

**BRITISH FOREIGN POLICY DECISION-MAKING TOWARDS PALESTINE
DURING THE MANDATE (1917-1948): A POLIHEURISTIC PERSPECTIVE**

By

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Abstract

This thesis is chiefly concerned with understanding the reasons behind British foreign policy towards Palestine between the invasion in December 1917 and final withdrawal in May 1948. It applies Poliheuristic Decision (Ph) Theory to British Cabinet decision-making at four critical junctures in foreign policy decision-making during this time period, arguing that contrary to the established literature on Mandate Palestine, British Cabinet policy reflected a stark lack of viable alternatives that left little room for consideration of personal biases, allegiances or sentimental attachment to either Zionism or Arab nationalism during the decision-making process. This reveals how crucial decisions concerning the future of Palestine were frequently more concerned with fighting narrow, domestic or broader, international political battles than preventing or dealing with a burgeoning conflict in a tiny strip of land on the Mediterranean. In so doing, this thesis aims to elucidate previously neglected areas of the British Mandate for Palestine as well as highlight some of the problems with Ph theory as a bridging framework between Rational Choice and cognitive models, while contributing new and innovative case studies to the field of Foreign Policy Analysis.

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Introduction

*“All we have to do is not to mix ourselves up with religious squabbles”.*¹

Sir Mark Sykes, British diplomat, 1915.

The British Empire controlled Palestine for little more than thirty years (1917-1948), but during that time had an enormous impact on the course of its future development, fostering the creation of a Jewish national home and suppressing Arab rebellion. This thesis is chiefly concerned with understanding the reasons behind British foreign policy towards Palestine – high policy decided by the cabinet in Westminster and not the day-to-day policy of administering the territory, which was conducted chiefly through the bureaucracy of the Colonial Office. As such, this thesis illustrates four case studies, critical junctures of foreign policy decision-making between the beginning of Britain’s occupation in December 1917 and its withdrawal from Palestine in May 1948. It argues that, contrary to the established literature on Mandate Palestine, British high policy reflected a stark lack of viable alternatives that left little room for consideration of personal biases, allegiances or sentimental attachment to either Zionism or Arab nationalism during the decision-making process, revealing that decisions made about the future of Palestine were frequently more concerned with fighting narrow, domestic or broader, international political battles than preventing or dealing with a burgeoning conflict in a tiny strip of land on the Mediterranean.

As previous studies have been focused chiefly on day-to-day interactions in Palestine, they have relied heavily on original documentation of the Palestine Administration, the High Commissioner and his dealings with the Colonial Office in London, as well as the diaries and memoirs of prominent Zionist leaders such as

¹ CAB 24/1, 16 December 1915, “Evidence of Lieutenant Colonel Sir Mark Sykes, Bart., M.P., on the Arab Question”, The National Archives, Kew (hereafter TNA).

Chaim Weizmann and David Ben-Gurion. This has meant that academic discussion of British policy decisions made during the Mandate has been conducted almost exclusively through the prism of external parties' perceptions. As this thesis seeks to elucidate specifically British decision-making, the focus has been placed on British archives as well as particular relevant collections held in the United States that are useful for examining the post-war Mandate period.

Additionally, while the established literature on Mandate Palestine has left complex British motives and goals largely unexplored – this is discussed in greater detail in Chapter One – a relative neglect shown by relevant studies of British foreign policy of the use of theoretical frameworks confounds the situation.² In order to understand the “simultaneously fragmented and unitary character” of foreign policy-making, as well as generalise findings to the wider field of international relations (IR), it is necessary to engage with theories that address the role of governmental choice.³ Consequently, this thesis applies one theory of governmental choice to archival documents in order to draw a line between what did and did not determine decision-making. This approach is anchored in the subfield of IR: Foreign Policy Analysis (FPA), and utilises the theoretical framework of Poliheuristic Decision (Ph) Theory.

In so doing, this thesis aids a more complete understanding of the British Mandate for Palestine, contributes innovative case studies to FPA, and demonstrates a useful and widely applicable framework for the study of foreign policy decision-

² Charles Ronald Middleton, *The Administration of British Foreign Policy 1782-1846* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1977); Matthew Hughes, *Allenby and British Strategy in the Middle East* (London: Frank Cass, 1999); Bruce Westrate, *The Arab Bureau: British Policy in the Middle East 1916-1920* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1992); Richard Grayson, *Austen Chamberlain and the Commitment to Europe: British Foreign Policy 1924-29* (London: Frank Cass, 1997); John Darwin, *Britain, Egypt and the Middle East: Imperial Policy in the Aftermath of War 1918-1922* (London: Macmillan, 1981); Paul Doerr, *British Foreign Policy 1919-1939* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1998); Philip Reynolds, *British Foreign Policy in the Inter-War Years* (London: Longman's, Green & Co., 1954); Matthew Hughes, *British Foreign Secretaries in an Uncertain World, 1919-1939* (London: Routledge, 2006); Isaiah Friedman, *British Pan-Arab Policy, 1915-1922* (New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers, 2010).

³ Christopher Hill, *The Changing Politics of Foreign Policy* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), 85.

making. Using Poliheuristic Decision Theory allows for the identification of predictable and generalisable patterns of behaviour among political leaders. This approach is based on a fundamental assumption – that the primary and immediate consideration of decision-makers is their own political survival and every other concern is secondary. This thesis argues, therefore, that while actual decisions varied during the British Mandate, Palestine foreign policy decision-making processes were driven primarily by a desire for political survival, which significantly narrowed the scope of options available to politicians for dealing with successive crises. This means that although colourful, interesting and engaging, the personalities, biases and beliefs of decision-makers had little demonstrable impact on British foreign policy decision-making towards Palestine during the Mandate.

Foreign Policy Analysis

Foreign Policy Analysis is the subfield of IR most concerned with choice, focusing on the decision-making of individual leaders and groups. Concerned with human decision-makers, FPA utilises historic case studies in order to distil useful patterns, seeking to provide a more comprehensive understanding of past behaviour, and even to predict present and future decisions. Crucially, this is not merely a descriptive exercise but one aimed at producing generalisable findings through the use of a theoretical framework. The case studies presented in the following chapters, therefore, are not studies in British foreign policy. Rather, they are investigations of British foreign policy decision-making, specifically towards Palestine during the initial occupation and Mandate period, conducted in order to identify patterns of behaviour. As Palestine policy between 1917 and 1948 was decided principally by politicians, it would be artificial to try and address the reasons behind these choices –

in a manner that reflected their complexity – without reference to domestic politics. Systematising the relationship between domestic politics and foreign policy, however, involves a degree of hybridisation between different FPA models. This thesis utilises the bridging framework of Poliheuristic Decision Theory as an appropriate model while it strives to provide this type of analysis.

Using a two-stage decision-making process, Ph Theory ostensibly represents a bridge between rational choice and cognitive models. These elements of Foreign Policy Analysis are discussed in greater detail in Chapter Two, but, in short, rational choice is a highly reliable if simplistic predictive model, whereas cognitive approaches seek to uncover the nuances of human decision-making by drawing upon other fields such as psychology and anthropology; the cognitive models are so detailed that they can rarely yield generalisable findings. In contrast, a Ph approach tries to combine them both in the two-stage decision-making process that operates as follows: in the first stage, politicians eliminate from their range of choices any alternatives that threaten their political survival. Then in the second stage, politicians choose an option out of the remaining alternatives using a simple cost-benefit analysis.⁴

No amount of benefit on any dimension, such as the economy or the military, can cancel out risk to a leader's political survival. This is the noncompensatory principle.⁵ Through this “logic of political survival” and the noncompensatory principle, Poliheuristic Decision Theory helps to provide a better understanding of

⁴ Alex Mintz and Nehemia Geva, “The Poliheuristic Theory of Foreign Policy Decision Making”. In: *Decisionmaking on War and Peace: The Cognitive-Rational Debate*, eds. Alex Mintz and Nehemia Geva, 81-102 (Boulder: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1997); Alex Mintz, “Integrating Cognitive and Rational Theories of Foreign Policy Decision Making: A Poliheuristic Perspective”. In: *Integrating Cognitive and Rational Theories of Foreign Policy Decision Making*, ed. Alex Mintz, 1-10 (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002).

⁵ Ibid.

decisions in which the final choice seems to have been irrational.⁶ This is because the Ph approach, by elucidating domestic political constraints on British foreign policy decision-making, supplies a new principle of rationality that does not exist in either rational choice or cognitive models on their own.⁷

Although the poliheuristic model is based to a large extent on research conducted into the United States presidency, the logic of political survival and noncompensatory principle should be applicable to any government system, including a dictatorship.⁸ In applying Ph Theory's two-stage decision-making framework to Britain's Palestine policy at four key junctures during the Palestine Mandate, it is possible to demonstrate why the cabinet decided to pursue action that worsened the burgeoning conflict between Palestine's two communities, sometimes in a manner that seemed entirely contrary to British interests, and how these policy decisions were often concluded without direct reference to the desires of either Zionists or Palestinian Arabs.

This thesis finds that in every case, the British cabinet always rejected alternatives that failed to meet their political requirements. Once these options were eliminated, the cabinet chose among the remaining alternatives by seeking to maximise benefit and minimise costs for other relevant considerations. This analysis reveals how the development of policy in Palestine was based primarily on the need to satisfy British domestic political concerns. This was not because Palestine was unimportant, but rather because Palestine policy frequently overlapped with issues more crucial to individual governments' political survival. This thesis, therefore,

⁶ Alex Mintz, "How Do Leaders Make Decisions? A Poliheuristic Perspective", *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 48 (1) 2004: 3-13.

⁷ David Brulé, "The Poliheuristic Research Program: An Assessment and Suggestions for Further Progress", *International Studies Review* 10 (2) 2008: 266-293, 267.

⁸ Brandon Kinne, "Decision Making in Autocratic Regimes: A Poliheuristic Perspective", *International Studies Perspectives* 6 (1) 2005: 114-128.

asserts that Ph Theory provides cogent explanations for a series of critical British decisions, as well as the ability to generalise to later and more culturally and politically diverse case studies, making it a highly useful theory of political decision-making. This is despite the various limitations and weaknesses that are discussed in Chapter Two.

Methodology

An execution of this poliheuristic approach is achieved through a series of qualitative case studies: multiple embedded case studies analysed using the method of process-tracing. While there are limitations to this approach, potential problems are minimised by the nature of the studies themselves, their theoretical framework, and the construct, internal and external validity they attempt to achieve through the use of a rich theoretical framework and extensive archival research.

First, Yin defines a case study as “an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon in depth and within its real-life context, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident”.⁹ When context is a crucial consideration, the case study is appropriate. As the studies presented in this thesis have not predetermined which variables influenced British decision-making towards Palestine, but instead investigate principally which variables were at play, context has been a vital component necessitating the use of case study analysis. This methodology is also appropriate because a traditional quantitative study is unlikely to provide the detail necessary to understand this type of decision-making. While it is possible to use Poliheuristic Decision Theory in large-N studies, the shifting nature of routine foreign policy is more problematic to classify than crisis

⁹ Robert Yin, *Case Study Research: Design and Methods*, 4th Edition (London: Sage Publications, 2008), 18.

behaviour.¹⁰ In addition, a qualitative approach utilising Ph Theory then also allows for an explanation of behaviour that defies rationality – defined by the rational choice model as purposive action seeking utility maximisation – rather than labelling it a statistical anomaly.¹¹

In applying a qualitative methodology to the poliheuristic framework, this thesis is concerned with four specific case studies: the decision to reaffirm the Jewish national home in the Churchill White Paper of 1922; the reversal of the Passfield White Paper in 1931; the decision to issue the MacDonald White Paper in 1939; and the decision to withdraw from Palestine made in 1947. This thesis does not, however, provide a separate analysis of decision-making behind the original Balfour Declaration in 1917 (see Chapter One). This is because the subject has already been covered in great depth and also because an extremely vague wartime promise of dubious sincerity, released initially as a private letter rather than as a white paper, does not necessarily constitute foreign policy. Rather, the affirmation of the Balfour Declaration is the real starting point for British foreign policy decision-making towards Palestine and the declaration itself is a natural component of analysing the Churchill White Paper of 1922.

Otherwise, these case studies have not been selected from a wider pool of options; they represent four distinct periods of decision-making during British rule over Palestine. Each period is defined by a problem in Palestine – a violent riot or protest – that required a policy decision from the British cabinet in Westminster rather

¹⁰ Karl DeRouen and Christopher Sprecher, “Initial Crisis Reaction and Poliheuristic Theory”, *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 48 (1) 2004: 56-68; David Brulé and Alex Mintz, “Blank Check or Marching Orders? Public Opinion and Presidential Use of Force in the United States”. In: H Starr, ed. *Approaches, Levels, and Methods of Analysis in International Politics: Crossing Boundaries* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), 157-172.

¹¹ Paul MacDonald, “Useful Fiction or Miracle Maker: The Competing Epistemological Foundations of Rational Choice Theory”, *American Political Science Review* 97 (4) 2003: 551-565; Graham Allison, *Essence of Decision: Explaining the Cuban Missile Crisis* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1971).

than the Palestine Administration in Jerusalem or simply the Colonial Office. These disturbances always preceded two commissions of enquiry followed by a statement of policy, which remained in place until the next violent outbreak necessitated another reassessment. These four case studies represent the only instances when the central British government became directly involved in shaping Palestine's burgeoning conflict, and these decisions had the long-term consequences that make their study vital to understanding formative stages in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

Implementing Yin's five components of research design¹², this thesis aims to answer the question, what motivated British foreign policy decision-making towards Palestine during the Mandate period? Its key propositions derive from Polyheuristic Decision Theory: the logic of political survival and the noncompensatory principle, and the units of analysis are the four key junctures of foreign policy outlined above. Providing the logical link between data collected on each of these junctures and propositions of Ph Theory is an identification of which variables constituted the cabinet's political dimension (understanding of its political survival) and what were the key substantive dimensions (other considerations such as the economy or diplomacy) in each decision-making process. This is also achieved through archival research. In addition, the Ph approach's two-stage decision-making process provides the criteria and vehicle for analysing findings: was stage one or stage two more influential in the adoption of a final choice? This process is discussed in greater detail in Chapter Two.

These case studies represent a multiple-case, or collective case, design, as they represent four cases that are part of the same study.¹³ They are embedded because the cases are variants, or subunits, of the same phenomenon and do not purport to address

¹² Yin, *Case Study Research*, 27.

¹³ Ibid, 53; Robert E. Stake, *The Art of Case Study Research* (London: Sage Publications, 1995).

the global nature of British foreign policy decision-making in its entirety.¹⁴ In an attempt to ensure construct, internal and external validity,¹⁵ these case studies are performed using a variety of source materials including official documentation and private papers, a number of different archives and written evidence from both sides of the political spectrum. As these are explanatory case studies, the presence of an unknown third factor intervening in what would otherwise be a direct causal relationship between x and y would undermine their internal validity. To try and avoid such a mishap, all of these studies have involved both extensive “soaking and poking” through secondary sources highlighted in Chapter One and a deliberate over-collection of data in archival research.¹⁶ Rival causal explanations have also been considered, and so each case study includes a brief explanation of why the rational choice model, which is not traditionally centred on the importance of domestic politics in Foreign Policy Analysis, would have provided incorrect or less than satisfactory predictions under the circumstances of each decision-making juncture.

As it is not possible in this study to conduct a controlled comparison – when every variable between two or more cases is the same apart from one – it utilises a process-tracing approach.¹⁷ This method “attempts to identify the intervening causal process – the causal chain and causal mechanism – between an independent variable (or variables) and the outcome of the dependent variable”.¹⁸ Such an approach fits particularly well with Poliheuristic Decision Theory because both allow for and accept the possibility of equifinality – that there may be multiple causal pathways. As Ph Theory essentially describes decision-making as convergent causal mechanisms,

¹⁴ Yin, *Case Study Research*, 50.

¹⁵ Ibid, 40-45.

¹⁶ Alexander L. George and Andrew Bennett, *Case Studies and Theory Development in the Social Sciences* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2005), 90.

¹⁷ Ibid, 179.

¹⁸ Ibid, 206.

there is no temptation to force the analysis into proclaiming a single, and probably unrealistic, determining variable. Likewise, tracing the process of decision-making “helps narrow the list of potential causes” but “forces the investigator to take equifinality into account, that is, to consider the alternative paths through which the outcome could have occurred”.¹⁹ This thesis specifically applies the variety of process-tracing labelled Analytic Explanation; it converts a historical narrative into an analytical causal explanation couched in explicit theoretical forms.²⁰ The actual process of process-tracing, however, remains somewhat ambiguous. This is why Gerring insists that the case study method “is correctly understood as a particular way of defining cases, not a way of analyzing cases or a way of modeling causal relations”.²¹

In terms of external validity, these cases are intrinsic – because one of the primary concerns is to provide a better understanding of the case itself – and instrumental – as they provide insight that aids development of Polyheuristic Decision Theory.²² Neither purpose, however, is necessarily secondary to the other, and this thesis purports to contribute to both disciplines, of history and FPA. This method, therefore, agrees with Stake’s view that “case studies need not make any claims about the generalizability of their findings but rather, what is crucial is the use others make of them”.²³ This is based on the implication that if one case is valid then that analysis

¹⁹ Ibid, 207.

²⁰ Ibid, 211.

²¹ John Gerring, “What is a Case Study and What is it Good For?” *American Political Science Review* 98 (2) 2004: 341-354, 341.

²² Stake, *The Art of Case Study Research*; Pamela Baxter and Susan Jack, “Qualitative Case Study Methodology: Study Design and Implementation for Novice Researchers”, *The Qualitative Report* 13 (4) 2008: 544-559, 549.

²³ Lee Peter Ruddin, “You Can Generalize Stupid! Social Scientists, Bent Flyvbjerg, and Case Study Methodology”, *Qualitative Inquiry* 12 (4) 2006: 797-812, 798.

must hold for comparable cases.²⁴ External validity, therefore, is a matter of degree rather than a binary distinction between generalisable and not.²⁵ The test is whether case studies “afford sufficient contextual information to facilitate the reader’s judgment as to whether a particular case can be generalized to a specific field of practice”.²⁶

An important step in trying to achieve a certain level of dependability or credibility, is maintaining the chain of evidence and utilising “a rich, theoretical framework” that states the conditions under which a phenomenon is likely to be present, when it is unlikely to be present, and then this framework becomes the vehicle for generalising.²⁷ In the following cases, the evidentiary chain is maintained through extensive citations of archival documents that are readily available for further study, and the theoretical framework, as already mentioned, is Poliheuristic Decision Theory. This methodology does possess certain limitations, however, which George and Bennet have highlighted as the dangers of selection bias, difficulty identifying scope, the “Degrees of Freedom” problem, a lack of representativeness and a potential lack of independence between cases.²⁸

As the following chapters seek to elucidate the reasons behind centralised British decision-making regarding Palestine policy and cover the breadth of those high policy decisions, the dangers of selection bias are not overly applicable. It has not been possible to choose cases based on a particular outcome, and the thesis is more concerned with decision-making processes than resultants, which often do not become clear until after the research is complete. While George and Bennet do also

²⁴ Robert E. Stake, “Naturalistic Generalization”, *Review Journal of Philosophy and Social Science* 7 (1-2) 1982: 1-12; Roger Gomm, ed., *Case Study Method* (London: Sage Publications, 2000), 19-26; Ruddin, “You Can Generalize Stupid!”, 801.

²⁵ Ruddin, “You Can Generalize Stupid!”, 806.

²⁶ Ibid, 805.

²⁷ Yin, *Case Study Research*, 54.

²⁸ George and Bennett, *Case Studies and Theory Development in the Social Sciences*, 22.

highlight that bias may arise because cases are selected for their historical importance, this cannot be problematic when the cases in question mark the beginning of a phenomenon.²⁹ As there was no large-scale nationalist conflict between Zionism and Arabs in Palestine before the Balfour Declaration and British rule, the case studies presented in subsequent chapters are historically significant, and, more importantly, they mark boundaries of research that are methodologically sound.

The second potential limitation is scope because case studies are better at assessing causal relations in particular cases than estimating generalised causal effects across a range of cases.³⁰ Although this is a common problem, the use of Polyheuristic Decision Theory overcomes it because the theoretical framework is based on a single key assumption: the logic of political survival. The theory assumes that a decision-maker will consider his or her political survival over any other variables, regardless of the system of government in place. While the decision outcome may vary, therefore, it is possible to chart patterns in decision-making processes. This creates a scope limited only by the necessity of one key condition, that decision-makers in all case studies are political leaders taking purposeful action. Since Ph Theory begins with a fundamental assumption, the following chapters are less concerned with demonstrating the importance of the political dimension to British decision-making regarding Palestine, but rather how this political dimension was operationalised.

Other limitations on case studies highlighted by George and Bennet, such as the “Degrees of Freedom” problem, a lack of representativeness or the potential lack of independence between cases become far less problematic when dealing with qualitative rather than quantitative research. This is reinforced by the aim of Foreign Policy Analysis, which specifically seeks to understand the variables that constitute a

²⁹ Ibid, 25.

³⁰ Ibid.

causal pathway, and so FPA case studies are much less likely to be in danger of under-determination or the championing of theoretical parsimony at the expense of “a well-defined type or subtype of case with a high level of explanatory richness”.³¹ Indeed, there is more of a danger of over-determination. As finding the cut-off point for a decision-maker’s political requirements (the point at which risk becomes too great) can only be done through specialist knowledge, this particular element of the case study may be susceptible to selection bias.

It is important to consider, therefore, that the case studies in the following chapters reflect an argument supported by evidence rather than conclusions reached through laboratory experimentation or statistical models. Instead, the Ph case study analysis presented herein is based on extensive primary research. As well as substantial collections held at The National Archives in Kew, it has utilised the Cadbury Archives in Birmingham, the Parliamentary Archives in Westminster, the London School of Economics archives, the Cambridge Archive Centre, the University of Durham special collections, the Truman Presidential Library in Missouri, the United Nations archives in New York and the United States National Archives in Maryland. This material includes a wide swathe of source types, including government documents, reports and memoranda, as well as personal diaries, memoirs, correspondence, speeches, press conferences and debates. As the research is focused specifically on decision makers in Westminster rather than Jerusalem, Israeli archives have been deliberately avoided. This is because books on the Palestine Mandate have traditionally relied upon Israeli-held documents, creating a dominant narrative that is centred on Zionist activities. This is discussed in greater detail in Chapter One, but it is important to stress that British motives during the Mandate have been left largely

³¹ Ibid, 31.

unexplored and have frequently been misrepresented by the over reliance on Israeli state and Zionist archives.

Structure

After introducing the research, this thesis progresses through a survey of the traditional Mandate narrative through a review of the established literature, before a chapter detailing Foreign Policy Analysis and the Poliheuristic Decision Theory. Following these are four analytic chapters that utilise multiple embedded case studies to highlight the specific decision-making processes operationalised during key junctions of British decision-making on Palestine. The concluding chapter then highlights the historical lessons of this poliheuristic perspective as well as the implications these case studies have for the future development of Poliheuristic Decision Theory.

The first case study concerns the Churchill White Paper of 1922 and why the British government decided to affirm the policy of a Jewish national home that was first articulated in the Balfour Declaration in 1917. This was despite violent Arab protests and Palestine's questionable military or strategic value. Two commissions of enquiry concluded that the government's policy, a draft Mandate based on the Balfour Declaration, was the source of Palestine's unrest. Why then, was the policy reaffirmed? This time period represented a Balfour Zeitgeist, in which the policy's confirmation in 1922 meant it remained unquestioned until a large-scale riot erupted in Palestine in 1929.

The second case study deals with policy formulated following this later outbreak of violence. It details the government's attempts to create policy that reflected the underlying problems in Palestine's society between the Arab majority

and Zionist minority. After another two commissions of enquiry, the government released a white paper named for the Colonial Secretary, Lord Passfield, which attempted to limit Jewish immigration and land purchase in Palestine. This white paper constituted a rational response to the conclusions offered by two independent investigations, but it was reversed only three months later. Why did this u-turn occur? The reversal meant that underlying tensions in Palestine continued to be ignored, and the early 1930s built to an Arab Revolt in Palestine, from 1936-1939.

The third case study, therefore, is centred on the British reaction to this larger rebellion. Again, two commissions of enquiry advised the government that the Mandate policy was the source of Palestine's unrest. The first recommended partition, and the second advised against that plan. In 1939, the government issued the MacDonald White Paper, which promised Palestine its independence within ten years and set a limited quota for Jewish immigration for five years, after which any further immigrants required Arab approval. This appeared to be a radical departure from the Balfour Zeitegeist, and from the pressures that caused a reversal of the Passfield White Paper, but why did it happen? The MacDonald White Paper stood as official British policy throughout the Second World War and into the post-war period, which witnessed an intense Jewish insurgency and burgeoning civil war in Palestine.

The fourth and final case study then deals with the British withdrawal from Palestine. After the war, there were two final commissions of enquiry, one conducted in concert with the United States and another by a United Nations Special Committee. The first recommended a binational state, whereas a majority opinion of the UN commission advocated partition. The British government, however, decided on neither of these courses and instead initiated a withdrawal plan in late 1947. After

more than 30 years committed to the territory out of political and perceived strategic necessity, why did the British government make this final decision?

Together, these case studies represent the building blocks of a more comprehensive understanding of British foreign policy decision-making towards Palestine during the Mandate and how it revolved around periods of violence. By elucidating precisely what variables drove British policy towards Palestine during and after riots and rebellions, it is possible to identify patterns of behaviour. While some established literature (see Chapter One) has offered incomplete explanations of British behaviour during this time, none have approached the subject in a systematic fashion or offered conclusions within a theoretical framework. This is exactly what subsequent chapters are intended to address, both individually and as a cohesive collection of interrelated case studies. Using Poliheuristic Decision Theory, this thesis seeks to find the root causes of British foreign policy decision-making towards Palestine, from 1917 to 1948.

Chapter 1: The Historical Narrative

*“It is asked, why are not the Arabs satisfied with the improvements in wages and in this and that? There never was an invader at any time who did not justify his invasion on that very ground – ‘We have given you a mess of pottage, so what is all this nonsense about a birthright?’ Have the Arabs a case? Yes, they have a case. They have had a rotten deal.”*³²

William Gallacher, Communist MP for West Fife, 1936.

Although the effects of British decision-making have been widely researched, reasons behind Britain’s Palestine policy have been left largely unexplored. How did the British government make decisions regarding Palestine? What were the motives, intentions and goals behind them? In order to provide as full an answer as possible to these questions, this thesis examines four critical junctures of policy during the entirety of Britain’s occupation and officially sanctioned Mandate, from 1917-1948. This is necessary because, notwithstanding some notable exceptions, the vast majority of studies of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict settle for only a cursory overview of this period.³³ Works on the Mandate tend to use British policy decisions as plot devices, focusing only on each new white paper’s effect on relations between Jews and Arabs in Palestine. British decision-making towards Palestine has provided the focus of very few scholarly investigations to date.

Although the work of historians such as William Roger Louis and Michael J. Cohen have, for example, explored in great detail the domestic and international political constraints on Palestine policy, their work has focused exclusively on the

³² House of Commons Debates, 19 June 1936, series 5, vol 313, cols 1367-1369.

³³ Ilan Pappé, *A History of Modern Palestine: One Land, Two Peoples* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006); Avi Shlaim, *Israel and Palestine: Reappraisals, Revisions, Refutations* (London: Verso, 2009); Avi Shlaim, *The Iron Wall: Israel and the Arab World* (London: Penguin Books, 2001); Martin Van Creveld, *The Land of Blood and Honey: The Rise of Modern Israel* (New York: St Martin’s Press, 2010); Colin Schindler, *A History of Modern Israel* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008); Ian Bickerton, *The Israeli-Palestinian Conflict: A History* (London: Reaktion Books, 2009); Gregory Harms, *The Palestine-Israel Conflict: A Basic Introduction* (London: Pluto Books, 2008).

later Mandate and withdrawal.³⁴ This means there has been no study dedicated to British policy decision-making during the entire Mandate and certainly none (even for a truncated decision-making period) that apply a theoretical framework designed to make any findings generalisable. In addition, there is one prevalent trend within the literature that this thesis intends to address.

As previous analyses have centred on the role of the Colonial Office and the Palestine High Commissioner, focused as they have been on day-to-day administration of the Mandate within Palestine, they have ignored the decision-making processes behind high policy, relying instead on certain assumptions, some stubborn myths and frequent over-simplification to explain the inner workings of British decision-making, often only with reference to British politicians' personal feelings toward Zionism or Arab nationalism. Epitomising this is a comment offered by Shlomo Ben-Ami:

“Frequently driven by pro-Zionist sentiments, and not withstanding the apprehension of many in the mandatory administration at the ruthless drive of the Zionists, an apprehension sometimes fed by a strong anti-Semitic bias as much as it was driven by a genuine sympathy for the dispossessed Arab fellahin, or by a romantic, Lawrence of Arabia brand of admiration for the Arab ‘wild man’, the policy makers in London and the high commissioners on the ground were essentially the protectors of the Zionist enterprise”.³⁵

The following chapters will demonstrate that although these attitudes may have been prevalent, they did not necessarily direct policy in Westminster, and connecting the two uncritically is partly the result of source choice. Investigating principally the Zionist Archives in Jerusalem and the papers of officials serving in

³⁴ Michael J. Cohen, “British Strategy and the Palestine Question 1936-1939”, *Journal of Contemporary History* 7 (3-4) 1972: 157-183; Michael J. Cohen, “Secret Diplomacy and Rebellion in Palestine, 1936-1939”, *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 8 (3) 1977: 379-404; Michael J. Cohen, *Palestine: Retreat from the Mandate: The Making of British Policy, 1936-45* (London: Paul Elek, 1978); Michael J. Cohen, *Palestine to Israel: From Mandate to Independence* (Oxon: Routledge, 1988); William Roger Louis, *The British Empire in the Middle East 1945-51* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1984); William Roger Louis, ed. *The End of the Palestine Mandate* (London: IB Tauris, 1986).

³⁵ Shlomo Ben-Ami, *Scars of War, Wounds of Peace: The Israeli-Arab Tragedy* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 2005), 9.

Palestine has created a history of British intents and purposes based on the supposition of parties far from the decision-making process, whose uninformed fears and frustrations naturally bled into their interpretations of cabinet decision-making. This has resulted in the survival of largely unfounded “explanations”, such as simple ideas of Zionist and Arab pressure on the British government, in what are otherwise academically rigorous studies. Examining the British Mandate only from Jerusalem’s perspective provides an incomplete version of events that does not help to elucidate the inner workings of Westminster during the Mandate years. Other, more specific myths have also been allowed to endure for similar reasons. By providing a survey analysis of British Palestine policy through a review of the current literature, it is possible to discern a dominant Mandate narrative and highlight its neglected dimensions that are addressed in later chapters. This chapter charts some of the most common historiographical themes as they have been represented in the established narrative: Zionism and Arab nationalism in the British imagination, riots and rebellion in the Interwar period, lobbying and influence, and the Mandate and the international community. These themes then also provide the backdrop against which more detailed analyses of British decision-making are subsequently laid.

Zionism and Arab Nationalism in the British Imagination

A major recurring theme in British Mandate historiography is the importance placed on ideas of Zionism and Arab nationalism in the British imagination, an emphasis with its roots in studies of Britain’s three infamous wartime promises. Between 1915 and 1917, the British government entered into three separate pledges that involved the future of Palestine: the Hussein-McMahon correspondence, the Sykes-Picot Agreement and the Balfour Declaration. As this thesis argues that

later British decisions were not driven by ideology, however, it is necessary to admit that these foundation pledges did involve a degree of sentiment combined with substantive concerns. The importance of ideology has been vastly overstated, however, and this informs perspectives like that of Shlomo Ben-Ami. These promises provide an important foundation for understanding the Mandate as a whole, but they are not sufficient devices to understand British behaviour in the 30 years that followed. As a great deal of studies have focused on this topic and they often contradict each other, the following survey is intended to demonstrate a combination of the factors that drove British decision-making under the curious and distinct political atmosphere created by a world war.

First, the Hussein-McMahon correspondence produced Britain's initial Palestine pledge, to Hashemite ruler Sharif Hussein of Mecca and his sons Ali, Abdullah, Faisal and Zeid. Despite Hussein's exalted position within the Ottoman Empire as guardian of the holy cities, he suffered a tense relationship with Constantinople.³⁶ Consequently, Hussein's son Abdullah (future king of Jordan) penned an official approach to the British Oriental Secretary in Cairo, Sir Ronald Storrs, in July of 1915.³⁷ Abdullah's letter ostensibly opened formal negotiations between "the Arabs" – represented by Sharif Hussein – and Great Britain – represented not by Storrs, but by his superior, the District Commissioner to Cairo, Sir Henry McMahon. What followed was a series of dispatches between July of 1915 and March of 1916 – the Hussein-McMahon correspondence. These communiqués outlined a deal in which the sharif agreed to lead a revolt against Ottoman forces in the Middle East, and in return, Britain would aid the creation of an independent Arab

³⁶ Jonathan Schneer, *The Balfour Declaration: The Origins of the Arab-Israeli Conflict* (London: Bloomsbury, 2010), 28-29.

³⁷ Elie Kedourie, *In the Anglo-Arab Labyrinth: The McMahon-Husayn Correspondence and its Interpretations, 1914-1939* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1976), 4.

state. While Hussein did indeed lead the Great Arab Revolt in June of 1916, it was the letters of negotiation rather than his military action that proved politically and historically significant. The correspondence became highly controversial due to a sustained debate over what, exactly, Britain had pledged to the Arabs, whether it included Palestine and how this affected the legitimacy of later promises to the French and ultimately to the Zionists.

The principal issue was one of wording. Abdullah's opening letter proposed an Arab state encompassing most of the Middle East.³⁸ In response, McMahon specifically excluded "portions of Syria lying to the west of the districts of Damascus, Homs, Hama and Aleppo", claiming this was necessary because "the interests of our ally, France, are involved in them both".³⁹ These exclusions were based on vague instructions from Foreign Secretary Grey, but a problem later arose from McMahon's use of the word "district", or *vilayet* in the Arabic version sent to Hussein. Damascus, Homs, Hama and Aleppo were cities, and so the concept of their districts was open to interpretation.⁴⁰ As Palestine had existed without boundaries for nearly 500 years under Ottoman control, it was difficult to ascertain whether, according to McMahon's exclusions, Palestine was inside or outside the area promised to an Arab state.⁴¹ This first promise has been made famous in the West largely by David Lean's 1962 film, *Lawrence of Arabia*. In the story, British generals and politicians are presented as a combination of enthusiastic Orientalists and evil imperialists, which is echoed in Ben-Ami's comment above. A great deal of research has been conducted into British

³⁸ Cmd 5957, 1939, "From Sherif Hussein to Sir Henry McMahon, 14 July 1915", Miscellaneous No. 3, Correspondence between Sir Henry McMahon G.C.M.G., G.C.V.O., K.C.I.E., C.S.I. His Majesty's High Commissioner at Cairo and the Sherif Hussein of Mecca.

³⁹ Ibid, 24 October 1915; Ibid, 14 December 1915.

⁴⁰ C. Ernest Dawn, "Elie Kedourie, In the Anglo-Arab Labyrinth", *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 9 (1) 1978: 128-130, 128.

⁴¹ Noam Levin, Ruth Kark and Emir Galilee, "Maps and the Settlement of Southern Palestine, 1799-1948: An Historical/GIS analysis" *Journal of Historical Geography* 36 (1) 2010: 1-18, 3.

intentions in this case, but opinion is divided.⁴² The same is true regarding interpretations of the second promise, made to France.

The Sykes-Picot Agreement was the result of negotiations between the attaché to the imperial war cabinet, Sir Mark Sykes, and French diplomat Francois Georges-Picot conducted during the latter stages of McMahon's correspondence with Hussein. These Anglo-Franco talks produced an explicit division of the Middle East into British and French spheres of influence, resulting in an academic debate questioning whether the Sykes-Picot Agreement contradicted promises made to Hussein. The problems associated with McMahon's wording have already been discussed above, so this answer hinges on why Britain entered into a second pledge. The agreement with France allowed Britain the political freedom to pursue an offensive through Ottoman territory without fearing that its principal ally would become hostile, either during or after the war. French Ambassador Paul Cambon, for example, had complained during the initial Hussein-McMahon correspondence that there was "too much talk in Cairo" and that this was discourteous to France, which "regarded Syria as a dependency".⁴³

War Secretary Kitchner also recognised the potential diplomatic storm arising from McMahon's correspondence with Hussein, posing the question to Sykes a month later: "May you not be straining your relations with France very gravely if you assume you have come to an agreement with them and take action in Syria?"⁴⁴ The

⁴² Isaiah Friedman, "The McMahon-Hussein Correspondence and the Question of Palestine", *Journal of Contemporary History* 5 (2) 1970: 83-122; Kedourie, *In the Anglo-Arab Labyrinth*; Marian Kent, "Asiatic Turkey, 1914-1916", *British Foreign Policy Under Sir Edward Grey*, ed. F.H. Hinsley (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977); Charles D. Smith, "The Invention of a Tradition: The Question of Arab Acceptance of the Zionist Right to Palestine During World War I", *Journal of Palestine Studies* 22 (2) 1993: 48-61; Leonard Stein, *The Balfour Declaration* (London: Valentine Mitchell, 1961); Arnold Toynbee, "The McMahon-Hussein Correspondence: Comments and a Reply", *Journal of Contemporary History* 5 (4) 1970: 185-201; Mayir Vereté, "The Balfour Declaration and its Makers", *Middle Eastern Studies* 6 (1) 1970: 48-74.

⁴³ FO 371/2486/34982, 20 October 1915, McMahon to Grey dis. No. 131, secret, TNA.

⁴³ CAB 24/1, 16 December 1915, "Evidence of Lieutenant Colonel Sir Mark Sykes, Bart., M.P., on the Arab Question", TNA.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

resulting negotiations were an exercise in preventative diplomacy. Rather than a rejection of the previous promise, this new agreement facilitated it because “without the British offensive there could have been no Arab revolt; and without the Sykes-Picot Agreement there would have been no British offensive”.⁴⁵ The motive was to prevent a misunderstanding in which French politicians believed they were being double-crossed.

Although the later establishment of a British Mandate in Palestine often leads commentators to assume that Sykes and Picot allotted the entire area to Britain, their agreement actually shared Ottoman Palestine between several authorities. A brown area on the map prepared during the negotiations indicated that most of Palestine west of the River Jordan would be under international administration, and this was dependent upon consultation with Britain and France’s mutual ally Russia, as well as with the sharif. Within the blue area allotted to France, Britain reserved the ports of Haifa and Acre with the right to build a railway linking them to Baghdad in its own red area. The northern tip of Palestine above Lake Tiberius was to be part of France’s annexed Syrian territory, whereas Palestine’s regions west of the River Jordan and south of Gaza were part of the Arab state under British protection, leaving the now-Israeli city of Beersheba, for example, as unequivocally Arab-owned.⁴⁶ The spirit if not the letter of this Sykes-Picot Agreement did come to fruition during post-war talks, but again this was partly due to Britain’s third promise, made to the Zionist movement.

On 2 November 1917, British Foreign Secretary Lord Balfour lent his signature to a short letter addressed to Zionism’s high-profile patron, Baron Lionel

⁴⁵ FO 608/107, undated, Peace Conference, “French Claims to Syria” memorandum by Sir Arthur Hirtzel, TNA, 2256.

⁴⁶ British and French Governments, “The Sykes-Picot Agreement (May 15-16, 1916)”, in Walter Laquere and Barry Rubin (eds.), *The Israeli-Arab Reader* (New York: Penguin, 2008), 15.

Walter Rothschild. In fewer than 150 words, the message conveyed, for the first time in Jewish history, the support of a great power to the cause of a Jewish homeland in Palestine:

“His Majesty’s Government view with favour the establishment in Palestine of a national home for the Jewish people, and will use their best endeavours to facilitate the achievement of this object, it being clearly understood that nothing shall be done which may prejudice the civil and religious rights of existing non-Jewish communities in Palestine, or the rights and political status enjoyed by Jews in any other country”.⁴⁷

The Balfour Declaration was a key juncture in the history of Britain’s involvement with Palestine; it laid the foundations – however unsteady they proved to be – for the British Mandate and a pro-Jewish Palestine policy that would continue until the brink of the Second World War. These initial British interests in Palestine evolved from two considerations: securing military lines of communication, and – after the Sykes-Picot Agreement – preventing a French Palestine.

British politicians sought the means during wartime to limit long-term German threats to the Empire.⁴⁸ This was because “the acquisition by Germany – through her control of Turkey – of political and military control in Palestine and Mesopotamia would imperil the communication [...] through the Suez Canal, and would directly threaten the security of Egypt and India”.⁴⁹ Although the Sykes-Picot Agreement had concluded with an international Holy Land, neither party was satisfied. If the War Office wanted to secure communication between Great Britain and the East, they would first need to block residual French claims to Palestine.⁵⁰ Prime Minister David Lloyd George intended to use British forces advancing on Gaza to present the French

⁴⁷ British Foreign Minister Lord Arthur Balfour, “The Balfour Declaration”, *The Israeli-Arab Reader*, ed. Walter Laqueur and Barry Rubin (New York: Penguin, 2008), 16.

⁴⁸ James Renton, “Flawed Foundations: The Balfour Declaration and the Palestine Mandate”. In *Britain, Palestine and Empire: The Mandate Years*, ed. Rory Miller, 15-37 (Farnham: Ashgate Publishing, 2010), 18.

⁴⁹ CAB 21/77, undated, Committee of the Imperial War Cabinet on Territorial Desiderata in the Terms of Peace, 1917, TNA.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

with a *fait accompli* – British occupation of Palestine would constitute a strong claim to ownership.⁵¹ They did not need Zionism to do so. This strategy, however, risked a direct political confrontation with a much-needed ally. To avoid this eventuality, the ubiquitous Sir Mark Sykes pursued Zionism – a “just cause” with interests in Palestine – to legitimate what were fundamentally strategic claims.⁵² As a result, Sykes began to introduce Zionist interests in his negotiations with Picot.⁵³

It was not until the first British invasion of Palestine was in motion, however, that Sykes contacted the two men who would figure most prominently in British-Zionist diplomacy. In January 1917 he met with Secretary General of the World Zionist Organisation Nahum Sokolow, and President of the British Zionist Organisation Chaim Weizmann, and the two leaders made it clear to Sykes that they favoured British rule in Palestine. The following month Sykes introduced Sokolow to Picot, and the amicable meeting resulted in the opening of a Zionist mission in Paris. Thus by the spring of 1917 the Zionist agenda was reassuringly recognised by the *Entente*. This, combined with an underlying anti-Semitic belief in the power and pro-German tendencies of world Jewry, led to the final British agreement to the Balfour Declaration.⁵⁴

When the war cabinet approved the letter – drafted in negotiation between the Foreign Office, Sykes and several Zionists – on 31 October, 1917, the action passed because they believed “the vast majority of Jews in Russia and America, as, indeed, as over the world, now appeared to be favourable to Zionism. If we could make a declaration favourable to such an ideal, we should be able to carry on extremely

⁵¹ Vereté, “The Balfour Declaration and its Makers”.

⁵² Geoffrey Lewis, *Balfour and Weizmann: The Zionist, The Zealot and the Emergence of Israel* (London: Continuum, 2009), 110.

⁵³ Isaiah Friedman, *The Question of Palestine 1914-1918* (New York: Schocken Books, 1973), 116.

⁵⁴ Mark Levene, “The Balfour Declaration: A Case of Mistaken Identity”, *The English Historical Review* 107 (422) 1992: 54-77, 58.

useful propaganda both in Russia and America”.⁵⁵ This conviction provided the final motivation – targeting American and Bolshevik Jews for propaganda – in approving the Balfour Declaration. It was merely the final step on a longer journey through military communication requirements and the need to keep France out of Palestine.

If, however, the Hussein McMahon correspondence is seen as a promise motivated by Orientalist fascination with the Bedouin, or if the Balfour Declaration is viewed as a morally-intentioned return of the Jews to their homeland that was brought about by the lobbying skill of Weizmann and Sokolow, then the result is an impression of British decision-making based on sentiment and ideology. This implies that politicians were free to make decisions regarding the future of Palestine unhindered by domestic political constraints. Ben-Ami’s quote exemplifies this misunderstanding, but it pervades the literature on Mandate Palestine in more subtle and nuanced ways that result in misleading views of British policy. This is discussed in greater detail below and forms the basis for the historical intervention contributed by this thesis.

Riots and Rebellion in the Interwar Period

During the Interwar period there were three main outbreaks of violence that each resulted in a statement or change of British policy towards Palestine. Mandate histories tend to use this convenient chronology as a plot device to move the reader through a discussion of Jews and Arabs’ relations during the time period. As British motives during these instances is not the primary focus of other studies, cabinet decision-making in Westminster is largely assumed to follow the same influences that led to the Balfour Declaration and, crucially, no deeper investigation is attempted.

⁵⁵ CAB 23/4, 31 October 1917, War Cabinet Minutes, TNA.

The first violent outbreak was characterised by the Nebi Musa Riots of April 1920 and the Jaffa Riots of May 1921. The Nebi Musa procession is traditionally a celebration of Moses and also a rally against the Crusades, and this Muslim holiday attracted an influx of revellers to Jerusalem's Old City every year. In 1920, the traditional procession clashed with members of a Zionist group called *Beitar*, which had decided to stage its own demonstration, and the situation escalated into a riot.⁵⁶ Nine deaths, hundreds of injuries and the sheer scale of destruction demanded a commission of inquiry. It was led by Major-General P.C. Palin.

This was the first British attempt to redress Jewish-Arab tensions in Palestine, but its findings were highly critical of Zionists, positing that they, "by their impatience, indiscretion and attempts to force the hands of the Administration, are largely responsible for the present crisis".⁵⁷ The Palin Commission, however, was never published, and just as Palestine's military occupation transformed into a civilian administration, another riot began on 1 May 1921. These disturbances continued for a further two days in Jaffa, and spread to the surrounding region leading to attacks on Jewish agricultural settlements.⁵⁸ Again, the violence necessitated an official enquiry – the Haycraft Commission – which repeated many of Palin's concerns and recommended a clarification in policy to prevent further violence.

The result in Westminster was the Churchill White Paper, published June 1922. On 24 July 1922 the League of Nations then officially awarded Britain's Mandate to govern Palestine.⁵⁹ The British government, therefore, possessed ample evidence that

⁵⁶ Haim Gerber, *Remembering and Imagining Palestine: Identity and Nationalism from the Crusades to the Present* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), 94; Pappe, *A History of Modern Palestine*, 83, 93.

⁵⁷ *Ibid*, 70.

⁵⁸ Cmd 1540, 1921, *Palestine. Disturbances in May, 1921. Reports of the Commission of Inquiry with Correspondence Relating Thereto*, 17.

⁵⁹ Naomi Shepherd, *Ploughing Sand: British Rule in Palestine, 1917-1948* (London: John Murray Ltd, 1999), 82.

the policy of supporting a Jewish national home in Palestine was creating violent tension, but chose nevertheless to pursue it. For the first time, however, the Churchill White Paper tied Jewish immigration to Palestine's economic capacity "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 section of the present population of their employment".⁶⁰

Although the allotment of blame for these early outbreaks of violence varies between scholarly interpretations – Tom Segev for example, chooses to highlight incidents of horrific violence perpetrated against Jerusalem's Jewish families,⁶¹ whereas Haim Gerber focuses on the clash between Muslims and Zionist political demonstrators⁶² – there has been no investigation of why Britain responded with the Churchill White Paper in 1922. The traditional Mandate narrative always includes some discussion of this white paper, but scholars' differing opinions about its contents (discussed more below) have informed their analyses of British decision-making without making this the focus of their research. In actuality, the exact sequence of events that led up to the Churchill White Paper form an important foundation in understanding how the British government developed policy during the rest of the Mandate, and this is addressed in detail in Chapter Two.

For High Commissioner Samuel, the problems created by the Mandate were too great, and he left Palestine bitter and disillusioned in 1925. His successor, Sir Herbert Plumer, oversaw a period of relative calm in Palestine – possibly because a recession in Poland meant Jewish immigration declined during his tenure.⁶³ In fact,

⁶⁰ Cmd 1700, 1922, *Palestine. Correspondence with the Palestine Arab Delegation and the Zionist Organisation*.

⁶¹ Tom Segev, *One Palestine, Complete: Jews and Arabs Under the British Mandate* (London: Abacus, 2000), 140-141.

⁶² Gerber, *Remembering and Imagining Palestine*, 93.

⁶³ Segev, *One Palestine, Complete*, 289.

this calm remains one of the enigmas of British rule since tensions failed to either dissipate or erupt. Believing Palestine's tranquillity was permanent, Plumer dismantled several units.⁶⁴ Leaving with a successful record in 1928, Plumer informed his replacement, Sir John Chancellor, that, "the main security problems deserving attention were in Transjordan, not in Palestine".⁶⁵ A wave of unprecedented violence swept the country only a few months later.

The disturbances of 1929 were sparked by a long series of events connected with the Western or "Wailing" Wall in Jerusalem – beginning on the Jewish holiday of Yom Kippur in 1928, and culminating in a Zionist demonstration on 15 August 1929 and a Muslim protest on the following day.⁶⁶ Rumours that Jews were killing Muslims spread to other cities and some whole families were killed in their homes. The reaction from Westminster constituted another two commissions of inquiry and a subsequent white paper. The first was the Shaw Commission, which identified that "the difficulties inherent in the Balfour Declaration and in the Mandate for Palestine are factors of supreme importance in the consideration of the Palestine problem" and like the Palin Commission and the Haycraft Commission, saw the fundamental cause as "the Arab feeling of animosity and hostility towards the Jews consequent upon the disappointment of their political and national aspirations and fear for their economic future".⁶⁷

As this investigation identified that there was a problem with Jewish immigration and land purchase, the Shaw report recommended "a scientific enquiry" which became the one-man commission of Sir John Hope-Simpson.⁶⁸ Although

⁶⁴ Ibid, 290.

⁶⁵ Evyatar Freisel, "Through a Peculiar Lens: Zionism and Palestine in British Diaries, 1927-31", *Middle Eastern Studies* 29 (3) 1993: 419-444, 422.

⁶⁶ Cmd 3530, 1930, *Report of the Commission on the Palestine Disturbances of August, 1929*, 164.

⁶⁷ Ibid, 158, 163.

⁶⁸ Ibid.

Hope-Simpson did not conclude that Jewish immigration was the source of all Arab woes in Palestine, he had to admit that immigration into a flooded labour market was impractical. He recommended both the curtailment of Jewish immigration and “an active policy of agricultural development” for the Arabs.⁶⁹ This was not an issue of fairness, but of peacekeeping and riot-prevention. Whitehall prepared a new statement of policy – the Passfield White Paper.

Since both the Balfour Declaration and the Mandate instructed that Jewish immigration should not prejudice the position of any other group in Palestine, and both Shaw and Hope-Simpson had demonstrated the potential harm created by adding to the labour market at that time, the mandatory power had a “duty to reduce, or, if necessary, to suspend” immigration until unemployment had eased.⁷⁰ This new white paper built upon the foundations of Churchill’s earlier policy, but it made establishing the Jewish national home through force of numbers significantly less likely. The Passfield White Paper, however, lasted less than four months. In February 1931, Prime Minister James Ramsay MacDonald wrote to Chaim Weizmann and essentially reversed the immigration restrictions included in the Passfield White Paper.⁷¹ This so-called “Black Letter” has led to an impression that the documents prepared by Shaw, Hope-Simpson and finally the Colonial Office under Lord Passfield are immaterial to the study of British Palestine. This is because to date there are very few, and only unsatisfactory, analyses of why the white paper was reversed (discussed more below).

The third, and most violent, episode of Arab-Jewish clashes in the inter-war period began in mid-April 1936. As little action had been taken after MacDonald’s letter, the situation in Palestine continued to fester. Smaller disturbances became more commonplace, but they achieved no political recognition and were repelled through

⁶⁹ Ibid, 143.

⁷⁰ Cmd 3692, 1930, *Statement of Policy by His Majesty’s Government in the United Kingdom*.

⁷¹ Renton, “Flawed Foundations”, 36.

the use of force alone; one example was the October-November demonstrations of 1933 when Whitehall was assured that Palestine's government could handle any future breaches of the peace.⁷² This confidence was called into question during the Arab Revolt of 1936-1939, which erupted in two distinct phases: the first was championed by urban elites involved with the Higher Arab Committee (HAC), and was focused mainly on political protest and a general strike. The British civil administration dealt with this mainly through concessions and diplomacy, negotiating via – among others – Abdullah of Transjordan and Iraq's Foreign Minister, Nuri Pasha, utilising their connections to calm protestors and prepare for yet another inquiry, the report of which ignited a second stage in the revolt.⁷³

Led by Lord Peel, the Royal Commission was asked to examine wide issues of British obligations to Arabs and Jews. Although sent ostensibly to “study”, the commission's report betrayed an underlying conviction that the real problem was opposition to the Mandate; it was unworkable, and every solution except partition would provide only illusory and temporary relief.⁷⁴ They decided that the disturbances of 1936 reflected “the same underlying causes as those which brought about the ‘disturbances’ of 1920, 1921, and 1933 [...] All the other factors were complementary or subsidiary, aggravating the two causes or helping to determine the time at which the disturbances broke out”.⁷⁵ These “other factors” were developing Arab independence in Iraq, Transjordan, Egypt, Syria and Lebanon; high Jewish immigration and Jewish pressure on Palestine due to the Nazi regime in Germany; Jewish ability to appeal directly to His Majesty's Government by means denied to the

⁷² Yitzhak Gil-Har, “British Intelligence and the Role of Jewish Informers in Palestine”, *Middle Eastern Studies* 39 (1) 2010: 117-149, 120.

⁷³ Avi Shlaim, *The Politics of Partition: King Abdullah, The Zionists, and Palestine 1921-1951* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 52.

⁷⁴ Penny Sinanoglou, “The Peel Commission and Partition, 1936-1938”. In *Britain, Palestine and Empire: The Mandate Years*, ed. Rory Miller, 119-140 (Farnham: Ashgate, 2010), 140.

⁷⁵ Cmd 5479, 1937, *Palestine Royal Commission Report*, 510-511.

Arabs; distrust in British promises following the Hussein-McMahon correspondence; and provocative Jewish nationalism and modernism.⁷⁶

The final report, consequently, recommended an end to the Mandate and a two-state solution.⁷⁷ This report marked a real departure from all investigations and statements of policy that preceded it, and reactions from the interested parties ranged from cautious endorsement from Zionists to utter condemnation from Arabs – apart from Abdullah – and Britons alike.⁷⁸ The plan's widespread rejection was based either on the moral refusal of Britain's right to give Arab land to Jews, or on the grounds that it betrayed the Balfour Declaration, appeased Arab violence or damaged Anglo-Arab relations.⁷⁹

In Palestine, the publication of Peel's recommendations in July 1937 provoked the second phase of the Arab revolt – a violent but initially successful peasant rebellion that British forces met with a brutal crackdown. The British cabinet headed by Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain then appointed a further commission in December of 1937 to gather the technical details needed to implement partition, and traditional scholarship attests that it was strongly encouraged to consider a negative opinion.⁸⁰ This Woodhead Commission reported they were “unable to recommend boundaries which will afford a reasonable prospect of the eventual establishment of self-supporting Arab and Jewish states”.⁸¹ To a question of two states, therefore, the answer was a resounding “no”.

⁷⁶ Ibid, 512.

⁷⁷ Ibid, 534.

⁷⁸ T.G. Fraser, “A Crisis of Leadership: Weizmann and the Zionist Reaction to the Peel Commission's Proposals, 1937-38”, *Journal of Contemporary History* 23 (4) 1988: 657-680, 671; Marlowe, *Seat of Pilate*, 150.

⁷⁹ Rory Miller, “Introduction”. In *Britain, Palestine and Empire: The Mandate Years*, ed. Rory Miller, 1-14 (Farnham: Ashgate, 2010), 7.

⁸⁰ Aaron Klieman, “The Divisiveness of Palestine: Foreign Office versus Colonial Office on the Issue of Partition, 1937”, *The Historical Journal* 22 (2) 1979: 423-441, 441.

⁸¹ Cmd 5854, 1937-38, *Palestine Partition Commission Report*, 14.

Consequently, partition was formally rejected in November of 1938 and instead, the government invited Jewish and Arab representatives to a conference in London.⁸² The Colonial Secretary Malcolm MacDonald authorised the drafting of a new policy in conjunction with the Foreign Office under Lord Halifax. Although its terms were rejected in meetings with both Zionist and Arab delegates, the resulting MacDonald White Paper of 1939 outlined a commitment to independence in Palestine within ten years and essentially halted the Jewish national home.⁸³ In the interim, immigration during the next five years would allow Jewish numbers in Palestine to reach approximately one third of the population – economic capacity permitting. Numerically, this translated into an additional 75,000 legal Jewish immigrants over five years.⁸⁴ The policy represented a complete reversal of the spirit of Britain's earlier commitment to the Balfour Declaration. Rather than a stand-alone incident, however, it was part of the larger pattern of decision-making throughout the period of British rule.

In Palestine, the new policy embittered Jews who compared the MacDonald White Paper to the Nuremberg laws. Jewish paramilitary organisations, the Irgun (a right-wing group founded in 1937 by Revisionist Zionists) and its radicalised splinter group, the Stern Gang, attacked British installations, blew up phone booths and post offices, attacked Arab civilians in markets and coffee houses, and committed a total of 130 murders in the few short months between Britain's new policy and the outbreak of the Second World War.⁸⁵ The Jewish Agency's paramilitary wing, the Haganah, agreed to support Britain's war effort and instead fought the white paper by facilitating illegal immigration, but the Irgun continued violent attacks throughout the

⁸² Shlaim, *The Politics of Partition*, 61.

⁸³ Cmd 6019, 1938-1939, *Palestine. Statement of Policy*.

⁸⁴ Ibid.

⁸⁵ Segev, *One Palestine, Complete*, 441.

war.⁸⁶ British troops continued to fight what they termed Jewish terrorism, but when evidence of the Holocaust was discovered, widespread horror and outrage turned Palestine policy from a purely British concern into an international crisis. These three outbreaks of violence form the spine of a dominant Mandate narrative, but various interpretations of how they led to British policy-making are characterised by overly simple explanations of lobbying and influence.

Lobbying and Influence

The idea that pro or anti-Zionist feelings drove Palestine policy is one that reappears frequently in the Mandate literature alongside other tenuous explanations for British decision-making that do not withstand even a small degree of scrutiny. The most common instances of this relate to the passage of the Churchill White Paper in 1922 and the reversal of the Passfield White Paper in 1931.

Following the Nebi Musa and Jaffa riots of 1920-21, the most memorable aspect of the Churchill White Paper policy was that, in theory, it tied Jewish immigration to Palestine's economy. How scholars have explained this development depends on whether they have perceived it as a change or continuation of policy. Avi Shlaim, for example, views the Churchill White Paper as the beginning of Britain's withdrawal from Zionism.⁸⁷ Likewise, Benny Morris cites the reason for the Churchill white paper as a change of personality in Downing Street from a pro-Zionist Liberal Lloyd George to the ambivalent Conservative Bonar-Law, leading to more even handed language in Britain's dealings with Zionism.⁸⁸ The problem with this analysis is that Lloyd George resigned on 22 October 1922, months after the white paper was

⁸⁶ Ibid.

⁸⁷ Shlaim, *The Iron Wall*, p. 10.

⁸⁸ Benny Morris, *Righteous Victims: A History of the Zionist-Arab Conflict, 1881-1999* (London: John Murray, 2000), 103.

written and published.⁸⁹ Conversely, Gudrun Kramer and James Renton posit that Britain allied itself with Zionism to justify its occupation to the other Great Powers, especially France, at the Supreme Council of the Paris Peace Conference in San Remo.⁹⁰ Acting supposedly under the Wilsonian principles of non-annexation and national self-determination, Britain had chosen to justify its rule over Palestine by presenting itself as the protector of Zionism.⁹¹ This is echoed in John McTague's work, which notes that by appointing the first High Commissioner to Palestine as Sir Herbert Samuel, a Jew and a Zionist, the British Prime Minister appeared determined to promote the Balfour Declaration irrespective of internal advice to the contrary.⁹² In this respect, the white paper was an instrument of governance, imposing a minor limitation that was necessary to maintain the commitment to Zionism.

This seemingly unshakeable commitment did, of course, face its first test in the Passfield White Paper of 1930 despite the swift reversal in 1931. Scholars tend to assume that the activities of Zionist lobbyists, such as Chaim Weizmann, placed the British government under immense pressure to recant the Passfield policy and that this was the sole reason for its reversal. Shlomo Ben-Ami, for example, notes that, "before it could even come into effect, Passfield's White Paper was for all practical purposes abrogated by Chaim Weizmann's skilful lobbying".⁹³ Similarly, Benny Morris writes, "By early 1931 well-applied Zionist pressure in the press and lobbying by Weizmann in London bore fruit".⁹⁴ The same reasoning is found in Yehoshua Porath's work, citing "Zionist pressure" in the reversal of policy, in Ilan Pappé's *A*

⁸⁹ Yehoshua Porath, *The Emergence of the Palestinian-Arab National Movement 1918-1929* (London: Frank Cass, 1984), 166.

⁹⁰ Gudrun Kramer, *A History of Palestine: From the Ottoman Conquest to the Founding of the State of Israel* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2008), 162.

⁹¹ Renton, "Flawed Foundations", 18.

⁹² John J. McTague, "The British Military Administration in Palestine 1917-1920", *Journal of Palestine Studies* 7 (3) 1978: 55-76, 71.

⁹³ Ben-Ami, *Scars of War, Wounds of Peace*, 9.

⁹⁴ Morris, *Righteous Victims*, 117.

History of Modern Palestine, Neil Caplan's *Contested Histories* and many others.⁹⁵

Such "explanations" of British behaviour are almost entirely without citation, however, and when they are referenced, the evidence is tenuous. Susan Pederson, for example, notes that "Historians usually and rightly credit Weizmann's remonstrance and effective lobbying for that *volte-face*", and cites Norman Rose's *The Gentile Zionists*, chapter one, to illustrate this point.⁹⁶ It is particularly interesting that Rose is credited with this analysis as it appears nowhere in his book. Instead, Rose offers an account that highlights Parliamentary political infighting and at no point credits Weizmann with a victory.⁹⁷

Rather than Rose's work, which is based heavily on research at the Weizmann Archives, this myth is actually most likely the result of Chaim Weizmann's own account in his autobiography, *Trial and Error*.⁹⁸ In what Christopher Sykes agrees is a highly biased account of the negotiations with British politicians, Weizmann paints the British attitude as incompetent and coloured by anti-Semitism.⁹⁹ Accounts of the white paper's reversal are rarely granted more than a sentence or two in histories of the Mandate or Anglo-Zionist relations, and there seems to have been a widespread acceptance of these largely unfounded assumptions. The idea that Chaim Weizmann successfully lobbied the British government stems from his own personal

⁹⁵ Porath, *The Emergence of the Palestinian-Arab National Movement 1918-1929*, 136; Pappe, *A History of Modern Palestine*, 93; Neil Caplan, *The Israel-Palestine Conflict: Contested Histories* (Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010), 80; Weldon C. Matthews, *Confronting an Empire, Constructing a Nation* (London: IB Tauris, 1988), 83; Segev, *One Palestine, Complete*; Roza El-Eini, *Mandated Landscape: British Imperial Rule in Palestine 1929-1945* (New York: Routledge, 2006); Renton, "Flawed Foundations".

⁹⁶ Susan Pederson, "The Impact of League Oversight on British Policy in Palestine". In *Britain, Palestine and Empire: The Mandate Years*, ed. Rory Miller, 39-66 (Farnham: Ashgate, 2010), 52.

⁹⁷ Norman Rose, *The Gentile Zionists* (London: Frank Cass, 1973), Chapter 1.

⁹⁸ Chaim Weizmann, *Trial and Error: The Autobiography of Chaim Weizmann* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1949).

⁹⁹ Christopher Sykes, *Cross Roads to Israel* (London: Collins, 1965), 116; Weizmann, *Trial and Error*, 413.

interpretation of events, but is one that has been repeated often without citation and has endured relatively unquestioned by further academic investigation.¹⁰⁰

A small number of scholars have attempted to provide a more nuanced explanation for this reversal decision, but the analyses remain unsatisfactory. One argument points to a Whitechapel by-election as the reason for Labour's apparent collapse under pressure.¹⁰¹ Crucially, however, the by-election took place on 3 December 1930, two months before MacDonald wrote to Weizmann, and James Hall, the Labour candidate in Whitechapel, won having secured the support of the British chapter of the international Zionist organisation, Poalei Zion, despite the Liberal candidate actually being Jewish and every other candidate denouncing the white paper.¹⁰² Although Hall did not actively defend the new policy, his election pamphlets and documentation did repeat the official government interpretation of Passfield's white paper, that it was both a continuation of the Mandate and the Churchill White Paper of 1922.¹⁰³ It is incongruous, therefore, to explain the government's reversal decision by implying that it was a preventative measure directed towards this by-election; neither the timings – months before MacDonald's letter to Weizmann – nor the campaign – in which the Labour candidate won by opposing the white paper and securing Zionist support – demonstrate a plausible causal relationship. This by-election, however, was certainly important in retrospect, and this is discussed in relation to the government's correspondence with Chaim Weizmann in greater detail in Chapter Four.

¹⁰⁰ Notable exceptions include Christopher Marlowe, *Seat of Pilate: An Account of the Palestine Mandate* (London: Cresset Press, 1959), 124; Rose, *The Gentile Zionists*, Chapter 1; Kramer, *A History of Palestine*, 235.

¹⁰¹ Gabriel Sheffer, "British Colonial Policy-Making towards Palestine (1929-1939)", *Middle Eastern Studies* 14 (3) 1978: 307-322

¹⁰² Joseph Gorny, *The British Labour Movement and Zionism 1917-1948* (London: Routledge, 1983).

¹⁰³ PREM 30/69/366, November 1930, James Hall Election Pamphlet, TNA.

Another opinion about this incident points to a letter to *The Times* written by pre-eminent lawyers Hailsham and Simon. Taking what amounted to a pro-Zionist stance, the letter called for an opinion from The Hague on whether limiting Jewish immigration violated the official Mandate for Palestine.¹⁰⁴ The scholarly argument, therefore, cites Prime Minister MacDonald's desire to avoid such scrutiny as the reason for reversing Passfield's white paper.¹⁰⁵ The problem with this reasoning, however, is that Hailsham and Simon specifically focused on criticising paragraphs 27 and 28 of the white paper, neither of which were mentioned in MacDonald's letter to Weizmann. If Hailsham and Simon's criticisms were crucial, then why were their arguments absent from the final reversal? No evidence has been presented to demonstrate that MacDonald viewed interference from The Hague as a credible threat, and indeed these accusations levelled at the white paper met only sarcasm and scorn at the Colonial Office (see Chapter Four). On its own, the Hailsham and Simon letter provides only a half-formed explanation. The letter was important, but for a different reason: Hailsham and Simon were pre-eminent lawyers, but more importantly, they were both also former and future cabinet ministers from the Conservative and Liberal parties respectively, and their letter to *The Times* is evidence of a larger campaign to destabilise an already weak Labour government. This domestic political angle, however, has been largely ignored.

Although both Norman Rose and Gudrun Kramer mention the importance of political infighting within Westminster in the final decision, no study has thus far been dedicated to elucidating the decision-making process itself.¹⁰⁶ Rose, for example, notes that "MacDonald must have been extremely sensitive" to rumours of

¹⁰⁴ Lord Hailsham and John Simon, 4 November 1930, "British Policy in Palestine", *The Times*, 15.

¹⁰⁵ Gabriel Sheffer, "Intentions and Results of British Policy in Palestine: Passfield's White Paper", *Middle Eastern Studies* 9 (1) 1973: 43-60.

¹⁰⁶ Rose, *The Gentile Zionists*, Chapter 1; Kramer, *A History of Palestine*, 235.

Zionist activism against his government around the world but chooses not to investigate this idea further.¹⁰⁷ Coupled with this collection of unexplored assumptions about the reversal of the Passfield White Paper is also a general apathy to the event. Major works such as Gelvin's *Hundred Years War* fail to even mention the Passfield White Paper and other scholars, such as Michael J. Cohen deliberately avoid it, proceeding in the Mandate narrative directly from 1928 to 1936.¹⁰⁸ Asking why the Passfield White Paper was reversed is not only crucial to understanding how and why British policy evolved during the entire Mandate, but also to address this event's almost inexplicable lack of scholarly attention. This is important because giving the domestic political environment surrounding these interwar decisions an appropriate level of attention reveals a pattern of decision-making processes that forms the nucleus of this thesis. Comparatively, the final theme has been covered in more detail by Mandate scholars, but again it lacks integration into the broader perspective of how British policy was decided throughout the period.

The Mandate and the International Community

As the British Mandate for Palestine was a trusteeship of the League of Nations, policy towards it always had to consider the international community. External involvement in Palestine politics, however, was particularly prominent in only two distinct time periods of Britain's 30-year administration. These were following the Arab Revolt in negotiations leading to the MacDonald White Paper of 1939 and after World War Two when United States President Harry Truman involved American politics in Palestine policy.

¹⁰⁷ Rose, *The Gentile Zionists*, 17.

¹⁰⁸ Cohen, *Palestine to Israel*.

Although the Arab Revolt is a particular phase of British decision-making that has received far more attention than earlier incidences, the targeted focus of such studies limits their usefulness. Michael J. Cohen's excellent analysis of the later Mandate, for example, highlights the domestic political constraints placed on the British government in the late 1930s but betrays such a study's truncated scope by implying that earlier decisions were not equally the result of *Realpolitik*. Cohen writes, "The white paper was the result of diminishing options in the Arab Middle East on the eve of war",¹⁰⁹ but also that it "reflected a dramatic change from prior British policy in the area, in particular from the British attitude towards the Zionists, which previously had been at worst bureaucratically neutral and at best openly sympathetic".¹¹⁰ In contrast, Chapter Four argues that the decision-making period leading up to the MacDonald White Paper was conducted in exactly the same fashion as policy in the 1920s and early 1930s and represented the beginning of Britain's ultimate withdrawal from "the Holy Land".

The Second World War then created two significant developments with regard to British policy in Palestine. All previous Palestine policy had been relatively secretive – from patronage for Zionism in the 1920s to Arab self-determination in 1939. A new post-war internationalism, however, coupled with the public outcry for Europe's Holocaust survivors meant the United States and members of the fledgling United Nations pressured Britain for a real moral, rather than purely strategic, policy in Palestine.¹¹¹ The British Mandate hosted two final investigative commissions that demonstrated this new context. First, the Anglo-American Committee of 1946 attempted and failed to repair a rift between British and American administrations on

¹⁰⁹ Cohen, *Palestine: Retreat from the Mandate*, 87.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹¹¹ Kermit Roosevelt, "The Partition of Palestine: A Lesson in Pressure Politics", *Middle Eastern Journal* 2 (1) 1948: 1-16, 11.

the subject of Palestine. Second, when Britain referred the problem to the UN in 1947, the United Nations Special Committee on Palestine (UNSCOP) conducted its own investigation.

The United States President, Harry Truman, had publicly called for the admission of 100,000 Jewish refugees into Palestine, but the prospect presented a peacekeeping nightmare for British authorities. The Anglo-American report then reiterated this demand and concluded that the best solution was a single bi-national state in which, “Palestine shall be neither a Jewish state nor an Arab state”.¹¹² The report, therefore, simply suggested reconciling what throughout the 1920s and 1930s had remained irreconcilable. Unable to solve the conflict, unaided by any practical American suggestions, and under financial and political pressure created by the plummeting post-war economy, the British cabinet approved referring the issue to the UN.¹¹³ The final UNSCOP report constituted both a majority and a minority opinion; whereas the minority suggested a federal state with a permanent but autonomous Jewish minority, the majority preferred partition.¹¹⁴ If the solution was partition, however, this presented a further question of its enforcement. In keeping with all previous negotiations, the Arabs of Palestine rejected both partition and the minority federal plan, but the UN General Assembly voted for partition on 29 November 1947. Rather than accept the responsibility, the British government decided to withdraw.

This final Palestine policy decision has been characterised in the literature in several ways. Traditional Zionist history asserts that referral to the UN was a ploy designed to push Palestine’s Jews back into British arms once the United Nations

¹¹² Cmd 6808, 1945-1946, *Report of the Anglo-American Committee of Enquiry Regarding the Problems of European Jewry and Palestine*.

¹¹³ Ellen J. Ravndal, “Exit Britain: British Withdrawal from the Palestine Mandate in the Early Cold War 1947-1948”, *Diplomacy and Statecraft* 21 (3) 2010: 416-433, 419.

¹¹⁴ “United Nations Special Committee On Palestine Report To The General Assembly, Volume 1”, Lake Success, New York, 1947, Chapter 6, Part 1, 1.

failed to offer a solution – or withdrawal would allow the invasion of Arab armies who would eradicate the Jewish homeland. Conversely, Arab historiography has viewed British withdrawal as a plot to aid the creation of a sole, Jewish state in Palestine.¹¹⁵ Alternatively, either the decision has been presented as tactical, meaning Prime Minister Attlee and Foreign Secretary Bevin identified the UN vote as a perfect opportunity to rid the Empire of costly Palestine, or British forces were withdrawn out of economic necessity and war weariness.¹¹⁶ Investigation of the inner workings of Westminster during this critical time period are frequently sidelined, however, in favour of discussing Zionist terrorist activities after the war, implying that the bombing of the King David Hotel in Jerusalem in June 1946 or the hanging of two kidnapped sergeants in 1947 provided the final impetus to leave.¹¹⁷ The commissions are mentioned only to highlight what appeared to be Britain's ineptitude in dealing with the post-war crisis in Palestine.

This “dithering” has led scholars such as Benny Morris and James L. Gelvin to describe referral of the Palestine question to the UN as “dumping” the issue onto another party.¹¹⁸ This is not only an unfair characterisation of Ernest Bevin's attempts to reach an Arab-Jewish agreement through negotiations, but it is also an oversimplified analysis of British decision-making during this turbulent era. This perception is also part of the literature's constant conflation of Britain's referral to the UN in February 1947 with the decision to withdraw, taken in September 1947.

¹¹⁵ Avi Shlaim, “Britain and the Arab-Israeli War of 1948”, *Journal of Palestine Studies* 16 (4) 1987: 50-76, 51.

¹¹⁶ Mark Tessler, *A History of the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2009), 261; Utting, “The Strategic Information Campaign: Lessons from the British Experience in Palestine 1945-1948”, *Contemporary Security Policy* 28 (1) 2007: 48-62, 56; Pappe, *A History of Modern Palestine*, 120-121.

¹¹⁷ Elizabeth Monroe, *Britain's Moment in the Middle East 1914-1956* (London: Methuen, 1965), 165-66.

¹¹⁸ Benny Morris, *The Birth of the Palestinian Refugee Problem Revisited* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2004), 12; James L. Gelvin, *The Israel-Palestine Conflict: One Hundred Years of War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 124.

Confusing the timeline obscures any helpful understanding of the British decision-making process at the end of the Mandate and the primary motivations of key decision-makers. Rather than merely plot devices or the backdrop to a Zionist insurgency, the final commissions of the Mandate demonstrate the British need to achieve a delicate and precarious balance of diplomatic interests. This is discussed in detail in Chapter Six.

Conclusion

Britain's Palestine policy evolved from staunch support for the Jewish national home after the Balfour Declaration of 1917 to plans for an independent Arab Palestine in 1939 that had to be re-assessed following the Second World War. This gradual reversal of policy coincided with a series of riots and rebellions in Palestine between Arabs and Jews in the 1920s, 1930s and 1940s, and Britain's inability to devise a workable solution to this ongoing tension. The Mandate years witnessed periods of violence and these are generally used as plot devices in the established literature, highlighting how the British reaction to these crises worsened the burgeoning conflict. These periods of violence and four major themes constitute the dominant Mandate narrative, but it remains incomplete.

The story sketches events in which the British government intervened or attempted to intervene in Palestine between Zionists and Arabs but fails to provide a rigorous analysis of the reasoning behind such action, especially when it repeatedly worsened the situation. This results in a fundamentally flawed understanding. In order to demonstrate an intervention on this subject, this thesis uses the Polyheuristic Decision Theory framework to highlight precisely what is missing from

aforementioned scholarship on British policy towards Palestine during the Mandate:
the importance of domestic political constraints.

Chapter 2: The Poliheuristic Approach to Foreign Policy Analysis

*“We have never sought or got anything out of Palestine. We have discharged a thankless, painful, costly, laborious, inconvenient task for more than a quarter of a century with a very great measure of success.”*¹¹⁹

Winston Churchill, Former Prime Minister, 1946.

Although the primary objective of this thesis is not to test Foreign Policy Analysis models, their inclusion is both necessary and important to establish the analytical framework necessary to generalise the analyses in the following chapters to a broader understanding of foreign policy decision-making. Specifically, this thesis utilises Poliheuristic Decision (Ph) Theory in order to employ both cognitive and rational approaches. Demonstrating the utility of the poliheuristic model, this analysis offers explanations, or “post-dictions”, rather than predictions of the British government’s decisions, but demonstrates the same processes that may be used to employ Ph Theory in a predictive manner. To illustrate this framework, this chapter introduces FPA before narrowing to Ph Theory. This section situates this approach within the body of established FPA literature.

Foreign Policy Analysis and the Actor-Specific Focus

FPA identifies the point of theoretical intersection between the most important determinants of state behaviour: material factors and ideational factors; the point of intersection is not the state, but human decision-makers.¹²⁰ This focus on individuals and decision-making is based on “the epistemological notion of *Verstehen*”, that “action must always be understood from within”.¹²¹ An analyst, therefore, must study “the rules, conventions, and context governing the action” and “know what the agent

¹¹⁹ House of Commons Debates, 1 August 1946, series 5, vol 426, cols 1253-1254.

¹²⁰ Valerie Hudson, *Foreign Policy Analysis: Classic and Contemporary Theory* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2007).

¹²¹ Martin Hollis and Steve Smith, *Explaining and Understanding International Relations* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990), 72.

intended by and in performing the action”.¹²² This sub-discipline is characterised by several theoretical hallmarks, and a debate between rational and cognitive models.

First, the most important element that distinguishes FPA from much of IR is that it seeks to understand or explain the choices made by human decision-makers (leaders). FPA is not concerned with accidents, mistakes or decisions that lack an international context; this is because the action needs to be purposeful (utilising agency) and the framework for analysis distinct from domestic policy. To FPA analysts, therefore, international politics is derived from specific human beings making decisions individually or in groups.¹²³ As FPA considers the factors that influence decision-making, its analysis is multilevel and multidisciplinary, utilising relevant research from fields such as psychology, sociology, anthropology and economics to enrich and develop FPA models. This process can help to “identify unique and general patterns of decisions and generate insights about leadership styles and personalities that cannot be revealed through a systemic approach to foreign policy analysis”.¹²⁴

This perspective is based on actor-specific theory, as opposed to the actor-general, or *unitary* rational actor, theory of systemic primacy in understanding the behaviour of states.¹²⁵ FPA is largely a response to the idea of a unitary rational actor and attempts instead to provide a useful set of tools for breaking open the black box of decision-making. This focus also means FPA is, to some extent, outside the agency-structure debate because “it is assumed that causation always involves both structures

¹²² Walter Carlsnaes, “Foreign Policy”. In *Handbook of International Relations*, eds. Walter Carlsnaes, Thomas Risse and Beth Simmons, 331-349 (London: Sage Publications, Ltd., 2002).

¹²³ Hudson, *Foreign Policy Analysis*.

¹²⁴ Alex Mintz and Karl DeRouen, *Understanding Foreign Policy Decision Making* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 5-6.

¹²⁵ Kenneth Waltz, *Theory of International Politics* (Reading, MA: Addison Wesley, 1979); John Mearsheimer, “The False Promise of International Institutions”. *International Security* 19 (3) 1995: 5-49.

and agencies”, and that “the two kinds of phenomena help to constitute each other in a perpetual process of interaction”.¹²⁶ How to achieve such an analysis, however, has produced some disagreement between followers of rational choice and cognitive models as they developed through three waves of FPA (see below).

Having rejected the focus on system alone, there are two broad approaches to FPA: the rational actor and cognitive models. Rational choice is arguably the most important approach to emerge in the post-war study of IR. As well as helping to define theoretical debates about international politics, it has advanced understanding of subjects such as anarchy and international cooperation.¹²⁷ The principle behind rational choice is derived from economics: “individual economic decision makers want to buy low, sell high, and maximize wealth [...] the rational decision maker chooses from among a set of alternatives, the alternative that maximizes utility”.¹²⁸ Decision-makers are rational, therefore, if their preferences are connected and transitive, meaning if A is preferred to B, then B cannot be preferred to A at the same time, and if A is preferred to B and B is preferred to C, then C cannot be preferred to A.¹²⁹ Rational choice theorists use this rationality in an instrumental rather than a procedural way, and its procedural limitations are the source of much criticism.¹³⁰

In contrast, the cognitive approaches generally posit that the rational actor model cannot be realised in practice.¹³¹ Instead of assuming people are goal-oriented maximisers, cognitive approaches “feature mental shortcuts and other processes indicative of the mind’s inability to carry out the complicated calculus of the rational

¹²⁶ Hill, *The Changing Politics of Foreign Policy*, 26.

¹²⁷ Duncan Snidal, “Rational Choice and International Relations”. In *Handbook of International Relations*, eds. Walter Calsnaes, Thomas Risse and Beth Simmons, 73-94 (London: Sage Publications, Ltd., 2002).

¹²⁸ Mintz and DeRouen, *Understanding Foreign Policy Decision Making*, 7.

¹²⁹ Vesna Danilovic, *When the Stakes are High: Deterrence and Conflict Among Major Powers* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2002).

¹³⁰ Carlsnaes, “Foreign Policy”.

¹³¹ Robert Jervis, *Perception and Misperception in International Politics* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1976).

model”.¹³² These cognitive approaches are not “irrational”, but rather more detailed and therefore realistic descriptions of the decision-making process – attempting to describe how the mind really works. This is behavioural IR,¹³³ and is discussed in greater detail with Ph Theory below.

Three Waves of FPA

The origins of FPA lie in three waves or generations of scholarship that built upon key foundation works.¹³⁴ Snyder, Bruck and Sapin gave a burgeoning field of Foreign Policy Analysis its focus on decision-making, calling for multicausal and interdisciplinary explanations, and James Rosenau challenged analysts to develop a general, testable theory that contemporary analysis was lacking, encouraging the development of middle-range theory to mediate between grand principles and complex reality.¹³⁵ Harold and Margaret Sprout also addressed such complexities and argued that in order to understand foreign policy decisions, the analyst should examine the *psycho-milieu* of decision-makers, their international and operational environments, meaning the context of decision-making, as they perceive it. This key collection of studies helped Foreign Policy Analysis to develop as a subfield of International Relations through three generations of scholarship.

The first wave, since termed “Classic” FPA Scholarship, lasted roughly from 1954 until the early 1970s. This first generation made great strides in

¹³² Mintz and DeRouen, *Understanding Foreign Policy Decision Making*, 8.

¹³³ Stephen Walker, “Foreign Policy Analysis and Behavioral International Relations”. In *Rethinking Foreign Policy Analysis: States, Leaders, and the Microfoundations of Behavioral International Relations*, eds. Stephen Walker, Akan Malici and Mark Schafer, 3-20 (Oxon: Routledge, 2011).

¹³⁴ Richard Snyder, H.W. Bruck and Burton Sapin, *Decision Making as an Approach to the Study of International Politics* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1954); James Rosenau, “Pre-Theories and Theories of Foreign Policy”. In *Approaches in Comparative and International Politics*, eds. B. Farrell, 27-92 (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1966); Harold Sprout and Margaret Sprout, *Man-Milieu Relationship Hypotheses in the Context of International Politics* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1956).

¹³⁵ Hudson, *Foreign Policy Analysis*.

conceptualisation, data collection and methodological experimentation, especially with regard to four areas of investigation: the dynamics of group behaviour, Bureaucratic Politics, Comparative Foreign Policy (CFP) and the beginnings of a cognitive approach. Building on the foundation texts discussed above, foreign policy analysts began to consider the factors that lead to suboptimal decision-making, and by extension, to inferior choices.¹³⁶ This scholarship possessed a normative quality, and analysts tacitly sought to provide explanations of dissatisfactory decision-making processes in order to expose pitfalls and improve processes for future leaders. Such a normative ontology was not ubiquitous in classic FPA, however, and it was absent from both Comparative Foreign Policy – a multilevel theory subject to aggregate empirical testing in the attempt to develop a truly cross-national framework for analysis – and the beginnings of a cognitive approach to analysis – espoused by the Sprouts but underdeveloped until the second generation of FPA.

The second wave of FPA scholarship (1974-1993) was a period of self-reflection within the discipline rather than a break from its foundations. CFP dwindled in the course of a theoretical and methodological pruning, but the psychological approach enjoyed slow growth due to readily available methodological tools provided by the field of psychology.¹³⁷ Since high quality analysis of groups or Bureaucratic

¹³⁶ Allison, *Essence of Decision*; Irving Janis, *Groupthink* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1982); Morton Halperin, *Bureaucratic Politics and Foreign Policy* (Washington DC: Brookings Institution, 1974); Carrie Leana, "A Partial Test of Janis' Groupthink Model: Effects of Group Cohesiveness and Leader Behavior on Defective Decision-Making" *Journal of Management* 11 (1) 1975: 5-18; Charles Hermann, "Decision Structure and Process Influences on Foreign Policy". In *Why Nations Act: Theoretical Perspectives for Comparative Foreign Policy Studies*, eds. Maurice East, Stephen Salmore and Charles Hermann, 69-102 (Beverly Hills, CA: Sage, 1978); Andrew Semmel and Dean Minix, "Small Group Dynamics and Foreign Policy Decision-Making: An Experimental Approach". In *Psychological Models in International Politics*, ed. L. Falkowski, 251-287 (Boulder, CO: Westview, 1979); Philip Tetlock, "Identifying Victims of Groupthink from Public Statements of Decision-Makers", *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 37 (8) 1979: 1314-1324.

¹³⁷ Richard Ashley, "Noticing Pre-Paradigmatic Progress". In *In Search of Global Patterns*, ed. J. Rosenau, 150-157 (New York: Free Press, 1976); Michael Brecher, *The Foreign Policy System of Israel: Setting, Image, Process* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1972); Jervis, *Perception and Misperception in International Politics*; Richard Cottam, *Foreign Policy Motivation: A General Theory*

Politics required extensive source material and foreign policy documents often remain classified for many years, analysts had to question whether their work was relevant to current events if it concentrated on older case studies.¹³⁸ Scholars responded by asserting that historical case studies could be used to identify patterns that could be generalised to modern policy-making.¹³⁹ CFP suffered chiefly because analysts' search for a grand theory that appreciated the importance of detail became too taxing; they shed features such as aggregate empirical testing and decided to forgo grand theory aspirations in favour of a more attainable middle range theory.

This methodological refinement coincided with the end of the Cold War, which reinvigorated the FPA research agenda by irrevocably altering systemic variables relied upon by neorealist unitary rational choice models, making it clear that "it is impossible to explain or predict system change on the basis of system-level variables alone".¹⁴⁰ One of the most significant contributions of this interim period was the conception of a two-level game,¹⁴¹ which introduced the importance of domestic politics to understanding foreign policy decision-making, a feature that continues to be developed in the third wave of FPA.

The third generation of FPA scholarship (1993-present) addresses a new post-Cold War complexity in the international system. Whereas FPA has retained its distinct theoretical goals, it continues to evolve. The research questions are more sophisticated, asking for example, how situations are "framed" by decision makers, how options are developed, or whether it is possible to specify the effect domestic

and a Case Study (Pittsburgh, PA: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1977); Hudson, *Foreign Policy Analysis*.

¹³⁸ Paul Anderson, "What Do Decision Makers Do When They Make a Foreign Policy Decision? The Implications for the Study of Comparative Foreign Policy". In *New Directions in the Study of Foreign Policy*, eds. Charles Hermann, Charles Kegley and James Rosenau, 285-308 (Boston: Allen & Unwin, 1987).

¹³⁹ Hudson, *Foreign Policy Analysis*.

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid*, 31.

¹⁴¹ Robert Putnam, "Diplomacy and Domestic Politics: The Logic of Two-Level Games", *International Organization* 42 (3) 1988: 427-260.

political competition has on foreign policy?¹⁴² A new multi-polarity in the international system also requires expanding the range of case studies from an over-reliance on crises between superpowers to include examples that feature the threat of terrorism and the question of humanitarian intervention (such as the Anglo-American Commission 1946).¹⁴³ Also, decision-making in the *absence* of crisis remains largely unexplored, despite the fact that routine foreign policy has an equal if not greater propensity to affect patterns of international behaviour.¹⁴⁴

As well as new case studies, FPA is currently undergoing another methodological refinement as analysts try to bridge the gap between rational choice and cognitive models. This development is relatively recent, but continuing the détente between rational and cognitive approaches may help to develop a neo-behavioural approach “in which the concept of rationality is informed, defined, and modelled by the concepts of beliefs, emotions, and motivations in applications to the study of international relations and foreign policy”.¹⁴⁵ An enduring difficulty, however, “in predicting foreign policy behavior stems from a lack of awareness about which factors decision makers consider the most important”.¹⁴⁶ One model that possesses the potential for flexibility needed to address these issues is Poliheuristic Decision Theory.

¹⁴² Hudson, *Foreign Policy Analysis*.

¹⁴³ Michael Brecher, *Decisions in Crisis: Israel, 1967 and 1973* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1980); Zeev Maoz and Allison Astorino, “The Cognitive Structure of Peacemaking: Egypt and Israel, 1970-78” *Political Psychology* 13 (4) 1992: 647-662.

¹⁴⁴ Allison Astorino-Courtois and Brittani Trusty, “Degrees of Difficulty: The Effect of Israeli Policy Shifts on Syrian Peace Decisions”. In *Integrating Cognitive and Rational Theories of Foreign Policy Decision Making*, ed. Alex Mintz, 29-54 (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002).

¹⁴⁵ Walker, “Foreign Policy Analysis and Behavioral International Relations”, 7.

¹⁴⁶ Kinne, “Decision Making in Autocratic Regimes: A Poliheuristic Perspective”, 127.

Poliheuristic Decision Theory

As discussed above, the two leading paradigms in the study of foreign policy are the rational actor model, originally the product of Von Neumann and Morgenstern in the 1940s, and a second based on the cognitive, “Cybernetic perspective” established by Herbert Simon and refined by John Steinbruner.¹⁴⁷ Rational choice models tend to pursue outcome validity at the expense of process validity, questioning the “why” of foreign policy decision-making but not the “how”.¹⁴⁸ These models offer a unified and generalisable theory, but they lack a descriptive quality that reflects the complexities of reality. This is why rational choice has been challenged by the cognitive approach – because laboratory tests repeatedly demonstrate that real people do not make decisions based solely on a rational cost-benefit analysis.¹⁴⁹ However, Milton Friedman has observed that individuals behave “as if” they maximise utility, and this seems to be a valid assertion considering the success rational choice models have enjoyed with regard to predicting foreign policy behaviour.¹⁵⁰ Cognitivists, in contrast, favour Prospect Theory and reject rational choice’s “expected utility” models due to their descriptive inadequacies.¹⁵¹ However,

¹⁴⁷ Herbert Simon, “Theories of Decision Making in Economics and Behavioral Science” *American Economic Review* 49 (3) 1959: 253-283; Herbert Simon, “Human Nature in Politics: The Dialogue of Psychology with Political Science”, *American Political Science Review* 79 (2) 1985: 294-304; John Steinbruner, *The Cybernetic Theory of Decision: New Dimensions of Political Analysis* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2002); Charles Ostrom and Brian Job, “The President and the Political Use of Force”, *American Political Science Review* 80 (2) 1986: 541-566; Patrick James and John Oneal, “The Influence of Domestic and International Politics on the President’s Use of Force”, *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 35 (2) 1991: 307-332.

¹⁴⁸ Mintz and Geva, “The Poliheuristic Theory of Foreign Policy Decision Making”.

¹⁴⁹ Alex Mintz, “Foreign Policy Decisionmaking: Bridging the Gap Between the Cognitive Psychology and Rational Actor ‘Schools’”. In *Decisionmaking on War and Peace: The Cognitive-Rational Debate*, eds. Alex Mintz and Nehemia Geva, 1-10 (Boulder: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1997).

¹⁵⁰ Werner De Bondt and Richard Thaler, *Financial Decision Making in Markets and Firms: A Behavioral Perspective* (Cambridge, MASS: National Bureau of Economic Research, 1994), 2.

¹⁵¹ Bruce Bueno de Mesquita and David Lalman, *War and Reason: Domestic and International Imperatives* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992); James Morrow, “A Rational Choice Approach to International Conflict”. In *Decision Making on War and Peace: The Cognitive-Rational Debate*, eds. Nehemia Geva and Alex Mintz, 11-32 (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner, 1997).

this approach champions the “how” of process validity over the “why” of outcome validity and provides descriptive hypotheses but little useful generalisability.¹⁵²

These ostensibly rival models, therefore, actually highlight different aspects of decision-making, and possess different strengths and weaknesses. In an attempt to bridge the divide and attain both the descriptive accuracy of cognitivists and the predictive success of rational choice models, Poliheuristic Decision Theory utilises a two-stage decision-making process: in the first stage, alternatives are eliminated from the choice set, and in the second, the decision-maker goes through an analytic process of choosing an option that minimises risk and guarantees rewards.¹⁵³ The decision-making processes for Stage One are governed by five key characteristics: decision-making is nonholistic, dimension-based, noncompensatory, satisficing and order-sensitive.¹⁵⁴

First, the nonholistic or nonexhaustive nature of decision-making differentiates the poliheuristic approach from other FPA models based on utility, which demand that a decision-maker conducts an exhaustive search of alternatives in order to compare costs versus benefits between them.¹⁵⁵ Instead, Ph Theory assumes the decision-maker “adopts heuristic decision rules that do not require detailed and complicated comparisons of relevant alternatives, and adopts or rejects undesirable alternatives on the basis of one or a few criteria”.¹⁵⁶ This nonholistic approach means that the choice set is defined by a dimension-based rather than an alternative-based

¹⁵² Bryan Jones, *Reconceiving Decision-Making in Democratic Politics: Attention, Choice, and Public Policy* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994); Janice Gross Stein and David Welch, “Rational and Psychological Approaches to the Study of International Conflict: Comparative Strengths and Weaknesses”. In *Decisionmaking on War and Peace: The Cognitive-Rational Debate*, eds. Alex Mintz and Nehemia Geva, 51-80 (Boulder: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1997).

¹⁵³ Alex Mintz, “Integrating Cognitive and Rational Theories of Foreign Policy Decision Making: A Poliheuristic Perspective”. In *Integrating Cognitive and Rational Theories of Foreign Policy Decision Making*, ed. Alex Mintz, 1-10 (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002).

¹⁵⁴ Mintz and Geva, “The Poliheuristic Theory of Foreign Policy Decision Making”.

¹⁵⁵ Ibid.

¹⁵⁶ Ibid, 85.

search; decision-makers compare alternatives to a cluster of variables within the same organising theme rather than assessing alternatives in a vacuum.¹⁵⁷ For example, the political dimension might include elements such as public opinion polls, the leader's popularity, the state of the economy and domestic opposition – variables used to evaluate the consequences of a chosen alternative on the political dimension. As the search is nonholistic, how many criteria and variables are used for any dimension is likely to vary as the decision-maker considers different alternatives along each organising theme.¹⁵⁸ This means that Stage One concentrates on the most important dimension only and assumes that any alternative that fails to meet a certain threshold on this dimension will be discarded.¹⁵⁹

Assuming political actors operate under self-interested motivations, politicians see gains and losses in political terms; the most important dimension, therefore, is the political or domestic dimension.¹⁶⁰ How a leader perceives the political consequences of his or her actions plays a crucial role in the decision-making process.¹⁶¹ Traditional rationality is purposive action seeking utility maximisation, but utility maximisation requires a holistic search in which no dimension can be distinguished as more or most important.¹⁶² Therefore, in order for decisions to be considered rational in this context, they must demonstrate decision-makers seeking utility maximisation on the same topic as the decision (i.e. a decision taken on Palestine is only rational if it is seeking to maximise utility on the Palestine issue). In the Ph approach, loss-aversion

¹⁵⁷ Thomas Ostrom, John Lingle, John Pryor and Nehemia Geva, "Cognitive Organization of Person Impressions". In *Person Memory: The Cognitive Basis of Social Perception*, eds. Reid Hastie, Thomas Ostrom, Ebbe Ebbeson, Robert Wyer, David Hamilton, Donal Carlston, 55-88 (Hillsdale, NJ: Erlbaum, 1980).

¹⁵⁸ Mintz and Geva, "The Poliheuristic Theory of Foreign Policy Decision Making".

¹⁵⁹ Alex Mintz, "The Decision to Attack Iraq: A Noncompensatory Theory of Decision Making", *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 37 (4) 1993: 595-618.

¹⁶⁰ Karl DeRouen, "The Decision Not to Use Force at Dien Bien Phu: A Poliheuristic Perspective". In *Integrating Cognitive and Rational Theories of Foreign Policy Decision Making*, ed. Alex Mintz, 11-28 (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002).

¹⁶¹ Mintz, "How Do Leaders Make Decisions?", 3-13.

¹⁶² MacDonald, "Useful Fiction or Miracle Maker"; Allison, *Essence of Decision*.

overrules all other considerations, and so decision-making is driven by the desire to avoid failure rather than to achieve success.¹⁶³ Consequently, “a low score in the political dimension cannot be compensated for by a high score in some other dimensions”.¹⁶⁴ This is the noncompensatory principle, and this loss-aversion variable can be operationalised in several ways:

“Threat to a leader’s survival; Significant drop in public support for a policy; Significant drop in popularity; The prospects of an electoral defeat; Domestic opposition; Threat to regime survival; Inter-party rivalry and competition; Internal or external challenge to the regime; Potential collapse of the coalition government or regime; Threat to political power, dignity, honor, or legitimacy of a leader; Demonstrations, riots, and so forth; The existence of veto players (e.g., pivotal parties in parliamentary government).”¹⁶⁵

Consequently, this model represents a process in which alternatives are selected or rejected based on a “satisficing” rather than maximising rule. The poliheuristic approach seeks acceptable options rather than maximising alternatives because it is likely that some dimensions will remain unconsidered even after a decision is made.¹⁶⁶ Rejecting the “invariance assumption” that two alternative versions of the same problem should lead to the same outcome, this stage also considers that the order in which variables are evaluated may have an impact on the elimination of options from the choice set.¹⁶⁷ These characteristics form the cognitivist foundation of Ph Theory’s first stage. Options are eliminated from the choice set that do not meet requirements on the political dimension, and then the remaining alternatives are assessed with a cost-benefit analysis. After options are

¹⁶³ Paul Anderson, “Decision Making by Objection in the Cuban Missile Crisis”, *Administrative Science Quarterly* 28 (2) 1983: 201-222.

¹⁶⁴ Mintz and Geva, “The Poliheuristic Theory of Foreign Policy Decision Making”, 84.

¹⁶⁵ Mintz, “How Do Leaders Make Decisions?”, 9.

¹⁶⁶ Mintz and Geva, “The Poliheuristic Theory of Foreign Policy Decision Making”, 87.

¹⁶⁷ George Quattrone and Amos Tversky, “Contrasting Rational and Psychological Analyses of Political Choice”, *American Political Science Review* 82 (3) 1988: 719-736; Daniel Kahneman and Amos Tversky, “Choices, Values, and Frames”, *American Psychologist* 39 (4) 1984: 341-350; Mintz and Geva, “The Poliheuristic Theory of Foreign Policy Decision Making”.

eliminated in the first stage, a second stage based on the rational choice model selects a final alternative that becomes the choice.

Weaknesses of the Poliheuristic Model

In applying Poliheuristic Decision Theory to four case studies, some limitations of the theory become apparent. Chiefly, there are problems with the central goal of using Poliheuristic Decision Theory as a bridging framework. There is also an under-specification of decision-making processes in Stage Two and some confusion over why Ph Theory is useful if it provides outcome validity that is equal to rational choice in many cases. An under-determination of both the variable choice and “cut-off point” in Stage One creates further procedural problems, and the framework’s general neglect of group decision-making is a weakness in this respect as well. The final criticism is that Ph Theory paints foreign policy as overly reactive rather than proactive. Regardless, however, this section claims that Ph Theory is applicable to the case studies presented in subsequent chapters and then seeks to demonstrate this suitability, partly through the elimination of other frameworks with similar epistemologies.

First, although Alex Mintz developed Ph principally as a bridging theory between rational choice and cognitive schools of Foreign Policy Analysis, it does not necessarily achieve this goal for two reasons. The frequent elimination of all options except one in the first stage of decision-making undermines the bridging principle. Although the sole viable option must satisfy key substantive dimensions in the second stage, the inability to conduct a cost-benefit analysis between competing alternatives is a theoretical flaw. James and Zhang posit that confirming the existence of a second stage in decision-making requires showing that the final decision is made

along a more diverse set of dimensions (as opposed to mostly the political), but this is not necessarily the case.¹⁶⁸ In the context of dominant FPA literature, the Ph approach does not need to “prove” the existence of the second stage, but, rather, the first stage. The behavioural assumptions of rational choice are a widely accepted fiction, but if a decision appears to have been made principally based on political survival, then that is the more ground-breaking discovery. The lack of a cost-benefit analysis does not ultimately have an impact on outcome validity in circumstances where there are enough resources available to make accurate predictions about the political dimension, but this does demonstrate an area where greater procedural clarification would be beneficial. In addition, however, the second stage is also under-defined.

DeRouen and Sprecher argue that the second stage utilises either Elimination by Aspect (EBA) or lexicographic (LEX) processes, but the poliheuristic model does not specify the conditions under which either strategy is selected.¹⁶⁹ Whereas EBA is simply “a sequential elimination decision heuristic”, the LEX decision rule involves the selection of an alternative that provides the greatest utility for the most important dimension.¹⁷⁰ The poliheuristic model “does not specify the conditions under which rational-analytic or lexicographic decision making is to be expected at the second stage” but cognitive psychology suggests this depends on the structural complexity of remaining choices.¹⁷¹ As both EBA and LEX, however, violate core principles of

¹⁶⁸ Patrick James and Enyu Zhang, “Chinese Choices: A Poliheuristic Analysis of Foreign Policy Crises, 1950-1996”, *Foreign Policy Analysis* 1 (1) 2005: 31-54, 44.

¹⁶⁹ Karl DeRouen, “The Decision Not to Use Force at Dien Bien Phu”; DeRouen and Sprecher, “Initial Crisis Reaction and Poliheuristic Theory”; Allison Astorino-Courtois and Brittani Trusty, “Degrees of Difficulty: The Effect of Israeli Policy Shifts on Syrian Peace Decisions”. In *Integrating Cognitive and Rational Theories of Foreign Policy Decision Making*, ed. Alex Mintz, 29-54 (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002), 32.

¹⁷⁰ Ibid; John Payne, James Bettman and Eric Johnson, “Adaptive Strategy Selection in Decision-Making”. *Journal of Experimental Psychology: Learning, Memory and Cognition* 14 (3) 1988: 534-552.

¹⁷¹ Astorino-Courtois and Trusty, “Degrees of Difficulty”, 32; David Hansen and James Helgeson, “Choice Under Strict Uncertainty: Processes and Preferences”, *Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes* 66 (2) 1996: 153-164; John Payne, James Bettman and Mary Frances Luce, “When

rationality as defined by the expected utility model, using either of these decision rules in the second stage blurs the distinction between the two schools, which are ideally represented in their own separate stages of decision-making.

This thesis has maintained use of the simplest expected utility model to avoid confusion, but this under-specification does create a paradox: seeking to explain and define Stage Two any further only limits its usefulness to the main aim of Ph as a bridging theory. Again, this theoretical hiccup does not have an impact on outcome validity because all formulations of Stage Two minimise costs and maximise rewards, but it is something to consider in Poliheuristic Decision Theory's future development. In addition, there are three further areas that pose certain limitations on Ph Theory: equal outcome validity to rational choice, determining the cut-off point for evaluating risk and group decision-making.

It is important to note that the Ph framework fails to provide a more accurate prediction than rational choice in most cases, and the necessary "scoring" of variables leaves research designs open to the possibility of selection bias.¹⁷² Astorino-Courtois and Trusty, for example, utilised Ph Theory to investigate the effect of Israeli policy shifts on Syrian peace decisions; they concluded that, "in none of the cases did [Ph Theory] anticipate strategy choices or outcomes significantly different from those suggested by rational analysis".¹⁷³ This is important because it is not enough to show that a case does not fit the rational choice model, rather it is necessary to show how the Ph perspective leads to a better fit.¹⁷⁴ The fact that Ph Theory is as good as rational choice is somewhat of a compliment, and it does not negate the reasoning

Time is Money: Decision Making Behavior Under Opportunity-Cost Time Pressure", *Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes* 66 (2) 1996: 131-152.

¹⁷² Alexander George and Andrew Bennett, *Case Studies and Theory Development in the Social Sciences* (Cambridge, MASS: MIT Press, 2004), 22-25.

¹⁷³ Astorino-Courtois and Trusty, "Degrees of Difficulty", 47.

¹⁷⁴ Mintz, "Foreign Policy Decision Making".

behind a poliheuristic approach. Unlike rational choice, Ph Theory is compelling partly because it can add to our understanding of why events do not happen.¹⁷⁵ DeRouen, for instance, used a case study that resulted in no new policy, President Eisenhower's decision not to use force at Dien Bien Phu, to demonstrate how the expected utility and Cybernetic models would have predicted an alternative outcome, whereas Ph Theory provided a compelling post-diction through use of the noncompensatory principle.¹⁷⁶ Mintz uses this case study of Dien Bien Phu to demonstrate how Ph Theory is applicable to decisions that maintain the status quo, but it is important to recognise that this is only one case and, as the theory is still in its infancy, no further studies of this type have yet been conducted.

This thesis does include one decision that maintained the status quo, the reversal of the Passfield White Paper in 1931, and employs the poliheuristic approach due to the flexibility it purports to possess. Rational choice is an inadequate model to analyse some events of this type – as argued by DeRouen – and Ph Theory provides as accurate an analysis as rational choice in other cases. Ph Theory, therefore, may be the most useful framework to study a range of cases in which some appear to defy the rational actor ideal (such as the Churchill White Paper of 1922) and others that appear to demonstrate a maximising principle (such as the MacDonald White Paper in 1939). Crucially, the malleable Ph approach provides a different but still widely generalisable understanding of rationality, one based primarily on the logic of political survival and the non-compensatory principle.¹⁷⁷ As this principle is excluded from both rational choice and models favoured by cognitive theorists, qualitative applications of Ph Theory can provide a rational explanation for otherwise

¹⁷⁵ DeRouen and Sprecher, "Initial Crisis Reaction and Poliheuristic Theory", 66.

¹⁷⁶ DeRouen, "The Decision Not to Use Force at Dien Bien Phu".

¹⁷⁷ Mintz, "How Do Leaders Make Decisions?"

inexplicable choices, such as various Labour politicians' extremely pro-Zionist views outside government and apparently anti-Zionist actions once in power.¹⁷⁸

The problems of a single remaining option, equal outcome validity and the potential for flexibility really require confirmation through further case studies. One limitation that cannot be reconciled with theory development, however, is that before conducting any research is it not possible within the Ph framework to determine which variables are going to be part of the political dimension or at what point an alternative poses too much risk to those variables. More fundamentally, the poliheuristic approach assumes that politicians can identify *a priori* which alternatives are risky to their political survival. The case studies presented in subsequent chapters generally demonstrate that politicians do indeed possess a certain skill for identifying risky scenarios. The only exception is the initial publication of the Passfield White Paper in 1930 when the government of James Ramsay MacDonald did not anticipate the backlash it would create. As argued in Chapter Four, however, this was an understandable oversight. While the process of assessing risk does seem to take place, therefore, politicians may make an incorrect judgement regarding that risk. This has implications for the theory's development and is discussed in detail in the Conclusion.

For the researcher, identifying which variables British decision-makers have considered and how they identify which options are too risky is only possible through archival research, and most likely an over-collection of data. Politicians' levels of sensitivity to the political dimension, which variables are included in the political dimension and the other dimensions under consideration are unique to each case study. While it may be true in the abstract to declare that "everything is political", this maxim does not necessarily follow in practice. Archival research tends to reveal

¹⁷⁸ Brulé, "The Poliheuristic Research Program", 267.

decision-makers' key concerns. There was, for example, during Winston Churchill's tenure at the Colonial Office in the early 1920s, hardly a memorandum written about Palestine that did not refer to the cost of troops stationed there. The poliheuristic framework, therefore, relies on a high degree of specialised knowledge in order to yield either a post-diction or prediction.

More nebulous, unfortunately, is the method for identifying a cut-off point – the stage at which the risk associated with one alternative is too great and it is eliminated from the choice set. While Mintz and Geva have attempted to clarify the cut-off point for risk through the use of a decision board, it merely papers over the theoretical cracks. Mintz and Geva assigned numerical values to variables within the political dimension in order to rank them, but this process involves the same level of educated estimation required in any qualitative analysis.¹⁷⁹ Assigning numerical values on a decision board allows for clarification in research design, but it does not solve the underlying problem of context specificity and the dangers of selection bias. This is not a flaw unique to Poliheuristic Decision Theory, however. Just as the widely accepted rational choice model ranks preferences according to expected utility, the first stage of Ph Theory essentially ranks options according to their expected utility on the variables of the political dimension. Rather than selecting a winning option, however, this process simply eliminates the losers, but it cannot be done in a vacuum. This is far more problematic in predictions than in historical “explanations” as the historian already knows which options have been eliminated.

While it is certainly a limitation on Poliheuristic Decision Theory that the framework cannot be implemented in a situation of limited available information, in circumstances of rich resource availability, this constraint becomes one strength of the

¹⁷⁹ Mintz and Geva, “The Poliheuristic Theory of Foreign Policy Decisionmaking”.

theory. Also, as all theories of human decision-making are based to some degree on assumptions, such as rational choice, which assumes that all humans are utility maximisers, Ph Theory utilises a far more realistic fundamental assumption. As the logic of political survival is restricted to leaders, it becomes a useful tool rather than a necessary fiction. This focus on national leaders means that the specific governmental system under consideration is also relevant. As the case studies presented in following chapters deal with a collectively responsible cabinet rather than a presidential system, the process of eliminating options in a group setting must be addressed.

Although Redd has provided case studies in which a single decision-maker is influenced by bureaucratic advice, this is not the same as group decision-making.¹⁸⁰ Conversely, Brummer directly applies Ph Theory to the Bureaucratic Politics model, but rather than integrating Bureaucratic Politics into the Poliheuristic Theory, Brummer utilises Ph to facilitate Bureaucratic Politics's process validity. Having specifically chosen a case study in which party politics was unlikely to play a role due to a large government majority, Brummer replaces the noncompensatory loss aversion variable with a "noncompensatory organizational loss aversion variable" in which the key dimension is not domestic politics but organisational interests.¹⁸¹ While useful to the Organizational Behaviour model within Bureaucratic Politics, this approach must assume the existence of multiple causal paths and so it sacrifices the predictable outcome validity needed to maintain the central function of Ph Theory. Instead, the best argument for group decision-making within a poliheuristic approach can be

¹⁸⁰ Steven Redd, "The Influence of Advisers on Foreign Policy Decision Making: An Experimental Study", *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 46 (3) 2002: 335-364; Steven Redd, "The Influence of Advisers and Decision Strategies on Foreign Policy Choices: President Clinton's Decision to Use Force in Kosovo"; *International Studies Perspectives* 6 (1) 2005: 129-150; Eben Christensen and Steven Redd, "Bureaucrats Versus the Ballot Box in Foreign Policy Decision Making: An Experimental Analysis of the Bureaucratic Politics Model and the Poliheuristic Theory", *The Journal of Conflict Resolution* 48 (1) 2004: 69-90.

¹⁸¹ Klaus Brummer, "The Reluctant Peacekeeper: governmental Politics and Germany's Participation in EUFOR RD Condo", *Foreign Policy Analysis* doi: 10.1111/j.1743-8594.2011.00174.x, 2012, 2-6.

found in the work of Brulé.¹⁸² Brulé argues that decisions made in group settings can be addressed “as an n-actor, m-dimensional bargaining scenario in which preferences are aggregated according to the two-stage process Poliheuristic Theory describes”.¹⁸³ This is based on the assumption that all members of the group possess “an effective veto on any decision”, so “the aggregation of group preferences into a single choice would, in the first stage, involve the elimination of all alternatives that are noncompensatory to any member of the group”.¹⁸⁴

Rather than every member of the British cabinet possessing an effective veto, however, the following chapters assume a narrowing of the group to only the key actors associated with Palestine in the interwar and post-war periods – principally, though not limited to, the Prime Minister, Colonial Secretary, Foreign Secretary and Chiefs of Staff. These figures dominated cabinet discussions on Palestine and carried the entire group, making Brulé’s characterisation of group decision-making through member-veto most appropriate. This, however, is an area of Poliheuristic Decision Theory that remains procedurally undeveloped and the problem is tied to Ph literature’s almost exclusive focus on politics of the United States. Mintz claims that the poliheuristic model is applicable wherever a political dimension is present, regardless of the type of government under consideration. Shifting the focus away from a presidency to a cabinet model, however, does require more consideration of the group dynamic. One way of integrating a realistic discussion of group decision-making behaviour in the Ph approach may be to assign a more generalised description of Bureaucratic Politics to the political dimension as one variable among many, and this is discussed in greater detail under Alternative Frameworks below.

¹⁸² Brulé, “The Poliheuristic Research Program: An Assessment and Suggestions for Further Progress”.

¹⁸³ Ibid, 283.

¹⁸⁴ Ibid.

One final criticism of Poliheuristic Decision Theory is that it places a strong emphasis on domestic political constraints and the elimination of alternatives, which means it reflects a highly reactive rather than proactive form of policy-making. This critique, however, misunderstands the narrow jurisdiction of a poliheuristic approach. The theory is not necessarily concerned with how foreign policy options are developed or ideas constructed, but rather how they transition from alternatives within a choice set to becoming a final choice. A non-holistic search is assumed, but how alternatives enter the choice set is beyond Ph Theory's current remit – it is not a model of foreign policy-making, but a model of foreign policy decision-making. The only major requirement for the researcher in this regard is to know which options are under consideration. The framework's central ethos may be expanded over time, and this will require further case studies as well as the integration of other aspects of Foreign Policy Analysis, such as personality and culture – at the moment, a Ph approach is relatively Spartan. These are the main flaws within Poliheuristic Decision Theory. In comparison to the most obvious alternatives, however, it remains a useful and applicable framework for the purposes of this thesis.

Alternative Frameworks

In order to argue the suitability of Ph Theory to this thesis, it is necessary to highlight why potential alternative frameworks are less appropriate by comparison. As the goal of this thesis is to provide a better understanding of British decision-making towards Palestine during the Mandate, which is based on a greater attention to domestic politics than that provided for by rational choice, FPA offers several additional frameworks that would seem applicable. These are Groupthink, Bureaucratic Politics, Psychobiography/Content Analysis (CA), Prospect Theory, the

Cybernetic model and Binary Role Theory. Each, however, possesses certain weaknesses that are problematic to reaching accurate empirical findings or possesses a procedural complexity that severely hampers their successful application.

Since the British cabinet system is a group-based decision-making environment, it is necessary to address the major frameworks within FPA that deal with this dynamic: Groupthink and Bureaucratic Politics. First, Groupthink is a concept that describes decision-making within small groups as a collective psychological phenomenon.¹⁸⁵ Introduced by Irving Janis in the 1970s, the theory is grounded in rational choice, focused more on identifying characteristics of decision-making that may produce suboptimal outcomes than on how the processes that govern these decisions are operationalised.¹⁸⁶ Under Groupthink conditions, the group in question seeks consensus and sacrifices the exploration of a variety of alternatives in order to secure it. Under these circumstances, the decision-making process is marked by conformity, both self- and group-imposed, and outsiders are vilified as morally inferior. As a result, the group disregards dissenting opinions and information that does not support the majority position.¹⁸⁷ This model exhibits multiple symptoms. Some are observable in British decision-making towards Palestine during the Mandate period, but key characteristics do not appear to have been present.

Janis's symptoms can be divided into three categories: 1) features that have been observed in groups who are susceptible to faulty decision-making, 2) characteristics of the search for conformity and 3) traits of the actual decision-making process – all of which are collectively termed “Groupthink”. The first category includes hallmarks such as similar ages and backgrounds within the group, isolation,

¹⁸⁵ Hill, *The Changing Politics of Foreign Policy*, 115.

¹⁸⁶ Irving Janis, *Victims of Groupthink: A Psychological Study of Foreign Policy* (New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1972); Irving Janis, *Groupthink: A Psychological Study of Policy Decisions and Fiascos* (New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1982).

¹⁸⁷ Mintz and DeRouen, *Understanding Foreign Policy Decision Making*, 44.

absence of an impartial leader, a crisis situation, an illusion of invulnerability and an unquestioned belief in the group's morality.¹⁸⁸ When these features are present, activities in the second category may also occur. These include collective rationalization efforts, stereotypes of outsiders, self-censorship, illusions of unanimity, direct pressure on dissenters and the existence of self-appointed mindguards. Finally, these features may then result in decision-making processes marked by traits from the third category: an incomplete survey of alternatives and objectives, a failure to examine risks of preferred choice, a failure to reappraise initially rejected alternatives, a poor information search, a selective bias in processing available information and a failure to work out contingency plans.¹⁸⁹

In assessing the suitability of Groupthink to an analysis of British decision-making towards Palestine, it appears that the model would have only partial applicability. Successive British cabinets certainly possessed some of the characteristics that might have made them susceptible to Groupthink, such as similar ages and socio-economic brackets among members, at least two instances of national crisis (discussed in Chapters Five and Six) and isolation due to political unpopularity (addressed in Chapters Three and Four). Also, as some politicians appeared to change their opinions on Zionism after assuming high office – most notably James Ramsay and Malcolm MacDonald – it would be tempting to assume that pressures of conformity highlighted by the Groupthink model could explain British decision-making processes.

However, when examining the group dynamic, features from the first two categories of Janis's Groupthink symptoms merely indicate vulnerability to

¹⁸⁸ Greg Cashman, *What Causes War? An Introduction to Theories of International Conflict* (New York: Lexington Books, 1993), 112-115; Brandon Kennedy, "The Hijacking of Foreign Policy Decision Making: Groupthink and Presidential Power in the Post-9/11 World", *Southern California Interdisciplinary Law Journal* 21 (4) 2011: 633-680, 641-643.

¹⁸⁹ Kennedy, "The Hijacking of Foreign Policy Decision Making", 641-643.

Groupthink. If the decision-making period under investigation does not exhibit signs of a poor survey of information and objectives etc., then Groupthink is not an appropriate model.¹⁹⁰ Crucially, in the case of British foreign policy decision-making towards Palestine, the investigative commissions present in every decision-making period represent sophisticated and independent information searches. Cabinet discussions were marked by both conformity and conflict throughout the Mandate period, but the search for information and options was never truncated. In addition, archival research highlighted by this thesis indicates an awareness of risk in every case study – political, economic and military/strategic – rather than a failure to examine the consequences of a preferred choice. The repeated absence of key Groupthink characteristics means that the model is less applicable than the poliheuristic framework to an analysis of British decision-making across the Mandate period. The model of Bureaucratic Politics, however, while posing a different collection of barriers, does yield several useful descriptive tools for even a Ph analysis.

The model of Bureaucratic Politics, developed largely by Graham Allison and Morton Halperin, is a combination of three complementary frameworks: Model I The Rational Actor, Model II Organizational Behaviour and Model III Governmental Politics.¹⁹¹ Although the generic term “Bureaucratic Politics” is often conflated with organisational process and used generically to indicate structural features in decision-making, these three components mean it is premised more on an agency-oriented than structural level of analysis – addressing individual, large and small group behaviour

¹⁹⁰ Noni Richardson Ahlfinger and James K. Esser, “Testing the groupthink model: Effects of promotional leadership and conformity predisposition”, *Social Behavior and Personality: An International Journal* 29 (1) 2001: 31-42; Paul t’Hart, “Preventing Groupthink Revisited: Evaluating and Reforming Groups in Government”, *Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes* 73 (2-3) 1998: 306-326.

¹⁹¹ Graham Allison and Philip Zelikow, *Essence of Decision: Explaining the Cuban Missile Crisis* (New York: Longman, 1999).

respectively.¹⁹² This chapter has already highlighted how Ph Theory attempts to move beyond rational choice at the individual level and bridge the theoretical gap with cognitive models, but the case studies in this thesis do involve large organizations, predominantly the Foreign and Colonial Offices as well as their representatives in cabinet, and so the Bureaucratic Politics models would appear to be relevant. Indeed, Organizational Behaviour and Governmental Politics yield some useful concepts that increase the descriptive accuracy of British decision-making during the Mandate within a poliheuristic approach, but neither stand-alone model offers greater outcome validity than a systematic application of Poliheuristic Decision Theory.

Within the Organizational Behaviour perspective, foreign policy decision-making can be understood as “outputs of large organizations functioning according to standard patterns of behavior”.¹⁹³ The model suggests a series of characteristics that define the nature of such organizations – a collection of traits whose existence is presumed constant. In their simplest descriptive forms, these are “essence” and “turf”. Essence is a quality that prompts organisations to claim a turf – an understanding of what issues it can assert an interest in – whether as a primary or lesser stakeholder.¹⁹⁴ As organisations develop their own identities, missions and visions based on specific skill sets, once entrenched this organisational culture is almost impossible to change. Such self-understanding is crucial to an organisation’s ability to function effectively. Mission and identity tells members why what they do is important; without this focus, an organisation may not develop a niche necessary to be influential within the bureaucracy.

¹⁹² Hollis and Smith use ‘bureaucratic’ interchangeably with ‘structural’, for example in Martin Hollis and Steve Smith, “Roles and Reason in Foreign Policy Decision Making”, *British Journal of Political Science* 16 (3) 1986: 269-286. This position is opposed more recently in Walter Carlsnaes, “Foreign Policy”. In *Handbook of International Relations*. eds. Walter Carlsnaes, Thomas Risse and Beth Simmons, 331-349 (London: Sage Publications Ltd, 2002).

¹⁹³ Allison and Zelikow, *Essence of Decision*, 143.

¹⁹⁴ Hudson, *Foreign Policy Analysis*.

Essence, however, can also breed distrust and resentment of nonconformists – both inside and outside the organisation – narrowing the essence over time. This attitude means that organisations jealously guard their turf while seeking to expand – more turf means more influence, a larger budget and possibly more autonomy. The presence of essence and turf also influences how members of the organisation behave towards a wide variety of issues, including morale, budgets, domestic accountability, career progression, use of the press and policy implementation.¹⁹⁵

These characteristics are observable in specific decision-making periods during Britain's Mandate for Palestine. Unfortunately, however, the Organizational Behaviour model is not solely capable of providing causal pathways between bureaucratic resultants and final decisions in these and many cases – including the oft-repeated Cuban Missile Crisis.¹⁹⁶ Sub-cabinet activities can determine which options enter the choice set, but such a question falls outside of the remit of this thesis. The alternatives available to British decision-makers during the Mandate are readily available from archival research and this thesis is chiefly concerned with the decision-making process that occurred after these options were identified. This is where Allison interjects the model of Governmental Politics, or rather the identification of cabinet secretaries as key players in the decision-making environment. This small group dynamic is what bridges between descriptive features of large-group Organizational Behaviour and the causal pathways of small-group decision-making.

The main actors in each case involving this model, therefore, “are key individuals sitting atop key organizations, each of which is trying to maximise its interests, agendas and goals”.¹⁹⁷ In order to conduct a study taking these players into account, it is necessary to establish whose interests and actions played an important

¹⁹⁵ Morton Halperin, *Bureaucratic Politics* (Washington DC: Brookings Institution, 1974).

¹⁹⁶ Allison and Zelikow, *Essence of Decision*, 255.

¹⁹⁷ Mintz and DeRouen, *Understanding Foreign Policy Decision Making*, 71.

role in governmental decision-making and determine each player's impact on results – what was the actor's relative power and how did their actions combine to influence decision-making?¹⁹⁸ Essence and turf are also assumed to influence a stakeholder's stance in negotiations.¹⁹⁹ This is Miles' Law, that "where you stand depends on where you sit".²⁰⁰ Then, how each player or stakeholder's input is weighted, depends on the dimension his or her organisation represents, and, therefore, its relative ranking for the issue being discussed.²⁰¹

This provides a realistic description of representative small-group behaviour, but the presence of a higher authority such as a president, or to a lesser extent a prime minister, makes it difficult to identify causal pathways between cabinet-level bargaining and final foreign policy choices. This has led to the open admission that Bureaucratic Politics may skew decision-making in another direction rather than explain the process from first formulation to final choice.²⁰² The lack of causal pathways, however, does not eradicate any discussion of Bureaucratic Politics from analyses of decision-making, those that are clearly marked by cabinet-level disputes reflecting the interests of each participant's respective organisation – or turf wars.

Palestine policy decision-making during the Mandate period coincided with a tug-of-war between the Foreign and Colonial offices, and to ignore this would produce an artificial analysis. As Mintz noted how models such as Bureaucratic Politics "represent instances of political organizing themes during the decision-making process", it is possible to integrate a discussion of Bureaucratic Politics into

¹⁹⁸ Allison and Zelikow, *Essence of Decision*.

¹⁹⁹ Daniel Drezner "Ideas, Bureaucratic Politics, and the Crafting of Foreign Policy", *American Journal of Political Science* 44 (4) 2000: 733-749; Hudson, *Foreign Policy Analysis*.

²⁰⁰ Roger Hilsman, *The Politics of Policy Making in Defense and Foreign Affairs: Conceptual Models and Bureaucratic Politics* (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice Hall, 1987), 55.

²⁰¹ Drezner "Ideas, Bureaucratic Politics, and the Crafting of Foreign Policy"; Hudson, *Foreign Policy Analysis*.

²⁰² Hilsman, *The Politics of Policy Making in Defense and Foreign Affairs*.

the poliheuristic approach by making the Bureaucratic Politics phenomenon a variable on the political dimension in the first stage of decision-making.²⁰³ This means the small-group behaviour Allison describes in the Governmental Politics model can be highlighted as an influencing factor without needing to specify the causal mechanisms connecting Bureaucratic Politics to the elimination of a particular alternative from the choice set.

This means that the broad idea of “Bureaucratic Politics” is not artificially excluded from the analysis of British political infighting, but neither is it relied upon too heavily to “explain” decision-making. Rather than “causing” a decision, Bureaucratic Politics creates a negative atmosphere surrounding the decision-making process that leads to delay. This is evident in Chapters Three and Five in the interplay between rival heads of the Foreign and Colonial Offices. Consequently, these chapters feature a variable on the political dimension that is labelled “Bureaucratic Politics”; it refers to the combination of assumed characteristics present in Graham’s Organizational Behaviour and Governmental Politics models – the existence of essence, turf, and Miles’ Law – with archival evidence to demonstrate the turf-focused rather than merely personal cabinet-level conflicts that dominate the study of this phenomenon.²⁰⁴

It is important to note that within the group-based British cabinet system, individuals played a key role. Since FPA posits the importance of individuals in foreign policy decision-making, this has led to research investigating the role of personality, psychological and cognitive elements. Borrowing from the field of psychology, examinations of the individual decision-maker try to understand the relationship between the brain’s filters for information – which may include

²⁰³ Alex Mintz, “The Decision to Attack Iraq: A Noncompensatory Theory of Decision Making”, 603.

²⁰⁴ Halperin, *Bureaucratic Politics*, 297.

stereotypes, biases, heuristics and even mental illnesses such as narcissism and paranoia – and foreign policy decisions.²⁰⁵ The main models used to investigate these filters have been Psychobiography and its derivative, Content Analysis (CA).

Psychobiography emerged chiefly through the work of David Barber and Jerrold Post.²⁰⁶ Barber categorised presidents based on two axes, active-passive and positive-negative. The active-passive axis referred to a leader's level of energy and personal belief in the power of the individual to effect change, and the positive-negative axis addressed a leader's world view and motivation for seeking office – discerning whether a leader is pessimistic, suspicious, motivated by feelings of neediness, shame or obligation.²⁰⁷ Naturally, Barber labels active-positive presidents such as Roosevelt, Truman and Kennedy as suitable for the highest office and passive-negative individuals including Wilson, Johnson and Nixon as unsuitable.²⁰⁸ Barber views the most important observable feature as “character,” which is “the way a person ‘orients himself towards life’ as developed through childhood” and highlights this as a crucial determining factor in presidential performance.²⁰⁹

Post then built on this method – using a methodology he called *anamnesis* – to develop in-depth leadership profiles by examining everything from a leader's childhood, personal experiences and family story, to health, habits, emotional stability, conscience, values and reaction to criticism and failure as well as the individual's ideologies and even oratory and communication style. Post aimed to

²⁰⁵ Hudson, *Foreign Policy Analysis*, 40.

²⁰⁶ James David Barber, *The Presidential Character: Predicting Performance in the White House* (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice Hall, 1972); Jerrold Post, “Saddam Hussein of Iraq: A Political Psychology Profile”, *Political Psychology* 12 (1) 2003: 279-289..

²⁰⁷ Hudson, *Foreign Policy Analysis*, 54.

²⁰⁸ *Ibid*, 55.

²⁰⁹ Philip Abbott, *Bad Presidents: Failure in the White House* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), 39; Michael Nelson, “The Psychological Presidency”. In *The Presidency and the Political System*. ed. Michael Nelson, 142-166 (Washington DC: CQ Press, 2010), 148.

produce a detailed profile and then use it to predict a president's reactions to various scenarios involving international politics, most notably for the CIA.²¹⁰

These frameworks are highly useful for their descriptive detail but lack procedural clarity – they struggle to connect personality traits to causal mechanisms, which is also a criticism levelled at the “Great Man” approach to history and interwar IR.²¹¹ Barber's use of Psychobiography was intended more as a pre-emptive warning model than an explanatory one – alerting American voters to dysfunctional presidential candidates – and Post's approach is so complex that it fails to provide a theoretical model. Content Analysis has been used to try and simplify the process of identifying personality traits, but it falls into the same descriptive category.

CA acts as a complement or alternative to psychobiography. Operating under the assumption that artefacts of personality appear in what a leader says and writes, CA attempts to uncover personality traits that influence decision-making by analysing a leader's speeches and writings. There are two main forms of CA: thematic and quantitative (word count). Whereas the thematic approach requires a scholar to categorise personality themes he or she wants to investigate – meaning the analysis is only as meaningful as the analyst's categorisation scheme – quantitative, or word count, CA rests on psychological theory.²¹² If words are artefacts of personality, then personality traits can be linked to particular word choices; “I”, “me”, “my”, “mine”, for example, demonstrate confidence.²¹³

As well as posing problems of contextual validity, however, such as the royal “we”, this approach faces several major hurdles: politicians do not tend to write their

²¹⁰ Hudson, *Foreign Policy Analysis*, 55-56; Mintz and DeRouen, *Understanding Foreign Policy Decision Making*, 119.

²¹¹ Alexander George, “Assessing Presidential Character”, *World Politics* 26 (1) 1974: 234-282.

²¹² Hudson, *Foreign Policy Analysis*, 57.

²¹³ Margaret Hermann, “Assessing Leadership Style: Trait Analysis”. In *The Psychological Assessment of Political Leaders*, ed. Jerrold Post, 178-214 (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2003).

own speeches, their speeches are audience-specific and they lie – even if only to protect national security – meaning that spontaneous live interviews are the only reliable texts for quantitative CA. Fundamentally, however, leaders cannot be assumed to possess many isolated traits constantly, and even if a scholar can demonstrate the link between word choice in a particular text and personality, this still does not demonstrate causal paths relating personality to decision-making. This is why particular biases, such as anti-Semitism, for example, cannot necessarily be assumed to have an impact on decision-making. Such feelings are often complex and seemingly contradictory. Colonel Meinertzhagen, for example, attempted to clarify his position vis-à-vis Zionism in 1919, writing that, “[m]y inclination towards Jews in general is governed by an anti-Semitic instinct which is invariably modified by personal contact. My views on Zionism are those of an ardent Zionist.”²¹⁴ It is too easy, therefore, to attribute both pro- and anti-Zionist policy to anti-Semitism, and means that this particular causal pathway, supported by the theoretical basis that underpins Content Analysis, fails to hold much weight.

The same is true of lesser-known methods for examining personal, psychological and cognitive traits, such as “think aloud” protocols, cognitive mapping, concept coding, image theory, and CA’s more technologically advanced cousin, ProfilerPlus.²¹⁵ These cognitive frameworks are all immensely valuable for their descriptive contributions but struggle to satisfy the procedural needs of a foreign policy decision-making framework when used alone. However, research into individual cognitive elements does have a direct bearing on Ph Theory.

²¹⁴ FO 608/99/19861, 26 September 1919, Meinertzhagen to GHQ, TNA.

²¹⁵ Helen E. Purkitt “Problem Representations and Political Expertise: Evidence from ‘Think Aloud’ Protocols of South African Elite”. In *Problem Representation in Foreign Policy Decision Making*, eds. Donald A. Sylvan and James F. Voss, 147-186 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998).

Since certain personality traits/mental illnesses such as narcissism and paranoia seem to be disproportionately frequent among national leaders (up to 13 per cent), analysts should consider that people drawn into politics may be those willing to pay any price for power, and that the pressures of high office can help pathological states to develop.²¹⁶ This must impact how politicians perceive risk, and it may be necessary to assume that politicians, will, in general, accept greater risk to the political dimension than a control group. Alternatively, the negative feelings associated with losing power may be more acute among narcissists, for example, resulting in a lower than average threshold for acceptable political risk once in office. Such an issue falls outside the remit of this thesis, but it does raise the importance of individual characteristics even for a model that does not utilise them procedurally. In contrast to less theoretical cognitive approaches, Prospect Theory does connect cognition to decision-making but only under certain circumstances.

Prospect Theory is the most influential cognitive model of decision-making. Developed by Daniel Kahneman and Amos Tversky to predict choices that leaders make under conditions of risk, the theory has two phases: an editing phase of “framing effects” and an evaluation phase when an option is chosen.²¹⁷ Although the poliheuristic model appears to adopt a similar structure, the main problem with Prospect Theory is its inability to predict frames.²¹⁸ Whereas Ph Theory posits the domestic dimension as paramount to decision-making, Prospect Theory cannot posit one particular frame as constant throughout case studies, and so is only suitable for crisis situations in which the conditions of risk and potential loss provide the

²¹⁶ Hudson, *Foreign Policy Analysis*, 47; Jerrold Post, *The Psychological Assessment of Political Leaders* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2003); David L. Weiner, *Power Freaks* (Amherst: Prometheus, 2003).

²¹⁷ Daniel Kahneman and Amos Tversky, “Prospect Theory: An Analysis of Decision Under Risk”, *Econometrica* 47 (2) 1979: 263-291.

²¹⁸ James Druckman and Rose McDermott, “Emotion and the Framing of Risky Choice”, *Political Behavior* 30 (3) 2008: 297-321, 299.

appropriate cognitive boundaries for analysis. As it is not a complete theory of decision-making, therefore, Prospect Theory is inapplicable to cases of routine foreign policy – nor indeed have Prospect Theory studies been performed on groups.²¹⁹ Similar limitations are found in the Cybernetic model.

Cybernetic decision-making is concerned with minimising uncertainty in conditions of crisis.²²⁰ In an ethos later adopted by Ph Theory, the Cybernetic approach highlights how decision-makers lack fundamental cognitive skills needed to carry out an exhaustive or holistic search.²²¹ This is based on Herbert Simon's concept of bounded rationality.²²² Rather than optimise, decision-makers satisfice, monitoring only a small set of critical variables and aiming to reduce uncertainty by keeping these variables within tolerable ranges.²²³ Whereas Ph Theory complements this satisficing principle with a second decision-making stage involving rational choice, the Cybernetic model relies on a single stage, a satisficing principle alone and a fixed rather than evolving decision matrix.²²⁴ Again, this is why the model is useful only for conditions of crisis. Unable to predict which set of variables are crucial without the constraints of a high-risk situation, Cybernetic theory lacks the wider applicability necessary for case studies involving routine foreign policy decisions. The final alternative, Binary Role Theory, possesses the flexibility necessary to study both crises and routine policy, but it falls into the cognitivist trap of over-reliance on process without parsimony.

²¹⁹ Jack Levy, "Prospect Theory and the Cognitive-Rational Debate". In *Decisionmaking on War and Peace: The Cognitive-Rational Debate*, eds. Alex Mintz and Nehemia Geva, 33-50 (Boulder: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1997).

²²⁰ Steinbruner, *The Cybernetic Theory of Decision*.

²²¹ Miriam Steiner, "The Search for Order in a Disorderly World: Worldviews and Prescriptive Decision Paradigms", *International Organization* 37 (3) 1983: 373-413.

²²² Simon, "Theories of Decision Making in Economics and Behavioral Science".

²²³ Steinbruner, *The Cybernetic Theory of Decision*; Ostrom and Job, "The President and the Political Use of Force"; Xinsheng Lui, "The Poliheuristic Theory of Decision and the Cybernetic Theory of Decision: A Comparative Examination". In *Integrating Cognitive and Rational Theories of Foreign Policy Decision Making*, ed. Alex Mintz, 159-168 (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002).

²²⁴ Lui, "The Poliheuristic Theory of Decision and the Cybernetic Theory of Decision".

Binary Role Theory, like the poliheuristic approach, purports to bridge the gap between, metaphorically, “the cast-iron laws of classical physics that govern the behaviour of ‘clocks’ and the indeterminacy models of modern physics that govern the behaviour of ‘clouds’”.²²⁵ This theory focuses on two political worlds – the world of events “generated by the presence, power, and behaviour of other actors” and the world of beliefs “generated by the cognitive, emotional, and motivational processes of leaders”.²²⁶ In this approach, the world of beliefs (of states of mind) and the world of events (a set of possible actions that constitute randomness) converge in a third world of interactions, the process of which reduces randomness in each world, explaining stability and change. The operational code acts as an interface: philosophical beliefs represent the external world of events, and based on instrumental beliefs, the operational code prescribes strategies and tactics for decision-making vis-à-vis other actors.²²⁷ There are then two elements constituting the field of world politics: rationality and power, and these are “the respective conceptualisations of cognition and behaviour whose processes are systematically linked and offer theoretical explanations of patterns of continuity and change over time in the political universe”.²²⁸

Although in an abstract sense this approach does utilise cognitive and rational factors, it does not provide a methodological structure with which to apply both. If rationality is simply seen as one element of cognition, then the approach is simply cognitivist. Binary Role Theory, therefore, is a model of how beliefs may interact with rationality and power as opposed to a model of decision-making. In attempting to

²²⁵ Stephen Walker, “The Integration of Foreign Policy Analysis and International Relations”. In *Rethinking Foreign Policy Analysis: States, Leaders, and the Microfoundations of Behavioral International Relations*, eds. Stephen Walker, Akan Malici and Mark Schafer, 267-282 (Oxon: Routledge, 2011), 268.

²²⁶ Walker, “Foreign Policy Analysis and Behavioral International Relations”, 6.

²²⁷ Ibid.

²²⁸ Ibid, 12.

do full and complete justice to the complexity of cognition and causal pathways, Binary Role Theory over emphasises process validity at the expense of outcome validity. Like Content Analysis, Prospect Theory and the Cybernetic Model, Binary Role Theory lacks a crucial element that would make it a more suitable framework than Ph Theory to analyse British Palestine policy during the Mandate.

Poliheuristic Decision Theory is not without its limitations and flaws, however, as previously discussed. The original intent of Ph Theory was to bridge the divide between rational and cognitive models, but as demonstrated above, this is undermined by the existence of a single viable alternative after Stage One and also by an unclear specification of decision-making processes in Stage Two. Rather than providing a panacea or umbrella theory, therefore, it is better to consider Poliheuristic Decision Theory as a pragmatic compromise. It sacrifices both the wider applicability of rational choice and minute detail of cognitive frameworks to allow a realistic study of certain specific circumstances. Instead of a theory of human decision-making, the poliheuristic approach is a framework for studying decision-making in the environment of high-stake politics.

Conclusion

In the twenty-first century, the opening of archives, and the accessibility of decision-makers and open source material more generally, provides a unique opportunity to blend useful elements of the cognitivist approach with rational choice. As the British Mandate for Palestine witnessed a dissimilar collection of crucial decision-making periods, this chapter claims that Poliheuristic Decision Theory provides the flexibility needed to address the entire period. As each case study highlights individually in subsequent chapters, the rational choice model can provide

only an inaccurate prediction or incomplete post-diction of the British government's decision-making processes. Neither Groupthink nor Bureaucratic politics provide adequate models for assessing cabinet-level decision-making, Psychobiography and Content Analysis rests upon an easily refutable assumption that personality is always connected to choice, Prospect Theory and the Cybernetic Model struggle to apply outside crisis situations and Binary Role Theory is impractical as a bridge between rational and cognitive schools. In contrast, Poliheuristic Decision Theory, while taking its weaknesses into consideration, remains useful in the specific decision-making instances highlighted in this thesis – choices that resulted in changes to policy as well as one that maintained the status quo, and decisions taken in environments of both routine and crisis policy-making – a diverse collection of cases for which alternative frameworks lose their applicability.

Chapter 3: The Balfour Zeitgeist 1917-1928

*“The Arabs believe that in the next few years they are going to be swamped by scores of thousands of immigrants from Central Europe, who will push them off the land, eat up the scanty substance of the country and eventually gain absolute control of its institutions and destinies. As a matter of fact these fears are illusory.”*²²⁹

Winston Churchill, Colonial Secretary, 1921.

The Balfour Declaration of 1917 became the first in a chain of events committing the British government to a Jewish national home in Palestine. Extended in the draft Mandate for Palestine and confirmed in the Churchill White Paper of 1922, this national home policy continued almost unquestioned until the Palestine riots of 1929 prompted a reassessment. This period, therefore, represented a “Balfour Zeitgeist”, but it was a phase of British foreign policy that was not without frustration and confusion regarding its implementation. Rather than drawing a linear timeline from 1917 onwards, it is vital to recognise that the 1922-decision to confirm the principles of the declaration was highly uncertain. Using a traditional expected-utility foreign policy analysis, this decision was also inexplicable. Between the declaration and its affirmation, two British commissions of enquiry uncovered fundamental and irresolvable flaws in the national home policy, making a cost-benefit analysis incapable of recommending its continuation.

In order to provide a cogent explanation and “post-diction” of this decision, therefore, it is necessary to invoke the more nuanced Poliheuristic Decision (Ph) Theory. This chapter applies the Ph Theory’s two-stage decision-making framework to the national home policy, demonstrating how and why the British government decided to affirm the policy in 1922. It argues that in the first stage of the decision-making process, the government rejected alternatives that failed to meet requirements

²²⁹ House of Commons Debates, 14 June 1921, series 5, vol 143, cols 285-286.

on the most important, political dimension. Key variables the British government considered in the critical time period of 1920-1922 reflect criteria outlined in Mintz 2004: prestige, bureaucratic politics, post-war economic decline and inter-party rivalry. Once options were eliminated, the government chose among the remaining alternatives in the second stage of decision-making by seeking to minimise costs on the substantive, strategic dimension. Finally, this chapter highlights how the national home policy remained untouched by both Conservative and Labour governments in the 1920s due to sunk costs. Rather than a Palestine policy based on interests, events and people in the territory under consideration, this analysis reveals a Palestine policy based primarily on the need to satisfy political concerns unrelated to the tiny Mediterranean territory.

Defining the Choice Set

In the Rational Actor, or Expected Utility (EUT) model, the decision-maker chooses the option with the most preferred consequence. Rationality then, is a “consistent, value-maximizing choice within specified constraints”.²³⁰ Therefore, when explaining the British decision to affirm the national home policy in 1922, it is first necessary to acknowledge that several factors make this decision “irrational” as it failed to demonstrate purposive action seeking utility maximisation.²³¹ A simple cost-benefit analysis based on information available to decision-makers at the time would have predicted a renunciation of the national home policy. This is evident from the reports submitted in 1920 and 1921 by two commissions of enquiry. Following the Nebi Musa Riots of April 1920, the Palin Commission pinpointed fundamental flaws in the policy of supporting a Jewish national home, and following the Jaffa Riots of

²³⁰ Allison, *Essence of Decision*, 30.

²³¹ MacDonald, “Useful Fiction or Miracle Maker”; Allison, *Essence of Decision*.

May 1921, the Haycraft Commission independently reiterated many of the same concerns.

The first major riots under British rule occurred roughly two-and-a-half years after the Balfour Declaration was first issued, but the Palin Commission found it was “undoubtedly the starting point of the whole trouble”.²³² The Arabs of Palestine were struggling to reconcile an Anglo-French Declaration of self-determination with the promise of a Jewish home in Palestine, “giving rise to a sense of betrayal and intense anxiety for their future”.²³³ The announcement of Jewish, Zionist Sir Herbert Samuel as Palestine’s first High Commissioner was thought to exacerbate the situation. General Allenby in command in Palestine believed “that appointment of a Jew as first Governor will be highly dangerous”.²³⁴ He anticipated that “when news arrives of appointment of Mr. Samuel general movement against Zionist will result, and that we must be prepared for outrages against Jews, murders, raids on Jewish villages, and raids into our territory from East”.²³⁵ In contrast, many British and French politicians were concerned about the actions of Zionists rather than Arabs. To reassure the French Prime Minister, Colonial Secretary Winston Churchill “expatiated on the virtues and experience of Sir Herbert Samuel, and pointed out how evenly he was holding the balance between Arabs and Jews and how effectively he was restraining his own people, as perhaps only a Jewish administrator could”.²³⁶

Although the Palin report pointed towards “provocative” Zionist behaviour as an immediate cause of the riots, it more importantly highlighted the real doubts underlying Arab animosity; “at the bottom of all is a deep-seated fear of the Jew, both

²³² WO 32/9614, 1920, “Jerusalem riots: Courts of Enquiry”, TNA.

²³³ Ibid.

²³⁴ LG/F/12/3/32, 6 May 1920, Allenby to Lloyd George, Parliamentary Archives.

²³⁵ Ibid.

²³⁶ LG/F/9/2/54, 11 January 1921, Notes on Churchill’s Conversations in Paris, Parliamentary Archives; LG/F/9/2/54, 12 January 1921, Churchill to Lloyd George, Parliamentary Archives.

as a possible ruler and as an economic competitor”.²³⁷ These anxieties became a familiar theme in all riots during the British Mandate. Also, in blaming Zionists for the disturbances, the commission report could not avoid implicating British support for Zionism in the violence. It asserted that “the Administration was considerably hampered in its policy by the direct interference of the Home Authorities”, a thinly-veiled criticism of policy emanating from the Foreign Office.²³⁸ Major-General Palin and his fellow commissioners warned the British government “[t]hat the situation at present obtaining in Palestine is exceedingly dangerous” and “a very firm hand” was necessary to “hold the scales as between all parties with rigid equality” to avert “a serious catastrophe”.²³⁹ However, as Samuel took charge of Palestine from the military administration before the Palin report was complete, he issued a general amnesty and declared the matter closed. On 15 July 1920, and before he had read it, Samuel telegraphed the Foreign Office to advise against publishing the Palin Commission “irrespective of contents”.²⁴⁰ The dangers, fears and tensions highlighted in the report might have been inconsequential if another riot on a worse scale had not erupted the following year in Jaffa. These disturbances were also the subject of an investigation, headed by Chief Justice of Palestine, Sir Thomas Haycraft.

Although the Haycraft Commission did not question the national home as a viable policy, its report reiterated the fundamental tensions between Arabs and Zionists in Palestine. The immediate cause of the Jaffa riots was a clash between Jewish Labour demonstrators: *Achdut HaAvoda*, the powerful majority organisation which possessed a permit to conduct a rally, and *Miflagat Poalim Sozialistim* (MPS),

²³⁷ WO 32/9614, 1920, “Jerusalem riots: Courts of Enquiry”, TNA.

²³⁸ Ibid.

²³⁹ Ibid.

²⁴⁰ Ibid.

an inflammatory and banned group which did not.²⁴¹ The Labour dispute finished relatively quickly, but police found Arabs smashing windows in Menshieh and “a general hunting of the Jews began”.²⁴² It was recognised immediately that the underlying cause was Arab hostility towards the Jewish national home, and on 14 May, Samuel announced a temporary prohibition on immigrants landing at the port of Jaffa and began preparations for another commission of inquiry.²⁴³ Haycraft posited that, “the Bolshevik demonstration was the spark that set alight the explosive discontent of the Arabs, and precipitated an outbreak which developed into an Arab-Jewish feud”.²⁴⁴ Although appalled by the violence, Haycraft and his fellow commissioners believed that Arab antipathy in Jaffa resulted in part from a perceived Jewish arrogance, since newly arrived young men and women tended to stroll the streets arm-in-arm in “easy attire”, holding up traffic and singing songs. This did not fit with conservative Arab ideas of decorum. Haycraft detected, therefore, “no inherent anti-Semitism in the country, racial or religious”.²⁴⁵

The report concluded that, “the fundamental cause of the Jaffa riots and the subsequent acts of violence was a feeling among the Arabs of discontent with, and hostility to, the Jews, due to political and economic causes, and connected with Jewish immigration”.²⁴⁶ Politically, the main fear was “that the Jews when they had sufficiently increased in numbers would become so highly organised and so well armed as to be able to overcome the Arabs, and rule over and oppress them”.²⁴⁷ Economically, the influx of skilled Jewish labourers and artisans was seen as a threat

²⁴¹ Cmd 1540, 1921, *Palestine. Disturbances in May, 1921. Reports of the Commission Of Inquiry with Correspondence Relating Thereto*, 21.

²⁴² *Ibid.*, 25.

²⁴³ *Ibid.*, 35.

²⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 43.

²⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 53-54.

²⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

²⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

to Arab livelihoods.²⁴⁸ The Haycraft Commission provided the British government with another accurate illustration of Arab-Jewish tension in Palestine, but it could not offer a solution without extending beyond its remit and questioning the overarching policy: “Much, we feel might be done to allay the existing hostility between the races if responsible persons on both sides could agree to discuss the questions arising between them in a reasonable spirit, on the basis that the Arabs should accept implicitly the declared policy of the government on the subject of the Jewish national home, and that the Zionist leaders should abandon and repudiate all pretensions that go beyond it”.²⁴⁹ Without suggesting a political change, the commission had no practical advice to offer.

In light of the tensions highlighted by these commission reports, the government in London was presented with three options: continue supporting the creation of a Jewish national home in Palestine – imposing it with the threat or use of force, limiting the national home policy in a manner acceptable to its critics, or repudiating the policy altogether. The General Staff articulated these options in practical terms: “(a.) An alteration of policy as regards Jewish immigration; (b.) An increase in the British garrison; or (c.) The acceptance of serious danger to the Jewish population”.²⁵⁰ The cabinet agreed their courses were to “withdraw from their Declaration, refer the Mandate back to the League of Nations, set up an Arab National government and slow down or stop the immigration of Jews: or they could carry out the present policy with greater vigour and encourage the arming of the Jews”.²⁵¹ Far from a simple continuation of the Balfour Declaration policy, the entire question of Britain retaining Palestine was under review. In June 1921, the new Middle East

²⁴⁸ Ibid.

²⁴⁹ Ibid.

²⁵⁰ CAB 24/126, 8 July 1921, “The Military Aspect of the Present Situation in Palestine”, TNA.

²⁵¹ CAB 23/26, 18 August 1921, Cabinet Minutes, TNA.

Department of the Colonial Office advised “it is idle to consider what steps should now be taken [...] until we have made up our minds whether we wish to retain the Mandates”.²⁵² As Colonial Secretary, Winston Churchill found the situation highly troubling, writing how “[b]oth Arabs and Jews are armed and arming, ready to spring at each other's throats”.²⁵³ By August, it was obvious to the cabinet that “peace was impossible on the lines of the Balfour Declaration”.²⁵⁴ The situation required some form of action, not least to protect the British officials administering Palestine. Governor of Jerusalem Sir Ronald Storrs wrote in his diary at the time, “we remain, all of us, in unstable equilibrium until, after two years and a half, somebody can be found to take any decision”.²⁵⁵ As the following analysis will argue, however, the decision taken to affirm the national home policy in 1922 was the result of options eliminated in the first stage of decision-making that failed to meet requirements on the political dimension, followed by a satisficing principle in the second stage. These variables and dimensions at no point included consideration of either Zionist or Arab interests in Palestine.

Stage One

According to the poliheuristic theory, the first stage of decision-making is presumed to be based on political survival rather than a complete assessment of costs and benefits.²⁵⁶ A decision-maker is first concerned with the political implications of a decision, so variables such as public opinion, the economy and domestic opposition “may be used to evaluate the consequence of a chosen alternative on this organizing

²⁵² CAB 24/125, 8 June 1921, “Palestine and Mesopotamia Mandates. Circulated by the Secretary of State for the Colonies”, TNA.

²⁵³ CAB 24/127, 4 August 1921, “The Financial Position. Memorandum by the Secretary of State for India”, TNA.

²⁵⁴ CAB 23/26, 18 August 1921, Cabinet Minutes, TNA.

²⁵⁵ Ronald Storrs, *Orientations* (London: Nicholson & Watson, 1937), 388.

²⁵⁶ DeRouen, “Initial Crisis Reaction and Poliheuristic Theory”, 61.

theme”.²⁵⁷ Using the list of variables to be considered as part of the political dimension from Mintz²⁵⁸, this section demonstrates how the “noncompensatory loss aversion variable” was operationalised in British decision-making regarding Palestine through prestige, bureaucratic politics, post-war economic decline and inter-party rivalry; options were eliminated from the choice set by discarding those that failed to meet requirements on the political dimension.

Variable: Prestige

The threat to dignity, or prestige, is one of the variables outlined by Mintz²⁵⁹ that can be considered on the political dimension because of its inherent danger to political survival. In the context of British decision-making in the early 1920s, the threat to prestige emanated from stature within the international community. Although British policy on the Jewish national home was officially made in Westminster, it acquired an international element first as a wartime promise approved by the *Entente*, then in the draft Mandate assigned to Britain by the Principled Allied Powers in 1920 (Britain, France, Italy and Japan with a US representative present), and finally in negotiations with the League of Nations and the United States for the Mandate’s approval.²⁶⁰ These complicating factors meant that concerns for international prestige led the British government to eliminate the option of repudiating the national home policy in the first stage of decision-making.

Palestine’s retention by the British Empire was not a foregone conclusion, but became more likely after the First World War ended. Ultimately for Britain, the problem of Palestine’s trusteeship was less an issue of imperial expansionism and

²⁵⁷ Mintz, “The Decision to Attack Iraq: A Noncompensatory Theory of Decision Making”, 600.

²⁵⁸ Mintz, “How Do Leaders Make Decisions? A Poliheuristic Perspective”.

²⁵⁹ Ibid.

²⁶⁰ CAB 24/159, 17 February 1923, “Palestine. Memorandum by the Secretary of State for the Colonies”, TNA.

more about avoiding unwelcome intrusions. British military, strategic and energy interests in Egypt, Arabia and Mesopotamia made the prospect of a rival power in Palestine immediately following a world war decidedly unattractive. British Prime Minister Lloyd George and French Prime Minister Clemenceau agreed in secret that Britain would annex Palestine and oil-rich Mosul in Mesopotamia in exchange for an exclusively French Syria and share of the Mosul oil.²⁶¹ Through this bargaining and a pledge of good faith towards the published Balfour Declaration, which allowed more general League of Nations approval, the principle of a British Palestine became diplomatically entrenched very early, before British officials had time to appreciate the potential difficulties this entailed.

A further complication was the Treaty of Sèvres with Turkey, signed in August 1920. Article 95 of the Turkish peace treaty reinforced the draft Mandate in committing Britain to supporting a Jewish national home in Palestine.²⁶² Since the document carried signatures from Britain and the Dominions (including India), France, Italy, Japan, Armenia, Belgium, Greece, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Serbia, Czechoslovakia and Turkey, the scale of international agreement essentially prevented repudiation of the national home without creating a legal quagmire.²⁶³ The Balfour Declaration had rapidly become the entire public basis of a British Palestine, and the length of negotiations with the French and other powers made it less and less likely that the national home could be reversed without substantial international humiliation, if the necessary agreements from League members could be achieved at all.²⁶⁴ Churchill noted that the French were feeling the same about Syria and Lebanon as

²⁶¹ Cedric James Lowe and M. L. Dockrill, *The Mirage of Power: British Foreign Policy Volume II 1914-1922* (Cambridge: Routledge, 1972), 359.

²⁶² CAB 24/125, 2 June 1921, "League of Nations. 'A' Mandates. Note by the Secretary", TNA.

²⁶³ CAB 24/159, 17 February 1923, "Palestine. Memorandum by the Secretary of State for the Colonies", TNA.

²⁶⁴ FO 608/98/588, 1919, "British Delegation, Correspondence and Papers Relating to Middle East (Political): Peace Congress and Palestine", TNA.

British politicians were about Palestine and Mesopotamia: “utterly sick of pouring out money and men”²⁶⁵. Both powers, however, had bargained for the new territories through a larger international framework that was nearly impossible to reverse.

By June 1921, the power of this international body to inflict humiliation on the British Empire became readily apparent. There was “serious risk” that when the Council of the League of Nations next met to vote on the final mandates, they would be rejected on the basis of Italian and American objections.²⁶⁶ Italy was raising the concerns of the Vatican regarding guardianship of Christian holy places in Palestine, and the American State Department, despite its position outside the League, formally objected to their exclusion from the consultation process.²⁶⁷ In light of this diplomatic deadlock and the problems Britain was already facing in Palestine, the option to withdraw from the territory altogether was considered.²⁶⁸ On a diplomatic level, the British government considered taking the opportunity to repudiate the terms of the national home policy while the entire Mandate was in question by “publicly confessing that they [the terms] are insecurely based and rebuilding them on a firmer foundation”.²⁶⁹ Unfortunately for the policy’s opponents, however, the Council of the League agreed to postpone a final vote from 1921 to July 1922 rather than create a situation in which all prior negotiations were void. This meant that after June 1921, any modifications to the Mandate would have required separate approval from the

²⁶⁵ LG/F/9/2/54, 11-12 January 1921, “Notes on Churchill’s Conversations in Paris”, Churchill to Lloyd George, Parliamentary Archives.

²⁶⁶ CAB 24/125, 8 June 1921, “Palestine and Mesopotamia Mandates. Circulated by the Secretary of State for the Colonies”, TNA.

²⁶⁷ CAB 24/126, 29 June 1921, “The Recent Meeting of the Council of the League of Nations. Note by Mr. Fisher”, TNA; CAB 24/136, 16 May 1922, “League of Nations. Palestine Mandate. Note by the Acting Secretary”, TNA.

²⁶⁸ CAB 24/125, 8 June 1921, “Palestine and Mesopotamia Mandates. Circulated by the Secretary of State for the Colonies,” TNA.

²⁶⁹ Ibid.

great powers within the prohibitively short period of one year.²⁷⁰ American support for the draft Mandate was forthcoming on 3 May 1922 – in a joint resolution by the United States Congress – but this meant Britain was merely further entrenched in the national home policy.²⁷¹

Between this public American declaration of support and the final League vote on 22 July 1922, the Churchill White Paper was published. It not only confirmed the national home policy, but also specifically cited the diplomatic ties preventing its alteration: the “Declaration, reaffirmed by the Conference of the Principle Allied Powers at San Remo and again in the Treaty of Sèvres, is not susceptible of change”.²⁷² By incorporating the language of the Balfour Declaration into the Mandate and Treaty of Sevres, Britain had officially recognised a legal obligation to serve two masters. Governor of Jerusalem Sir Ronald Storrs, for example, referred to the highly unsteady first civilian administration in Palestine as “making a bicycle and riding it at the same time”.²⁷³ Ultimately, the loss of prestige associated with reversing the Balfour Declaration meant this option failed to meet requirements on the political dimension and was eliminated from the choice set in the first stage of decision-making. Removing this alternative, however, was also influenced by the political dimension’s variable of “bureaucratic politics”.

²⁷⁰ CAB 24/126, 29 June 1921, “The Recent Meeting of the Council of the League of Nations. Note by Mr. Fisher”, TNA.

²⁷¹ CAB 24/159, 17 February 1923, “Palestine. Memorandum by the Secretary of State for the Colonies”, TNA.

²⁷² Cmd 1700, 1922, *Palestine. Correspondence with the Palestine Arab Delegation and the Zionist Organisation*.

²⁷³ Storrs, *Orientations*, 458.

Variable: Bureaucratic Politics

Utilising the description of bureaucratic politics developed by Allison and Halperin,²⁷⁴ this section argues that a turf war between the Foreign and Colonial Offices over the Middle East contributed to an option being eliminated from the choice set in the first stage of decision-making. Repudiating the national home policy may have been discarded as an option due to both departments claiming expertise in the decision-making process. This was the product of earlier and lingering tensions – if not fully developed turf wars – between the Foreign and War Offices as well as the Foreign Office and 10 Downing Street. The actors in this case were secretaries of state “sitting atop key organizations, each of which is trying to maximize its interests, agendas and goals”.²⁷⁵ Rather than representing a stand-alone variable that directly led to an option being removed from the choice set, bureaucratic politics created the conditions under which it was very difficult to repudiate the national home policy, contributing to the rejection of this alternative.

Immediately after the First World War, responsibility for Palestine was divided between two cabinet offices. The War Office administered the Occupied Enemy Territories Administration (O.E.T.A.) in Palestine following the invasion in December 1917. The organisation acted under a Chief Administrator taking his orders from the Commander-in-Chief (General Allenby) through the General Officer Commanding.²⁷⁶ While the War Office was responsible for executing policy, it acted on instructions from the Foreign Office, which received intelligence on the O.E.T.A. administration directly from a Chief Political Officer stationed in Palestine.²⁷⁷ Colonel Meinertzhagen was the last to serve in this awkward position and wrote,

²⁷⁴ Allison, *Essence of Decision*; Halperin, *Bureaucratic Politics and Foreign Policy*.

²⁷⁵ Mintz and DeRouen, *Understanding Foreign Policy Decision Making*, 71.

²⁷⁶ WO 32/9614, 1920, “Jerusalem riots: Courts of Enquiry”, TNA.

²⁷⁷ Ibid.

“such work is tantamount to that of a spy on Allenby’s staff”.²⁷⁸ When the military administration gave way to the civilian High Commissioner Sir Herbert Samuel in July 1920, Samuel also began his tenure under direction from the Foreign Office.²⁷⁹ This monopoly on Palestine policy, however, was challenged directly by the formation of a new Middle East Department in the Colonial Office. Lord Curzon of Kedleston was Foreign Secretary at the time, and his specific expertise was Eastern affairs. This, coupled with simmering rivalry between Lord Curzon and Prime Minister David Lloyd George in the search for a post-war peace settlement in Europe, made the Middle East even more important to the “essence” of the Foreign Office at this time, and contributed to a propensity to fight for the Middle East as its “turf”.²⁸⁰

Between the resignation of Lord Arthur Balfour as Foreign Secretary in 1919 and Lloyd George’s downfall in October 1922, there was tension between the Foreign Office and the Office of the Prime Minister over European peace negotiations. Lord Curzon inherited a weakened Foreign Office, partly as a result of wartime conditions, but also due to Balfour’s apparent tendency to concede control over Foreign Policy relatively easily.²⁸¹ Rather than using the traditional Foreign Office channels, Lloyd George dominated post-war foreign affairs through presidential-style summit-diplomacy, keeping close control of the agenda and minutes, and leading War Secretary Winston Churchill to complain that the record bore little resemblance to his memory of discussions.²⁸² The lack of information coming out of the Paris Peace talks, for example, was a matter of great contention at the Foreign Office, which

²⁷⁸ Richard Meinertzhagen, *Middle East Diary 1917-1956* (London: The Gesset Press, 1959), 88.

²⁷⁹ CAB 24/159, 17 February 1923, “Palestine. Memorandum by the Secretary of State for the Colonies”, TNA.

²⁸⁰ Hudson, *Foreign Policy Analysis*.

²⁸¹ Gaynor Johnson, “Curzon, Lloyd George and the Control of British Foreign Policy, 1919–22: A Reassessment”, *Diplomacy & Statecraft* 11 (3) 2000: 49-71, 50.

²⁸² Kenneth O’Morgan, *Consensus and Disunity: The Lloyd George Government 1918-1922* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1979), 111; Lowe and Dockrill, *The Mirage of Power*, 336.

complained that, “we rarely receive, except occasionally through private channels on which it is not often easy to take prompt action, any official intimation of the decisions reached by the Councils of four or five”.²⁸³ This personal and semi-secretive style of diplomacy caused a certain amount of antagonism within the British government at large, leading Conservative statesman Andrew Bonar Law to promise specifically in his 1922 election address that all future international conferences would be handled by the Foreign Office and not by him personally.²⁸⁴ This came too late, however, to have any effect on relations between the Foreign and Colonial Offices over Palestine policy.

Between December of 1920 and the Churchill White Paper of 1922, there was a turf war between the Foreign and Colonial Offices over control of the Middle East. As early as February 1918, Lord Curzon had suggested a new department for Middle East affairs, but he had always intended it to be an entirely independent new ministry or part of the Foreign Office.²⁸⁵ Although the initial universal desire was for an entirely new ministry, it was prohibitively costly.²⁸⁶ Players with a stake in foreign affairs subsequently lined up in support behind either a new department in the Foreign Office under Lord Curzon or one in the Colonial Office under the next Colonial Secretary Winston Churchill – as India Secretary Sir Edwin Montagu removed his ministry from consideration because “India expected her Secretary of State to mind her own affairs, [and] it was derogatory to her dignity to be treated as a part-time job”.²⁸⁷ What ensued was an argument regarding expertise. Curzon wrote to the

²⁸³ FO 608/98/8365, 1919, “British Delegation, Correspondence and Papers Relating to Middle East (Political): Peace Congress and Palestine”, TNA.

²⁸⁴ Frederick Walter Scott Craig, ed., *British General Election Manifestos 1900-1974* (London: Macmillan, 1975), 36.

²⁸⁵ CAB 24/4, 20 February 1918, “Report of the Egyptian Administration Committee”, TNA.

²⁸⁶ CAB 24/106, 20 May 1920, “Mesopotamia. Note by the Secretary of State for War Covering Four Memoranda”, TNA.

²⁸⁷ CAB 24/107, 2 June 1920, “Mesopotamia and Middle East: Question of Future Control”, TNA.

cabinet that “Mr. Churchill prefers the Colonial Office, but I think must be very imperfectly acquainted with the views or interests of the States of the Middle East, if he thinks that such a transference [...] would lead to an immediate solution of the difficulties by which we are confronted”.²⁸⁸ Rather than highlight problems of correct administration, Curzon tried to paint Palestine as a diplomatic issue, irremovably connected to “the jealous and complex interests of foreign Powers arising out of their ecclesiastical pretensions, their commercial interests, and their acute rivalry”, reiterating claims to the region as part of Foreign Office “turf”.²⁸⁹ If the new department for the Middle East was not installed in the Foreign Office, Curzon concluded, “it would merely mean that the work would have to be done twice over, and that there would be general confusion”.²⁹⁰

However, on 31 December 1920, the new department was, by a majority vote, assigned to the Colonial Office.²⁹¹ This appears chiefly to have been the result of bullying from Churchill. A revolt had broken out in the Iraqi region of Mosul in May, and Churchill issued the cabinet with an ultimatum requiring either withdrawal to Basra and ignoring the chaos in the rest of Iraq – “a grave political blunder” – or giving the Colonial Office a new department for the Middle East with the political authority needed to restore order in the two mandates of Palestine and Mesopotamia.²⁹² This meant, however, that true to Lord Curzon’s predictions, since the Foreign Office could not realistically stop being a player in the Middle East, the two departments vied for control during the diplomatic wrangling described above and the Parliamentary infighting demonstrated below. Kozak notes that policy made under these conditions is characterised by bargaining and accommodation, creating

²⁸⁸ CAB 24/107, 8 June 1920, “Future Administration of the Middle East”, TNA.

²⁸⁹ Ibid.

²⁹⁰ Ibid; CAB 24/110, 16 August 1920, “A Middle Eastern Department”, TNA.

²⁹¹ CAB 23/23, 31 December 1920, Cabinet Minutes, TNA.

²⁹² Ibid.

“resultants” rather than decisions, and it certainly appears that the turf war between the Foreign and Colonial Offices in 1920 created a situation un conducive to decisive change.²⁹³ Even after the final division of responsibilities was in place, Churchill continued to agitate for complete control within the Colonial Office: “The more I study the Middle Eastern problem”, he wrote to Lloyd George, “the more convinced I am that it is impossible to deal with it unless the conduct of British affairs in the whole of the Arabian peninsula is vested in the Middle Eastern Department [...] I must have control of everything in the ringed fence”.²⁹⁴ Churchill was convinced that the split had produced nothing but “paralysis and confusion of action”.²⁹⁵ This was because “Feisal or Abdullah, whether in Mesopotamia or Mecca; King Hussein at Mecca; Bin Saud at Nejd; Bin Rashid at Hail’ the Sheikh of Kuwait; and King Samuel at Jerusalem are all inextricably inter-woven, and no conceivable policy can have any chance which does not pull all the strings affecting them”.²⁹⁶

The issue was not differing opinions between departments on the moral or practical value of the Jewish national home – the Palin and Haycraft Commissions both demonstrated the grave problems inherent in the Balfour Declaration. Instead, the bureaucratic politics of the Foreign and Colonial Offices meant they were already predisposed to reject large or sweeping potential solutions. Consequently, this atmosphere contributed to eliminating the option to repudiate the national home policy in the first-stage of decision-making.

²⁹³ Kozak, *Bureaucratic Politics and National Security*; Hudson, *Foreign Policy Analysis*.

²⁹⁴ LG/F/9/2/54, 12 January 1921, Churchill to Lloyd George, Parliamentary Archives.

²⁹⁵ Ibid.

²⁹⁶ Ibid.

Variable: The Economy

The economy may seem more like a substantive dimension in the second stage of decision-making, but in times of hardship it serves as a variable on the political dimension. This is because the variable under consideration, though ostensibly dealing with issues related to the economy, is really concerned with strategic political manipulation of perceptions of the economy, and as such, it requires consideration on the political dimension. The post-war coalition under Lloyd George was faced with the major task of reconstruction. As a prolonged economic crisis hit Britain by 1920-21, the government was under pressure to spend less abroad and more at home. One of the most expensive elements of Britain's Empire was the troop numbers needed to maintain it. This meant that post-war economic decline removed an option from the choice set in the first stage of decision-making regarding the Jewish national home in Palestine. Imposing it with the threat or use of force – i.e. the stationing of troops sufficient in number to protect a very small Jewish minority from the Arab majority – presented far too much risk to the political dimension.

In December 1918, the coalition manifesto emphasised economic development, cutting the war debt and making “the inevitable reductions in our military and naval establishments with the least possible suffering to individuals and to the best advantage of industry and trade”.²⁹⁷ However, the severe contraction of markets during the war (including the loss of Britain's largest trading partner, Germany) meant Britain slid quickly into its first globalised economic crisis. An industrial recession struck in May 1920 and Britain was facing a high unemployment problem by the end of the year. More than two million were out of work in December 1921, and the average unemployment rate stayed over 10% for several years, higher

²⁹⁷ Craig, *British General Election Manifestos 1900-1974*, 29-30.

than anything recorded before the war.²⁹⁸ These economic problems also brought large-scale industrial action. A “triple alliance” of workers from the mining, railway and transport industries provided continual unrest.²⁹⁹ As well as the demonstrations, marches and occasional violence of British workers, the government was also trying to deal with complaints from big business and institutions such as the Bank of England, all clamouring for cuts.³⁰⁰ However, a complicating factor was Britain’s victory in 1918 position at the centre of imperial authority combined with communal responsibility as part of the Supreme Allied Council and then the League of Nations. This meant a continental commitment to deploy troops in border regions of Germany as well as vast and diverse new sections of the Empire, which conflicted with the election priorities of reduced military spending.

In terms of the Middle East, this conflict between maintaining an empire and satisfying the domestic need for economies was embodied by Winston Churchill’s time at the War and Colonial Offices. Churchill pushed the new Middle East Department “towards a curtailment of our responsibilities and our expenditure”.³⁰¹ Before the new department was assigned to the Colonial Office, Churchill complained bitterly about the waste created by the War Office, which followed instructions from the Foreign Office in the Middle East.³⁰² He charged that the result was villages “inhabited by a few hundred half naked native families, usually starving”, being occupied by “garrisons on a scale which in India would maintain order in wealthy provinces of millions of people” and that this waste would continue “as long as the

²⁹⁸ Stephen Constantine, *The Making of British Colonial Development Policy, 1914-1940* (Cambridge: Routledge, 1984), 89.

²⁹⁹ Leopold Amery, *My Political Life: Volume 2 War and Peace 1914-1929* (London: Hutchinson, 1953), 205.

³⁰⁰ Constantine, *The Making of British Colonial Development Policy*, 90.

³⁰¹ CAB 24/106, 20 May 1920, “Mesopotamia. Note by the Secretary of State for War Covering Four Memoranda”, TNA.

³⁰² Ibid.

department calling the tune has no responsibility for paying the piper”.³⁰³ Churchill was only prepared to invest in fertile territories, such as East and West Africa, where development could contribute rapidly to British coffers.³⁰⁴ For the Middle East, he recommended placing responsibility for maintaining order on the air force; this would be much cheaper than army garrisons or cavalry because it required only a few airstrips with no earth-bound lines of communication or animals.³⁰⁵

This focus on spending cuts meant considerations of cost came before the safety of Britain’s Zionist subjects in Palestine. Chief of the Imperial General Staff (C.I.G.S) Henry Wilson called the cabinet’s attention to the weakness of British garrisons in the Middle East in May 1920. This was due to the delay in a peace settlement with Turkey, the inability to enforce its terms, French problems with Turks and Arabs in Cilicia – “disasters which have obliged the French government to reinforce that theatre up to 48 battalions (reinforcements which are not sufficient to avoid still further disasters)” – and “the very unsettled interior condition of both Palestine and Egypt”.³⁰⁶ The General Staff feared the boundaries of economy would leave them unable to fulfil imperial policy. They pointed to a “real danger” and how the government’s pro-Zionist stance was “likely to increase our difficulties with the Arabs, and there are already indications that military action may be necessary, both to maintain the frontier and concurrently to preserve peace internally”.³⁰⁷

These warnings were issued one month after the Nebi Musa Riots in Palestine, but Churchill made no reference to either the army’s advice or the violent outburst in Jerusalem in policy discussions regarding the Middle East or Palestine specifically. The issue of cost became important even before the draft Mandate was complete.

³⁰³ Ibid.

³⁰⁴ Ibid.

³⁰⁵ Ibid.

³⁰⁶ Ibid.

³⁰⁷ Ibid.

Lloyd George believed “that the raising of money for the development of Palestine is a most important matter, and that the government should do all it reasonably can to facilitate this”.³⁰⁸ As a result, Foreign Secretary Curzon was advised to “have a talk with the representatives of the Zionist Organization and find out whether it is possible to meet some of their views without modifying the principles upon which the Mandate is based”.³⁰⁹ This was because the bulk of financing for development of the Jewish national home was expected to come from Zionist fundraising, easing the future burden on the British Treasury.

On 26 January 1921, Churchill called for the further reduction of troops from Palestine, which the General Staff advised was too low and invited rebellion.³¹⁰ The Jaffa Riots broke out three months later. Nevertheless, in assuming responsibility for Palestine first in the War Office and then in the Colonial Office, the only relevant issue to Churchill remained spending cuts. A means to this end was a series of Middle East conferences where various regional leaders and officials could be summoned to “effect economies in the Middle East”.³¹¹ This was a source of frustration to Zionist supporters who wanted active British involvement in building the national home. Colonel Meinertzhagen for example – a professed Zionist advocate who worked in both the O.E.T.A and Middle East Department – declared, “Winston does not care two pins, and does not want to be bothered about it. He is reconciled to a policy of drift. He is too wrapped up in home politics”.³¹² Even the people seconded to Cairo for the conferences demonstrated Churchill’s priorities. Rather than Arabists or policy experts, the guests from London were Chief of the Air Staff Sir Hugh Trenchard,

³⁰⁸ LG/F/13/1/29, 28 October 1920, Lloyd George to R.H. Campbell, Parliamentary Archives.

³⁰⁹ Ibid.

³¹⁰ CAB 24/118, 26 Jan 1921, “Proposed Reduction in the Garrison in Palestine. Memorandum by the Secretary of State for War”, TNA.

³¹¹ CAB 24/122, April 1921, “Report on Middle East Conference Held in Cairo and Jerusalem, March 12-30, 1921”, TNA.

³¹² Meinertzhagen, *Middle East Diary*, 112.

Director of Military Operations Major-General Radcliffe, J. B. Crosland from the Finance Department of the War Office and Sir George Barstow of the Treasury.³¹³ The word “Zionism” was left off the Conference agenda; that it was discussed at all is only implied by two minutes: “Policy in Palestine under the Mandate” and “Special Subjects”.³¹⁴ Churchill did travel to Palestine and met with both Arab and Jewish consultations, but he merely urged them to get along for the benefit of all.³¹⁵ This was not a political discussion that could result in reduced expenditure. Instead, the Colonial Secretary focused his Palestine discussions on Transjordan.³¹⁶ In order to save money, the Sharifian Prince Abdullah would administer Transjordan with British advisers and a small contingent of troops, refrain from attacking French Syria and prevent cross-border raids; in return, the British would cut Zionism off at the River Jordan, thereby sparing them the soldiers and administrators needed to extend it.³¹⁷ This also allowed Churchill plausibly to claim that he was honouring the Hussein McMahon correspondence.

The Jaffa Riots themselves did not alter Churchill’s position on this issue of cost. General Congreve submitted a memo to the Colonial Office in June 1921 entitled “Situation in Palestine”; it said Palestine was in “increasing danger” that would require “heavy expenditure” and meet “bitter resentment” from Zionists “for not protecting them better”.³¹⁸ “I do not think”, Congreve concluded, “things are going to get better in this part of the world, but rather worse”.³¹⁹ Churchill circulated this memo to the cabinet, but only to highlight how he disagreed with it. This was one

³¹³ CAB 24/122, April 1921, “Report on Middle East Conference Held in Cairo and Jerusalem, March 12-30, 1921”, TNA.

³¹⁴ CAB 24/126, 1921, “Report of the Cairo Conference”, TNA.

³¹⁵ CAB 24/122, April 1921, “Report on Middle East Conference Held in Cairo and Jerusalem, March 12-30, 1921”, TNA.

³¹⁶ Ibid.

³¹⁷ CAB 24/126, 1921, “Report of the Cairo Conference”, TNA.

³¹⁸ CAB 24/125, 9 June 1921, “The Situation in Palestine. Memorandum by the Secretary of State for the Colonies”, TNA.

³¹⁹ Ibid.

month after the Jaffa Riots, but neither the unrest nor advice from local officials appeared in policy discussions on cuts.³²⁰

Indeed, despite troop reductions, Churchill still saw Palestine as too expensive. When a danger arose in the summer of 1921 that the League of Nations would refuse Britain her mandates, Churchill suggested complete withdrawal on the basis that “His Majesty's Government have spent over one hundred million pounds in Palestine and Mesopotamia since the armistice”.³²¹ Churchill even suggested to Lloyd George, believing he would agree, that Britain should offer “to hand over to the charge of the U.S. either or both of the Middle Eastern Mandates we now hold, if they should desire to assume them”.³²² The Colonial Secretary advocated this course of action in cabinet where, to everyone's surprise, Lord Balfour supported the idea, noting that it “ought to be very seriously examined”.³²³ Cutting costs in Palestine became one of the Colonial Secretary's favourite topics: “But whatever may be done about it”, Churchill wrote, “the fact remains that Palestine simply cannot afford to pay for troops on the War Office scale”.³²⁴

Instead, the Colonial Secretary recommended getting rid of British troops altogether and relying instead on police, Indian troops “and lastly upon arming the Jewish colonies for their own protection”.³²⁵ Churchill's enterprise in economy was so comprehensive that even the infamous Geddes Committee on National Expenditure, which called for huge sweeping cuts across Whitehall's already nervous departments, confessed that while it found “very heavy expenditure” in Palestine,

³²⁰ CAB 24/131, November 1921, “Palestine. Memorandum by the Secretary of State for the Colonies”, TNA.

³²¹ CAB 24/125, 8 June 1921, “Palestine and Mesopotamia Mandates. Circulated by the Secretary of State for the Colonies”, TNA.

³²² LG/F/9/3/51, 9 June 1921, Churchill to Lloyd George, Parliamentary Archives.

³²³ LG/F/25/1/39, 14 June 1921, Hankey to Lloyd George, Parliamentary Archives.

³²⁴ LG/F/9/3/86, 3 September 1921, Churchill to Lloyd George, Parliamentary Archives.

³²⁵ Ibid.

Egypt and Constantinople, there was little more Palestine could afford to give up.³²⁶

Geddes recognised the problem characterised by “the maintenance of internal order in a comparatively small country, and [how] the difficulties which have arisen are due to the attitude of the Arab population toward the Zionist policy adopted by the Government”.³²⁷ While many Secretaries of State called the Geddes “axe” irresponsible, it perfectly complemented Churchill’s own policy within the Colonial Office.

As War and then Colonial Secretary, Winston Churchill’s singular drive to reduce spending reflected the political situation faced by the entire coalition government. The expense associated with troops meant Palestine could not receive the necessary reinforcements needed to protect the Zionist experiment from violence. In a time of widespread industrial action, high unemployment and general economic downturn, the political cost was too high and this option was removed from the choice set. In this sense, the economy variable was closely connected to inter-party politics, which is discussed below.

Variable: Inter-party Politics

One of the most important aspects of Britain’s early Palestine policy was the relationship with inter-party politics. This section argues that criticisms coming mainly from the Conservative Party led to an option being eliminated from the choice set in the first stage of decision-making. The “coupon” election of December 1918 left the Liberal David Lloyd George as Prime Minister at the head of a majority Conservative coalition. Dissension with his leadership grew steadily, and virulent Parliamentary criticism of the government’s Palestine policy meant the coalition was

³²⁶ Cmd 1589, 1922, *Committee on National Expenditure. Third Report of Committee on National Expenditure.*

³²⁷ Ibid.

unable to continue the national home as it stood in the Balfour Declaration and draft Mandate (which included a commitment to put it into effect).³²⁸

The coupon election of December 1918 was a means to extend Lloyd George's prime ministerial tenure. After he ousted fellow Liberal Asquith in 1916, Lloyd George relied heavily on Conservative support. The "coupon", a derogatory term employed by Asquith, was a letter of endorsement signed by the Prime Minister and the Conservative leader Bonar Law, recognizing its recipient as the official coalition candidate in his constituency.³²⁹ Owing to the immediate post-war popularity of the Prime Minister and the significant expansion of voting rights in 1918, the coupon was a powerful tool. The majority of recipients were Conservatives (364 as opposed to 159 Liberals), which reflected the reality of the Liberal Party as a spent force.³³⁰ As the post-war political climate was marked by a significant swing to the right – the main issues were the fate of Germany and the Kaiser, with many calling for his trial and execution along with the expulsion of Germans from Britain – the atmosphere among the electorate favoured a Conservative victory. Liberal leader Asquith lost his seat to an "uncoupled" Conservative, and the Conservative Party even swept the vote in the traditional Liberal stronghold of Manchester.³³¹ This climate placed a great deal of right-wing pressure on Lloyd George at the head of his coalition cabinet.

After violence erupted in Palestine in 1920 and 1921, the government's handling of Zionism became one of several key issues with which to criticise Lloyd George. Although there had been a substantial amount of backbench support for the

³²⁸ Cmd 1785, 1923, *League of Nations. Mandate for Palestine, Together with a Note by the Secretary-General Relating to its Application to the Territory Known as Trans-Jordan, Under the Provisions of Article 25.*

³²⁹ Trevor Wilson, "The Coupon and the British General Election of 1918", *The Journal of Modern History* 36 (1) 1964: 28-42.

³³⁰ *Ibid.*, 36-37.

³³¹ *Ibid.*, 40-41.

Balfour Declaration in 1917, this had merely reflected a need for wartime coalition solidarity that was hardly critical by 1920.³³² The idea of cost versus benefit was a recurring political theme, and Conservative MPs Sir Frederick Hall, Sir Harry Brittain and Sir Henry Page-Croft raised the issue in July 1920 and again in December that “an enormous amount of money has been expended in this direction for which we are not getting any return”.³³³ Opposition to the national home then began in earnest in March 1921 (with Sir Joynson-Hicks calling for publication of the Palin Commission) and continued in the House of Lords following the Jaffa Riots³³⁴

Complaints included the unlimited nature of Zionist immigration and how this led to Bolshevik infiltration, with the Conservative MP Joynson-Hicks highlighting how advice to “be very careful about introducing the right class of immigrants, and about not introducing too many at a time” had been “totally disregarded”.³³⁵ The issue of native rights was also brought up in both Houses in defence of Palestinian Arabs. Conservative Peer Lord Lamington, for example, defended British control of Palestine while criticising the Zionist element: “whilst it might be quite possible to give to a child a spoonful of jam containing a lot of noxious medicines, the child would not be pleased with the jam in that condition. That is practically an analogy in regard to this Mandate as held by us.”³³⁶

The main inter-party dispute, however, remained costs. On 8 June, Joynson-Hicks had raised the point that “[b]efore we occupied this little country there was harmony, and the Turks only kept 400 regular troops in Palestine. We appear now to

³³² Harry Defries, *Conservative Party Attitudes to Jews, 1900-1950* (London: Frank Cass, 2001), 99.

³³³ House of Commons Debates, 15 July 1920, series 5, vol 131, col 2595; House of Commons Debates, 2 December 1920, series 5, vol 135, col 1439.

³³⁴ House of Commons Debates, 3 March 1921, series 5, vol 138, col 2030; House of Lords Debates, 8 June 1921, series 5, vol 45, cols 470-9; House of Commons Debates, 14 June 1921, series 5, vol 143, col 265-334; House of Lords Debates, 15 June 1921, series 5, vol 45, cols 559-73.

³³⁵ House of Lords Debates, 8 June 1921, series 5, vol 45, cols 470-9.

³³⁶ House of Lords Debates, 15 June 1921, series 5, vol 45, cols 559-63.

require at least 8,000, for whom this country has to pay”.³³⁷ This was a prevalent theme, and Sir Esmond Harmsworth added, “[t]he Jews are a very wealthy class, and should pay for their own national home if they want it [...] As representing a portion of the British taxpayers, I do protest most strongly that any money of theirs should be thrown away in Palestine”.³³⁸ In response, Colonial Secretary Churchill advised, “[w]hile the situation still fills us with a certain amount of anxiety [...] I believe it is one that we shall be able to shape [...] within the limits of the expense I have mentioned”.³³⁹ Later that month, he advised the cabinet to withdraw from Palestine.³⁴⁰ This was because the Liberal Churchill and the rest of the coalition were beginning to feel a great deal of pressure on the Palestine issue. The criticisms they faced were potent because they reflected political issues masquerading as substantive concerns, and these fell largely under the Conservative banner of “Anti-Waste”.

The coalition government tried to downplay inter-party differences, so many policy debates raged in the press instead.³⁴¹ An overwhelming majority of the 1918-enfranchised population (79.1%) had never voted before and were clamouring for information about politics – enhancing the role of newspapers, especially with regard to foreign affairs, for which the press was one of very few public sources of information.³⁴² Consequently, the press outlets that were highly critical of the Lloyd George government were also quite powerful. This was demonstrated by the Anti-Waste League, a campaign led by Conservative Peer and press baron Lord Rothermere, and championed in the House by his son, the above-mentioned MP

³³⁷ House of Lords Debates, 8 June 1921, series 5, vol 45, cols 470-9.

³³⁸ House of Commons Debates, 14 June 1921, series 5, vol 143, cols 265-334.

³³⁹ Ibid.

³⁴⁰ Michael Makovsky, *Churchill's Promised Land: Zionism and Statecraft* (London: Yale University Press, 2007), 103.

³⁴¹ O'Morgan, *Consensus and Disunity*, 169.

³⁴² Michael Kinnear, *The Fall of Lloyd George: The Political Crisis of 1922* (London: Macmillan, 1973), 21-22.

Esmond Harmsworth. Using an axe as its symbol to represent spending cuts, it was credited with winning two by-elections in Conservative seats.³⁴³ One sign that Lloyd George felt under pressure from this movement was the formation of The Committee on National Expenditure under the chairmanship of Conservative politician and businessman Sir Eric Campbell Geddes, which, as expected, called for major spending reductions across most departments.³⁴⁴ Rothermere's brother, Lord Northcliffe, was also using his papers *The Times*, the *Daily Mail* and the *Daily Mirror* to criticise Palestine based on its cost, as well as the idea that handing Muslim Holy sites to Jews would inflame India. Northcliffe's death in 1922 meant these papers passed to Rothermere and they too became direct proponents of Anti-Waste.

In the same period, previously supportive Lord Beaverbrook also abandoned Lloyd George and used his *Daily Express* and *Sunday Express* to propagate the myth of a Jewish conspiracy and to claim British politicians were being manipulated by Chaim Weizmann and other "mystery men"; also included in this press revolt were *The Spectator* and the *Morning Post*, which questioned the loyalty of Jewish Liberal politicians such as Palestine High Commissioner Sir Herbert Samuel and India Secretary Sir Edwin Montagu.³⁴⁵ This was particularly unsound since Montagu had been one of few politicians adamantly opposed to the Balfour Declaration in 1917, arguing that it placed the status of Jews around the world in jeopardy.³⁴⁶ However, it would be a mistake to view these anti-Semitic attacks outside their political context. Montagu was a target principally because he opposed the Anti-Waste League and

³⁴³ Ibid, 24.

³⁴⁴ Cmd 1581, 1922, *Committee on National Expenditure. First Interim Report of Committee on National Expenditure*; Cmd 1582, 1922, *Committee on National Expenditure. Second Interim Report of Committee on National Expenditure*; Cmd 1589, 1922, *Committee on National Expenditure. Third Report of Committee on National Expenditure*.

³⁴⁵ Defries, *Conservative Party Attitudes to Jews*, 109-110.

³⁴⁶ CAB 24/24, 23 August 1917, "The Anti-Semitism of the Present Government", TNA.

Geddes's spending cuts.³⁴⁷ The sheer virulence of such press attacks made many members of the coalition cabinet nervous. In an exchange with Samuel in February 1922, Churchill fought with Samuel over responsibility to fund the Palestine gendarmerie. Due to the "growing movement of hostility, against Zionist policy in Palestine" Churchill as Colonial Secretary struggled to afford the new expense politically rather than financially.³⁴⁸

Opposition to the national home continued to grow, and there was a major debate in the Commons on 9 March 1922.³⁴⁹ Churchill requested extra funds for salaries and expenses (including the gendarmerie) in the Middle East and was careful to stress that Palestine had been quiet and immigration was more closely monitored, since "[w]e cannot have a country inundated by Bolshevik riffraff".³⁵⁰ He was met again with accusations of cost versus benefit in Palestine. Unionist MP Sir J.D. Rees asked "whether the Palestine Mandate is absolutely irrevocable, because the advantages to us I for one cannot see, and it seems to me a deplorable thing that we should be keeping down the Arabs in their own country at a large expense to our own country".³⁵¹ The Conservative MP Frederick Macquistan added, "to the question of Palestine, I must say that that is a great mystery to the average Briton, especially if he is unemployed and sees good money going for the benefit of people who he always thought knew far more about money than he did".³⁵² The same points were being raised time and again. This discussion, however, was only the precursor to a more controversial debate in the House of Lords in June.

³⁴⁷ CAB 24/127, 4 August 1921, "The Financial Position. Memorandum by the Secretary of State for India", TNA.

³⁴⁸ CAB 24/134, April-May 1922, "Cost of Palestine Gendarmerie", TNA.

³⁴⁹ House of Commons Debates, 9 March 1922, series 5, vol 151, cols 1535-604.

³⁵⁰ Ibid.

³⁵¹ Ibid.

³⁵² Ibid.

Lord Islington introduced a motion against the Palestine Mandate on the basis that the national home policy broke promises made to the Arabs and “unless it is very materially modified, it will lead to very serious consequences. It is literally inviting subsequent catastrophe.”³⁵³ To the government’s chagrin, Islington’s motion carried by 60 votes to 29.³⁵⁴ This had symbolic more than legal importance and was followed by a Commons debate less than two weeks later. Joynson-Hicks called for a motion to decrease the Colonial Secretary’s salary as a procedural ploy to introduce a vote on Palestine, on the basis that the Mandate had never been referred to the House for approval.³⁵⁵ It had the opposite outcome to that which Joynson-Hicks intended. Churchill secured a vote of confidence 292 to 35.³⁵⁶ Crucially, one vital document had been published on 1 July 1922, between the two debates, and this was the Churchill White Paper.³⁵⁷

In publishing the white paper with records of communication between the Colonial Secretary and Arab as well as Zionist leaders, the government was addressing domestic political challenges rather than the tangible problems of governing Palestine under a dual obligation. The Churchill White Paper answered accusations that Britain was depriving Palestine’s Arabs of their own home: “Unauthorized statements have been made to the effect that the purpose in view is to create a wholly Jewish Palestine. [...] His Majesty’s Government regard any such expectation as impracticable and have no such aim in view”.³⁵⁸ To demonstrate this, the white paper formally linked immigration to the Palestine economy, following the

³⁵³ House of Lords Debates, 21 June 1922, series 5, vol 50, cols 994-1033.

³⁵⁴ Ibid.

³⁵⁵ House of Commons Debates, 4 July 1922, series 5, vol 156, cols 221-343.

³⁵⁶ Ibid.

³⁵⁷ Howard Grief, *The Legal Foundation and Border of Israel Under International Law* (Jerusalem: Mazo Publishers, 2008).

³⁵⁸ Cmd 1700, 1922, *Palestine. Correspondence with the Palestine Arab Delegation and the Zionist Organisation*.

example set by Samuel immediately after the Jaffa riots.³⁵⁹ It also addressed the charge of broken promises: “The whole of Palestine west of the Jordan was [...] excluded from Sir Henry McMahon's pledge”.³⁶⁰ Answering allegations that the national home would inflame Indian opinion, the white paper highlighted how “the present administration has transferred to a Supreme Council elected by the Moslem community of Palestine the entire control of Moslem Religious endowments (Waqfs), and of the Moslem religious Courts”.³⁶¹ Against lingering claims of Bolshevik infiltration – as described in the Haycraft Commission – the document stressed that “[i]t is necessary also to ensure that persons who are politically undesirable be excluded from Palestine”.³⁶² Lord Islington had declared in June that the national home policy could not continue unaltered, and he was correct. Under the pressure of inter-party politics played out in Parliament and in the press, the coalition was forced to eliminate the option of continuing with a policy based solely on the Balfour Declaration.

Stage Two

After the first stage of decision-making eliminated all options from the choice set that failed to meet requirements on the political dimension, only one alternative remained. The British government could neither entirely support nor repudiate the national home, leaving the single option of continuing, but imposing limitations designed to address its substantive weaknesses and political critics. Although the noncompensatory decision-making process does not always continue until only one alternative is left, it is possible that all options except one are eliminated due to their

³⁵⁹ Ibid.

³⁶⁰ Ibid.

³⁶¹ Ibid.

³⁶² Ibid.

unacceptably high costs on the political dimension.³⁶³ The British government had no choice but to continue with the national home policy by imposing limitations on it. As the poliheuristic approach seeks “acceptable” options, a remaining alternative is compared “to predetermined values along a selected set of dimensions”.³⁶⁴ In the case of post-war Palestine, a single dimension emerged as substantive for decision-makers. Rather than seeking to maximise in this case, the remaining alternative was found to “satisfice” the sole substantive dimension, which was the military, or strategic, dimension.³⁶⁵

The Military/Strategic Dimension

In the context of the Jewish national home, the only dimension decision-makers considered outside those variables constituting the political dimension, was the military, or strategic, dimension. Rather than maximise rewards, the second stage of decision-making ensured that the remaining option did not incur “costs”. Palestine was debateable as a military asset, but any options remaining after the first stage of decision-making had to satisfice British military and strategic interests in the region.

During and after the First World War, the British cabinet frequently considered the prospect of another similar conflict. Safeguarding routes to India, including lines of communication through Egypt and the Suez Canal, was paramount. These lines of communication became even more important after the war because Britain’s Empire had grown in Asia and Africa as well as the Middle East. These new holdings included former German territories (Tanganyika, South-West Africa, New Guinea and Samoa), Turkish territories (Palestine, Transjordan and Mesopotamia

³⁶³ Mintz, “The Decision to Attack Iraq”, 600.

³⁶⁴ Mintz and Geva, “The Poliheuristic Theory of Foreign Policy Decision Making”, 87.

³⁶⁵ Steinbruner, *The Cybernetic Theory of Decision*; Ostrom and Job, “The President and the Political Use of Force”; Lui, “The Poliheuristic Theory of Decision and the Cybernetic Theory of Decision”.

including Mosul) and the need to station British troops in Persia and in Constantinople to defend the Dardanelles Straits, as well as increase troop numbers in Egypt to combat the rise of a powerful national movement in 1919 and in India to protect borders from the emerging Soviet Union as well as battle insurgency.³⁶⁶ The importance of Palestine in this geo-political worldview, however, was a matter of opinion.

In June 1918, Lloyd George asserted that “if we were to be thrown back as an Empire upon our old traditional policy of utilising the command of the sea in order to cut off our enemies from all the sources of supply and from all possible means of expansion, north, east, south, and west, Palestine would be invaluable”.³⁶⁷ It “secured the defence of Egypt” and losing Palestine “would not only involve the interruption of a main artery of our imperial communications, but would react upon our whole situation in the East, and even in India”.³⁶⁸ Immediately post-war in December 1918, the army agreed with maintaining Palestine as a buffer state, but only “so long as it can be created without disturbing Mohammedian sentiment”.³⁶⁹

As British policy of a Jewish national home did indeed inflame Arab and Muslim opinion, however, the army and key members of the cabinet began to express doubts regarding its military value. By November 1920, C.I.G.S advised the cabinet that Palestine “has no strategical interest for the British Army” but it “constitutes a serious potential drain on its resources”.³⁷⁰ Winston Churchill retained the post of War Secretary at this time, and he agreed: “[s]o far as the security of the Empire is concerned, we are the weaker, rather than the stronger, by the occupation of

³⁶⁶ O’Morgan, *Consensus and Disunity*, 117-118.

³⁶⁷ CAB 23/43, 11 June 1918, “Shorthand Notes of the Fifteenth Meeting of the Imperial War Cabinet, Held in London at 10, Downing Street, S.W., on Tuesday, June 11, 1918, at 12 noon”, TNA.

³⁶⁸ CAB 23/44A, 21 June 1918, Note by the Secretary, TNA.

³⁶⁹ FO 609/99/1327, 1918, “Peace Conference: British Delegation, Correspondence and Papers”, TNA.

³⁷⁰ CAB 24/132, 20 January 1922, “The Interim Report of the Committee on National Expenditure. Army Estimates”, TNA.

Palestine”.³⁷¹ His successor at the War Office, Sir Worthington-Evans, espoused the opposing view, that uprisings in Egypt and Mosul increased Palestine’s importance, and the debate continued in Parliament into 1923.³⁷² Even those such as Churchill who openly questioned Palestine’s strategic value in private, publicly supported the “buffer state” line of reasoning. It provided a simple and convenient explanation for British entanglement in Palestine. Both sides of this debate, however, understood that Palestine could not be allowed to fall to a hostile or potentially challenging power. The tiny country was not necessarily crucial to British strategic defence of the Empire, but a foreign obstruction there could be devastating.³⁷³

Therefore, as long as Palestine remained in friendly hands, the military dimension was satisfied. The remaining option from Stage One was to continue with the national home policy by imposing limitations on it. This alternative left Palestine in British hands, which was acceptable on the military, or strategic dimension, allowing it to become the final choice.

Sunk Costs

The years 1920-1922 were crucial in bringing about the confirmation of the national home policy in the Churchill White Paper, but the “Balfour Zeitgeist” continued throughout most of the 1920s despite a rapid turnover of British governments during this time. This continuing commitment was the result of sunk costs. The phenomenon of sunk costs is explained as an escalation of commitment that is non-rational because “cost-benefit calculations should not include resources

³⁷¹ CAB 24/117, 18 December 1920, “The Palestine Garrison. Memorandum by the Secretary of State for War”, TNA.

³⁷² CAB 24/129, 9 November 1921, “The Situation in the Near East. Memorandum by the Secretary of State for War”, TNA.

³⁷³ FO 609/99/1327, 1918, “Peace Conference: British Delegation, Correspondence and Papers”, TNA.

already expended”.³⁷⁴ One assumption of the poliheuristic theory is that “the presentation of information will affect how this information is evaluated and what choices are made. Mintz *et al.* found that “in an experimental setting [...] decision makers were more likely to disregard new information due to sunk costs”.³⁷⁵ This “irrational” process occurred under a new Conservative administration in 1923, under a Labour government in 1924 and again in 1926 under Conservative direction.

Four months after the Churchill White Paper was published, Prime Minister Lloyd George suffered a political mutiny that led to a General Election in November 1922. For those Conservative backbenchers who had vigorously campaigned against the Middle East mandates, it was an opportunity to exert influence in favour of withdrawal. However, as the Anti-Waste League and Parliamentary condemnations of the coalition government’s Middle East policies had largely been directed politically at Lloyd George, the issue did not maintain its potency once he had left Downing Street. Press baron Lord Beaverbrook told the Conservative Leader Bonar Law he would be using his newspapers to pressure Conservative candidates, urging the tax-paying public to ask who was in favour of leaving Palestine and Mesopotamia. The World Zionist Organization monitored this “bag and baggage” campaign carefully, but they found that a mere 26 candidates supported it and out of those, only 17 were elected.³⁷⁶

Bonar Law privately wrote to Foreign Secretary Curzon referring to the Palestine Mandate and saying, “you know how keen I am to get rid of it”, but at an election address in London, declared he would “not be stampeded on the issue by

³⁷⁴ Jonathan Renshon and Stanley Renshon, “The Theory and Practice of Foreign Policy Decision Making”, *Political Psychology* 29 (4) 2008: 509-536, 536.

³⁷⁵ Alex Mintz, Nehemia Geva, Steven Redd and Amy Carnes, “The Effect of Dynamic and Static Choice Sets on Political Decision Making: An Analysis Using the Decision Board Platform”, *American Political Science Review* 91 (3) 1997: 553-566, 556.

³⁷⁶ CZA, Z4/1878 I, cited in Defries, *Conservative Party Attitudes to Jews*, 111-112.

Beaverbrook and Rothermere”.³⁷⁷ During the campaign, prominent Conservative politicians Leopold Amery, Austen and Neville Chamberlain expressed a desire to continue the national home pledge, as did former War Secretary Worthington-Evans, former Chancellor Horne and 27 Conservative MPs.³⁷⁸ Despite the fear and intimidation that anti-Zionist Conservatives in the Anti-Waste League had previously inspired, Lloyd George’s departure left them largely neutralised.

However, the Conservative victory in 1922 led many Arab politicians to believe the policy would be overturned.³⁷⁹ The immediate result was the return – after unsuccessful negotiations with the Colonial Office under Winston Churchill – of an Arab Delegation to London in January 1923.³⁸⁰ Although the new Colonial Secretary, the Duke of Devonshire, received them and insisted there would be no departure from the white paper policy, the cabinet fully expected a new lobbying campaign.³⁸¹ In February 1923, the Middle East Department submitted a memo to the cabinet explaining to the new government how “[w]e are, in fact, committed to the Zionist policy before the whole world in the clearest and most unequivocal fashion” and stressed how repudiation of the Balfour Declaration meant returning the Mandate to the League of Nations and evacuating Palestine immediately.³⁸² On 27 March, Lord Islington revived the opposing argument by introducing a motion in the Lords to change Palestine’s constitution on the basis that Arabs had boycotted the vote.³⁸³ The motion failed, but when Conservative Prime Minister Bonar Law resigned in May

³⁷⁷ *Jewish Chronicle*, 10 November 1922, 11, cited in Defries, *Conservative Party Attitudes to Jews*, 112.

³⁷⁸ CZA Z4/1878 I, cited in Defries, *Conservative Party Attitudes to Jews*, 113.

³⁷⁹ CAB 24/159, 17 February 1923, “Palestine. Memorandum by the Secretary of State for the Colonies”, TNA.

³⁸⁰ *Ibid.*

³⁸¹ *Ibid.*

³⁸² *Ibid.*

³⁸³ House of Lords Debates, 27 March 1923, series 5, vol 53, cols 639-69.

1923 and was succeeded by Stanley Baldwin, the new Prime Minister dealt with the Palestine uncertainty by calling for a new committee to report on policy.³⁸⁴

This committee, however, was a political exercise and not a comprehensive review of policy. Members were under pressure from supporters of the Palestine Arab Delegation – whose memorandum to the British government secured the signatures of more than 100 Conservative MPs including 40% of backbenchers – but this anti-Zionism posed no political danger to any member of the committee, which consisted of secretaries of state and ministers previously associated with both sides of the Palestine argument.³⁸⁵ These included Devonshire, Curzon, Amery, Worthington-Evans and Joynson-Hicks.³⁸⁶ Despite the wide swathe of views this group had expressed as individuals at an earlier date, they heard evidence from High Commissioner Sir Herbert Samuel only.³⁸⁷ Predictably, no member seriously considered reversing the national home policy because it possessed “a cumulative weight from which it is well-nigh impossible for any government to extricate itself without a substantial sacrifice of consistency and self-respect, if not of honour. Those of us who have disliked the policy are not prepared to make that sacrifice”.³⁸⁸ They decided it was no longer pertinent to discuss the original promise made in 1917: “There are some of our number who think that that Declaration was both unnecessary and unwise, and who hold that our subsequent troubles have sprung in the main from its adoption. But that was nearly six years ago. We cannot ignore the fact that ever since it has been the accepted policy of His Majesty's Government”.³⁸⁹ The cabinet

³⁸⁴ CAB 23/46, 27 June 1923, Cabinet Minutes, TNA.

³⁸⁵ Defries, *Conservative Party Attitudes to Jews*, 111.

³⁸⁶ CAB 24/160, 27 June 1923, “Cabinet. Palestine Committee”, TNA.

³⁸⁷ Ibid.

³⁸⁸ CAB 24/161, 27 July 1923, “Cabinet. Committee on Palestine. The Future of Palestine”, TNA.

³⁸⁹ Ibid.

accepted these conclusions, marking an official Conservative commitment to the national home. This, crucially, de-politicised the issue for the 1920s.

When a Labour government was elected in 1924, the national home was reviewed again. Like the Liberal Churchill and Conservative Devonshire before him, Labour Colonial Secretary Thomas agreed there was no option but to continue: “My own view is that we have no alternative but to adhere to the policy of carrying out the terms of the Balfour Declaration as interpreted by our predecessors. I do not underrate the difficulties, but I am satisfied that the difficulties of any alternative course would be even greater” and the cabinet agreed.³⁹⁰ Similarly, when Conservative Stanley Baldwin became Prime Minister again later that year, Palestine policy remained unchanged. Sunk costs meant the British government, regardless of party platform, could find no benefit in altering the commitment to a Jewish national home in Palestine.

Indeed, a period of tranquillity in Palestine – actually caused by a Polish recession and a substantial reduction in Jewish immigration and settlement – meant British officials viewed the white paper policy as a success.³⁹¹ The effective de-politicisation of the national home coupled with the absence of riots meant Palestine became less and less important as the decade progressed. In 1927, only 3,034 new Jewish immigrants were recorded in Palestine and 5,071 left.³⁹² All was quiet, and so Samuel’s successor as High Commissioner, Lord Plumer, saw little need for the inflated troop and police numbers stationed in Palestine since 1921, and with Colonial Secretary Amery’s approval, began to disband them.³⁹³ When riots and widespread

³⁹⁰ CAB 24/165, 19 February 1924, “Cabinet. Palestine. Memorandum by the Secretary of State for the Colonies”, TNA; CAB 23/47, 21 February 1924, Cabinet Minutes, TNA.

³⁹¹ Sykes, *Cross Roads to Israel*; CAB 24/140, 30 December 1922, “The Situation in Palestine”, TNA.

³⁹² Sykes, *Cross Roads to Israel*, 111.

³⁹³ *Ibid*, 111-112.

violence erupted in Jerusalem in 1928-29, the illusion and the Balfour Zeitgeist came to an end.

Conclusion

The “Balfour Zeitgeist” was a phase of British foreign policy marked by a commitment to the Jewish national home in Palestine. There was no period of linear policy that continued from 1917 until Palestine’s major riots in 1929. Rather, there was a crucial episode of decision-making in 1920-1922 when the policy was questioned and then confirmed, albeit with limitations, in the Churchill White Paper. Considering the findings of two commissions of enquiry following the 1920 Nebi Musa Riots and the 1921 Jaffa Riots, the decision to confirm Britain’s commitment to the national home in 1922 failed to fit an expected utility model. Instead, the Poliheuristic two-stage decision-making process provides a better fit, demonstrating the domestic political variables that give a post-diction of how and why the British government came to its decision to affirm the national home.

In the first stage of the decision-making process, the government rejected alternatives that failed to meet requirements on the most important, political dimension. Taking prestige and bureaucratic politics into account meant the option to repudiate the national home was eliminated. The state of the post-war economy meant the option to impose the national home with the threat or use of force failed to meet requirements on the political dimension and was also eliminated. Finally, inter-party rivalry left the government unable to continue the national home as it stood in the Balfour Declaration and draft Mandate. Consequently, the first stage of the decision-making process left only one alternative in the choice set. This option was then compared to the single substantive dimension to ensure it would not incur costs. The

option to continue with the national home with key limitations designed to satisfy domestic critics was found to be acceptable on the military/strategic dimension, allowing it to become the final choice. Due to the sunk costs, this policy was then continued throughout most of the 1920s under governments representing all shades of the mainstream political spectrum.

As this chapter demonstrates, the poliheuristic framework offers a cogent analysis for the British government's decision. Rather than a Palestine policy based on consideration of the territory affected, this post-diction reveals a Palestine policy based primarily on the need to satisfy domestic political concerns. What this meant in the 1920s, however, was that the Jewish-Arab tensions in Palestine remained unresolved, as did their propensity to effect, and be impacted by, British domestic politics.

Chapter 4: The Passfield Reversal 1929-1935

“If there were any question that the 600,000 Arabs should be ousted from their homes in order to make room for a Jewish national home; if there were any question that they should be kept in political subordination to any other people: if there were any question that their Holy Places should be taken from them and transferred to other hands or other influences, then a policy would have been adopted which would have been utterly wrong. It would have been resented and resisted – rightly – by the Arab people. But it has never been contemplated.”³⁹⁴

Herbert Samuel, Former High Commissioner of Palestine, 1930.

As discussed in the previous chapter, the Churchill White Paper of 1922 cemented a period in British policy towards Palestine marked by a commitment to the Balfour Declaration. This “Balfour Zeitgeist” coincided with a period of calm in Palestine, during which British politicians were able to ignore lingering Jewish-Arab tensions, leading to rapid reductions in costly troops and police. However, a conflict over Jerusalem’s ‘Wailing Wall’ in 1928 roused the passions of both Jews and Arabs in Palestine, leading to violence on a horrific scale the following year.³⁹⁵

In preparation for Yom Kippur in 1928, the Jewish beadle erected a screen at the Western Wall to separate male and female worshippers. This action was interpreted in the Muslim community as a sign of ownership, and since the Temple ruins were legally part of Muslim *waqf* property, British forces forcibly removed the screen to prevent rioting. This incident created an atmosphere of political tension that continued to simmer. On 15 August 1929, a group of young, right-wing Jewish activists demonstrated at the Wall – followed by Muslims counter-demonstrating – and British efforts to mediate the approaching crisis failed, leading to a bloodbath only days later.³⁹⁶ The following week Muslim activists streamed into Jerusalem armed with sticks and knives, and rumours that Jews were killing Arabs inspired mass

³⁹⁴ House of Commons Debates, 17 November 1930, series 5, vol 245, cols 120-121.

³⁹⁵ Cmd 3530, 1930, *Report of the Commission on the Palestine Disturbances of August 1929*, 155.

³⁹⁶ Gerber, *Remembering and Imagining Palestine*, 108.

murder, looting and destruction elsewhere in the country. Raymond Cafferata, for example, Hebron's British Police Superintendent, reported mob attacks on Jewish homes that led to murder and mutilation, but he possessed only a fraction of the force needed to restore the peace. Only the kindness of 28 Arab households saved Jewish lives in Hebron, a fact that thoroughly shamed British administrators who prided themselves on maintaining order.³⁹⁷ The British government responded with two commissions of enquiry that directly resulted in the Passfield White Paper of 1930.

This document represented the first attempt to limit the Jewish national home in Palestine, not indefinitely, but to an extent designed to cool Arab hatreds and prevent rioting in the future. Nevertheless, this new policy was reversed. The *volte-face* was articulated in a letter sent from Prime Minister James Ramsay MacDonald to Chaim Weizmann in February 1931, giving rise to the belief that Zionist lobbying had successfully harnessed the British Empire's foreign policy.³⁹⁸ This historiographical phenomenon was discussed in Chapter One, and demonstrating a more realistic and coherent post-diction of the reversal decision requires examining the British government's political pressure points in more depth. The two commissions of enquiry highlighted dangerous levels of Jewish-Arab antagonism in Palestine as a direct result of Arab unemployment and landlessness, which was blamed locally on Jewish immigration and land purchase.³⁹⁹ This meant the Passfield White Paper was predictable based on the expected utility model specifically because it limited Jewish immigration and land purchase. The decision to reverse it, however, was inexplicable if using the same framework.

³⁹⁷ Segev, *One Palestine, Complete*, 326.

³⁹⁸ Porath, *The Emergence of the Palestinian-Arab National Movement 1918-1929*, 136; Pappe, *A History of Modern Palestine*, 93; Caplan, *The Israel-Palestine Conflict: Contested Histories*, 80; Matthews, *Confronting an Empire, Constructing a Nation*, 83; Segev, *One Palestine, Complete*. El-Eini, *Mandated landscape*; Renton, "Flawed Foundations".

³⁹⁹ Cmd 3530, 1930, *Report of the Commission on the Palestine Disturbances of August 1929*.

In contrast, the two-stage decision-making process of Ph Theory allows a cogent post-diction, not only of the initial decision to issue the Passfield White Paper, but also of the subsequent decision to undermine it. This chapter applies Ph Theory to the passage and reversal of the Passfield White Paper of 1930, demonstrating how and why the British government decided to abandon its policy in 1931, until the Arab Revolt in 1936-1939 prompted a re-evaluation. It argues, that in the first stage of the decision-making process, the government rejected alternatives that failed to meet requirements on the most important political dimension. Key variables the British government faced during the critical time period of 1930-1931 mirror criteria outlined by Mintz:⁴⁰⁰ internal party politics and parliamentary politics.

Once options were discarded, the government chose among the remaining alternatives in the second stage of decision-making by maximising on the key substantive dimension: the economy. Finally, this chapter highlights how the British government's handling of Palestine policy, between the MacDonald letter of 1931 and the beginning of the Arab Revolt in 1936, was crystallised. Following the political storm underlying Passfield's reversal, no options met requirements on the domestic, political dimension and so did not pass into the second stage of decision-making. Rather than a Palestine policy based on a narrow interpretation of the role played by Zionist lobbying, this analysis reveals a Palestine policy based primarily on the need to maintain a modicum of unity within government and across parties, which was threatened by the strategic pro-Zionist activism of opposition leaders as well as more sincere Zionist sympathies of some Labour Party backbenchers.

Defining the Choice Set

⁴⁰⁰ Mintz, "How Do Leaders Make Decisions? A Poliheuristic Perspective".

As discussed previously, the rational actor, or expected utility (EUT) model requires a decision-maker to choose the option with the most preferred consequence.⁴⁰¹ Like the decision to affirm the Mandate in 1922, the decision to reverse the Passfield White Paper was also irrational according to the traditional model. Rather than purposive action seeking utility maximisation, the decision to reverse the white paper fails to fit a simple cost-benefit analysis based on information available to decision-makers at the time.⁴⁰² Such an analysis would have predicted either investment in Palestinian Arab agriculture or a restriction on Jewish immigration and land purchase. This is evident from the reports submitted in 1930 by two commissions of enquiry, and indeed was fulfilled by the issuing of the Passfield White Paper.

In the immediate aftermath of violence in Palestine, these two commissions of enquiry were charged with investigating the root of the problem and recommending a solution. The first was led by distinguished jurist Sir Walter Shaw and the second was composed of only one man, Sir John Hope-Simpson. Just as earlier commissions investigating violence had concluded in the early 1920s, all but one member of the team led by Sir Walter Shaw identified that “the difficulties inherent in the Balfour Declaration and in the Mandate for Palestine are factors of supreme importance in the consideration of the Palestine problem”.⁴⁰³ The fundamental cause of rioting was “the Arab feeling of animosity and hostility towards the Jews consequent upon the disappointment of their political and national aspirations and fear for their economic future”.⁴⁰⁴

⁴⁰¹ Mintz and DeRouen, *Understanding Foreign Policy Decision Making*.

⁴⁰² Allison, *Essence of Decision*; MacDonald, “Useful Fiction of Miracle Maker”.

⁴⁰³ Cmd 3530, 1930, *Report of the Commission on the Palestine Disturbances of August 1929*, 150-163.

⁴⁰⁴ Ibid.

Palestine had suffered severe economic problems during the mid 1920s, and despite provisions of the Churchill White Paper of 1922 having stipulated that immigration should be based on economic capacity, this had largely been ignored.⁴⁰⁵ The Shaw Commission found that both immigration and Jewish land purchase during the 1920s meant “a landless and discontented class is being created”.⁴⁰⁶ This was potentially a very dangerous development, and the commission decided that the only solution was a radical overhaul of agriculture and expansion of cultivation.⁴⁰⁷ The report then recommended a scientific enquiry “into the prospects of introducing improved methods of cultivation in Palestine” so a new land policy could be based on science rather than politics.⁴⁰⁸ The problem was considered acute enough that the Colonial Office temporarily halted Jewish immigration into Palestine under the Labour Schedule in May 1930, pending the scientific land report.⁴⁰⁹ As Sir John Hope-Simpson was considered experienced in ethnic conflicts, having acted as the League of Nations’ Vice-Chairman of the Refugee Settlement Commission in Greece, and was neither demonstrably pro-Arab nor pro-Zionist, he was entrusted with the task.⁴¹⁰

After two months of researching scientific reports written during the Mandate, as well as conducting interviews and travelling the country, Sir John Hope-Simpson concluded that “there is at the present time and with the present methods of Arab cultivation no margin of land available for agricultural settlement by new immigrants, with the exception of such undeveloped land as the Jewish Agencies hold in

⁴⁰⁵ Ibid, 161.

⁴⁰⁶ Ibid, 162.

⁴⁰⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁰⁸ Ibid, 166.

⁴⁰⁹ Gorny, *The British Labour Movement and Zionism 1917-1948*, 69.

⁴¹⁰ CAB 24/212, 9 May 1930, “Palestine: Statement with Regard to British Policy”, TNA, 4.

reserve”.⁴¹¹ Many Jews and some British officials in Palestine regarded Arab unemployment and landlessness as a myth, but Simpson affirmed the growing problem – also manifest to a lesser degree in the Jewish community – after hearing testimony from employers who said they could meet their labour needs multiple times over. These misfortunes, Simpson noted, were then ascribed, “probably quite erroneously, to Jewish competition”.⁴¹² Like the Shaw Commission, Hope-Simpson saw the only solution as intensive development, and to that end, “drastic action is necessary”.⁴¹³ Hope-Simpson also included a huge host of small, practical suggestions from limiting the orange crop and encouraging the cultivation of other fruits, to reducing fees and taxes in line with the fall of the price of crops, and even ensuring schoolmasters received agricultural training.⁴¹⁴ Fundamentally, however, he found that “[t]here exists no easy method of carrying out the provisions of the Mandate. Development is the only way. Without development, there is not room for a single additional settler”.⁴¹⁵ In light of these two commission reports, the cabinet committee on Palestine, led by Colonial Secretary Lord Passfield, was faced with the necessity of action.

The government in Westminster had several key options: do nothing, repudiate the national home, amend the Mandate, reinforce the national home, invest in Arab agriculture, or limit Jewish immigration and land purchase. Palestine’s High Commissioner, Sir John Chancellor, outlined these alternatives as 1) removing the privileged position of the Jews and allowing a measure of self-government or 2)

⁴¹¹ Cmd 3686, 1930, *Report on Immigration, Land Settlement and Development or Hope Simpson Report*, 141.

⁴¹² *Ibid*, 135.

⁴¹³ Gorny, *The British Labour Movement and Zionism 1917-1948*, 142.

⁴¹⁴ *Ibid*, 142-153.

⁴¹⁵ *Ibid*, 153.

installing enough military in Palestine to protect the Jews.⁴¹⁶ Conversely, Shaw Commission member MP Harry Snell defined the choice set as either allaying “Arab anxiety by the easy device of restricting Jewish immigration, in which ease you lay yourself open to a suspicion of evading the Mandate”, or “you should rescue the Arab farmer from his situation of indebtedness”.⁴¹⁷ Furthermore, Sir John Hope-Simpson himself stated the options as, “[u]nless Great Britain is prepared to surrender the Mandate (and I understand that the Dutch are willing to accept it), she will be compelled to undertake the expense of development. These are the two alternatives, and there is no avenue of escape”.⁴¹⁸ A brief analysis of the decision-making process behind the Passfield White Paper demonstrates how, as well as fitting the expected utility model, options were eliminated in the first stage of decision-making under the Ph framework before a utility maximisation analysis took place in the second stage.

The option to do nothing was most likely discarded immediately because it would have resulted in a surge of political criticism accusing the government of evading fundamental responsibilities to keep the peace. Due to sunk costs, as discussed in the previous chapter, the option to repudiate the national home was also discarded immediately. Unlike the machinations surrounding the development of the Churchill White Paper in 1922, no official seriously suggested returning the Mandate to the League of Nations. Amending the Mandate was also eliminated from the choice set very early; this would have required consent from the League and a great deal of time spent lobbying other members for their support while the situation remained unresolved. Passfield himself noted that “[t]he objections to a revision of the actual

⁴¹⁶ CO 733/183/77050, 17 January 1930, Chancellor to Passfield, TNA, cited in Gabriel Sheffer, “Intentions and Results of British Policy in Palestine: Passfield’s White Paper”, *Middle Eastern Studies* 9 (1) 1973: 43-60, 44.

⁴¹⁷ House of Commons Debates 17 November 1930, vol 245, series 5, cols 146-147.

⁴¹⁸ CAB 24/215, 18 August 1930, Hope-Simpson to Passfield, TNA.

terms of the Mandate seem to me insuperable”.⁴¹⁹ Reinforcing the national home meant pouring in funding for security, and while the Palestine Administration did increase security measures following the riots in 1929, this was an impractical long-term solution even before the Great Depression. All of these options failed to meet requirements on the political dimension as they would have initiated intolerable domestic political criticism. Investing in development or limiting Jewish immigration and land purchase were the only politically viable options remaining after Stage One.

In terms of parliamentary politics, Passfield understood that the general policy of the white paper would not be welcomed warmly, but he did not predict the outrage it would produce from Zionists and members of every party. This was because criticism directed at the white paper, such as Hailsham and Simon’s letter to *The Times* outlined in Chapter One, was couched in the language of international law but created a political rather than a legal quagmire. The Colonial Secretary had warned Weizmann beforehand, giving him an overview of the Hope-Simpson report and the policy under consideration, and Passfield believed that Weizmann “took it very well indeed” while stressing that “there should be no numerical limitation on the ultimate number of Jews”.⁴²⁰

Prime Minister MacDonald had even reiterated Britain’s commitment to the Jewish national home and the dual obligation on 3 April 1930, and the text of this speech was included in the white paper; it was “an international obligation from which there can be no question of receding”.⁴²¹ Taking into account Weizmann’s reluctant but nevertheless apparent acquiescence, MacDonald’s reiteration of Britain’s commitment to the national home and Passfield’s regular communications with the Prime Minister during cabinet committee deliberations, there was no warning of the

⁴¹⁹ CAB 24/211, 27 March 1930, Memorandum by the Secretary of State for the Colonies, TNA.

⁴²⁰ PREM 1/102, 3 October 1930, Passfield to Ramsay MacDonald, TNA.

⁴²¹ House of Commons Debates, 3 April 1930, series 5, vol 237, cols 1466-1467.

political storm that followed.⁴²² Believing the two options of restricting Jewish immigration and investing in Arab agriculture satisfied requirements on the political dimension, the government allowed these alternatives to pass into Stage Two, where they needed to satisfy the key substantive dimension: the economy.

As the American stock market crash of 1929 was developing into an international financial crisis that heralded stagnation and unemployment for British voters, development in Palestine necessitated either a guaranteed loan or grant-in-aid from the Colonial Office.⁴²³ When the cabinet committee on Palestine submitted their first report to the cabinet on 15 September 1930, it was a detailed plan for the development that Hope-Simpson had advised was urgently necessary. However, the cost of Hope-Simpson's plan was unknown until a further financial committee delivered the blow: "Sir John Hope-Simpson's scheme involved the expenditure of some £6,000,000, spread over ten years, the interest on which would have to be guaranteed by the Exchequer. This would probably necessitate a loan spread over twenty years, the service of which would require £400,000 a year. This sum, however, did not include the capital cost of the land".⁴²⁴ These amounts were much higher than anything the cabinet committee had considered and they were advised to re-assess the situation in light of this new information.⁴²⁵ The state of the economy was so dire that in late 1930 the Treasury re-imposed its control over Palestine's finances and sent an investigator, Sir Simon O'Donnell, to rate the Palestine Administration's efficiency and judge where economies could be made.⁴²⁶ The committee prepared a new report

⁴²² PREM 1/102, 12 August 1930, Passfield to Ramsay MacDonald, TNA.

⁴²³ PREM 1/102, 10 August 1930, "Cabinet Committee on Policy in Palestine. Memorandum on the Financial Situation of Palestine by Sir John Campbell, Financial Advisor to the Secretary of State", TNA, 29.

⁴²⁴ CAB 23/65, 19 September 1930, Cabinet Minutes, TNA, 2.

⁴²⁵ Ibid, 3.

⁴²⁶ MAC 9/5/29, 18 Nov 1930, Passfield to Chancellor, reproduced by permission of Durham University Library; MAC 9/5/18, 5 Jan 1931, Shuckburgh to Selby, reproduced by permission of Durham University Library.

following this financial information, and concluded that, “in present circumstances a proposal to spend many millions on land settlement of Jews and Arabs in Palestine would meet with serious opposition in Parliament and the country”.⁴²⁷

Consequently, the committee returned to the cabinet on 24 September with new suggestions. They decided that Britain was under a moral if not legal obligation to recompense Arabs dispossessed by British policy in Palestine, that the Jews should be allowed, at their own expense, to continue developing the land they already owned and that this should suffice to permit Jewish settlement for the following five years.⁴²⁸ Jewish immigration would be restricted to numbers suitable for those reserve lands or immigrants who could be absorbed comfortably into the industrial population.⁴²⁹ Unfortunately, there is no full transcript of this meeting, and the minutes merely record that after “considerable discussion” the cabinet agreed to approve the committee’s draft policy including their new points following the realisation of the cost of Hope-Simpson’s scheme.⁴³⁰ The outcome was a compromise of some very limited development and compensation, as well as limits on the rate of expansion of the Jewish national home. The draft policy was subject to many minor alterations and was published as the Passfield White Paper on 21 October 1930.

Regarding the question of peace, Passfield’s new policy articulated the belief that, “so long as widespread suspicion exists, and it does exist, amongst the Arab population, that the economic depression, under which they undoubtedly suffer at present, is largely due to excessive Jewish immigration, and so long as some grounds exist upon which this suspicion may be plausibly represented to be well founded, there can be little hope of any improvement in the mutual relations of the two

⁴²⁷ CAB 24/215, September 1930, “Cabinet Committee on Policy in Palestine Second Report”, TNA, 2.

⁴²⁸ Ibid, 3; CAB 23/65, 24 September 1930, Cabinet Minutes, TNA, 10.

⁴²⁹ Ibid.

⁴³⁰ Ibid.

racess".⁴³¹ This prompted condemnation from both the Conservative and Liberal Party leaders that both Passfield and MacDonald failed to predict.⁴³²

By February 1931, the white paper had been undermined so severely as to constitute reversal. This was done in a published letter from MacDonald to Weizmann offering an "authoritative interpretation" of the Passfield White Paper and British policy in Palestine.⁴³³ Far from limiting land purchase or Jewish immigration, the MacDonald letter stressed that centralised control over land purchase would be "regulatory and not prohibitive" and that "His Majesty's Government did not imply a prohibition of acquisition of additional land by Jews", which of course was the entire point of Passfield's policy.⁴³⁴ Regarding immigration, the letter asserted that "His Majesty's Government did not prescribe and do not contemplate any stoppage or prohibition of Jewish immigration in any of its categories",⁴³⁵ which again, ran counter to both the Shaw and Hope-Simpson commission reports, as well as the deliberations of the cabinet committee on Palestine and the approval they received in cabinet.

As the final text of the letter "had been agreed upon between representatives of the Jewish Agency and [another] Committee appointed by the Cabinet on the 6th November, 1930", Zionist leaders appeared to have exerted a great deal of influence on the decision, contributing to the belief in the power of lobbying.⁴³⁶ However, the decision-making process behind the reversal of the Passfield White Paper was more nuanced. Weizmann did orchestrate a campaign by writing letters to prominent newspapers as well as the League of Nations' Permanent Mandates Commission and

⁴³¹ Cmd 3692, 1930, *Statement of Policy by His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom*.

⁴³² CO 733/183/2, October 1930, "Discussion of Amendments", TNA.

⁴³³ James Ramsay MacDonald, 14 February 1931, "The Palestine White Paper An Interpretation, Prime Minister's Letter", *The Times*, 8.

⁴³⁴ Ibid.

⁴³⁵ Ibid.

⁴³⁶ CAB 23/66, 4 February 1931, Cabinet Minutes, TNA, 10.

encouraged his supporters and friends – of which he had many among the British elite – to do the same, but these efforts always constituted more of a public show of protest than an exercise in secret diplomacy.⁴³⁷ Negotiations with Zionists from November 1930 until January 1931 began with the Foreign Office trying to convince Weizmann and his colleagues that the white paper was a sound, legal policy and ended with a *volte-face*. In these short months between the publication of the white paper and the MacDonald letter, the government came under severe criticism internationally, but most importantly, domestically from opposition Liberal and Conservative parties. The polarising nature of Passfield's new policy meant that the choice set for dealing with its aftermath was narrowed to only two options: to continue with the white paper, or to reverse it.

Stage One

The Poliheuristic Decision Theory presumes that options are eliminated from the choice set in the first instance based on whether they meet requirements on the most important, political dimension.⁴³⁸ Those that fail, meaning they present intolerable risk to political survival, are eliminated from the choice set. In terms of the Labour government's decision-making from 1930-1931 regarding Palestine, the variables that made up the political dimension were internal party politics and the closely linked variable of parliamentary politics – in keeping with the criteria outlined by Mintz.⁴³⁹ In analysing how these variables presented risk to the Labour government, this section demonstrates how the “noncompensatory loss aversion

⁴³⁷ Chaim Weizmann, *The Letters and Papers of Chaim Weizmann Volume XV Series 3 October 1930-June 1933* (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Books, 1978).

⁴³⁸ Alex Mintz, “Applied Decision Analysis: Utilizing Poliheuristic Theory to Explain and Predict Foreign Policy and National Security Decisions”, *International Studies Perspectives*, 6 (1) 2005: 94-98.

⁴³⁹ Mintz, “How Do Leaders Make Decisions? A Poliheuristic Perspective”.

variable” was operationalised, leaving only a very narrow choice between options to be maximised in the second stage of decision-making.⁴⁴⁰

Variable: Internal Party Politics

A key variable on the political dimension in 1930-1931 was internal party politics. The minority Labour government held only a fragile grip on power, and a variable that presented high levels of risk to that power was disunity within the Labour Party itself.⁴⁴¹ Labour foreign policy was marked by a commitment to the League of Nations, the credibility and stature of which was, therefore, highly important.⁴⁴² As Labour’s traditional stance towards Zionism was staunchly supportive, James Ramsay MacDonald’s government also faced the added complication of rebellion by key Labour Party backbenchers. Both of these issues – attitude to the League and party sentiment for Zionism – became dangerously inflamed due to inter-party rivalry, which is discussed in detail below. Labour’s precarious unity combined with the government’s numerical weakness meant that the option to continue with the Passfield White Paper was eliminated in the first stage of decision-making.

In terms of foreign policy, the Labour Party’s League of Nations focus constituted support for a program of arms limitation, eradication of outstanding grievances, arbitration of international disputes and collective security.⁴⁴³ The point was to prevent further global conflicts and – although this goal proved impractical – Labour leaders viewed their time in office as an historic opportunity for peace.⁴⁴⁴ This

⁴⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴⁴¹ Michael Hughes, *British Foreign Secretaries in an Uncertain World* (Oxon: Routledge, 2006), 82.

⁴⁴² Henry Winkler, “The Emergence of Labour Party Foreign Policy”, *The Journal of Modern History*, 28 (3) 1956: 247-258, 247.

⁴⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴⁴ Ibid.

foreign policy, however, did not reflect the party's grassroots priorities; instead, it was the brainchild of Labour's intelligentsia, most notably Foreign Secretary Arthur Henderson (described by Lady Davidson as "that prim old Methodist").⁴⁴⁵ The policy was then sold to the rest of the party.⁴⁴⁶ In addition, by the autumn of 1930 there was a general problem with "[d]iscontent and disillusionment" along the front bench. Lady Passfield remarked how the Labour leaders were "strangled by the multitudinous and complicated issues raised in government departments; and by the alarming gravity of two major problems – India's upheaval and the continuous and increasing unemployment".⁴⁴⁷

As such, the intellectual commitment to the League was a potentially weak point in the armour of Labour Party unity. Paradoxically, as the Palestine Mandate was granted and theoretically supervised by the Council of the League of Nations, it was also divisive for British Palestine policy to even appear in contravention of League authority. This Labour Party commitment to the League faced its first criticisms from the Permanent Mandates Commission (PMC) – the body appointed to oversee all mandates – in the summer of 1930. To further complicate matters, when various politicians wrote their letters to *The Times* months later to protest against the Passfield White Paper, their criticisms were more poignant because they echoed accusations levelled by the PMC.

Following the Shaw Commission report, although Foreign Secretary Henderson assured the Council of the League of Nations that Britain had no intention of deviating from a policy based on the Balfour Declaration, the Council requested

⁴⁴⁵ Lady Davidson Papers; partly in *Davidson Memoirs*, 355, in Philip Williamson, ed. *Baldwin Papers: A Conservative Statesman, 1908-1947* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 246.

⁴⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 254.

⁴⁴⁷ LSE/PASSFIELD/1/2/9, 1 July 1930, Diary of Beatrice Webb.

that the PMC conduct a thorough examination of this new document.⁴⁴⁸ Prime Minister MacDonald received a copy of the PMC's report on 28 July 1930, and said it "was not pleasant reading".⁴⁴⁹ The report contained a very grave charge, "that the partial inaction of the Mandatory Power as regards its obligations to the Palestinian population both Arab and Jewish is the fundamental cause of the friction which eventually culminated in the serious disorder of August 1929".⁴⁵⁰ Charging Britain with negligence, the PMC was discarding the Shaw Commission's evidence and conclusions as well as any new policy they inspired. In response, Colonial Office Under-Secretary Sir Drummond Shiels tried to reassure the Council; he advised that "there is no new policy; there is no secret to be disclosed; and that the British government stands today where it did when it accepted the Mandate, and with the same policy".⁴⁵¹

Months later, however, in the face of criticism following the publication of Passfield's new white paper, Shiels's statement, in hindsight, could easily have been interpreted as a lie told directly to the Council of the League. Tension built in October immediately following the white paper's publication. Allegations arose that it "crystallised" the Jewish national home.⁴⁵² This term had come directly from the report of the Permanent Mandates Commission: "The Policy of the Mandatory would not be fairly open to criticism unless it aimed at crystallising the Jewish national home at its present stage of development".⁴⁵³ The PMC's opinion that Britain had been responsible for Jewish-Arab tensions, its preference for Zionist arguments over an

⁴⁴⁸ Pederson, "The Impact of League Oversight on British Policy in Palestine", 47.

⁴⁴⁹ CAB 23/64, 28 July 1930, Cabinet Minutes, TNA, 4.

⁴⁵⁰ CAB 24/214, 29 July 1930, "Palestine: Comments of His Majesty's Government on Report of Permanent Mandates Commission, Memorandum by the Secretary of State for the Colonies", TNA.

⁴⁵¹ Ibid.

⁴⁵² Stanley Baldwin, Austen Chamberlain and Leopold Amery, 23 October 1930, "British Policy In Palestine, The White Paper, Conservative Leaders' Comments", *The Times*, 15.

⁴⁵³ PREM 1/102, 10 August 1930, "Cabinet Committee on Policy in Palestine. Memorandum by the Secretary of State for the Colonies", TNA, 8.

official British investigation and Shiels's apparent dishonesty with regard to policy all contributed to an atmosphere in which Britain's relationship with the League of Nations was mutually wary. This meant that the minority Labour government did not relish the thought of further censure from the League, a development that would risk creating rifts within a party already potentially divided ideologically on the Palestine issue.

The Labour Party had been officially pro-Zionist since two-and-a-half months before the Balfour Declaration by approving the War Aims Memorandum, which called for a Jewish return to Palestine.⁴⁵⁴ Its main proponent was Sydney Webb, who became Lord Passfield and the future Colonial Secretary, and reflected the party's general support for self-determination among national ethnic groups, including in India.⁴⁵⁵ By 1930, the strongest Labour supporters of Zionism were Joseph Kenworthy in the House of Commons and Josiah Wedgewood in the Lords.⁴⁵⁶ Kenworthy, for example, wrote to Weizmann immediately after the white paper's publication, assuring him he had the support of many non-Jewish MPs and would correct this "blunder".⁴⁵⁷

Kenworthy had a general commitment to pragmatism in ethnic conflicts and did not consider British conciliations in the face of violence to be good policy unless they actually solved the problem at hand. He released a book in 1931 called *India: A Warning* highlighting all of the problems to finding a constitutional solution in India; his attitude was not partisan but intended to warn fellow politicians that succumbing to the violence of one particular ethnic group would not solve fundamental obstacles

⁴⁵⁴ Labour Party and Trades Union Congress, *Memorandum on War Aims* (London: Inter-Allied Labour and Socialist Conference, 1917); Paul Keleman, "Zionism and the British Labour Party: 1917-39", *Social History*, 21 (1) 1996: 71-87, 71-72.

⁴⁵⁵ Ibid; Rose, *The Gentile Zionists*, 70.

⁴⁵⁶ Paul Lamont Hanna, *British Policy in Palestine* (Washington: American Council on Public Affairs, 1942), 98.

⁴⁵⁷ Kenworthy to Weizmann, 21 October 1930, *Letters and Papers of Chaim Weizmann Volume XV*, 2.

to peace and stability.⁴⁵⁸ As discussed further below, this sort of reasoning was also directly relevant to perceptions of Palestine.

In the House of Lords, Wedgwood had been a friend to Zionism since the 1920s, joining with both James Ramsay MacDonald and future Chancellor Philip Snowden in organising the Palestine Mandate Society, a pro-Zionist lobby group.⁴⁵⁹ MacDonald had even visited Palestine in 1922 and subsequently argued that the Arab claim to self-determination was invalid because “Palestine and the Jews can never be separated” and “the Arab population do not and cannot use or develop the resources of Palestine”.⁴⁶⁰ MacDonald, Passfield and Snowden, therefore, had all been involved in promoting the Zionist movement with their likeminded colleagues before attaining high office. Once confronted with the Shaw and Hope-Simpson reports, however, they all approved a new policy based on limiting Jewish immigration to Palestine.⁴⁶¹ This pre-existing sentiment juxtaposed against the Passfield White Paper of 1930 had the potential to create a split within the Labour Party that, if left uncorrected, posed a real danger to the government’s political survival.

When the white paper was published on 21 October 1930, the criticism it attracted seemed to have an impact on MacDonald’s thinking relatively quickly. On 6 November, the cabinet decided to create a new committee for Palestine policy.⁴⁶² Primarily, the new committee was tasked with legal clarification of Palestine policy in cooperation with an authority such as the Lord Advocate. It would also “get in touch with the representatives of the Zionists in the most politic and tactful manner possible in the circumstances and should make recommendations as to the attitude to be taken

⁴⁵⁸ Joseph Kenworthy, *India: A Warning* (London: E. Matthews & Marrot, 1931).

⁴⁵⁹ Kenworthy to Weizmann, 21 October 1930, *Letters and Papers of Chaim Weizmann Volume XV*, 2.

⁴⁶⁰ James Ramsay MacDonald, *A Socialist in Palestine* (London: Jewish Socialist Labour Confederation, 1922), 18, cited in Keleman, “Zionism and the British Labour Party”, 73.

⁴⁶¹ CAB 23/65, 24 September 1930, Cabinet Minutes, TNA.

⁴⁶² CAB 23/65, 6 November 1930, Cabinet Minutes, TNA.

up by the government in view of the reception of the recently issued white paper”.⁴⁶³ MacDonald then met with Chaim Weizmann the same day, when he reportedly told the Zionist leader, “There is no white paper”.⁴⁶⁴ This unequivocal comment was most likely an off-the-record exclamation and there is little other indication that the decision to reverse the white paper had been made by 6 November. Indeed, MacDonald had written to Weizmann the day after the document’s publication to advise him that, “a closer study of what is laid down in the statement of policy will show you that it is far better than you seem to imagine, and that whatever you may object to in it is a very reasonable price to pay if we can secure closer cooperation in Palestine”.⁴⁶⁵ In addition, the Prime Minister wrote again a week later to stress that their differences over the policy were minor and based on misunderstandings and phraseology.⁴⁶⁶ Weizmann had understood this to mean, “that some amending interpretation of the White Paper is being considered” and he telegraphed his American counterpart, Felix Warburg to this effect immediately after meeting MacDonald.⁴⁶⁷

Bringing the Zionists into discussions in this manner undoubtedly began with the aim of making absolutely sure that the new policy was legal and sound. This is why the cabinet wanted “clarification” conducted in conjunction with the Lord Advocate and why the initial approach was kept secret – the announcement of Zionist participation in the new Palestine subcommittee remained classified until the Parliamentary debate on 17 November.⁴⁶⁸ Gestation of the reversal idea, therefore,

⁴⁶³ Ibid.

⁴⁶⁴ Rose, *The Gentile Zionists*, 20.

⁴⁶⁵ PREM 30/69/579, 22 October 1930, Ramsay MacDonald to Weizmann, TNA.

⁴⁶⁶ MacDonald to Weizmann, 31 October 1930, *Letters and Papers of Chaim Weizmann Volume XV*, 33.

⁴⁶⁷ Weizmann to Malcolm MacDonald, 5 November 1930, *Letters and Papers of Chaim Weizmann Volume XV*, 34; Weizmann to Warburg, 6 November 1930, *Letters and Papers of Chaim Weizmann Volume XV*, 35.

⁴⁶⁸ Weizmann to Amery, 13 November 1930, *Letters and Papers of Chaim Weizmann Volume XV*, 38.

had only just begun, and the government would have been unlikely to proceed with a difficult Commons debate and an impassioned defence of the white paper had the decision to reverse it already been made.

Rather, the main issue remained correcting any appearance that Labour intended to undermine League authority and placing Foreign Secretary Arthur Henderson as Chair of the new committee facilitated this aim.⁴⁶⁹ This also went on to serve a second purpose of soothing internal politics, as Henderson was far more popular within the party than MacDonald, especially when the extent of backbench antipathy for the white paper became clear during the debate.⁴⁷⁰ This parliamentary debate is discussed in more detail below, but Kenworthy, for example, publicly railed against his own party leadership and advised the House that, “Colonial secretaries have come under the lash of my tongue in the past and others will do the same unless the Colonial Office policy is changed”.⁴⁷¹

This added Palestine to the lengthy list of issues with which Labour backbenchers already took issue under MacDonald’s leadership. The Prime Minister found himself at the mercy of “rumours of dissensions, intrigues and crises in the government ranks” and Conservative politician Austen Chamberlain believed this was “a case in which the proverb is true that there is no smoke without fire”.⁴⁷² Under this strain, Conservatives believed “Ramsay is terribly overworked, shows some signs of fretfulness which attacks him in such conditions, and might be upset by an accident”.⁴⁷³ Before the Palestine issue could become such an “accident”, reaching out to representatives of the Zionist movement to liaise with a new cabinet committee

⁴⁶⁹ CAB 23/65, 6 November 1930, Cabinet Minutes, TNA.

⁴⁷⁰ Andrew Thorpe, “Arthur Henderson and the British Political Crisis of 1931”, *The Historical Journal* 31 (1) 1988: 117-139, 119.

⁴⁷¹ House of Commons Debates, 17 November 1930, series 5, vol, 245, cols 203-204.

⁴⁷² AC4/1/1-1358, 18 November 1930, Austen Chamberlain to Mary Carnegie, Cadbury Research Library: Special Collections, University of Birmingham.

⁴⁷³ Ibid.

on Palestine was less a direct reaction to their demands and more of a safety measure intended to guard against party divisions over the League of Nations; later in November, December and January it became a way to plaster over the fissures left by the Labour leadership's shifting commitment to Zionism.

As the Prime Minister would have recognised this rebellious streak among his own backbenches after the white paper's publication, why did the cabinet not anticipate a breaking of ranks beforehand? Although it is very difficult to explain why a particular threat did not occur to decision-makers, it is likely that the new policy's internal effect was considered manageable. The threat became dangerously exacerbated, however, by the vocal and unrelenting opposition raised by Conservative and Liberal leaders. Internal party politics was not necessarily enough on its own to constitute too much danger on the political dimension, but it primed the situation, most likely lowering the threshold of what constituted acceptable risk. Once combined with parliamentary politics described below, the internal politics variable meant the option to continue with the Passfield White Paper was removed from the choice set in the first stage of decision-making.

Variable: Parliamentary Politics

The two variables of internal party politics and parliamentary politics are closely related in this case because the latter represented an adroit, if not entirely purposeful, manipulation of the former. The minority Labour government depended foremost on its own unity to maintain power, but also relied heavily on Liberal Party support.⁴⁷⁴ This weakness was exploited effectively following publication of the Passfield White Paper by the appearance of a Liberal-Conservative alliance that

⁴⁷⁴ Gorny, *British Labour Movement and Zionism*, 80.

heightened and prolonged the divisive debate that was identified as dangerous to Labour's unity in the above section. The approaching India Conference in mid-November 1930 exacerbated the white paper problem, and despite its critics across the aisle posing emotional and even fallacious arguments against Passfield's policy, a coherent and comprehensive governmental rebuttal proved unpersuasive. MacDonald was already in a precarious position; India policy had proved dangerously divisive the previous year, a parliamentary debate on the Passfield White Paper demonstrated these continuing divisions – which were confirmed by a diminished majority in the Whitechapel by-election – and finally, these factors accumulated to ensure that discussions with Zionists that had begun as legal “clarification” resulted in a complete reversal of the offending policy. These features of the parliamentary politics variable combined with Labour's internal party politics to make the option of continuing with the Passfield White Paper untenable on the political dimension, and it was eliminated in the first stage of decision-making.

As well as unstable levels of support for foreign policy within his own party, MacDonald had to contend with the inherent difficulties of minority governance; he relied on varying degrees of cross-party support for foreign policy initiatives to prevent polarised parliamentary debates that risked splitting his own party.⁴⁷⁵ In March 1930, for example, MacDonald wrote to Passfield to arrange some discussion on whether a new white paper on Palestine policy was urgently required, but stressing that “it could only be [...] with the general support of all parties in the House of Commons”.⁴⁷⁶ Likewise, the Prime Minister's son, Malcolm MacDonald, noted how

⁴⁷⁵ Gorny, *The British Labour Movement and Zionism 1917-1948*, 51.

⁴⁷⁶ CO 733/183/1, 19 March 1930, JRM to Passfield, TNA.

it was always “important that the Liberals at any rate should support their proposals”.⁴⁷⁷

Labour had inherited an Empire in disarray, and with the coming of a global depression, stronger dominions and colonial nationalisms, as well as the rise of the United States as a world power, imperial policy had become an exercise in calculated control through concession and compromise – a balance between firmness and conciliation – and these issues had the power to arouse great parliamentary passions within, as well as across, parties.⁴⁷⁸ Conservative Chairman Leopold Amery called this problem Labour’s “paralysing ineptitude”.⁴⁷⁹ In this atmosphere, however, all party heads recognised the importance of some degree of cooperation in private negotiations.⁴⁸⁰ As such, MacDonald had conferred with both Conservative leader Stanley Baldwin and Liberal *de facto* leader David Lloyd George in March 1930 – specifically with regard to the Shaw Commission – to ask for “the guidance of your views on what should be done now”.⁴⁸¹ Although no notes from this meeting exist, it was necessary because the consequences of trying to move ahead without cross-party support had proved nearly disastrous for India policy the previous year, in circumstances highly similar to the debate that followed the Passfield White Paper.

When Labour came to power in 1929, the existing legislation on India’s internal government was the Montagu-Chelmsford Act of 1921, which was due for review.⁴⁸² To this end, a Statutory Commission chaired by Liberal MP Sir John Simon had been formed to investigate and recommend the next stages of

⁴⁷⁷ MAC 8/12/2, undated, MacDonald Notes, reproduced by permission of Durham University Library.

⁴⁷⁸ Phillip Williamson, *National Crises and National Government* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 79.

⁴⁷⁹ AMEL 1/5/3, undated, draft article for *Home and Empire*, Churchill Archives Centre, The Papers of Leopold Amery.

⁴⁸⁰ Williamson, *National Crises and National Government*, 79.

⁴⁸¹ PREM 1/102, 19 March 1930, Ramsay MacDonald to Baldwin, Lloyd George, Passfield and Henderson, TNA.

⁴⁸² Stuart Ball, *Baldwin and the Conservative Party: The Crisis of 1929-1931* (London: Yale University Press, 1988), 109.

constitutional development.⁴⁸³ Differences of opinion regarding the degree and pace of this self-rule cut across parties.⁴⁸⁴ India had growing provincial nationalisms, and Lord Irwin, a Conservative peer cooperating with the government, suggested giving Indian politicians a veneer of responsibility and proto-independence to produce a sedative effect.⁴⁸⁵ Before the Simon Commission could present its report, however, the government issued the Irwin Declaration based on this principle on 31 Oct 1929.⁴⁸⁶

Whereas both Conservative and Liberal leaders had agreed to this Labour government policy adopted from Irwin, the problem was with the declaration itself.⁴⁸⁷ Liberal Lord Reading, former Viceroy to India, criticised the wording as dangerously ambiguous, sacrificing long-term stability for short-term pacification.⁴⁸⁸ Reading's stature commanded a great deal of authority, and his objections allowed Lloyd George and other Liberals to refuse consent for the declaration, stiffening the instinctive opposition of Peel, Austen Chamberlain, Churchill and other Conservatives whom Baldwin was unable to restrain once it became known that the declaration had not received Simon Commission approval.⁴⁸⁹ This meant Baldwin also had to withdraw his support since diehard Conservative opposition (mostly Churchill who was looking for an issue with which to revive his career) placed the Conservative leader's own position in profound peril.⁴⁹⁰

The result was a major hardening against minority-Labour's India policy among both Conservatives and Liberals.⁴⁹¹ The cabinet issued a communiqué

⁴⁸³ Williamson, *National Crises and National Government*, 90.

⁴⁸⁴ Ibid, 84-85.

⁴⁸⁵ Ibid, 86.

⁴⁸⁶ Ball, *Baldwin and the Conservative Party*, 109.

⁴⁸⁷ Williamson, *National Crises and National Government*, 86.

⁴⁸⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁸⁹ Ibid, 87.

⁴⁹⁰ Ball, *Baldwin and the Conservative Party*, 114.

⁴⁹¹ Williamson, *National Crises and National Government*, 87.

specifically stating what Irwin's ambiguity had attempted to conceal, that the declaration involved no change of policy, which sparked outrage in India – leading to the need for repressive measures by May 1930, and leaving bitter and substantial divergences between parties in Westminster.⁴⁹² In the year following the Irwin Declaration, however, there was a subtle and tenuous shift within Parliament back towards a more bipartisan line. Labour stood firmly behind the declaration and, despite a flurry of Liberal uncertainty, was ultimately supported by Lloyd George with Conservatives acting as a check on hurried constitutional development.⁴⁹³ India remained a crucial issue, however, and the cabinet was meeting twice a day in the summer of 1930 to discuss it.⁴⁹⁴ The situation remained tenuous for MacDonald and Lady Passfield recorded in her diary during this time that “the Labour government is on the rocks and may any day be wrecked”.⁴⁹⁵

This tense situation continued throughout 1930 when the government had to deal with the Imperial Conference and the India Round Table only to be blindsided politically by the subsidiary issue of Palestine. This convergence of similar crises left the Prime Minister “overwhelmed with work” and in a terribly exposed political position.⁴⁹⁶ Cross-party cooperation was vital but shaky. Austen Chamberlain expressed an opinion common among the Prime Minister's supporters and rivals, that “there is too much trouble ahead; Ramsay is not, I think, the man to deal with it”.⁴⁹⁷ The uneasy consensus on India policy built up the previous year was the product of luck rather than adroit political manoeuvring on the part of the Labour government,

⁴⁹² MacDonald Diary, 10 November 1929, cited in Williamson, *National Crises and National Government*, 87-90.

⁴⁹³ Ball, *Baldwin and the Conservative Party*, 114.

⁴⁹⁴ LSE/PASSFIELD/1/2/9, 9 July 1930, Diary of Beatrice Webb.

⁴⁹⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁹⁶ PREM 30/69/676, 30 October 1930, NB to Stevenson, TNA.

⁴⁹⁷ AC4/1/1-1358, 18 November 1930, Austen Chamberlain to Mary Carnegie, Cadbury Research Library: Special Collections, University of Birmingham.

and approaching the first of in series of India Round Table conferences in November 1930, was directly threatened by the fallout from Passfield's white paper.

While it would be overly simplistic to state that Palestine and India policy were decided in tandem, the period 1929-1930 marked one of the few occasions when India policy coloured all of British politics.⁴⁹⁸ In addition, the conflict in Palestine bore some of the hallmarks British politicians associated with India, such as ethnic conflict and "natives" agitating for political rights. Conservative Party Chairman Leopold Amery remarked how the violence in Palestine would be "familiar to most Indian administrators".⁴⁹⁹ This meant that attitudes to Palestine among the British political elite were, to some extent, informed by how they viewed the India problem, with which they were far more familiar. Who were the "natives" in Palestine, and which group required suppressing and which protecting? Neither Palestine's Jews nor Arabs escaped the paternalistic racism emanating from the House of Commons that was associated with British imperialism more generally and the India question in particular in 1930.

In this context, any perception of weakness to imperial subjects around the world had to be considered very carefully. It would be a mistake, however, to consider that the two issues held equal weight in British politics: "little Palestine with its troubles – insignificant to the rest of the world", Lady Passfield wrote, "is likely to be forgotten in concern over the revolution which some say is going on in India. For the next six weeks the P.M. and other Cabinet Ministers, having finished with the Dominions, will be absorbed in the Round Table Conferences to settle the fate of India – or rather the British in India."⁵⁰⁰ Palestine was, paradoxically, both important

⁴⁹⁸ Sarvepalli Gopal, *The Viceroyalty of Lord Irwin 1926-1931* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1957), 113.

⁴⁹⁹ AMEL 1/5/12, 1 of 2, undated, draft article, Churchill Archives Centre, The Papers of Leopold Amery.

⁵⁰⁰ LSE/PASSFIELD/1/2/9, 30 October 1930, Diary of Beatrice Webb.

– because it threatened to disrupt Labour’s cross-party support for the India Round Table conference – and insignificant – as India was the chief and all-consuming concern. This meant that although the government’s and certainly Passfield’s early concern when formulating the new Palestine policy had been avoiding any appearance of capitulation to either outside lobbying or parliamentary pressure, the political storm created by its publication altered their priorities.⁵⁰¹

At first, the dominant voice within cabinet on this issue was that of the Colonial Secretary, who stressed the need to remain firm against any and all external parties. This meant ignoring both the borderline anti-Semitic complaints of Palestine’s High Commissioner Sir John Chancellor as well as “the persistent bombardment by the Jews, in personal intercourse, in formal interviews, in newspaper propaganda, in insidious threats of ulterior action, notably electoral pressure at home and international public opinion abroad, and all the rest of it [...]”.⁵⁰² Passfield seemed, for example, to take great pride in resisting Zionist lobbying to lift a ban on immigration under the Labour schedule imposed by Chancellor with cabinet approval: although “very strong pressure has been brought to bear upon His Majesty’s Government to rescind the suspension without awaiting the Report of Sir John Hope-Simpson”, he wrote, “[s]o far, all demands to rescind or modify the suspension have been resisted by His Majesty’s Government”.⁵⁰³ This unwavering position was justified within the Colonial Office by the argument for a stable empire.

Crucially, this attitude of forbearance against the “Jewish hurricane”, as Passfield referred to it, endured during the new policy’s preparation in cabinet committees in the summer of 1930 and obviously did not prevent its publication on 21

⁵⁰¹ PREM 1/102, 10 August 1930, “Cabinet Committee on Policy in Palestine. Memorandum by the Secretary of State for the Colonies”, TNA, 4.

⁵⁰² Ibid.

⁵⁰³ Ibid, 7.

October. Weizmann, for example, threatened to resign on 13 October but the white paper was still published two weeks later.⁵⁰⁴ In contrast, the political danger following publication of the Passfield White Paper emanated chiefly from within the British political establishment, and stemmed from many criticisms levelled at the white paper that represented more political strategy than principled objection.⁵⁰⁵ Accusations directed by Liberal and Conservative leaders against the Labour government, for example, were not really about the text of the white paper or the policy it contained. Before outlining the attacks made by Conservative and Liberal party politicians, however, it is necessary to sketch a portrait of these opposition leaders' own precarious careers in 1930 to illustrate their motives.

Conservative leader Stanley Baldwin had barely survived the Irwin Declaration debacle by appeasing his vocal critics within the Conservative Party. When Baldwin spoke in Parliament on the India issue, for example, "there had been no word of approval from his own colleagues and as soon as Lloyd George got up Winston and Worthington-Evans on each side of him leant forward and punctuated every sentence with emphatic 'hear hears!'"⁵⁰⁶ The Conservative leader was in danger of having to resign because "[i]f the matter had gone to division half his colleagues would have voted against him".⁵⁰⁷ A moderate facing diehard backbench opinion, especially with regard to India, the Conservative leader could ill afford to support any government policy that appeared to acquiesce in the face of demands even remotely similar to those of the India Congress. In the case of Palestine, Arabs were comparable to Indians – not because British politicians viewed Jews as non-indigenous, but because they were Caucasian, European, and therefore perceived very

⁵⁰⁴ Rose, *The Gentile Zionists*, 16.

⁵⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, 18.

⁵⁰⁶ Lytton to Irwin, 9-10 November 1929, Halifax Indian Papers Mss Eur c. 152/18/309, in Williamson, *Baldwin Papers*, 224.

⁵⁰⁷ *Ibid.*

differently in the interwar imperial mindset. Approaching the India Round Table in 1930, Baldwin deliberately retreated from frontline politics and declined to serve on Britain's delegation to the conference.⁵⁰⁸ He wrote to Lord Irwin on 16 October to say that in preparing for the conference, he "kept off, partly to keep L.I.G. off and partly because the political situation is far too tricky to allow me to be immersed in a Conference when every crook in the country is out for my scalp".⁵⁰⁹

In this environment, the Conservative Party Chairman and former Colonial Secretary Leopold Amery was highly concerned with keeping Baldwin in his leadership position.⁵¹⁰ Amery was a known Zionist sympathiser who had been involved with securing Palestine's advantageous borders in 1920, but did not support the cause at the Arabs' expense – he simply did not believe that the Arabs were losing anything. This is evident in an article Amery wrote for *The Pioneer* in December 1929. He was, first and foremost, a British imperialist:

"The terms of the Balfour Declaration make it plain that the creation of the Jewish national home did not imply the setting up of a Jewish nationalist state or the support, in favour of the Jews, of that essentially intolerant type of racial or linguistic nationalism which has devastated Europe by its conflicting claims for political domination. Equally it left no room, in Palestine at least, for the assertion of that type of nationalism by the Arabs".⁵¹¹

His motivations may be clearer when considering Amery's recollections after a dinner party the previous year; Amery admitted "[...] our object is to have Palestine permanently within the ambit of our commonwealth of peoples".⁵¹² Fundamentally, however, Leopold Amery's first loyalty was to the party, and at that moment to

⁵⁰⁸ Baldwin to Joan Davidson, 2 November 1930, Lady Davidson papers partly in *Davidson Memoirs*, 354, M&B 578-9, in Williamson, *Baldwin Papers*, 243.

⁵⁰⁹ Halifax Indian Papers. Mss Eur c. 152/19/147, in Williamson, *Baldwin Papers*, 239.

⁵¹⁰ LG/F/39/2/28, Blankenberg to Amery, 1 November 1920, Parliamentary Archives; Lady Davidson Papers, partly in *Davidson Memoirs*, Baldwin to Davidson, 13 November 1930, in Williamson, *Baldwin Papers*, 246.

⁵¹¹ AMEL 1/5/46, 1 of 2, December 1929, "The Future in Palestine" *The Pioneer*, Churchill Archives Centre, The Papers of Leopold Amery, 5-6.

⁵¹² AMEL, 1/5/46, 2 of 2, 26 July 1928, My Recollections After Dinner Written the Same Night. Unchecked, Unauthorised and Largely Inaccurate. Josiah Wedgewood, Churchill Archives Centre, The Papers of Leopold Amery.

Baldwin, who also felt the opposition of Conservatives who still favoured coalition with Lloyd George and had been marginalised by his removal in 1922. These had included Austen Chamberlain, making the former Foreign Secretary an important man to court.

The policy that joined many along the Liberal and Conservative benches was free trade within the Empire, which was the particular cause of press barons, Lord Beaverbrook and Lord Rothermere, who formed the United Empire Party to split the Conservative vote and pressure against India reform.⁵¹³ These two characters opposed Lloyd George when he was Prime Minister on the basis of an anti-waste campaign discussed in the previous chapter, but by 1929, they were undermining Stanley Baldwin's leadership of the Conservative Party over India and the free trade issue, the latter of which was championed by David Lloyd George and aroused suspicions of collaboration between the three men. Baldwin, for example, asked his shadow cabinet, "[w]hat is your reading of the Beaverbrook-Rothermere game? And under which thimble is the pea, or in other words L.I.G.?"⁵¹⁴

In a moment of frustration in dealing with this situation, Amery suggested the Baldwin-loyalists within the party should sign a letter to their leader saying "All your old colleagues conscious of each other's senility desire to tell you that not one of them has any objection to any of the others being bumped off [...]"⁵¹⁵ While assassinating the diehard Conservatives was not an option, their various outrages were at least relatively predictable. Baldwin and Amery were determined to beat the press lords and the diehards at their own game: "I am fighting with beasts at Ephesus", Baldwin wrote, "and I hope to see their teeth drawn and their claws broken before the battle is

⁵¹³ Williamson, *Baldwin Papers*, 225-232.

⁵¹⁴ Amery Diaries, II, 59-60 (30 January 1930) in Williamson, *Baldwin Papers*, 226.

⁵¹⁵ Baldwin to Davidson, 13 November 1930, Lady Davidson Papers, partly in *Davidson Memoirs*, 355, in Williamson, *Baldwin Papers*, 246.

over!”⁵¹⁶ On 23 October, one tactic for this war became apparent. The Conservative leadership penned a letter to *The Times* signed by Baldwin, Amery and Chamberlain to protest against the Passfield White Paper.⁵¹⁷ Rather than being aimed solely at the Labour government’s apparent anti-Zionism, however, the letter also targeted divisive factions within Conservative ranks. It was part Zionist sympathy and part political strategy.

The letter was first constructed in conjunction with Arthur Balfour’s niece and Zionist campaigner Baffy Dugdale. Amery recounted how “Mrs Dugdale [...] came in very much concerned about the Palestine White Paper” and believed that the Conservative Party should “dissociate themselves as promptly as possible from the government in this matter”.⁵¹⁸ Amery agreed and ushered Mrs Dugdale in to see Stanley Baldwin, inviting her to begin “drafting something before she came back and lunched with us”.⁵¹⁹ Mrs Dugdale then took Baldwin’s “general instructions as to the points to be brought out in a letter”, which she drafted and then Amery revised and amended with Baldwin and Austen Chamberlain.⁵²⁰ Weizmann credited his colleague Namier with inspiring Mrs Dugdale, but it was Leopold Amery who organised the Conservative opposition to the white paper.⁵²¹

Amery even recruited Austen Chamberlain for this purpose. As well as being a known Zionist sympathiser, Chamberlain had opposed Baldwin over the Irwin Declaration and had no confidence in him as a leader, noting how, “to recall an old

⁵¹⁶ Baldwin to Sir John Simon, 19 February 1930, Simon Papers 62/228, in Williamson, *Baldwin Papers*, 228.

⁵¹⁷ Stanley Baldwin, Austen Chamberlain and Leopold Amery, 23 October 1930, “British Policy In Palestine, The White Paper, Conservative Leaders’ Comments”, *The Times*, 15.

⁵¹⁸ Leopold Amery, 22 October 1930, *The Empire at Bay: The Leo Amery Diaries 1929-1945* (London: Hutchinson, 1988), 85.

⁵¹⁹ Ibid.

⁵²⁰ Ibid.

⁵²¹ Weizmann to Amery, 23 October 1930, *Letters and Papers of Chaim Weizmann Volume XV*, 1; Weizmann to Warburg, 24 October 1930, *Letters and Papers of Chaim Weizmann Volume XV*, 8.

cartoon of “Punch”, a manifesto in his hands becomes ‘a wet blanket’”.⁵²² Chamberlain, however, did not relish the thought of a party run by the press barons and opposed attempts to force Baldwin’s resignation on the grounds that it “would be hailed as a triumph for themselves by Rothermere and Beaverbrook” and “would lend itself to every form of misconception and be deeply wounding [...]”.⁵²³ Baldwin was not a passive observer in this political infighting, but he found it very draining and sympathised with James Ramsay MacDonald’s similar situation, seeing the Prime Minister as “a good man and true, fighting for his life”.⁵²⁴ The same was not true for Baldwin’s opinions of David Lloyd George: “no constitution can stand public life today when you get near seventy”, Baldwin wrote, “unless you are made like L.I.G. with no bowels, no principles, no heart and no friends”.⁵²⁵ The Liberal leader was, incidentally, also under pressure from his own party. While Amery did not necessarily want a parliamentary debate on the Palestine white paper, “fearing that it would show divisions in our own ranks”, it was members of David Lloyd George’s Liberal Party who pushed for a date and organised it.⁵²⁶

It is important to note that Lloyd George had been a divisive figure for Liberal politics since 1916 when he ousted Prime Minister Asquith and then fronted a majority Conservative government against the wishes of many within his party. Until Lloyd George suffered a similar coup at the hands of his Coalition partners in 1922, the former Prime Minister lent broad support to the Zionist enterprise. As discussed in the previous chapter, however, this was the less the result of sentiment and ideology

⁵²² AC39/2/1-56, 9 October 1930, Austen Chamberlain to Neville Chamberlain, Cadbury Research Library: Special Collections, University of Birmingham.

⁵²³ Ibid.

⁵²⁴ Gwynne to Louis Grieg, 11 November 1930, Gwyne Papers 20, in Williamson, *Baldwin Papers*, 245.

⁵²⁵ Baldwin to Salisbury, 19 Jan 1931, Hatfield House Archives 4M/139/45, in Williamson, *Baldwin Papers*, 250.

⁵²⁶ Amery, 6 Nov 1930, *The Empire at Bay*, 88.

than the opportunities and constraints created by post-war diplomacy. Regardless, whenever the Palestine issue surfaced subsequently in debate, Lloyd George vociferously defended the Zionist movement – and thereby his own tenure as Prime Minister.

By 1930, his unofficial position as leader of the Liberal Party was also tenuous. Lloyd George had led a vote against the government in July 1930 and lost, simply because many Liberal MPs had defied the whip and sided with the government.⁵²⁷ Sir John Simon, of the Simon Commission in India, was also close to challenging Lloyd George for the leadership of the Liberal Party, and the letter he sent with Conservative politician Lord Hailsham to *The Times*, protesting the Passfield White Paper, was a tacit challenge to the Liberal leader's authority.⁵²⁸ Lloyd George was also bitterly frustrated with the Liberal Party's marginalised position and support for a Socialist party that was failing to live up to its radical reforming intentions.⁵²⁹ As MacDonald refused to supply an arrangement that gave the dwindling Liberal Party any lifeline, Lloyd George attempted to exploit Conservative dissatisfaction with Baldwin to win back some of his former coalitionists and attract younger, more progressive Tories into his sphere.⁵³⁰

Baldwin recognised the tactic, noting that, "The Goat has finally failed to get any real arrangements with Labour and rumour has it he is going to make another attempt on us".⁵³¹ Baldwin's assessment was that "[t]he Liberal Party is cracking badly and Labour is running about with its' tail between its' legs. Ramsay is tired and

⁵²⁷ LSE/PASSFIELD/1/2/9, 11 July 1930, Diary of Beatrice Webb.

⁵²⁸ Robert Self, ed. Chamberlain to Hilda, 14 Feb 1931, *The Neville Chamberlain Diary Letters Volume 3* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2000), 237.

⁵²⁹ John Campbell, *Lloyd George: A Goat in the Wilderness, 1922-1931* (Aldershot: Gregg Revivals, 1993), 253.

⁵³⁰ Ibid.

⁵³¹ Baldwin to Davidson and Joan Davidson, 27 November 1930, Lady Davidson Papers partly in *Davidson Memoirs*, 355-6, M&B 579, in Williamson, *Baldwin Papers*, 246-7.

rattled. An election may come any day but I still feel they will see the New Year in [...]”.⁵³² Lady Passfield recognised, however, that “all three parties are in a devil of a mess”.⁵³³ This was the political context in which the Passfield White Paper was published on 21 October 1930 and then debated in the House of Commons on 17 November. Both Baldwin (through Amery) and David Lloyd George had previous ties to Chaim Weizmann and Zionism more generally, and this meant they were also well placed to use Zionist arguments in order to guard against internal criticism (in the case of Baldwin) or undermine a disappointing government usurping the Liberal Party’s position in British politics.

As mentioned previously, the initial criticisms came in the form of two letters to *The Times* and these were followed by the crucial Parliamentary debate. The first letter came from Baldwin, Amery and Austen Chamberlain. It accused the Labour government of abandoning the Jewish national home policy, stating, “they have laid down a policy of so definitely negative a character that it appears to us to conflict [...] with the whole spirit of the Balfour Declaration and of the statements made by successive governments in the last 12 years”.⁵³⁴ The effect of this policy, the letter charged, was “to create a feeling of distrust in that British good faith which is the most precious asset of our foreign Imperial policy”.⁵³⁵ The letter was relatively brief, and as such made no reference to the Shaw or Hope-Simpson Commissions nor to any of the specific arguments utilised by the white paper.

Following this, on 4 November, two lawyers and former cabinet ministers, Lord Hailsham and Sir John Simon, wrote their letter to *The Times*, which purported

⁵³² Baldwin to Davidson, 6 November 1930, Lady Davidson Papers partly in *Davidson Memoirs*, 354-5, M&B 579, in Williamson, *Baldwin Papers*, 244-5.

⁵³³ LSE/PASSFIELD/1/2/9, 11 July 1930, Diary of Beatrice Webb.

⁵³⁴ Stanley Baldwin, Austen Chamberlain and Leopold Amery, 23 October 1930, “British Policy In Palestine, The White Paper, Conservative Leaders’ Comments”, *The Times*, 15.

⁵³⁵ Ibid.

to compare provisions of the white paper to the terms of the Mandate.⁵³⁶ Hailsham was a Conservative, the former Lord Chancellor, and Simon, of the aforementioned Simon Commission in India, had served as a Liberal Home Secretary.⁵³⁷ As a Conservative, Hailsham was predictably opposed to Labour, and the Irwin Declaration had seriously undermined Simon both politically and personally. Described by Lady Passfield as “[t]hat smooth faced, slim and ingratiating personage”, Simon was not characterised as a politician who accepted such insults to his stature with ease; he and his wife were “admirable citizens; but they have far too much contempt for other people and are far too obstinate and dogmatic, too assured of their own enlightenment”.⁵³⁸

Hailsham and Simon’s letter accused the government’s new Palestine policy of flouting Britain’s international obligations as a member and trustee of the League of Nations.⁵³⁹ Furthermore, it called for “the Council of the League of Nations to obtain from the Hague Court an advisory opinion on the questions involved”.⁵⁴⁰ As the Labour government’s League of Nations policy was a potentially divisive issue and the report from the PMC had been damning in places, this was hardly an attractive proposal in Downing Street. As with the Irwin Declaration, however, such criticism of the Passfield White Paper was not concerned with the actual policy, but instead, “[a]lleged ambiguities and unfriendliness”, how it looked and sounded.⁵⁴¹ Following these letters to *The Times*, a debate in Parliament on 17 November shook the government’s already unstable foundations.

⁵³⁶ Lord Hailsham and John Simon, 4 November 1930, “British Policy in Palestine”, *The Times*, 15.

⁵³⁷ Defries, *Conservative Attitudes to Jews, 1900-1950*, 145.

⁵³⁸ LSE/PASSFIELD/1/2/9, 9 July 1930, Diary of Beatrice Webb; LSE/PASSFIELD/1/2/9, 29 March 1930, Diary of Beatrice Webb.

⁵³⁹ Lord Hailsham and John Simon, 4 November 1930, “British Policy in Palestine”, *The Times*, 15.

⁵⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

⁵⁴¹ CO 733/183/3, October-November 1930, “Notes on Jewish Criticisms of White Paper”, TNA.

Comprised of targeted attacks from Liberal and Conservative MPs designed to embarrass the government rather than clarify points of policy, the debate was centred on issues like anti-Semitism and breaches of faith. The government's response, however, had been prepared in advance by the Colonial Office and so was directed against the substance of these complaints rather than their political motivations. This led to a situation in which "the facts" of the white paper were immaterial to its survival.

Speaking first, Lloyd George led the attack, accusing the government of anti-Semitism and hypocrisy, and he attempted to drive a wedge between the Prime Minister (who was present) and the Colonial Secretary (who was not) by questioning "whether the Prime Minister himself was fully consulted before this document was issued".⁵⁴² Chancellor's comments on this speech were as blunt as ever: "L.G.'s speech was typical – all sentiment and hot air".⁵⁴³ Lloyd George also struck at the heart of Labour's commitment to the League, specifically highlighting how the PMC "was full of the most severe criticism of their administration" and "[t]heir answer was practically to tear up the Mandate".⁵⁴⁴ During the debate, Amery echoed Lloyd George's sentiments, remarking that, "no one wishes to acknowledge the parentage of this undesirable child. I do not suppose that the Prime Minister is prepared to elucidate this problem of disputed parentage".⁵⁴⁵ MacDonald never answered these comments, but of course he had approved the policy – as had a cabinet committee, the full cabinet and, as far as Lord Passfield was concerned, Chaim Weizmann.⁵⁴⁶

It is important to note that this was routine parliamentary antagonism, and was not necessarily unanimously designed to try and topple the government on this

⁵⁴² House of Commons Debates, 17 November 1930, series 5, vol 245, cols 80-81.

⁵⁴³ FO 800/282, 3 December 1930, Hope-Simpson to Campbell, TNA.

⁵⁴⁴ House of Commons Debates, 17 November 1930, series 5, vol 245, cols 81-82.

⁵⁴⁵ Ibid, cols 114-115.

⁵⁴⁶ PREM 1/102, 3 October 1930, Passfield to Ramsay MacDonald, TNA.

relatively minor issue. Amery wrote, for example, that “[i]t was important to push the Govt. hard but not to have a division which might either have finally confirmed the White Paper or alternatively defeated the Govt. and committed the Socialist Party to Passfield’s anti-Zionist policy”.⁵⁴⁷ Nevertheless, the danger to Labour was cumulative.

In response to these attacks, it was Colonial Office Under-Secretary Shiels’s assignment to speak in defence of the government, which in principle was not a difficult task. The Prime Minister had originally charged Henderson with the duty, but defending the government’s policy so publicly would have placed him in an awkward position vis-à-vis the beginning of Anglo-Zionist talks.⁵⁴⁸ Shiels highlighted that “[t]here seems to have been some obvious misunderstanding” of the Passfield White Paper, but he was merely being polite.⁵⁴⁹ The vociferous nature of the opposition from Liberals and Conservatives in *The Times* had already been identified as both fallacious and underhanded. Palestine High Commissioner Sir John Chancellor openly expressed this opinion, writing to O.G.R. Williams directly at the Colonial Office to say he was “greatly concerned about the letter which Baldwin, Chamberlain and Amery have written to the *Times*. If all parties would accept H.M.G.’s statement of policy, there would be some prospect of future peace in Palestine. If they are going to make it a party question, Palestine will become a running sore and a potential danger to the safety of the Empire, like Ireland”.⁵⁵⁰ In correspondence with Shuckburgh in the Colonial Office’s Middle East Department, Chancellor added, “I share your view as to the mischievous character of the Baldwin-

⁵⁴⁷ AMEL 1/5/46, 2 of 2, 5 February 1951, Palestine Debate Nov. 16, 1930, Churchill Archives Centre, The Papers of Leopold Amery.

⁵⁴⁸ FO 800/282, 14 November 1930, Henderson to Cabinet, TNA.

⁵⁴⁹ House of Commons Debates, 17 November 1930, series 5, vol 245, cols 92-93.

⁵⁵⁰ CO 733/183/3, 22 October 1930, Chancellor to Williams, TNA.

Chamberlain-Amery letter. No doubt it was inspired by Amery.”⁵⁵¹ After both letters had been published, the Colonial Office prepared a defence of the white paper, and their memoranda formed the basis of Shiels’s defence.

At the Colonial Office, O.G.R. Williams was responsible for the full rebuttal to Hailsham and Simon’s letter. Williams noted that the letter purported to compare the white paper with the official Mandate, but mentioned only the Mandate’s preamble, Article II and Article VI, omitting any reference to protecting non-Jewish populations.⁵⁵² As well as misleadingly paraphrasing the white paper, Hailsham and Simon also ignored the findings of Hope-Simpson and created an impression of the new policy that was “quite untrue”.⁵⁵³ Williams did highlight, however, how Hailsham and Simon’s reference to The Hague was purely political since “it would be so framed as to be exceedingly unfavourable and humiliating to His Majesty’s Government [...] owing to the peculiar composition of the Hague Court”.⁵⁵⁴ This was the only part of the letter that was troubling, not because the issue really would necessitate referral to The Hague, but because dealing with the threat exposed the government’s financial motivations for cutting Jewish immigration rather than investing in development.⁵⁵⁵

Other than revealing this slightly mercenary policy-making process, the arguments opposed to the white paper prompted only incredulity at the Colonial Office. Passfield himself drafted a letter to *The Times*, stating “[i]t is reassuring to find from their letter published in your columns [...] that such high authorities as Lord Hailsham and Sir John Simon do not indicate anything in the Palestine White Paper

⁵⁵¹ PREM 1/103, 16 November 1930, Chancellor to Shuckburgh, TNA.

⁵⁵² CO 733/182/8, 4 November 1930, Memorandum by Williams, TNA.

⁵⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵⁵ CO 733/183/3, 21 November 1930, “Memorandum on the Policy of His Majesty’s Government as Set out in the October White Paper”, TNA.

inconsistent with the Balfour Declaration and the Mandate save in so far as they seek to draw from language used in paragraphs 15, 19 to 23 and 28 three inferences, not one of which is justified”.⁵⁵⁶ These inferences, Passfield added, “are made plausible only by an inaccurate representation of the contents of the paragraphs referred to, not one of which is quoted verbatim”.⁵⁵⁷ High Commissioner Chancellor echoed the absurdity of this situation, noting that “[t]he local Jewish criticisms of the statement of policy, for the most part, condemn it for things that it does not contain”.⁵⁵⁸

In Parliament, Shiels reiterated polite versions of these sentiments and stressed his earlier opinion that the “White Paper makes no change whatever in the interpretation of the Mandate”, but rather, “[w]hat it does is to emphasize the necessity for a more exact application of the absorptive capacity principle”.⁵⁵⁹ Therefore, Shiels argued, “[i]t is obvious that the suggestion that this government is seeking to crystallise the Jewish national home in its present position is without a shadow of foundation”.⁵⁶⁰ Although the Prime Minister spoke very little during the debate, to this point he did add that “I have said again and again and I say now that the Mandate is to be carried out. But when we come to the condition of Palestine we must admit that the Mandate has to be carried out in such a way that civil disorder is not going to result from its operation.”⁵⁶¹

In this sentiment, the usually competitive Foreign and Colonial Offices were in agreement. Foreign Secretary Henderson had received the full text of Zionist objections to the white paper the week before the debate via the Prime Minister’s pro-Zionist son, Malcolm MacDonald. The Eastern Department of the Foreign Office had

⁵⁵⁶ CO 733/182/8, 5 November 1930, Draft Letter, Passfield to *The Times*, TNA.

⁵⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁵⁸ CO 733/183/3, 22 October 1930, Chancellor to Williams, TNA.

⁵⁵⁹ CO 733/183/3, October-November 1930, “Notes on Jewish Criticisms of White Paper”, TNA.

⁵⁶⁰ House of Commons Debates, 17 November 1930, series 5, vol 245, cols 96-97.

⁵⁶¹ Ibid, cols 115-116.

then prepared a full rebuttal that raised almost identical points to the defence written by the Colonial Office without conferring between the two.⁵⁶² Both ministries agreed that there was “no intention to crystallise the status quo”.⁵⁶³ The Foreign Office noted how “it is clear that, so long as an acute unemployment problem exists in Palestine (whether of Jews or Arabs), it is the duty of the Mandatory, under Article 6 of the Mandate, to restrict immigration into Palestine (whether Jews or Arabs)”.⁵⁶⁴ The bureaucracy, therefore, was united on the Palestine issue. The disagreements over Passfield’s white paper were between politicians.

During the parliamentary debate, it was Leopold Amery who brought up the subject of India. Amery declared that Palestine’s 1929 riots were “an old-fashioned religious outbreak of the type with which the Indian administration is only too familiar”.⁵⁶⁵ He was trying to draw a comparison between “giving in” to Arabs in Palestine and acquiescing to Indian self-rule, hinting at the Irwin Declaration. “This is not the first White Paper of this kind that has appeared”, Amery declared, and pointed to unrest throughout the world “because of the White Papers which are poured out from the Colonial Office and which we are afterwards told do not mean what they appear to say”.⁵⁶⁶ Amery’s speech was aimed at a continued appeasement of the diehard, anti-Baldwin group within the Conservative Party. This is why the arguments against the white paper had little relation to the document’s actual contents. Even Malcolm MacDonald admitted that “[t]he substance of the white paper is all right [...] its embroidery is all wrong”.⁵⁶⁷

⁵⁶² FO 800/282, 14 November 1930, “Notes on Jewish Statement Communicated by Mr Malcolm Macdonald”, TNA.

⁵⁶³ Ibid.

⁵⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁶⁵ House of Commons Debates, 17 November 1930, series 5, vol 245, cols 108-109.

⁵⁶⁶ Ibid, cols 114-115.

⁵⁶⁷ MAC 9/4/41, undated, MacDonald Notes, reproduced by permission of Durham University Library.

While the rank and file of the House of Commons indulged in emotional arguments for and against the new policy, party leaders were also calculating. The outcome of the debate was not necessarily instrumental for Amery and Baldwin, merely their noted opposition to a white paper that appeared to reward Arab violence in Palestine with decreased Jewish immigration. No majority was necessary, and so the plethora of opinion expressed during the debate posed no fundamental problems for Conservative leaders other than the slight embarrassment Amery originally hoped to avoid.

As expected, condemnation and support was not unanimous among any party. Colonel Charles Howard-Bury, for example, was Conservative MP for Chelmsford and spoke in support of the government, which he believed had “acted very courageously and impartially in producing that White Paper”.⁵⁶⁸ Another Conservative MP, Sir George Jones, admonished the character of the debate, stating “that it would be a calamity if the Palestinian question were involved in party politics in this country”.⁵⁶⁹ The Liberal MP Sir Rhys Hopkin Morris defied his own leader by highlighting how “it would be a moment of very grave importance in the history of this country if it were recognised that international events of this kind are to be part of the ordinary battle of party conflict”.⁵⁷⁰ Labour MP Frederick Cocks also called attention to the political machinations underway, saying Lloyd George “had one eye on the Mount of Olives and the other on a part of the East End of London where a by-election is about to take place and where there is a population of very hard-working and able Zionists”.⁵⁷¹

⁵⁶⁸ House of Commons Debates, 17 November 1930, series 5, vol 245, cols 139-140.

⁵⁶⁹ Ibid, cols 163-164.

⁵⁷⁰ Ibid.

⁵⁷¹ Ibid, cols 164-165.

Other Labour members lent support to the Opposition. Daniel Hopkin, for example, raised the spectre of anti-Semitism, asserting that “[a]ccording to this White Paper, if a Jew buys land he is wrong. If he is a farmer, he is wrong. It seems to me that to some people Trotsky is always a Jew but Einstein is always a German. Every time he is wrong.”⁵⁷² To Hopkin, this made the white paper “the greatest mistake of any Minister since the time when we lost the American colonies”.⁵⁷³ Although both Liberal and Conservative parties were relatively untroubled by backbench dissent in this debate, Labour could ill-afford such breaking of ranks. Amery understood this and gave his assessment of the debate as follows:

“My speech drew the PM who was thoroughly woolly; full of general gush about the Zionists but not really precise as to what the government meant to do [...] Walter Elliot wound up for us quite effectively, and then Alexander replied, a meagre ill formed speech which did not satisfy the House. Kenworthy rose full of indignation, was cut short but re-opened after the usual reading of bills, to ask questions which Alexander dodged by walking away leaving poor Shiels, sick and sorry, to make as good a defence as he could to a series of persistent questions as to whether the government stood by the White Paper or not. My summary of the debate was ‘From White Paper to white sheet’.”⁵⁷⁴

First Lord of the Admiralty, Lord Alexander, had argued that based on the debate, the government was undefeated, asserting that, “the so-called case against the government as stated to-night had been a very damp squib”.⁵⁷⁵ Alexander challenged “any impartial Member of the House who has sat right through this debate and heard all the speeches, to summarise the arguments [...] and to say if he does not agree with me that, in the main, the debate has not shown that there is a strong feeling in this House on the part of a majority against the position of the government”.⁵⁷⁶ This is where Labour’s problem arose, however.

⁵⁷² Ibid, cols 186-187.

⁵⁷³ Ibid, cols 138-139.

⁵⁷⁴ Amery, 17 Nov 1930, *The Empire at Bay*, 90.

⁵⁷⁵ House of Commons Debates, 17 November 1930, series 5, vol 245, cols 196-197.

⁵⁷⁶ Ibid.

The government needed more than a majority on this single issue as it required its own unity as well as cross-party support for foreign policy in general. This situation left the Prime Minister “cross about Palestine” and particularly annoyed with the Colonial Secretary. Lady Passfield wrote how, “the Shaw Commission and Hope-Simpson, with his report, both nominees of Sidney’s, have been too pro-Arab; a White Paper (which the P.M. saw and approved) was ‘tactless’ – indeed he allowed Lloyd George in his virulent attack on the White Paper, to assert that the P.M. has not seen it’ – which was mean of MacDonald”.⁵⁷⁷

Although the beleaguered Shiels, late in the evening debate, was badgered into asserting that “[i]t is quite obvious, surely, that the answer to the question put to me is that the White Paper, as explained and amplified today, certainly stands”, this was unlikely.⁵⁷⁸ The Labour government was fragile on foreign policy, had already been undermined by criticism from the League of Nations, was threatened over the potential loss of cross-party support on India and was faced with the realisation that a few key pro-Zionist Labour MPs also opposed the white paper.

The younger MacDonald noted how the main problem was that “[i]f you dispute Hope-Simpson then certainly disagree with White Paper; that is a fundamental controversy”.⁵⁷⁹ Like many British Zionist sympathisers, however, he did not tend to speak out against the two investigative commissions but instead took offence principally because the white paper seemed to focus unnecessarily on criticising the Jews: “Document is typical of Colonial Office accustomed to take paternal interest in self-helpless native race [...] White Paper shows lamentable and disastrous imbalance”.⁵⁸⁰ MacDonald Junior vehemently defended Zionism during this period,

⁵⁷⁷ LSE/PASSFIELD/1/2/9, 14 December 1930, Diary of Beatrice Webb.

⁵⁷⁸ House of Commons Debates, 17 November 1930, series 5, vol 245, cols 210-211.

⁵⁷⁹ MAC 9/4/41, undated, MacDonald Notes, reproduced by permission of Durham University Library.

⁵⁸⁰ MAC 9/4/43, undated, MacDonald Notes, reproduced by permission of Durham University Library.

writing that “[i]f such censures are to be written, how many pages might be written about Arab assassins!”⁵⁸¹ The young Labour politician’s own legacy on Palestine, however, would prove even more unpopular and controversial during his tenure as Colonial Secretary in the late 1930s (see Chapter Five).

In addition, supplementing this internal split and external antagonism was the very tangible Whitechapel by-election results of 3 December 1930, which showed a significantly reduced Labour majority. These different factors combined to deliver the death knell to Passfield’s white paper, but it was a slow-burn decision that did not materialise until protracted talks between Zionists and the Palestine cabinet subcommittee disruptively spilled into the next calendar year.

Immediately after the debate, James Ramsay MacDonald was still clinging to the official interpretation of the white paper. He wrote to Dr Myer Solis Cohen in Philadelphia:

“I am in an awful state of pressure. You will have seen the repeated contentions of the government that, as a matter of fact, the White Paper is no upset of the Mandate. The position in Palestine has got very dangerous, and the responsibility has to be shared by both the Jews and the Arabs on the spot. We must get things a little quieter; otherwise, nothing but disaster is ahead.”⁵⁸²

Following the by-election, however, the government needed to end the white paper debate that was being extended by protracted Anglo-Zionist discussions and nullify the dividing impact of Liberal and Conservative opposition on Labour’s own unity, the dangers of which had already been raised in cabinet on 11 November.⁵⁸³ The Prime Minister had ceded this issue to Foreign Secretary Arthur Henderson on 6 November to organise a cabinet sub-committee, which did include Lord Passfield, and confer with Chaim Weizmann and other Zionist leaders to “clarify” the white

⁵⁸¹ MAC 9/4/44, undated, MacDonald Notes, reproduced by permission of Durham University Library.

⁵⁸² PREM 30/69/676, 19 November 1930, JRM to Solis Cohen, TNA.

⁵⁸³ CAB 23/65, 11 November 1930, Cabinet Minutes, TNA, 6.

paper.⁵⁸⁴ Although this clarification did result in an effective reversal of the white paper, this was certainly not the original intention. As noted above, the talks began as a legal exercise and a means of convincing the policy's Zionist critics that it did not violate the Mandate.

Henderson's notes for the negotiations demonstrate his confidence in the government's stance. "If 'the position' of the Arabs is 'positively changed for the worse'", Henderson wrote, "the government must take steps to put things right".⁵⁸⁵ Zionist criticisms, he decided, therefore, "lose a good deal of their force because they assume intentions on the part of His Majesty's Government which are contrary to the facts".⁵⁸⁶ The Foreign Secretary was also annoyed by Zionist memoranda's prolific citations of Hailsham and Simon's letter to *The Times* without a single reference to Lord Passfield's rebuttal of 5 November.⁵⁸⁷

In addition, Henderson criticised Zionist negotiator Leonard Stein's selective and misleading quotes, how he represented the policy as more anti-Zionist than it really was by eliminating the government's references to working with the Jewish Agency.⁵⁸⁸ The oft-repeated accusation that the white paper blamed Arab unemployment solely on Jewish immigration, for example, was one instance "of incomplete quotation and misinterpretation of the white paper. Great stress was laid on this particular misinterpretation in the ingenious perversion of it contained in a letter to Lord Passfield from Dr Weizmann, which Dr Weizmann published in 'The Times'".⁵⁸⁹ That part of the white paper, Henderson noted, spelled out Arab suspicions

⁵⁸⁴ CAB 23/66, 4 February 1931, Cabinet Minutes, TNA.

⁵⁸⁵ FO 800/282, November 1930, "Detailed Comments on a Memorandum by Mr. Leonard Stein. The Palestine White Paper of October 1930", TNA.

⁵⁸⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁸⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁸⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁸⁹ Ibid.

but in no way endorsed them.⁵⁹⁰ The Foreign Secretary believed another tactic was to minimise the problem of dispossessed Arabs cultivators because Weizmann and his colleagues, “for political reasons” had to go “as far as possible towards satisfying their more extreme supporters who sympathise with the revisionist policy of a Jewish state in their time”.⁵⁹¹ Lady Passfield offered a simple explanation of Zionist opposition to the white paper despite all the government’s assurances: “It was not the Statement of Policy but the facts revealed by Hope-Simpson’s report that he was up against”, she wrote, “it was these facts that were so damning. Weisman is in the difficult position of a Company Promoter, confronted with an adverse expert’s report, damaging to his prospective enterprise.”⁵⁹²

As it was not the British government’s priority to establish a Jewish state, Henderson believed it was Britain’s duty to issue the white paper.⁵⁹³ It is important to preface these opinions, however, with the knowledge that Henderson entered into these Anglo-Zionist talks with an eye on the League of Nations where his top priority throughout the autumn of 1930 was German disarmament. The Foreign Secretary was wary of and slightly bitter about Zionism’s international activities. “On the publication of the Shaw Report”, he wrote, “there is reason to suppose that every effort was made by the Jews to influence the Permanent Mandates Commission unfavourably against His Majesty’s Government”.⁵⁹⁴ Another member of the Foreign Office later scribbled an additional note: “though it must be admitted that there is no documentary or other proof”.⁵⁹⁵

⁵⁹⁰ Ibid.

⁵⁹¹ Ibid.

⁵⁹² LSE/PASSFIELD/1/2/9, 30 October 1930, Diary of Beatrice Webb.

⁵⁹³ FO 800/282, November 1930, “Detailed Comments on a Memorandum by Mr. Leonard Stein. The Palestine White Paper of October 1930”, TNA.

⁵⁹⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁹⁵ Ibid.

The Palestine subcommittee first met Zionist representatives on 17 November and the initiation of these talks was announced that day. It was hoped that the beginning of the subcommittee's discussions would provide some inoculation against criticisms anticipated at the debate, but Shiels was unconvinced: "I am rather doubtful about the electoral help we shall get", he wrote to Henderson, "as Amery, L.I.G. and Co. are heavily in with Weizmann [...]".⁵⁹⁶ This first meeting had been postponed at Weizmann's request, but it was merely a procedural affair and the group adjourned after an hour to observe the debate in the Commons.⁵⁹⁷ What followed was a series of face-to-face meetings and negotiations via correspondence until late January 1931. Throughout these talks, Chaim Weizmann alternated between confidence in his ability to secure a reversal of the white paper, and gloom and uncertainty regarding the direction of negotiations with Henderson's committee. Two days after the debate, for example, Weizmann informed Amery that "[a]lthough the government is retreating very slowly and with not too much grace, a retreat it is".⁵⁹⁸ However, a few days later Weizmann wrote that, "I don't know exactly what will be the result of our present negotiations with the government – I am writing at a time when events are about to break [...] I do not know how our negotiations will end. This is no easy matter".⁵⁹⁹

The first draft of what became the MacDonald letter was received by Weizmann on 29 November, and he remarked that the "impression here is unfavourable".⁶⁰⁰ This first draft, labelled "the Henderson letter" at this stage, was very long and essentially constituted the full rebuttals already made by Passfield,

⁵⁹⁶ FO 800/282, 15 November 1930, Shiels to Henderson, TNA.

⁵⁹⁷ Weizmann to Samuel, 26 November 1930, *Letters and Papers of Chaim Weizmann Volume XV*, 49; MAC 9/3/80, 17 November 1930, Weizmann to Malcolm MacDonald, reproduced by permission of Durham University Library.

⁵⁹⁸ Weizmann to Amery, 19 November 1930, *Letters and Papers of Chaim Weizmann Volume XV*, 44.

⁵⁹⁹ Weizmann to Wormser, 21 November 1930, *Letters and Papers of Chaim Weizmann Volume XV*, 47; Weizmann to Beilinson, 27 November 1930, *Letters and Papers of Chaim Weizmann Volume XV*, 51-53.

⁶⁰⁰ Weizmann to Henderson, 1 December 1930, *Letters and Papers of Chaim Weizmann Volume XV*, 55; Weizmann to Jacobson, 4 December 1930, *Letters and Papers of Chaim Weizmann Volume XV*, 56

Shiels, the Colonial and Foreign Offices.⁶⁰¹ It did contain some of the key reversing phrases found in the final letter, but these were accompanied by extensive contextual caveats. While noting that the Passfield White Paper made land control “regulatory and not prohibitive” the first draft also included a section saying, “it does involve a power to veto transactions which are inconsistent with the tenor of the general scheme”.⁶⁰² As well as assurances there would be no stoppage of immigration in any category, the first draft included sprawling provisos asserting the government’s right to restrict immigration in line with economic capacity.⁶⁰³

Weizmann considered that Passfield was poisoning the atmosphere against them, believing “the old man malignantly sabotages everything”.⁶⁰⁴ Lord Passfield’s relationship with the Zionist negotiators was indeed extremely strained at times. Lady Passfield wrote that her husband partially admired Weizmann, stating the Zionist diplomat was “a disinterested idealist, a clever administrator, an accomplished intellectual – all rolled into one. But he is a champion manipulator – and uses arguments and devices, regardless of accuracy, straightforwardness or respect for confidence, or other honourable undertakings [...] ‘A clever devil: I take my hat off to him’”.⁶⁰⁵ Mostly there was frustration between them. Although “Sidney started with a great admiration for the Jew and a contempt for the Arab”, Lady Passfield wrote, “he reports that all the officials, at home and in Palestine, find the Jews, even many accomplished and cultivated Jews – intolerable as negotiators and colleagues”.⁶⁰⁶

From the Zionist delegation’s perspective, the problem was that Henderson and two other committee members, Alexander and Shaw, had no prior dealings with

⁶⁰¹ FO 800/282, 29 November 1930, Henderson to Weizmann, TNA.

⁶⁰² Ibid.

⁶⁰³ Ibid.

⁶⁰⁴ Weizmann to Sokolow, 7 December 1930, *Letters and Papers of Chaim Weizmann Volume XV*, 57.

⁶⁰⁵ LSE/PASSFIELD/1/2/9, 30 October 1930, Diary of Beatrice Webb.

⁶⁰⁶ Ibid

their cause, creating long, drawn-out meetings in which the intricacies had to be explained and the busy Henderson in particular became very irritable.⁶⁰⁷ In contrast, Weizmann wrote, “Passfield does know the thing, but he is so artful and shifty that you never know when you have got him to agree to something”.⁶⁰⁸ Looking at the meeting transcripts and Henderson’s notes, it does seem that he was well versed in the problems of Palestine but simply refused to yield on the government’s right to issue the white paper and his belief that the Zionist criticisms were unfounded. Henderson told Weizmann he was being “supersensitive”, and quoted Shiels’s parliamentary defence of the white paper during meetings.⁶⁰⁹ The Foreign Secretary challenged Weizmann on every point, demonstrating how these talks were originally intended to persuade and intimidate rather than placate Weizmann and his fellow Zionists. “[O]ur whole object”, Henderson stated, is “to clear up matters that are ambiguous, that have been misstated or misunderstood [...] I want you and your colleagues to be quite clear in your mind that the fullest possible opportunity is given to you to state every possible objection your people have to this White Paper. You can expect nothing more.”⁶¹⁰ The Foreign Secretary specifically wanted to avoid any action that looked like a withdrawal of the original white paper.⁶¹¹

By mid-December, Weizmann complained that “[t]he negotiations with the government drag on rather inconclusively”.⁶¹² A redraft of the Henderson letter reached Weizmann, but it included only minor changes following advice from a legal committee, and the alterations constituted technical changes to language in two

⁶⁰⁷ Weizmann to Warburg, 11 December 1930, *Letters and Papers of Chaim Weizmann Volume XV*, 63-64.

⁶⁰⁸ Ibid.

⁶⁰⁹ FO 800/282, 18 November 1930, “Verbatim Notes Taken by Stenographer at 2nd Meeting of Members of the Cabinet with Jewish Representatives Held on Tuesday 18 November”, TNA.

⁶¹⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹¹ FO 800/282, 27 November, “Informal Minutes of Cabinet Policy in Palestine”, TNA.

⁶¹² Weizmann to Bentwich, 17 December 1930, *Letters and Papers of Chaim Weizmann Volume XV*, 69; Weizmann to Rothschild, 24 December 1930 *Letters and Papers of Chaim Weizmann Volume XV*, 76.

paragraphs of a document more than 20 pages long.⁶¹³ There was still no agreement by the end of December.⁶¹⁴ Weizmann, however, had met with MacDonald on Christmas Eve and found that “the prime minister seems really anxious that our negotiations should end in a successful agreement”.⁶¹⁵ Malcolm MacDonald records this meeting slightly differently, noting that nothing much was said about the subcommittee conference other than it needed to be complete before Weizmann could bring up other subjects like Palestine Administration staff and the development scheme.⁶¹⁶

The Palestine subcommittee was achieving very little, and Henderson was due to leave London for Geneva on 9 January.⁶¹⁷ In preparation for his absence, the Foreign Secretary authorised another redraft of the letter. This was written by the Lord Advocate and Malcolm MacDonald, both identified by Weizmann as friends of their cause, in conjunction with Leonard Stein and Louis Namier, another Zionist named Major Hind and even Weizmann himself.⁶¹⁸ It was finished on 7 January in time to be circulated to the cabinet committee and to Henderson before he left for Geneva, resulting in a few further amendments and a fourth draft of the letter.⁶¹⁹ It was during these January meetings that the final letter took shape by cutting out all of the caveats and provisos concerning Britain’s right to limit Jewish immigration and

⁶¹³ FO 800/282, 17 December 1930, “Redraft of December 17 of Paragraphs 8 and 9 of Letter Sent by the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs to Dr Weizmann, Dated November 29, Regarding British Policy in Palestine, Embodying Amendments Agreed on by Drafting Committee at Meetings December 11 and by Legal Committee on December 17”, TNA.

⁶¹⁴ MAC 9/ 4/38 31 Dec 1930, Weizmann to Malcolm MacDonald, reproduced by permission of Durham University Library.

⁶¹⁵ Weizmann to Bentwich, 17 December 1930, *Letters and Papers of Chaim Weizmann Volume XV*, 69; Weizmann to Rothschild, 24 December 1930 *Letters and Papers of Chaim Weizmann Volume XV*, 76.

⁶¹⁶ MAC 9/6/30 24 December 1930, Interview Between the Prime Minister, Dr Weizmann and Mr. Namier at 9.30am, reproduced by permission of Durham University Library.

⁶¹⁷ MAC 9/8/2-9/8/58, 27 April 1931, Historical Summary of Discussions leading up to the Prime Minister’s letter of February 13th, 1931, To Dr. Weizmann, reproduced by permission of Durham University Library.

⁶¹⁸ Ibid.

⁶¹⁹ Ibid.

land purchase that Henderson had defended since the previous November. Further changes were agreed via written correspondence on 22 January 1931, but they were all superficial – all offending wording had already been removed from the British draft.⁶²⁰ There was a final meeting between Zionists and the Palestine subcommittee on 30 January and suddenly they had complete agreement. The fifth draft of the letter was finalised during this session and was approved by the cabinet on 4 February 1931.⁶²¹ By this time Weizmann admitted to Malcolm MacDonald that “I am afraid you are sick of the sight of my blue paper [...]”⁶²², which the Zionist leader almost always used for his flourishingly handwritten correspondence.

The reversal of the Passfield White Paper, therefore, did not occur until January and evolved slowly during that month. It is likely that as Henderson pressed on doggedly in discussions with Zionists, James Ramsay MacDonald worried more about the depressing statistics of the Whitechapel by-election and the negotiations’ anticipated affect on upcoming parliamentary business. The India issue was due to resurface early in the new year. On 23 January, the Prime Minister officially closed the first stage of the India Conference, which was due to continue within a few months. Palestine could be tidied away, but “[d]uring the next year, whichever party is in power, it is India that will claim attention”.⁶²³ Lady Passfield called the closing speech “a gorgeous success” but India’s constitutional development would remain an ongoing concern.⁶²⁴ The same was true of Labour’s internal divisions. The Prime Minister, for example, expressed how he was “getting very tired [...] of the number of

⁶²⁰ MAC 9/5/36, 22 January 1930, “Proposed Corrections in Mr. Henderson’s Draft Letter”, reproduced by permission of Durham University Library.

⁶²¹ Weizmann to Vera Weizmann, 30 January 1930, *Letters and Papers of Chaim Weizmann Volume XV*, 95

⁶²² MAC 9/6/33, 8 February 1930, Weizmann to Malcolm MacDonald, reproduced by permission of Durham University Library.

⁶²³ LSE/PASSFIELD/1/2/9, 14 December 1930, Diary of Beatrice Webb.

⁶²⁴ LSE/PASSFIELD/1/2/9, 22 January 1931, Diary of Beatrice Webb.

letters I get from colleagues ending, for one reason or another, with a threat that they must resign. I think it is about time that I started playing the same sort of card.”⁶²⁵ It appears that the weight of holding the Labour Party together on an issue made more divisive by the arguments of Conservative and Liberal politicians, who were partially motivated by preserving their own leadership positions, was simply too tiresome. The minority Labour government found it less politically risky to concede to the terms of a letter drafted and amended by the Prime Minister’s own son and a legal authority in the Lord Advocate than to continue to defend the Passfield White Paper against what both the Foreign Office and Colonial Offices agreed were unfounded accusations. Baldwin wrote that “[t]he government is decaying daily and I can’t see how in any way they can hold on much longer [...]” and he was correct.⁶²⁶ There may have been no official alliance between Baldwin, Amery and Lloyd George, but the effect on MacDonald was the same.⁶²⁷ In a bid to maintain Labour unity and avoid derailing Indian policy, the government was unable to continue with the Passfield White Paper and this option was eliminated in the first stage of decision-making.

Stage Two

Although Stage One of this poliheuristic analysis provided only a single main option of reversing the white paper, there were also two subsidiary alternatives for the second stage: the government could reverse the Passfield White Paper and replace it with extensive development as originally intended, or reverse the Passfield White Paper without extensive development. One of these options provided the greater

⁶²⁵ PREM 30/69/676, 31 October 1930, Ramsay MacDonald to Lord Arnold, TNA.

⁶²⁶ Baldwin to Davidson and Joan Davidson, November 1930, Lady Davidson Papers, partly in *Davidson Memoirs*, in Williamson, *Baldwin Papers*, 247.

⁶²⁷ Gwyne Papers 20, Gwynne to Louis Grieg, 11 November 1930, in Williamson, *Baldwin Papers*, 245.

utility on the most important substantive dimension which, in 1930-31, was the economy.

The Economy

Unlike in the analysis of the Balfour Zeitgeist, the economy for the Labour government during the Passfield debacle was a substantive dimension rather than a variable on the political dimension. Distinct from the embattled Lloyd George Coalition, the minority Labour government was not facing a campaign like “Anti-Waste” – as the Press Barons, Lords Beaverbrook and Rothermere were largely thorns in Baldwin’s side. Since the period of decision-making did not fall close to a general election, the economy was not overly politicised in this specific decision-making process. Rather, over the period and subject in question, specifically October 1930-February 1931, the financial crisis following the collapse of the United States stock market in 1929 was a constant, looming, material fact rather than a chiefly political problem in which the issue was a matter of perception.⁶²⁸

As a result of these substantive financial constraints, the option to reverse the Passfield White Paper was not dependent on a commitment to the development programme of Sir John Hope-Simpson, already rejected once due to its high costs when the white paper was first published. The original cabinet committee on Palestine had determined that Britain was under a moral if not legal obligation to recompense Arabs dispossessed by British policy in Palestine, but the expenditure required was open to substantial manipulation because it depended entirely on how the number of dispossessed Arabs was calculated.⁶²⁹

⁶²⁸ CAB 24/217, 9 December 1930, “Draft White Paper. Statement of the Principal Measures Taken by H.M. Government in Connection with Unemployment”, TNA, 2.

⁶²⁹ CAB 24/215, 15 September 1930, “Cabinet Committee on Policy in Palestine Second Report”, TNA, 3.

During the Parliamentary debate, MPs such as Lloyd George, Samuel and Amery called for extensive development of Palestine along the lines originally proposed by Hope-Simpson.⁶³⁰ Ultimately, however, extensive development failed to satisfy the substantive economic dimension for a second time, and the option to reverse the white paper without a large development programme generated far greater utility. Incidentally, these MPs raised no objections when the white paper's provisions relating to Jewish immigration and land purchase were rescinded but not replaced with the agricultural development that Hope-Simpson had identified as urgently necessary. Therefore, just as the Passfield White Paper began as a programme to prevent violence in Palestine but was restrained by the substantive economic dimension, so too was its reversal, prompted by a need to maintain political power and limited in viability due to financial pressures.

After 1931

Even though Passfield's policy was reversed in this somewhat humiliating spectacle, he wrote to Henderson that, "I think you were thoroughly justified in embarking on the discussions in the political emergency".⁶³¹ After 1931, the constraints that led to this decision only grew, meaning that the British government's handling of Palestine policy between the MacDonald letter of 1931 and the beginning of the Arab Revolt in 1936 remained stagnant. Following the political storm created by the Passfield White Paper, and the re-emergence of the economy as a variable on the political dimension later in 1931, no option ranked well enough to pass into the second stage.⁶³² The India problem continued within British politics, notwithstanding

⁶³⁰ House of Commons Debates 17 November 1930, series 5, vol 245, cols 85-210.

⁶³¹ FO 800/282, 26 December 1930, Passfield to Henderson, TNA.

⁶³² John D. Fair, "The Conservative Basis for the Formation of the National Government of 1931", *Journal of British Studies* 19 (2) 1980: 142-164, 150.

a tense settlement reached between Irwin and Gandhi in March 1931.⁶³³ The Labour government then fell in August as the financial crisis reached new heights and the Conservative Party orchestrated a takeover, succeeding in splitting Labour in the process.⁶³⁴ As the crisis deepened and London's financial sector called for cuts in government spending, continued tensions in Palestine failed to materialise on the new government's agenda.⁶³⁵ Although the cabinet discussed individual issues such as a Palestine trade preference, forming a legislative council and the rise in immigration following Hitler's ascension in Germany, the question of overall policy remained unaddressed.⁶³⁶

In 1932, the Colonial Secretary again placed the issue of Jewish immigration before the cabinet and, rather than proposing a change of policy, he suggested that the determination of economic capacity be left entirely in the hands of the High Commissioner. Another committee was formed to consider the question.⁶³⁷ This adroitly removed Westminster from the immediate realm of responsibility and safely ignored the findings of the Hope-Simpson Commission.⁶³⁸ In addition, the Colonial Office pressured the Palestine Administration to develop a greater budget surplus, which meant less spending on development.⁶³⁹ Although "[n]ew agricultural stations, demonstration plots, research, etc., were provided for", such schemes were tiny in comparison to the needs Hope-Simpson had identified.⁶⁴⁰ Whereas the one-man commission had found thousands of Arab families either directly or indirectly dispossessed or made unemployed by British policy in Palestine, in February 1933 the

⁶³³ Gopal, *The Viceroyalty of Lord Irwin*, 98.

⁶³⁴ Ibid.

⁶³⁵ Ibid.

⁶³⁶ CAB 23/70, 23 February 1932, Cabinet Minutes, TNA; CAB 23/71, 6 April 1932, Cabinet Minutes, TNA.

⁶³⁷ CAB 23/71, 6 April 1932, Cabinet Minutes, TNA, 12.

⁶³⁸ CAB 24/231, 28 June 1932, "Memorandum by the Secretary of State for India", TNA.

⁶³⁹ Roza El Eini, "Government Fiscal Policy in Mandatory Palestine in the 1930s", *Middle Eastern Studies*, 33 (3) 1997: 570-596, 577.

⁶⁴⁰ Ibid, 581.

Colonial Secretary asked that compensation should be restricted to ex-tenants.⁶⁴¹

Tensions in Palestine continued to mount.

Unlike the period between the Jaffa Riots in 1921 and those in 1929, the interlude between the Passfield White Paper and the next great outbreak, what became the Arab Revolt, was not calm at all. On 15 April 1931, the High Commissioner “reported that in several areas, of which he gave details, the Zionists had bought property and were undertaking eviction proceedings against Arab families”, which Weizmann was unable or unwilling to prevent.⁶⁴² Riots broke out in October 1933, the Palestine police opened fire, and Arab hostility resulted in frequent demonstrations through Jerusalem and Jaffa.⁶⁴³ Sir Arthur Wauchope, the new High Commissioner, even expressed concern over delays to his shipments of tear gas by 1934.⁶⁴⁴ Wauchope expressed, however, that such demonstrations were not “serious as a threat to the State” until the “*fellaheen*” peasant farmers joined the riots.⁶⁴⁵ “Should religious as well as political cries be raised”, Wauchope warned, “a number of the *fellaheen*, many of whom are landless and many very poor, will join; [...] Our difficulties therefore are liable to be far more formidable in the future than they have been in the past”.⁶⁴⁶ The High Commissioner then went on to list exactly the same political, religious and economic grievances that the Shaw and Hope-Simpson reports highlighted following the 1929 riots.⁶⁴⁷ By the late 1930s, violence in Palestine erupted on a hitherto unfathomable scale.

⁶⁴¹ CAB 22/237, February 1933, “Memorandum by the Secretary of State for the Colonies”, TNA; CAB 23/75, 8 February 1933, Cabinet Minutes, TNA, 9.

⁶⁴² CAB 23/66, 15 April 1931, Cabinet Minutes, TNA, 19.

⁶⁴³ CAB 24/247, 18 December 1933, High Commissioner to Secretary of State for the Colonies, TNA.

⁶⁴⁴ CAB 23/78, 16 January 1934, Cabinet Minutes, TNA, 31.

⁶⁴⁵ CAB 22/237 February 1933, “Memorandum by the Secretary of State for the Colonies”, TNA.

⁶⁴⁶ CAB 24/247, 18 December 1933, High Commissioner to Secretary of State for the Colonies, TNA.

⁶⁴⁷ CAB 22/237 February 1933, “Memorandum by the Secretary of State for the Colonies”, TNA.

Conclusion

The “Passfield Reversal” was a period in Britain’s decision-making towards Palestine that marked the first stages of Britain’s withdrawal from the Jewish national home policy. Following the riots of 1929, two commissions of enquiry highlighted the need to invest in Arab agriculture, and limit Jewish immigration and land purchase, in line with economic capacity in order to keep the peace. These investigations resulted in the Passfield White Paper that was subsequently reversed following Conservative and Liberal opposition, and lengthy consultations with prominent Zionists. Unlike many previous works on the Mandate that have characterised this decision-making process as little more than a triumph of Chaim Weizmann’s diplomatic skills, this analysis highlights the role played by Conservatives’ and Liberals’ use of Zionist arguments for their own political ends.

Baldwin feared the Conservative diehards who equated Arabs of Palestine with Indians agitating for self-rule and vociferously opposed both. Lloyd George was acutely aware of the Liberal Party’s rapidly declining status and sought to defend his own prime ministerial record, which witnessed both the Balfour Declaration and official Mandate, as well as simply to grapple for position. MacDonald’s government was placed in jeopardy by the divisive nature of this ongoing debate and sought to solidify the new policy’s legal standing and also placate key backbenchers by assigning Henderson to confer with the Zionists. Henderson was focused on Europe and disarmament, and concerns for the ongoing India conference and poor performance in the Whitechapel by-election combined to make the Passfield White Paper too risky on the political dimension. The threshold seems to have been significantly lower than previous Palestine decision-making episodes, and this can be attributed to Labour’s much more fragile hold on power than the Lloyd George

Coalition government of the early 1920s. Following February 1931, no policy options met requirements on the political dimension that would have allowed them to pass into the second stage of decision making, effectively crystallising the British government's own Palestine policy until tensions erupted again in 1936.

Chapter 5: The MacDonald Betrayal 1936-1939

*"We cannot treat a million Arabs in their own country as though they did not exist".*⁶⁴⁸

Malcolm MacDonald, Colonial Secretary, 1939.

The Arab Revolt (1936-1939) preceded what appeared to represent a major shift in British policy towards Palestine. Despite a commitment to the Jewish national home expressed in the Balfour Declaration, the official Mandate, the Churchill White Paper and the "Black Letter" of 1931, the MacDonald White Paper of 1939 seemed to abrogate any further obligation to Zionism. Instead, this new policy committed Britain to an independent Palestine with a permanent Jewish minority. Considering the difficulties faced by previous British governments in attempting to withdraw from the Jewish national home, this new direction was highly controversial. Labelled "betrayal" and "appeasement", the MacDonald White Paper was in many ways a direct result of the violent uprising of the Arab Revolt; demonstrating why, however, is more complicated than a simple analogy with Munich.⁶⁴⁹

Unlike the cases presented in previous chapters, this decision to end the Jewish national home does indeed fit the traditional expected utility model. Between the beginning of the Arab Revolt and the publication of the MacDonald White Paper, two commissions of enquiry resolutely presented the British government with the same fundamental and irresolvable flaws in the national home policy that had characterised all previous investigations, leading the government first to pursue partition of Palestine and then to decide in favour of a single state solution. In the context of imminent war in Europe, a rational cost-benefit analysis reflected the adoption of advice from two pre-eminent committees in order to end rebellion in the

⁶⁴⁸ CAB 24/282, 18 January 1939, "Cabinet. Palestine. Memorandum by the Secretary of State for the Colonies", TNA.

⁶⁴⁹ Arthur Koestler, *Promise and Fulfilment: Palestine 1917-1949*, (London: Macmillan, 1983); Cohen, "Secret Diplomacy and Rebellion in Palestine, 1936-1939", 379.

empire and refocus attention and resources closer to home. This, however, is an incomplete analysis, not least because similar reasoning fails to explain previous British behaviour towards Palestine. In contrast, invoking Poliheuristic Decision Theory lends an additional insight, a multi-layered analysis that demonstrates specifically which variables influenced the decision to abandon Zionism and why this sudden shift in policy actually represented far more continuity than change in British Palestine policy.

Accordingly, this chapter applies the Ph Theory's two-stage decision-making framework to the abrogation of the Jewish national home, demonstrating how and why the British government decided to issue the MacDonald White Paper in 1939. It argues that in the first stage of the decision-making process, the government rejected alternatives that failed to meet requirements on the most important, political dimension. Key variables on this dimension reflect criteria outlined in Mintz 2004: diplomacy, bureaucratic politics and parliamentary politics. Once options were eliminated, the government chose among the remaining alternatives in the second stage of decision-making by seeking to minimise costs on the substantive, strategic and economic dimensions. Rather than a sudden U-turn in Palestine policy as the result of appeasement, this analysis reveals a rebalancing of diplomatic interests in the Middle East necessitated by the Italian/German threat and made possible by a large Conservative majority in the House of Commons.

Defining the Choice Set

In the time period under consideration, the British government was presented with a severe problem in the form of the Arab Revolt in Palestine, and their choice set for dealing with this situation was determined by the essentially contradictory reports

of two commissions of enquiry, the Peel Commission in 1937 and the Woodhead Commission in 1938.

These investigations both identified the Arab Revolt as a severe intensification of previous neglected disturbances. Unrest in the early 1930s had been a direct result of increased legal and illegal Jewish immigration into Palestine due to the rise of Hitler in Germany. This immigration had exceeded 50,000 in 1933 and peaked at 62,000 in 1935, doubling the Jewish population in a very short time period that coincided with severe drought and agricultural hardship in Palestine.⁶⁵⁰ These levels of Jewish immigration did not threaten to reverse the Arabs' large demographic majority, but the new influx of German Jews was perceived as a dangerous precedent, the latest anxiety in a cumulative response to Zionism that inspired Palestine's Arabs to fear for their future. When the uprising began in April 1936, it evolved as a response to this increased Jewish presence, a series of reprisal murders between Jews and Arabs, Parliamentary rejection of a Palestine Legislative Council and refusal to grant three demands presented by the Arab Higher Committee: cessation of Jewish immigration, prohibition of land sales to Jews and the creation of a national government.⁶⁵¹ The rebellion began in the form of a general strike accompanied by outbreaks of violence and sabotage directed at Jews, British officials and fellow Arabs, and the British government's response entailed both repressive measures and authorisation of the Palestine Royal (Peel) Commission to make recommendations for a political solution.

The answer, according to Lord Peel's commission, was decisive; the recommendation was partition of Palestine, which far exceeded the committee's terms

⁶⁵⁰ Cohen, "Secret Diplomacy and Rebellion in Palestine", 380; W.F. Abboushi, "The Road to Rebellion, Palestine in the 1930s", *Journal of Palestine Studies* 6 (3) 1977: 23-46, 26-28.

⁶⁵¹ Cohen, "Secret Diplomacy and Rebellion in Palestine", 379; Cmd 5479, 1937, *Palestine Royal Commission Report*, 97.

of reference.⁶⁵² While the committee was charged with finding both the causes of and solutions to Palestine's problem, it was not technically empowered to undermine the Balfour Declaration. This original statement of intent and the official Mandate had accepted a British obligation to Zionism, but commissioners found that violence in Palestine during the 1920s and 1930s was consistently caused by an Arab desire for independence coupled with fear and hatred for the Jewish national home.⁶⁵³ This had been exacerbated by the strides towards independence achieved by Iraq, Transjordan, Egypt, Syria and Lebanon as well as the pressure of immigration from Germany, the perceived injustice of McMahon's correspondence with Sharif Hussein and "the intensive character of Jewish nationalism".⁶⁵⁴ Finding that "[n]either Arab nor Jew has any sense of service to a single state",⁶⁵⁵ the commission report concluded that any measures taken to ease the situation "might reduce the inflammation and bring down the temperature, but they cannot cure the trouble".⁶⁵⁶ This was because an "irrepressible conflict has arisen between two national communities within the narrow bounds of one small country".⁶⁵⁷ Peel, therefore, viewed repression as the only other way to maintain peace in Palestine, which was an expensive and morally objectionable course, a "dark path" that would also exacerbate the problem.⁶⁵⁸ "While neither race can justly rule all Palestine", the committee members decided, "we see no reason why, if it were practicable, each race should not rule part of it".⁶⁵⁹

At the time, this was considered not only the best plan, but the only viable solution. Peel's partition proposals, however, amounted to nothing more than a

⁶⁵² CAB 24/264, 25 August 1936, Ormsby-Gore to Smuts, TNA.

⁶⁵³ Cmd 5479, 1937, *Palestine Royal Commission Report*, 110-111.

⁶⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 111-112.

⁶⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 370.

⁶⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 368.

⁶⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 370.

⁶⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 371-372.

⁶⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 375.

preliminary sketch, recommending a very small Jewish state in the north of Palestine, and an Arab entity joined to Transjordan with an exchange of population between the two and a British enclave from Jerusalem to the sea.⁶⁶⁰ Designed to address what they viewed as “fundamentally a conflict of right with right”, this partition principle was readily accepted by the Colonial Office and cabinet, tentatively approved by Zionist leaders but totally rejected by Palestine’s Higher Arab Committee.⁶⁶¹ Partition was based on an English idiom: “Half a loaf is better than no bread”, but the idea of giving even a square inch of Arab land to Zionists was objectionable enough to ignite a second and more intense phase of the Palestine rebellion in autumn 1937.⁶⁶² District Commissioner Lewis Andrews was murdered and Arab rebels took control of large swathes of territory; government forces evacuated Beersheba and Jericho, and the rebels besieged Jaffa – for a few days in October 1938, the rebels even had *de facto* control of the Old City of Jerusalem.⁶⁶³ These successes prompted a harsher British response.

By the inter-war period, Britain had established its self-image as a humane empire, having avoided brutalities akin to the Belgian Congo, German Southwest Africa or French Algeria, and many British officials prided themselves on their empire’s focus on the rule of law.⁶⁶⁴ This does not, however, mean tactics were humane by modern standards, simply that in the 1930s they were legal. Army manuals forbade stealing from or mistreating civilians but provided for shooting rioters, collective punishment and “retribution”.⁶⁶⁵ The violence, property damage and humiliation inflicted by British forces during this period of suppression were of a

⁶⁶⁰ Ibid, 377-389.

⁶⁶¹ Ibid, 2.

⁶⁶² Ibid, 394; Abboushi, “The Road to Rebellion”, 42.

⁶⁶³ Segev, *One Palestine, Complete*, 414.

⁶⁶⁴ Matthew Hughes, “The Banality of Brutality: British Armed Forces and the Repression of the Arab Revolt in Palestine, 1936-39”, *English Historical Review* 124 (507) 2009: 313-354, 315.

⁶⁶⁵ Ibid, 316.

harrowing nature, and threatened to destroy all relations between the Arabs and the civilian government in Palestine. By 1938, High Commissioner Sir Arthur Wauchope was barely managing to temper the actions of British armed forces. When he looked for a political solution to the revolt and challenged army efforts to institute martial law, the Colonial Office replaced him with the more compliant Sir Harold MacMichael.⁶⁶⁶ An even greater repressive effort was thought to be required, but the need for and purpose of a second investigating commission also gradually evolved in cabinet during the autumn of 1937.

Chaired by Sir John Woodhead, the technical or partition commission was ostensibly charged with determining the best route towards implementing partition. Its verdict, however, undercut the principle. The Woodhead Commission returned three plans, A, B and C, with varying borders, levels of subsequent British responsibility and economic integration. This report concluded that any partition scheme that involved population transfer was doomed to failure due to the necessity of implementing such a scheme by force or leaving large minorities in each new state.⁶⁶⁷ The commission was also unable to devise any boundary formulation that left Jewish areas defensible and Arab territory economically sound.⁶⁶⁸ As Britain would need to conclude treaty agreements with both states, it was also likely find itself in an impossible situation of having to defend the Jewish state from outside attack after incurring the expense of implementing partition.⁶⁶⁹ One member of the commission, T. Reid, felt the need to add: “it may be said that one cannot make an omelette

⁶⁶⁶ Ibid, 319.

⁶⁶⁷ Cmd 5854, 1938, *Palestine Partition Commission Report*, 84.

⁶⁶⁸ Ibid, 86.

⁶⁶⁹ Ibid, 87.

without breaking a few eggs, but it would not be easy to find an omelette in any possible scheme of partition”.⁶⁷⁰

Rather than ending on a negative note, however, the Woodhead Commission instead proposed partition with two very large British enclaves in the north and south that withheld fiscal autonomy from both Jews and Arabs, creating an economic federalism between the two with a British administration serving as the federal government.⁶⁷¹ This, however, would have required a very high financial liability for the foreseeable future and would not have alleviated the rebellion already inflamed over the idea of Jewish statehood within Palestine.⁶⁷² Although the commission report specifically stated that Arab antagonism toward partition did not oblige them to return a verdict that no scheme was practicable, the report permitted no other conclusion.⁶⁷³ It admitted that even economic federalism would be satisfactory to neither Arabs nor Jews, and certainly not to the Treasury.⁶⁷⁴ As a result, the cabinet officially rejected partition in November 1938.⁶⁷⁵

Following these two commissions, therefore, the British government was seemingly left with very few options. Peel had determined that partition was the only way forward, “at least a chance of ultimate peace”, and Woodhead had demonstrated the impossibility of its implementation.⁶⁷⁶ Although it took a relatively long time to realise in the context of what was otherwise a matter of urgency, the government was eventually faced with a stark choice between continuing to support the Jewish national home, thereby suppressing Arab protest indefinitely, or somehow surrendering the obligation to Zionism contained in the Mandate.

⁶⁷⁰ Ibid, 281.

⁶⁷¹ Ibid, 14, 101.

⁶⁷² Ibid, 14.

⁶⁷³ Ibid, 100.

⁶⁷⁴ Ibid, 244.

⁶⁷⁵ Cmd 5893, 1938, *Palestine. Statement By His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom.*

⁶⁷⁶ Cmd 5479, 1937, *Palestine Royal Commission Report*, 376.

After concurrent bilateral negotiations in early 1939 at St James's Palace, the MacDonald White Paper utilised Woodhead's arguments but not the commission's recommendations, declaring that, "the establishment of self-supporting independent Arab and Jewish states within Palestine has been found to be impracticable".⁶⁷⁷ Instead, the white paper committed Britain to Palestinian independence after a transitional period of ten years, allowing the Jewish population to increase to roughly 30 percent of Palestine's total inhabitants over five years – a plan permitting about 75,000 immigrants, made up of 10,000 per year as well as 25,000 refugees.⁶⁷⁸ After that, further immigration would require Arab consent, meaning the Jewish national home was officially established.⁶⁷⁹ As war approached in Europe, this white paper represented the most rational course in the sense that it satisfied the simple expected utility model. The reasoning behind rejection of partition, however, as well as the decision-making process involved in choosing between Britain's two client-nations in Palestine, was more complex than such an analysis implies. Utilising Poliheuristic Decision Theory's two-stage model allows a more nuanced assessment, leading to the conclusion that even this sudden change in policy in 1939 was entirely in keeping with the way the British cabinet's logic of political survival had always influenced their dealings with the burgeoning Arab-Jewish conflict.

Stage One

Poliheuristic Decision Theory is based on the premise that options are eliminated from the choice set in the first stage of decision-making depending on whether they meet requirements on the most important, political dimension.⁶⁸⁰ Those

⁶⁷⁷ Cmd 6019, 1939, *Palestine. Statement of Policy*.

⁶⁷⁸ Ibid.

⁶⁷⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁸⁰ Mintz, "Applied Decision Analysis".

alternatives that pose intolerable risk to political survival are removed from the choice set. In considering the British government's decision to abandon partition and issue the MacDonald White Paper on the eve of the Second World War in 1939, the variables that constituted this political dimension were – reflecting criteria given by Mintz – diplomacy (threat to regime survival), bureaucratic politics and parliamentary politics.⁶⁸¹ By analysing how the government interpreted risk in the context of imminent war, it is possible to demonstrate how the “noncompensatory loss aversion variable” was operationalised, leaving only one option that was politically sound to be satisfied in the second stage of decision-making.⁶⁸²

Variable: Diplomacy

The most important variable on the British political dimension concerning Palestine in 1936-1939 was diplomacy. The second half of the 1930s witnessed a pervading threat of imminent war spread throughout the government and its decision-making processes. Diplomacy, therefore, became directly linked to regime survival. In this context, Britain's empire and spheres of influence were both its strongest asset – in the event of friendly, acquiescent mass mobilisation and support – and a major source of vulnerability – should popular uprisings break out or formerly subject leaders alter their allegiances. Added to this concern was the necessity of securing, or rather avoiding offending, public opinion of other great powers such as the United States. Palestine, unhappily for the British government, combined these delicate facets of international diplomacy, pitting Arab leaders in the Middle East and Muslim opinion in India against Zionism, ostensibly the United States and a traditionally pro-Zionist Council of the League of Nations.

⁶⁸¹ Mintz, “How Do Leaders Make Decisions?”.

⁶⁸² Ibid.

In the late 1930s, the desire for Arab goodwill towards Britain was an overriding concern. No Arab leaders, least of all the Palestinians, applied direct pressure on the British government. Instead, Arab leaders jockeyed for regional prominence and position vis-à-vis Britain on the Palestine issue. There were no threats to break diplomatic ties, only a widespread underlying fear in Westminster of Italian and German infiltration, and the catastrophic wartime loss of safe routes through the Suez Canal and communication links to India. The perceived necessity of placating opinion in the Middle East far outweighed the importance of Zionist opinion, not least because the US State Department deliberately refrained from interfering and the League of Nations only became involved shortly before the Second World War was declared. In addressing the risks associated with each of these parties, the government found that it was unable to continue with the options of partition or indefinite repression under the Mandate due to uncertain relations with Arab leaders of the Middle East. In contrast, the risks to political survival posed by Jewish and Zionist opinion, as well as the attitudes of the United States and the League of Nations, did in fact satisfy requirements on the political dimension, allowing the option of acting against the national home to pass into the second stage of decision-making.

Throughout this process, regional Arab leaders, rather than Palestinian politicians, were central to British decision-making, a phenomenon that arose due to the general strike in Palestine which was then promulgated by Foreign Secretary Anthony Eden, the Committee on Imperial Defence (CID) and eventually the Colonial Office. Involving regional leaders in the British Empire's Middle East policy was a new phenomenon in the 1930s and although initially beneficial, this broader spectrum of actors became increasingly worrisome. The Peel Commission had been delayed by approximately three months while 20,000 reinforcements restored order in Palestine

and the strike came to a close, but only with the face-saving help of Ibn Saud, King Ghazi of Iraq and Emir Abdullah.⁶⁸³ For the Arab states, their participation was a matter of prestige, but it was initiated against the backdrop of more grassroots agitation for the Arabs of Palestine. Rebellion was nothing surprising for imperial administrators, but the Peel Commission highlighted how the most striking feature of Palestine's revolt was the degree to which it "roused the feeling of the Arab world at large against Zionism and its defenders".⁶⁸⁴ Although the support offered by Egypt, Transjordan, Saudi Arabia and Yemen was "by no means a powerful, all-embracing popular sentiment" and was largely confined to opposition groups, the issue gradually intensified as the British inability to solve the immediate crisis dragged on for years.⁶⁸⁵ At the cabinet level, it was Foreign Secretary Anthony Eden who repeatedly warned of the consequences of Middle Eastern opinion solidifying against Britain over Palestine.

As Palestine's Arabs viewed partition with the same moral and material objection that was directed against the more vague policy of building a Jewish national home, Eden's initial arguments were against the Peel Commission's proposals, a policy the cabinet had rapidly accepted on recommendation from the Colonial Secretary, William Ormsby-Gore (who Lady Passfield described as "small and Welsh in appearance").⁶⁸⁶ Eden had been cautioning the cabinet regarding Palestine's wider implications since before Peel arrived in the country and the new partition policy did little to assuage his concerns. Highlighting the military implications, Eden had noted how,

⁶⁸³ Cmd 5479, 1937, *Palestine Royal Commission Report*, ix.

⁶⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 105.

⁶⁸⁵ Porath, *The Emergence of the Palestinian Arab National Movement: 1929-1939*, 230.

⁶⁸⁶ Cmd 5513, 1937, *Statement of Policy by His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom*; CAB 24/270, 25 June 1937, "Report of Palestine Royal Commission: Memorandum by the Secretary of State for the Colonies", TNA; CAB 23/88, 5 July 1937, Cabinet Minutes, TNA; LSE/PASSFIELD/1/2/9, 7 March 1930, Diary of Beatrice Webb.

“troubles in Palestine have been watched with the keenest anxiety in the neighbouring Arab and Moslem-countries”,⁶⁸⁷ and more importantly, that “Saudi Arabia, the Yemen and Iraq have now become of great importance to His Majesty’s government from the point of view of imperial communications. The air route to India and Australasia must cross over either Iraqi or Saudi territories; between Cairo and the Protected States of the Persian Gulf, and it is not open to doubt that if Iraq and Saudi Arabia were to become hostile to British policy, they would be able seriously to interrupt Imperial communications with the East”.⁶⁸⁸ After Peel’s partition proposals, part of the problem was population transfer and the negative political impact of its enforcement – the realization that “partition can now only be imposed by force”.⁶⁸⁹

Taking into account the very small size of Peel’s suggested Jewish state and the number of Jews needing to flee Germany, Eden pointed out to the cabinet that the Jewish state’s urge to expand would be “well-nigh irresistible”.⁶⁹⁰ Then what would be Britain’s responsibility? “If any stimulus were required to their rapidly growing nationalism”, Eden argued, “it is hard to imagine any more effective method than the creation of a small dynamic State of hated foreign immigrants on the seaboard of the Arab countries with a perpetual urge to extend its influence inland”.⁶⁹¹ Arabs would view the establishment of this entity as treachery and, crucially, it would not solve the military problem. Britain would have to protect minorities in the new states, and so Eden questioned whether “we see any limit to the extent to which these troops are likely to be involved?”⁶⁹² Such intervention could have had disastrous repercussions in Egypt, Iraq, Saudi Arabia and Yemen.

In Egypt, the Suez Canal was vital, and Britain had already accepted many concessions on this point in negotiating an independence treaty with the Egyptians.⁶⁹³

⁶⁸⁷ CAB 24/263, 20 June 1936, “Cabinet. Palestine: Memorandum by the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs”, TNA.

⁶⁸⁸ Ibid.

⁶⁸⁹ CAB 24/273, 19 November 1937, “Cabinet. Palestine: Memorandum by the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs”, TNA.

⁶⁹⁰ Ibid.

⁶⁹¹ Ibid.

⁶⁹² Ibid.

⁶⁹³ Ibid.

In addition, oil supplies from Iraq would be “seriously threatened”.⁶⁹⁴ There were also similar dangers in Saudi Arabia and Yemen that were intensified by the Italian invasion of Abyssinia in 1935 and Italian overtures towards the two kings. Yemeni protests against Britain’s Palestine policy, for example, preceded an Italo-Yemeni Treaty.⁶⁹⁵ Based on this interpretation of Middle East politics, Eden concluded that the only way to ensure peace with the Arabs was to provide “some assurance that the Jews will neither become a majority in Palestine, nor be given any Palestinian territory in full sovereignty”.⁶⁹⁶

Similar arguments were forthcoming from the Committee on Imperial Defence and high ranking British officials who dealt with the new Arab states. The CID, for example, consistently warned of Iraq, Saudi Arabia, Yemen and Persia becoming “uncertain friends” after Palestine’s political leaders rejected partition, “which would be a most serious embarrassment to us in the event of war with Germany”.⁶⁹⁷ The India Secretary, Lord Zetland, also voiced concerns, that “Moslem opinion in India was now becoming rather aggressive on the question of partition”.⁶⁹⁸ Although by 1938 the India threat had dissipated except for “occasional expressions of indignation in the press and speeches by minor Muslim politicians”, this did not prevent it being used as an argument for Arab concessions in 1939.⁶⁹⁹ Another official who provided somewhat confused advice was Miles Lampson, British Ambassador to Egypt. Lampson advised Malcolm MacDonald – who had assumed the post of Colonial Secretary following Ormsby-Gore’s frustrated resignation in 1938 – that pro-Palestine

⁶⁹⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁹⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁹⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁹⁷ CAB 24/278, 14 September 1938, “Committee of Imperial Defence. Chiefs of Staff Sub Committee, Appreciation of the Situation in the Event of War Against Germany”, TNA.

⁶⁹⁸ CAB 23/90A, 17 November 1937, Cabinet Minutes, TNA, 13.

⁶⁹⁹ CAB 24/277, 14 June 1938, “Quarterly Survey of the Political and Constitutional Position in British India for the Period from 1st February to 30th April, 1938”, TNA; CAB 24/282, 18 January 1939, “Cabinet. Palestine. Memorandum by the Secretary of State for the Colonies”, TNA.

agitation in Egypt was the political tool of opposition leader Nahas Pasha, but that Egyptians knew they were dependent on Britain for their security and well-being.⁷⁰⁰ Lampson told Macdonald that any policy pursued in Palestine was unlikely to render Arab loyalties a positive asset, but if they were turned against Britain they would provide a formidable tool in enemy hands.⁷⁰¹ This measured advice acquired an urgent tone very quickly, however, as Miles wrote to MacDonald to plead that “unless the Arabs get satisfaction over immigration we must face the fact that, if war comes, we shall have to take on the Arabs as well as the Italians and Germans”.⁷⁰² Time, he considered, was of the essence, as “[t]he longer you delay that no doubt painful decision, the less value you will get from making it. If you leave it until the verge of European War you will get no value at all.”⁷⁰³ These arguments built over the course of the Arab Revolt to back the British government into what it perceived to be a diplomatic corner.

The content, therefore, of the MacDonald White Paper emerged in phases. The government had adopted partition in 1937, but arguments against it from Eden, the CID, Lord Zetland and others meant that its longevity as a policy was almost instantly in question. The Woodhead Commission was a response to this debate, and its conclusions were rumoured to be negative towards partition months before the final report was published. Meanwhile, Ormsby-Gore’s successor as Colonial Secretary, Malcolm MacDonald, quickly accepted the view that partition was impracticable due to wider Arab opinion. This was despite his own pro-Zionist background – MacDonald had already served at the Colonial Office and left in 1936 when he wrote to Chaim Weizmann that, “I need not tell you how sorry I was to leave the Colonial

⁷⁰⁰ PREM 1/352, 2 September 1938, Notes by MacDonald, TNA.

⁷⁰¹ Ibid.

⁷⁰² CAB 24/281, 6 December 1938, Ambassador to Cairo to MacDonald, TNA.

⁷⁰³ Ibid.

Office, and so to give up the official connection with Palestine. But you know I shall always watch developments there with sympathy, and if I can be of any help at any time you only have to let me know.”⁷⁰⁴

Following Woodhead’s rejection of partition, however, MacDonald and the rest of the government released a command paper agreeing with its conclusions and calling for a conference to negotiate a political settlement between the two parties. MacDonald was well aware that no settlement was likely and that Britain would still have to impose a solution.⁷⁰⁵ It was imperative, however, that the ultimate policy formulation was acceptable to regional Arab leaders and not necessarily to the Arabs of Palestine: “It is more important”, MacDonald informed the cabinet, “that we should regain the full sympathy of these neighbouring governments than that we should secure the friendship of the Palestinian Arabs; they are the countries whose lukewarm support or actual hostility in case of war would have most unfortunate results”.⁷⁰⁶ This was despite the recognition that Arab states were unlikely to support Germany and Italy, having sided with Britain during the Munich crisis “with scarcely any mention of the embarrassing situation in Palestine”.⁷⁰⁷ Regardless, the Colonial Secretary continued to assert that “we cannot ignore the repeated warnings of our representatives in that part of the world, and the strength of feeling of the Arab public generally against our Palestine policy is making it more and more impossible for their rulers to maintain a pro-British attitude”.⁷⁰⁸

This was how the government abandoned partition, but it was only through the course of discussions at St James’s Palace in January, February and March 1939 that

⁷⁰⁴ MAC 9/9/10, 8 Jan 1936, MacDonald to Weizmann, reproduced by permission of Durham University Library.

⁷⁰⁵ CAB 23/98, 15 March 1939, Cabinet Minutes and Appendix with Draft White Paper”, TNA.

⁷⁰⁶ CAB 24/282, 18 January 1939, “Cabinet. Palestine. Memorandum by the Secretary of State for the Colonies”, TNA.

⁷⁰⁷ Ibid.

⁷⁰⁸ Ibid.

the intractable nature of Arab demands became clear. As a result, the cabinet went from agreeing to only harsh restrictions on Jewish immigration and land purchase to supporting an independent Palestine within ten years.⁷⁰⁹ The Palestine delegation rejected these proposals on the basis that the interim period was too long, and “the representatives of the neighbouring Arab States had taken this attitude in public, behind the scenes some of them had told us that they regarded our proposals as wise and reasonable”.⁷¹⁰ In particular, Saudi delegate Fuad Bey Hamza said in private that, “while their hearts were with the Palestinian Arabs, they had brought not only their hearts, but also their heads, to London”.⁷¹¹ Independence was important, but as a principle rather than an immediate outcome.

It had even “been suggested by the Arab representatives that a solution could be reached on the lines of the regime which had been in force for some years in Iraq, while arrangements for a constitutional Assembly were being worked out. A provisional government of Iraqi Ministers had been established, with British advisers; during this period, which lasted some four years, the Iraqi Ministers had been a facade, and the British advisers had been the real rulers of the country. Nuri Pasha was urging us to follow this precedent.”⁷¹²

As a result, MacDonald finally put to the cabinet what he had already discussed with both delegations: that they should announce an end to the Mandate and the establishment of an “independent” Palestine state “with British advisers to run the show”.⁷¹³ The figure of 75,000 additional Jewish immigrants over five years was finalised – MacDonald had originally argued for more than 300,000 – and Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain admitted there was no better bargain they could strike for the Jews, though he felt they had been roughly treated.⁷¹⁴ “The plain fact”,

⁷⁰⁹ CAB 24/283, 30 January 1939, “Cabinet. Committee on Palestine Report”, The National Archives Kew; CAB 23/97, 1 February 1939, Cabinet Minutes, TNA; CAB 23/97, 8 March 1939, Cabinet Minutes, TNA.

⁷¹⁰ CAB 23/98, 22 March 1939, Cabinet Minutes, TNA.

⁷¹¹ CAB 23/97, 15 February 1939, Cabinet Minutes, TNA.

⁷¹² CAB 23/97, 22 February 1939, Cabinet Minutes, TNA.

⁷¹³ CAB 23/97, 2 March 1939, Cabinet Minutes, TNA.

⁷¹⁴ CAB 23/97, 8 March 1939, Cabinet Minutes, TNA.

MacDonald told the cabinet, “was that the Jews had made no attempt to co-operate with the Arabs in the last twenty years, but they would now have to do so”.⁷¹⁵ This was largely the attitude taken with Zionist leaders after Ormsby-Gore’s departure.

Rather than adopting the rhetoric often heard in Parliament that portrayed Zionism as a special and enlightened movement, MacDonald’s language implied equality with Palestine’s Arabs and an air of disdain, trivialising the conflict as merely a battle of interests in which “each of them wants to be the master”.⁷¹⁶ When Zionists threatened to boycott the St James’s Conference after British refusal to allow 10,000 refugees into Palestine, Chamberlain and MacDonald understood that that “the Jews” simply were not in a position to withdraw.⁷¹⁷ The opinion of actual Zionists, therefore, was almost inconsequential. The fact that they did not have an impact on the British political dimension in this period of decision-making should come as no surprise, however, as they had never possessed that of type of direct influence. Previously supportive elements in the House of Commons (discussed more below), the League of Nations and the United States either shrank away from the issue or wielded too little influence to be of assistance.

The “betrayal” of the MacDonald White Paper was self-imposed, in believing Zionism had harnessed the foreign policy of the British Empire only to realise this was not the case. Although both Chamberlain and MacDonald still professed affection for Zionism, this had no impact on their decision-making. Upon the release of MacDonald’s white paper, the Colonial Secretary drafted a letter that Chamberlain sent to Chaim Weizmann, saying “I greatly regret that this should be so, and that it should be necessary to apply some measure of disappointment to long and ardently

⁷¹⁵ Ibid.

⁷¹⁶ CAB 24/282, 18 January 1939, “Cabinet. Palestine. Memorandum by the Secretary of State for the Colonies”, TNA.

⁷¹⁷ CAB 23/96, 14 December 1938, Cabinet Minutes, TNA, 14-15.

cherished hopes. I have always recognised and admired your single-minded devotion.”⁷¹⁸ In the end it was understood that, regardless of Palestine policy, in a war with Germany the Zionists had nowhere but Britain to turn.⁷¹⁹ No intervention on their behalf was forthcoming.

Diplomacy from neither the United States nor the League of Nations entered the political dimension in this period of decision-making. Although Ormsby-Gore had frequently warned of rampant American displeasure over the abandonment of partition, this, as the Foreign Office predicted, never materialised.⁷²⁰ The American State Department made it clear to British Ambassador Lindsey that they were receiving thousands of telegrams on the issue, but that “that this was merely a personal message for our information”, because “the United States Government did not wish to appear to be interfering in any way with the conduct of matters which were within the province of His Majesty’s Government”.⁷²¹ MacDonald did discuss the release of the white paper with US Ambassador to Britain, Joseph P. Kennedy, “who had been in a somewhat gloomy mood”, and had thought that “Jews, in his view, were unpopular in America, but he thought they might be able to work up a certain amount of anti-British agitation; the results of which would not, however, last for very long”.⁷²² In terms of US opinion, the government received notification only of very low level pleas such as letters from a Presbyterian and a Methodist minister, resolutions by the Massachusetts cities of Worcester and Chelsea, and a request to continue the Mandate from a New Jersey Senator, as well as many individual

⁷¹⁸ PREM 1/352, May 1939, “Palestine. Situation and Policy in Palestine”, Chamberlain to Weizmann, TNA.

⁷¹⁹ PREM 1/352, 23 February 1939, MacDonald to Chamberlain, TNA.

⁷²⁰ CAB 24/273, 3 December 1937, Cabinet. Policy in Palestine, TNA; FO 371/21873/E851, 14 Feb 1938, Notes, TNA.

⁷²¹ FO 371/21881 E5999, 13 October 1938, Notes, TNA.

⁷²² CAB 23/99, 10 May 1939, Cabinet Minutes, TNA.

concerned citizens and even one telegram from the American Arab National League urging the opposite, for British not to be swayed by “Jewish clamor”.⁷²³

These combined factors led Mr Baggaallay at the Foreign Office to “regard Middle Eastern opinion, which might be permanently and seriously hostile, as outweighing American opinion, which would probably be only temporarily incensed”.⁷²⁴ He concluded that “[o]ur interests here are far too important to be made the plaything of the Jews of America, however important they may be politically”.⁷²⁵ Eventually, the US State Department did issue a series of telegrams noting American rights to be consulted regarding changes in the Mandate, but the Foreign Office dismissed them as pre-election posturing.⁷²⁶ Likewise, the League of Nations never posed a political risk.

Cabinet ministers anticipated that the Permanent Mandates Commission would be split four to three on whether MacDonald’s white paper was legal within the terms of the Mandate and that it would be referred to September’s full meeting of the Council.⁷²⁷ This was indeed the verdict, but before the full Council of the League could render its judgment, war was declared.⁷²⁸ Ultimately, the options to partition Palestine or continue the Mandate using indefinite repression were eliminated from the choice set in the first stage of decision-making due to the importance of Arab and Muslim opinion. In contrast, the option to act in contravention of previous obligations to the Jewish national home passed the political dimension due to a lack of effective opposition in Geneva, in Washington or, as discussed below, in the House of Commons.

⁷²³ CO 733/406/7, 1939, “American Opinion. Mandate Over Palestine”, TNA.

⁷²⁴ CO 733/386/13, 11 October 1938, “Palestine Discussions”, TNA.

⁷²⁵ FO 371/21881 E5999, 14 Oct 1938, “Note by Baggaallay on U.S. Public Opinion”, TNA.

⁷²⁶ FO 371/21882 E6030, 17 Oct 1938, Notes, TNA.

⁷²⁷ CAB 23/100, 28 June 1939, Cabinet Minutes, TNA.

⁷²⁸ CAB 23/100, 19 July 1939, Cabinet Minutes, TNA.

Variable: Bureaucratic Politics

Utilising the description of bureaucratic politics developed by Allison and Halperin,⁷²⁹ this section argues that a turf war between the Foreign and Colonial Offices over Palestine policy contributed to an option being removed from the choice set in the first stage of decision-making. Throughout 1937 and part of 1938, the two secretaries of state for these ministries – Colonial Secretary William Ormsby-Gore and Foreign Secretary Anthony Eden – entered into a cabinet-level power struggle ostensibly over the Peel Commission’s partition proposals. This turf war only came to an end in 1938 when both men resigned from the cabinet – Eden in February and Ormsby-Gore in May – and were replaced by Malcolm MacDonald and Lord Halifax (formerly Lord Irwin of the Irwin Declaration) respectively. Eden had found the Foreign Office a challenging posting, not least because of his relatively junior status among fellow cabinet secretaries. Writing later, Eden admitted that,

“I was aware that my appointment was not welcome to all my elders in the Cabinet, where there was no lack of former Foreign Secretaries and other aspirants to the office. I knew that Baldwin’s support would be fitful and lethargic. I had also seen the practice...of a multiplicity of Ministers taking a hand at redrafting a dispatch. On one of these occasions about a year later, I began to protest vigorously, when Baldwin passes me a note: ‘Don’t be too indignant. I once saw Curzon burst into tears when the Cabinet was amending his dispatches.’ After the meeting he told me I must remember that out of my twenty colleagues, there was probably not more than one who thought he should be Minister of Labour and nineteen who thought they should be Foreign Secretary”.⁷³⁰

He faced a built-in tradition of turf wars that began again with William Ormsby-Gore over the Palestine question, though Ormsby-Gore supported him on other issues. The subsequent Colonial Secretary, Malcolm MacDonald, then adopted the Foreign Office view of partition, but the delay created by bureaucratic politics had

⁷²⁹ Allison, *Essence of Decision*; Halperin, *Bureaucratic Politics and Foreign Policy*.

⁷³⁰ Anthony R. Peters, *Anthony Eden at the Foreign Office, 1931-1938* (London: St. Martin’s Press, 1986), 251.

allowed the situation in Palestine to worsen considerably. This helped to eliminate the option of continuing with the Jewish national home due to increased repressive measures against the revolt and an inevitable hardening of the Arab position. This turf war was characterised by a conflict between two cabinet secretaries rather than only their staff and defended as a strategic versus a compassionate argument, leading to the Prime Minister intervening in a manner that caused the severe delay before a replacement Colonial Secretary emerged successful in the dispute over turf. The process of bureaucratic infighting added more than a year to British decision-making, procrastinating until after the Munich Crisis and much closer to the profound constraint of imminent war in Europe.

First, it is important to note that the turf war played out between Ormsby-Gore and Eden, “sitting atop key organizations, each of which [...] trying to maximize its interests, agendas and goals”.⁷³¹ The Colonial and Foreign Offices were traditional bureaucratic rivals where chief players were often under-secretaries and heads of department, but the conflict between lower ranked officials and office staffs was not the factor that influenced decision-making. In 1937, for example, the Colonial Office Middle Eastern Department was headed by O. T. R. Williams, one of four assistant under-secretaries of state, supervised by Sir Cosmo Parkinson and often Sir John Shuckburgh, who presented information to Ormsby-Gore.⁷³² The day-to-day running of Palestine fell within the Colonial Office remit, but Palestine’s international diplomatic ties were handled by the Eastern Department of the Foreign Office.⁷³³ George Rendel headed this department, which reported to Sir Lancelot Oliphant and

⁷³¹ Mintz and DeRouen, *Understanding Foreign Policy Decision-Making*, 71.

⁷³² Aaron Klieman, “The Divisiveness of Palestine: Foreign Office Versus Colonial Office on the Issue of Partition, 1937”, *The Historical Journal* 22(1) 1979: 423-441, 424.

⁷³³ *Ibid*, 425.

upwards to Anthony Eden.⁷³⁴ Previous studies have highlighted the turf war between these ministry staffs⁷³⁵ but the key figures, in terms of how interdepartmental conflict had an impact on decision-making, sat in the cabinet. This is where the delay was created. The Foreign Secretary had a much wider scope than the Colonial Secretary and it was this scope – in considering the impact of Palestine policy across Britain’s Middle East strategic interests – that gave him a legitimate role in the development of policy during the Arab Revolt. Repeatedly, however, the Colonial Secretary attempted to reinterpret the crisis as a small, isolated incident that should be dealt with equitably rather than strategically, an argument essentially against Foreign Office interference.

This may appear to be a cynical reading of the Colonial Office’s attempt to do what was best for Palestine, but Ormsby-Gore’s early evaluation of the rebellion demonstrates agreement with what became the Foreign Office argument, and it was only after Eden’s involvement that Ormsby-Gore became hostile regarding any cabinet discussions on abandoning partition. When Peel’s proposals were discussed and the Colonial Secretary advocated the partition plan, Ormsby-Gore wrote privately that “without a reasonable measure of assent on the part of the two peoples concerned, no scheme of partition involving the establishment of two independent States can be put into effect”.⁷³⁶ Ormsby-Gore had pinned his colours on partition in order to prevent the appearance of indecision or uncertainty following the publication of Peel’s recommendations.⁷³⁷ This meant that he could not accept Eden’s arguments without tacitly surrendering responsibility on this issue to the Foreign Office.

⁷³⁴ Ibid.

⁷³⁵ Ibid; Aaron Klieman, “Bureaucratic Politics at Whitehall in the Partitioning of Palestine, 1937”. In *Great Powers in the Middle East, 1919-1939*, ed. Uriel Dann, 128-154 (New York: Holmes & Meier, 1988).

⁷³⁶ CAB 24/270, 25 June 1937, “Report of Palestine Royal Commission: Memorandum by the Secretary of State for the Colonies”, TNA.

⁷³⁷ Ibid.

Several months later, when international tension increased over Italy's joining with Germany in the Axis and leaving the League, as well as Japan's threat to the British position in Asia, the Foreign Office took a renewed interest in the Palestine problem and its ramifications across the region. This began a series of memoranda⁷³⁸ in which the two secretaries of state jockeyed for position on the issue within the cabinet. Ormsby-Gore accused Eden of ignoring "fundamental realities of the Palestine problem" and the Foreign Secretary labelled Ormsby-Gore's assessment of regional Arab amity as "unfounded and misleading".⁷³⁹ A direct result of Ormsby-Gore's defensive posture was the need for a second commission. Although the Colonial Office did not appoint Sir John Woodhead and his fellow commissioners until March 1938, their mission came under intense discussion between Ormsby-Gore and Eden in cabinet. Was the commission merely a "technical" commission as Ormsby-Gore argued, tasked with implementing partition? Or, as Eden advocated, was it a "partition" commission, possessing the right to judge partition impracticable?⁷⁴⁰ Ormsby-Gore managed to get the word "technical" inserted into the commission's terms of reference by securing the Prime Minister's private approval, a measure that Eden referred to as having "gone too far".⁷⁴¹

In May 1937 – before the Peel Commission had returned its report – Neville Chamberlain replaced Stanley Baldwin as Prime Minister; he acted with far more intervening authority than the beleaguered Baldwin had demonstrated. On 8 December 1937, Chamberlain mediated between the two men, asserting that while

⁷³⁸ CAB 24/272, , 9 November 1937, "Cabinet. Policy in Palestine: Memorandum by the Secretary of State for the Colonies", TNA; CAB 24/273, 19 November 1937, "Cabinet. Palestine: Memorandum by the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs", TNA; CAB 24/273, 1 December 1937, "Cabinet. Policy in Palestine: Memorandum by the Secretary of State for the Colonies", TNA.

⁷³⁹ CAB 24/273, 19 November 1937, "Cabinet. Palestine: Memorandum by the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs", TNA; CAB 24/273, 1 December 1937, "Cabinet. Policy in Palestine: Memorandum by the Secretary of State for the Colonies", TNA.

⁷⁴⁰ PREM 1/352, 13 December 1937, Eden to Ormsby-Gore, TNA.

⁷⁴¹ PREM 1/352, 16 December 1937, Foreign Office Note, TNA, 228.

“evidence available to the world was as yet not sufficient to carry conviction that, partition was impracticable”, and “if the Government were to make such an announcement it would be criticised for having surrendered to threats and force”, the commission should not be debarred from concluding that “in their view no workable scheme could be produced”.⁷⁴² This, Chamberlain asserted, “need not antagonise the Arab States! Neither need it exclude the possibility of a change of policy if the Commission showed partition to be unworkable.”⁷⁴³ The cabinet generally agreed that an announcement committing Britain to enforcing partition would create unrest in India while at the same time any “impression of vagueness” had proved just as fatal in the past.⁷⁴⁴ This meant that the technical/partition commission, which became the Woodhead Commission, provided a convenient tool to help the government appear decisive when it was anything but. The final decision between the two arguments was delayed until some unknown date in the future. Woodhead was appointed three months later, travelled to Palestine in April and presented the committee’s findings in November 1938, nearly a year after Chamberlain had intervened in cabinet.

As Eden resigned in February 1938 and Ormsby-Gore followed in May, the bureaucratic dynamic of a search for peace in Palestine changed significantly. Although the traditionally pro-Zionist Malcolm MacDonald assumed Ormsby-Gore’s post, he did not defend partition on the basis of an “equitable” solution. Instead, as MacDonald shared none of Ormsby-Gore’s responsibility for the adoption of partition, he was able to approach the issue free from his predecessor’s defence of Colonial Office turf. Although it is unlikely that MacDonald assumed his new post with a bureaucratic politics agenda in mind, his agreement with the Foreign Office and CID opinion that Arab support was threatened by Palestine policy actually won

⁷⁴² CAB 23/90A, 8 December 1937, Cabinet Minutes, TNA, 5-15.

⁷⁴³ Ibid.

⁷⁴⁴ Ibid.

the bureaucratic battle for the Colonial Office. Without a policy to rail against, the Foreign Office possessed no legitimate reason to claim Palestine policy was within its remit. The documents that deal with Palestine policy formation following Eden and Ormsby-Gore's resignations are dominated by Malcolm MacDonald in discussions with Prime Minister Chamberlain; the new Foreign Secretary, Lord Halifax, is hardly mentioned. This relationship may have been the result of pressure on MacDonald to act quickly, which was very difficult before the Woodhead Commission returned its findings. MacDonald anticipated that the enquiry would return a verdict of no confidence in partition, but this was by no means certain.

The Woodhead Commission, far from receiving instructions simply to reject partition, found the task set to them was exceedingly difficult. Woodhead noted, "that if he had known how difficult this job was when it had been offered to him, he would have refused to undertake it!"⁷⁴⁵ MacDonald pestered the committee continually for an early submission, as he needed time to assess their policy recommendations and formulate ideas to take to the cabinet. The Colonial Secretary had heard rumours that the commission would repudiate partition and believed it would be better for the Arab insurrection for this news to emerge sooner rather than later.⁷⁴⁶ MacDonald pleaded with Woodhead, "saying that he would appreciate that the European situation increased the desirability of our getting Palestine policy settled as early as possible".⁷⁴⁷ Woodhead, however, refused to provide him with early data or even discuss the matter in private over dinner to avoid overt interference or the appearance of impropriety.⁷⁴⁸ "If I came and dined with him and his colleagues for the purpose which I had in mind", the Colonial Secretary offered, "I would not try to influence

⁷⁴⁵ PREM 1/352, 14 September 1938, Notes by MacDonald, TNA.

⁷⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁷⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁷⁴⁸ Ibid.

their decision. If they liked, I would not open my mouth, except to put food into it, throughout the evening”.⁷⁴⁹ When the conclusions did eventually emerge in November 1938, they provided the perfect opportunity to retreat officially from the policy that appeared to endanger British strategic interests in the Middle East – a consideration that was only pertinent due to the looming threat of a second world war.

Ultimately, although staff at the respective ministries were indeed pitted against each other in terms of their opinions, it remained the relationship between William Ormsby-Gore and Anthony Eden that fuelled a turf war between the Foreign and Colonial Offices in 1937-38. This is evidenced by the profound change witnessed once these two men left the government and a final consensus emerged. Rather than demonstrating how bureaucratic politics led to a faulty decision, however, this episode of a turf war represented one cabinet minister’s defence against another’s legitimate interest in his turf and a subsequent delay in formulating a new policy. The resultant was a single bureaucratic adherence to a policy against partition, but rather than being purely a product of bureaucratic politics, this consensus primarily resulted from the real fear of losing Arab support in the event of war, an opinion that was shared and reiterated by many more than Rendel, Oliphant and Eden. The year’s delay this conflict produced contributed to eliminating the option to continue with the Jewish national home. Arab attitudes hardened against repressive British counter-insurgency measures and the perceived lack of interest in Westminster. Added to the fear of regional Arab leaders and the bureaucratic politics that produced delay, was a lack of effective parliamentary criticism that allowed the option to act against the Jewish national home to pass into the second stage of decision-making.

⁷⁴⁹ Ibid.

Variables: Parliamentary Politics

Although the parliamentary politics variable did not eliminate any options from the choice set, it is important to discuss it because this variable had eliminated options previously in both 1922 and 1930. In 1939, however, the lack of effective parliamentary opposition allowed the option of acting against the Jewish national home to move into the second stage of decision-making, a result that seemed impossible in the decision-making processes discussed in earlier chapters. This was due to Chamberlain and MacDonald's opinion that prestige was not a variable on the political dimension when dealing with Palestine in 1939, and because a large Conservative majority in the House of Commons permitted the government to risk losing a sizable number of Conservative MPs who equated Palestine's independence with appeasement. Amery, for example, wrote to Eden that "[t]he whole business is a replica on a small scale of the European situation; absence of policy and fear of irritating those who mean mischief in any case".⁷⁵⁰ Incidentally, although Ormsby-Gore had opposed Eden's attitude to Palestine, he had supported him in cabinet on the crisis with Germany.⁷⁵¹

By the late 1930s, the national government, a Labour-Conservative alliance created by a Conservative takeover of Ramsay MacDonald's government in August 1931, was very secure. Still dominated by Conservatives, who had a very large majority in the House of Commons following a general election in 1935, the government felt very little threat from parliamentary politics. There were only eight Labour MPs and 33 Liberals versus 387 Conservatives.⁷⁵² There was, however, a proportion of Conservative MPs who opposed the Neville Chamberlain cabinet over

⁷⁵⁰ AMEL 1/5/46, 2 of 2, 11 October 1938, Amery to Eden, Churchill Archives Centre, The Papers of Leopold Amery.

⁷⁵¹ Peters, *Anthony Eden at the Foreign Office 1931-1938*, 333.

⁷⁵² Defries, *Conservative Party Attitudes to Jews, 1900-1950*, 153.

the policy of appeasement. This reflected a concern for international prestige and the risks appeasement posed to political survival – not in terms of democratic elections, but in the event of war in Europe. This placement of prestige as a variable on the political dimension, however, was not an opinion shared by the Chamberlain government. Those who opposed appeasement in the form of the Munich Agreement of 1938 saw parallels in the MacDonald White Paper's concessions to Palestinian Arabs. Consequently, they opposed the white paper too by an extension of principle.

The Prime Minister and Colonial Secretary took pains to ensure that the white paper met their requirements for prestige and, fundamentally, the anti-appeasement groups posed no political danger due to the low numbers of opposition MPs in the House. This was evidenced during the Commons debate on the white paper, which included a great deal of posturing but a vote that reflected surprising abstentions and an ultimate, if reduced, victory for the government in line with expectations. The unusually large Conservative majority in the House of Commons, therefore, had allowed the option of acting against the Jewish national home to pass into the second stage of decision-making because the Chamberlain government did not perceive the white paper as posing an intolerable risk to the prestige variable and Parliament was never anticipated to pose a threat on the political dimension.

The architects behind the MacDonald White Paper, MacDonald – a former Labour MP and son of James Ramsay MacDonald – and Chamberlain, did not view prestige as part of the political dimension in dealing with Palestine. This meant the policy they developed did not represent as much of a fundamental change as it appeared. Britain's empire had a history of rebellion, and the idea of repressive measures to restore "order" followed by concessions was not new. MacDonald had specifically questioned Sir Miles Lampson about the impact of abandoning partition.

“Would not this be greeted as a sign of our decadence?”, he asked, as “[t]he Germans and Italians would certainly urge this in all their propaganda”.⁷⁵³ At the Colonial office, the veteran imperial administrator Shuckburgh had expressed similar concerns, that “there was a danger that terrorists would declare that they had won their first battle and must now carry on with the work of driving the Jews into the sea”.⁷⁵⁴ Lampson merely replied, however, that “[i]n a way the British were always giving way to this sort of pressure. They had done so in the cases of Ireland and India and even of Egypt [...] On the whole their credit was far greater after the event than before”.⁷⁵⁵ Pretending Britain had always remained firm in the face of local challenge was futile. Rather than associating the rejection of partition with Munich and appeasement, the Colonial Secretary and the Prime Minister came to view it as part of imperial governance. Ultimately, Britain could concede ground but attempted, if possible, to avoid the appearance of it.

This attitude was most apparent during interdepartmental discussions on Palestine in October 1938. MacDonald noted that “if concessions were to be made, it was essential to avoid the appearance of a surrender to terrorism; we must show the world that our decision has its roots in justice, not force; and thorough-going measures for the restoration of security must therefore precede and accompany the proposed declaration of policy”.⁷⁵⁶ This is why communications about Palestine with regional Arab leaders were conducted clandestinely. Chamberlain, for example, wrote to Egyptian Prime Minister Mahmoud Pasha in October 1938 to assure him they were seeking a solution beyond repression, but it was marked “secret”.⁷⁵⁷ The Colonial Secretary also argued that the key leader in the Revolt, Mufti of Jerusalem Haj Amin

⁷⁵³ PREM 1/352, 2 September 1938, Notes by MacDonald, TNA.

⁷⁵⁴ PREM 1/352, 7 September 1938, “Colonial Office Conference”, TNA.

⁷⁵⁵ PREM 1/352, 2 September 1938, Notes by MacDonald, TNA.

⁷⁵⁶ CO 733/386/13, 7 October 1938, “Palestine Discussions”, TNA.

⁷⁵⁷ PREM 1/352, 26 October 1938, Chamberlain to Pasha, TNA.

al Husseini, would have to be represented at bilateral talks because “no considerations of prestige should prevent us from coming to terms with the one man who can, on his side, guarantee peace. The vicious circle of rebellion – investigation – half settlement has got to be broken, and this is apparently the only way of breaking it.”⁷⁵⁸ When Palestine’s new High Commissioner Sir Harold MacMichael protested that, “His Majesty’s Government cannot treat with instigators of murder”, Sir G. Bushe from the Colonial Office replied, “On the contrary, peace in Ireland was made by a treaty between Cabinet Ministers and ‘murderers’”.⁷⁵⁹ MacDonald agreed, and argued that rejecting partition in this manner would create some opposition in Parliament, but it would not be too great and largely irrelevant because “His Majesty’s Government is only committed to consulting Parliament before embarking on a new constructive policy”.⁷⁶⁰

This transparent secrecy involved in courting wider Arab opinion continued even when the government had to defend its policy to Parliament. When the House of Commons debated an end to partition in October 1938 and then voted on the white paper in May 1939, at no point did government representatives use the “Arab opinion” argument to justify its position. The debates were centred on moral rather than strategic questions and were totally dominated by criticisms of the policy with no backbench opinion being voiced from the other side – a situation highly out of character with previous debates. The final votes, however, vindicated the government’s position – meaning 268 MPs who voted in favour of the white paper had declined to defend it publicly. Opposition in these debates had mainly been mounted by the very small number of Labour MPs, whose presence was hardly

⁷⁵⁸ CO 733/386/13, 12 Oct 1938, “Palestine Discussions”, TNA.

⁷⁵⁹ CO 733/386/13, 7 Oct 1938, “Palestine Discussions”, TNA.

⁷⁶⁰ Ibid.

threatening, and two vocal Conservative opponents of appeasement, Leopold Amery and Winston Churchill.

Criticising the white paper on the basis of appeasement, Amery declared that “[i]t is preposterous to ask the House to shut its eyes, open its mouth and swallow this half-baked project”.⁷⁶¹ The white paper only invited “more intransigence, more violence, more pressure from neighbouring States”, and was “a direct invitation to the Arabs to continue to make trouble”.⁷⁶² His multiple speeches were long and heated, and Churchill stood up to agree, asking, “What will our potential enemies think? What will those who have been stirring up these Arab agitators think? Will they not be encouraged by our confession of recoil? Will they not be tempted to say: ‘They’re on the run again. This is another Munich.’”⁷⁶³ These arguments were echoed across parties and in the House of Lords, by Lord Snell and former High Commissioner to Palestine, Herbert Samuel. To these men, neither partition nor the white paper presented an adequate solution.

Instead they advocated merely “perseverance”. Churchill, for example, had criticised the government’s lack of a decision in November 1937, accusing the cabinet of doing nothing except “palter and maunder and jibber on the Bench”.⁷⁶⁴ He had also openly opposed partition in an article for the *Jewish Chronicle* citing the pending war in Europe and an inevitability of armed conflict in Palestine as his reason.⁷⁶⁵ Then in the debate over the MacDonald White Paper in 1939, Churchill declared that he was bound to vote against the government’s proposals because “I could not stand by and see solemn engagements into which Britain has entered before the world set aside for reasons of administrative convenience or – and it will be a vain hope – for the sake of

⁷⁶¹ House of Commons Debates, 22 May 1939, series 5, vol 347, cols 2015-2016.

⁷⁶² Ibid, cols 2013-2014.

⁷⁶³ House of Commons Debates, 23 May 1939, series 5, vol 347, cols 2176-2177.

⁷⁶⁴ House of Commons Debates, 24 November 1937, series 5, vol 329, cols 2031-2032.

⁷⁶⁵ Defries, *Conservative Attitudes to Jews*, 160.

a quiet life [...] I should feel personally embarrassed in the most acute manner if I lent myself, by silence or inaction, to what I must regard as an act of repudiation”.⁷⁶⁶ In the final vote, Churchill abstained – perhaps demonstrating that he, like all of the 268 MPs who voted “yes” reluctantly admitted that there was little other choice.⁷⁶⁷ Amery, with 178 other MPs, voted against the white paper, but the government still won by a margin of 89. As predicted, the government could afford to lose votes and split the party on this single issue – it simply had a large enough majority. Therefore, although parliamentary politics and the sometimes hollow rhetoric of strident members of the House had proved influential in earlier case studies, by 1939, parliamentary politics actually met requirements on the political dimension in the first stage of decision-making.

Stage Two

After the first stage of decision-making eliminated all options from the choice set that failed to meet requirements on the political dimension, only one alternative remained. The British government could not continue with repression and by extension the Mandate for Palestine including a Jewish national home – nor could it implement partition. This left only one option, to act against, repudiate or end the British obligation towards building a Jewish national home in Palestine.

As demonstrated in previous chapters, operationalising the noncompensatory principle can result in only a single option remaining in the choice set after the first stage of decision-making.⁷⁶⁸ As the poliheuristic approach seeks “acceptable” options, the remaining alternative in this conception is compared “to predetermined values

⁷⁶⁶ House of Commons Debates, 23 May 1939, series 5, vol 347, cols 2168-2169.

⁷⁶⁷ Defries, *Conservative Attitudes to Jews*, 170.

⁷⁶⁸ Mintz, “The Decision to Attack Iraq”, 600.

along a selected set of dimensions”.⁷⁶⁹ In the case of Palestine policy as Britain approached the Second World War, one dimension emerged as substantive for decision-makers. This was the military, or strategic dimension. Rather than seeking a cost-benefit analysis between alternatives along this dimension, the option of ending the Jewish national home was found to “satisfice” it.⁷⁷⁰

The Military/Strategic Dimension

As war approached, the military or strategic dimension was naturally very important. The war played a large role in determining which variables were included in the political dimension, but more tangible military considerations, plans of the Chiefs of Staff for example, constituted a separate, substantive dimension in the second stage. Crucially, any option considered by the cabinet to have passed on the political dimension had to satisfice the needs of the army, navy and airforce. Palestine had to remain available and in a manner that did not draw troops away from vital areas of defence in the Middle East. The white paper met both of these conditions.

First, as Leopold Amery highlighted in the Commons, Palestine was crucial to the British military because it was “the Clapham Junction of all the air routes between this country, Africa and Asia”.⁷⁷¹ It also occupied an important naval position following Italy’s conquest of Abyssinia, what Amery called “new conditions in the Mediterranean” and the port at Haifa allowed a flow of oil supplies from Baghdad.⁷⁷² Palestine occupied a key position in the defence of Egypt and India for a dual reason. As well as the British military requiring use of Palestine, the armed forces could not afford any other power to take its place there and threaten these vital British holdings.

⁷⁶⁹ Mintz and Geva, “The Poliheuristic Theory of Foreign Policy Decision-making”, 87.

⁷⁷⁰ Steinbruner, *The Cybernetic Theory of Decision*; Ostrom and Job, “The President and the Political Use of Force”; Lui, “The Poliheuristic Theory of Decision and the Cybernetic Theory of Decision”.

⁷⁷¹ House of Commons Debates, 19 June 1936, series 5, vol 313, cols 1351-1352.

⁷⁷² Ibid.

This had been a consideration throughout the 1920s and 1930s, with fears that renouncing the Jewish national home would mean returning the Mandate to the League for re-assignment. By creating a situation in which Britain would continue to act as trustee, for the interim period before independence and official treaty negotiations (that were supposed to secure an indefinite British military presence), the white paper removed this threat. It envisioned a ten-year transition period for Palestinian independence, to be followed by a treaty, which was the same process that had allowed Britain to grant Egypt “independence” while keeping control of the Canal.⁷⁷³ Although “the General Staff strongly criticised the absence from the White Paper of a more specific statement as to the strategical safeguards”, critically, it kept Britain in Palestine and unencumbered by an indefinite insurrection that was aided by regional Arab leaders – such as Ibn Saud who had been funding Palestine’s rebellion.⁷⁷⁴

Troops deployed in Palestine were needed to defend the Suez Canal in the event of war and if Italy blocked the Red Sea entrance to the Canal, reinforcements from India would need to be transported to Egypt overland from the Persian Gulf, through Palestine.⁷⁷⁵ As the Peel partition plan was written during the first, less violent stage of the Arab Rebellion, it was directed at this strategic need. Partition, when proposed, was not primarily an attempt to settle the Arab-Jewish problem but merely to solve the immediate political and monetary costs that Britain bore for the Arab-Jewish problem.⁷⁷⁶ As partition appeared universally unacceptable, however, military measures were necessary to subdue Palestine. The counter-insurgency campaign represented merely a temporary measure, however, for Britain lacked the

⁷⁷³ CAB 24/284, 24 February 1939, “Cabinet. Palestine, Minutes of Cabinet Committee”, TNA.

⁷⁷⁴ CAB 23/99, 1 May 1939, Cabinet Minutes, TNA; FO 371/21878 E3791, 27 June 1938, Notes, TNA; FO 371/21878 E3793, 27 June 1938, Notes, TNA.

⁷⁷⁵ Marlowe, *Seat of Pilate*, 151.

⁷⁷⁶ Sheffer, “British Colonial Policy-Making Towards Palestine (1929-1939)”, 318.

manpower, funding and public opinion necessary to endure without a political solution.⁷⁷⁷

Also, while partition might have seemed attractive initially as a means of securing the Mediterranean against Italian incursion following Italy's successful invasion of Abyssinia in 1935, this thinking was easily reversible as a second war between European powers crept ever closer.⁷⁷⁸ If Britain needed to mobilise, simultaneously creating two new states in the Middle East would have upset the status quo, incurred immediate expense and commanded far too much attention considering the primacy of European affairs.⁷⁷⁹

This meant that troops could not continue to be siphoned away from key strategic zones in the Middle East. Cost of troops and hardware was of vital concern to the Chiefs of Staff, and the broad swathe of territory Britain "protected" during the Interwar period had already led to a reappraisal of military thinking. In October 1937, the Chiefs of Staff stressed the policy of "self sufficiency" in the Middle East to avoid moving squadrons needed to protect vital areas such as the Suez Canal.⁷⁸⁰ Defending the empire in a state of tension with limited resources had become a sensitive subject. The Arab Revolt in Palestine required reinforcements paid for by the Palestine administration in the region of £3.5 million (approximately £185 million today) but they had to be diverted from other tasks.⁷⁸¹ By 1939, the violent element of the Arab Revolt had been largely eliminated and the white paper gave Britain more security vis-à-vis the other Arab leaders. Vitality, an independent Palestine still meant a strong

⁷⁷⁷ Mahmoud Yazbak, "From Poverty to Revolt: Economic Factors in the Outbreak of the 1936 Rebellion in Palestine", *Middle Eastern Studies* 3 (3) 2000: 93-113, 95; Cmd 5479, 1937, *Report of the Royal Commission*, 519.

⁷⁷⁸ Cohen, "British Strategy and the Palestine Question 1936-1939", 157.

⁷⁷⁹ Sheffer, "British Colonial Policy-Making Towards Palestine (1929-1939)", 319.

⁷⁸⁰ Cohen, "British Strategy and the Palestine Question 1936-1939", 182-183.

⁷⁸¹ Cmd 5479, 1937, *Palestine Royal Commission Report*, 106.

British military presence and one that did not pose a drain on resources, ensuring that the MacDonald White Paper satisfied the military/strategic dimension.

Conclusion

The MacDonald White Paper of 1939 is often considered to mark a major shift in British policy towards Palestine. The white paper stated Britain's objective was "the establishment within ten years of an independent Palestine State".⁷⁸² This was portrayed as a direct response to the violence in Palestine, highlighting the Arab fear of Jewish domination and how this "has produced consequences which are extremely grave for Jews and Arabs alike and for the peace and prosperity of Palestine".⁷⁸³ Instead of seeking to expand the Jewish national home indefinitely by immigration, the cabinet chose to allow further immigration only if the Arabs were prepared to acquiesce. Theoretically, this proviso relieved British troops of the tangible burden of policing Palestine solely to protect the growing national home. It also guarded against the diplomatic furore with regional Arab leaders who were opposed to Zionism and purported to avoid assuming the moral burden of ceasing Jewish immigration – the Arabs would make that decision.

When examining the decision-making process behind this document in the context of Britain's previous policy formulations (the Churchill White Paper of 1922 and the MacDonald "Black" Letter in 1931), the decision in 1939 represents continuity as well as change. This is because the decision-making process, if not the final decision, followed a very similar pattern to previous chapters. In every period, the British cabinet was presented with authoritative interpretations of tensions in Palestine that rested on Arab opposition to the policy of building a Jewish national

⁷⁸² Cmd 6019, 1938, *Palestine. Statement of Policy*.

⁷⁸³ Ibid.

home. Constraints presented by variables on the political dimension, however, had, until the late 1930s, prevented the government following advice to vigorously implement, reduce or end the policy.

Whereas the Chamberlain government did not interpret Palestine data any differently than its predecessors, it possessed the impetus of impending war and the strength of a large majority in the House necessary to carry out a “rational” policy. Inter-party politics had played a large role in denying previous governments this luxury. Former India Secretary Lord Winterton noted, for example, how “if during all the troubles that we had in India, the Hindu and Moslem disturbances, that if in speaking as Under-Secretary I had to deal with a state of affairs in which there was in this House either a Pro-Moslem or a Pro-Hindu bloc, it would have been impossible for me to discharge my duties, because the government of India could not have maintained order”.⁷⁸⁴

Also, the new policy was only as finite as the conditions that made it necessary, and it was still MacDonald’s hope that there would be an eventual return to the idea of partition in the future.⁷⁸⁵ Political conditions might improve over time, or they might deteriorate. As such, the white paper also included a provision that after ten years, independence could be postponed.⁷⁸⁶ This was not a disingenuous article of the document, merely a safeguard against an unknowable future condition of international relations. By repudiating the Jewish national home and instead supporting a Palestinian Arab bid for autonomy masquerading as independence, Britain gave up nothing of value to its present or future political or strategic interests in the Middle East, making it difficult to label the policy as appeasement.

⁷⁸⁴ House of Commons Debates, 19 June 1936, series 5, vol 313, cols 1337-1338.

⁷⁸⁵ CAB 24/282, 18 January 1939, “Cabinet. Palestine. Memorandum by the Secretary of State for the Colonies, National Archives”, TNA.

⁷⁸⁶ Cmd 6019, 1939, *Palestine Statement of Policy*.

Far from an analogy with the Munich Agreement of 1938 – which was a foreign policy anomaly pursued to avoid war with another European power – MacDonald’s White Paper represented merely the routine exercise of diplomacy within Britain’s own empire. The London Conference represented a familiar practice of short-term conciliation.⁷⁸⁷ While labelled “appeasement” by some of those MPs who opposed Munich, the comparison was an emotional reaction to an otherwise normal act of concession and compromise. MacDonald himself was resigned to what he considered to be a less than ideal policy: “I don’t think I did make such a good job of Palestine; but the problem was insolvable on any short-term lines, and there was little else we could do in the circumstances and at the time that would have given us the essential minimum of trouble in the Near East now. In the end Jew and Arab alike will have gained from our policy.”⁷⁸⁸ The decision was made in the context of a crisis, but the decision-making process was indeed rational, both in terms of a traditional expected utility model and the poliheuristic two-stage analysis. Also, it is important to remember that Palestine remained but a sideshow to the European situation, and books and memoirs on those involved in British foreign policy during the critical time period 1938-39 rarely even list Palestine in the index.⁷⁸⁹

The Second World War then stalled further cabinet-level considerations of Palestine policy, despite a violent campaign orchestrated by the Jewish paramilitary organisations, the Irgun and the Stern Gang. When allied troops began to liberate concentration camps, however, the horror of the Holocaust meant Britain was again severely constrained by the diplomacy variable on the political dimension. Rather

⁷⁸⁷ Sheffer, “British Colonial Policy-Making Towards Palestine (1929-1939)”, 309.

⁷⁸⁸ MAC 2/5/95, undated, Malcolm MacDonald’s Notes on his tenure at the Colonial Office before the war, reproduced by permission of Durham University Library.

⁷⁸⁹ Peters, *Anthony Eden at the Foreign Office*.

than only regional Arab states, by 1945, the cabinet had to contend with a new superpower in strident support of the Jewish cause.

Chapter 6: From War to Withdrawal 1940-1948

*“There must be a Jewish State – it is no good boggling at this – and, even if it is small, at least they will control their own immigration, so that they can let in lots of Jews, which is what they madly and murderously want”.*⁷⁹⁰

Hugh Dalton, Chancellor of the Exchequer, 1947.

When Clement Attlee’s Labour government was voted into power in July 1945, it was faced with a stark post-war reality. As well as problems such as financial ruin, occupation of Germany, the beginnings of a Cold War with the Soviet Union and a reinvigorated independence movement in India, Palestine was one of many pressing issues dominating the political landscape in these initial post-war years. Palestine, however, had explosive potential. The MacDonald White Paper of 1939 had left a rift between British authorities and the Jewish Agency in Palestine. Paramilitary groups such as the Haganah, Irgun and its offshoot, the Stern Gang, repeatedly attacked British forces, which were deporting thousands of illegal Jewish immigrants – Holocaust survivors – to camps in Cyprus. Tension and violence escalated, and explanations of British withdrawal from Palestine in May 1948 tend to cite war fatigue and economic hardship as the key elements of this decision.⁷⁹¹ The actual decision-making process, however, was more related to frustrated diplomacy and the potential effects this could have on the economy than singular considerations of purely substantive concerns.

Like some case studies presented in previous chapters, the British decision to withdraw from Palestine in 1948 does not appear to fit the rational choice model. After the war ended and Labour ascended to power, two commissions of enquiry in 1945-1946 and 1947 recommended an end to Britain’s Palestine Mandate in the form

⁷⁹⁰ Hugh Dalton, *High Tide and After: Memoirs 1945-1960* (London: Frederick Muller Limited, 1962), 189.

⁷⁹¹ Pappé, *A History of Modern Palestine: One Land, Two Peoples*; Shlaim, *The Iron Wall: Israel and the Arab World*.

it had taken since the 1920s. Labour was in favour of this outcome, but the nature of Palestine's constitutional development placed Britain in a seemingly hopeless political quandary. The Anglo-American Committee of 1946 recommended a binational state for Arabs and Jews under British trusteeship, whereas a majority of the United Nations Special Committee on Palestine in 1947 advocated partition and independence. Between these two investigations, Foreign Secretary Ernest Bevin had attempted to secure agreement between Palestine's Jews and Arabs on either of these solutions, as well as a plan for provincial autonomy. No proposals met with mutual agreement, however, leaving Britain between a Zionist position supported by the President of the United States and a set of Arab demands endorsed by leaders across the Middle East. This meant that between 1945 and late 1947, the British government found itself totally incapable of making a final policy decision. A simple cost-benefit analysis cannot account for this inertia, as rational choice employs a holistic search in which the option providing the greatest utility is simply selected.⁷⁹² Conversely, operationalising Poliheuristic Decision Theory's nonholistic search and non-compensatory principle provides a plausible explanation.

This chapter applies Ph Theory to the British decision to withdraw from Palestine in 1948. It argues, that in the first stage of the decision-making process, the government rejected alternatives that failed to meet requirements on the most important, political dimension. There was only one key variable on this dimension, which, reflecting criteria outlined in Mintz 2004, was diplomacy. Until September 1947, no alternative met requirements on the political dimension, leaving Palestine policy in a state of paralysis concealed by ongoing but unprofitable negotiations. In 1947, however, an additional option was introduced into the choice set that did satisfy

⁷⁹² Mintz and Geva, "The Poliheuristic Theory of Foreign Policy Decision Making".

the political dimension: the potential to withdraw preceding a vote for partition at the United Nations. Then, once all but one option was eliminated, the government sought to satisfy the remaining alternative on the substantive strategic and economic dimensions in the second stage of decision-making. Rather than an empire fleeing from one of its previously vital strategic outposts, this analysis reveals a challenging and time-sensitive balancing of diplomatic interests between east and west, and long term strategic planning in the context of short-term economic pressure. The lack of viable options on the political dimension led to a lengthy delay in deciding Palestine policy, an end to which was only made possible by relinquishing any further mandatory responsibility.

Defining the Choice Set

At the annual Labour Party Conference in 1944, the party platform drafted by future Chancellor Hugh Dalton was strongly pro-Zionist.⁷⁹³ It advocated a Jewish state in Palestine with expanded borders and encouraged local Arabs to emigrate in exchange for compensation.⁷⁹⁴ This position, dubbed “Zionism Plus”, favoured unlimited Jewish immigration into Palestine, specifically without consideration of economic capacity, and so rejected the MacDonald White Paper.⁷⁹⁵ Upon election to government in July 1945, Ernest Bevin believed his own negotiating skills developed through years as a union leader could resolve the Palestine problem. Convinced that he could forge an agreement, Bevin boasted, “if I don’t get a settlement, I’ll eat my hat”.⁷⁹⁶ Attlee’s government, however, soon realised the difficulties of their position regarding Palestine, finding themselves in similar constraints to those binding Neville

⁷⁹³ Dalton, *High Tide and After*, 145.

⁷⁹⁴ Ibid.

⁷⁹⁵ Ibid, 146.

⁷⁹⁶ Ibid, 147.

Chamberlain's cabinet in 1939. An uprising in Palestine had the potential to create wider diplomatic problems, and the government's choice set was reflected in the polarised plans produced by two commissions of enquiry: the Anglo-American Committee and the United Nations Special Committee on Palestine. Although by 1945 the alternatives presented by these investigations were already well known, it is important to realise that the commissions took place specifically in order to search for new options.

The first post-war investigation, the Anglo-American Committee, resurrected the option of a binational state with provincial autonomy. The Peel Commission had rejected this alternative in 1937 because it required Jewish and Arab cooperation, but it was re-introduced into the choice set in 1945-46. As an investigation, the Anglo-American Committee was a direct result of increased American awareness of the Jewish displaced persons (DPs) problem in Europe. In mid-1945 the horrors of the Holocaust were still unravelling, and President Truman seemed particularly effected by the report of public servant, Earl G. Harrison, into poor living conditions among DPs encamped in the American zone of occupied Germany.

Like the Jewish Agency – whose immigration quota under the 1939 white paper was nearing completion – Harrison called for the immediate admission of 100,000 Jewish DPs into Palestine.⁷⁹⁷ Truman then echoed this demand on 31 August 1945, but Attlee's government had barely moved into their offices and found compliance with this request fraught with difficulties.⁷⁹⁸ There was the potential for a second Arab uprising against British forces in Palestine that would compound the Jewish insurgency growing there since the MacDonald White Paper, and such large-scale immediate immigration would also have made Attlee's government appear

⁷⁹⁷ Department of State Bulletin Vol XIII, No 327, 30 September 1945, *Report of Earl G. Harrison on Conditions and Needs of Displaced Persons*, 456.

⁷⁹⁸ Dalton, *High Tide and After*, 148.

callously indifferent to British-Arab obligations outlined in 1939. Faced with pressure from across the Atlantic, Bevin orchestrated a joint venture with the United States in order to persuade its representatives of the merits of the British way of thinking.⁷⁹⁹ Appointed 13 November 1945, the committee did not report its findings until 20 April 1946.

Five months of investigation and negotiation yielded a unanimous report among the Anglo-American committee members. This report relied very heavily on the extensive investigation conducted by the Peel Commission in 1937, but came to different conclusions. It made ten recommendations, of which the most important were immediate immigration of 100,000 Jewish DPs from Germany to Palestine and a new Palestinian constitution to establish a binational state in which the majority would not be able to dominate the minority.⁸⁰⁰ The committee members also advised for a continuation of the Mandate pending a trusteeship agreement with the United Nations.⁸⁰¹ Although the committee recognised the problems associated with enacting positive policy while “Palestine is an armed camp”, they believed the result of withdrawal would be “prolonged bloodshed the end of which it is impossible to predict”.⁸⁰²

To enforce a blending of Arab and Jewish nationalisms, the committee recommended “that, if this Report is adopted, it should be made clear beyond all doubt to both Jews and Arabs that any attempt from either side, by threats of violence, by terrorism, or by the organization or use of illegal armies to prevent its execution,

⁷⁹⁹ Michael J. Cohen, “The Genesis of the Anglo-American Committee on Palestine, November 1945: A Case Study in the Assertion of American Hegemony”, *The Historical Journal* 22 (1) 1979: 185-207, 185.

⁸⁰⁰ Cmd 6806, 1946, *Report of the Anglo-American Committee of Enquiry Regarding the Problems of European Jewry and Palestine*, 2-10.

⁸⁰¹ Ibid.

⁸⁰² Ibid, 39, 42.

will be resolutely suppressed”.⁸⁰³ The report did not specify which responsible party would enact this suppression, which is worth noting since Britain was already embroiled in such a conflict and the committee found the reality of this quite disturbing – noting how they “became more and more aware of the tense atmosphere each day”.⁸⁰⁴ Faced with an unhappy situation, therefore, the committee had recommended a well-intentioned policy but one that seemed ignorant of the entire history of British mandated Palestine, as well as the aspirations of both Arab and Jewish communities. How to implement these recommendations, therefore, remained a difficult proposition. President Truman, for his part, reiterated his demand for the 100,000 immigration permits without reference to the constitutional development necessary to make this possible. Without an agreed framework for implementation, the joint committee was virtually useless.

As a result, Truman agreed to send two groups of advisers to Britain to negotiate a scheme for moving forward. The first was charged with discussing only the practicalities of admitting 100,000 Jews to Palestine. The second round of negotiations was led by Lord President of the Council Sir Herbert Morrison and US State Department official Henry F. Grady, resulting in the Morrison-Grady plan of a binational state with Arab and Jewish provinces, and a separate Jerusalem and Negev under British rule.⁸⁰⁵ This left a central government with final control of departments such as defence, customs and excise, the police and the courts, but with an elective legislature in the Jewish and Arab provinces whose bills required approval from the High Commissioner.⁸⁰⁶ In theory, Jewish DPs could immigrate into the Jewish province and this meant the plan fulfilled recommendations made by the Anglo-

⁸⁰³ Ibid.

⁸⁰⁴ Ibid.

⁸⁰⁵ Cmd 7044, 1947, *Palestine No. 1 (1947). Proposals for the Future of Palestine*, 4.

⁸⁰⁶ Ibid, 5.

American Committee. As the joint investigative commission had already rejected provincial autonomy, however, the link was somewhat tenuous.

Provincial autonomy also comprised only the beginning of a solution, as negotiations with Arabs and Jews would still be necessary for implementation. Unsurprisingly, President Truman rejected the plan due to the intolerable delay it would create for DPs seeking immigration visas. Regardless, provincial autonomy was presented to the British Parliament as a basis for negotiations.⁸⁰⁷ As Conservative MP Oliver Stanley noted during the policy debate on 31 July 1946, however, this scheme was a year in the making and still lacked American support.⁸⁰⁸ It was pointless discussing the Anglo-American Committee report, Stanley declared, as “that Report is dead, although, it is only fair to say, it has been buried with the very highest honours”.⁸⁰⁹ Provincial autonomy remained the official basis for negotiations, but representatives of the Jewish Agency refused to attend. Their most basic demand was some form of partition. In 1947, this was also recommended by the United Nations Special Committee on Palestine.

Partition had been rejected in 1938 after Sir John Woodhead’s commission found it impracticable. The idea did, however, re-emerge in the choice set of Winston Churchill’s national wartime government. Churchill’s cabinet had flirted with the idea of partition along the lines originally suggested by Peel – with Arab Palestine annexed to Transjordan – but they never made a decision and the issue was shelved following Lord Moyne’s assassination by the Stern Gang in November 1944.⁸¹⁰ Churchill especially believed that implementing almost any policy initiative was impossible in

⁸⁰⁷ House of Commons Debates, 31 July 1946, series 5, vol 426, cols 965-966.

⁸⁰⁸ Ibid, cols 978-979.

⁸⁰⁹ Ibid, cols 978-980.

⁸¹⁰ CAB 66/64/14, 4 April 1945, “The Future of the British Mandate for Palestine”, TNA; CAB 66/65/56, 16 May 1945, “Palestine. Memorandum by the Secretary of State for the Colonies”, TNA.

the face of terrorist activities and would likely destabilise the Middle East.⁸¹¹ After the war, partition re-entered the choice set again, albeit unofficially, because it formed the basic demands of Jewish Agency representatives involved in private negotiations with Ernest Bevin though 1946 and 1947. Then, after the Palestine issue was referred to the United Nations, the option to partition forcibly asserted itself as an alternative within the choice set.

Over four months, the United Nations Special Committee on Palestine investigated the Palestine problem and signed its report on 31 August 1947.⁸¹² Made up of representatives from 11 countries (Australia, Canada, Czechoslovakia, Guatemala, India, Holland, Iran, Peru, Sweden, Uruguay and Yugoslavia), its composition specifically avoided any members of the Security Council and reflected the geopolitical balance of power in the UN.⁸¹³ The Higher Arab Executive boycotted UNSCOP proceedings, but representatives from Egypt, Iraq, Lebanon, Saudi Arabia, Syria and Transjordan agreed to participate.⁸¹⁴ The boycott, however, effectively meant that while the UNSCOP committee was swamped with memoranda, letters of appeal, reports, witness testimony and evidence submitted by advocates of the Jewish, Zionist and DP cause, there was little seen of the opposing argument unless it was included in British documentation. After nearly 40 UNSCOP meetings, the Arab states and Pakistan did all testify on behalf of the Palestinian Arab cause, but the amount of paperwork – in comparison to documents advocating the Zionist cause –

⁸¹¹ CAB 66/64/14, 4 April 1945, “The Future of the British Mandate for Palestine”, TNA.

⁸¹² Ritchie Owendale, “The Palestine Policy of the British Labour Government 1947: The Decision to Withdraw”, *International Affairs* 56 (1) 1980: 73-93, 88.

⁸¹³ Tessler, *A History of the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict*, 258.

⁸¹⁴ S-0611, S-0611-0001, S-0611-0001-02, June 13 1947, J Husseini to Chairman, United Nations Special Committee on Palestine, UN archives; Ibid, July 10 1947; S-0611, S-0611-0001, S-0611-0001-04, 17 July 1947, Abdul Aziz Kuheimi to Mr Victor Ho, UN archives; S-0611, S-0611-0001, S-0611-0001-04, 14 July 1947, Consul General of Transjordan to Dr Victor Hoo, UN archives; S-0611, S-0611-0001, S-0611-0001-04, 9 July 1947, “Special Committee on Palestine. Communication Addressed by the Personal Representative of the Secretary-General to the Arab League States”, UN archives.

was miniscule. In August, UNSCOP asked to see British documents on various partition plans, but the committee had to be educated on the Palestine issue virtually from scratch.⁸¹⁵ Sir Henry Gurney and the British Liaison MacGillivray gave testimony that was almost totally confined to basic facts and figures regarding population, taxation, immigration laws, average incomes and how the Palestine Administration operated.⁸¹⁶ In this context, the committee report was returned remarkably quickly, albeit with two different conclusions.

The majority plan suggested partition into Jewish and Arab states with the city of Jerusalem under international supervision and all areas joined by an economic union.⁸¹⁷ This was deemed necessary because, just as Sir John Woodhead had reported in 1938, the Arab state would not, on its own, be economically viable.⁸¹⁸ The scheme then required Britain to continue the Mandate for an interim period that would allow the immigration of 150,000 Jews into Palestine.⁸¹⁹ Based to a large degree on Lord Peel's commission of 1937, the majority opinion agreed with Peel's earlier observations "that the claims to Palestine of the Arabs and Jews, both possessing validity, are irreconcilable, and that among all of the solutions advanced, partition will provide the most realistic and practicable settlement".⁸²⁰ The majority opinion intended to divide Palestine into two sovereign states with an internationalised City of Jerusalem under the following specifications:

"The proposed Arab State will include Western Galilee, the hill country of Samaria and Judea with the exclusion of the City of Jerusalem, and the coastal plain from Isdud to the Egyptian frontier. The proposed Jewish State will

⁸¹⁵ S-0611, S-0611-0001, S-0611-0001-06, 11 August 1947, D C MacGillivray to the Principal Secretary, United Nations Special Committee on Palestine, UN archives.

⁸¹⁶ S-0611, S-0611-0002, S-0611, S-0611-0002-06, 16 June 1947, "Special Committee on Palestine. Verbatim Record of the Sixth Meeting", UN archives.

⁸¹⁷ "United Nations Special Committee On Palestine Report To The General Assembly, Volume 1", Lake Success, New York, 1947, Chapter 6, 3.

⁸¹⁸ Ibid.

⁸¹⁹ Ibid, Chapter 6, 2(B) (c), 1.

⁸²⁰ Ibid, Chapter 6, Part 1, 1.

include Eastern Galilee, the Esdraelon plain, most of the coastal plain, and the whole of the Beersheba sub-district, which includes the Negev.”⁸²¹

In contrast, the minority position advocated by India, Iran and Yugoslavia called for an independent federal state after a transitional period entrusted to an appointee of the General Assembly’s choosing.⁸²² The majority, however, believed this type of binational or cantonised state was unworkable because the constant oversight necessary to keep both populations in parity would be nearly impossible.⁸²³ These proposals were then refined through ad hoc committee and plenary meetings and put to a vote in the General Assembly on 29 November 1947.

There were, therefore, three options available to British decision-makers in the late 1940s. In the House of Commons, President of the Board of Trade, Sir Richard Stafford Cripps announced in August 1946 that, “there are three possible alternatives for Palestine in the future – partition [...]; the present scheme, or something of that character; and, thirdly, the return to the status quo”.⁸²⁴ This meant that other than partition, which had already been removed from the choice set in 1938 with the Woodhead Commission, the alternatives were to create a binational state along the lines suggested by the Anglo-American Committee or, more precisely, with provincial autonomy as agreed in the Morrison-Grady proposals, or to continue with the Mandate unaltered, adhering to the last defined policy as articulated in the MacDonald White Paper of 1939. The presence of this “do nothing” option meant that conventional Palestinian independence still remained in the choice set. Partition was then officially re-introduced by the UNSCOP report.

⁸²¹ Ibid, Chapter 6, Part II.

⁸²² Ovendale, “The Palestine Policy of the British Labour Government 1947”, 89.

⁸²³ “United Nations Special Committee On Palestine Report To The General Assembly, Volume 1”, Lake Success, New York, 1947, Chapter 5, 6.

⁸²⁴ House of Commons Debates, 1 August 1946, series 5, vol 426, cols 1237-1238.

There was, of course, a final alternative that has not been discussed above. The option to withdraw without committing British resources to any form of a “solution” was obviously within the choice set because it became the final decision. When this alternative entered the choice set, however, was dependent on the rejection of all other alternatives, and it was only when faced with the prospect that the General Assembly could vote in favour of partition that the option to withdraw in this manner also entered the choice set. This is explored in greater detail below.

Stage One

The fundamental assumption of Poliheuristic Decision Theory is that options are eliminated from the choice set in the first stage of decision-making if they fail to meet requirements on the political dimension, meaning they threaten political survival.⁸²⁵ In the context of post-war decision-making on Palestine policy, there was only one key variable that constituted the political dimension: diplomacy. Britain’s devastatingly weakened post-war position gave diplomacy a new level of importance. The souring of certain political relationships were potentially destructive to substantive dimensions such as the fragile economy, but the consequences were only vaguely predictable, and this degree of uncertainty only increased the perceived level of risk associated with diplomacy. This sole variable was then operationalised in three different ways: in negotiations with the United States, the Jewish Agency and the Arab states. An analysis of how the British government identified risk after the Second World War vis-à-vis these parties demonstrates how the “noncompensatory loss aversion variable” was operationalised, leaving no viable options within the choice set until after the UNSCOP report was returned in 1947. When the single

⁸²⁵ Mintz, “Applied Decision Analysis”.

viable alternative to withdraw appeared, it then satisfied key substantive dimensions in the second stage of decision-making.⁸²⁶

Variable: Diplomacy (with the United States of America)

When President Truman called for 100,000 Jewish DPs to enter Palestine, he was declaring a new level of American interest in the Palestine problem. This was the result of widespread horror following the Holocaust and Earl Harrison's report detailing survivors' poor treatment within the American occupation zone in Germany.⁸²⁷ Although initially driven by humanitarian concerns, the President's involvement in the Palestine question also acquired importance on his own political dimension that was in direct conflict with that of the Attlee government. Due to the importance of US-UK relations following the Second World War, and President Truman's humanitarian and politically motivated support for Zionism, the options for the British government to pursue either a single majority Arab state of Palestine or create a system of provincial autonomy were removed from the choice set in the first stage of decision-making. Establishing the terms of reference for the joint committee illustrated a mistaken perception in Westminster that British politicians held sway over the American government; these initial negotiations also exposed an underlying American antagonism to the British position in Palestine more generally. Predictably, the two governments were then unable to agree on the report of the Anglo-American Committee or the subsequent Morrison-Grady proposals.

First, it is important to recognise that early in the post-war trans-Atlantic relationship, Attlee and Bevin tried to exert influence over the US president and failed repeatedly. Truman's initial request for the immigration permits, for example, arrived

⁸²⁶ Ibid.

⁸²⁷ Department of State Bulletin Vol XIII, No 327, 30 September 1945, *Report of Earl G. Harrison on Conditions and Needs of Displaced Persons*, 456.

in the form of a letter to Attlee.⁸²⁸ This was not immediately made public, but US Secretary of State James Byrnes informed Foreign Secretary Ernest Bevin it was going to be published, causing Attlee to write to the President warning “that such action could not fail to do grievous harm to relations between our two countries”.⁸²⁹ It was published nevertheless. Additionally, Truman and the US State Department could not be persuaded over Bevin’s proposed terms of reference for the Anglo-American Committee. Framing the committee’s central purpose demonstrated Washington and London’s fundamentally opposed positions on even investigating solutions to the Palestine problem.

Bevin and Attlee wanted a commission focused on the problem of displaced persons in Europe and the possibility of their immigration to countries other than Palestine; this would have prevented the appearance of British double-dealing against the Arabs in favour of Zionism and provided greater scope for dealing with the actual DP problem. There was, however, a real danger that Truman would end the whole idea of a joint commission if Bevin insisted on redirecting the spotlight away from Palestine, where a large number of the DPs professed a desire to go.⁸³⁰ Lord Halifax – Britain’s foreign secretary when the MacDonald White Paper was published and subsequently the British ambassador in Washington – spied Truman’s personal hand in the negotiations over terms of reference. Halifax wrote to Bevin, that, “[t]his is very annoying but I got a hint late last night that rats were at work. This is the President himself.”⁸³¹

Part of Truman’s desire to highlight the Palestine issue in 1945 had been the upcoming New York mayoral election in November, but this meant Truman needed to

⁸²⁸ PREM 8/89, 31 August 1945, Truman to Attlee, TNA.

⁸²⁹ PREM 8/89, 14 September 1945, Attlee to Truman, TNA.

⁸³⁰ President’s Secretary’s Files 1945-1953, Subject File – Foreign Affairs, Box 149, Folder – Attlee, Clement R. Miscellaneous, October 28 1945, Byrnes to Bevin, Truman Presidential Library.

⁸³¹ PREM 8/627, 7 November 1945, Halifax to Bevin, TNA.

delay the announcement of the Anglo-American Committee – the Democrats needed to avoid criticism from New York’s Jewish community about further delay in dealing with the DP issue.⁸³² In 1945, it was estimated that only half of the American electorate had even heard of the Palestine issue but of those, three to one were in favour of the creation of a Jewish state there, and the number was disproportionately high in New York.⁸³³ As a result of these electoral considerations, the best compromise Bevin could achieve on the terms was that the committee would investigate DPs’ ability to migrate to Palestine “or other countries outside Europe”.⁸³⁴ Even after this agreement, it was difficult for the Foreign Office to predict what further requirements could yet emerge. Attlee was scheduled to visit Washington in November, and Halifax perhaps naively noted that, “there will be value in the Prime Minister’s presence here to keep the President straight”.⁸³⁵

When the Anglo-American Committee returned its report, a cabinet committee made up of experts from the Colonial, Foreign and India Offices as well as the Chiefs of Staff and cabinet offices agreed “that a policy based on the recommendations of the Anglo-American Committee is not one which His Majesty’s Government should attempt to carry out alone”.⁸³⁶ This was because “such a policy would have disastrous effects on our position in the Middle East and might have unfortunate repercussions in India”.⁸³⁷ Added to this, the Anglo-American Committee’s binational state approach would not please Zionists either and required a “crippling financial burden”.⁸³⁸ It had been a calculated tactic bringing the United States into a joint commission, but Bevin

⁸³² Cohen, “Genesis of the Anglo-American Committee”, 199-203.

⁸³³ Papers of David K. Niles, Box 29, Folder – Israel File 1940-1945, April 4 1945, Memo from Hadley Cantril to David Niles, Truman Presidential Library.

⁸³⁴ PREM 8/627, 7 November 1945, Halifax to Bevin, TNA.

⁸³⁵ Ibid.

⁸³⁶ FO 371/52517/E3842, 26 April 1946, “Palestine. Appointment, Terms of Reference and Constitution of the Committee. Draft report of the Ad Hoc Official Committee”, TNA.

⁸³⁷ Ibid.

⁸³⁸ Ibid.

and ultimately the cabinet recognised it was imperative that America also share in the solution to prevent Britain shouldering all of the blame or the cost.⁸³⁹

Bevin believed this was possible, not least because he was under the impression that Secretary of State Byrnes told him American interest in the Palestine problem was to prevent large-scale Jewish immigration to America.⁸⁴⁰ As an attempt at a comprehensive plan, however, the Anglo-American Committee's report was recognised as "unhelpful, irresponsible, unrealistic" and suggested that the British government was being "pushed around".⁸⁴¹ Regardless, pride had to be put aside and the necessary next step was to agree a joint scheme for implementation.⁸⁴² The Foreign Secretary, however, was expecting a spirit of cooperation from Washington that did not materialise. He had written to Byrnes on 28 April to stress, "I trust that we can be sure that the United States government will not make any statement about the policy without consultation with His Majesty's Government".⁸⁴³ Two days later, on 30 April, Truman unilaterally reiterated his demand for the 100,000 immigration permits.⁸⁴⁴

A tense few months then followed in which groups of British and American experts attempted to develop a new scheme for Palestine. In this atmosphere, Bevin and Attlee were trying very delicately to prevent further incidents in Palestine that could upset their courting of presidential opinion. In order to avert indiscretions among British forces, the High Commissioner was stripped of the power "to authorise the Military Authorities to take drastic action against Jewish illegal

⁸³⁹ CAB 195/4, 29 April 1946, Cabinet Minutes, TNA; CAB 128/5, 29 April 1946, Cabinet Minutes, TNA.

⁸⁴⁰ CAB 195/4, 29 April 1946, Cabinet Minutes, TNA.

⁸⁴¹ Ibid.

⁸⁴² CAB 128/5, 29 April 1946, Cabinet Minutes, TNA.

⁸⁴³ FO 371/52517/E3815G, 28 April 1946, Bevin to Byrnes, TNA.

⁸⁴⁴ Papers of David K. Niles, Box 29, Folder – Israel File 1946, January-June, April 30 1946, "Statement by the President", Truman Presidential Library.

organisations without cabinet consent”.⁸⁴⁵ Attlee informed the High Commissioner specifically that “[i]n present critical circumstances it is essential that nothing should be done to alienate U.S. sympathy”.⁸⁴⁶ President Truman’s attitude towards the problem – one naturally centred on his own political requirements rather than the British predicament – should perhaps have alerted Attlee and Bevin that solutions acceptable to them were unlikely to excite the Americans. In need of both a Palestine policy and United States support, however, the British government had to pursue the show of cooperation and conciliation, and hope the President could be persuaded.

To this end, the Jewish Agency, the Higher Arab Executive and the Arab states were invited to submit their views on the Anglo-American Committee report within one month following 20 May, and then British and American experts would convene to discuss.⁸⁴⁷ Vitally, Attlee and Bevin tried to convince Truman that whatever solution the experts created, it had “to consider not only the physical problems involved but also the political reactions and possible military consequences”.⁸⁴⁸ This also applied to individual stages of the negotiations. Truman, for example, pushed for a preliminary team of American experts to travel to London in advance of the main group, specifically to discuss the practicalities of moving 100,000 DPs to Palestine.⁸⁴⁹ Bevin resisted, fearing Arabs would interpret such discussions as meaning Britain had already decided on the policy of mass immigration.⁸⁵⁰ The Foreign Secretary relented as long as these preliminary talks remained confidential, but before US State Department official Averell Harriman and

⁸⁴⁵ FO 371/52525/E4623G, 4 May 1946, Chief of Staff in Middle East to War Office, TNA.

⁸⁴⁶ FO 371/52525/E4623G, 8 May 1946, Ismay to Attlee, TNA.

⁸⁴⁷ FO 371/52525/E4775G, 20 May 1946, Cabinet Minutes, TNA.

⁸⁴⁸ President’s Secretary’s Files 1945-1953, Subject File – Foreign Affairs, Box 149, Folder – Attlee, Clement R. Miscellaneous, June 10 1946, Attlee to Truman, Truman Presidential Library.

⁸⁴⁹ PREM 8/627, 10 June 1946, Inverchapel to Bevin, TNA.

⁸⁵⁰ Ibid.

his colleagues could begin talks, Bevin made a highly impolitic speech from the Labour Party Conference in Bournemouth on 12 June 1946.

Bevin remarked how the American desire for 100,000 immigrants to Palestine “was proposed with the purest of motives. They did not want too many Jews in New York.”⁸⁵¹ While this comment betrayed more of what Bevin assumed was American anti-Semitism than his own, this comment in conjunction with earlier statements – such as his warning at a press conference in 1946 that Jews wanted “to get too much at the head of the queue”, meaning this attitude would incite further anti-Semitism – only made the foreign secretary himself appear Nazi-like in the tense post-Holocaust atmosphere.⁸⁵² Bevin was even rebuked in Parliament for these “hasty, ill-timed remarks”, and Labour MP Sydney Silverman reminded him that “[t]he Jews have been at the head of the queue since 1933. They were at the head of the queue in Warsaw, in Auschwitz, in Buchenwald, in Belsen and in Dachau and in all the other spots of unutterable horror that spattered the European mainland.”⁸⁵³ Bevin’s chief crime in these instances was a decided lack of tact, sympathy or emotional understanding of the tragedy that had taken place, which only made agreement with the profoundly saddened President Truman even more difficult.

By declaring that the United States only wanted immigration to Palestine to prevent the arrival of thousands more Jews in New York, Bevin unwisely made the President appear foolish when his goodwill and understanding were crucial.⁸⁵⁴ Bevin never retracted his statement about Jews going to Palestine to avoid them going to New York – he had meant it – though he instructed the Bournemouth remarks to be

⁸⁵¹ Louis, *The British Empire in the Middle East*, 428.

⁸⁵² *Ibid*, 389.

⁸⁵³ House of Commons Debates, 21 February 1946, series 5, vol 419, cols 1373-1374.

⁸⁵⁴ FO 371/52529, 13 June 1946, Inverchapel to FO, TNA.

circulated so they could be read in context.⁸⁵⁵ The second group of American experts arrived to begin a second phase of conversations in July just as Congress was discussing the United Kingdom Loan.⁸⁵⁶ As a sweetener, Secretary of State Byrnes asked Attlee to issue “a reassuring statement on Palestine” and the cabinet refused.⁸⁵⁷ This was because the transparency of such a statement would be obvious to all and because they doubted it would have the desired effect.⁸⁵⁸ The talks over the Anglo-American committee were scheduled to continue and the Chancellor of the Exchequer, Hugh Dalton, believed that “according to the latest reports from Washington, the prospects of Congress approving the United Kingdom loan were now more favourable” and so “it would be a mistake for His Majesty’s Government to issue any further public statement on Palestine until the debate on the loan was completed”.⁸⁵⁹ At least the appearance of Anglo-American cooperation was perceived in Westminster to be doing some good in Washington.

When the US-UK negotiations produced the Morrison-Grady plan of provincial autonomy, Bevin hoped this would secure the President’s support as a fulfilment of the Anglo-American Committee’s recommendation that Palestine exist as neither an Arab or Jewish state and would allow DPs to immigrate to the Jewish province. It was attractive to the British cabinet because provincial autonomy was a short-term policy that could see them through the immediate post-war diplomatic crisis in Palestine, which was just one of many to be dealt with.⁸⁶⁰ Then the subject could be revisited outside an emergency atmosphere. While partition was an inexpedient and diplomatically challenging solution in 1946, provincial autonomy

⁸⁵⁵ Louis, *The British Empire in the Middle East*, 428.

⁸⁵⁶ PREM 8/627, 25 June 1946, Attlee to Truman, TNA.

⁸⁵⁷ CAB 128/6, 8 July 1946, Cabinet Minutes, TNA.

⁸⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁸⁵⁹ Ibid.

⁸⁶⁰ CAB 128/6, 11 July 1946, Cabinet Minutes, TNA, 189-191.

was considered “a constructive and imaginative plan” that “should be commended to the favourable consideration of the Jews and the Arabs if United States support for it could be secured”.⁸⁶¹

Neither Bevin nor Attlee, nor the rest of the cabinet, were fundamentally opposed to partition. It was merely the timing of it that was wrong, when Britain was at its weakest, and this was something they hoped the American president would understand. Bevin, for example, had Sir Norman Brook advise the cabinet that it may,

“be practicable to adopt, as our long-term aim, a scheme under which the major part of the Arab province would be assimilated in the adjacent Arab States of Trans Jordan and the Lebanon, and the Jewish province established as an independent Jewish State, with perhaps a somewhat larger territory than that suggested for the Jewish province proposed in [the Peel Commission]. He hoped that any intermediate solution [...] would contain nothing which was inconsistent with this long-term aim”.⁸⁶²

Provincial autonomy was officially submitted for US approval on 30 July 1946, though Truman had already heard the proposals beforehand from his own team.⁸⁶³ A debate on the plan was scheduled in Parliament for 31 July and 1 August, and Bevin and Attlee were determined to press ahead despite receiving no word from the White House until the day before the debate.⁸⁶⁴ It was a rejection.

Principally, this was because the Morrison-Grady proposals, though relatively practical, violated the spirit of what both Zionists and Truman’s humanitarian concerns wanted to achieve. Although provincial autonomy would have allowed the immigration of 100,000 Jewish DPs to Palestine, it reflected no urgency on the matter. Such mass immigration would need to wait for the negotiations on constitutional development necessary to create a Jewish province, and like the 1939 white paper,

⁸⁶¹ Ibid.

⁸⁶² Ibid.

⁸⁶³ CAB 128/6, 30 July 1946, Cabinet Minutes, TNA.

⁸⁶⁴ Ibid.

was still dependent on Arab acquiescence.⁸⁶⁵ Agreeing to the plan meant postponement of the DP problem indefinitely and admitting a cap on the Jewish community's future growth in Palestine.⁸⁶⁶

On the day of Britain's parliamentary debate, the British Ambassador in Washington wrote that, "It is acutely embarrassing for us that, on the eve of debate in Parliament, the President should have rejected the proposed statement approved both by Grady and Byrnes".⁸⁶⁷ Truman also intended to recall his delegation from London immediately, and this "can hardly be otherwise interpreted than as denoting that, as at present advised, the administration intend drastically to recast the recommendations jointly agreed upon in London, if not to reject them in toto".⁸⁶⁸ Newly appointed British Ambassador Inverchapel labelled this a "deplorable display of weakness" that was, he feared, "solely attributable to reasons of domestic politics which, it will be recalled, caused the Administration last year to use every artifice of persuasion to defer the announcement about the establishment of the Anglo-American Committee until after the New York elections".⁸⁶⁹ This opinion was based on a conversation with the Director of the US State Department's Near East Division, who "frankly admitted as much in talk with me this evening".⁸⁷⁰

Rather than telling Parliament about Truman's rejection of the Morrison-Grady proposals, however, Morrison was instructed to inform the Commons that the government "had hoped before the Debate to receive from President Truman his acceptance, but we understand that he has decided, in view of the complexity of the

⁸⁶⁵ Papers of David K. Niles, Box 29, Folder – Israel File 1946, July-December, July 24, 1946, "Memorandum. Commentary on Some Aspects of the Proposals with Respect to Palestine and the Jewish Problem Submitted to the U.K. and U.S. Governments by the London Conference", Truman Presidential Library.

⁸⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁸⁶⁷ PREM 8/627, 31 July 1946, Washington (British Embassy) to United Kingdom Delegation, TNA.

⁸⁶⁸ Ibid.

⁸⁶⁹ Ibid.

⁸⁷⁰ Ibid.

matter, to discuss it in detail with the United States expert delegation who are returning to Washington for the purpose. The President is thus giving further consideration to the matter, and we hope to hear again from him in due course.”⁸⁷¹ This avoided the appearance of a total political failure for which there was no time before the debate to prepare, but it also left “the door ajar for the Americans to shut” so that “part at any rate of the onus for the sequel will then rest with them”.⁸⁷²

The Prime Minister tried to persuade Truman that the plan devised by US and UK experts was the best prospect for a settlement, that it allowed the introduction of DPs to Palestine “without disturbing the peace of the whole Middle East and imposing on us a military commitment which we are quite unable to discharge”.⁸⁷³ Truman continued to deny support for the plan, which forced Attlee to remind him that “you will appreciate that any solution must, as matters stand, be one which we can put into effect with our resources alone”.⁸⁷⁴ Provincial autonomy was the only plan the British had at that point as a reasonable basis for negotiations. Crucially, however, the government did not consider its position immovable on this plan or any of its features.⁸⁷⁵ Its position merely reflected the steadfast adherence to a single independent Palestinian state, as advanced by the Arabs, and partition with the creation of a Jewish state, as advocated by the Jewish Agency (discussed more below).

A formal conference was opened with the Arab states in London in September, but informal talks with representatives of the Jewish Agency had already begun in Paris in August. A new moment of tension between the Trans-Atlantic

⁸⁷¹ House of Commons Debates, 31 July 1946, series 5, vol 426, cols 969-970.

⁸⁷² PREM 8/627, 31 July 1946, Washington (British Embassy) to United Kingdom Delegation, TNA.

⁸⁷³ President’s Secretary’s Files 1945-1953, Subject File – Foreign Affairs, Box 149, Folder – Attlee, Clement R. Miscellaneous, August 9 1946, Attlee to Truman, Truman Presidential Library.

⁸⁷⁴ President’s Secretary’s Files 1945-1953, Subject File – Foreign Affairs, Box 149, Folder – Attlee, Clement R. Miscellaneous, August 18 1946, Attlee to Truman, Truman Presidential Library.

⁸⁷⁵ Ibid; PREM 8/627, 29 November 1946, Creech Jones to Attlee, TNA.

powers then emerged as Truman intended to make a statement on the evening of Yom Kippur, the Jewish Day of Atonement. Just as Bevin believed he was starting to reach a breakthrough with Zionist negotiators, Attlee received the text of Truman's proposed statement on Palestine at midnight on 3 October 1946. The text reiterated Truman's earlier demand for 100,000 Jewish DP immigration visas to Palestine, and gave his reason as the suspension of official conference talks until December, which forced DPs to face a harsh German winter without hope or succour.⁸⁷⁶ As discussed below, however, the suspension of talks was entirely innocent and actually intended to allow Jewish participation in the official conference. Attlee requested that Truman allow him a little time to discuss the message with Bevin in Paris and this was denied.

"I have received with great regret", Attlee wrote, "your letter refusing even a few hours grace to the Prime Minister of the country which has the actual responsibility for the government of Palestine in order that he might acquaint you with the actual situation and the probable results of your action. These may well include the frustration of the patient efforts to achieve a settlement and the loss of still more lives in Palestine. I am astonished that you did not wait to acquaint yourself with the reasons for the suspension of the conference with the Arabs. You do not seem to have been informed that so far from negotiations having been broken off, conversations with leading Zionists with a view to their entering the conference were proceeding with good prospects of success".⁸⁷⁷

Although Truman denied political calculations behind this statement, 1946 was an election year and Under Secretary of State Dean Acheson informed Britain's Ambassador in Washington, Lord Inverchapel, that "Truman had reluctantly yielded to intense pressure from elements within the Democratic Party and from the Jewish groups in and about New York, which had been 'pestering and harassing' him for some time past and which had 'blown up' when the news had come that the

⁸⁷⁶ President's Secretary's Files 1945-1953, Subject File – Foreign Affairs, Box 149, Folder – Attlee, Clement R. Miscellaneous, undated, Truman to Attlee, Truman Presidential Library.

⁸⁷⁷ President's Secretary's Files 1945-1953, Subject File – Foreign Affairs, Box 149, Folder – Attlee, Clement R. Miscellaneous, October 4 1946, Attlee to Truman, Truman Presidential Library.

conference in London had been adjourned until December 16th”.⁸⁷⁸ The key to this pressure, Acheson told Inverchapel, was that “the President had been much stirred on hearing that all the candidates nominated for the coming elections in New York were preparing an open attack on him”.⁸⁷⁹ Complicating the Palestine issue for Democratic congressional candidates was the American Federation of Labor and a general fear among the American voter about Jewish immigration to the US.⁸⁸⁰

By 1946, American opinions about immigration had hardened, with less than ten percent of voters outside the clergy favouring immigration.⁸⁸¹ Among the 90% against, roughly half opposed immigration for economic reasons – they remembered the hardship of the 1930s, for example – and the rest possessed feelings against Jews or foreigners more broadly and the “threat” they posed to the American way of life.⁸⁸² An AIPO poll in January 1946 found even fewer in favour of immigration from Europe, less than five percent, and for the same reasons.⁸⁸³ In a poll specific to Iowa in 1946, about one in seven respondents volunteered an opinion on Palestine – about half were critical of Britain and half believed the US should expedite sending DPs “‘back’ to Palestine” rather than admit them to the US.⁸⁸⁴ Conversely, there was almost a complete consensus on the need for a Jewish haven and the majority favoured immigration to Palestine but disagreed with any active US military participation in settling the problem.⁸⁸⁵

⁸⁷⁸ PREM 8/627, 3 October 1946, Inverchapel to Foreign Office, TNA.

⁸⁷⁹ Ibid.

⁸⁸⁰ President’s Secretary’s Files 1945-1953, Subject File – Foreign Affairs, Box 162, Folder – Palestine Jewish Immigration, July 15 1946, Niles to Connelly, Truman Presidential Library.

⁸⁸¹ Papers of David K. Niles, Box 28, Displaced Persons and Immigration File 1945-June 1947, October 21 1946, “Opinions About Immigration: Preliminary Report”, Truman Presidential Library.

⁸⁸² Ibid.

⁸⁸³ Ibid.

⁸⁸⁴ Ibid.

⁸⁸⁵ Ibid.

In addition, between 1946 and 1949, the Truman Administration received just under a million campaign cards on the Palestine issue.⁸⁸⁶ More than half of these cards came from New York, which contained 47% of America's Jews.⁸⁸⁷ This meant the cards did not represent the American population as a whole but betrayed the existence of a sophisticated and highly mobilised pressure group campaign.⁸⁸⁸ Similarly, Zionist organisations issued letter templates for various age and socio-economic groups, including school children, to rewrite in their own words to the President and encourage policies such as selling arms to Palestine's Jews.⁸⁸⁹ The White House only realised the letters were orchestrated because many had neglected to change the wording adequately enough to avoid detection.⁸⁹⁰ These polling statistics and Zionist campaigning made judging the Palestine issue in terms of public opinion confusing at best, and this environment must have weighed on Truman and congressional candidates' minds.

Sensing this atmosphere when in New York for the Council of Foreign Ministers in November 1946, Bevin began to consider any means that might make partition a workable solution, which would strengthen the vital US-UK relationship. Agreeing to consider partition, Bevin believed, was simply an invitation for greater Zionist demands that had the potential to provoke US support for allotting Palestine in its entirety to the Jews.⁸⁹¹ This meant that "before His Majesty's Government could move openly from their present position they would have to await an undertaking by

⁸⁸⁶ Papers of George M. Elsey, Box 115, Folder – Palestine, June 26, 1951, "Philleo Nash to Andie Knutson, Report on Unsolicited Cards on Palestine Situation Stored in Room 65", Truman Presidential Library.

⁸⁸⁷ Ibid.

⁸⁸⁸ Ibid.

⁸⁸⁹ Ibid.

⁸⁹⁰ Ibid.

⁸⁹¹ PREM 8/627, 26 November 1946, United Kingdom Delegation to Council of Foreign Ministers to Foreign Office, TNA.

the Jews and by the American government that partition would satisfy them and not be merely the first of a series of demands”.⁸⁹²

Support from both Republican and Democratic parties would be necessary to avoid Palestine becoming “a subject for bargaining and vote-catching in the Presidential election”.⁸⁹³ Then, finally, partition would require approval by the United Nations.⁸⁹⁴ Secretary of State Byrnes advised Bevin that the President would approve of such a plan.⁸⁹⁵ The Foreign Secretary even seems to have initiated the diplomatic foundations for such a scheme, attempting to scare his counterparts a little. “In all these talks”, Bevin wrote back to the Foreign Office, “I have taken the line that there are three courses open to us; to settle the problem ourselves if we can, to offer the Mandate to the United States or to return it to the United Nations”, adding gleefully, that “my frank statement of these alternatives has been received with a certain amount of consternation on all sides”.⁸⁹⁶ After he returned home from New York, however, these ideas seem to have been discarded, most likely due to fundamental Arab opposition (discussed more below).

In January 1947, Bevin told the cabinet that he was not fundamentally opposed to partition but that the difficulty was imposing that solution against the will of either or both communities, and instead some middle ground should be sought through further negotiations.⁸⁹⁷ At this meeting, the cabinet declined to specify a course of action in the event that negotiations broke down, but they acknowledged that referral to the UN “was bound to be embarrassing” because “[t]here would be much discussion of the various promises that had been made on behalf of His

⁸⁹² Ibid.

⁸⁹³ Ibid.

⁸⁹⁴ Ibid.

⁸⁹⁵ PREM 8/627, 26 November 1946, Inverchapel to Foreign Office, TNA.

⁸⁹⁶ PREM 8/627, 26 November 1946, United Kingdom Delegation to Council of Foreign Ministers to Foreign Office, TNA.

⁸⁹⁷ CAB 128/11, 22 January 1947, “Confidential Annex”, TNA.

Majesty's Government, not all of which were easy to reconcile with one another, and critics would dwell on the long history of our failure to find a solution of the problem by ourselves".⁸⁹⁸ When Bevin finally did ask the cabinet to approve referral to the United Nations, he "recalled the various stages of the negotiations over the past eighteen months, and explained how the problem had become progressively more intractable".⁸⁹⁹ He blamed the influence of American Jewry both in Washington and within the Jewish Agency, and despite having "made every effort to secure the assistance of the United States government, [...] their interventions had only increased our difficulties".⁹⁰⁰ The UN was not an avenue of investigation to be taken lightly, but it provided one potential avenue to secure, at last, a modicum of American acquiescence.

When talks did break down and the cabinet approved referral to the United Nations in February 1947, Bevin held informal talks in New York with the United States Ambassador to the UN and the Secretary General before seeking approval also from Chinese, French and Soviet delegates.⁹⁰¹ Between them they agreed that a special session of the General Assembly would be called to select the member states of a committee on Palestine, which would report back to the regular Assembly.⁹⁰² British Ambassador to the UN, Sir Alex Cadogan, issued a formal note to the Secretary General on 2 April 1947, making it official.⁹⁰³ In the end, even Truman admitted that "[w]e could have settled this Palestine thing if U.S. politics had been kept out of it".⁹⁰⁴ During the process, however, the British government had been

⁸⁹⁸ Ibid.

⁸⁹⁹ CAB 128/9, 14 February 1947, Cabinet Minutes, TNA.

⁹⁰⁰ Ibid.

⁹⁰¹ PREM 6/626, 1 April 1947, Christopher McAlpine to Addis, TNA.

⁹⁰² Ibid.

⁹⁰³ PREM 8/626, 5 April 1947, JM Addis to Miss E A Gilliatt, TNA.

⁹⁰⁴ Confidential File 1938 (1945)-1953, Box 43, Folder – State Department, Palestine 2 of 2, May 13 1947, Truman to Niles, Truman Presidential Library.

rendered incapable of following a course of policy that conflicted with Zionist interests due to the level of support offered to their cause in the United States. This meant that both provincial autonomy and the option for a single independent Palestinian state, due to the American opposition detailed above, were removed from the choice set in the first stage of decision-making.

Variable: Diplomacy (with Zionists)

As well as negotiations with the United States, diplomacy was also undertaken between Britain and representatives of the Jewish Agency. While this was not necessary on a purely strategic level, as the Joint Chiefs agreed Palestine's Jewish rebellion could be ended, like the Arab Revolt, with enough reinforcements, the political consequences of a war against "the Jews" following the Holocaust were too ludicrously damaging to consider.⁹⁰⁵ As noted above, US opinion was firmly in support of Zionist goals and it was American, rather than strictly Zionist, goodwill that was perceived as crucial to Britain's post-war recovery. Provincial autonomy was the plan Bevin advanced following the Anglo-American Committee and securing Zionist agreement to it or any otherwise viable plan implied backing from the United States would be forthcoming as well. Crucially, Zionist acquiescence would have mended the diplomatic fissure that Palestine had opened between London and Washington.

It was not, however, forthcoming, and this failure meant the option to create a system of provincial autonomy was removed from the choice set in the first stage of decision-making, placing Britain in an increasingly tightening diplomatic vice. Provincial autonomy received limited objections in Parliament, and Britain's

⁹⁰⁵ CAB 128/11, 15 January 1947, "Confidential Annex", TNA.

politicians treated the issue surprisingly calmly considering Jewish paramilitary activities in Palestine. The plan for provinces was never in any way acceptable to the Jewish Agency, however, even as the basis for negotiations through 1946 and 1947.

First, it is important to understand that the provincial autonomy plan, which provided the basis for talks with Jews and Arabs, was presented to Parliament very soon after Zionist paramilitary groups bombed the King David Hotel on 22 July 1946, which housed the British Palestine administration's headquarters. Rather than driving policy, however, it seemed to create a certain amount of fatigue towards the Palestine issue that removed Parliamentary politics from the political dimension. When the House of Commons met to debate provincial autonomy on 31 July, the death toll was still unknown and a large number of people were missing. Other than the expected condemnations of terrorist activities, however, combined with expressions of sympathy for Jews killed by the Nazis, mention of the event itself was surprisingly absent.

An exception was Labour backbencher Mr Wilkes, who declared that the "Irgun represents a right wing, Fascist, terrorist, brutal, murdering organisation controlled by a terrorist and Fascist Right Wing party".⁹⁰⁶ After this a number of Conservatives questioned the exact denotation of the term "right wing" and Wilkes agreed to retract that particular phrase from his assessment, which he stated again for good measure. The only MP to note how the bombing might cause political ramifications at home was Mr Evans. He expressed that it was "a most unpleasant business to be hunted, stalked and ambushed by evilly disposed persons armed with sticks of dynamite, tommy-guns and other lethal weapons, a very unpleasant business indeed. I have had some. And it does not console the victims of these attacks to know

⁹⁰⁶ House of Commons Debates, 1 August 1946, series 5, vol 426, cols 1280-1282.

that their assailants are Zionist gentlemen with political ambitions. Neither does it console their bereaved mothers and wives, our constituents.”⁹⁰⁷

Instead of focusing on the bombing itself, or even the merits of provincial autonomy, a great deal of this discussion surrounded the necessity of guarding against carelessly anti-Semitic language – as used by both the Foreign Secretary and Palestine’s General Evelyn Barker – and mostly criticising the government for delay but not actual policy. Barker’s anti-Semitic indiscretions were somewhat more vehement than Bevin’s, as the general had circulated a “restricted” letter to his officers following the King David Hotel bombing, ordering them to “put out of bounds to all ranks all Jewish places of entertainment, cafes, restaurants, shops and private dwellings. No British soldier is to have any intercourse with any Jew [...]”; he concluded by calling on the army to begin “punishing the Jews in a way the race dislikes as much as any – by striking at their pockets”.⁹⁰⁸

Although the government distanced itself from these comments, the accumulated damage was done. Additionally, it had been a year since Bevin had initiated the creation of the Anglo-American Committee and the debate was soured because MPs had learned of the provincial autonomy plan through leaks to the press rather than an official communiqué. Lieutenant-Colonel Morris, for example, remarked how “The Lord President of the Council comes along like a conjuror producing a rabbit out of a hat – a rabbit which has, apparently, already escaped and created a certain amount of mischief”.⁹⁰⁹ The lack of attention Attlee’s government paid to Parliament, however, reflects its low level of importance on the political dimension regarding Palestine policy in the late 1940s. Even when presented with

⁹⁰⁷ House of Commons Debates, 31 July 1946, series 5, vol 426, cols 1056-1057.

⁹⁰⁸ Anthony Julius, *Trials of the Diaspora: A History of Anti-Semitism in England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 334.

⁹⁰⁹ House of Commons Debates, 31 July 1946, series 5, vol 426, cols 1032-1033.

policy initiatives that would satisfy neither Zionists nor Arabs, and therefore, based on previous experience, should have provoked outrage among pro-Zionist or pro-Arab MPs, there was hardly a murmur. “It is remarkable”, Colonial Secretary George Hall noted on 1 August, “that we should have a two days’ Debate on the question of Palestine with so little political feeling displayed, so many constructive speeches made and so much agreement as to the policy before the House”.⁹¹⁰ Equipped with parliamentary acquiescence, Attlee’s government pressed ahead with persuading the Jewish Agency and the Arab states to accept provincial autonomy.

Negotiations with representatives of the Jewish Agency were informal, unofficial and unfruitful, and Ernest Bevin publicly blamed President Truman for the deadlock. One of the key problems was that the Jewish Agency refused to participate in a conference in which the basis for discussion was not partition. As such, when talks began in Paris on 17 August 1946 they were, to a large degree, spontaneous.⁹¹¹ Principally, Bevin wanted to get the Jewish Agency into official negotiations, but they continued to refuse any framework that did not centre on partition proposals. Both the Foreign and Colonial Secretaries “regarded the condition as an impossible one” and this deadlock continued through September 1946.⁹¹² As late as 1 October, Bevin met with Agency representatives Weizmann, Fishman, Goldman, Locker, Brodetsky, Kaplan and Linton, and they reiterated that attendance at the conference was only possible if its object was to establish a Jewish state in, or as part of, Palestine.⁹¹³ They also requested an act of good faith such as releasing Zionist detainees or stopping arms searches in Palestine.⁹¹⁴ Bevin refused, telling them that, “British bayonets

⁹¹⁰ House of Commons Debates, 1 August 1946, series 5, vol 426, cols 1308-1309.

⁹¹¹ PREM 8/627, 19 August 1946, Foreign Office to Cairo, Beirut, Jedda, Baghdad, Jerusalem, TNA.

⁹¹² Ibid; PREM 8/627, 25 September 1946, Goldman to Hall, TNA.

⁹¹³ FO 371/52560, 1 October 1946, Cunningham to Secretary of State for the Colonies, TNA.

⁹¹⁴ Ibid.

would not force partition on resisting Arabs”.⁹¹⁵ Nevertheless, the Foreign Secretary did express the hope that provincial autonomy could be an agreed “*modus vivendi* that might lead to partition”.⁹¹⁶ This idea of autonomy as merely a transition period before the creation of a Jewish state seemed more appealing to the Jewish Agency representatives.

To Bevin, the situation suddenly seemed promising.⁹¹⁷ Regarding detainees and searches, Bevin also scored a small victory by convincing the Jewish Agency representatives to enter separate talks on law and order, assuring them “there would be no difficulty in reaching some sort of an arrangement about detainees. The British government had not taken the initiative in blowing people up.”⁹¹⁸ As Bevin found himself “groping towards a conclusion”, he “felt that the best answer would be a trial transitory period on the basis of a unitary state ensuring proper rights for every citizen”.⁹¹⁹ As had been the practice since August, the Agency representatives agreed to meet with Bevin again after considering the questions of law and order in Palestine separately.⁹²⁰ Meanwhile, talks with the Arab states had been postponed until 16 December, after the UN General Assembly and Council of Foreign Ministers.⁹²¹ Far from approaching a settlement, Bevin’s 1 October meeting with the Zionists was merely the first sign that the Jewish Agency might enter the official conference when it reopened.⁹²² It provided Bevin with a very small glimmer of hope that was dashed following a statement by President Truman on 4 October 1946.

⁹¹⁵ Ibid.

⁹¹⁶ Ibid.

⁹¹⁷ FO 371/52560, 1 October 1946, “Note of a Meeting Held in the Foreign Office at 12 O’Clock on Tuesday 1 October 1946”, TNA.

⁹¹⁸ Ibid.

⁹¹⁹ Ibid.

⁹²⁰ Ibid.

⁹²¹ PREM 8/627, 4 October 1946, Attlee to Truman, TNA.

⁹²² CAB 129/13, 5 October 1946, “Palestine Conference, Memorandum by the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs and the Secretary of State for the Colonies”, TNA.

On the eve of Yom Kippur, Truman publicly reiterated his earlier demand for the immediate immigration of 100,000 Jewish DPs to Palestine. Attlee had received only hours of notice before the announcement, and since Bevin was in Paris negotiating with the Jewish Agency, requested a delay in order to confer with his Foreign Secretary. This was denied, despite that fact that postponement was partly decided in hope that the Jewish Agency would agree to join, which might be prejudiced by Truman's statement.⁹²³ This is what Attlee wrote to the President, and that modifying Britain's immigration policy during the adjournment would be tantamount to a breach of faith towards the Arabs.⁹²⁴ Further complicating the relationship were Zionist interpretations of Truman's speech. He ended the statement with a call for compromise between British and Jewish negotiators, but this was widely viewed as an endorsement of partition.⁹²⁵ For his part, Truman believed the statement contained nothing new.⁹²⁶

Fearing a resurgence of Zionist intransigence, Bevin seized the initiative and set in motion the "good faith" gesture they had requested. If an agreement regarding detainees could be found, Bevin advised the cabinet, "we shall be able to bring Jewish representatives into the Conference on future policy in Palestine, and there is no reason why this should be deferred until the Delegates of the Arab States return to London on the 16th December".⁹²⁷ The result was a Colonial Office subcommittee formed to find means of cooperation between the Jewish Agency and the Palestine

⁹²³ PREM 8/627, 4 October 1946, Attlee to Truman, TNA.

⁹²⁴ Ibid.

⁹²⁵ Cohen, *Palestine to Israel*, 223.

⁹²⁶ White House Central Files 1945-1953, Official File 1945-1953, OF 204, Box 913, Folder – OF 204 (May 1946-53), undated, Note by Byrnes, Truman Presidential Library.

⁹²⁷ CAB 129/13, 5 October 1946, "Palestine Conference, Memorandum by the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs and the Secretary of State for the Colonies", TNA.

Administration over issues such as detainees, arms searches and Emergency Regulations with the aim of securing a truce.⁹²⁸

In October, Arthur Creech Jones's replaced George Hall as Colonial Secretary. A known Zionist sympathiser, Creech-Jones' appointment was also an act of good faith.⁹²⁹ The next month, in line with Bevin's earlier discussions with Agency representatives, the new Colonial Secretary recommended the release of members of the Jewish Executive detained in Palestine since Operation Agatha in June 1946.⁹³⁰ Agatha had been a forcible search and seizure operation ordered by General Barker involving more than 100,000 soldiers and police surrounding Jewish settlements, including Jerusalem and Tel Aviv, and imposing a curfew. Renamed locally as the "Black Sabbath", the manoeuvre resulted in more than 3,000 arrests and considerably exacerbated the already tense situation between Jews and Britons in Palestine.⁹³¹ The King David Hotel was then bombed only a few weeks later, and this meant that negotiators on both the Zionist and British sides spent the autumn and winter of 1946 engaging in tentative talks while totally unsure who they could trust.

Additionally, the conference scheduled for 16 December was postponed again until after Christmas. This was because an upcoming election at the Zionist Conference in Basle would decide whether the Jewish Agency could enter official negotiations and would not be complete by 16 December.⁹³² This meant that in the meantime, the Jewish Agency pushed very strongly for Bevin to admit partition to the conference proceedings in order to sway the Basle vote.⁹³³

⁹²⁸ FO 371/52560, 5 October 1946, Colonial Secretary to Cunningham, TNA.

⁹²⁹ Youssef Chaitani, *Dissension among Allies: Ernest Bevin's Palestine Policy Between Whitehall and the White House, 1945-47* (London: Saqi, 2002), 84.

⁹³⁰ CAB 129/14, 1 November 1946, Cabinet Minutes, TNA.

⁹³¹ Segev, *One Palestine, Complete*, 476.

⁹³² CAB 128/6, 21 November 1946, Cabinet Minutes, TNA.

⁹³³ PREM 8/627, 26 November 1946, United Kingdom Delegation to Council of Foreign Ministers to Foreign Office, TNA.

The problem was, however, that Bevin was attempting to secure an agreement based on provincial autonomy in the short term that may lead in the future to partition – agreeing to consider partition in the first instance would only invite greater demands and place Britain in an intolerable position with the Arab states (discussed more below).⁹³⁴ At the Twenty-Second Zionist Conference in Basle, Chaim Weizmann lost his presidency to Rabbi Silver and attendance at the London conference in January was refused unless Britain made significant concessions in the direction of partition – an attitude that US Secretary of State Byrnes told Silver was “frankly silly”.⁹³⁵ This marginalisation of Weizmann had begun with the Peel Commission’s proposals in 1937 when Labour Leader David Ben-Gurion rose in ascendancy in Palestine’s leadership; the power in international Zionism then continued to shift away from its British representatives and more towards American leaders, such as Rabbi Silver, when Weizmann’s failure to secure the longevity of the Jewish national home became clear in 1939.⁹³⁶ The post-war Zionist attitude in negotiations became less conciliatory and more militant. Informal talks, however, did continue, though Bevin noted that, “[t]errorism is poisoning the relationship between Great Britain and the Zionist movement”.⁹³⁷

Meeting several times in January and February 1947, the representatives of the Jewish Agency and Foreign Secretary Bevin, new Colonial Secretary Creech-Jones and additional secretary to the cabinet Norman Brook, still could not reach any points of consensus.⁹³⁸ The two Secretaries agreed to launch a last ditch effort for agreement

⁹³⁴ Ibid.

⁹³⁵ FO 371/61762, 9 January 1947, Inverchapel to Foreign Office, TNA.

⁹³⁶ Fraser, “A Crisis of Leadership”, 657-680.

⁹³⁷ FO 371/61762, 4 January 1947, Draft telegram Bevin to Inverchapel, TNA.

⁹³⁸ FO 371/61873, 29 January 1947, “Note of Meeting Between United Kingdom Representatives and a Delegation Representing the Jewish Agency for Palestine Held at the Colonial Office”, TNA; FO 371/61873, 3 February 1947, “Note of the Second Meeting Between United Kingdom Representatives and a Delegation Representing the Jewish Agency for Palestine Held at the Colonial Office”, TNA; FO 371/61873, 10 February 1947, “Note of Fourth Meeting Between United Kingdom Representatives and

to provincial autonomy leading to independence after a transition period of five years.⁹³⁹ If this failed, then they recommended referral to the United Nations – the statesmen had run out of ideas.⁹⁴⁰

Another problem, however, was that the Jewish Agency could not accept provincial autonomy (even as an interim measure before partition) because it was viewed as merely a small alteration to the 1939 white paper and deprived the Jewish people of their rights in their homeland as promised by the Balfour Declaration, Mandate and prior policy of the Labour Party.⁹⁴¹ Considering the Zionists' Biltmore Declaration, which called for the remaking of Palestine into a Jewish commonwealth (rather than the traditional demand for a Jewish national home within Palestine), Agency representative Moshe Shertok told Creech Jones "he would like the British Delegation to understand the magnitude of the sacrifice which the Jews were prepared to make in offering to accept a reasonable partition".⁹⁴² When shown British maps of the proposed Jewish province, for example, the Zionists rejected them "as a mockery of their just claims".⁹⁴³ Instead, they insisted that a Jewish state "must include, over and above the area shown on the map, Galilee, the Gaza Sub-district, the Beersheba Sub-district and the eastern portions of the Hebron and Jerusalem Sub-districts, up to and including the Jerusalem-Jericho road".⁹⁴⁴ The Colonial Secretary noted how "[i]n other words, they claimed the whole of Palestine except the central Judean hills".⁹⁴⁵

a Delegation Representing the Jewish Agency for Palestine Held at the Colonial Office", TNA; FO 371/61873, 13 February 1947, "Note of Fifth Meeting Between United Kingdom Representatives and a Delegation Representing the Jewish Agency for Palestine Held at the Colonial Office", TNA.

⁹³⁹ CAB 129/16, 6 February 1947, "Palestine. Joint Memorandum by the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs and the Secretary of State for the Colonies", TNA

⁹⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁹⁴¹ FO 371/61873, 5 February 1947, "Memorandum by the Jewish Agency", TNA.

⁹⁴² FO 371/61873, 6 February 1947, "Note of the Third Meeting between United Kingdom Representatives and a Delegation representing the Jewish Agency for Palestine held at the Colonial Office", TNA.

⁹⁴³ FO 371/61873, 13 February 1947, Creech Jones to General Cunningham, TNA.

⁹⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁹⁴⁵ Ibid.

After the Anglo-American Committee, Ernest Bevin had engaged in Anglo-Jewish negotiations for more than five months and achieved absolutely nothing. As provincial autonomy, even as an interim measure, required cooperation from both sides, the Jewish Agency's constant and unwavering rejection of this plan meant it was removed from the choice set in the first stage of decision-making.

Variable: Diplomacy (with Arab states)

Directly linked to political survival in the post-war environment, diplomacy concerning the Palestine problem also took place between representatives of the British government and leaders of the Arab states. This was, in a nutshell, because communications and oil supplies “depended on retaining the goodwill and co-operation of the Arab peoples”.⁹⁴⁶ Like the relationship with America, full consequences of any broken ties were difficult to predict, lending the subject an air of greater risk. Crucially, diplomacy with the Middle East seems to have been viewed on roughly equal terms as the US-UK relationship and, by extension, more important than British-Zionist relations. Bevin and Atlee agreed, for example, that, “if the Jews refuse to participate in the Conference owing to their demands not being met, the Conference must go on without them”.⁹⁴⁷ Although representatives of the Arab states were, ostensibly, willing to negotiate, their basic requirements removed the option to partition Palestine, or create a system of provincial autonomy, from the choice set in the first stage of decision-making. A regional desire for independence was complicated by ongoing Anglo-Egyptian talks, and the Arab leaders' position remained just as immovable as that of their Jewish counterparts.

⁹⁴⁶ CAB 128/6, 11 July 1946, Cabinet Minutes, TNA, 189-191.

⁹⁴⁷ PREM 8/627, 18 August 1946, Foreign Office to United Kingdom Delegation to Peace Conference, TNA.

It is important to note that Arab leaders' opinions were highly important to the British political dimension. 1946-47 was a time of British weakness and Middle East ascendancy, and the Arabs leaders were aware of their value. This placed Britain in a similar situation to 1939, when the white paper was formulated to appeal to regional Arab leaders who then negotiated in support of their own interests as well as those of Palestinian Arabs. The fate of Palestine, however, was an even trickier subject to discuss with Arab leaders after the war because it was tied to wider impatience for full independence in the Middle East. During the war, Churchill had called for Syria and Lebanon to have full independence. Once this was achieved in 1943, it was entirely unrealistic to expect other Arab states to forfeit the right.⁹⁴⁸

Complicating the situation were ongoing talks between Britain and individual Arab states on other issues. Negotiations over Palestine, for example, coincided with Anglo-Egyptian talks for revising the 1936 treaty of alliance.⁹⁴⁹ British Ambassador to Egypt, Sir Ronald Campbell, argued that the Anglo-American Committee proposals "will add another serious element of disturbance to the troubled situation in the Middle East at an inopportune moment when in view of the treaty revision problems in Egypt and Iraq, we need to secure as much goodwill as possible from Egyptian-Arab world".⁹⁵⁰ Campbell suggested that accepting the committee's proposals should be deferred until after the treaty negotiations with Egypt were complete.⁹⁵¹ Likewise, the Joint Intelligence Staff warned that the committee report would create unrest throughout the Arab and Muslim world, endangering a settlement of the India

⁹⁴⁸ Louis, *The British Empire and the Middle East*, 124.

⁹⁴⁹ F.S. Northedge, "Britain and the Middle East", in *The Foreign Policy of British Labour Governments 1945-1951*, ed. Ritchie Ovendale (Leicester: Leicester University Press, 1984), 167.

⁹⁵⁰ FO 371/52517/E3757G, 25 April 1946, Campbell (Cairo) to Foreign Office, TNA.

⁹⁵¹ Ibid.

question.⁹⁵² This conflict of interests only worsened as negotiations dragged on. January 1947 witnessed Anglo-Egyptian negotiations stall, Britain withdrawing from responsibility in Greece and Turkey, and the beginning of a phased withdrawal from India.⁹⁵³ This only heightened the strategic importance of the rest of the Middle East, and Arab states recognised their leverage.

When invited to begin talks on the Palestine issue by the British government, the Foreign Ministers of the Arab states met first in Alexandria to agree minimum requirements.⁹⁵⁴ They would attend, but only if the subjects of partition, federalisation and Jewish immigration remained off the agenda.⁹⁵⁵ Nothing was said about the participation of Palestine's Higher Arab Executive, but the Arab states were not willing to consider any proposals that endangered their counterpart's goal of independence.⁹⁵⁶ The Arabs of Palestine did not engage in separate talks over their future because the former Mufti of Jerusalem, Haj Amin al-Husseini, was specifically excluded and the Higher Arab Executive – formed during the Arab Revolt in the 1930s – refused to continue negotiating on a subject that was supposed to have been settled by the 1939 white paper.⁹⁵⁷ This proto-nationalism was something that Attlee found difficult to understand, commenting in his memoirs that “you might think that an Arab struggling to keep alive on a bare strip of sand would jump at the chance of going to Iraq or somewhere else where there was more opportunity for a better life.

⁹⁵² FO 371/52517/E3941G, 25 April 1946, “Recommendations of the Anglo-American Committee of Enquiry into Palestine and the Condition of Jews in Europe. Preliminary Report by the Joint Intelligence Staff”, TNA.

⁹⁵³ Ovendale, “The Palestine Policy of the British Labour Government 1947”, 87.

⁹⁵⁴ Haim Levenberg, “Bevin's Disillusionment: The London Conference, Autumn 1946”, *Middle Eastern Studies* 27(4) 1991: 615-630, 620.

⁹⁵⁵ CAB 128/6, 22 July 1946, Cabinet Minutes, The National Archives; Levenberg, “Bevin's Disillusionment”, 620.

⁹⁵⁶ Levenberg, “Bevin's Disillusionment”, 620.

⁹⁵⁷ CAB 129/12, 27 July 1946, “Cabinet Conference on Palestine. Invitations to Jews and Palestine Arabs. Memorandum by the Secretary of State for the Colonies”, TNA; CAB 129/13, 5 October 1946, “Palestine Conference, Memorandum by the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs and the Secretary of State for the Colonies”, TNA.

But oh no. One patch of desert doesn't look very different from another patch of desert but that was the one they wanted – their own traditional piece.”⁹⁵⁸

The London Conference opened on 9 September 1946 and, like private talks with the Jewish Agency, showed little ground for compromise on the subject of provincial autonomy. The Additional Secretary to the cabinet, Norman Brook, wrote to Attlee that the Chiefs of Staff believed “any solution of the Palestine problem must satisfy two conditions. First, it must give us the power to control and co-ordinate the defence of the country and to maintain forces and military facilities in it as, when and where we require; and, secondly, it must not alienate the Arab States.”⁹⁵⁹ They doubted very much whether provincial autonomy satisfied the second of these conditions.⁹⁶⁰ As the Chiefs expected, all of the Arab states opposed provincial autonomy because they viewed it as a transition to partition, and feared Jewish autonomy would lead to overall population majority and expansionist policies.⁹⁶¹

In response to this plan, the Arab states proposed an independent unitary Palestine with safeguards for the Jewish minority but a prohibition on further Jewish immigration.⁹⁶² It was essentially a fulfilment of the MacDonald White Paper, an alternative that had been removed from the British choice set primarily through the need for good diplomatic relations with America. When the conference resumed in 1947, Bevin had to admit to the cabinet that negotiations with the Arab states “have confirmed our fear that there is no prospect of finding such a settlement”.⁹⁶³ This was because the absolute minimum requirements for both parties were incompatible –

⁹⁵⁸ Clement Attlee and Francis Williams, *Twilight of Empire: Memoirs of Clement Attlee* (London: Barnes, 1962), 183.

⁹⁵⁹ CAB 129/11, 20 July 1946, “Palestine. Note by the Additional Secretary”, TNA.

⁹⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

⁹⁶¹ CAB 129/13, 5 October 1946, “Palestine Conference, Memorandum by the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs and the Secretary of State for the Colonies”, TNA.

⁹⁶² *Ibid.*

⁹⁶³ CAB 129/16, 6 February 1947, “Palestine. Joint Memorandum by the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs and the Secretary of State for the Colonies”, TNA.

Arabs could not, under any circumstances, endorse the creation of a Jewish state in Palestine and the Zionists could not agree to anything less.⁹⁶⁴ This meant Bevin could not secure either full American or Arab backing for any plan and instead searched for another potential source of ideas in the United Nations.⁹⁶⁵

When UNSCOP returned its verdict in August in favour of partition, Bevin immediately understood that Britain could in no way be associated with implementing this plan due to its fragile relationship with the Arab states. He informed the cabinet, in contradiction with an earlier opinion, that partition would have a destabilising impact on the Middle East as a whole. “It would probably not be long”, Bevin wrote, “before the Jewish government, faced as it would be in the course of time with a problem of over-population and driven by the ultra-nationalist political parties which will not accept partition as a final settlement, would try to expand its frontiers”.⁹⁶⁶ Partition created a Jewish state with a large Arab minority surrounded by Arab territory, and so Bevin supposed that “the Arab population of this State would play a part in history not unlike that of the Sudeten German minority in pre-war Czechoslovakia. Thus the existence of a Jewish State might prove to be a constant factor of unrest in the Middle East, and this could hardly fail to have a damaging effect on Anglo-Arab relations.”⁹⁶⁷ Fundamentally, Bevin asserted, partition was not possible because, as well as producing an economically unviable Arab state and in the process putting British soldiers in danger, it would, crucially, incur bad relations with the Arab states.⁹⁶⁸ As the London conference demonstrated staunch Arab opposition

⁹⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁹⁶⁵ CAB 129/17, 13 February 1947, “Palestine. Memorandum by the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs and the Secretary of State for the Colonies”, TNA.

⁹⁶⁶ CAB 129/21, 18 September 1947, “Palestine. Memorandum by the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs”, TNA.

⁹⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁹⁶⁸ CAB 129/16, 6 February 1947, “Palestine. Joint Memorandum by the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs and the Secretary of State for the Colonies”, TNA.

to both provincial autonomy and partition, therefore, these alternatives were both removed from the choice set in the first stage of decision-making.

Redefining the Choice Set

As diplomacy with the United States prevented fulfilment of the MacDonald White Paper, and since both Jews and Arabs rejected provincial autonomy while the Arab states refused to consider partition, the British government was left in a situation in which all available options had been removed from the choice set in the first stage of decision-making. This is when the option to withdraw entered the choice set. After the UNSCOP proposals were returned in September 1947, but long before the General Assembly voted in favour of partition on 29 November, withdrawal became an option viable on the political dimension simply because all avenues of negotiation had failed and withdrawal threatened to damage neither US nor Arab state relations.⁹⁶⁹

As early as January 1947, before the conference with Arab states resumed, Bevin was advising Attlee that success was unlikely and that they were running out of alternatives. Bevin wrote to Attlee that, “I think this decision should be taken in full realisation that the Conference has very little chance of success, and before taking it we should look ahead and consider what we should have to do in the event of a breakdown”.⁹⁷⁰ They had two options: to impose a solution by force, which, as already noted was impossible on a diplomatic level alone before considering the cost, or to give up responsibility for Palestine.⁹⁷¹ Considering this dilemma, the referral to the United Nations should be viewed as a stalling tactic, a desperate search for more options. In February 1947, Bevin told parliament that “[w]e have carefully studied

⁹⁶⁹ CAB 129/21, 18 September 1947, “Palestine. Memorandum by the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs”, TNA.

⁹⁷⁰ FO 371/61761, 1 January 1947, Bevin to Attlee, TNA.

⁹⁷¹ Ibid.

this matter, and put forward proposal after proposal. They are there, and I personally do not think that we can offer to the United Nations any more proposals. We shall leave them on the table. They, in turn, may have better ones, but this is the best we can do.”⁹⁷² Colonial Secretary Creech-Jones, however, specifically told the House, “We are not going to the United Nations to surrender the Mandate. We are going to the United Nations setting out the problem and asking for their advice as to how the Mandate can be administered.”⁹⁷³ As well as buying time, the Foreign Secretary believed this action could bully Palestine’s communities into accepting some compromise.

Bevin advised the cabinet that he “thought that both Jews and Arabs were anxious to avoid discussion of the problem” in the UN, and “our firm intention to take the matter to the United Nations Assembly [...] might bring them to a more reasonable frame of mind”.⁹⁷⁴ Bevin believed that “[e]ven though we gave notice of our intention to submit the matter to the United Nations, we could subsequently withdraw it from the agenda of the Assembly if between now and September a solution could be found which was acceptable to both parties”.⁹⁷⁵ Rather than “dumping” the issue on the UN in February 1947, therefore, Bevin intended to use the new circumstances as a negotiating ploy to Britain’s advantage, and “[e]ven after such an announcement had been made, he would certainly continue his efforts to find a solution”.⁹⁷⁶ The Foreign Secretary and the Prime Minister even extended this logic after the UNSCOP report was returned. Bevin advised the cabinet that, “unless His Majesty’s Government announced their intention of abandoning the Mandate and of

⁹⁷² House of Commons Debates, 18 February 1947, series 5, vol 433, cols 994-995.

⁹⁷³ House of Commons Debates, 25 February 1947, series 5, vol 433, cols 2007-2008.

⁹⁷⁴ CAB 128/9, 14 February 1947, Cabinet Minutes, TNA.

⁹⁷⁵ Ibid.

⁹⁷⁶ CAB 128/9, 14 February 1947, Cabinet Minutes, TNA.

withdrawing from Palestine, there was no prospect of an agreed settlement”.⁹⁷⁷ Attlee agreed, hoping that the threat posed to both Jews and Arabs by an unpredictable UN vote on partition might scare the two groups sufficiently to extract concessions.⁹⁷⁸ Ultimately however, no additional overtures from either Jews or Arabs were forthcoming.

As well as seeking more options or more fruitful negotiations, this tactic also had to prevent Britain taking on the responsibility for implementing whatever scheme upon which the General Assembly decided. To avoid unwelcome obligations, Bevin inserted a key section in Creech-Jones’s statement to the UN saying Britain would not implement a solution that was not acceptable to both parties.⁹⁷⁹ The additional proviso was intended to ensure that no other UN member put forward ludicrous counter proposals expecting Britain to implement them, but it also allowed Britain to cede responsibility for Palestine under a guise of moral abstention.⁹⁸⁰ This was based on a valid fear, since rumours were spreading at the General Assembly before the vote on 29 November, “that the strategic importance of Palestine to our oil interests in the Middle East and to defence of Suez Canal is so great that Great Britain is bound to implement whatever United Nations decides, regardless of consequences to ourselves”.⁹⁸¹ In cabinet, however, this was far from the general consensus, and withdrawal had been considered a viable option since at least mid-September. “[O]ur withdrawal from Palestine”, Bevin informed the cabinet, “even if it had to be effected at the cost of a period of bloodshed and chaos in the country, would have two major advantages. British lives would not be lost, nor British resources expended, in

⁹⁷⁷ CAB 128/10, 20 September 1947, Cabinet Minutes, TNA.

⁹⁷⁸ PREM 8/859/1, 20 October 1947, Attlee and Bevin to Colonial Secretary, TNA.

⁹⁷⁹ PREM 8/859/1, 21 September 1947, Henniker to Colonial Office, TNA.

⁹⁸⁰ PREM 8/859/1, 20 September 1947, “CM (47) 76th Conclusions, Minute 6 Confidential Annex”, TNA.

⁹⁸¹ FO 371/61878, 17 September 1947, Permanent United Kingdom Representative to United Nations to Foreign Office, TNA.

suppressing one Palestinian community for the advantage of the other. And (at least as compared with enforcing the majority plan or a variant of it) we should not be pursuing a policy destructive of our own interests, in the Middle East.”⁹⁸² The option to withdraw, therefore, became part of the choice set following the removal of all other alternatives, and it merely had to satisfy the key substantive dimensions in stage two in order to become the final decision.

Stage Two

Previous chapters have demonstrated the possibility and likelihood that only a single viable option remains within the choice set after the first stage of decision-making. This sole alternative is then required to satisfy the most important substantive dimensions, which, immediately following the Second World War, were the economic and military/strategic dimensions. As there was only one option left, no cost-benefit analysis was possible. Instead, the option to withdraw from Palestine merely had to avoid prohibitively high costs in the realms of short-term economic hardship and long term strategic planning. As withdrawal involved minimal costs and Palestine’s importance as a strategic outpost was nullified by the Jewish insurgency and prospects of civil war, it was found to “satisfice” these key substantive dimensions.

The Economy Dimension

In the post-war environment, it was inevitable that considerations of the economy would form some part of any foreign policy decision-making. Discussed briefly here, the economic dimension played an important role, but one that was

⁹⁸² CAB 129/21, 18 September 1947, “Palestine. Memorandum by the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs”, TNA.

somewhat intertwined with the military/strategic dimension discussed below. When, in 1947, the British government was presented with an option to withdraw from Palestine, it was facing a disastrous year for the economy, most notably in the form of a Sterling crisis. In order to satisfy the economic dimension, therefore, withdrawal simply had to avoid incurring additional costs.

First, it is important to note that when 1947 began, and during ongoing negotiations with both Arabs and Jews over Palestine, Britain was trapped in a profound energy shortage. A terribly cold winter highlighted the already short supply of coal, and this vital resource slipped below the stock levels considered necessary for national survival.⁹⁸³ As coal could not be transported to power stations, the lack of electricity throughout the country shut down industry and home consumption; livestock died and people froze in their homes.⁹⁸⁴ This was the domestic economic context in which Attlee, Bevin and the cabinet agreed to refer the Palestine problem to the UN in February. To complicate decision-making further, another – potentially devastating – financial crisis then hit Westminster in August, just before the completion of the UNSCOP report, and was the direct result of Britain's loan conditions with the United States.

In December 1945, the Attlee government had secured a loan from the United States that began in July 1946. By 1947, however, the funds were diminishing far too quickly.⁹⁸⁵ A global shortage of food and raw materials effectively made the United States a sole supplier, and a sharp rise in American prices in early 1947 decreased the original loan's value by approximately one billion dollars.⁹⁸⁶ As the dollar drain continued, the Treasury estimated the loan might last until 1948 rather than the

⁹⁸³ Kenneth O'Morgan, *Labour in Power 1945-1951* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1984), 331-332.

⁹⁸⁴ Ravndal, "Exit Britain", 424; O'Morgan, *Labour in Power*, 332-333.

⁹⁸⁵ O'Morgan, *Labour in Power*, 339.

⁹⁸⁶ Ibid.

original estimate of 1951; by July, the Treasury was losing 500 million dollars every month and there were major depletions of gold and silver reserves.⁹⁸⁷

Additionally, part of the loan's terms had been a British commitment to the free convertibility of Sterling into dollars, and this initiative was scheduled to commence on 15 July 1947.⁹⁸⁸ The result was disastrous. Free convertibility and the global demand for dollars – as well as speculating in foreign markets – meant that Britain was suddenly hit by a massive outflow of capital.⁹⁸⁹ In order to meet the demand for dollars, it was necessary to use funds from the American loan, which meant it was unlikely to last even throughout 1947. Britain was losing dollar reserves at a rate between 100 and 200 million dollars each week.⁹⁹⁰ On 17 August, the cabinet decided that financially, the situation was too dire and agreed to halt convertibility. In response, the remaining United States loan was frozen.⁹⁹¹ Only after tense but rapid negotiations did the US agree to a temporary emergency suspension on 20 August.⁹⁹² The situation was bleak and Britons faced cuts in their food rationing by November 1947.⁹⁹³ This provided the economic context of the cabinet's decision to withdraw.

The military expenditure associated with rebellion in Palestine had exceeded 82 million pounds by May 1947, and although this was largely borne by the Palestinian rather than British taxpayer, there was still a perception of Palestine incurring high costs in times of austerity.⁹⁹⁴ Palestine's financial burden was mentioned rarely in cabinet discussions in comparison to the diplomatic constraints of

⁹⁸⁷ Ibid, 213, 340.

⁹⁸⁸ Ibid, 342.

⁹⁸⁹ C.S.S. Newton, "The Sterling Crisis of 1947 and the British Response to the Marshall Plan", *The Economic History Review* 37(3) 1984: 391-408, 401.

⁹⁹⁰ O'Morgan, *Labour in Power*, 344.

⁹⁹¹ Ibid, 346.

⁹⁹² Ibid.

⁹⁹³ Ibid, 348.

⁹⁹⁴ CAB 129/19, 18 May 1947, "Financial Situation. Cost of Terrorist Damage and Other Illegal Activities, Memorandum by the Secretary of State for the Colonies", TNA; CAB 128/9, 20 May 1947, Cabinet Minutes, TNA.

both the United States of America and the Arab states, but Ernest Bevin did specifically recommend withdrawal to avoid the further loss of British lives and waste of resources.⁹⁹⁵ Britain's very limited financial reserves were a constant, well-known constraint. Withdrawal removed a costly responsibility following a year of economic uncertainty and privation, not least by removing the 100,000 troops needed to fight a Jewish insurgency, and this meant that the economic dimension was satisfied.⁹⁹⁶

The Military/Strategic Dimension

A recurrent theme in Palestine policy discussions during the Mandate, the military/strategic dimension, was also an important consideration in the post-war environment and tied very closely to the economic dimension. Palestine was a strategic imperial outpost and at no point did the Chiefs of Staff ever explicitly renounce its geographic military importance. The undeclared state of war in Palestine, however, was financially draining and possessed the explosive potential to create equally expensive unrest elsewhere in the Middle East, especially if Britain attempted to enforce either of the UNSCOP proposals. Crucially, when Foreign Secretary Bevin recommended withdrawal to the cabinet on 18 September 1947, he did so with the specific understanding that Palestine lost its military/strategic value when constantly engaged in, or under the threat of, violent internal conflict and civil war.⁹⁹⁷

First, British strategic and military planning continued after 1945 as though Britain was still a great world power and a strong empire.⁹⁹⁸ The withdrawal option had been mentioned in passing before the UNSCOP report, but it had always been the

⁹⁹⁵ CAB 129/21, 18 September 1947, "Palestine. Memorandum by the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs", TNA.

⁹⁹⁶ Ravndal, "Exit Britain", 424.

⁹⁹⁷ CAB 129/21, 18 September 1947, "Palestine. Memorandum by the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs", TNA.

⁹⁹⁸ Raymond Smith and John Zametica, "The Cold Warrior: Clement Attlee Reconsidered, 1945-7", *International Affairs* 61 (2) 1985: 237-252, 246.

consensus that withdrawal from Palestine “would have serious effects on our strategic position in the Middle East and on our prestige throughout the world” and the Foreign Secretary specifically asked the cabinet not to consider such alternatives in October 1946.⁹⁹⁹ Throughout consideration of the Palestine problem, the Chiefs of Staff stressed that “strategic considerations should not be overlooked”.¹⁰⁰⁰ Palestine’s location gave Britain its strategic hold in the Mediterranean close to the Suez Canal, both of which were made more important in 1947 by the plan to withdraw from Greece and removal of troops from Egypt following Anglo-Egyptian talks.

As prospects for negotiations with the Jewish Agency and the Arab states seemed bleak in January 1947, the Chiefs of Staff outlined the three cardinal requirements of future defence of the British Commonwealth: “(i) the defence of the United Kingdom and its development as a base for an offensive; (ii) the maintenance of our sea communications; and (iii) the retention of our existing position and influence in the Middle East”.¹⁰⁰¹ These “vital props” of Britain’s defensive position were all interdependent, and “if any one were lost the whole structure would be imperilled”.¹⁰⁰²

Specifically with regard to Palestine, the territory was considered to hold “special importance in this general scheme of defence. In war, Egypt would be our key position in the Middle East; and it was necessary that we should hold Palestine as a screen for the defence of Egypt.”¹⁰⁰³ Following the stalled Anglo-Egyptian talks, however, and Britain’s commitment to withdraw from Egypt unless it was threatened, the Chiefs saw in Palestine the “base for the mobile reserve of troops which must be

⁹⁹⁹ CAB 128/6, 25 October 1946, Cabinet Minutes, TNA.

¹⁰⁰⁰ CAB 128/6, 11 July 1946, Cabinet Minutes, TNA, 189-191.

¹⁰⁰¹ CAB 128/11, 15 January 1947, “Confidential Annex”, TNA.

¹⁰⁰² Ibid.

¹⁰⁰³ Ibid.

kept ready to meet any emergency throughout the Middle East”.¹⁰⁰⁴ This was because Transjordan was not a good enough outpost on its own, and the Jerusalem enclave would not suffice either in the event of partition.¹⁰⁰⁵ Even when the Foreign and Colonial Secretaries suggested merely referring the Palestine problem to the UN, the Joint Chiefs reacted defensively against the proposal. They believed that “[t]he Preservation of our strategic position in the Middle East as a whole would be gravely prejudiced if our right to station British forces in Palestine were not retained”.¹⁰⁰⁶ It was strategically imperative to keep some form of base in the Mediterranean because if all bases there and in the Middle East were lost, the “defence of the United Kingdom and the Commonwealth would be undermined”.¹⁰⁰⁷

Combined with this preoccupation with long term strategic planning, however, was the realisation of very limited short term resources that made hostilities in Palestine, and their potential to create wider instability across the Middle East, financially costly and strategically dangerous.¹⁰⁰⁸ Colonial Secretary George Hall, for example, stressed that, implementing the Anglo-American Committee's recommendations was likely “to involve us in military and financial commitments beyond our capacity to bear”.¹⁰⁰⁹ In a joint memorandum, the Foreign and Colonial Secretaries stressed, that “[i]f we were to undertake it, or to be associated in any way with the enforcement of a settlement as unpopular with one of the parties as that now

¹⁰⁰⁴ Ibid.

¹⁰⁰⁵ Ibid.

¹⁰⁰⁶ PREM 8/627, 6 February 1947, “Note by LC Hollis. Top Secret”, TNA.

¹⁰⁰⁷ CAB 128/9, 11 February 1947, Cabinet Minutes, TNA.

¹⁰⁰⁸ CAB 129/21, 18 September 1947, “Palestine. Memorandum by the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs”, TNA.

¹⁰⁰⁹ CAB 129/11, 8 July 1946, “Report of the Anglo-American Committee of Enquiry Regarding the Problems of European Jewry and Palestine. Memorandum by the Secretary of State for the Colonies”, TNA.

recommended by the United Nations, the whole responsibility would fall on us, as the only armed forces on the spot are ours”.¹⁰¹⁰

This potential commitment was more than a little daunting. In February 1947, Colonial Secretary Creech-Jones, who had professed sympathy for Zionism and favoured partition, admitted to the cabinet that it was an unworkable plan. The Colonial Secretary “confessed” that “the enforcement of Partition was, he was now convinced, bound to involve conditions of rebellion and disorder in Palestine which might last for a considerable time and would involve a substantial military commitment for us”.¹⁰¹¹ This recognition of limited resources combined with the reality of ongoing hostilities in Palestine then gradually altered opinions among Britain’s military elites over the summer of 1947, causing them to question whether Palestine was really worth the expense and lives lost. These casualties amounted to 141 members of the Palestine police, 368 servicemen from the army, navy and airforce and 21 British civilians – lost to both Arab and Jewish hostilities in Palestine.¹⁰¹² An important consideration of British well being may have been the hanging of two sergeants in July 1947 – kidnapped and murdered by the Irgun, their bodies were then booby trapped to injure others.¹⁰¹³ This was only the latest in a line of incidents involving kidnap or ambush, but it was considered particularly shocking.¹⁰¹⁴

By 18 September, after the UNSCOP report was complete, a new attitude emerged. The same day Bevin dated his recommendation of withdrawal for the cabinet, the Defence Secretary outlined the impossibility of fulfilling almost any plan

¹⁰¹⁰ CAB 129/22, 3 December 1947, “Palestine. Memorandum by the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs and the Secretary of State for the Colonies”, TNA.

¹⁰¹¹ CAB 128/9, 7 Feb 1947, Cabinet Minutes, TNA.

¹⁰¹² House of Lords Debates, 9 June 1948, series 5, vol 156, cols 528-9.

¹⁰¹³ Ravndal, “Exit Britain”, 424.

¹⁰¹⁴ Ibid.

in Palestine. The UNSCOP Majority Plan for partition would involve “[t]he imposition by force of some Colonial type of government in the Arab State, the safeguarding of the Jewish State and the protection of British life”, which entailed “appreciable reinforcement of the existing Middle East garrison with appropriate naval and air supports”.¹⁰¹⁵ Long-term, it would “render impossible of achievement the firm strategic hold in the Middle East which is an indispensable and vitally important part of Imperial defence policy”.¹⁰¹⁶ Similarly, the Minority Plan for a single binational state “would be impossible to implement [...] against greatly increased opposition from the Jews and it would be necessary to impose by force a Colonial type of government”.¹⁰¹⁷ Agreeing to implement either one of these plans, on a purely military level, therefore, would “entail a drastic revision of our Defence Policy”.¹⁰¹⁸ Critically, although the Defence Secretary advised against any “demonstration of weakness in withdrawing in the face of difficulty” and that withdrawal “might be impossible to implement”, he did not at any point object to withdrawal from Palestine on the basis of its military importance.¹⁰¹⁹ The strategic value perceived only months earlier had simply dissipated. Exemplifying this new consensus were the opinions of Chancellor of the Exchequer, Sir Hugh Dalton.

Dalton, another professed Zionist sympathiser within the cabinet, wrote to Attlee in August 1947:

“I am quite sure [...] that the time has almost come when we must bring our troops out of Palestine altogether. The present state of affairs is not only costly to us in man-power and money, but is, as you and I agree, of no real value from the strategic point of view – you cannot in any case have a secure base on top of a wasps’ nest – and riot is exposing our young men, for no good purpose, to most abominable experiences, and is breeding anti-Semites at an

¹⁰¹⁵ CAB 129/21, 18 September 1947, “Palestine: Report of United Nations Special Committee. Military and Strategic Implications. Memorandum by the Secretary of State for Defence”, TNA.

¹⁰¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁰¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁰¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁰¹⁹ Ibid.

alarming speed. [...] It is high time that either we left the Arabs and Jews to have it out in Palestine, or that some other Power or Powers took over the responsibility and the cost.”¹⁰²⁰

Dalton also raised the issue in cabinet on 20 September. “If an agreed settlement could not be reached in Palestine”, he said, “that country was of no strategic value to His Majesty’s Government and the maintenance of British forces in it merely led to a heavy drain on our financial resources and to the creation of a dangerous spirit of anti-Semitism”.¹⁰²¹ The decision to withdraw was approved that day, more than two months before the UN officially adopted partition. Only one option had remained in the choice set in the first stage of decision-making, and due to Palestine’s cost and dwindling military/strategic importance, this single alternative also satisfied the key substantive dimensions in the second stage of decision-making.

Conclusion

After submission on 31 August, and months in committee and plenary meetings, the partition resolution was finally ready for a vote in the General Assembly. It achieved the necessary two-thirds majority on 29 November 1947, inaugurating the famous Resolution 181.¹⁰²² Five days later, on 4 December, the cabinet approved a withdrawal plan drafted jointly by the Foreign and Colonial Secretaries, and approved by the Defence Committee.¹⁰²³ It was presented to Parliament on 11 December and received barely a hint of criticism except on the most

¹⁰²⁰ PREM 8/623, 11 August 1947, Dalton to Attlee, TNA.

¹⁰²¹ CAB 128/10, 20 September 1947, Cabinet Minutes, TNA.

¹⁰²² Ilan Pappé, *The Making of the Arab-Israeli Conflict 1947-1951*, (London: IB Tauris, 1992), 41; Caplan, *Contested Histories*, 108.

¹⁰²³ CAB 129/10, 4 December 1947, Cabinet Minutes, TNA; PREM 8/859/1, 27 November 1947, “CAB DO (47) 25th Meeting”, TNA; CAB 129/22, 3 December 1947, “Palestine. Memorandum by the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs and the Secretary of State for the Colonies”, The National Archives Kew.

minute of procedural details.¹⁰²⁴ Although in Parliament the arrival of this policy seems to have been entirely expected, neither the Jews nor Arabs nor even the Americans believed it was real, and their UN representatives had to be informed privately in order to be convinced.¹⁰²⁵ British forces and administration would only stay in Palestine long enough to aid Jews and Arabs through a limited transition period, and planned to withdraw fully by 1 August 1948.¹⁰²⁶ This was revised later, and the last member of the British Administration left Palestine on 15 May 1948.¹⁰²⁷

Ultimately, the need to satisfy diplomatic requirements with both the United States and the Arab states left the Attlee government between two policies – partition and independence – that were bitterly opposed on each side. When first assuming office in 1945, Bevin even highlighted Britain’s new dual obligation with regards to Palestine: “I consider the Palestine question urgent”, he wrote, “and when I return to London I propose to examine the whole question, bearing in mind the repercussions on the whole Middle East and U.S.A.”.¹⁰²⁸ The American relationship with Zionism and President Truman’s desire to intervene on behalf of displaced persons suffering a humanitarian crisis, as well as the need to consider his own domestic political situation, meant there could be no repeat of 1939.

Attlee and Bevin’s problem in dealing with Truman, as well as American public opinion moulded by Holocaust newspaper headlines, was that British politicians attempted to deal with the tragedy of displaced persons as entirely separate from the fate of Palestine, when the tide of global opinion viewed them as one and the same – not least due to very effective Zionist campaigning. Attlee expressed this to

¹⁰²⁴ House of Commons Debates, 11 December 1947, series 5, vol 445, cols 1223-1224.

¹⁰²⁵ PREM 8/859/1, 4 October 1947, Foreign Office to Cadogan, TNA.

¹⁰²⁶ PREM 8/859/1, 14 October 1947, Foreign Office to Colonial Secretary, TNA; PREM 8/859/1, 27 November 1947, “CAB DO (47) 25th Meeting”, TNA.

¹⁰²⁷ Tessler, *A History of the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict*, 261.

¹⁰²⁸ FO 800/484, 30 July 1945, Bevin to Attlee, TNA.

Truman, explaining, “[w]e are giving deep thought to means of helping the Jews in Europe and to the question of Palestine. The two problems are not necessarily the same [...]”¹⁰²⁹ Bevin then attempted to “sell” the plan of provincial autonomy to both Zionists and Arabs on the basis that it would be an interim solution, though this was a scheme with two diametrically opposed outcomes depending on who constituted the Foreign Secretary’s audience. Bevin’s initial search for a long-term settlement became a desperate attempt to create almost any short-term agreement, enough to see the British government through the whirlwind of post-war crises elsewhere.

In the first stage of decision-making, therefore, no option proved viable on the political dimension until talks stalled and withdrawal entered the choice set specifically because negotiations had been exhausted. The poor health of Britain’s post-war economy and the doubtful strategic benefit of a warring Palestine then allowed this alternative to become the final choice. Attlee later wrote in his memoirs that “[i]t was one of those impossible situations for which there is no really good solution. One just had to cut the knot.”¹⁰³⁰ Hector McNeil, Foreign Office Minister and subsequently Vice President of the UN General Assembly, in 1947 summed up the legacy such knot-cutting was going to leave for two peoples locked in conflict: “We have failed”, he said, “and we must confess our failure. Beyond doubt when the historians come to look at our record of administration in Palestine, they will find many errors, and I hope that they will learn from those errors.”¹⁰³¹

¹⁰²⁹ FO 800/484, 6 October 1945, Attlee to Truman, TNA.

¹⁰³⁰ Attlee and Francis, *Twilight of Empire*, 182.

¹⁰³¹ House of Commons Debates, 10 March 1948, series 5, vol 448, cols 1364-1365.

Conclusion

*“It may seem fanciful, at a moment like this, to dream of a day when Jewish and Arab leaders may come together [...] to frame their own constitution for Palestine as a self-governing nation within the orbit of the British Commonwealth. But in no other way can the problem of Palestine find its ultimate solution [...]”*¹⁰³²

Leopold Amery, Former Colonial Secretary, 1929.

*“This conflict was inherent in the situation from the outset. The terms of the Mandate tended to confirm it. If the government had adopted a more rigorous and consistent policy it might have repressed the conflict for a time, but it could not have resolved it.”*¹⁰³³

Peel Commission Report, 1937.

More than thirty years of British rule in Palestine witnessed a seemingly unshakable commitment to Zionism crumble under the weight of varying pressures that threatened the political survival of successive prime ministers and cabinets. The case studies presented in previous chapters represent four distinct periods of decision-making, which reflect the only instances when the central government for the British Empire became embroiled in a small nationalist conflict in Palestine. Charting these British attempts, ostensibly at reconciliation between Jews and Arabs, reveals how the distinct leaders’ feelings, biases and passions about Zionism or Arab nationalism, and their intents and goals for the tiny territory, were continually shaped and undermined by the necessity of maintaining their own political positions. In every case, the decision-makers under consideration were confronted with only a single viable option or an extremely narrow selection of alternatives. Rather than “choosing” which policy to pursue in Palestine, they consistently found themselves cornered into a suboptimal decision. This realisation has changed the focus of study entirely, away from questioning what the British government hoped to achieve in Palestine, to asking first and foremost what ramifications it tried to avoid.

¹⁰³² Churchill Archives Centre, The Papers of Leopold Amery, AMEL 1/5/46, 1 of 2, “The Future in Palestine” *The Pioneer*, December 1929, 5-6.

¹⁰³³ Cmd 5479, 1937, *Report of the Royal Commission*, 370.

As the case studies featured in this thesis are organised chronologically while reflecting distinctly themed episodes, they constitute the individual puzzle pieces that fit together in order to form a more complete image of British decision-making than previous works on the Mandate have achieved. During the Balfour Zeitgeist, when Britain committed itself to supporting the creation of a Jewish national home in Palestine – following the Balfour Declaration, the draft Mandate and finally the Churchill White Paper – there was ample evidence that this policy was fomenting violent unrest. Such disturbances had the potential to undermine the strategic value of Palestine and were draining financially. Under these circumstances, ending the British involvement with the Jewish national home would have been a rational decision, as demonstrated by both the Palin and Haycraft Commissions. Instead, the British government found itself in a position where either renouncing or wholeheartedly supporting the policy of the Balfour Declaration was politically untenable. The calm in Palestine that followed the Churchill White Paper in 1922 seemed to vindicate Britain's medium course, but the riots of 1929 threw it into question yet again.

The decision-making process associated with reversing the Passfield White Paper in 1931 is possibly the most misunderstood element of the Palestine Mandate. Rather than a simple equation of Zionist pressure achieving a change in policy, an alignment of political interests among Zionists, Liberals and the Conservative Party threatened the unity and survival of the Labour government, which eventually had to withdraw the policy of limiting Jewish immigration and land purchase in Palestine. This episode has received startlingly little scholarly attention, perhaps because the myth of an all-powerful Jewish lobby in Interwar Westminster has suited both Israeli and Palestinian historical narratives. Such simplification is not useful to

understanding decision-making, however, and a more complete analysis of why the Passfield White Paper was reversed is a crucial component of this thesis.

When Palestine's tensions remained unsolved in the early 1930s and erupted into the Arab Revolt of 1936-1939, the decision-making process became simpler to identify. Pending war presented such an obvious risk to the government's political survival that the strategic importance of the Arab leaders outside Palestine's diminutive boundaries in 1939 was readily apparent. The policy of the MacDonald White Paper, which called for Palestinian independence, has been labelled a "betrayal", but the previous chapters demonstrated that loyalty to the Zionist cause never drove British cabinet decision-making at any stage of the Mandate. Rather than the beginning of *Realpolitik*, this episode was merely a continuation of it.

Ultimately, the withdrawal from Palestine represented the same elimination of risky options demonstrated in earlier British decision-making. By highlighting the primacy of the political dimension, however, it becomes clear that perfectly reasonable explanations for Britain's withdrawal, such as the cost of troops in a dwindling post-war economy, played a lesser role than expected. Inconclusive diplomacy with the United States, Zionists and the Arab states left the British government's proverbial hands tied. Even before the United Nations General Assembly voted for partition, there was no viable alternative except to withdraw.

Looking at these case studies – from the Churchill White Paper in 1922, to the reversal of the Passfield White Paper in 1931, the MacDonald White Paper in 1939 and, finally, Britain's decision to withdraw from Palestine in 1947 – it becomes possible to identify how every decision made with regard to Palestine was based on an assessment of alternatives, with leaders judging their political and substantive ramifications. There were changes in British policy during the course of the Mandate,

but there was perfect continuity of decision-making processes. Although this seems like a logical and expected system of behaviour for any state, this is not the way much of British decision-making has been presented in the Palestine literature. Rather than an assessment of British intents and goals based on individual politicians' capricious allegiances or aversions to Zionism, Poliheuristic Decision Theory reveals a predictable pattern, within case studies of a well-defined type, enriched with a level of complexity that reflects real life.

Historical Lessons of the Poliheuristic Perspective

Although the focus of this thesis has been on British foreign policy decision-making towards Palestine through the lens of a poliheuristic perspective, its four case studies yield several additional points to consider in terms of a historical intervention. As well as the central theme that personal biases had less to do with policy than individual career prospects, three further potential conclusions can be raised. The first is that Britain's sponsorship of the Jewish national home, which significantly contributed to Israeli statehood in 1948, was to some degree an accident, not least because Zionism's infamous hold on British politicians was tenuous and dependent on context. In addition, it is possible to assert that successive British negotiators did wholeheartedly try to solve the conflict they had provoked in Palestine but found the issue constrained severely by their own domestic politics. This predicament ultimately aided the Jewish insurgency's cause following World War Two, specifically with reference to the Holocaust's impact on international diplomacy. While one popular argument attests that international sympathy led to the creation of Israel and there are scholarly rebuttals to the contrary, this thesis indicates that due to the rift in Anglo-American relations that opened specifically over the issue of Palestine, which formed

a crucial component of the British decision to withdraw, there was an indirect link between six million Jewish deaths and the creation of Israel.

First, the British sponsorship of a Jewish national home evolved out of a combination of ambition and necessity. The original overtures towards Zionism, as discussed in Chapter One, were conducted by Sir Mark Sykes. He believed in national self-determination for small ethnic groups, and was searching for a political rather than strictly military means to legitimise British invasion and occupation of Palestine. After the First World War, this championing of a grand cause helped Prime Minister David Lloyd George to secure Britain's hold on Palestine, which was necessary to protect the routes to Egypt and India. The international approval required for this arrangement, however, meant that it was nearly impossible for Britain to extract itself from the pledge to support a Jewish national home, despite many warnings that this was potentially a dangerous commitment. This is where the "accidental" British support for Zionism became entrenched and was demonstrated in multiple governments' tacit commitment to the policy throughout the 1920s.

Although it was frustrated relatively quickly, the Passfield White Paper also represented an attempt to roll back the "accidental" policy that was causing unrest among Palestine's majority Arab population. As detailed in Chapter Four, the effort was undermined by the inherent weakness of James Ramsay MacDonald's minority Labour government. Again, the continuation of Britain's commitment to a Zionist enterprise was merely a short-term fix, a policy that lacked real intent. The next decision-making episode witnessed yet another retreat from the idea of a Jewish national home. The white paper named for Colonial Secretary Malcolm MacDonald promised independence to Palestine and demonstrated the British government's collectively unsentimental attitude towards the future of Zionism. Interestingly, the

most dedicated British effort to maintain the Jewish national home arguably came during the tenure of Foreign Secretary Ernest Bevin, who relentlessly tried to keep the territory and court President Truman's approval but ultimately helped to engineer Britain's withdrawal.

From this perspective, the British sponsorship of Zionism over a 30-year period, which allowed the Yishuv to develop enough strength in terms of population numbers, organisational ability and military training to engage in the first Arab-Israeli War in 1948 and establish the State of Israel, might be considered an accident of history. Even the raging Jewish insurgency in Palestine and the threat of further Arab disturbances that necessitated a final departure could be attributed to the British failure in preceding years to "clarify" internally what endured as an undefined and often inadvertent British responsibility towards Zionism. Mission creep and the use of Palestine as a political football allowed the commitment to continue far longer and more deeply than multiple British governments intended.

On a similar note, the accidental nature of Britain's commitment to Zionism undermines more conspiratorial ideas of Jewish power or, in less controversial terms, the influence of Zionist lobbying. A closer look at British decision-making reveals that while Dr Weizmann was a well liked, respected and adroit negotiator among Britain's political elite, his influence owed as much to luck and to the virtue of representing the right cause at the right time, as to his personal skill in British politics. He and other Zionist leaders, however, did have to battle against periodic British governments' attempts at reconciliation between Zionism and developing Arab nationalism that would have led to the creation of self-governing institutions in Palestine.

At first, the logical course of action regarding these animosities would have been for Britain to simply abandon the policy of a Jewish national home. This was implied in the first commissions chaired by Major-General Palin and Sir Thomas Haycraft and suggested by multiple officials, including Winston Churchill, during the initial stages of British rule. As it was in the Empire's best interests to avoid rioting in Palestine, the Churchill White Paper of 1922 did represent a concerted effort to assuage what were considered to be unfounded fears about the nature of Zionism – restricting Jewish immigration in line with economic capacity and assuring the world that the aim was not to create a solely Jewish Palestine.

Then again in 1930, the Passfield White Paper represented an honest if somewhat naïve attempt at redressing a perceived imbalance in Palestine, between the Jewish community, which seemed to be benefiting largely from British rule, and the Arab population that was suffering far more as a result of economic depression. The same was true in the negotiations leading to the MacDonald White Paper in 1939 – the aim was a quiet Palestine. Although the policy of promising independence, as discussed in Chapter Five, was hardly driven by altruistic motives, it still demonstrated an attempt at settlement that many British politicians who professed Zionist sympathies, including Colonial Secretary MacDonald, hoped would not be necessary. Following the Second World War, Ernest Bevin staked his reputation on finding a solution to the Jewish-Arab conflict in Palestine and worked tirelessly to secure some compromise from both sides. It was only because these negotiations repeatedly stalled that Britain's Mandate for Palestine came to an end.

While it is very easy, therefore, to dismiss a succession of British politicians' policy decisions as inept, dithering or worsening the conflict, there was also a concerted and consistent effort to end and prevent violence. The counterinsurgency

methods of the 1930s are today considered unacceptable, brutal and in many cases illegal, but the Arab Revolt was a turning point in the British government's attitudes towards Palestinian nationalism. Early British negotiators had really lacked a sympathetic understanding of Arab complaints. The rebellion, and later the Jewish insurgency, meant that subsequent mediators were forced to recognise both Zionist and Arab concerns, but they were simply unable to reconcile what they realised far too late was a conflict between nations within one strip of land. It is possible to conclude, therefore, that there were some good intentions but an inability or unwillingness to understand the situation with unmitigated clarity.

These efforts at negotiation are relevant to the discussion of one final misperception about the Mandate. A common opinion is the idea that international sympathy for the Zionist cause, following the Holocaust, led to Israel's creation. Such a simplistic argument is easy to refute,¹⁰³⁴ but Chapter Six of this thesis reveals how outrage and distress, particularly in the United States following World War Two, severely constrained both British counter-insurgency efforts against Zionists in Palestine and options for dealing with the crisis diplomatically. The policy of granting Palestinian independence, for example, became untenable chiefly because the British economy needed American money. At the same time, maintaining the intended British presence in Palestine endangered relations with the Arab states and would have required a stronger and politically unviable counter-insurgency campaign. While it is simplistic, therefore, to draw a direct link between international sympathy and the creation of Israel, it did play a vital role in the British decision to withdraw that prompted Israel to proclaim statehood. The use of Polyheuristic Decision Theory has made this clarification possible, as well as the other small historical points discussed

¹⁰³⁴ Eyyatar Friesel, "On the Myth of the Connection Between the Holocaust and the Creation of Israel", *Israel Affairs* 14 (3) 2008: 446-466.

above. In addition, the case studies included in this thesis also have a broad impact on the framework's development as a theory of decision-making.

Implications for Poliheuristic Decision Theory

Over the course of four case studies, research into the critical junctures in British decision-making towards Palestine during the Mandate has raised several key issues with regard to the development of Poliheuristic Decision Theory. These relate to bureaucratic politics and the impact of personality or leadership styles, the potential for inertia following Stage One, the importance of the single option and a possibility that politicians may make a faulty assessment of risk.

First, although Poliheuristic Decision Theory has often neglected the role of group behaviour, this thesis has sought to partially remedy this oversight by integrating a discussion of bureaucratic politics into the framework as a variable in the first stage of decision-making. While literature on the Mandate tends to assume bureaucratic politics was a constant force during the time period, this thesis finds that it was only an influencing factor in two of the four key junctures of policy-making: the Balfour Zeitgeist in the 1920s and the MacDonald Betrayal of the late 1930s. Although the bureaucracies of the Foreign and Colonial Offices were always involved in the question of Palestine and its day-to-day administration, it was the rivalry between various heads of these organisations that mobilised their respective ministries and had an impact on decision-making at cabinet level. Without this individual competition, the other periods of decision-making covered in this thesis found that bureaucratic politics was largely immaterial. Unfortunately, when turf wars did erupt, the result was a staggering lethargy or delay in the British government's ability to act on Palestine policy.

In the early 1920s, this dynamic of group decision-making manifested in a fierce competition between Foreign Secretary Lord Curzon and Colonial Secretary Winston Churchill, which was partly the result of a prior turf war between Curzon and David Lloyd George. Palestine had entered the Empire under auspices of Foreign Office control before passing to the Colonial Office's newly constituted Middle East Department, but neither institution gained complete control of the Middle East and the cabinet secretaries continued to agitate for bureaucratic expansion on the basis that splitting responsibility created paralysis. This led to a situation in which the decision-making atmosphere was prohibitive of decisive change, not least because in a turf war it was in both men's and institutions' best interests to demonstrate that they could not work together. While the costs involved in keeping Palestine part of the British Empire were readily apparent, there was, however, no institutional ability to react with any alacrity, as a direct result of the personal rivalries of men representing the Foreign and Colonial Offices. This level of immobilisation, however, was far less severe than the stoppage created by Foreign Secretary Anthony Eden and Colonial Secretary William Ormsby-Gore in the late 1930s.

As highlighted in Chapter Five, the Arab Revolt and the Peel Commission's suggestion of partitioning Palestine created an almost paralysing inertia between the two rival institutions in Westminster. It is particularly curious that Ormsby-Gore and Eden seemed vitriolic in their attacks against the other's position on this one issue but gave each other support on other subjects such as the Munich Agreement of 1938. This implies that the competition between them was indeed a turf war, probably the result of splitting governmental responsibility for the Middle East back in the 1920s. The bureaucratic conflict ended when both men resigned from the cabinet in 1938, and their successors avoided its continuation partially due to the Woodhead

Commission's opinion that partition was impracticable. This investigation was deliberately aimed at solving the deadlock within cabinet on this issue. The commission extended decision-making processes for over a year, during which violence and brutal suppression continued in Palestine.

Over the 30 years of British rule, therefore, it is possible to assert that bureaucratic politics played both a minor role – as it influenced the timings of decision-making in only two of four case studies – and that it formed a crucial component in periods of apparent British ineptitude and dithering during situations of crisis. In these instances, the decision-making process was drawn out to the detriment of Palestine's communities, a delay resulting not from considerations of public safety or long-term strategic and financial planning, but rather from the expansionist and defensive attitudes of key institutions that was evident in more personal, cabinet-level rivalries. This assessment is only made possible by including a description of bureaucratic politics in Stage One of Polyheuristic Decision Theory, demonstrating its appropriate and necessary integration despite the fact that bureaucratic politics cannot explain the elimination of any variable from the choice set on its own. This use of bureaucratic politics, however, is complicated slightly by considerations of leadership style and personality within the cabinet.

Although personality would also fail to provide causal pathways in the decision-making processes featured in this thesis, it does seem to have played a secondary role in the development of bureaucratic politics that may warrant further investigation. During the Balfour Zeitgeist, David Lloyd George was prime minister and adopted a presidential style of leadership. He conducted post-war negotiations with his French counterpart in relative isolation, cutting the Foreign Office and Foreign Secretary Curzon out of the bargain and encroaching far onto his turf. Not

only did this result in the kind of secret diplomacy often blamed for starting the First World War, but also it must have contributed to Lord Curzon's defensive posture on Palestine when Colonial Secretary Churchill tried to acquire responsibility for the entire Middle East. Indeed, Curzon's personal attachment to the Middle East as a region he had visited and explored, and Churchill's single-minded pursuit of budget cuts, may have worsened both men's inclination towards bureaucratic conflict in the first place.

Paradoxically, Prime Minister Baldwin's later deliberate avoidance of foreign policy fed the turf war between Ormsby-Gore and Eden in the late 1930s. It was only Neville Chamberlain's appointment to the prime ministerial chair and his attempt at compromise in the Woodhead Commission that helped to end their particular battle over partition. Again, it is not possible to draw causal pathways between these personality traits and the outcome of decision-making processes, but idiosyncrasies of various prime ministers and their cabinet colleagues may well have made them more or less inclined to enter into turf wars. The role of personality and leadership style is not a main or even subsidiary focus of this thesis, but it does seem to have been a factor that helped to create the atmosphere surrounding decision-making in at least two of the case studies presented herein. This is something with which Poliheuristic Decision Theory is not entirely equipped to deal, but it can be made part of any discussion of bureaucratic politics integrated into Stage One. The result would be more descriptive accuracy but not necessarily any greater outcome validity due to the lack of causal pathways. One factor that does have an impact on the poliheuristic framework's predictive abilities, however, is situations in which no option satisfies requirements on the political dimension.

In Poliheuristic Decision Theory, it is assumed that alternatives are eliminated from the choice set when they pose too much risk to the decision-maker's political survival. An obvious question, therefore, is what happens when all of the available alternatives fail this test and no option passes into the second stage? This situation seems to have arisen in two instances during the British Mandate. First, the political storm surrounding the Passfield White Paper made it very clear that any attempt to limit Jewish immigration and land purchase in Palestine would encounter staunch opposition in the House of Commons, and secondly, the diplomatic gridlock between representatives of Zionism, the United States and the Arab states following World War Two gave Prime Minister Attlee and Foreign Secretary Bevin no avenue to pursue. The result in both cases was inertia.

Although the inability to act following the Passfield White Paper ended with the outbreak of the Arab Revolt and a freshly defined political dimension, and the post-war deadlock was relieved by a United Nations Special Committee favouring partition, these instances reflect an interesting and unexplored element of Ph Theory. DeRouen's study of President Eisenhower's decision to withhold bombing at Dien Bien Phu represents the sole case applying a poliheuristic framework to a decision that maintained the status quo.¹⁰³⁵ DeRouen, however, demonstrates how Eisenhower's decision not to act was the result of a political risk assessment followed by utility maximisation. This is very different to a situation in which the decision-makers are paralysed by high levels of political risk on every front. What seems to happen in these cases is that the risks posed by politically dangerous alternatives, those requiring some form of positive action, carry more weight than the objectively equal risk of doing nothing.

¹⁰³⁵ DeRouen, "The Decision Not to Use Force at Dien Bien Phu".

Mintz proffers the noncompensatory principle as a method to rank dimensions – the political always outweighs other considerations – but ranking does not explicitly take place within the political dimension itself. In addition, an assumption of the Ph approach is that “the presentation of information will affect how this information is evaluated and what choices are made. Mintz et al. found that “in an experimental setting [...] decision makers were more likely to disregard new information due to sunk costs.”¹⁰³⁶ Practically, however, it is difficult to assert that a “do nothing” option necessarily occurs to decision-makers before the urge to “do something”. The natural inclination of politicians may be more towards the latter than the former. The noncompensatory principle, therefore, needs to be augmented slightly to take into account that risk on one variable within the political dimension may be relative to risk on another variable within the same organising theme. This means that inertia, or delay, may be a bad choice politically, but one that is made tolerable by the excessive risk presented by other variables. The only way these periods of inertia in British decision-making in the early 1930s and late 1940s were resolved was a change in the choice set brought about by events outside British control. This has serious implications for Ph Theory’s predictive abilities, especially in competition with the extremely reliable outcome validity of rational choice.

When pursuing post-dictions, it is entirely possible to determine which variables on the political dimension represent more or less risk than others, even when all alternatives pose too much danger to political survival. This would be very difficult to achieve for predictions because foreign policy analysts would probably not have access to as many resources as archival researchers and do not possess the benefit of hindsight. One solution is to adopt the principle that politicians generally

¹⁰³⁶ Mintz, Geva, Redd and Carnes, “The Effect of Dynamic and Static Choice Sets on Political Decision Making”, 556.

view “doing nothing” as the lesser of multiple evils. This, however, would need to be tested in further case studies. Another situation problematic for Ph Theory is the existence of a single viable alternative after Stage One, which occurred in three out of the four case studies contained in this thesis.

Although the Poliheuristic Decision Theory purports to act as a bridge between rational choice and cognitive approaches by using both in a two-stage decision-making process, the bridging element of the theory is severely undermined when there is only a single viable option remaining after Stage One – this is discussed in Chapter Two. Mintz skirts the issue by using a satisficing principle, asserting that Stage Two is still necessary to ensure that the politically sound option also satisfices the key substantive dimensions, and this is the approach taken in this thesis. In three case studies, however, it would seem as though the real decision was made using Stage One alone.

During the Balfour Zeitgeist, for example, political risk eliminated all but one alternative, which was to continue with the policy of supporting a Jewish national home but with limits to that commitment. The resulting policy document, the Churchill White Paper of 1922, did indeed satisfice the vitally important military/strategic dimension but would probably have failed to pass through Stage One if such a vital component of British foreign policy had been ignored – there would have been political ramifications. A similar paradox occurred with the MacDonald White Paper in 1939 and the decision to withdraw from Palestine, taken in 1947.

In terms of how this affects Poliheuristic Decision Theory, the bridging element of the theory is undermined, but this anomaly may also contribute to a narrower and perhaps more accurate definition of rationality specifically in the

context of political decision-making. Ph Theory, by focusing on the political dimension, highlights how national leaders' decision-making processes are different to the average human's. As Foreign Policy Analysis is largely centred upon these leaders, the political dimension provides a useful and easily identifiable limit to rationality. It is bounded, yes, but critically, it is confined by the logic of political survival. This means that Stage One can indeed provide all the theoretical framework that is necessary to explain some decisions – those where only one option remains. Otherwise, the theory can invoke Stage Two to perform a cost-benefit analysis between options. What these case studies reveal, therefore, is that the satisficing principle is useful in terms of description, but it is not necessarily crucial to explaining or predicting. Conversely, outcome validity is shattered by the possibility that politicians can make inaccurate assessments of risk.

The Poliheuristic Decision Theory assumes that decision-makers at the state level will always consider their own political survival before any other dimensions such as the economy or strategic planning. This means that politicians must always perform an assessment of risk to their political survival at the outset of any decision-making process. While the case studies in previous chapters tend to confirm this view, one case presented a situation that may prove problematic for the predictive function of Ph Theory. Chapter Four detailed the decision-making process surrounding the passage of the highly controversial Passfield White Paper and its subsequent reversal only months later. While the reversal process does seem to have been influenced to a great extent by the James Ramsay MacDonald government's need to maintain political survival, it is curious that the white paper received agreement in cabinet in the first place. Lord Passfield believed he had secured the acquiescence of Chaim Weizmann in announcing a new policy, and framed the document to address the

specific concerns of Sir John Hope-Simpson by cutting Jewish immigration and land purchase in Palestine. In addition, the Prime Minister was kept informed at every stage and, even after the white paper's provocative publication, Foreign Secretary Henderson continued to defend its contents as innocent of the charge that it crystallised the Jewish national home.

These attitudes point to a conclusion that is difficult to marry with Poliheuristic Decision Theory – that politicians can make an assessment of risk and get it wrong. In terms of a purely historical understanding of foreign policy decision-making, this is neither a new nor startling assessment. However, if Ph Theory intends to replace rational choice as a predictive model – albeit one based on substantial available resources rather than strict utility maximisation – then the realisation that politicians' assessment of risk is not necessarily predictable does have an impact on its overall outcome validity.

Just as rational choice can struggle to deal with decisions that maintain the status quo, Poliheuristic Decision Theory cannot account for choices in which the key decision-makers possess a flawed understanding of the risk to their own political survival. Within this thesis, the case study of the Passfield White Paper represents a one in four anomaly in the decision-making process. In turn, politicians' inability to assess risk correctly may be linked to other more traditional elements of Foreign Policy Analysis such as the role of personality, illness or culture. The only way to establish how often this phenomenon occurs, and thereby how frequently Ph Theory either loses a degree of external validity or has to become complicated by a larger range of cognitive variables, is to perform a greater number of case studies. The same is true of the other concerns and points for discussion detailed above.

The Last Word

This thesis encompasses four distinct case studies of British foreign policy decision-making during the Mandate and has yielded several interventions on the subject. First and foremost, this research addresses the myth that British policy was driven primarily by individual politicians' biases for or against Zionism or Arab nationalism. In addition, the studies clarify some minor points on the Mandate period more broadly – concluding that British support for a Jewish national home may represent an accident of history; that some British politicians did attempt to solve the conflict in Palestine regardless of motive; and finally that the Holocaust did play an indirect role in the creation of Israel. In terms of theory development, this thesis also contributes new and innovative studies to the third wave of Foreign Policy Analysis. Utilisation of Poliheuristic Decision Theory highlights the framework's potential and also the elements that require further attention. Group decision-making, personality and factors that undermine external validity are all areas that call for further case studies.

Just as the British Mandate for Palestine constituted a formative stage in the Israel-Palestine conflict, Poliheuristic Decision Theory is still in its infancy. By developing the theory, it is possible to gain a better understanding of the role played by domestic politics in foreign policy-making. This has implications for studying not only the British Mandate, but also a multitude of issues that continue to demand worldwide attention from state leaders and governments, all with their own political dimensions to consider.

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