibited impressive political skill and awareness on the part of the local elite. The Third Palestine Arab congress was held in December 1920 in Haifa by the delegates of MCA and other local 'clubs' from all over the country. The most important difference between the First and the Third Congress was not only the establishment of a local institutionalized leadership, but its shift in focus (Porath, 1974). The name Southern Syria (in reference to Palestine) ceased to be used at this congress. Palestine was no longer regarded as a part of Syria or any other larger identity, but rather as a distinct polity with its native Palestinian members .The Congress passed resolutions which rejected the Balfour Declaration and all that it implied, while demanding the formation of a representative government. In order to maintain some continuity of action, the Congress created an Arab Executive Committee (AEC) and was headed by two Jerusalem notables, Musa Kazim Pasha el Husseini as president and Aref al-Djani as vice-president. From that point onwards, the Palestinian nationalist movement during the mandate period continued to be headed by the urban notable class and to be guided by the principles of the third congress (Muslih, 1988).The Palestine Arab Congress was a nationwide body that demanded national rights for the Arab majority, local patriotism and political interest were at the heart of the ideological preferences.

On 18 December, Musa Kazim Pasha el Husseini, presented a memorandum appealing to Samuel and asking for a native government to be formed immediately. On 21 December Wyndham Deedes dismissed this memorandum, denying that the congress was representative of the population (FO 406/45). The British contested the Palestine Arab Congress' legitimacy and its representative nature and never officially recognized it.

To divide the Palestinian Arabs along religious lines, the Mandatory state proceeded in the haphazard fashion of British colonialism to construct an entirely new communitarian system. As Khalidi wrote: ".... Palestinian Arab politics were increasingly dominated by religious leadership that had been authorized, encouraged, and subsidized by the British. Indeed the religious-political institutions controlled by these leaders were very much in the nature of an 'invented tradition', in the words of Hobsbawm and Ranger."(Khalidi, 2001). In practice this meant the creation of certain 'Islamic' institutions with no precedent in the country's history or the Islamic history in general (Khalidi, 2009).

A particular episode that was to have lasting consequences was the intervention of the Palestine administration in the selection of a new religious leader for the Moslem community. It began with the death of the Mufti of Jerusalem in1921. A mufti was an official who implemented the Moslem religious laws (shari'a), and the Mufti of Jerusalem was the chief jurist in his province. The British administration –bestowing a title apparently of its own invention- also designated him as the "Grand Mufti of Palestine" (mufti filastin al-akbar) and as the leader of the Moslem community in Palestine (Kedourie, 2004). The position of mufti of Jerusalem had always been an important one in the past, but it had been limited both in terms of geographical scope and authority. The holder of this position traditionally had no power over muftis who

served in other major Palestinian cities, even though he certainly had greater prestige than any of them. This new title expanded both the scope and the authority of this position. British administration also created another 'Islamic' institution: The Supreme Muslim Council "al-Majlis al_Islami al A'la". This entirely new administrative body was given a variety of duties including the control over Muslim courts, schools, religious endowments (awqaf), mosques, and an annual revenue of £50,000 for its functioning. The council also had the power to hire and fire all awkaf and shari'a (the code of law laid down in and derived from the Quran) court officials included qadis, member of shari'a court of appeal, local muftis as well as employees of awkaf funds (Cmd. 5479, 1937). All these enormous powers which touched innumerable Palestinians in their livelihood and welfare were almost totally exempt from official inspection and control (Kedourie, 2004).49

According to the Ottoman law, which the British incorporated into their own administrative legislation of the area, the government was to select the new Mufti from among the candidates nominated by a Moslem Electoral College. On 11 April, the day before the meeting of Electoral College, Samuel had a meeting with Hajj Amin in order to show his support. During the meeting, Hajj Amin "declared his earnest desire to cooperate with the government, and his belief in the good intentions of the British government towards the Arabs. He gave assurances that the influence of his family and himself would be devoted to maintaining tranquillity in Jarusalem." (Kedourie, 2004). This meeting was intended to prepare the way for Samuel to select Hajj Amin's name from the list of three candidates. To the surprise of the British government Hajj Amin was not among the three candidates and therefore could not be included in the list. Arab politics within Palestine were formed by the rivalry between the great urban families. Throughout the British occupation, the most conspicuous rivalry was between the Jerusalem families of al-Husayni and al-Nashashibi. Musa Kazim al-Husayni, who was the head of the Husayni family and the mayor of Jerusalem during the Nabi Musa disturbances of April 1920, was dismissed after the riot and Raghib al-Nashashibi, from a rival family was appointed in his place. For Samuel it would be ill-advised for both the mayor and the mufti to be drawn outside the Husayni family, thus Hajj Amin al Husayni was the favourite contender. By the end of the month the results of the election was to be disregarded. Although he had received the fewest votes of the four candidates for the post, Hajj Amin al Husayni was allowed to become Grand Mufti of Jerusalem and at the same time to head the Supreme Muslim Council (SMC) too. This led to a situation unheard of in Islamic jurisprudence, where a mufti appointed the qadis, when traditionally it should have been the other way around. In the Ottoman and every other Islamic system, the post of mufti was invariably subordinate in power and prestige to that of the qadi. The qadi had normally been appointed by the Ottoman state from the ranks of the central Ottoman religious establishment, and because of the importance of the position, the qadi was not supposed to come from a local family, in order to prevent conflicts of interest and local favouritism. The mufti's as well as the qadi's deputy, the naib (chief secretary of the shari'a court), was by contrast almost always of local origin (Khalidi, 1997).

Samuel was well satisfied with the composition of the SMC and anticipated it to have cordial relations with the British administration (CO 733/18). After its establishment until the final days of Samuel's term in office, the SMC strove to prevent any disturbances that might have occurred. The establishment of the SMC was a conscious attempt on Samuel's part to placate the Muslim Arabs by providing them with some form of representation, in order to compensate them, at least partially, for the autonomous representative institution which he had granted to the Zionists.

By the terms of the Mandate, only one party, the Jews, was formally recognized as a political or national entity. It was absolutely essential to the British to divide, distract, and divert the opposition of the other party representing the vast majority of the country's population, the Palestinian Arabs. The British carried out this diversion by providing the Palestinian Muslim elites with entirely new communal structures recognized by the administration, involving a certain degree of autonomy, and enjoying significant revenues. As a president of the MSC, Hajj Amin was given an income over £100.000 a year at his disposal (Kedourie, 2004), which was not subject to a governmental audit. On the other hand, they were denied any official identity and therefore national or representative institutional authority. In 1924 the MSC employed 1,193 people in various posts (Morris, 2001), those who accepted such posts were obliged to refrain from openly opposing the Mandate, its commitment to support a Jewish national home, and the concomitant denial of Palestinian self-determination.

As Khalidi (2009) claims; the greatest coup for the British in the first decade after their occupation was to entice Hajj Amin al-Husayni, into accepting such a position as part of an implicit bargain of this sort. He was a leader of the most prominent family in the most important city of Palestine, a man with familial, religious, social, and political prestige.

There was an interlude in the Palestinian Arab struggle against Zionism from the end of 1923 to 1929, when Palestine witnessed the second major outbreak of violence. This quiet period and the reduction of Arab pressure on the Mandate Administration were mainly due the rifts which developed within the Arab nationalist movement. During this period, Hajj Amin served the British remarkably well in keeping Palestinian opposition to the mandatory regime within reasonable limits, showing devotion 'to maintaining tranquillity' as he promised Samuel at their meeting in 1921. This continued until 1930, when Hajj Amin felt obliged to align himself with a growing popular rebellion against his former masters, and abandoned his balancing act between them and the popular forces that threatened to leave him and the rest of the traditional leadership behind.

3.1 Internal Personality Clashes and Power Struggles within the Arab Notables

The internal personality clashes and power struggles within the Arab notables from 1924 onwards, were to characterize the Palestinian nationalist movement into the 1930s. The Palestinian leaders, semi-feudal in the countryside and authoritarian in the cities, were unable to transcend the narrow world of the notable family politics. In a situation where political elites fought each other vehemently, their narrow mindedness was tantamount to paralysis and stagnation. It should be noted that the Zionist leadership, by contrast, concentrated on mobilizing its community towards one clear goal: the construction of an infrastructure for a Jewish state in Palestine.

Samuel established Hajj Amin at the centre of Palestinian politics, but the action was far from satisfactory for the local elite. There was the unremitting hostility of the mufti to any institution or any individual that threatened to challenge the power and prestige of the institutions he controlled. This jealousy obviously extended to the Municipality of Jerusalem, formerly headed by a member of the al-Husayni family, but from 1920 until the mid-1930s controlled by one of the mufti's leading rivals, Ragip Bey al-Nashahibi. Notables' early divisions and rivalry continued throughout this period with the formation of internal factions.

The first faction was made up by those supporting the mufti. The council became the Mejlisiyyun (the coalition). Those opposing him, the Mu'aridun (the Opponents), were headed

by Raghib Bey al-Nashashibi. This simplistic division was further complicated by the appearance of ideological parties supporting pan-Arabism in the 1930s. Hizb al-Istiqlal al-'Arabi (Arab Independence Party) was supporting pan-Arabism whereas the Young Men's Muslim Association supported Political Islam. Furthermore, other forms of oppositions, based on new groupings, parties, and forms of associations, with the Arab Independence Party being the most significant, exacerbated the problem. Some of those groups called for boycotting the British entirely. Their approach horrified most members of the notable leadership which was almost without exception deeply involved with the British and many of whom were directly on the Mandate's payroll. Briefly, when compared with all other factions, the basic coalition-opposition rift was the most important one in the high politics of the day. When active, which was usually the case, the coalition-opposition weakened the Palestinian national movement as a whole (Pappe, 2006).

Opposition to Husayni's leadership crystallized around the Nashashibi clan, which represented the richest landowners, citrus growers, and entrepreneurs of the area. They were more heavily involved than other notables in the land sales to the Zionists, and were the greatest beneficiaries of citrus exports to England. The Nashashibi-led groups opposed the pan-Arab unity and were ready to accept less than a total independence from Britain. This group, which established the National Defence Party in 1934, had a certain base of support through its patron-client networks (Lesch, 1979). Nashashibies relied on Abdullah in Transjordan to assist them in countering the Jewish Agency's power and to influence British policies in Palestine's favour. They did not hesitate, when they deemed it necessary, to follow Abdullah who, from the early 1920s, was prepared to divide Palestine between himself and a small Zionist entity under a British umbrella (Pappe, 2006).

The Istiqlal (Independence) Party established in 1932 was led by the elements of the educated middle class and the disaffected offspring of the notable families. Unlike other Palestinian parties founded in the 1930s, it was organized not on the basis of family or clan loyalties but around a political program, and thus it was the first to appeal to and construct a new and modern form of subjectivity. It also distinguished itself by centring its political action on opposing the British mandate government rather than aiming them at the Jewish community alone. The party's political strategy of boycotting the British made it essential for the mandate administration to find the means of weakening the Istiqlal Party's influence in Palestine. The Istiqlal advocated the establishment of a nationalist parliament and the abolition of 'feudal' titles, such as pasha, bey, and effendi, which were common among the notable families. The lack of preferential social class element in their policies antagonised the landed notables who were profiting from their land sales to the Zionists. In 1933, The Party began to attack the notable families leadership, asserting that, they remained passive and collaborative in the face of Zionism and imperialism. The mandate administration and the Zionist were as deeply alarmed as the notable families by the rise of the Istiqlal Party's nationwide support. Additionally, their nationalist agenda dedicated to opposing British rule and defeating Zionism was not less alarming. In his study, Matthews has revealed how both the British and the Zionists colluded with the Mufti and his political associates to meet what they perceived as the most dangerous challenge to their dominance, that posed by the Istiqlal Party (Matthews, 2006).

In 1934, the Istiqlal Party ceased to function effectively, aided by Hajj Amin's efforts to divide the party into a pro-Hashemite and a pro-Saudi faction. As a result many Istiqlalist joined the Mufti's Palestine Arab Party, which was simply a clan-based grouping (Kayyali, 1978).

Zionist efforts to divide and weaken the Arab nationalist movement from within began in 1921. Members of the Zionist Executive Committee (ZEC) had already identified some elements among the Arab political elite who, for reasons of personal family feuds, opposed the Arab Executive Committee (AEC). The Zionist Executive Committee immediately set out to encourage their members, both "morally" and "materially", to work against the leaders of the AEC (Porath, 1974). It was during the summer of 1921, that Zionist attempted to organize all the opponents of the AEC under one political framework with a programme favourable to Zionism. When the first Palestinian Arab delegation departed for England in July 1921, various Zionist elements argued that the delegation was not representative of the entire Arab population of Palestine (Huneidi, 2001). The Zionist Organisation spend considerable sums of money to establish two political parties: the National Muslim Association (al-Jam'iyya al-Islamiyya al-Wataniyya, 1921-23), and the Agricultural Party (1924-26). The members of the National Muslim Association were basically those who, for reasons of the family feuds, opposed the Husayni leadership. Chief among them were members of the Nashashabi family. On the other hand the members of the Agricultural Party were village sheikhs. Thus the Zionist exploited the differences between the village and the city (Porath, 1974).

The National Muslim Association disappeared from the scene after the success of the AEC's boycotting the elections for the Legislative Council in 1923. But a new grouping emerged to oppose the leadership of the AEC, at a critical moment when the mandate for Palestine had been ratified by the League of Nations. This group was at first referred to as the "moderate party", and took the formal shape of the Palestine Arab National Party (al-Hizb al-watani al-'Arabi al-Filastini) in November1923(Porath, 1974) . This was the result of the combined efforts of the Zionists and Samuel. Towards the end of 1922 Samuel himself began to advocate the formation of an Arab "moderate party" (Kayyali, 1978). In his letter dated December 1922, he wrote to the Duke of Devonshire that, some of the leading men in Palestine took a different view to that of the AEC. Samuel portrayed them as Arab nationalists, who recognized that Palestine could not at present govern itself, welcoming the British Mandate and believing in the ultimate success of self-government. Samuel also stated that, some of them were "largely animated" by personal animosity to individuals in the other camp. Furthermore, some were under the impression that they might obtain some advantages by standing with the government, and some others "were influenced by favours received from one of the Jewish organisers, who had set out to form a pro-Zionist Arab party." (CO 733/28, 1922). The Palestine Arab National Party split the nationalist movement and weakened it for the rest of the mandate years, for no other reason than to challenge the leadership of the AEC.

In June 1924, there had been reports of reconciliation between Arab political parties and suggestions for forming one single party (CO 733/71, 1924). In October; an attempt was made by the rival parties to reconcile their differences, the first step being taken by the AEC. By the end of the year, there was general agreement to keep personal rivalries under check, and although delegates from the two parties had met, no formal decisions were taken. However, these initiatives resulted with no visible outcome. As the Arab division reached its climax, a Muslim scholar from Tunis ('Abd al-'Aziz Tha'alibi) attempted to arbitrate between the two opposing Palestinian camps. His efforts to promote the unity of all Arab parties before the advent of the Seventh Palestine Arab Congress also failed (Huneidi, 2001).

The progression of the Arab revolt began in April 1936 and lasted until the early summer of 1939. It began with a combined strike and boycott in the cities from April to November 1936 and was accompanied by an armed resistance. 'National strike comities' formed almost in every Arab town. Despite their lack of political experience all the Arab white and blue collar

workforce, urban and countryside dwellers felt compelled to act. As Krämer (2008) observes; they hadn't taken orders 'from above' neither from the Supreme Muslim Council nor from one of the notable families, but were acting on their own initiative. Under their pressure, Arab leaders were forced to take action. For a brief period, old rivalries were set aside to form a joint national leadership, the Arab Higher Committee (AHC), chaired by Mufti Hajj Amin al-Husayni. However, this did not stop the internal bickering and divisiveness (Khalidi, 2001). Khalaf (1991) observes that to regain control and dominance "the notability attempted to organize local bands where their clientelist influence was strong and use these bands to balance the politico-military strength of each other." The revolt failed not only because of the British forces' brutal suppression but also because of the traditional Palestinian leadership's failure to unite due to their internal rivaleries.

The history of Palestine under the British Mandate almost invariably focuses on the disputes among Palestinian Arab leaders/notables and the factions they headed. The leadership were neither capable of providing the desperately needed alternative approach, nor of diverting them from the tragic course that led to the sacrifices of the 1936-39 revolt, the crushing of which marked the beginning of the end of an Arab Palestine. Over the 10 percent of adult male population of Palestinian Arabs were killed, wounded, imprisoned or exiled during the revolt. Those losses were mostly experienced by military cadets and capable fighters; also large quantities of arms and ammunitions were confiscated (Khalaf, 1991).The suppression of the Arab revolt was brutal and cruel, and was suppressed in ways that even some British officials described as not shaming the Nazis (Gerber, 2003). The Palestinian notables felt that brutal suppression of the 1936 revolt exposed Britain's real agenda. Even without this brutality, the nationalist notables felt betrayed by Britain, which had constantly violated its promises to the Palestinians since 1916.

The British conduct was documented in the local press, and included horrific stories of abuse, hanging, torture and callousness, mostly, but not exclusively, between 1936 and 1939 (Pappe, 2006). These methods included the indiscriminate killing of villagers near where British soldiers had been the victims of terrorist acts, the stripping of women to make sure that they were not men in disguise, and the tying of village leaders on trains as human shields. The British exiled many individual leaders, others fled, and the Palestinian Arabs were left without any leadership. As Issa Khalaf observes "the lack of representative institutions denied Palestinian society a truly democratic voice, a situation which allowed the notability to continue with its in fighting. More fundamentally than self-governing institutions, the lack of effective power over the state meant that the Palestinian Arab notability which headed the national movement would be unable to use the resources of the state to centralize power in its hands and develop into a cohesive stratum." (Khalaf, 1991).

While Palestinian Arabs still suffering from the British repression of 1936-39 they faced the most crucial challenge of their history: the events of 1947-49.Tthey call it the Nakba (the Palestinian catastrophe).

4.0 CONCLUSION

Palestine was under the British protection and Mandate from 1918 to 1948, the demographic, economic, military, and organizational infrastructure of the future Jewish state was laid, at the expense of the indigenous Palestinian people and despite their resistance. It was during this period that the balance of power between the indigenous Palestinian population and the Jewish

immigrant population slowly but relentlessly shifted in favour of the latter. Solidly established indigenous Arab inhabitants, settled on the land and dominant in the urban administration of Palestine for centuries, and forming the majority at approximately eight to one in 1922, become a minority within the new Israeli state in 1948. Benny Morris claims that, the Mandate period provided a "nursery" of state building that Palestinians failed to take advantage of but which the Zionist exploited to the full (Morris, 1989). In reality this nursery did exist, but only for the Zionists. The British, explicitly excluded Palestinian national rights, and did not even mention the Palestinians in the Balfour Declaration and the League of Nations Mandate for Palestine. They were referred to solely in negative terms, as 'the non-Jewish communities in Palestine'. This was an important prerequisite both for the denial of self-determination to the Palestinians, and for the British decision to favour Zionism and building the Jewish National Home.

The policies of the Arab leadership were largely the effect, rather than the cause of basic British policy and orientation. The British policy was decided in accordance with British imperial needs and contingencies, which were all too frequently founded on the "divide and rule" method in opposition to the legitimate national interests and aspirations of the peoples concerned.

The British Mandate government fostered the creation and development of newly created 'Islamic' institutions; gave them full control of extensive public revenues and broad patronage powers. From 1922 until the revolt of 1936, this policy served its intended purpose of dividing the traditional leadership and providing a counterweight to the Palestinian national movement. The British by giving a crucial portion of the Palestinians elite both some control over resources and a measure of prestige, but no access to official authority, they effectively distracted many Palestinians form a unified focus on anti-colonial national objectives, including the control of the mandatory state, and building an effective nationalistic body to rival the state. Without any central authority and leadership the Palestinian Arab society did not have the social and cultural resources to organize and unite itself.

The Palestinian nationalist movement was not obstructed solely by external obstacles such as the British and Zionist policies. Internal factors, resulting largely from the nature of the social structure and the individual greed of certain notables in Palestine also contributed to the problem. The lack of cohesion of Palestinian elites repeatedly stalled an effective and a unified response to the challenges posed by the formidable foes of Palestinian nationalism. The Palestinian notables/leadership did not show the ability to transcend local, family, and political rivalries and to unify their efforts against their common enemies.

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