



Foreign Office,
November 2nd, 1917.

I have the pleasure in conveying to you, on behalf of His Majesty's Government, the following declaration of their views and of the Jewish Zionist aspirations which have been adopted by the Cabinet, and approved by the Government. It is the Government view with favour that the establishment of a national home for the Jewish people in Palestine will use their best endeavours to secure that nothing shall be done which might prejudice the civil and religious rights of the non-Jewish communities in Palestine, or the rights of other peoples enjoying equal status with the Jews in any part of Palestine.

I am, Sir,
Arthur James Balfour

GIVING AWAY OTHER PEOPLE'S LAND

The Making of the Balfour Declaration



The Palestinian Return Centre

The Palestinian Return Centre is an independent consultancy focusing on the historical, political and legal aspects of the Palestinian Refugees. The organization offers expert advice to various actors and agencies on the question of Palestinian Refugees within the context of the Nakba - the catastrophe following the forced displacement of Palestinians in 1948 - and serves as an information repository on other related aspects of the Palestine question and the Arab-Israeli conflict. It specializes in the research, analysis, and monitor of issues pertaining to the dispersed Palestinians and their internationally recognized legal right to return.

Giving Away Other People's Land: The Making of the Balfour Declaration

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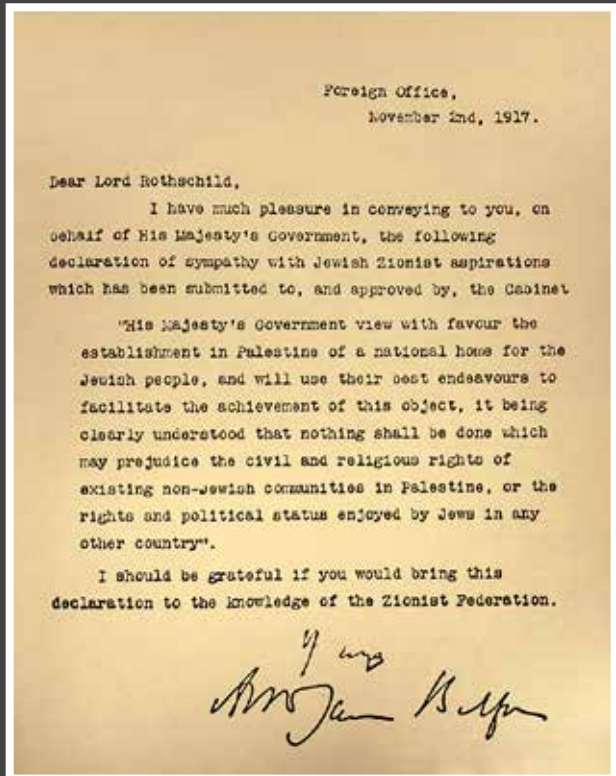
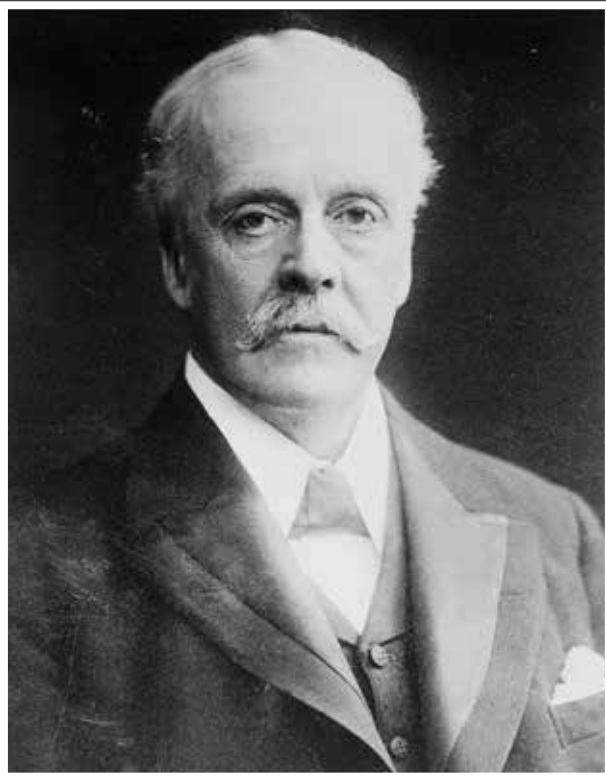
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Contents

Introduction	3
Background to the Balfour Declaration	6
Chapter 1	
British Anti-Zionist Jews reject the Balfour Declaration	8
Chapter 2	
Imperial Ambitions	19
Chapter 3	
The Anti-Semitic Logic Behind the Declaration.....	34
Chapter 4	
Orientalist ideology towards Palestinians	41
Conclusion	48
Bibliography	50



Introduction

No document in Middle Eastern history has had as much influence as the Balfour Declaration on the current plight of the Palestinian people. It has been suggested that ‘The Balfour Declaration may be the most extraordinary document produced by any Government in world history’⁽¹⁾. The Declaration was quite simply just a letter from the Foreign Secretary Arthur Balfour to Lord Lionel Walter Rothschild, a Jewish banker, which was made public in November 1917 for the Zionist Federation of Great Britain and Ireland. Despite the document initially having no legal legitimacy Zionists consider the Balfour Declaration their charter for colonising Palestine.⁽²⁾ Later when it was incorporated into the 1922 Mandate of Palestine, what was initially just a political sentiment was transformed into British policy.⁽³⁾ The Declaration was a promise made by the British Government to facilitate the establishment of a national home for the Jewish people. The Imperial Government promised them the Holy Land which was at the time an integral part of Syria and belonging to the Ottoman Empire, of which Britain had no legal right to give away.⁽⁴⁾

(1) Robert John, ‘*Behind the Balfour Declaration: Britain’s Great War Pledge to Lord Rothschild*’, Institute for Historical Review, http://www.ihr.org/jhr/v06/v06p389_john.html [accessed 25/01/2017].

(2) Sahar Huneidi, *A Broken Trust: Herbert Samuel, Zionism and the Palestinians* (London, 2001), 2.

(3) Janko Scepanovic, ‘*Sentiment and Geopolitics and the Formulation and Realization of the Balfour Declaration*’, CUNY Academic Works (2014) http://academicworks.cuny.edu/gc_etds/280 [accessed 02/02/2017].

(4) Kathy Durkin, *The Ambiguity of the Balfour Declaration: Who Caused it and Why?*

Foreign Office,

November 2nd, 1917.

Dear Lord Rothschild,

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

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

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

Yours sincerely,

Arthur James Balfour.

BL Add MS41178 A The Balfour Declaration 1917.

By exploring the archival documents from its drafting stages conclusions can be drawn which attempt to hold the British Government accountable for their continual support of Zionism. The documents held in the National Archives in Kew Gardens detail the vast oversights, insincerity of British motivations and a complete lack of consideration for the Palestinian people that has ignited and fuelled decades of violence and injustice in the region. It is empirical that we review these documents and continue to evaluate the role Britain has played in establishing the current Israeli regime of settler colonialism. Historian Elizabeth Monroe has described the declaration as 'one of the greatest mistakes in our [British] imperial history.'⁽⁵⁾

The following chapters will display extracts of archival evidence narrated and then analysed, documents from the years pre-and post-declaration. Balfour historian Robert John demonstrates how crucial it is to examine documents from the past, he writes: 'Attempts to review historical records impartially often reveal that blame, culpability, or dishonour

(5) Elizabeth Monroe, *Britain's Moment in the Middle East 1914-1956* (London, 1963).

are not to be attached wholly to one side in the conflicts of the last hundred years. To seek to untangle fact from propaganda is worth study, for it increases understanding of how we got where we are and it should help people resist exploitation by powerful and destructive interests in the present and future, by exposing their working in the past'.⁽⁶⁾

Historical propaganda has continually been used as a political weapon to justify the denial of basic rights to the Palestinian people. Over the last one hundred years colonial discourse has constructed the history of this conflict and written its dominant narrative. Colonial discourse within historiography, and academia as a whole, has proven to be a powerful tool which manipulates our understanding of the conflict. To quote Chomsky: 'to dive into the ocean of words found in the political and diplomatic documents in the various national archives understands how precarious is the story extracted from these heaps of documents, left behind by the chattering classes that shaped our lives over the last two centuries'.⁽⁷⁾ This work will attempt to do just that, however precarious it might be.

This research is divided into thematic sections. The following chapters will critique the Balfour Declaration by taking the various objections voiced by British Jewish anti-Zionists as a point of departure. Chapter one will commence by examining the Jewish anti-Zionist movement, the form it took, its key figures and its main arguments. First I will analyse the primary evidence to explore the perceived impact of the Balfour Declarations on the Jewish people, both in Britain and across the globe. The successive chapters will then extend upon three core themes advocated by the anti-Zionists breaking these down to form three more chapters. Chapter two will therefore analyse the charge that the British Government held ulterior motivations for promoting Zionism. The insincere reasons behind the Declaration are widely known by academics and hold a firm grounding within the historiography of the Balfour debate. The evidence in the archives proves that government ministers used political Zionism to advance their own ambitions, firstly to help them gain an advantage in World War One but also to pursue their imperial interests in the region. The third chapter will scrutinise the accusation that the British ruling elite were anti-Semitic and thus driven by an age-long ambition to humanely expel their Jewish communities. It will also investigate how the Zionists were keenly aware of Western governments anti-Semitism using it for their own advantage. The final chapter will assess the allegation that the declaration was proclaimed with a total disregard for the inhabitants of Palestine. It will critique both the British Government and the Zionists justifications for the domination of Palestine by exploring their application of both Orientalist and Colonialist ideologies.

(6) Robert John, Behind the Balfour Declaration: Britain's Great War Pledge to Lord Rothschild, https://archive.org/stream/BehindTheBalfourDeclaration-BritainsGreatWarPledgeToRothschild_491/BehindTheBalfourDeclaration_BritainsGreatWarPledgeToLordRothschild_djvu.txt.

(7) Noam Chomsky and Ilan Pappé, *Gaza in Crisis: Reflections on Israel's War Against the Palestinians* (London, 2010), p 20.

Background to the Balfour Declaration

For centuries the core European powers have actively sought to extend their influence in the Holy Land. Back then the vision was the reclamation of Palestine, an age long ambition for Christian and Jewish Europeans alike; Zionism therefore only represents one of the many European movements dedicated to these ambitions.⁽⁸⁾ The age of Empires brought a renewed interest in the Levant as Europeans squabbled for power and influence in the rapidly developing geostrategic region. Unfortunately for the European Empires the region was already colonised by the old Turkish Empire. When the region was under the control of the Ottomans it prevented any form of territorial colonisation, meaning that the Europeans had to look for other more creative ways of penetrating Palestine. As Scholch identifies they did this primarily through the pursuit of protecting non-Muslim minorities in the Ottoman Empire⁽⁹⁾ as a way of infiltrating the Holy Land. Britain was one such country that perceived the region as strategically important to them, they had long term ambitions of establishing political and economic hegemony in the Arab world. They also looked to Palestine for interests relating to protecting their trade routes to India - the affectionately known Jewel in their crown – as well as seeking ways gain advantage the Great War. These national interests were coupled with age long Christian aspirations in the Holy Land. The desire to gain a foot hold in the region was then synthesised with Christian messianic teachings that the return of the Jews to the Promised Land was a prerequisite for the second coming of Christ. Back then the very notion of Palestine was romanticised beyond all recognition.⁽¹⁰⁾

For a while British designs for the Holy Land remained latent in colonial policy and Middle Eastern strategy that was until it came in direct contact with modern political Zionism. This new Zionist movement emerged in Europe in the late 19th century, largely in response to the rise of nationalism and growing anti-Semitism. The movement was championed by Theodore Herzl, an Austrian-Hungarian journalist and activist, who published his work *der Judenstaat* (The State of the Jews) in 1896. His work advocated that the Jews should leave Europe and establish their own national home, preferably in Palestine, as the only viable answer to anti-Semitism. 'I shall therefore clearly and emphatically state that I believe in the practical outcome of my scheme, though without claiming to have discovered the final shape it will assume. The Jewish State is necessary for the world; consequently it will come about.'⁽¹¹⁾ He gained notoriety and the movement flourished amongst Jews and Christians alike. Just a year after *der Judensataat* was published he founded the First Zionist Congress in Basel, Switzerland, in which the delegates created the World Zionist Organisation. As modern Zionism gained momentum across the continent, it picked up steam in Britain, the British Zionist Federation being formed in 1899. The campaign in Britain was spear headed by chemist Chaim Weizmann who met with Arthur Balfour for the first time in 1906 - who at the time leader of the opposition. Weizmann was joined by Jewish MP and

(8) Alexander Scholch, 'Britain in Palestine 1838-1882' in *Journal for Palestinian Studies*, Vol. 22, No. 1 (1992-1993)

(9) *Ibid*

(10) Faysal Mikdadi, 'Britain's Legacy in Palestine', in Dr. Maria Holt and Nasim Ahmed Britain's Legacy in Palestine (London, 2016), 31.

(11) Theodore Herzl, *The Jewish State* (Tel-Aviv, 1954), 32.

Minister Herbert Samuels and banker Lord Lionel Walter Rothschild, the cause gained strong support from within the government but it initially remained a sub-issue.

Meanwhile the events of the First World War were having an impact on the Jewish quest for the Holy Land. In 1914 Britain declared war on the Ottoman Empire, and since Palestine was under the remit of the Ottomans the task was on to liberate Palestine from the Turks and carve up the remnants of their Empire. As Britain's strategic war time interests began to align with the Zionists, British statesmen picked up the issue and began to debate its potential political rewards.

The territory of Palestine has a rather apt historical name: 'the Promised Land'. As Keay explains the: 'Hashemites thought it had been promised to them, Sykes-Picot promised it international jurisdiction, the British promised it to the Zionists and the League of Nations finally mandated it to the British'.⁽¹²⁾ In the years preceding the publication of the Declaration the British Government had already entered into two very opposing agreements in the Levant territory. The first being the notorious Sykes-Picot Agreement,⁽¹³⁾ in which British statesman Sir Mark Sykes and French politician François Georges-Picot drew with pencils and carved up the map of the Middle East between France and Britain, assuming that the Ottoman Empire would fall.⁽¹⁴⁾ They agreed that Iraq and the overland route in Southern Palestine and Transjordan would come under the British sphere and the French would have Syria and Lebanon.⁽¹⁵⁾ Under this agreement it was decided Palestine would be internationalised in order to provide a buffer zone between the two competing states. The second agreement was named the Hussein-McMahon agreement. The Agreement comprised of a series of correspondences and formal pledges made between Hussein bin Ali, the Sherif of Mecca and Sir Henry McMahon, the High Commissioner for Egypt.⁽¹⁶⁾ As the Great War commenced Britain realised that Arab nationalists could be of benefit to them, they therefore solicited their loyalty to fight the Ottomans and in return McMahon promised to Hussein Arab independence - on the advent of the Turkish Empire being defeated. The British had therefore already double crossed and betrayed two peoples before a third agreement on the destiny of Palestine had even been declared.

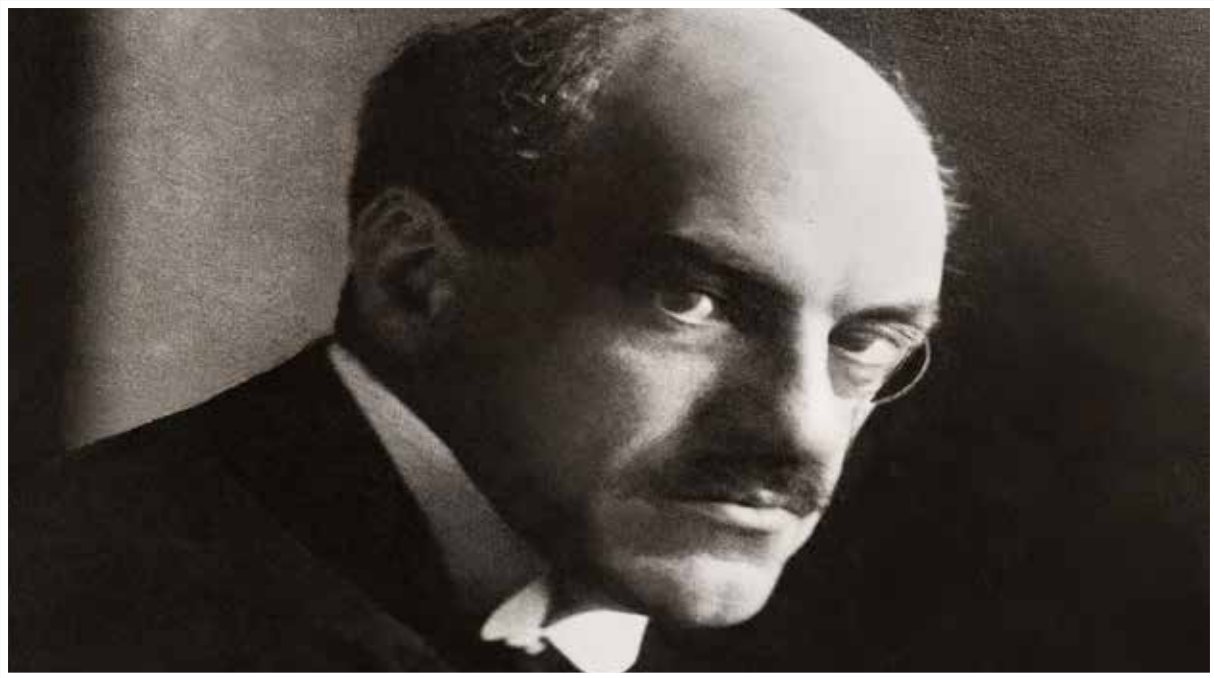
(12) John Keay, 'In the Wrong Place: the Strategic Importance of Palestine for Parties to the Conflict', in Sophia Akram (ed) *World War I Impact on Palestine: a Hundred Year Legacy* (London, 2016), 50.

(13) FO 371/27055 Sykes-Picot Agreement 1916.

(14) Joe Stork, 'Understanding the Balfour Declaration', *Middle East Research and Information Project* (1972), 13, 9-13.

(15) Anita Shapira, *Israel: a History* (London, 2014), 71.

(16) Hussein-McMahon Agreement (1915-1916), <http://www1.udel.edu/History-old/figal/Hist104/assets/pdf/readings/13mcmahonhussein.pdf> [accessed 03/02/2017].



Edwin Samuel Montagu (6 February 1879 – 15 November 1924) was a British Liberal politician who served as Secretary of State for India between 1917 and 1922. Photograph: Wikipedia.

Chapter 1

British Anti-Zionist Jews reject the Balfour Declaration

'I have never heard it suggested even by their most fervent admirers, that either Mr. Balfour or Lord Rothschild would prove to be the Messiah.'⁽¹⁷⁾ – Edwin S. Montagu

Included in the War Cabinet files relating to the Balfour Declaration are various letters written by Edwin Samuel Montagu a Jewish Government Minister, who was at the time Secretary of State for India. Contained in the letters are Montagu's objections to the declaration which are varied and far reaching. Alongside his protests is a list of forty-five prominent British Jews, representing those who vehemently opposed the impending declaration and abhorred Zionism. The list Montagu provides is accompanied by figures from the Zionist Federation that show that just six percent of the Jewish population of Great Britain supported Zionism. It is important to acknowledge that the Governments policy, which was declared in the name of its Jewish citizens, did not represent the views of the majority of Jewish people, and the promise of the Holy Land was imposed upon the community despite its advice and objections. The evidence found in the War Cabinet documents show a distinct lack of consideration for the views of distinguished Jews who opposed Zionism. Very few letters of anti-Zionists make it into the files; and in fact there is evidence to suggest that the War

(17) NA CAB 21/58 Pamphlet written by Edwin S. Montagu (1917).

Cabinet limited circulation of the draft declaration, in order to restrict anti-Zionists being able to convey their criticisms. The vast majority of all other correspondence comes from members of the Jewish community who were themselves Zionists.

Listed below there are some prominent anti-Zionists. It will be noticed that it includes every Jew who is prominent in public life, with the exception of the present Lord Rothschild, Mr. Herbert Samuel, and a few others.

- Dr. Israel Abrahams, M.A University of Cambridge.
- Sir Lionel Abrahams, K.C.B.
- Professor S. Alexander, M.A., University of Manchester
- D.L., Alexander, Esq., K.C., J.P.
- Captain O.E., d'Avigdor-Goldsmid.
- Leonard L. Cohen, Esq.
- Robert Waley Cohen, Esq.
- Dr. A Eichholz.
- S.H. Emanuel, Esq., B.A., Recorder of Winchester.
- Ernest I. Franklin, Esq.
- Professor I. Gollanez, M.A., Secretary of the British Academy.
- Michael A. Green, Esq.
- P.J. Hartog, Esq, M.A., Registrar University of London.
- H.S.Q. Henriques, Esq., M.A.
- Sir Charles S. Henry, Bart, M.P.
- J.D. Israel Esq.
- Benjamin Kisch, Esq.
- Rev. Ephraim Levine, M.A.
- Joshua M. Levy Esq., Chairman of the Council of Jews' College.
- Major Laurie Magnus. Bart., M.P.
- Sir Alfred Mond, M.P.

Fig. NA CAB21/58 extract from a letter to the War Cabinet titled 'The Future of Palestine' by Montagu, October 1917.

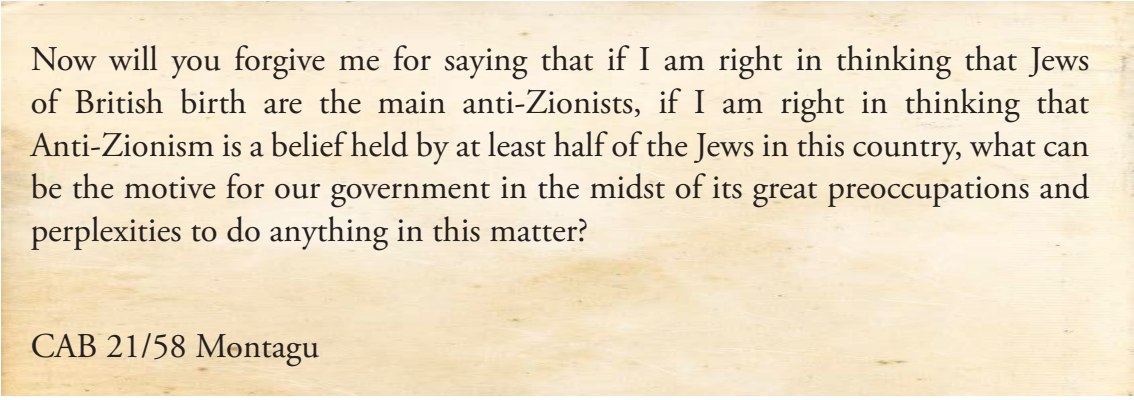
League of British Jews

- C.G. Montefiore, Esq., M.A.
- A.R. Moro Esq.
- Sir Matthew Nathan, G.C.M.G.
- J. Prag. Esq., J.P.
- The Right Hon. Viscount Reading, G.C.B., K.C.V.O.
- Captain Anthony de Rothschild, New Court, St. Swithin's Lane, E.C.
- Captain Evelyn de Rothschild, New Court, E.C.
- Major Lionel de Rothschild, New Court, E.C.
- Captain I. Salmon, L.C.C.
- Sir Harry S. Samuel, M.P.
- Sir Marcus Samuel, Bart.
- Edmund Sebag-Montefiore, Esq.
- Oswald J. Simon, Esq.
- Dr. Charles Singer, M.A., & c., 33 Upper Brook Street, W.
- Sir Isidore Spielman, C.M.G.
- Marion H. Spielman, Esq.
- Meyer A. Spielman, Esq.
- Sir Edward D. Stern.
- Lord Swaything.
- Sir Adolph Truck, Bart.
- Philip S. Waley, Esq.
- Professor A. Wolf, M.A., University College, London.
- Lucien Wolf, Esq.
- Albert M. Woolf, Esq.

The Jewish men listed above ardently resented Zionist efforts to convince Jews that they were an ethnic-racial group whom constituted a nation. They believed it was an injustice to turn over control of a land to those who then constituted only 7 per cent of the population;⁽¹⁸⁾ they also distinguished that the Holy Land is Holy to Jews, Christians and Muslims insisting that the Jews do not have religious privilege. Montagu and others further articulated

(18) Michael Meyer, *Response to Modernity: A History of the Reform Movement in Judaism*, Oxford University Press (1990, Oxford).

the practical implications of Zionism, and the challenge those who immigrated would face. And, what appears to be their overarching argument against Zionism is the threat assimilationist Jews would face if it was declared their national home was now in Palestine.



Now will you forgive me for saying that if I am right in thinking that Jews of British birth are the main anti-Zionists, if I am right in thinking that Anti-Zionism is a belief held by at least half of the Jews in this country, what can be the motive for our government in the midst of its great preoccupations and perplexities to do anything in this matter?

CAB 21/58 Montagu

Just one week after the Balfour Declaration was publicly announced three high profile British Jews: Lionel Nathan de Rothschild, Sir Philip Magnus and Lord Swaything came together to found the League of British Jews. Their principle aim was to publicly oppose and denounce Zionist ideology which advocated the idea that Jews constituted a political nation.

Their work largely consisted of reaffirming that Judaism is a religion, not a race or a nation. These Jewish men resented the Zionist effort to convince Jews that they were an 'ethnic-racial' group and on its preliminary announcement to the press it was proclaimed: 'resist the allegation that Jews constitute a separate political nationality'. At its inaugural meeting 400 of Britain's most influential Jews attended, demonstrating the extent of the movement which was working to oppose Zionist aspirations in Palestine. Following on from the founding of the League of British Jews, the prominent ideologues of the movement began to express their views in writing by establishing a newspaper to counter the *Jewish Chronicle*, the leading Zionist publication. They created the *Jewish Guardian* that sought to uphold liberal, and reformist Jewish views and which actively criticised the ideology of Zionism and the British Government's policy of promoting it. The Jewish anti-Zionist campaign in Britain was strong and represented by impressive names from within high Jewish circles. The most influential in the movement were the likes of Rabbi Israel Mattuck, Claude Montefiore, Lucien Wolf, and Laurie Magnus.

Prominent British anti-Zionist profiles

Despite the Rothschild family being the most prolific supporters of the Zionist movement there were several who became key members in the anti-Zionist movement – members like Evelyn de Rothschild, Lionel de Rothschild and Anthony de Rothschild.

Rabbi Israel Mattuck was arguably one of the most influential members of the Liberal Jewish movement. He wrote many publications and held sermons primarily advocating that the Jews in the modern world no longer constituted a nation, and that religion by its very nature lends to universalism. ‘The idea of nationality apart from its intrinsic error holds no promise for the future of the Jews, but that of a weak ineffective national existence for a small fraction of them, while the large number of them are left in the world thence to choose between remaining for all time alienated or separated from the Jewish people’.⁽¹⁹⁾

Claude Montefiore was another prominent Jewish anti-Zionist he was highly revered philanthropist and scholar within the Jewish community, with his portrait hanging in the National Portrait Gallery. Montefiore was the founding President of the World Union for Progressive Judaism, the intellectual founder of Liberal Judaism and a leading figure in the Anglo-Jewish Association. Alongside this he has published numerous books, pamphlets and teachings. In his work: *Race, Nation, Religion* and *The Jews and Nation or Religious Community*.⁽²⁰⁾

The establishment of a ‘National Home for the Jewish Race’ in Palestine presupposes that the Jews are a nation, which I deny, and that they are homeless, which implies that the countries where they enjoy religious liberty and the full rights of citizenship, they are separate entities, unidentified with the interests of the nations of which they form parts, an implication which I repudiate.

CAB21/58 letter from Leonard Cohen October 1917.

There is further evidence from anti-Zionist Jew Leonard Cohen who concurs that key objection to the Balfour Declaration. His main arguments, were outlined by Montagu in his letters to the War Cabinet, but were completely ignored by the British Executive and dismissed by Zionists. His key argument advocates that Jews should not be looking to find a nation of their own as they already belong to a nation. He writes ‘in Italy, Holland, France and, above all England, a fatherland is not denied to the Jews... there fatherland is Italy, Holland, France and England respectively’.⁽²¹⁾ Being a strong patriot he proudly declared himself to be an Englishman of the Jewish persuasion.

Before the publication of the Balfour Declaration there was a movement to internationalise Palestine in order to protect it and preserve it in the interests of all three faiths. Montagu goes on to testify that the Jewish people have no more a religious claim to the Holy Land than the Christians, Muslims:

(19) Israel Mattuck, Sermon ‘*The Theory of Zionism*’ June 1917 <http://lnk.li/?k=S20>

(20) CAB 21/58 *Nation or Religious Community?* By Claude G. Montefiore 1917.

(21) Claude Montefiore, *Race, Nation, Religion, and The Jews*, 1918 <https://archive.org/details/racenationreligi00mont>.

3. I deny that Palestine is to-day associated with the Jews or properly to be regarded as a fit place for them to live. The Ten Commandments were delivered to the Jews on Sinai. It is quite true that Palestine plays a large part in Jewish history, but so it does in modern Mahomedan history, and after the time of the Jews, surely it plays a larger part than any other country in Christian history. The Temple may have been in Palestine, but so was the Sermon on the Mount and the Crucifixion.

CAB21/58 Montagu

Zionism was seen by many Jews, and primarily by rabbis, as an anti-Jewish rebellion comparable to Luther's challenge to the Church of Rome. Looking outside the British Jewish community Montagu also gives the testimony of Jewish politicians from France and Italy who cite the same objections based on the debate about nationality. Luigi Luzzatti (1841-1927), Italy's second Jewish prime minister, declared:

"Jews must acquire everywhere full religious liberty as existing in the United States and in Italy. In Palestine, delivered from the Turks, Jews will live, not as sovereigns but as free citizens, to fertilise their fathers land. Judaism is not a Nationality but a Religion"

Fig. CAB21/58 booklet from Edwin Samuel Montagu titled 'Zionism', 1917.

And prominent French Deputy, who gained notoriety in the Dreyfus Affair, wrote in 1917:

"Patriotism is the first of our duties. It is the duty of every country to accord the same rights to all citizens without regard to their beliefs."

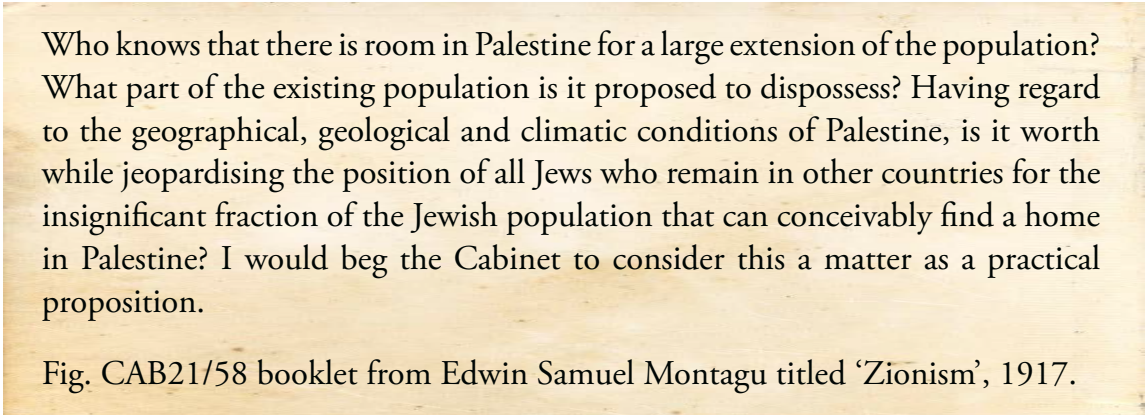
"I am resolute adversary to Zionism. Jerusalem belongs to all the religions. We know its history for 3,000 years. The Jewish Kingdom endured scarcely five centuries"

"Judaism is a religion"

"The absolute duty of the Jews, as of the Catholics, Protestants and Orthodox is to serve their country as good citizens and loyal soldiers. Zionism has been a dream."

Fig. CAB21/58 Booklet from Edwin Samuel Montagu titled 'Zionism', 1917.

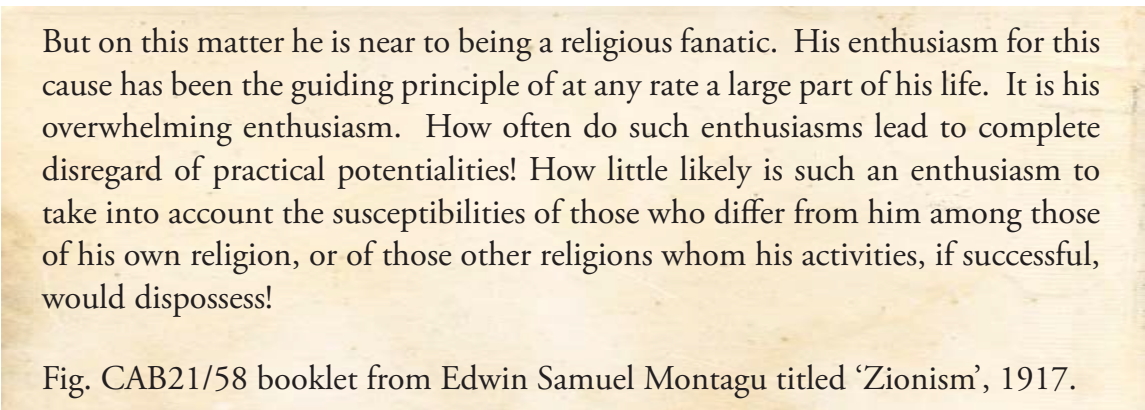
The objections from the Jewish community went further than just the philosophical debate centred on questions of Jewish nationality and race. Montagu in a booklet titled 'Zionism', which he circulated round the government, he provided practical and geographical implications that the Zionists would encounter if they settled in Palestine.



Who knows that there is room in Palestine for a large extension of the population? What part of the existing population is it proposed to dispossess? Having regard to the geographical, geological and climatic conditions of Palestine, is it worth while jeopardising the position of all Jews who remain in other countries for the insignificant fraction of the Jewish population that can conceivably find a home in Palestine? I would beg the Cabinet to consider this a matter as a practical proposition.

Fig. CAB21/58 booklet from Edwin Samuel Montagu titled 'Zionism', 1917.

He goes on to warn of the religious fanaticism of Weizmann and how this drive is blinding him from the impracticalities of choosing the Holy Land as a Jewish homeland:



But on this matter he is near to being a religious fanatic. His enthusiasm for this cause has been the guiding principle of at any rate a large part of his life. It is his overwhelming enthusiasm. How often do such enthusiasms lead to complete disregard of practical potentialities! How little likely is such an enthusiasm to take into account the susceptibilities of those who differ from him among those of his own religion, or of those other religions whom his activities, if successful, would dispossess!

Fig. CAB21/58 booklet from Edwin Samuel Montagu titled 'Zionism', 1917.

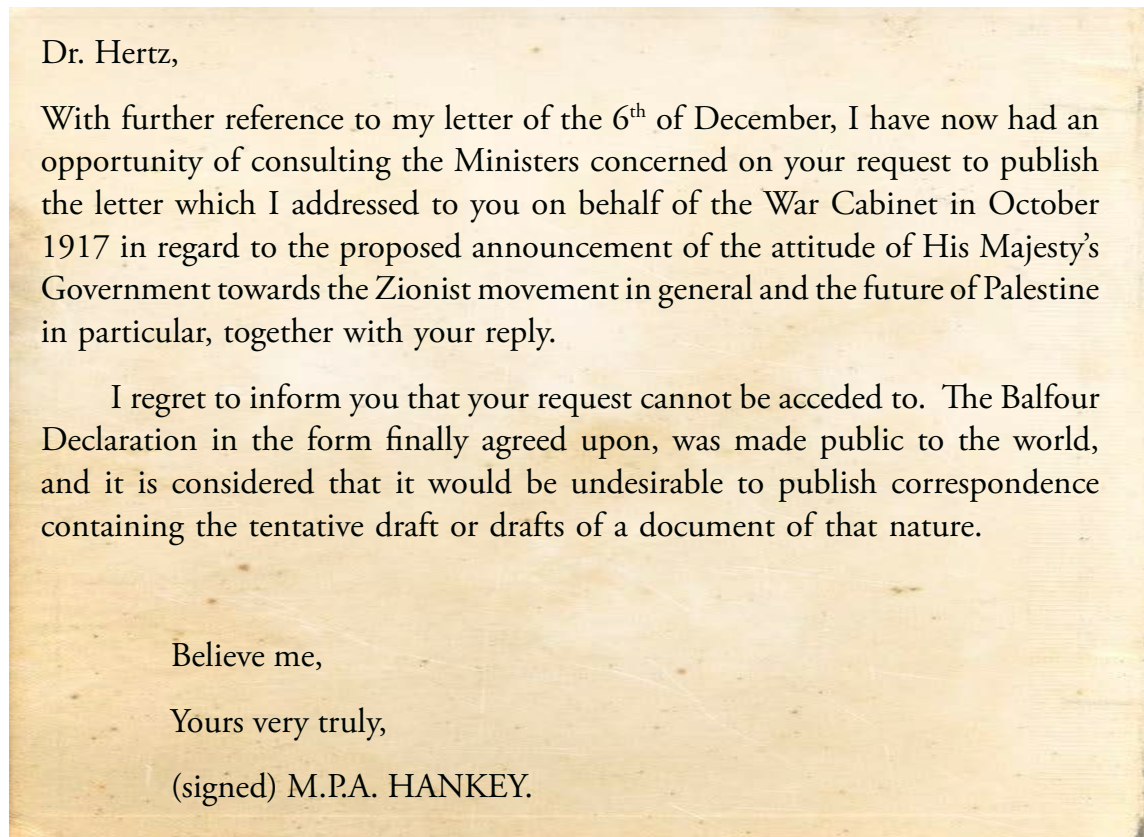
This example also shows how these prominent Jewish activists recognised the threat of Zionism to those which it would dispossess. Archival evidence demonstrates that despite the colonialist context of the era in which the Balfour Declaration evolved, there were many vocal Jewish objections based on an understanding that Zionism would harm the local population.

Montefiore similarly and quite rightly predicts the practical problem of choosing Palestine by writing '[Palestine] might involve them in the bitterest feuds with their neighbours... and would find deplorable echo's throughout the Orient'.⁽²²⁾

In files dated after the Balfour Declaration was made public, there is evidence of the Cabinet suppressing the communications during the Declarations drafting stages. This alludes to a series of issues, the British government not wanting the Jewish community's protests to be known and its insincere motivations to not be publicly revealed.

(22) The London Library, 'Claude Montefiore: A Cautious Revolutionary', June 2016 <http://blog.londonlibrary.co.uk/?p=6581> [accessed 09/01/2017].

Although the request for the publication of the Balfour drafting documents was requested by a pro-Zionist member of the Jewish community, the government's response leads us to question why the government did not want the public to see the communications.



There were further objections from the Anglo-Jewish community which speculated that the creation of a Jewish State would harm the rights of Jewish people who did not leave for Palestine. It was postulated that if a Jewish national home was brought to existence it would undercut the claim of Jews to civil rights in the countries where they lived.⁽²³⁾ Meaning it would only benefit the small minority of Jews who left for Palestine, while leaving Jewish people who decided to stay vulnerable to further anti-Semitism. These objections were the very few to be taken into consideration by the British Government during the drafting of the Declaration, largely because they were voiced by Zionists and anti-Zionists alike. The final copy of the Balfour Declaration laid acknowledgment to Jewish fears: 'it being clearly understood that nothing shall be done which may prejudice... the rights and political status enjoyed by Jews in any other country'.⁽²⁴⁾

It is beneficial to review the protests from the Jewish community who opposed the Zionist movement as their reasons against a Jewish settlement in Palestine still apply to the conflict today. In a majority of instances the anti-Zionists predicted the catastrophic issues and developments that have arisen from the Balfour Declaration. They foresaw and advocated

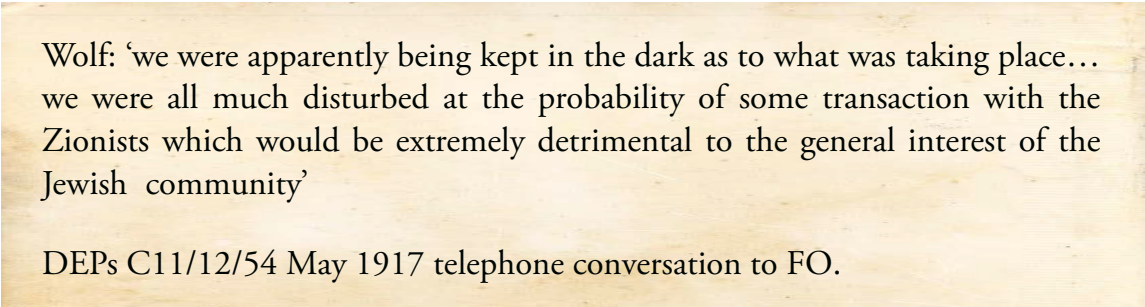
(23) David Cesarani, 'Who Speaks for British Jews', *The New Statesman*, May 2012 <http://www.newstatesman.com/media/media/2012/05/who-speaks-british-jews> [accessed 23/01/2017].

(24) BL Add MS41178 A The Balfour Declaration 1917.

that the Jewish population would not fit into the territory of Palestine and thus the indigenous population would be disposed; they provided the argument that mass Jewish immigration would be deplorable across the Orient as the newcomers would struggle to keep peace with their Arab neighbours; they listed practical geographical reasons like lack of access to water and economy tied to limited agricultural produce that has harmed the economies of both Palestinians and Israelis. These arguments were all submitted to the War Cabinet advising the British Government not to proceed yet were not acted upon. The dispossession of the Palestinian people in the Nakba of 1948 could have been averted, the destabilisation of the Levant and the Arab World could have also been avoided had these prominent Jews had their protests listened to. When reviewing such a profoundly important document which changed the course of history for millions of people ‘the richest and most influential Jews in the United States and England, with the exception of the Rothschild’s... were opposed to the political implications of Zionism’⁽²⁵⁾

Zionist ideology distinguishes that the Holy Land belongs to the Jewish people as promised by them from God in the Bible. This principle has remained a fundamental aspect of Israeli thinking towards the conflict and drives their commitment to the Jewish State. Contained within the archives are various accounts of objections from members of the Jewish community who debunk Zionist ideology that the land belongs to the Jews, instead perceiving that three faiths have a religious and historical claims to the same land. Palestine has a wholly unique history being a melting pot of different cultures and religions all of whom have had their histories intersect one another over the past few thousand years. It is a region for which three of world’s religions have cultural ties, religious buildings, symbols and icons but most importantly a spiritual connection to the land.

The documents also reveal truths that those who were critiquing the prospect of a declaration, and later opposed its incorporation into the British Mandate of Palestine, were kept in the dark as if to silence their dissent. It is clear from the primary evidence that once the decision to cede to Zionists demands had been taken, those instrumental in its creation attempted to keep discussions limited to a small pro-Zionist circle in order to successfully push through with their scheme. Many of Balfour’s commentators claim that it is one of the most important documents in world history, arguably reshaping international order, yet such a defining document was denied the opportunity to be appropriately critiqued before publication. Only a handful of Jewish anti-Zionists were sent the initial draft for their views and modifications.



Wolf: ‘we were apparently being kept in the dark as to what was taking place... we were all much disturbed at the probability of some transaction with the Zionists which would be extremely detrimental to the general interest of the Jewish community’

DEPs C11/12/54 May 1917 telephone conversation to FO.

(25) Robert John, ‘Behind the Balfour Declaration: Britain’s Great War Pledge to Lord Rothschild’ *Institute for Historical Review*, http://www.ihr.org/jhr/v06/v06p389_john.html [accessed 25/01/2017].

From the Political Report of the XII Zionist Congress 1921.

“In view of the divergence of opinion expressed on the subject by the Jews themselves, they would like to receive in writing the views of representative Jewish leaders, both Zionist and non-Zionist”

This letter was sent to the following gentlemen:

Sir Stuart M. Samuel

Mr. Leonard H. Cohen

Mr. C.G. Montefiore

Sir Philip Magnus, M.P.

Dr. Hertz, the Chief Rabbi of England.

Mr. N. Sokolow, Chief Representative in England of the International Zionist Executive.

Dr. Weizmann, President of the English Zionist Federation

CO733/248/19 Report from the Zionist Conference 1933.

Dear Lord Rothschild,

I beg to acknowledge your letter suggesting that Mr. Herbert Samuel, M.P., and Dr. Gaster should receive copies of the letter addressed to four Zionist leaders and to four Non-Zionists.

There are obvious objections to submitting the draft declaration to any large number of people, but I shall be glad to submit a copy to Mr. Herbert Samuel for his remarks. There would be no objection to your showing, confidentially, Dr. Gaster a copy of the draft declaration but if copies are addressed to further well-known Zionists, I think it might be demanded that other non-Zionists should be asked to submit their views.

CAB21/58 letter to Rothschild 9th October 1917

JUDAISM AND POLITICS

Views of the late Chief Rabbi

The Very Reverend Dr. Hermann Adler.

‘When we dwelt in the Holy Land we had a political organisation of our own: we had judges and kings to rule over us. But ever since the conquest of Palestine by the Romans, we have ceased to be a body politic; we are citizens of the country in which we dwell. We are simply Englishmen, or Frenchmen, or Germans, as the case may be, certainly holding particular theological tenets and practising special religious ordinances; but we stand in the same relation to our countrymen as any other religious sect, having the same stake in the national welfare and the same claim on the privileges and duties of citizens. To Mr. Goldwin Smith’s question, What is the political bearing of Judaism? I would reply that Judaism has no political bearing whatever. The great bond which unites Israel is not one of race, but the bond of a common religion. We regard all mankind as brethren. We consider ourselves citizens of the country in which we dwell, in the highest and fullest sense of the term, and esteem it our dearest privilege and duty to labour for its welfare. Is there aught incompatible with our devotion to humanity and with our patriotism, if at the same time, we feel sympathy for those who profess the same religious faith and practise the same religious ordinances, whether they inhabit this country or other lands?’

Nineteenth Century, July 1878

CAB21/58 ‘Judaism and Politics’ Views of the Chief Rabbi Dr. Hermann Adler
July 1878.



Chapter 2

Imperial Ambitions

'It would be a calculated win for the British Empire to gain the gratitude of Jews throughout the world' – Herbert Samuel

At the time of the drafting of the Balfour Declaration all British foreign policy was created along lines that sought to benefit the Empire. The general atmosphere of the period was that Palestine was a territory of the utmost importance to the future security and wellbeing of the British Empire.⁽²⁶⁾ For this key reason it can be interpreted that the promise of facilitating a homeland for the Jewish people was not formulated due to the British Governments sincere sympathies to the Jewish cause. As the archival evidence demonstrates the policy was driven by both the strategic needs of the Empire and respective propaganda rewards. It is imperative that we see the Balfour Declaration for what it was; it was not a humanitarian gesture.⁽²⁷⁾

According to Vereté, the British quite simply wanted Palestine for themselves, reputing evidence that it was the Zionists who drew them into the territory.⁽²⁸⁾ This line of argument finds that it was the British Government who invited the Zionists into the negotiations and opened up the debate; contradicting common claims that it was Zionist leaders who courted and persuaded the Cabinet to fulfil their desires. Developing on this Vereté claims that:

(26) D.Z. Gillon, 'The Antecedents of the Balfour Declaration', *Middle Eastern Studies* (1969), 5, 131-150.

(27) Joe Stork, 'Understanding the Balfour Declaration', *Middle East Research and Information Project* (1972), No.13, pp.9-13.

(28) Mayir Vereté, 'The Balfour Declaration and its Makers', *Middle Eastern Studies* (1970), 6, 48-76.

'had there been no Zionists in those days the British Government would have had to invent them'.⁽²⁹⁾ In fact Napoleon before them came to the conclusion that with compliant Jews controlling Palestine, imperial and commercial interests as far as India, Arabia and Africa could be secured.⁽³⁰⁾ Therefore alluding to the notion that the Middle East has throughout history has been a region that the Europeans have wanted to extend their sphere of influence – and the British were arguably at the forefront of this campaign. It thus became part of British Grand Strategy to have a base in the Holy Land long before the Zionists made contact with the Government, as Gillon puts it 'Zionism was just a sub-issue'.⁽³¹⁾

From the evidence left behind by the creators of the Declaration it becomes apparent that there were intersecting short and long term aims which inspired the government to make such a promise to the Jews. Stork identifies that the Declaration was merely a policy decision issued primarily to advance its own short term interests.⁽³²⁾ If this was the case then it can be found that the short terms ambitions of the Government relate largely to the First World War. By 1917 the allies had been fighting in the trenches for two long and deadly years, they were exhausted, lacking in morale and dwindling in numbers. By this time the British Army desperately needed American troops to join them on the front lines and crucially needed the revolutionary activities in Russia to cease so the Red Army could remain in the War. Alongside this when the Ottomans joined the war on the side of the Central Powers it had led the British to believe that by acquiring Palestine they could undermine the Turkish in the Middle East.

The long-term designs for Palestine differ and relate to the strategic needs of the Empire. For the British establishment, it was deemed that having a Jewish colony in Palestine would represent and maximise their regional interests without the complexities and complications of direct annexation.⁽³³⁾ Firstly, Britain wanted a buffer colony between French Syria and British Egypt in order to protect the Suez Canal, its gateway to the East, and thus maintaining a safe trade passage to India. Britain's imperial competition with the French also played a role, as the British needed a reason to make the Sykes-Picot agreement void and encroach on French territory. Finally acknowledging the imperial context of the period, It should be noted that the British wanted to extend their influence in a region of the world it had not yet fully grasped – an ambition that has arguably reflected British Foreign policy since. The evidence found in the War Cabinet's correspondence during the drafting of the Declaration, and other historical documents truly reveal the alternative motivations for the Governments promotion of a Jewish homeland in Palestine.

A common misconception exists about the origins of the Declaration; it is widely believed that it was Weizmann and the Zionist lobby who first approached the Government about the procurement of Palestine. Instead the archives show that the War Cabinet gained its

(29) *Ibid.*

(30) Dr. Rev Stephen Sizer, 'The Theological and Ideological Roots of the Balfour Declaration' in Dr. Maria Holt and Nasim Ahmed, *Britain's Legacy in Palestine* (London, 2016), 16.

(31) D.Z. Gillon, 'The Antecedents of the Balfour Declaration', *Middle Eastern Studies* (1969), 5, 131-150.

(32) Joe Stork, 'Understanding the Balfour Declaration', *Middle East Research and Information Project* (1972), 13, 9-13.

(33) Joe Stork, 'Understanding the Balfour Declaration', *Middle East Research and Information Project*, (1972), No.13, pp.9-13.

first introduction to the idea of a Jewish Palestine by Herbert Samuels, in a memorandum in 1915 titled 'The Future of Palestine'. The following memorandum details the prospective benefits a Declaration was assumed to bring, and shows the framework in which Zionists, pitched their argument to the Government. It reveals the core alternative motivations behind Britain's Palestine policy, each of which will be explored and examined over the following chapter.

'The Future of Palestine'

CAB 37/123/43 Memorandum by Herbert Samuel 21th January 1915, titled 'The Future of Palestine'.

... I am assured that the solution of the problem of Palestine which would be much the most welcome to the leaders and supporters of the Zionist movement throughout the world would be the annexation of the country to the British Empire. I believe that that solution would be cordially welcome also to the greater number of Jews who have not hitherto been interested in the Zionist movement...

From the standpoint of British interests there are several arguments for this policy, if wider considerations should allow it to be pursued:-

1. It would enable England to fulfil in yet another sphere her historic part of civiliser of the backward countries...
2. The British Empire, with its present vastness and prosperity, has little addition to its greatness left to win. But Palestine, small as it is in area, bulks so large in the world's imagination, that no Empire is so great but its prestige would be raised by its possession. The inclusion of Palestine within the British Empire would add a lustre even to the British Crown. It would make a most powerful appeal to the people of the United Kingdom and the Dominions, particularly if it were avowedly a means of aiding the Jews to reoccupy the country...
3. The importance that would be attached to this annexation by British opinion would help to facilitate a wise settlement of another of the problems which will result from the war. Although Great Britain did not enter the conflict with any purpose of territorial expansion, being in it and having made immense sacrifices, there would be profound disappointment in the country if the outcome were to be the securing of great advantages by our allies, and none for ourselves... Certain of the German colonies must no doubt be retained for strategic reasons. But if Great Britain can obtain the compensations, which public opinion will demand, in Mesopotamia and Palestine, and not in German East Africa and West Africa, there is more likelihood of a lasting peace.

4. The Belt of desert to the east of the Suez Canal is an admirable strategic frontier for Egypt. But it would be an inadequate defence if a great European Power were established on the further side. A military expedition organised from Southern Palestine, and including the laying of a railway from El Arish to the Canal, would be formidable. Palestine in British hands would itself no doubt be open to attack, and would bring with it extended military responsibilities. But the mountainous character of the country would make its occupation by an enemy difficult, and while this outpost was being contested time would be given to allow the garrison of Egypt to be increased and the defences to be strengthened. A common frontier with a European neighbour in the Lebanon is a far smaller risk to vital interests of the British Empire than a common frontier at El Arish.
5. The course which is advocated would win for England the lasting gratitude of the Jews throughout the world. In the United States where they number about 2,000,000, and in all the other lands where they are scattered, they would form a body of opinion whose bias, where the interest of the country of which they were citizens was not involved, would be favourable to the British Empire. Just as the wise policy of England towards Greece in the early part of the nineteenth century, and toward Italy in the middle of the nineteenth century, has secured for this country ever since the goodwill of Greeks and Italians, wherever they may be, so help given now toward the attainment of the ideal which the Jews have never ceased to cherish through so many centuries of suffering, cannot fail to secure, into a far-distant future, the devoted gratitude of a whole race, whose goodwill, in time to come, may not be without its value.

Initially, this chapter will examine documents which suggest that the British Government made this grand gesture to the Jewish people, not for genuine sympathies but for propaganda purposes for the war effort. For many historians, this is often cited as the primary driving force behind British motivations to support the Zionist project. The idea relied on the theory that by gaining the gratitude of world Jewry; influential Jews would then in turn sway US public opinion into joining the war and persuade Russian Jews to stay in the War. Trench warfare had created two years of stalemate and the Allies were in desperate need of the support of American troops, yet the Americans continued to favour isolationist policies. Running parallel to this was the domestic political situation in Russia, as the Bolshevik Revolutionary movement was weakening the Russian State and threatening its withdrawal from the war. By the advent of 1917 Britain's fortunes seemed uncertain and it needed to seek out every advantage it could find.⁽³⁴⁾ This was the context in which the declaration was created, it was thus understood that both these dilemmas could be solved by sponsoring the Zionist project as the minutes from War Cabinet meeting 245 explain:

(34) John Quigley, 'Why Britain did not Abandon the Balfour Declaration', in Dr. Maria Holt and Nasim Ahmed *Britain's Legacy in Palestine* (London, 2016), 6.

12. With reference to War Cabinet 245, Minute 18, the War Cabinet had before them a note by the Secretary (Paper G.-164) and also a memorandum by Lord Curzon (Paper G.T.-2406) on the subject of the Zionist movement.

The Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs stated that he gathered that everyone was now agreed that, from a purely diplomatic and political point of view, it was desirable that some declaration favourable to the aspirations of the Jewish nationalists should now be made. The vast majority of Jews in Russia and America, as, indeed, all 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 useful propaganda both in Russia and America.

Fig. NA CAB21/58 Minutes of a meeting of the War Cabinet held at 10 Downing Street, 31st October 1917.

When the initial talks of making a public declaration first arose the United States were supplying the British with weapons, money and intelligence however President Woodrow Wilson, under public pressure vowed to keep the US natural. Public opinion in America at this point was markedly anti-war. The Jewish community in New York, totalling 1.5 million, were at the centre of anti-war activism.⁽³⁵⁾ The strength of the pacifist movement was impressive and managed to keep the United States out of military participation for the majority of the war.

There was a very strong and enthusiastic organisation, more particularly in the United States, who were zealous in this matter, and his belief [Acting Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs] was that it would be of most substantial assistance to the Allies to have the earnestness and enthusiasm of these people enlisted on our side. To do nothing was to risk a direct breach with them, and it was necessary to face this situation.

CAB21/58 Cabinet Minutes 1917.

Although the files appear to prove that a crucial element to the story of the Declaration was the need to gain the support of American Jewry, by appeasing the Zionists, there is evidence which contradicts this. Information in a telegram found in the Balfour Papers dated May 1917 alternatively suggest that the US was already making arrangement to fully commit to the War on the side of the Allies, four months prior to the publication of the Declaration:

(35) Zosa Szajkowski, 'Private and Organized American Jewish Overseas Relief 1914–1938' *American Jewish Historical Quarterly* (1967), 57, 52–106.

‘in consideration of the participation of the United States in the present war with the consequent assistance to the Allies, which has been and will be given, the United States desires that agreement should be reached in regard to the following matters...’

Furthermore in a letter written to Weizmann it seems that the vast majority of American Jews did not even support the idea of a Jewish homeland in Palestine:

31st October 1918.

Dear Dr. Weizmann.

I enclose the letter which I received this morning from Walter Meyer. It would appear that opinion in America supported by Professor Levi is going in favour of an international Palestine, i.e. a condominium. I am letting the Foreign Office know of what Walter Meyer has written in this respect.

Yours Very Sincerely

NA CAB21/58 Letter to Weizmann 1917.

To help the Allied cause in America was one of the reasons given in the Cabinet discussion. I did not see the terms of the telegram which you sent to America, but it is obvious that President Wilson does not wish for a definite statement conveying any real commitment at present. This motive then goes by the board, and therefore I am impelled to urge once more that no form of words should be used by any spokesman of the British Government which implies that there is a Jewish people in the political sense.

NA CAB 21/58 Montagu

The domestic situation in Russia in the months leading up to the Balfour Declaration was a country on the brink of total revolution. The February Revolution launched by the Bolsheviks drastically set back Russian performance in the war and left much of the Russian Army in a state of mutiny. The British needed a strong Army to uphold the fighting on the Eastern flank, without the Russians Germany could direct all their efforts towards the West, tipping the balance of the War.⁽³⁶⁾ They presumed threat of the revolutionary movement in Russia is best vocalised in a telegram from the Foreign Office to the High Commissioner of Egypt:

(36) John Quigley, ‘Why Britain did not Abandon the Balfour Declaration’, in Dr. Maria Holt and Nasim Ahmed *Britain’s Legacy in Palestine* (London, 2016), 6.

Foreign Office

To. High Commissioner for Egypt

No. 493.

3. The attitude of Jews in Russia is not satisfactory elements are not only pacifist but anti-Ally. We hope to send SOKOLOFF out there in time to attend Pan-Russian Zionist conference to take place June 7th. Failing him a suitable substitute even Weizmann himself if absolutely necessary will be sent.

4. The Russian situation is thoroughly unsatisfactory in every way. It is difficult to see how definite cleavage between Reds and Moderate can be avoided and conflict ending in victory of latter or complete anarchy.

FO141/805/part one

Recognising the threat the Government needed a plan which would defuse the revolutionary potential of the Russian Jewish community.⁽³⁷⁾ Their plan was supporting the Palestine Campaign:

Telegram

Foreign Office

To. High Commissioner for Egypt

Following sent to Petrograd today No.791.

Confidential.

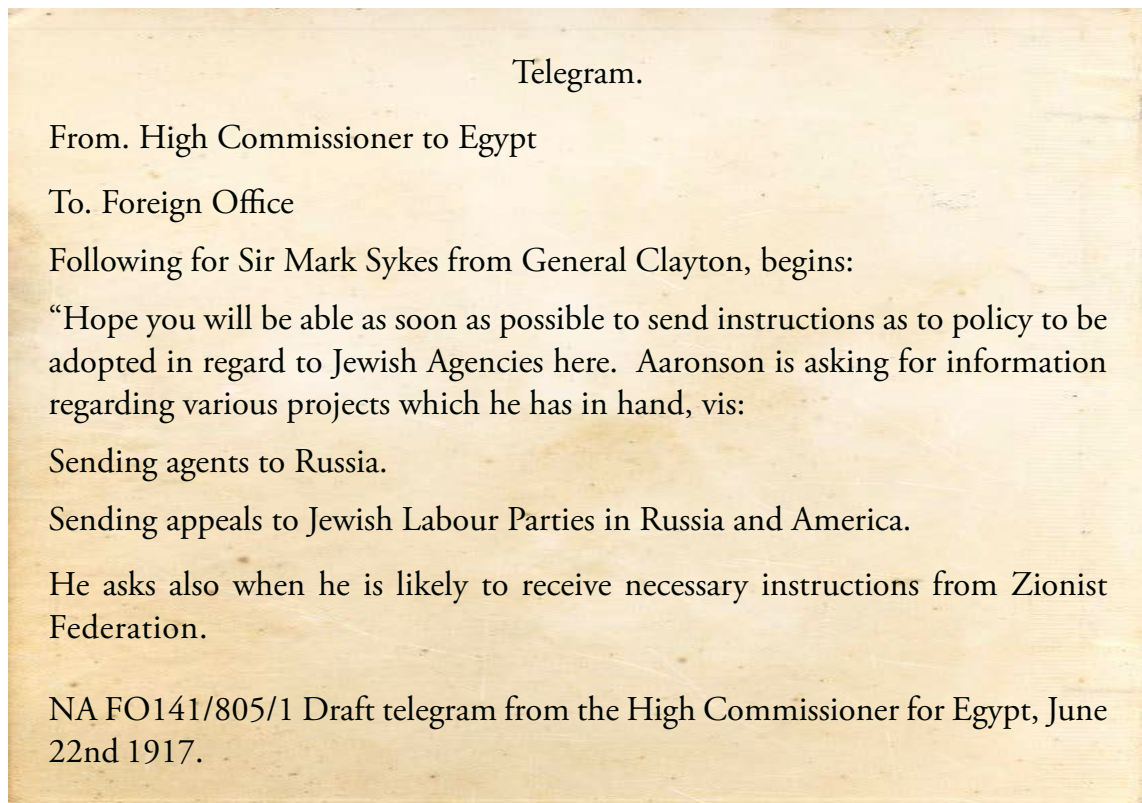
We are advised that one of the best methods of countering Jewish pacifists and socialist propaganda in Russia would be to offer definite encouragement to Jewish nationalist's aspirations in Palestine.

Question of Zionism is full of difficulties but I request your views in the first instance as to whether declaration by the Entente of sympathy with Jewish nationalist aspirations would help or not in so far as concerns internal and external situation of Russia.

NA FO141/805/1 Telegram from Foreign Office to High Commissioner for Egypt 25th April 1917.

(37) Joe Stork, 'Understanding the Balfour Declaration', *Middle East Research and Information Project* (1972), 13, 9-13.

It was believed at the time that if they provided what the prominent Zionists were asking for it would encourage them to rally Jewish opinion on the side of the Entente and tackle the drift to the left. The archives show that the Foreign Office sent influential Zionists on missions to achieve these aims. Aaron Arronsohn was one such Zionist who was sent on missions to both the US and Russia by the Foreign Office to spy and infiltrate Jewish communities.



This telegram shows that Aaronson, and others, were sent by the British on the proviso that the Government would in return facilitate a Jewish Palestine. A letter from Herbert Samuels sheds some light on the pressure the Government were put under by the Zionists to finalise the Declaration: ‘Our chief reason for our difficult relations with ‘A’ is owing to his dissatisfaction with our and H.M.G.’s general policy (or lack of it) towards the Jews’.⁽³⁸⁾ Statements like this imply that the British establishment were feeling under strain to give into Zionist demands as they were aware they needed to keep them on their side to help in their war time propaganda campaign.

Similarly to the propaganda campaign in America, which the evidence suggests their schemes were misguided, the same could be said for the Cabinet’s strategy in Russia. Despite it being widely believed and promoted that the Jewish community in Russia could help defuse the leftist movement, and realign the public in supporting the Allies, this was arguably a gross misinterpretation. The Jewish communities in Russia at the time were largely Hassidic who tended to oppose Zionism and even regard it as heresy.⁽³⁹⁾ Following on from this Stork identifies that there existed a widespread suspicion, during this time, that the Jews were

(38) NA FO141/805/part 1 letter to Hebert Samuel.

(39) Kathy Durkin, *The Ambiguity of the Balfour Declaration* (), 37.

themselves leftist revolutionaries.⁽⁴⁰⁾ The theory being that Jewish communities in response to oppression turned to revolutionary socialism and posed a threat to the internal politics of the European States. Indeed, there are limited facts that prove that by that time in the Russian Revolution the prominent Zionists would have made any impact and bearing on the domestic political situation.

There is evidence however, that facts relating to Russian Jewish influence were inflated and aggrandised. It is claimed that members of a secret Zionist committee, set up by Balfour to help guide the Cabinet in formulating their Palestine policy, manipulated the British Government by exaggerating the keenness of Russian and American Jews to support Zionism.⁽⁴¹⁾ For example, Influential Zionist Vladimir Jabotinsky was one such figure who was instrumental in relaying to the Foreign Office exaggerated numbers of Russian Jews who supported Zionism.

It cannot be denied that the ruling establishment promoted and pursued the Zionist project for reasons which sought to benefit the Allied cause. After all what the archives reveal is that the central debate on the topic of Zionism was under the remit of the War Cabinet, eliminating arguments that suggest otherwise. Furthermore by assessing the main authors of the archival documents, characters like Sykes, Lord Curzon and Grey, politicians who purport no interest in Zionism, leads us to conclude that a declaration was made solely for the immediate benefits it could produce for the war effort.⁽⁴²⁾ Balfour himself has been at the forefront of reputing these claims, stating in 1918 'both the PM and myself have been influenced by a desire to give the Jews their rightful place in the world'.⁽⁴³⁾ There are many commentators and historians who support Balfour's statement. They provide evidence from Lloyd George, Balfour and Churchill which does tend to demonstrate a genuine support for the Jewish people and their Zionist ambitions, arguing their case that there was a humanitarian dimension.⁽⁴⁴⁾ Yet the evidence from the actual debates and the drafting stages has shown that none of these characters were instrumental in the creation of the Balfour Declaration. And while they may have publicly and privately spoken of their desires to offer salvation to the Jewish people, the real creators of the Declaration were strategists who were seeking a war time advantage. Comments by Jonathan Schneer, a Balfour historian best concludes this argument: 'What British leaders wanted more than anything in November 1917 was to win World War I - all other goals were secondary.'⁽⁴⁵⁾

In the Wrong Place is the title of Keay's essay, which alludes to Palestine's unfortunate geographical position, he establishes that Empires have 'aspired to control the frayed portal through which Asia opens onto Africa and across whose threshold the West confronts

(40) Joe Stork, 'Understanding the Balfour Declaration', Middle East Research and Information Project (1972), no.13, pp 9-13.

(41) Kathy Durkin, *The Ambiguity of the Balfour Declaration* (), 68.

(42) D.Z. Gillon, 'The Antecedents of the Balfour Declaration', *Middle Eastern Studies* (1969), 5, 131-150.

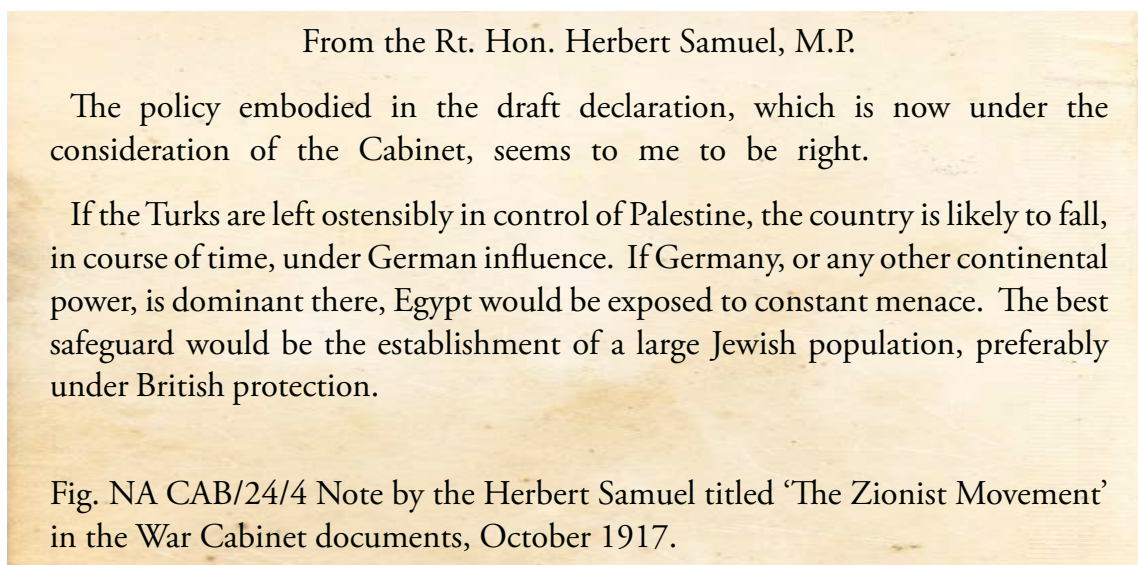
(43) 'Lord Balfour's Personal Position of the Balfour Declaration', *Middle East Journal* (1968), 22, 340-345.

(44) Janko Scepanovic, 'Sentiment and Geopolitics in the Formulation and Realization of the Balfour Declaration', CUNY Academic Works (2014), http://academicworks.cuny.edu.gc_etds/280 [accessed 02/02/217].

(45) Jonathan Schneer, 'How Anti-Semitism Helped Create Israel', *Foreign Policy.com* (September 2010), <http://foreignpolicy.com/2010/09/08/how-anti-semitism-helped-create-israel-2/> [accessed 08/02/2017].

the East'.⁽⁴⁶⁾ Keay's statement is particularly apt when analysing the origins of the Balfour Declaration and examining Britain's long term ambitions in Palestine. It helps to distinguish that imperial strategy was a primary driving force behind her Palestine policy. The Suez Canal and Egypt are both crucial elements to understanding this. The Suez Canal is an artificial waterway running through Egypt which connects the Mediterranean to the Dead Sea. The Canal was opened in 1869 and had an immediate effect on world trade, as it was estimated that it reduced the journey from the North Atlantic to the Indian Ocean by 4,300 miles. India, which was at the time affectionately regarded as the Jewel in the Crown of the British Empire, was now dramatically more accessible via the new Canal. This prompted a radical development in British political and strategic interests in the region.⁽⁴⁷⁾ The new trading route inevitably drew the colonial power into Egypt, claiming the North African region to be under British Protectorate soon after the Suez was opened – in what became known as the 'veiled protectorate'.⁽⁴⁸⁾ Thus Britain's energies shifted, and policy altered to focus on ensuring the protection of Egypt and the Suez Canal. Huneidi reaffirms this by claiming that: 'by this point Egypt had become too strategically important to be left alone, and the necessity of safeguarding the lines of communication between Europe and the East through the Suez Canal became a permanent concern in the minds of British imperial strategists.'⁽⁴⁹⁾

The archives indicate that Samuels, Sykes and General Allenby were the most ardent promoters of using the Palestine policy in order to safeguard Egypt and the Suez. As early as November 1914 Herbert Samuels, in a meeting with Sir Edward Grey, had pointed out the strategic benefit of having a British supported Palestine as a buffer zone.⁽⁵⁰⁾ This letter from Samuels dated October 1917 displays the sorts of discussions that were being held over the Palestine Question:



(46) John Keay, 'In the Wrong Place: The Strategic Importance of Palestine for Parties to the Conflict', in Sophia Akram (ed) *World War I: Impact on Palestine a Hundred Year Legacy* (London, 2016), 45.

(47) Sahar Huneidi, *A Broken Trust: Herbert Samuel, Zionism and the Palestinians* (London, 2001), 4.

(48) Lisa Pollard, *Nurturing the Nation: The Family Politics of Modernizing, Colonizing and Liberating Egypt, 1805-1923* (London, 2005).

(49) Sahar Huneidi, *A Broken Trust: Herbert Samuel, Zionism and the Palestinians* (London, 2001), 5.

(50) Kathy Durkin, *The Ambiguity of the Balfour Declaration* (), 60.

There were two main factors which aroused British fears, firstly Napoleon's Oriental expedition in Egypt and Southern Syria (1798-1801) had highlighted the extent to which events in the Middle East might threaten British rule in India.⁽⁵¹⁾ Secondly, Huneidi sees that the 'Aqaba Incident' of 1906 had an impact on policy making. It was a minor incident which was simply a border dispute in the Sinai Peninsula between Egypt and the Ottoman Empire. The British stepped in and forced the Ottomans to withdraw from the land, but as Huneidi concludes it 'awoke' the British to the possible threat to the Suez.⁽⁵²⁾ These two issues later manifest into strategic thinking and created the concept that these regions were vital to Britain's imperial interests. The perceived threat to the Canal led policy makers to regard acquiring Palestine as the answer. Evidence reveals that influential Zionists played on these fears in order to coax Britain into supporting a Jewish Palestine. Herbert Samuel's being the most prolific, yet others like Max Nordau, co-founder of the World Zionist Organisation who wrote: 'England could not afford to allow her situation at the Suez Canal to be imperilled. She was strong enough to hold her own. Still should not disdain having a trustee there, and if Great Britain would allow it, a sufficiently strong watch. The Jews desired nothing better than to be her sentries on the long and dangerous road through the near and Middle East up to the frontiers of India.'⁽⁵³⁾ The Government was convinced.

Ultimately British policy worked, supporting the Zionists and granting them the Declaration made Britain the chief contender for the Mandate of Palestine after the war. Palestine now was under the remit of the British Empire and thus her strategic aims had been met. The Government's commitment to the Suez was not only apparent in the formulation of the Declaration, but was also incorporated into the Mandate debate. Ministers and politicians, both in Britain and in the Allied States squabbled over what were to be Mandated Palestine's borders. The following telegram is from General Allenby in which he is advising Balfour that, from a militaristic point of view, the only way to protect Egypt is to ensure that they extend Palestine's frontier to meet with the Suez:

I note that there are held to be insuperable objections to inclusion of Beersheba in Egypt. I must make it clear that frontier which I recommend in my telegram 293 M includes only satisfactory line of defence of Suez Canal. By maintaining present frontier we abandon whole system of strategic railways constructed during campaign as well as all defensive positions against an attack on Egypt.

Hence present frontier is most unsatisfactory from a military point of view unless we obtain complete and permanent control of Palestine.

FO 608/98 Telegram from General Allenby to Mr. Balfour 16th April 1919

(51) Stuart A. Cohen, *English Zionists and British Jews* (Guildford, 1982), 6.

(52) Sahar Huneidi, *A Broken Trust: Herbert Samuel, Zionism and the Palestinians* (London, 2001), 5.

(53) Dr. Mahmoud O. Haddad, 'Palestine and the Eastern/Western Question' in Sophia Akram (ed) *World War I: Impact on Palestine a Hundred Year Legacy* (London, 2016), 36.

From the opening of the Canal until the Suez Crisis of 1956 Britain has been continually persuaded and driven by the need to safeguard her precious waterway and the Balfour Declaration and Mandate policy was no exception.

Taking into account the colonial and imperial context of the period, it is highly likely that the ruling elite looked to acquiring Palestine as part of their competition with the French and other European Empires. To gain control of such a sought after region and gain a stronger foot hold in the Levant would have been looked upon to further their imperial prestige. When General Allenby captured Beer Sheba on the 31st of October 1917 he sent a cable to Balfour stating: ‘we captured Beer Sheba. Jerusalem will be your Christmas present’,⁽⁵⁴⁾ this statement leads to the interpretation that Palestine was a much coveted prize which the British wanted for their own. In 1915 the British Government established the Committee on Asiatic Turkey, the group drew up plans and maps of annexation and the possibility of dividing up spheres of influence were studied in detail - as Huneidi puts it ‘a new Middle East was being envisaged’.⁽⁵⁵⁾ The question of Zionism markedly absent from any of these discussions. British competition with the French for territory had cumulated in the Sykes-Picot Agreement, which had envisaged an internationalised Palestine in the event of the Turks being defeated. It was clear from the offset though that the powers in Whitehall were not satisfied with the proposed fate of Palestine and instead looked to ways to prevent internationalisation and claim the territory for themselves. The British Government came to realise that if they supported Zionist aspirations, it might make it easier to overthrow the Sykes-Picot Agreement.⁽⁵⁶⁾ After a meeting with Sir Edward Grey in 1915 Herbert Samuels reported: ‘When I asked him what his solution was he said it might be possible to neutralise the country under international guarantee;... and to best the government of the country in some kind of Council to be established by the Jews’.⁽⁵⁷⁾

April 7th 1917

My Dear Hankey,

I think if the French accept the Z. declaration that a great step has been gained, because the element of Z. is recognised, and consequently a say in the matter is automatically accorded to them. The great difficulties which we have to contend with, and which I hope the Prime Minister realises are:

- (I) That the French public think that Palestine is in Syria, and do not realise how small a part of the coast-line it occupies.
- (II) That the desire to command the Holy Places is very strong even among radicals.

(54) Salman Abu Sitta, ‘The Destruction of Palestine: the Original Sin’ in Dr. Maria Holt and Nasim Ahmed *Britain’s Legacy in Palestine* (London, 2016), 8.

(55) Sahar Huneidi, *A Broken Trust: Herbert Samuel, Zionism and the Palestinians* (London, 2001), 9.

(56) D.Z. Gillon, ‘The Antecedents of the Balfour Declaration’, *Middle Eastern Studies* (1969), 5, 131-150.

(57) Leonard Stein, *The Balfour Declaration* (New York, 1961), 138.

- (III) That there is always an element of suspicion against England in matters Levantine.
- (IV) That while the French are irritating, pertinacious and pushful, the British are irritable and ready to be annoyed.

Our great cards are that the French cannot make good with the Arabs except with our help that their interests and opportunities are immense outside Palestine, and if there is not accord between us they will lose immense opportunities. I try to drive this home as much as I can. The Parisian Jews are very weak in the matter of Z. chiefly on account of the fear they have for raising hostility against themselves, though they won on the Dreyfus case in appearance, they felt the odium very much, and are shaken and easily terrified, though at heart they are Z. they dare not say so.

The situation to which we are moving is: -

1. British occupation of Palestine as a fait accompli.
2. British granted Hafia Acre, and a trans-Palestine railway.
3. Half the Jordan valley granted as in the British sphere of interest.
4. French recognise Jewish national aspirations.

CAB 21/96 suggestions of Sir Mark Sykes to Hankey.

Britain during this time was anxious about its limited influence in the Arab world East of Suez. Stork identifies that after the Ottomans joined the war, on the side of the continental powers, the British ruling elite adapted a long term grand strategy to establish political and economic hegemony throughout that part of the world.⁽⁵⁸⁾ The discovery of oil in Persia by the British company Anglo-Persian in 1908 may have played a latent role in the formulation of Zionist policy. There is an abundance of primary evidence revealing that the British Government was already aware of the lucrative oil potential of the Levant and Mesopotamia and were all set and ready to exploit these regions. In a Foreign Office Memorandum titled 'the Oilfields of Russia and Mesopotamia' it was explained that 'the security of this country and the British Empire is dependent on oil.'⁽⁵⁹⁾ Although infatuation with Middle Eastern oil reserves first appears to be a geopolitical factor which comes later in history, the archives unveil secret discussions detailing the need to extend control over regions in the East in which oil is expected to be found. The following letter from the Under-Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs endorses this theory:

(58) Joe Stork, 'Understanding the Balfour Declaration', *Middle East Research and Information Project* (1972), No.13, pp 9-13.

(59) NA FO608/97 Memorandum on Oilfields of Russia and Mesopotamia 1919.

Sir:-

- 1) We, the undersigned, have the honour to request the good offices and support of the Allied Governments of Great Britain and France for the purpose of obtaining a grant of a concession to explore, for develop, and work all mineral oils, with all reasonable facilities for the same, within the area delineated on the plan annexed hereto.
- 2) In connection with the possible boundaries of any future States, we venture to submit to the consideration of the Allied Governments that this area appears to be likely to produce oil in considerable quantities, and that consequently if it is included in independent States the oil deposits in question might come under alien control... this is most especially the case in regard to boundaries of the possible state of Palestine.

FO608/97 Letter dated 17th September 1919 from the Under- Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs.

Although this letter is dated after the Declaration had been created, it does enlighten to the sorts of discussions which were taking place during the Balfour period. It highlights how decisions about their territorial ambitions were already being decided and driven by their desires for oil. The British evidently did not want other actors gaining control of these potentially oil rich areas and so looked to tailor their Middle Eastern policy around these newly developing interests.

Academics and historians have continually debated the factors which drove the British Government to issue such a declaration. It is often contested whether long term imperial interests were a factor. If we just take the source material from the drafting stages as our only evidence it would appear that long term hegemonic ambitions were not at the forefront of policy makers' minds. Yet looking beyond the Balfour documents, and examining other forms of evidence from the period, it suggests that Britain's imperial mentality helped to shape her pro-Zionist agenda. It is plausible that British desires for control of Middle Eastern oil and a need to expand their influence to increase their international prestige were contributing factors that remained latent yet were nevertheless always in the back of their minds when formulating strategy. The men who created the Balfour Declaration were of their time, viewing world affairs through the context of their Western imperial greed. It can be concluded that the British establishment were looking into the future, speculating the enormous potential that this region would bring. A Palestine aligned with the British Empire would help to consolidate her power, influence and economic hegemony in this rapidly developing territory.

Vereté's observes that 'in the prevailing atmosphere of political idealism... people were prone to believe that the declaration was made in order to settle a huge debt which

'Christian Civilisation' owed to the Jewish people'.⁽⁶⁰⁾ Yet the grand majority of evidence left behind by the creators of the Declaration leads to a completely different narrative. A narrative consistent with British imperialism – and indeed European imperialism - which concludes that the ruling establishment made historic decisions based on its greed and prestige, all in the name of protecting and expanding its influence and power around the globe.

(60) Mayir Vereté, 'The Balfour Declaration and its Makers', *Middle Eastern Studies* (1970), 6, 48-76.



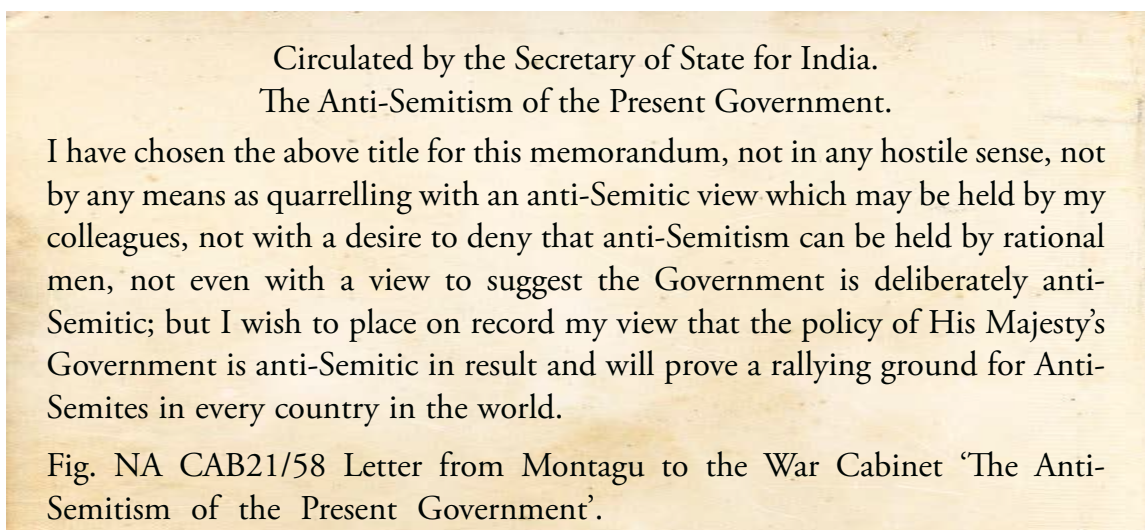
Direction sign of two major streets in Tel Aviv in Israel, Rehov Allenby and the Rothschild Boulevard. Photograph: lesexploratrices.com

Chapter 3

The Anti-Semitic Logic Behind the Declaration

'Palestine will become the world's ghetto'⁽⁶¹⁾ – Edwin Samuel Montagu

An extract from an article written by Edwin Samuel Montagu, which was submitted to the British War Cabinet titled 'the Anti-Semitism of the Present Government', outlines the theory that the prospective Declaration would result in an anti-Semitic policy. Below is an extract from that pamphlet that was circulated in the months leading up to the declarations publication:



(61) NA CAB21/58 Letter titled 'The Anti-Semitism of the Present Government' written by Edwin Samuel Montagu 1917.

In this extract Montagu explains that he does not wish to advocate that his colleagues' are outright anti-Semites but acknowledges that the pursuit of Zionist policy is anti-Semitic; and recognises the threat to Jewish people around the world of what a Jewish State could do. This chapter will explore the aspects of Montagu's protest, questioning his assumption that his fellow Government Ministers were not deliberately anti-Semitic but supporting his argument that the policy is anti-Semitic.

Zionists have long been aware of this connection and have manipulated the so called 'Jewish Problem' to use for their own advantage, Herzl writing: 'we must prove to them that the Jewish problem is a world problem and that a world problem must be solved by the world'.⁽⁶²⁾ In the case of the Balfour Declaration the archival evidence supports this concept by displaying the anti-Semitism of the British ruling elite being connected to their patronisation of a Jewish homeland. Israel looks upon the Balfour Declaration with gratitude, celebrating its anniversary every year and crediting it to their salvation from anti-Semitism. Moreover, many British politicians revere the document looking back to its publication with pride, seeing that their predecessors saved the Jews. Yet this was not the case as Mikdadi writes that 'support for Israel emanated more from wishing to be rid of their Jewish communities than it did from any sense of decency, humanity, or empathy for the long suffering people'.⁽⁶³⁾

Firstly though, it is imperative to understand the history and the nature of the anti-Semitism that existed within European societies before the creation of the Balfour Declaration. This is a precursor for analysing both the Declaration and Western Governments uncompromising alignment to the State of Israel. This chapter will therefore begin by briefly exploring the antecedents which would have led to Montagu's accusations.

Christian Europeans have always regarded Jewish people to be subversive and a threat to the 'nation' which has been manifested in European society. Because of these factors Jews were regarded as a race apart, and one that could not or should not be allowed to assimilate.⁽⁶⁴⁾ In Theodore Herzl's *der Judenstaat*, he speaks extensively about the problem of Anti-Semitism and the Jewish Question, which he believes plagues Europe: 'Anti-Semitism increases day by day and hour by hour amid the population; indeed, it is bound to increase because its cause continue to exist and cannot be removed',⁽⁶⁵⁾ adding that: 'the Jewish Question exists. It would be foolish to deny this. It is remnant of the Middle Ages... the Jewish Question exists wherever Jews live in perceptible numbers'.⁽⁶⁶⁾ As it has been shown anti-Jewish prejudices' have been prevalent since the birth of the Christian faith, but there are two key historic events that led to the dramatic growth of anti-Semitism in Europe in the immediate decades before the declaration. These two events were a catalyst, altering European demography and thus reshaping the Jewish Question towards Zionism as a solution.

(62) Robert John, 'Behind the Balfour Declaration: Britain's Great War Pledge to the Rothschild Bankers', *Institute for Historical Review* (1988), http://www.ihr.org/jhr/v06/v06p389_john.html [accessed 25/01/2017].

(63) Faysal Mikdadi, 'Britain's Legacy in Palestine' in Dr. Maria Holt and Nasim Ahmed (eds.) *Britain's Legacy in Palestine* (London, 2016), 27.

(64) Jonathan Crook, 'Once, Most Jews Viewed Israel as the Anti-Semites Best Friend', *Mondoweiss*, <http://mondoweiss.net/2016/05/viewed-semite-friend/>

(65) Theodore Herzl, *The Jewish State* (Tel-Aviv, 1954), 59.

(66) *Ibid*, 37.

The antecedents to the dramatic rise in anti-Semitism in the decades leading up to the Declaration were the Russian Pogroms of the 19th and early 20th centuries, but also more subtly the Dreyfus affair. The Dreyfus affair transpired in the French Republic in the late 19th century, when a Jewish artillery captain in the French Army, Alfred Dreyfus, was falsely accused of passing on military and intelligence secrets to the Germans. France had suffered a humiliating defeat in the Franco-Prussian War and were searching for an explanation for their defeat. It was concluded that their military plans must have been leaked to the Germans, and in an inherently anti-Semitic state the blame inevitably fell at the Jewish Captain's door. Evidence was forged and so Dreyfus was framed, they naturally convicted him and the trail proved to be an event in which anti-Jewish politicians', media and civilians could rally around. An outcry of 'down with traitors' and 'death to the Jews' spread throughout France and beyond. Although just a few years later Dreyfus's innocence was exposed the anti-Semitic seeds had already been sown. But compared with the impact of the Pogroms, the Dreyfus Affair was just the tip of the iceberg.

The pogroms were a series of large scale anti-Jewish riots occurring in the Russian Empire which attacked Jewish people, their homes and their businesses. Similarly to the Jesus Deicide and the Dreyfus Affair the Jews were once again used as a scapegoat, being blamed this time for the assassination of Tsar Alexander II which led to a wave of violence against them erupting. The riots of the 1880's saw at least forty Jews being killed and hundreds of women raped, the second wave in the early 1900s were much more violent with an estimated two-thousand being murdered and many more injured.⁽⁶⁷⁾ These events reduced the Eastern European Jewry to poverty, and signalled the loss of existential security. The pogroms coupled with expulsions and legal disabilities made the lives of the Jewish communities intolerable leading them to emigrate on masse.⁽⁶⁸⁾ As the displaced Jewish refugees dispersed and settled across the continent the seeds of anti-Semitism grew. Unlike the assimilated bourgeois Jews that were already residing in European States, these Jews were poor and seen as a burden.⁽⁶⁹⁾ Herzl suggests 'where [anti-Semitism] does not exist it is dragged in by immigrating Jews. We naturally move to places where we are not persecuted; and by our own presence the persecution then comes about'.⁽⁷⁰⁾ Herzl's words set the scene for what was to follow in Britain in the immediate aftermath of the Pogroms.

Between 1881 and 1905, Britain saw a dramatic influx of Eastern European Jews fleeing persecution, estimated at around one-hundred thousand. These new immigrants were unwanted by both non-Jewish citizens and the existing Anglo-Jewish population. It was believed that these refugees would fail to integrate into society, and there were fears that these 'undesirables' would lead to a degeneration of the Jewish community. This led Britain to develop a 'Jewish Question' of its own;⁽⁷¹⁾ as the Jews of Tsarist Russia became a fundamental

(67) Robert Weinberg, *The Revolution of 1905 in Odessa: Blood on the Steps* (Bloomington, 1993), 164.

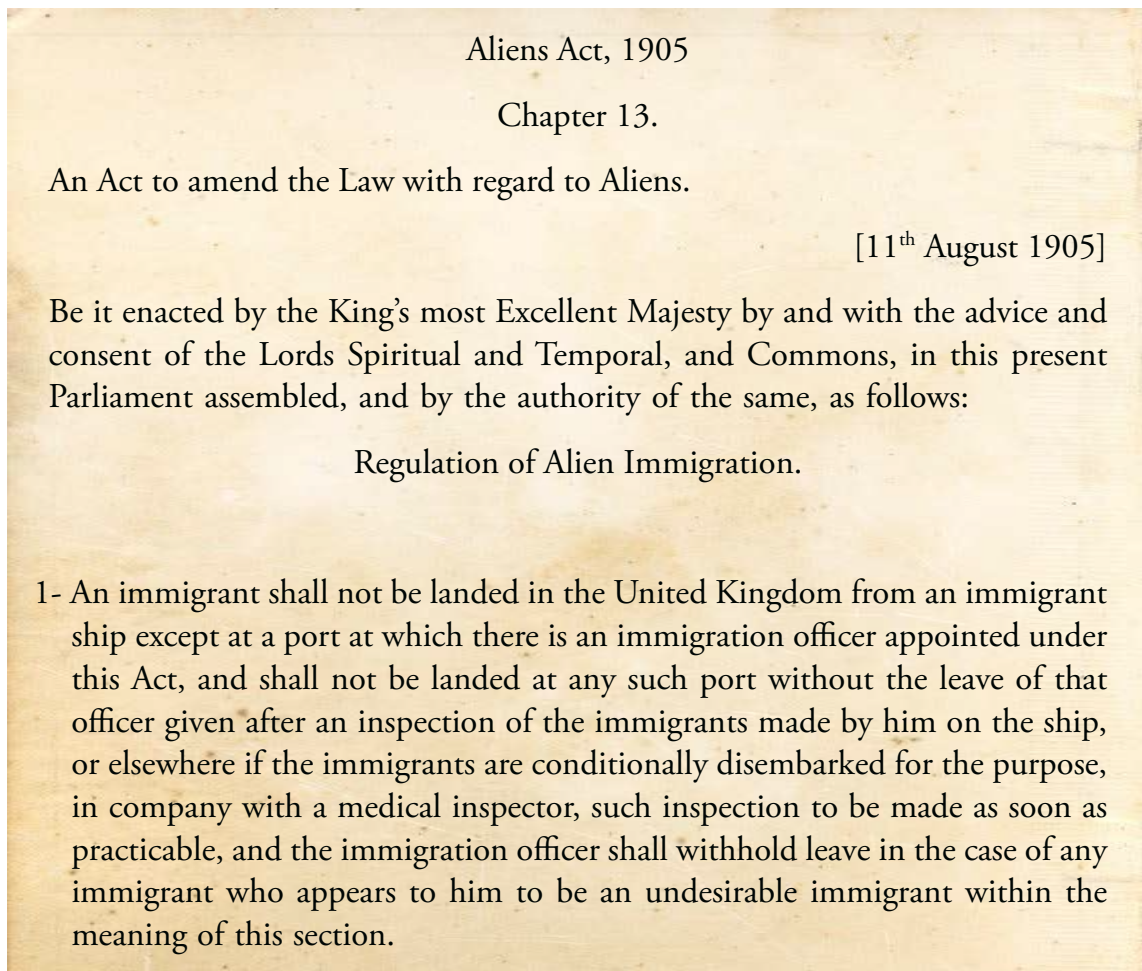
(68) Brian Klug, 'The Other Arthur Balfour: Protector of the Jews', *The Balfour Project, 2013* <http://www.balfourproject.org/the-other-arthur-balfour-protector-of-the-jews/> [accessed 12/01/2017].

(69) Victor Kattan, 'Imperialism, International Law, and the Legacy of the Balfour Declaration', in Dr Maria Holt and Naism Ahmed (eds.) *Britain's Legacy in Palestine* (London, 2016), 47.

(70) Theodore Herzl, *The Jewish State* (Tel-Aviv, 1954), 37.

(71) Leonard Stein, 'The Balfour Declaration', (New York, 1961)

issue in British domestic politics.⁽⁷²⁾ Leading British statesmen who were instrumental in the creation of the Balfour Declaration shared many of these anti-Semitic views and looked for a permanent solution to what they perceived to be a societal problem. The most profound piece of historical evidence to back up these claims comes in the form of an immigration act, which was targeted at Jews. The government, under the Premiership of Arthur Balfour rapidly responded to the incursion by passing the Aliens Act of 1905. The Act's intention was to curb and control the Jewish population and helps to illustrate the pervasive anti-Semitism experienced in Great Britain during this time. Although the Act's discourse is not explicitly anti-Jewish, Bernard Gainers' study of the conception of the 1905 Act points out that the words 'immigrant' and 'Jews' became synonymous terms.⁽⁷³⁾



What the act reveals is the government's initial reaction to their new Jewish citizens, their status as 'aliens' signalling the atmosphere of the anti-Jewish prejudice in the years pre-dating the declaration. Balfour himself in support of the Act wrote: 'the undoubted evils that had fallen upon the country from an immigration which was largely Jewish'.⁽⁷⁴⁾ Instead of promoting assimilation, toleration and protecting the rights of British Jewish citizens the government looked to pursue policies which would limit the Jewish population.

(72) Geoffrey Alderman, *The Jewish Community in British Politics* (New York, 1983), 66.

(73) Bernard Gainers, *The Alien Invasion: The Origins of the Aliens Act of 1905* (New York, 1972), 1.

(74) Leonard Stein, 'The Balfour Declaration', (New York, 1961)

Theodore Herzl was truly aware of this intrinsic link between Zionism and anti-Semitism and recognised the political potential of it, using it for his own propaganda purposes. Herzl's *der Judenstaat* can be understood to be an in depth analysis of the nature of anti-Semitism in European Societies. And within this analysis he recognises that it is an embedded societal problem which cannot be cured, instead he advocates that the Jews must use it to their advantage. According to Hannah Arendt, Herzl saw that anti-Semitism was an overwhelming force and the Jews had to make use of it or be 'swallowed up by it'.⁽⁷⁵⁾ Extracts from *der Judenstaat* reveal the political strategies that Herzl was both advocating and pursuing: 'the governments of all countries scourged by anti-Semitism will be keenly interested in assisting us to obtain the sovereignty we want.'⁽⁷⁶⁾ Herzl and other early Zionists knew that anti-Jewish governments would make their best allies. He therefore promoted anti-Semitic preconceptions to non-Jews in order to install a fear of Jews, their influence and particularly their revolutionary mentality.⁽⁷⁷⁾

The British Government proved this to be the case. Each government figure who played a role in the creation of the Balfour Declaration, to the exception of Herbert Samuels, displayed clear signs of anti-Semitism at different stages. Men like Sykes, Lloyd George, Churchill and especially Arthur Balfour although have since been revered philanthropic Zionists were latent – and at times explicit – anti-Semites. Sir Mark Sykes, as discussed in the previous chapters was the strategist propelling forward the Zionist agenda, yet at the same time despised assimilated Jews and propagated the modern anti-Semitic conspiracy that Jewish people controlled the world. Evidence from a tribute to Mark Sykes written in 1919 explains his attitude towards assimilated Jews:

In order to understand the attitude of such Sir Mark [Sykes] and others like him in his own and other nations towards the Jewish problem, it is necessary to study the problem more closely than is common among the unthinking crowd who bandy about the words anti-Semitism and philo-Semitism, and, upon their superficial observations, condemn one man as an anti-Semite and laud another as a philo-Semite, according as whether they hate or love certain individual Jews. The crowd does not understand that one can be a great friend of the Jewish people and a great admirer of the Jewish genius and yet find such things ridiculous and repulsive as the apeing, the servility, the obtrusiveness, the hollowness and the empty display, the desire to intrude everywhere, the excessive deal of the neophytes and all of the unpleasant traits of some assimilated Jews.⁽⁷⁸⁾

(75) Hannah Arendt, 'The Jewish State: Fifty Years After-Where Have Herzl's Politics led?' in Gary V. Smith (ed.), *Zionism: The Dream and the Reality* (London, 1974), 69.

(76) Theodore Herzl, *The Jewish State* (Tel-Aviv, 1954), 62.

(77) David Hirst, *The Gun and the Olive Branch: The Roots of Violence in the Middle East* (London, 1977), 18.

(78) Nahum Sokolow, 'Tribute to Mark Sykes' in Nahum Sokolow's *History of Zionism: 1600-1918* (1919), <https://archive.org/details/historyofzionism02sokouoft>.

This tribute to Sykes after his death in 1919, attempts to appreciate how one can admire the Jewish people yet at the same time be repulsed by their presumed character traits. I would decipher that these are two very contradictory beliefs to hold.

David Lloyd George is often portrayed within the Balfour narrative as championing Christian Zionism because of his reverence of the Jews. He had been nurtured Bible history in childhood,⁽⁷⁹⁾ and therefore had a deep interest in Jewish history. For many Balfour commentators Lloyd George is deemed the one character who supported Jewish aspirations for Palestine because of his respect for both the Jewish religion and its people. But again evidence shows that even Lloyd George cannot remain untarnished from accusations of anti-Semitism. The Prime Minister once described his Jewish colleague, Samuel, as: 'greedy, ambitious, and grasping Jews with all the worst characters of his race'.⁽⁸⁰⁾ Even Churchill who is judged in the same respect as Lloyd George, equally believed to propagate the idea of a Jewish state in Palestine for his love of the Jewish religion, perceived that the Jews has a destabilising influence.⁽⁸¹⁾ The examples taken from these key figures give credence to the argument that the ruling elite, who were instrumental in securing a pro-Zionist declaration possessed anti-Semitic tendencies which influenced their motivations.

For many around the globe Balfour's historic legacy has earned him the title 'protector of the Jews'. However there also appears to be a profound conundrum about Arthur Balfour. From the evidence left behind by the politician it can be determined that Arthur Balfour was a staunch pro-Zionist and was eager to have the declaration published as soon as possible. Yet while the document may have earned him praise and adoration from the Jews it is paramount to point out the hypocrisy of this promise on account of him being a known anti-Semite.

There exists within the historiography a common trajectory for explaining the anti-Semitism of Arthur Balfour that centres around one very simplistic case of evidence. The case cited by the vast majority of historians, academics and general critics of Balfour is the Alien's Act of 1905 which was consigned to the statues book during his term as Prime Minister. It is too simplistic to take the 1905 Alien Act as proof of Arthur Balfour's anti-Semitism. Indeed he presided over its creation and implementation yet observing the context in which the act evolved, a time of vehement nationalist mentality; it is probable most political leaders would have supported tightening emigration off all persuasions. The Act was reactionary and in response to the new undesirables and so does not help to demonstrate the entrenched anti-Semitism of the British ruling elite. Instead taking the case of Arthur Balfour his anti-Jewish tendencies are revealed in various writings and speeches as well as the commonly Aliens Act.

A collection of opinions and arguments from speeches by Arthur Balfour during his time within the public sphere is available in the British Library. It is within this text that examples

(79) Ruby Zagoren, *Chaim Weizmann: First President of Israel* (US, 1972), 85.

(80) Jonathan Schneer, 'How anti-Semitism Helped Create Israel', *Foreign Policy.com* (September 2010), <http://foreignpolicy.com/2010/09/08/how-anti-semitism-helped-create-israel-2/> [accessed 08/02/2017].

(81) Faysal Mikdadi, 'Britain's Legacy in Palestine' in Dr. Maria Holt and Nasim Ahmed (eds.) *Britain's Legacy in Palestine* (London, 2016), 27.

of his anti-Semitic views can be inferred. In a speech a House of Lords debate on the British Mandate Balfour states the following:

‘and should we not be doing something material to wash out an ancient stain upon our own civilization, if we absorb the Jewish race in friendly and effective fashion in those countries in which they are the citizens? We should then have given them what every other nation has, some place, some local habitation, where they can develop the culture and the traditions which are peculiarly their own⁽⁸²⁾

His remarks refer to the Jewish people as ‘an ancient stain’. This coupled with his insistence on ‘othering’ the Jewish people evidence his hostile stance against Jews.

It is in the introduction to influential Zionist, Nahum Sokolow’s *The History of Zionism*, that Arthur Balfour conveys his sentiments towards the Jewish people:

If it [Zionism] succeeds, it will do a great spiritual and material work for the Jews, but not for them alone. For as I read its meaning it is, among other things, a serious endeavour to mitigate the age-long miseries created for Western civilisation by the presence in its midst of a body which it too long regarded as alien and even hostile, but which it was equally unable to expel or to absorb. Surely, for this if for no other reason, it should receive our support.⁽⁸³⁾

The book was published in 1919 as so is thus an adequate representation of Balfour’s views from around the time of the declaration. Many historians apply later evidence where Balfour appears to show genuine respect and humility towards the Jewish people, with the ambition of contesting claims against him. Yet following the primary sources chronologically Arthur Balfour appears to discover these sentiments in response to the Balfour Declaration; and of working closer with the Jews in Palestine during the Mandate years. Evidence like the extract from *The History of Zionism* not only highlights the politician’s belief that the Jews are a ‘hostile body’ but it also validates the theory that Zionism was beneficial to Western civilisation as a means of solving their ‘Jewish problem’. Here Balfour is acknowledging that Jewish communities have long created problems and offers the promotion of Zionism as an answer to it.

(82) Arthur Balfour, *Opinions and arguments from speeches and addresses of the Earl of Balfour 1910-1927* (London, 1927), 247.

(83) Arthur Balfour, ‘Introduction’ in Nahum Sokolow’s *The History of Zionism* (1919), <https://archive.org/details/historyofzionism02sokouoft>.



Damascus Gate, Jerusalem during late 19th century.
Photograph: palestineisraelconflict.wordpress.com.

Chapter 4

Orientalist ideology towards Palestinians

'For in Palestine we do not propose even to go through the form of consulting the wishes of the present inhabitants of the country' – Arthur Balfour

One of the most noticeable trends when studying the archival documents from the Balfour period is the distinct lack of communication, reports and memorandums that discuss the so called 'non-Jews'⁽⁸⁴⁾, the Palestinian people. Sifting through the literature on the subject the vast majority all relates to the needs and desires of the Zionists or the British. In the final draft of the Declaration only one line was dedicated to the indigenous population, and even that one line was asked to be stripped out by the Zionists and so thus was left intentionally vague. What the documents show is a classic example of British colonial mentality. To decide the fate of a piece of land without any regard for the inhabitants that live on that piece of land. Chomsky identifies that: 'the British... did not perceive the locals as a 'people' or a group with rights or claims to the country but rather as, at best an exotic spectre and, at worst, an ecological nuisance'.⁽⁸⁵⁾ These harmful ideologies were transformed into policies and strategies which neglected the interests of the local people. The course of history for one group of people was altered forever, with devastating consequences, with minimal evidence to show that the British Government gave them any consideration when deciding

(84) BL Add MS41178 A The Balfour Declaration 1917.

(85) Noam Chomsky and Ilan Pappé, *Gaza in Crisis: Reflections on Israel's War Against the Palestinians* (London, 2010), 20.

their fate. Primary evidence doesn't just signal a lack of contempt for the Arabs, it goes further by signalling that both the Zionists and the British used Orientalist ideologies to justify their claim to the land. And as historian Mathew points out 'the British were remarkably explicit in their denial of democratic rights to the Palestinians'.⁽⁸⁶⁾

Again taking Montagu's pragmatic critique of the government's position towards Zionism as a point of departure, the following chapter will examine how the creators of the declaration showed a callous disregard for the people of Palestine and how this has manifested into Israel's narrative. It is remarkable, yet unsurprising, that while wading through the expansive array of government department documents discussing the pros and cons of such a declaration that I could only find evidence from Montagu and other anti-Zionist Jews who prophesied the future Palestinian injustice. Here we see Montagu ask his colleagues quite 'simply, what is to be done with those who claim this land to be their home?'

'There arises the further question, what is to become of the people of this country, assuming the Turk to be expelled, and the inhabitants not to have been exterminated by the war? There are over half a million of these, Syrian Arabs – a mixed community with Arab, Hebrew, Canaanite, Greek, Egyptian and possibly Crusaders' blood. They are their forefathers have occupied the country for the best part of 1,500 years.'

NA CAB 21/58 Edwin Samuel Montagu's pamphlet titled 'Zionism' 1917.

In this extract Montagu stands up for the Palestinian people, acknowledging their inalienable history and right to the land. He recognises that the inhabitants exist as a community and infers that a 'Jewish Homeland' in Palestine will harm these inhabitants.

Firstly it must be understood what existed in Palestine before the Declaration was conceived and made public. This is of paramount importance today, as the history of the Palestinian people has been used and manipulated in order to reconstruct a narrative beneficial to the Zionists. One of Israel's most successful tools of oppression is to deny to the existence of a Palestinian people, in order to legitimise its right to the land. The land of Palestine was deemed a '*terra nullius*', a land which belongs to no one, because the people do not matter.⁽⁸⁷⁾ The roots of this detrimental ideology lie within the charter of Herzl's political Zionism, his main doctrine being the transferring 'a people without a land' to some 'land without people'.⁽⁸⁸⁾ This colonial tool is not only practiced philologically but is practiced at the highest levels of the Israeli State. Former Prime Minister of Israel Golda Meir stated in 1969: 'there was no such thing as a Palestinian people... it was not as though there was a Palestinian people considering itself a Palestinian people and we came and threw them out and took away their country from them. They do not exist.'⁽⁸⁹⁾

(86) William M. Mathew, 'War-Time Contingency and the Balfour Declaration of 1917: an Improbable Regression', *Journal of Palestinian Studies* (2011), 40, 26-42.

(87) Salman Abu Sitta, 'The Destruction of Palestine: The Original Sin' in Dr. Maria Holt and Nasim Ahmed (eds) *Britain's Legacy in Palestine* (London, 2016), 9.

(88) Kathy Durkin, *The Ambiguity of the Balfour Declaration*, 39.

(89) Golda Meir (1969) found in Yasin Aktay, 'Palestine in the Legacy of Ottoman Empire' in Sophia Akram, Sameh Habeeb and Omar Kachouh (eds.) *World War I Impact on Palestine: a Hundred Year Legacy* (London, 2016), 15.

During the time of the drafting of the Balfour Declaration the population of Palestine was around 800,000.⁽⁹⁰⁾ This comprised of Muslims, Christians, Bedouins and Jews. Although there was no form of a devolved central governing system during this time, there existed organised social structures, which each community having a self-regulating entity. For those men who were at the forefront of bringing the Balfour Declaration into existence it is evident that the rights of the some 700,000 Arabs who lived on the land meant very little to them. Balfour stated ‘for in Palestine we do not propose even to go through the form of consulting the wishes of the present population of the country.’⁽⁹¹⁾

A long standing and devastating problem for Arab societies across the Middle East has been the use of Orientalist thinking used as a tool to justify imperial control.⁽⁹²⁾ A simplistic summary of Edward Said’s theory of Orientalism establishes that the Western world has created many negative myths and misconceptions about the Orient which are applied to policy to legitimise its behaviour in the East. In 1917 these ideas were articulated by the Zionists and reinforced by the British Government. Orientalist ideology has been continually practiced by Zionists since the Declaration as a way of rationalising to the world their domination of the land and the natives. Narratives play a defined role in shaping the way the Israelis and the international community view who has more right to the land based on Western interpretations of progress and development. The Israeli state has actively reconstructed a narrative which on the one hand sees the land pre-Balfour as barren, lacking in trade and infrastructure and the people uncivilised; and on the other tells the story of the Jews coming and making the land prosperous, democratic and most importantly civilised. Pappé identifies that when “they [the Palestinians] were acknowledged at all, they were denigrated as primitive and backwards, requiring ‘modernization.’⁽⁹³⁾”

The British allowed for epitomic and entrenched Orientalist ideas cloud their understanding of both the land and its people, as if the Jews deserved Palestine more because they could be judged by the white gaze.⁽⁹⁴⁾ Primary evidence for this claim is consistent and prevalent throughout both Zionist and government literature, and is even incorporated into the Mandate and beyond. It can be seen that the British applied Orientalist thinking in two distinct ways, the first being the adulteration for the perceived Jewish character, and the second juxtaposing this with an assault on the constructed Arab character. The Zionists pitched their case to the British Government in terms they could identify with. The Zionist campaign came during the age when the Western world was conquering lands based on their belief in the Civilizing mission. In a time when statesmen were inspired by Rudyard Kipling’s *The White Man’s Burden*⁽⁹⁵⁾, the idea that Europeans owed it to the rest of the ‘backwards’ world to paternally bring them Western civilization. Herzl appears to be both notable and explicit in pitching the civilizing argument, he writes of the Palestinians: ‘a plague-ridden, blighted corner of the Orient, to which the Jews, as representatives of Western civilization, would bring cleanliness, order and the well-distilled customs of the Occident’.⁽⁹⁶⁾ This

(90) Justin McCarthy, *The Population of Palestine* (New York, 1990).

(91) Salman Abu Sitta, ‘The Destruction of Palestine: the Original Sin’ in Dr. Maria Holt and Nasim Ahmed (eds) *Britain’s Legacy in Palestine* (London, 2016), 9.

(92) Edward Said, *Orientalism* (New Delhi, 2006).

(93) Ilan Pappé, *The Idea of Israel: A History of Power and Struggle* (London, 2014)

(94) Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks* (London, 1986).

(95) Rudyard Kipling, *The White Man’s Burden* (1899), http://www.kiplingsociety.co.uk/poems_burden.htm [accessed 16/02/2017].

(96) David Hirst, *The Gun and the Olive Branch: The Roots of Violence in the Middle East* (London, 1977), 17.

ideology was indoctrinated into the colonization of Palestine, it being evident from the origins of political Zionism; and in the introduction of the Zionist debate into the British Governments and also instrumental in Mandate policy. Taking again a passage from Herbert Samuel's 'Future of Palestine' the Orientalist civilizing argument can be found:

'The Future of Palestine'

It would enable England to fulfil in yet another sphere her historic part of civilised of the backward countries. Under the Turk, Palestine has been blighted. For hundreds of years she has produced neither men nor things useful to the world. Her native population is sunk in squalor. Roads, harbours, irrigation, sanitation and neglected. Almost the only signs of agricultural or industrial vitality are to be found in the Jewish and, on a smaller scale, in the German colonies. Corruption is universal in the administration and in the judiciary. The Governors, who follow one another in rapid succession, are concerned only with the amount of money they can squeeze out of the country to send to Constantinople. Under British administration all this will be quickly changed. The country will be redeemed. What has been done in Egypt will be repeated here, and the knowledge of this would make many of the present inhabitant more merely acquiesce, but rejoice, in the change. The British Agent in Egypt recently reported (on the 7th January) that the information of the Intelligence Department there indicated that a large proportion of the population would welcome British occupation. There have been many previous indications of the same feeling. Of Turkish officials are foreigners in the same country. Of Turkish population there is none. England should assume control, because by that means she can forward the purpose for which, at the bottom, her Empire in the tropics and sub-tropics exists.

CAB 37/123/43 Memorandum by Herbert Samuel 21th January 1915, titled 'The Future of Palestine'.

It is not only the Zionists who promote the Jewish character as a means of justifying their settler colonial project in Palestine, within Arthur Balfour's speeches and writings a plethora of examples can be found which seeks to support this concept. In an extract from a speech by Balfour in 1920, Balfour acknowledges that ordinarily the principle of self-determination should be awarded to the native inhabitants of that land. Yet in the case of Zionism this principle can be overlooked as the Jews are believed by Balfour to be civilized and therefore worthy.

'a second difficulty... arises from the fact that the critics of this movement shelter themselves behind the principle of self-determination, and say that, if you apply that principle logically and honestly, it is to the majority of the existing population of Palestine that the future destinies of Palestine should be committed... looking back upon the history of the world, upon the history more particularly of all the most civilised portions of the world, I say that the case of Jewry in all countries is absolutely exceptional, falls outside all the ordinary rules and maxims, cannot be contained in a formula'⁽⁹⁷⁾

(97) Arthur Balfour, *Opinions and arguments from speeches and addresses of the Earl of Balfour 1910-1927* (London, 1927), 234.

Churchill giving evidence in the Peel Commission 1937: 'I do not admit that the dog in the manger has the final right to the manger, even though he may have lain there for a very long time. I do not admit, for instance, that a great wrong has been done to the Red Indians of America, or the black people of Australia. I do not think the Red Indians had any right to say 'the American Continent belongs to us and we are not going to have any of these European settlers coming in here'. They had not the right, nor had they the power' 'I do not admit that a wrong has been done to these people by the fact that a stronger race, higher-grade race, a more worldly wise race to put it that way, has come in and taken their place'

To those British officials who did not feel that strongly about Zionism they did buy into the argument that Jewish settlers, with their intelligence, dynamism and capital would uplift the economy and culture of the native population.⁽⁹⁸⁾ Balfour stated:

'The Four Great Powers are committed to Zionism. And Zionism, be it right or wrong, good or bad, is rooted in age-long traditions, in present needs, and in future hopes, of far profounder import than the desires and prejudices of the 700,000 Arabs who now inhabit that ancient land. In my opinion that is right'

There is some kind of cold humour, a sobering irony perhaps in Balfour's speeches in the years after the Balfour Declaration was made and in the opening years of the British Mandate. Evidence from two of Balfour's speeches show that the politician was offended by the assumption that the lives of the Arab majority would suffer. He was repugnant at the accusation that British policy would allow for the domination of the indigenous population by the Zionist settler colonial project. An extract of Arthur Balfour's speech in the House of Lords defending Lord Islington's criticisms of the British Mandate in Palestine 1922:

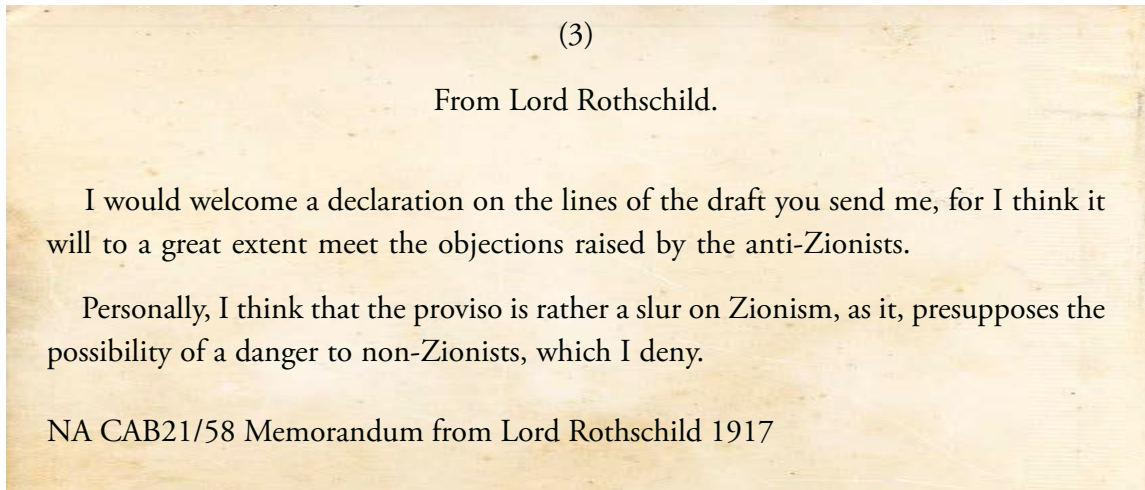
'As understood the noble Lord Islington, he thinks, in the first place, that the Mandate for Palestine is inconsistent with the policy of the Powers who invented the mandatory system, and who are now carrying it into effect. That is his first charge. His second charge is that we are inflicting considerable material and political injustice upon the Arab population of Palestine. His third is that we have done a great injustice to the Arab race as a whole I should like to traverse all those statements.' 238

He told us that it was quite obvious that some kind of Jewish domination over the Arabs was an essential consequence of the attempt to establish a Jewish home. It is no necessary consequence, and It is surely a very poor compliment to the British Government, to a Governor of Palestine appointed by the British Government, to the Mandates Commission under the League of Nations, whose business it will be to see that the spirit of the Mandate as well as the letter is carried out... to suppose that all of these bodies will so violate every principle to which they have ever subscribed, as to use the power given to them by the Peace Treaty to enable one section of the community in Palestine to oppress and dominate the other'241

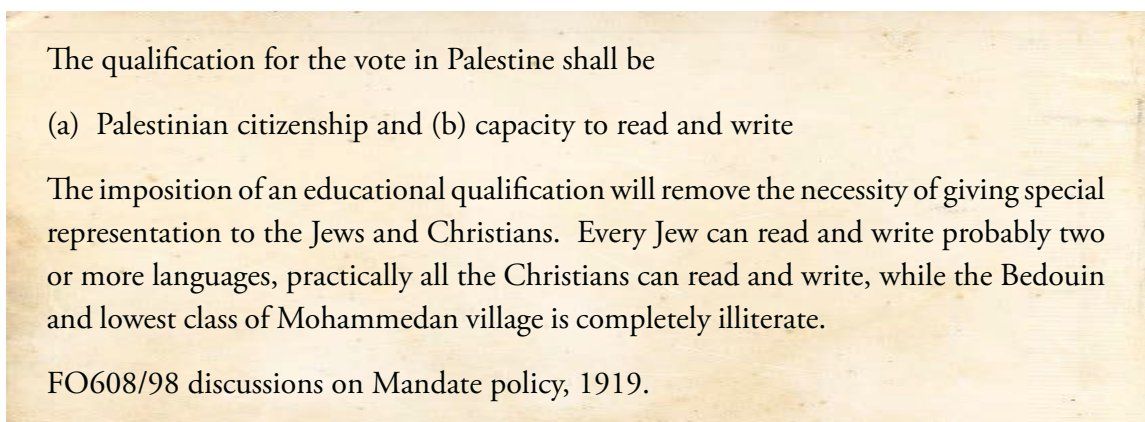
Speech to House of Lords 1922.

(98) Sarah Graham-Brown, *Palestinians and Their Society 1880-1946* (London, 1980), 22.

The final version of the Balfour Declaration derives most of its present day criticism from its distinct lack of regard for the Palestinian people, containing only a very vague reference to the 'existing non-Jewish communities'.⁽⁹⁹⁾ It was surprising to learn that prominent Zionists wanted the clause scrapped from the declaration. They instead pushed for an even stronger demand and commitment from the British Government.



It appears a little ironic knowing the events of the past one hundred years that the Zionists wanted the clause withdrawn on the basis that it implied they were a danger to the local population. But these sentiments had real backing from the Zionist leaders.



Historian Durkin establishes a strong and conclusive argument in her book *The Ambiguity of the Balfour Declaration*. Her argument is pivotal in demonstrating the levels of dishonesty on the part of the British Government. She explains that the War Cabinet kept the wording of the declaration deliberately vague in order to avoid making any real commitments to either the Jews or the Arabs. Both Lloyd George and Arthur Balfour later claimed that they always had the desired aim of creating a Jewish State in Palestine. This being the case, if a Jewish State was always their intention then it leaves us to question why they provided no secure promise. When reviewing the correspondence in the archives Rothschild, Weizmann and Samuels all put in requests to amend the ambiguity of the discourse yet the vague language was kept in place.

(99) BL Add MS 41178 A Balfour Declaration (1917).

Priority A

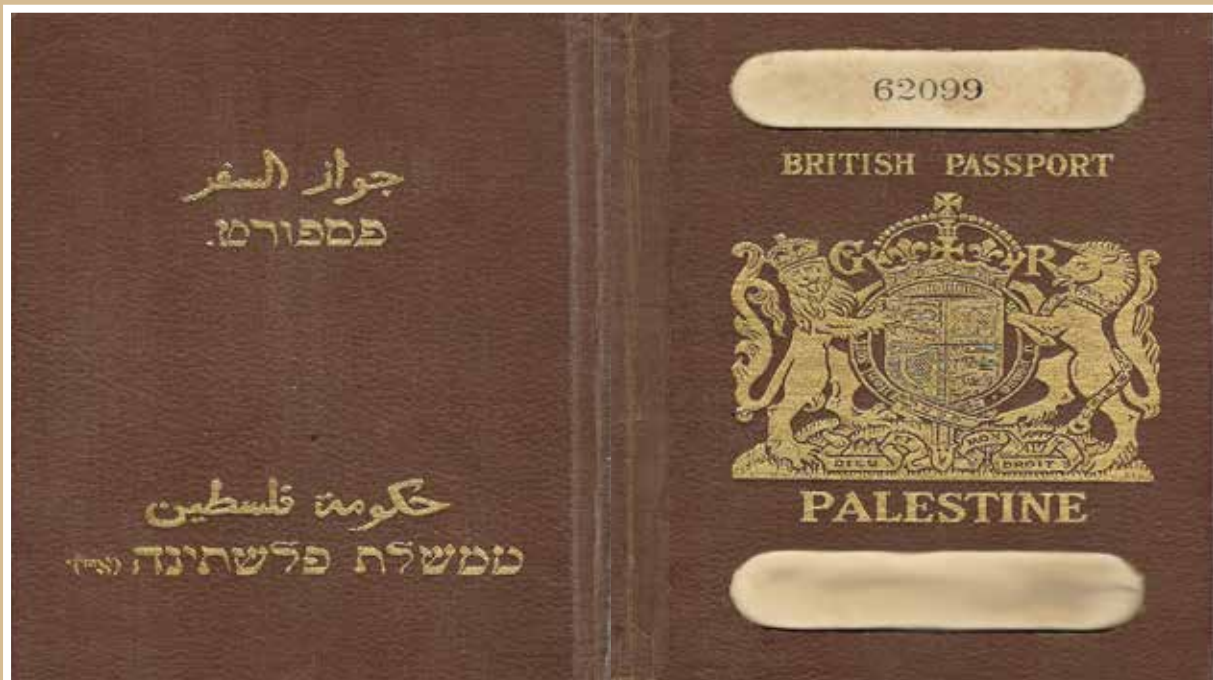
No. 558.

I have received an urgent letter from Feisal dated 29th May, the chief points of which are follows: -

1. He wishes to know the truth of the press statement that Mr. Herbert Samuel has been appointed High Commissioner for Palestine. He goes on to say that this news has had the worst possible effect upon the Arab population, since Mr. Samuel is universally known to be a Zionist, whose ideal is to found a Jewish State upon the ruins of a large part of Syria i.e. Palestine. The Arabs would inevitably regard such an appointment as made at their expense.
2. In the event of the report being true he begs me to urge His Majesty's Government to reverse a decision which vitally affects both the interests and the amour proper of the Arab population.

NA FO141/805/1 Telegram from the High Commissioner for Egypt to the Foreign Office 9th June 1920

In conclusion, the Balfour Declaration is one of the most remarkable pieces of British colonial history. It truly embodies the belief in the civilising mission and validates Said's theory of using discourse to legitimise colonial exploitation and control. The Zionists method of integrating Oriental discourse into their pitch to the British Government, while juxtaposing this with language that promotes their Western characteristics has proven to be successful in maintaining the domination of Palestine.



1935 Palestine British Passport English Hebrew Arabic. Photograph: picclick.com

Conclusion

“Appeals to the past are among the commonest of strategies in interpretations of the present. What animates such appeals is not only disagreement about what happened in the past and what past was, but uncertainty about whether the past really is past, over and concluded, or whether it continues, albeit in different forms, perhaps. This problem animates all sorts of discussions about influence, about blame and judgment, about present actualities and future priorities.”

Edward Said - *Culture and Imperialism*

This research has attempted to revisit the making of the Balfour Declaration through the lenses of the National Archives. No other historical document has had as much impact on the Palestinian plight as the Balfour Declaration. The Balfour Declaration was a catalyst for colonial violence and dispossession still present today. The analysis of the Balfour Declaration clearly showed that it was a product of four key mindsets: desperation for victory in World War I, imperialism, anti-Semitism and Orientalism.

In the first chapter it has been suggested that the evidence found in the War Cabinet documents show a distinct lack of consideration for the views of distinguished Jews who opposed Zionism. Very few letters of anti-Zionists make it into the files; and in fact there is evidence to suggest that the War Cabinet limited circulation of the draft declaration, in order to restrict anti-Zionists being able to convey their criticisms.

Chapter 2 focused on the Britain's imperial mindset towards its policy in Palestine. At the time of the drafting of the Balfour Declaration all British foreign policy was created along lines that sought to benefit the Empire. As the archival evidence demonstrates the policy was driven by both the strategic needs of the Empire and respective propaganda rewards. It is imperative that we see the Balfour Declaration for what it was; it was not a humanitarian gesture.

In Chapter 3 it is highlighted the opposition from people like Edwin Montague, who saw the Declaration as having anti-Semitic repercussions. Montagu explains that he does not wish to advocate that his colleagues' are outright anti-Semites but acknowledges that the pursuit of Zionist policy is anti-Semitic; and recognises the threat to Jewish people around the world of what a Jewish State could do. The chapter explored the aspects of Montagu's protest, questioning his assumption that his fellow Government Ministers were not deliberately anti-Semitic but supporting his argument that the policy is anti-Semitic.

The final chapter evaluated of the most noticeable trends when studying the archival documents from the Balfour period which is the distinct lack of communication, reports and memorandums that discuss the so called 'non-Jews'⁽¹⁰⁰⁾, the Palestinian people. Sifting through the literature on the subject the vast majority all relates to the needs and desires of the Zionists or the British. In the final draft of the Declaration only one line was dedicated to the indigenous population, and even that one line was asked to be stripped out by the Zionists and so thus was left intentionally vague. What the documents show is a classic example of British colonial mentality. To decide the fate of a piece of land without any regard for the inhabitants that live on that piece of land.

(100) BL Add MS41178 A The Balfour Declaration 1917.

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With the 1917 Balfour Declaration, Palestine became the victim of European colonialism, as Britain promised to establish a Jewish homeland in Palestine where the indigenous Palestinians amounted to over ninety percent of the total population. This report provides an in-depth analysis of the motivations and dynamics that culminated in the creation of the Balfour Declaration. The research is based primarily on archival documents from the National Archives in Kew Gardens, London. The reports begins with illustrating the objections to the Zionist project to settle in Palestine, strongly advocated by anti-Zionist British Jews. Contrary to the mainstream view that Britain had benevolent motivations in drafting the Declaration evidence in the archives proves that British government ministers used political Zionism to advance their own Imperial ambitions. The report also explores the accusation that the British ruling elite were anti-Semitic and thus driven by an age-long ambition to expel their Jewish communities. Lastly, this study argues that both the British government and the Zionist movement used Orientalist ideology to justify the dispossession of Palestinians from their lands.



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