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University of Kent

A Foreign Office Perspective on the British Withdrawal from Palestine

By

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A Dissertation Submitted to the School of History

In Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Award of the Degree of Master of Arts by

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A Foreign Office Perspective on the British Withdrawal from Palestine

Between 1945-47 civil unrest in the British Mandate of Palestine engulfed the nation, and as a result, the Foreign Office (FO) became heavily involved in trying to facilitate a solution. The Arab and Jewish communities became increasingly hostile to one another and to Britain, who was viewed as not protecting their respective interests, and fulfilling her security obligations. This study focuses on the FO's priorities and perspectives during the withdrawal from Palestine, and for the FO, the desires of these two communities in Palestine were not the main priorities. Maintaining relations with the Arab states and the United States were the major preoccupations for the FO during this period, who were vital allies in the Cold War against the Soviet Union. The United States was Britain's most important global ally, and the FO did not wish to adversely affect this relationship over Palestine. Despite this, the FO was consistent and mostly unified in rejecting American policy desires. Relations with the Arab states took priority, and the Eastern Department was central to placing priority on Arab relations when dealing with the future of Palestine. This was motivated by the precarious strategic position of Britain in the Middle East, which was caused by growing Arab nationalism resulting in demands for British withdrawal from key regional allies. The loss of military rights in the Middle East was the main FO concern. It was believed that Soviet influence would drastically expand into the Middle East, and prejudice British international position severely if relations with the Arab states was sacrificed to appease American policy desires.

Warnings from the FO of tensions in Palestine had preexisted, and these came to a head between 1936-39 with Palestinian Arabs revolting against Jewish immigration and the British presence in Palestine. This event split the two communities further and harmed British

relations with both peoples. It also unified Palestinian Arabs in their desire to become an independent Arab majority state, who also sought to end Jewish immigration.¹ This helped create division between the two communities and made future cooperation less probable. In an attempt find a solution, the Palestine Royal Commission was formed by Britain. On 7 July 1937, the commission recommended partition as the solution, and the Palestine Partition Commission, 21 February 1938, was created to draw up the technical details. This was condemned by Palestine Arabs and the Arab states, and found only partial acceptance within the Jewish Agency, and was rejected by the Zionist Congress.² This resulted in the British government forming the St James's Palace Conference, where it negotiated with both sides and ended with publication of the White Paper of 1939. This paper limited Jewish immigration and land purchases, and proposed self-governance within ten years.³ During the Second World War unrest in Palestine reduced drastically due to the mutual support in the fight against Nazi Germany. However, after the end of the war the British position in Palestine once again became complicated by the incompatible demands of both communities. The genocide and atrocities committed against the Jewish people by Nazi Germany caused large scale displacement due to many Jewish people desiring to leave Central and Eastern Europe. As a result, Palestine received a large influx of Jewish immigrants, which exceeded the quotas established in the White Paper.⁴ Despite both sides being against the original White Paper at the time, the Arabs called upon Britain to enforce it and stop large scale

¹ For greater understanding on the effect of the Arab revolt in Palestine 1936-1939 on Arab Palestinian national identity see, E.Nashif, *Palestinian Political Prisoners, Identity and Community*, (Abingdon: Routledge, 2008) , [Accessed Online 08/10/2020], <ndl.ethernet.edu.et>

² For more information on The 1937 Peel Commission and the decision to recommend partition see; P.Sinanoglou, "British Plans for the Partition of Palestine, 1929-1938", *The Historical Journal* 52, no. 1, [Accessed Online 11/11/2019] , < <http://www.jstor.org/stable/40264161>>

³ Palestine Statement of Policy, Presented by the Secretary of State for the Colonies to Parliament by Command of His Majesty, 23 May 1939, [Accessed Online 27/05/20], <<https://commonslibrary.parliament.uk/>>

⁴ For more details on the acceptance of the White Paper of 1939, and the process which led to its creation see; M.Cohen, "Appeasement in the Middle East: The British White Paper on Palestine, May 1939", *The Historical Journal*, Vol. 16, No. 3 (Sep., 1973), pp. 571-596, [Accessed Online 25/10/2019], < <https://www.jstor.org/stable/2638205>>

Jewish immigration. From the Jewish perspective, under the Balfour Declaration of 2 November 1917, the Jewish people had been promised a national home, and considering the circumstances of the Jewish plight in Europe, it was believed that Britain must now honour this declaration.⁵ It was under these circumstances that the FO attempted to mediate a resolution between the two sides. The differences between the demands of these two communities in Palestine made finding a solution incredibly difficult, and external pressures as well as British interests would exacerbate the situation further.

Outside the events in Palestine Britain was facing a period of reflection of its new international role. After the Second World War it became clear that the British Empire would face a transformation, and that many nations within the Empire would become independent. It was also clear that the Soviet Union was likely to maintain its position in Central and Eastern Europe. This changed the relationship of the wartime allies, to that of adversaries. While the loss of India may have reduced the importance of the Middle East and Suez Canal to Britain, the clear divide between Britain and the Soviet Union made the security of the Middle East a priority.⁶ The Middle East was viewed by British military planners as essential for Britain to maintain an offensive against the Soviet Union, the Chiefs of Staff (COS) warned the Cabinet that it was “essential to our defence that we should be able to fight from the Middle East in war...”.⁷ The Second World War had demonstrated the importance of Egypt in maintaining global communications and supply lines as well for the defence of the Middle East. Palestine was an effective screen to defend Egypt, who by the end of the war was calling for British withdrawal.⁸ These circumstances meant that a British withdrawal

⁵ For greater detail on the impact of the Balfour Declaration on Jewish calls for a home state see, M.Friedman, “The State of Israel as a Theological Dilemma”, in B.Kimmerling, *The Israeli State and Society, Boundaries and Frontiers*, (New York: State University of New-York Press, 1989)

⁶ For COS views on the importance of the Middle East to British security see, C.P, (46) 267, 10 July 1946, CAB 129/II, TNA.

⁷ Cabinet Minutes (47) 6, Minute 3, Confidential Annex, January 15, 1947, CAB 128/II, TNA

⁸ War Office Report, The Palestine Problem, October 1945, WO 201/192/12154506, TNA.

from Palestine would have dire effects on Britain's military position in the Middle East, and if other Arab states refused to provide future military rights then Britain's entire position in the Middle East could be undone. To complicate the situation further, the United States became increasingly involved in the Palestine crisis. The United States was a vital British ally, with the resources and manpower to help secure Europe from Soviet intrusion, and the two world powers cooperated on an unprecedented scale. However, the President of the United States, Harry Truman, faced lobbying in the United States to push for Jewish immigration into Palestine, and there was significant domestic sympathy to support this.⁹ As a result, Truman publicly and repeatedly called for the entry of 100,000 Jewish immigrants into Palestine. This went against the terms of the White Paper and the British position. Britain sought cooperation with the United States on the matter to an extent. However, British policy makers became increasingly frustrated at American intervention, which greatly agitated the Arabs, harming British interests.

For the FO there were two major relationships to consider regarding Palestine. To some surprise, this was not regarding ties with the Arab Higher Committee or that of the Jewish Agency, who were the main representatives to their respective communities. For the FO, the two key concerns were, cooperation with the United States and maintaining Arab goodwill. The former being Britain's most important ally to prevent future Soviet encroachment. The latter vital to ensuring Britain was able to hold its paramount position in the Middle East. Therefore, during the Palestine crises 1945-48, the British government focused on primarily dealing with the United States and Arab states as the solution to the

⁹ For information on the domestic pressures Truman faced to gain a favourable outcome in Palestine to the Jewish people see, M.Jones, *Failure in Palestine, British and United States Policy after the Second World War*, (London: Mansell Publishing Limited, 1986) pp.136-9; R.Ovendale, *The English-Speaking Alliance, Britain, The United States, the Dominions and the Cold War, 1945-51*, (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1985) pp.146-164; P.Grose, "The President Versus the Diplomats", in W.Stookey & R. Louis, *The End of the Palestine Mandate*, (London: I.B.Tauris,1986) pp.40-55.

matter. From July 1945 until July 1946, the British Foreign Secretary, Ernest Bevin, led British efforts to find an Anglo-American solution to the matter, which was met with opposition from within the FO, and eventually the whole attempt diminished in the face of Truman's actions, which caused a lack of faith in Cabinet. As a result, the Colonial Office was encouraged to find a solution, which had FO input, resulting in the evaporation of an Anglo-American initiative. Between August 1946 and February 1947, focus was placed on finding a solution with the Arabs, something the Eastern Department deemed essential. To this end the London Conference was created for Britain to meditate a solution between the three parties. They were: The Arab Higher Committee, The Jewish Agency, and The Arab League. The Arab League was the only party to agree to take part formally, and the FO was focused on finding a solution acceptable to the Arab states, having no desire to alienate to maintain a credible military position in the Middle East, to prevent Soviet influence. Therefore, this study will focus on the United States and Arab States as its primary focus in understanding the perspectives of the FO on the two key relationships they deemed most important.

The FO did not hold an entirely united position during the switch from American to Arab engagement, although there was a clear and unyielding consensus from the Eastern Department. This consensus was that alienating the Arabs would have the most catastrophic effect on Britain's future position in the Middle East. The Eastern Department was the FO division directly concerned with Palestine, as a result focus on the individuals within this division will be emphasized in this study. Due to the importance of the United States, the Northern American Department will also be considered. These two departments reported to their head, the Permanent Under-Secretary, Orme Sargent, and as a result the conversations between these three most relevant parts of the FO will be the focus for this study.

This study will argue that the FO perspective during the British withdrawal from Palestine was consistent and mostly unified. That it placed priority on maintaining favourable relations with the Arab states, over that of the United States or the two communities in Palestine, and that an awareness of rising Arab nationalism motivated this priority. The first chapter investigates Britain's relationship with the United States, and how Bevin tried to pursue an Anglo-American solution to the crises. It will be argued that the Eastern Department was at times dismayed by Truman's desires, and led calls to reject an Anglo-American solution, citing alienating the Arabs and prejudicing Britain's position in the Middle East. Despite some deviation from a few individuals within the FO, who attempted to provide some support to Bevin, it will be argued that this was only momentary and a minority view, and that overall, the FO welcomed the collapse of the Anglo-American initiative. The second half of this chapter will argue that the FO perspective became increasingly united and vocal in its rejection of American policy desires. That Truman lost significant credibility after his rejection of the Anglo-American initiative, and that this sentiment was shared in the Cabinet. It will also be argued that the FO was willing to compromise with the Colonial Office on a solution, to gain cross department consensus against scrapping the White Paper of 1939, to maintain favourable relations with the Arab states. Also, it will be argued that deviations from the mostly unified FO view reduced during this period, and the few examples of this were isolated incidents which were rejected elsewhere in the FO.

The second chapter will build upon the consistent and mostly unified perspective that the FO priority was maintaining favourable relations with the Arab states. It will be argued that the FO was primarily motivated by Britain's need to maintain military rights in the Middle East. This was vital to maintaining a credible military position in the Middle East, and necessary to protect British interests and prevent Soviet intrusion into the region. The chapter will argue that relations with Britain's key Arab allies was rapidly deteriorating,

owing to growing Arab nationalism, and that the British were facing losing military rights in Egypt and Iraq permanently. This made maintaining relations with the Arabs a priority, and that the only limited deviation from this was in supporting King Abdullah's plans, which if endorsed may have isolated Britain and Transjordan from the Arabs. The second half of this chapter investigates how the FO sought to deal with the Arabs collectively at the London Conference, and how rising Arab nationalism effected FO thought. It will be argued that FO policy continued to be motivated by appeasing Arab demands, and that the FO did not pursue divisive actions, by attempting to find a solution with one or two Arab states. Arguing that the FO did not seek to pursue possible leverages over one or two Arab states because of a growing awareness of Arab nationalism, and the domestic pressure this put on the various Arab states. It will be concluded that the FO was so concerned with rising Arab nationalism and the impending loss of Britain's position in the Middle East, that it felt compelled to prioritise relations with the Arab states when considering a solution to the crises. This study approaches this subject in a chronological fashion provides context to a complex and evolving situation and helps to understand the two distinct phases British policy went through in dealing with the crises, from an Anglo-American solution to an Anglo-Arab negotiation. It is under this narrative that the FO views, and their evolution can be best understood, during the stages the British Cabinet and Bevin went through in developing their Palestine policy.

This study seeks to bring more understanding to the FO view on the process leading to the British withdrawal from Palestine. To obtain this, the vast archival material available at the National Archives in Kew has been drawn upon, which houses the biggest FO collection of files from the time. Using the original FO files to gain a fuller understanding provides a historical primary source driven approach to obtain a true reflection of the thoughts of the officials of the time, by drawing upon their writing and discussions. There is much historical coverage of the events leading to the creation of Israeli, and the British perspective is also

well explored. However, as will be demonstrated, there is clear need for greater understanding of the FO views on the matter which have often been neglected. This is due to the focus of the British perspective being based around the strong personality of Bevin, and to a lesser extent Arthur Creech Jones (Secretary of State for the Colonies). Furthermore, the demands of the Colonial Office and the COS are given secondary focus, and these histories often lack a fuller understanding of the various views in the FO. It is due to these reasons this study will attempt to bring new light to the subject. The British withdrawal from Palestine was one of the most complex after the Second World War, and today the creation of Israel and Palestine's lack of nationhood are still an ongoing and seemingly unresolvable conflict. The FO was instrumental to carrying out the negotiations and is important to understand what advice and concerns the British government was receiving from the most relevant office. The crisis was not limited to the administration of the Mandate and remit of the Colonial Office, having large external ramifications for British foreign policy. Britain's main concerns during the withdrawal from Palestine were in maintaining Anglo-American and Anglo-Arab cooperation. Therefore, understanding British policy from the perspective of the office responsible for mediation with these nations is vital.

The British perspective and other relevant material about the British withdrawal from Palestine is separated by three specific periods: the earliest contributions during the 1940s and 1950s, followed by substantial contributions in the 1980s, with more specific focuses to the subject in the 1990s and 2000s. The earliest insights into the topic come from the work of George Antonius, Reader Bullard, A.Fitzsimons and Elizabeth Monroe. They provide coverage of Arab nationalism and the views of the British government. Antonius provides early insight into the background of the matters surrounding the British withdrawal from Palestine which he viewed as "the most notorious and least successful of all the mandatory

ventures.”¹⁰ His works focuses on rising Arab nationalism and the moves the Arab states were taking to remove themselves from the control of western powers. Antonius book has faced criticism since its publication, such as from Efraim Karsh, who claims that he oversimplified the motives to rising Arab Nationalism, and the development of the movement.¹¹ Despite disagreements on this matter, Antonius’ overall assessment of Arab states moving towards more equal partnerships with France and Britain (or neither) is agreed upon. This is clear in the violence and unrest in Arab states against foreign dominance, and in the successful attempts Arab states made to remove the confides placed on them by previous treaties. More specific arguments on Palestine from Antonius do not offer insight into FO thought on Palestine, and Antonius focuses on the circumstances which Britain faced in trying to secure future influence in the Middle East. The Palestine Royal Commission of 1937, commonly known as the Peel Commission, gave early impetus to a Jewish claim for a national home in Palestine. The report argued that the “Mandate had become unworkable and must be abrogated”¹², recommending partition as a solution. As a result of this, Antonius argues that “The problem became, in Arab eyes, a problem of self-preservation.”¹³ Antonius’ work helps to understand the motives of the Arab states, and the pressures they were under when negotiating with the British. This work provides earlier contextual knowledge needed to understand the roots Arab nationalism, which would become a major preoccupation for the FO surrounding the Palestine crisis in 1946-47, however it presents no insight into FO thought or concerns. Instead, Antonius focuses on the general principle of Britain needing to accommodate the Arabs, to retain its desired paramount position in the Middle East.

¹⁰ G.Antonius, *The Arab Awakening*, (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1945) p.386

¹¹ Karsh, Efraim, and Inari Karsh. "Reflections on Arab Nationalism: Review Article." *Middle Eastern Studies* 32, no. 4 (1996), [Accessed Online 20/10/2019] <<http://www.jstor.org/stable/4283833>>

¹² Anglo-American Committee of Inquiry - Appendix IV, Yale Law School, The Avalon Project, Documents in Law, History and Diplomacy, [Accessed Online 10/09/20], <avalon.law.yale.edu>

¹³ G.Antonius, p.386

Other earlier historical work on the topic similarly frame their discussions around the general British desire to retain a strong position in the Middle East, and the difficulties the British were having in trying to retain this. Bullard, like Antonius, discusses hostility to British dominance, and its effects, a notable example being the Anglo-Egyptian Treaty of 1936, which saw Britain's military footprint in Egypt reduced to the Suez Canal.¹⁴ In particular reference to Palestine, Bullard argues that the displaced person crisis resulting from the Second World War, helped fuel Zionist demands for a national home in Palestine. He argued that Zionists saw the White Paper as "illegal" and that they believed it was "a war measure which would be dropped the moment the British Government ceased to need Arab support."¹⁵ Bullard believed this view was not shared by the British government and was the source to much unrest which led to greater militancy from elements of the Jewish Agency. Bullard's work provides a narrative of the events, without any focus being brought upon British strategic concerns regarding Palestine, and provides no FO thought into the matter. However, he does touch upon a key issue, being Truman's calls for allowing a 100,000 Jewish immigrants entry into Palestine, as well Truman's loose commitment to funding a solution in Palestine.¹⁶ A matter which did preoccupy the FO, and engulfed Bevin's attempts towards finding an Anglo-American solution, which drew considerable criticism in the FO.

An additional earlier contribution to understanding British foreign policy during this period is found with A.Fitzsimons. His work is more relevant in the way he puts emphasis on the strategic and economic considerations that faced Britain during the Palestine crisis. He argues that Britain did not have "great resources of power and exercised influence through that complex network of imperial relationships"¹⁷ highlighting the importance of Britain's

¹⁴ Bullard.R, *Britain And the Middle East, From the earliest times to 1963* (London: Hutchinson University Library, 1964), pp.122-3

¹⁵ Ibid., p.149.

¹⁶ Ibid., p.150.

¹⁷ A,Fitzsimons, *Empire by Treaty*, (London: Earnest Benn Limited, 1965) , p.55

existing relationships with Arab states as vital to securing her interests. Fitzsimons also argues that “The Independence of India, which had once provided the impetus for British establishment in the Middle East, deprived Britain of a major base and the manpower for control of the Middle East.”¹⁸ Helping demonstrate the difficulties Britain faced in maintaining power in the Middle East, “The loss of India meant a precarious British position in the Middle East.”¹⁹ Fitzsimons strategic considerations of Britain’s position surrounding the crisis in Palestine supplies the context to the FO concerns. He also argues that Britain was “regarded by many Arabs as the enemy”, and that “The Arab governments were readily vulnerable to nationalist agitation and the special positions that Britain sought ran counter to Arab nationalist demands.”²⁰ Here Fitzsimons shows an understanding of the effect Arab nationalism was having on the Arab states, as they pushed away from British influence. He argues that this resulted in a “British cultivation of Arab good will... due to... the value of Britain’s Middle East Alliances, bases, and privileges.”²¹ The importance of Britain trying to maintain Arab goodwill is the predominant theme in FO thought during this time. Fitzsimons does not look at this matter from the view of the FO particularly, and instead argues these matters as general British foreign policy desires, with focus upon Bevin and not the FO.

A final earlier contribution to the subject comes from Elizabeth Monroe’s widely cited work. She argues that Britain faced a severely difficult political landscape during the Palestine crisis, due to the rise in Arab nationalism, and as a result British security interests were diminished.²² Monroe provides a similar historical context to the previously mentioned authors, however her work stands out as most relevant due to some inclusion of the FO in the matter. Monroe argues the hopelessness of the whole affair for Britain “As the government

¹⁸ Ibid., p.54

¹⁹ Ibid., p.54

²⁰ Fitzsimons, pp.35, 56.

²¹ Ibid., p.56

²² E.Monroe, *Britain’s Moment in the Middle East*, (London: The John Hopkins press, 1963)

wriggled this way and that in the toils of a problem that had not altered, except in degree, it was accused of taking by sides by two communities battling for survival ; by everyone except the Arabs, it was thought to be taking the Arab side.”²³ Monroe expresses the hostility of the Arabs to Britain over Palestine, and how it engulfed British attempts at treaty renegotiation which were vital to maintaining a British position in the Middle East. Monroe goes on to highlight how this caused major problems in maintaining a position in Iraq, discussing the Iraqi desire “to get rid of the British troops... and how to engineer a Palestine settlement of their choice.”²⁴ Monroe argues that it was “under this pressure the Foreign Office pushed ahead with arrangements for a new Iraqi Treaty.”²⁵ Monroe’s consideration of the FO was not limited to Iraq, and she argues that generally “The Foreign Office representatives in Arab capitals were reporting risk to defence plans and oil supplies if there Arabs were disregarded.”²⁶ Although she does fail to provide any FO sources to this claim, a similar issue with her assessment that “The motive power behind the Foreign Office search for bases came from the Imperial General Staff...”²⁷ Therefore, Monroe’s work provides the context to the concerns facing the FO and her own assessment of how this motivated the FO. Of all the earlier historiography on the subject Monroe’s work provides the most relevant and agreeable assessment of the key issues facing the FO, which was treaty renegotiation with the Arab States. Although Monroe’s work is somewhat reduced by the lack of actual FO documents to support these assessments in any detail.

During the 1980s, four major contributions to the subject came from Roger Louis, Richard Ovendale, Martin Jones and Avi Shlaim. They sought to build upon the understanding of British governments motives but sought to pursue this with more

²³ Ibid., p.163

²⁴ Ibid., p.154

²⁵ E.Monroe, p.163

²⁶ Ibid., p.163

²⁷ Ibid., p.157

consideration towards the Colonial Office, COS and in certain cases the FO. Louis looks at the British position in the Middle East from 1945-51, and similarly covers the key historical context of the previous authors. The need for British bases in the Middle East and the problems the British had in maintaining rights in Iraq and Egypt, where treaty revision was being demanded. Louis considers Bevin's views and to a limited extent the FO and provides greater historical coverage than previous authors in his use of Cabinet, Colonial Office and FO documents. He discusses the changing international role Britain was undertaking stating "the Empire was not in a state of dissolution but rather transformation. Formal rule would be replaced with more modest informal influence..."²⁸ It is under this transformation that Britain sought to "remain the dominant regional power" in the Middle East, and therefore Louis argues that British priority was to "support the Arabs and thereby to sustain British power in the Middle East."²⁹ Louis like Monroe places emphasis on the COS demands for bases in the Middle East in motivating FO actions, however, like Monroe, Louis does not focus his work on the FO. When the FO is included it is primarily focused on its dealings with the Colonial Office over provincial autonomy and partition. This contributes to a greater understanding of two departments views on provincial autonomy and partition but does not investigate the FO views on the wider implications of Palestine. Despite this Louis does provide some FO thought into how Palestine involved Anglo-American relations and he argued that a main FO motive for American involvement was "to educate the Americans and get them to act responsibly on both Palestine and the refugee issue."³⁰ This is of particular relevance to this dissertation, but this assertion is solely based on a Memorandum by the Superintending Undersecretary of the Eastern Department, Sir Robert Howe, this did not represent the view of most his department, who held large concerns regarding American involvement.³¹ Overall,

²⁸ R.Louis, *The British Empire in the Middle East 1945-51*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1984) p.396.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, p.396.

³⁰ *Ibid.*

³¹ *Ibid.*, p.392.

Louis provides a good narrative of the events in the Middle East, and what key Ministers thought. However, his work does not provide a deep understanding of FO thought outside of the disagreements between Creech Jones and Bevin, on whether provincial autonomy or partition would bring a peaceful solution. Louis' more recent work repeats a similar line of inquiry and highlights the lack of investigation into the FO when he summarizes; "The key to the problem of Britain and the end of the Palestine mandate lies in an understanding of the thought and motivation of the foreign secretary, Ernest Bevin.... Even though the contributions of the prime minister, the chiefs of staff, and the colonial secretary were substantial."³² Louis did not seem to consider the FO efforts as substantial, and argued that "Bevin took a strong and independent line... (of the FO)."³³ It is perhaps under these assertions that led Louis away from deeper insight into FO thought. This makes Louis' generalizations of singular opinions into that of the entire FO perspective somewhat understandable and highlights the need for more understanding of the FO thought during this time.

Ovendale provides a similarly authoritative and detailed account of the British position in the Middle East during the Palestine crises, and, like Louis, he frames the discussions around Cabinet and Bevin but with more FO inclusion. Ovendale goes over the familiar historical narrative of the time, arguing of the British need to keep military rights in the Middle East,³⁴ and how this was facing being diminished by Egyptian demands for British evacuation.³⁵ Ovendale, like Louis and Monroe, considers this in the context of the cold war, and uses FO sources to illustrate the concern "that the primary objective of Russia's

³² R.Louis, "British Imperialism and the End of the Palestine Mandate", in R.Louis & R.Stookey (eds), *The End of the Palestine Mandate*, (London: I.B.Tauris & Co Ltd, 1986), p.1.

³³ *Ibid.*, p.7.

³⁴ Ovendale.R, *Britain, The United States, And The End of The Palestine Mandate*, (New Hampshire: Royal Historical Society Studies in History, 1989), pp. 57, 65, 185, 217-18.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, p.185

middle eastern policy was to undermine Britain's position."³⁶ Ovendale argues that the British believed that the Soviet's would try to take advantage of any Arab resentment, and places this consideration, with the need for bases, as the prime motivator for British policy. Ovendale therefore argues that the FO believed that "Repercussions of a policy unfavorable to the Arabs were likely to be widespread."³⁷ Ovendale's consideration of the FO perspective is insightful however it has limitations being based primarily on views of C.W. Baxter (Head of the Eastern Department) and Harold Beeley (Eastern Department and adviser to Bevin) and their inclusion is in reference to the FO views on partition and provincial autonomy. Therefore, a focus on the differences in FO thought in dealing with the United States and Arabs is only a minor consideration in a wider narrative framed around the British government and COS. Furthermore, Ovendale is at times careless on providing notions of representative FO thought, such as in his suggestion that "the Foreign Office developed an idea which Bevin claimed to be his own: Britain should aim at establishing a Palestine state under an Arab King which might eventually lead to a federation with the other Arab states in Levant."³⁸ This idea will come under discussion in chapter two's focus on Transjordan. However, it is worth noting that this was not a policy that gained any traction and was disposed of almost immediately. Ovendale does provide greater FO insight into this topic than previous works on Britain and withdrawal, however like Louis there is limited use of FO documents, and they are used to make significant assertions. Overall, this is a continuation in the written history of the subject, to focus on the historical native, framed around Bevin and Cabinet, with limited FO inclusion. Where FO insight is included it is at times misrepresented, by the arguments of the few being applied to the many. This demonstrates

³⁶ Ibid., p.186

³⁷ Ibid., p.65

³⁸ Ibid., p.85

the need for more FO documents to be explored to uncover a more reflective account of what the FO thought and did during Britain's withdrawal from Palestine.

The most notable work on this topic is by Martin Jones, who published his study in between Ovendale's and Louis' first and second books. Jones' focus is not on the context of the time, and instead on the views of Bevin, the Cabinet, the COS, the FO, and the Colonial Office. Unlike Monroe, Fitzsimons, Ovendale and Louis, Jones aimed to explain why peaceful resolution in Palestine was not found, and where the blame was to be laid among the British participants. Jones has clear contempt for the FO, who he argues was obsessed with opposing any solution that was not found with the Arabs and their approval. He believed because of this there was "Vigorous opposition from the Foreign Office" to prevent an Anglo-American solution, or a British mediated solution with the Jewish Agency, stating that the FO was "battling to stop Partition".³⁹ Jones ultimately provides an unprecedented attack on the FO who he argued was the reason for the failure of British policy in Palestine. He believed that the FO, under the leadership of the Eastern Department engaged in an "ancient preference for dealing with 'the Arab world' as a whole"⁴⁰ and because of this thwarted the Anglo-American initiative. Jones believes this was with the "The single-minded intent of the Foreign Office to press ahead with the London Conference" as the solution and "the motivation was, as always, the concern to be seen to be doing the right thing by the Arab world."⁴¹ Jones' work uses a range of FO sources, and contributes to the two key areas of this study's focus, the FO views on American involvement and maintaining Arab goodwill. What Jones' history fails to do, is to provide balance. His focus on discrediting the FO to attribute blame fails to truly consider the wider context. The difficulties in the Anglo-American initiative will be explored in the next chapter, but it is worth noting that Truman's insistence

³⁹ M.Jones, *Failure in Palestine*, p.28

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, p.165

⁴¹ *Ibid.*

on scraping the White Paper and his push for 100,000 Jewish immigrants into Palestine without any negotiation, was a major handicap to Bevin's Anglo-American initiative. Also, of particular importance for the second chapter in this study, Jones attributes all FO sympathy to the Arabs as an irrational obsession with dealing with them on traditionally favorable terms, and collectively. He fails to consider the significance of Arab nationalism, and the domestic pressure the Arab states were under to stop Palestine being divided. This resulted in a failure to appreciate the FO consideration of this pressure and the limited pressure the FO could apply to the Arab States. Some Arab states were already calling for British evacuation and treaty revision, and there was an overall rejection of western imperialism. Under these circumstances there was little pressure the FO could bring upon the Arab states, and even less if Britain was to succeed in maintaining a military presence in the Middle East after the crisis in Palestine.

A final contribution from the 1980's comes from Avi Shlaim. His study focuses on the relationship between Abdullah and the Zionists working in Palestine towards a Jewish state. Shlaim argues that Abdullah was "a very welcome and important ally to the Jewish Agency"⁴², and that there was significant collusion between the two to carve up Palestine. Shlaim argues this was motivated by Abdullah's territorial ambitions, his estrangement from the other Arab states, as well as his dependence on Britain. His study uses a wide range of American, British and Israeli archival sources to uncover this collusion, and includes some FO thought surrounding Abdullah's attempts to gain British endorsement for annexation of part of Palestine. The most relevant of these inclusions was in the form of reservations from within the FO of publicly endorsing Abdullah's plans, as well as considerations of the potential benefits of an enlarged Transjordan. Bevin's private endorsement of Abdullah plans is central to Shlaim's inclusion of the British position; however, he ultimately concludes that

⁴² A.Shlaim, *Collusion Across the Jordan*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988), p.616

a tripartite between Britain, Abdullah and the Jewish Agency was not possible. This was due to Jewish mistrust of the mandatory power, as well as the lack of a formal British commitment to Abdullah's aims. Shlaim's work provides large insights into the relationship between Abdullah and the Jewish Agency during the British withdrawal from Palestine, however FO thought is a lesser consideration.

The most recent historiography since the 1980s comes from Ian Pappé, Charles Smith and D.K.Fieldhouse. Pappé provides greater FO insight than previous historians in the relationship between Britain and the Emir of Transjordan, King Abdullah, one of the three key Arab States focused on in this paper. Britain and Transjordan had a unique relationship and Pappé contributes to understanding the motives and attitude of a key member of the British Diplomatic Service, Alec Kirkbride the British Ambassador to Transjordan. Kirkbride defended Transjordan's interests, and its value to Britain as an ally. Pappé argues that, "British policy towards the Arab-Israeli conflict and to a lesser extent towards the Middle East as a whole was based on a strong Anglo-Transjordan alliance."⁴³ This was because British strategic considerations were facing major setbacks over the loss of Palestine, during a time when rights in Iraq and Egypt were also being rejected, "Britain is putting all its egg in one basket since all other baskets are unwilling to accommodate our eggs."⁴⁴ The importance of Transjordan in FO thought was due to the large influence Britain held there. Britain had freedom of movement in wartime, and financed, trained, and even supplied officers to the Arab Legion. Pappé believed that "Britain's dominant role in Transjordan was due to Sir Alec Kirkbride's immense influence on King Abdullah... Britain could rely, unhesitatingly, on Transjordan's loyalty and cooperation."⁴⁵ Pappé does not provide wider FO thought on the

⁴³ I.Pappé, "Sir Alex Kirkbride and the Anglo-Transjordan alliance, 1945-50", in (eds) Zametica.J, *British Officials and British Foreign Policy 1945-50*, (London: Leicester University Press, 1990), p.121

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 127

⁴⁵ C.Smith, *Palestine and the Arab-Israeli Conflict*, (Bedford: Bedford/St Martins, 2001).

Palestine crisis, however he does discuss Kirkbride's desire to see Abdullah annex part of Palestine in the event of partition, a subject of particular relevance to this study. The usefulness of Pappé's account of the relationship between Abdullah and Kirkbride is of limited value, due to the focus being on only one person within the FO. Despite this Kirkbride is a key figure in the FO and the British withdrawal from Palestine, as he sought to encourage a British-Transjordan agreement to help realize Abdullah ambitions, and widen British military rights. This is particularly useful as the FO response to these calls, helps to illustrate the overall reluctance to divide Arab opinion, and goodwill.

Charles Smith also contributes to modern history regarding the withdrawal from Palestine, and his works focuses on the Arab and Jewish struggle to obtain their desired futures. Smith's dedication to understanding the events which led to the creation of Israel is absent for the most part of British considerations. The usefulness of his work in understanding British motives is reduced to the desires of Bevin. He argues that "British Foreign Secretary Ernest Bevin's cardinal concern from 1945 to 1948 was the security of British strategic interests in the Middle East and Asia"⁴⁶ and his main reference to British concerns is framed around "The question (which) was where British troops could be stationed."⁴⁷ Smith provides a greater history of the dynamics of the Jewish Agency, and Arab organizations in Palestine such as the Mufti. His history does consider some British perspectives, such as Bevin's and Attlee's (The British Prime Minister) concerns of the impact Palestine could have on Anglo-American relations. However, British considerations are brief and are there to provide context, which lack any consideration of the Foreign Office.

The final recent history of events, is provided by D.K. Fieldhouse. His work looks at the Middle East as a whole and how the mandate systems there failed the Arab States. It is in

⁴⁶ Ibid., p.182

⁴⁷ Ibid.

these failures he argues Arab Nationalism rose, and resulted in rejection of western imperialism, demonstrated by Egypt's call for the evacuation of British troops and Iraq's failure to ratify treaty revision. Fieldhouse argues that "The British government regarded Palestine as critical for the security of its control of Egypt, itself vital for the route to India and the East"⁴⁸ and argues that British policy was firmly in support of the White Paper, until its eventual referral of the matter to the United Nations. Fieldhouse argues that the COS viewed "Palestine as essential to British strategic positions in the Middle East"⁴⁹ and that "The British defence establishment never viewed the evacuation of Palestine as an acceptable option..."⁵⁰ A main issue in Fieldhouse's work is the lack of any FO and Colonial Office sources, which fail to provide a full understanding of the various views in the British establishment. Like Monroe and Fitzsimons, Fieldhouse generalizes the British view as united, and frames it around Bevin and Attlee, using COS concerns to reinforce these claims. There is a lack of any archival material and as a result his contribution does not provide any understanding to the perspectives of the officials in the FO.

Overall, there is a large number of publications which look at the British position in the Middle East during the 1940s and the effect Palestine had on Britain's relations with the United States and the Arab States. Earlier historiography such as, Antonius, Bullard, Fitzsimons and Monroe provide historical context to the subject, the British attempts to maintain a position in the Middle East and the difficulties they had in doing so, due to Arab calls for less or no further British interference. These earlier works do not look into FO thought, however, they do contribute to a deeper understanding of the situation in the Middle East and pressures the British government faced. Louis and Owendale later provide a more

⁴⁸ D. Fieldhouse, *Western Imperialism in the Middle East 1914-1958*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), p.196

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, p.212

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, p.218

detailed narratives of events, which are based on more archival material, including some use of FO sources. Despite this both look at the British perspectives primarily from the view of Bevin, Attlee, the Cabinet and the demands of the COS. Louis justifies this focus due to the dominant hold Bevin had over British Foreign policy, and Ovendale failed to use enough FO material which resulted in false assertions. Martin uses far more FO material than Louis and Ovendale, however his work is dedicated to attributing blame for the failure to find a solution, and as a result he focuses on criticizing the FO in every manner, without fully considering the pressures of Arab nationalism and the problems the United States created in finding resolution. More recent histories such as Pappé provide focus to the contribution of Kirkbride on British-Transjordan relations, which is a key consideration in FO thought, although Pappé's work is limited to only one individual in the FO. Smith and Fieldhouse, both contribute to understanding the concerns of the Arabs and Jews at the time, and how the mandate system failed the Arab States, with the latter arguing resulted in a rejection of western imperialism. However, both these works do not contribute to understanding FO thought on the matter. Instead, they continue the trend of focusing on the British withdrawal from Palestine from the point of view of the British government and for the most part Bevin. Overall, there is a clear gap in the historiography for a specific focus on understanding the FO perspective on the British withdrawal from Palestine. This study aims to include a greater range and use of FO sources, to investigate where there was division and consensus within the FO, and what advice they provided to government to try and address their concerns. The FO perspective will be considered in the context of the Cold War, and FO policy in the Middle East during these years is included. This focuses on the rise of Arab nationalism and the various FO attempts at treaty renegotiation with Arab states, which was deemed essential to maintaining Britain's paramount position in the Middle East.

A FO perspective on the United States and the British Withdrawal from Palestine

The crisis in Palestine and the coming end of the British mandate occurred during the start of the Cold War. The Soviet Union occupied the majority of Eastern Europe and was perceived as a major threat to the security of the remaining democracies. As a result, Anglo-American cooperation was a priority for both nations. The Middle East was vital to maintaining British security, and the US shared the belief that Soviet penetration into the Middle East would severely go against the interests of both nations. Therefore, the UK and the US sought to coordinate their policies in the Middle East. Bevin championed an Anglo-American solution to the Palestine crisis in accordance with this spirit. The FO did not oppose the necessary political and military alliance with the United States, despite this fact, the FO was vocal and persistent in opposition to Truman's attempts influence the Palestine crisis, which most in the FO perceived as contrary to British strategic interests in the Middle East. The UK had a long history of direct involvement and presence in the Middle East, and its existing rights were primarily with Egypt, Iraq, and Transjordan. The United States did not share these rights, nor did it have the rapport with the various Arab regimes that Britain did. As a result, the FO was concerned of alienating its regional allies, in favour of the US which had little influence in the Middle East. Truman, on the other hand, faced large domestic pressure for a Jewish national home in Palestine, something which the Arabs rejected as unjust. These complications made Bevin's push for an Anglo-American solution less probable, and his enthusiasm was not shared within his own department. During this period, the FO remained mostly consistent in its warnings against Truman's desires, which are best understood during two phases. The first was the rise and fall of the Anglo-American initiative, which saw intensive negotiation between the Americans and British, and was ultimately rejected by Truman. The second phase was reduced US involvement during the London Conference, with the notable exception of Truman's Yom Kippur statement. During these two phases the FO remained

united, for the most part, against accommodating the Americans at the expense of Arabs. This perspective was led by Beeley and Baxter and found support from the Secretary to Cabinet and Chairman of Official Committee on Palestine, Norman Brook. Who condemned the Anglo-American Committee of Inquiry recommendations, arguing against partition and of an Arab backlash if greater Jewish immigration was permitted.⁵¹ Some deviation from this overall view did occur during the first phase, which was led by Howe and Sargent. During the second phase this was led by the British Ambassador to the US, Lord Inverchapel. The differences in opinion these individuals held will be explored, and what effect it had on a mostly united FO perspective will be assessed.

The process that led to the British withdrawal from Palestine saw frequent American involvement. This was met in Britain with varying degrees of enthusiasm. Bevin sought American cooperation globally, desiring a united front against the growing influence of the Soviet Union. This desire was apparent in his substantial efforts to find an Anglo-American solution to the British withdrawal from Palestine. The FO had significant concerns regarding American involvement and was weary of sacrificing Arab goodwill to appease American policy desires. During the Potsdam Conference 17 July to 2 August 1945 Truman told Churchill that he hoped “that the British Government may find it possible without delay to take steps to lift the restrictions of the White Paper on Jewish immigration in Palestine.”⁵² Truman’s desire to scrap the White Paper and allow large scale Jewish immigration into Palestine was also supported by the Harrison Report. This report was by Earl Grant Harrison (American representative on the Intergovernmental Commission on Refugees) and criticized the conditions displaced people in Europe faced stating “We appear to be treating the Jews as

⁵¹ Brook, Report Palestine, 27 April 1946, TNACAB 129/9 CP (46) 173

⁵² Truman to Churchill, Memorandum, 24 July 1945, *FRUS 1945 VIII* [Accessed Online 12/06/2020] <<https://history.state.gov>>

the Nazis treated them except that we do not exterminate them”⁵³ and recommended to Truman that 100,000 displaced persons should immediately be allowed entry to Palestine. Truman’s initial desire for Jewish immigration into Palestine as a partial solution to the displaced persons crisis and the Harrison Report led to greater American involvement in Palestine and a desire to seek a solution with Britain. Truman wrote to Attlee requesting that “special attention”⁵⁴ be drawn to the 100,000-recommendation laid out by Harrison upon his succession as the British Prime Minister.

The FO immediately began to raise concerns over the American desire to scrap the White Paper and allow large scale Jewish immigration. On 11 July 1945, Baxter argued that: “The existence of a Jewish State would provide a source of conflict which would inevitably continue to have a deplorable effect on Anglo-Arab relations”⁵⁵ and that once the White Paper’s immigration limits had expired, another 100,000 would prevent the safeguarding of British interests in the region due to Arab reactions. Beeley agreed with this argument and argued that another 100,000 “would not be believed”⁵⁶, warning against going beyond the White Paper. These concerns were repeated in the British Middle Eastern embassies, Sir Walter Smart (British Cairo Embassy) argued that Truman’s calls for more Jewish immigration have “forced the pace here” and he believed that “we should impress on the United States Government that, unless they are careful, they will start a fire here which we shall have to put out at considerable sacrifice to ourselves.”⁵⁷ The Eastern Department had therefore taken an immediate, and unified position against Truman’s calls to scrap the White Paper and allow 100,000 Jewish immigrants entry into Palestine. This opposition was

⁵³ K. Angelika, *The Harrison Report and Its Repercussions. Waiting for Hope: Jewish Displaced Persons in Post-World War II Germany* (New York: North Western University Press, 2001) pp. 31–42.

⁵⁴ Truman to Attlee, Telegram, 17 September, FRUS 1945 VIII, [Accessed Online 12/03/2020] <<https://history.state.gov>>

⁵⁵ Baxter, Minute, 11 July 1945, FO 371/45378 E5452/15/31G, TNA.

⁵⁶ Beeley, Minute, 29 August 1945, FO 37145379 E6562/15/31, TNA.

⁵⁷ Smart, Memorandum, Cairo, 29 August 1945, FO 141/1021 129/33/45, TNA.

founded on the negative impact it would have on Britain's relations with its key regional allies such as Egypt, Iraq, and Transjordan. These Arab states were essential to maintaining British military power in the region and Britain's 'paramount position' in the Middle East. This was outlined as vital to British security and was part of Britain's 'three pillar strategy', which was formed in the post-Second World War defence review.⁵⁸ Any large-scale Jewish immigration from the FO perspective would damage ties with the Arabs and weaken Britain's position in the Middle East.

FO opposition to involving the United States and permitting entry of 100,000 Jewish peoples into Palestine did not prevent Bevin from trying to pursue a cooperative approach with the United States on the matter of Palestine. On 15 October 1945, Bevin announced in the British Parliament the creation of the Anglo-American Committee of Enquiry. This committee was a joint Anglo-American body, that was tasked "To examine political, economic and social conditions in Palestine as they bear upon the problem of Jewish immigration and settlement" and to investigate the position of Jews in Europe, as well as consult Jews and Arabs on the problems in Palestine, with the ability to provide joint recommendations to the UK and US governments.⁵⁹ Bevin saw this as way to reduce American pressure and include them in delivering a solution. He argued that it was "essential to take steps to allay the agitation in the United States which was poisoning our relations."⁶⁰ The Cabinet agreed stating "The United States will thus be placed in the position of sharing the responsibility of the policy which she advocates. She will no longer be able to play the part of irresponsible critic."⁶¹ It was clear that there was frustration in the British Cabinet at

⁵⁸ Briefing Paper, 20 February 2020, A Brief Guide to Previous British Defence Reviews, House of Commons Library, [Accessed Online 25/04/2020], <researchbriefings.files.parliament.uk>

⁵⁹ Anglo-American Committee of Inquiry, Preface, Yale Law School, The Avalon Project, Documents in Law, History and Diplomacy, [Accessed Online 10/09/20], <avalon.law.yale.edu>

⁶⁰ Item 7, Cabinet Discussion, 4 October 1945, TNACAB 128/1 CM(45) 40

⁶¹ Item 1, Cabinet Discussion, 11 October 1945, TNACAB 128/1 CM(45) 40

the consistent public American criticism and demands, without being involved or sharing the responsibility of the matter. The start of this Anglo-American initiative sought to elevate American pressure and enable Britain and the United States to cooperate on finding a joint solution to the issues.

The start of this cooperation was not entirely opposed by the FO. Sargent and Howe, like Bevin, sought to involve the United States. Howe wrote to Bevin suggesting for a “fresh approach... with the object of ensuring that the United States, who now criticize us irresponsibly, should assume a share of the responsibility for the settlement.”⁶² This telegram was cowritten with Sargent, who also telegraphed Bevin stating that he believed this idea could be used in talks “if you think fit”.⁶³ Despite the concerns in the Eastern Department against American involvement and warnings of agitating the Arabs if Britain did so, Howe chose to disregard Beeley, Baxter and Smart and propose a shared vision with Sargent which supported Bevin’s desire for an Anglo-American solution. Sargent and Howe believed if they could involve the Americans in a solution, it would reduce their criticism because they would be forced into sharing the burden of any solution.

Beeley and Baxter did not share the views of Sargent and Howe and warned that the Anglo-American Committee “would not provide a substitute for the short-term policy which the Cabinet had previously put into effect. Nor could it take the place of the trusteeship agreement for Palestine, which will eventually have to be concluded.”⁶⁴ This short-term policy was to negotiate a trusteeship agreement with Palestine and the Arab states, for submission to the United Nations for approval. Beeley went on to argue that “The findings of an Anglo-American commission, while they might be fitted into this process and might play a

⁶² Howe to Bevin, 6 October 1945, FO 371/45380 E7479/15/31G, TNA.

⁶³ Sargent to Bevin, 6 October 1945, FO 371/45380 E7479/15/31G, TNA.

⁶⁴ Beeley, Draft Note, 5 October 1945, FO 371/45280/E7479/15/31G, TNA.

part in determining the character of the trusteeship agreement would not eliminate either of these stages.”⁶⁵ This demonstrates apprehension from Beeley and Baxter that the Anglo-American committee could interfere with gaining Arab support for a trusteeship agreement, without any potential gain. Howe defended the position that he and Sargent had taken, stating that the Anglo-American initiative did not go against these aims, and that it could be “fitted into the process... by being inserted between the adoption of the short-policy and the negotiation of a trusteeship agreement.”⁶⁶ The FO was therefore divided, with Sargent and Howe supporting Bevin in seeking Anglo-American cooperation, and hoping to involve the United States in a solution. The concerns of Baxter, Beeley and Smart were not completely discarded by Howe, who considered that the proposal could leave Britain open to “insuperable” objections from Arab states, who would see Britain as giving in to US pressure at the expense of Palestinian Arabs.⁶⁷ Furthermore, while the Anglo-American Committee of Inquiry was underway Howe was involved in discussions with J.M.Martin (Assistant Undersecretary at Colonial Office) about alternative solutions to resolve the problems. Martin was concerned that the committee might recommend partition “without fully realizing the repercussion elsewhere”⁶⁸ and felt that the only viable alternative was a provincial autonomy scheme. This would keep Palestine undivided and allow self-rule in the Jewish and Arab majority areas. The discussions of Martin and Howe developed in to an inter-departmental meeting between the FO and Colonial Office. Sir Kinahan Cornwallis (Chairman of the FO Middle Eastern Committee) and Baxter discussed the matter with Martin and Sir Douglas Harris (Colonial Office). No favoured alternative was found. Baxter and Howe both expressed restraint in making any recommendations to the committee in case they were to

⁶⁵ Beeley, Draft Note, 5 October 1945, FO 371/45280/E7479/15/31G, TNA.

⁶⁶ Howe, Note, 5 October 1945, FO 371/45280/E7479/15/31G, TNA.

⁶⁷ Howe, Note, 5 October 1945, FO 371/45280/E7479/15/31G, TNA.

⁶⁸ Martin to Howe, Letter, 10 January 1945, FO 371/52504/E389/4/31G, TNA.

“pronounced against it”⁶⁹, as this could rule out a FO and Colonial Office solution. Harris summarized that “neither Sir Kinahan nor Mr. Baxter were greatly interested in the provincial autonomy scheme except in so far as its presentation might afford an opportunity for getting the white paper policy in the picture again.”⁷⁰ Baxter and Kinhan were willing to potentially compromise with the Colonial Office on accepting their provincial autonomy scheme in order to prevent American policy desires gaining traction with the British government. Cooperation between the FO and Colonial Office during this period was limited due to the FO being opposed to deviating from the White Paper. The Colonial Office did not share this commitment and was quick to adopt provincial autonomy as a solution, which Harris promoted as a solution after the Harrison Report. It was only during October 1945 that FO officials started to seriously consider provincial autonomy as necessary compromise, hoping it could be a temporary solution which would limit further American demands that would agitate the Arabs.

Howe supported Sargent in a ‘fresh approach’ in dealing with the United States in a collaborative matter, but he was also involved in his department’s discussions about alternatives. He shared the Eastern Department’s concerns, not wishing to alienate the Arabs’.⁷¹ Baxter, Beeley, Smith and Sir Kinahan, were so concerned with maintaining Arab goodwill they sought to minimize American involvement. They saw Truman’s calls for 100,000 Jewish immigrants and scrapping the White Paper as destructive to their own policy goals and doubted the ability of the Anglo-American Committee to find a reasonable solution.⁷² Howe shared some of these concerns, but was in concurrence with Sargent, who supported Bevin’s Anglo-American initiative. In order to share the burden of any

⁶⁹ Martin to Howe, Letter, 10 January 1945, FO 371/52504/E389/4/31G, TNA.

⁷⁰ Harris, Note of Meeting, 23 January, CO 537/1754/75872/138/4, TNA.

⁷¹ Howe, Note, 5 October 1945, FO 371/45280/E7479/15/31G, TNA.

⁷² Smart, Memorandum, Cairo, 29 August 1945, FO 141/1021 129/33/45, TNA; Baxter, Minute, 11 July 1945, FO 371/45378 E5452/15/, TNA; Beeley, Minute, 29 August 1945, FO 37145379 E6562/15/31, TNA.

recommended solution, remove the United States as a spectating critic, limiting American agitation, and therefore improve Anglo-American ties. Between July 1945 and March 1946, FO concern about American involvement and rejection of allowing 100,000 Jews into Palestine had not been reduced. Overall, the Eastern Department was still persistent in the damage Anglo-American cooperation could have on British ties with the Arab states, vital to the aims of the Colonial Office and British military interests. Sargent supported Bevin in pursuing an Anglo-American initiative and Howe to a lesser extent, however both still sympathized with the concerns of the Eastern Department. The FO's perspective had changed little during this time, and the involvement of Sargent and Howe in supporting an Anglo-American initiative was retrospective. Bevin had already decided to press on with seeking a solution with the United States, even against clear warnings from his department.

The report of The Anglo-American Committee of Enquiry played a significant part in reestablishing FO opposition to an Anglo-American initiative and provided impetus in finding their own alternative. On 20 April 1946, the Anglo-American Committee's final report recommended that 100,000 immigrations certificates for Jewish people in Europe "be authorized immediately for the admission into Palestine" and that "immigration be pushed forward as rapidly as conditions will permit".⁷³ It also called for a state in which neither the Arabs nor the Jews dominated, and that Palestine should be organised under a United Nations Trusteeship once the British Mandate expired. At Cabinet level the implications and viability of the report was discussed. Brook provided a report on the committee's recommendations. Brook argued that the Anglo-American Committee of Inquiry recommendations "would have a disastrous effect on our position in the Middle East" and that it would not even "silence Zionist clamor in the United States."⁷⁴ This report was submitted to the Defence Committee

⁷³ Anglo-American Committee of Inquiry, Preface, Yale Law School, The Avalon Project, Documents in Law, History and Diplomacy, [Accessed Online 10/09/20], <avalon.law.yale.edu>

⁷⁴ Brook, Report Palestine, 27 April 1946, TNACAB 129/9 CP (46) 173

for discussion and Thomas Wikeley (Eastern Department) sent Bevin a brief in which he argued that the Anglo-American committee recommendations were unfair on the Arabs, who “lose nearly all along the line”, but Wikeley still believed it was “essential” for American cooperation.⁷⁵ Wikeley also stressed that the disarming of illegal Jewish organizations be a precondition for any consideration of more immigration, a matter which Truman wanted unconditionally and immediately. Wikeley warnings against the recommendations of the Anglo-American Committee were a repetition of the concerns Baxter, Beeley, Smith, and Sir Kinahan held throughout 1945. That American involvement and Truman’s calls for permitting 100,000 Jews entry into Palestine would severely damage Britain’s standing in the Arab world if these recommendations were implemented. Nevile Butler (Superintending Undersecretary of the North American Department) wrote to Howe suggesting that the FO reject the report, and that it would not antagonize the US significantly “if we play our hand well”.⁷⁶ Butler believed that Britain could not accept allowing 100,000 Jews into Palestine without United Nations’ approval, which would also be beneficial for Anglo-Arab relations. Beeley agreed with the note and wrote “A most useful paper. Keep it available for use during the Secretary of State’s discussions in Pairs (for the Paris Peace Conference).”⁷⁷ This shows that the FO was in agreement in the Eastern and North American Department and is evidence that the report had strengthened FO opposition to accommodating American demands, for permitting 100,000 Jews entry into Palestine and implementing the Anglo-American Committee’s report.

The Morrison-Grady discussions were an attempt for British and American experts to propose a plan to implement the recommendations from the Anglo-American Committee. These negotiations started 31 July 1946 and were led by Herbert Morrison (British Deputy

⁷⁵ Wikeley, Minute, 19 April 1946, FO 371/52515/E3492/4/31G, TNA.

⁷⁶ Butler to Howe, Memorandum, 26 April 1946, FO 371/52520/E4013/4/31, TNA.

⁷⁷ Beeley, Minute, 3 May 1946, FO 371/52520/E4013/4/31, TNA.

Prime Minister) and Henry F. Grady (American State Department). It was during these discussions that Bevin's desires for Anglo-American cooperation started to face multiple setbacks, and events in Palestine started to become bloodier. During this time the North American Department warned of Truman's complacency over the 100,000 being accepted by the British, and the Eastern Department continued to warn of the damage American involvement was going to have on Britain's entire position in the Middle East. At the same time the FO started to cooperate with the Colonial Office on the idea of provincial autonomy, which was to be used as the British position in discussions with Grady. On 30 April 1946, when the Anglo-American Committee published its report, Truman gave a press statement rejecting the White Paper and praising the inclusion of his 100,000 suggestion by the Anglo-American Committee.⁷⁸ Francis Williams, the Downing Street Press Secretary at the time wrote that this "Threw Bevin into one of the blackest rages I ever saw him in".⁷⁹ This was a poor start to the workings out of the Anglo-American initiative, and shows the difference in views between the two governments as to the finality of the Anglo-American committee recommendations. Inverchapel reported that he would "not be surprised at all" if Truman kept insisting on the 100,000 as an accepted precondition for finding a mutual solution.⁸⁰ Inverchapel reported from talks with James Byrnes, the United States Secretary of State, that "it is quite apparent that despite all we have said, he (Truman) takes for granted admission of the 100,000 as an immediate step."⁸¹ Sargent concurred and wrote to Attlee stating that it was "clear the two governments still have different ideas as to the purpose of these talks."⁸² The difficulty in cooperating with the United States on an acceptable solution to the British was becoming clear in the North American Department, and to Sargent. In the Eastern

⁷⁸ Acheson to Byrnes, Copy of Truman's Press Statement, 30 April 1946, FRUS 1946 VII, [Accessed Online 18/09/2020] <<https://history.state.gov>>

⁷⁹ F. Williams, *Ernest Bevin: Portrait of a Great Englishman*, (London: Hutchinson, 1952) p.180

⁸⁰ Inverchapel, Telegram, Washington to London, 6 June 1946, FO 371/52527/E5213/4/31G, TNA.

⁸¹ Inverchapel, Telegram, Washington to London, 13 June 1946, FO 371/52529/E5446/4/31G, TNA.

⁸² Sargent to Attlee, Telegram, 16 June 1946, FO 371/52530/E5628/4/31G, TNA.

Department further repetition of the repercussions of involving and ceding to American pressures continued, warning of the dire effect it was having, and would continue to have on the British position among the Arab States. From Lebanon, Terence Shone (British Minister in Beirut) wrote that “American support of Zionism is poisoning Arab thought” and that the “Arabs cannot stand by supine.”⁸³ What was most concerning to Shone and summarized the view of his colleagues in the Eastern Department, was the fact that Britain was sharing the blame in Arab circles,

There is no doubt that the Arab public opinion lays a large measure of responsibility for the (enquiries) recommendations on the Americans... but the press is little, if any, less bitter against us, not least for having brought the United States into the question.⁸⁴

Further Arab criticism for involving the United States came from Brigadier Iltud Nicholl Clayton (British Minister in Cairo) who warned that the Arab’s perceived Britain as providing concessions to the United States over Palestine, in return for a loan which the British were negotiating with the Americans. Clayton believed that this view was “almost universally held in the Middle East”.⁸⁵ Concerns in the Eastern Department were further exacerbated by the Arab League meeting in June 1946. Here the Arab League created the Palestine Committee and provided a fund for Palestine. There was concern that the Arabs may consider boycotting Anglo-American interests, and push for referral to the United Nations. This would involve the Soviets in a solution and was undesired by the British and American governments. The Eastern Department was primarily concerned with the diplomatic repercussions from Arab states, when working with the United States. From Truman’s initial desire to scrap the White Paper in July 1945, to the Morrison-Grady negotiations in July

⁸³ Shone, Telegram, Beirut to London, 27 May 1946, FO 371/52526/E4922/4/31G, TNA.

⁸⁴ Ibid.

⁸⁵ Campbell, Cairo to London, 7 June 1946, FO 371/52527/5227/4/31G, TNA.

1946, the Eastern Department was consistent and nearly unanimously against American involvement in Palestine. These concerns were being understood in the North American Department and Butler suggested rejecting the recommendations from the Anglo-American Committee, and Inverchapel warned of American complacency and the gulf between the two governments. These concerns occasionally met with Sargent's agreement, who like Bevin became frustrated with Truman and American actions during the negotiations. Despite all the concerns coming from the FO, Bevin and Attlee still sought to pursue a solution with the United States, which Sargent went along with as part of the wider Anglo-American strategic alliance in the face of the Soviet Union. Sargent like Bevin seemed more concerned with matters in Europe than the Middle East, therefore maintaining a coordinated foreign policy with the United States was important, and this meant that Bevin and Sargent were motivated to try and hear American concerns and work towards a mutually agreeable solution.

The final phase in the ending of the Anglo-American initiative started with the Colonial Office drawing up plans for provincial autonomy. The FO became involved in these discussions, and eventually they were accepted by Bevin as the only viable solution for Morrison to pursue with Grady. This development in the British position came from impatience and frustration. From April- July 1946 the situation in Palestine was becoming more dangerous for the British, and Jewish terrorist activity was costing the British more resources than previously, as well as lives. On 10 June, Jewish terrorists damaged trains, while on 16-17 June eight road and railways bridges were damaged.⁸⁶ On 18 June, six British officers were kidnapped,⁸⁷ and on 22 July part of the King David Hotel was blown up, with the loss of eighty-eight British lives. As well as these attacks, illegal Jewish immigration was rising, from below 1,000 in April to 1,663 in June and 1,758 in July,⁸⁸ concern was mounting

⁸⁶ Cunningham (CO), Palestine to Bagdad, Telegram, 5 July 1946, CO 537/1768/75827/142, TNA.

⁸⁷ Ibid.

⁸⁸ Command and Chief Middle East to WO, Telegram, 24 May 1946, FO 371/52526/E4913/4/31G, TNA.

that the situation would spiral further. Costing more British resources and causing greater resentment from the Arabs, because of Britain's failure to fulfill her obligations under the White Paper. These pressures were not reserved to Eastern Department thought, and the British Cabinet had grown impatient and skeptical at Bevin's Anglo-American initiative, the events in Palestine lead to the Cabinet requesting the Colonial Office to find an alternative.

These events were discussed in Cabinet by George Hall (Colonial Secretary) while Bevin was away for talks in Paris. Hall was asked to present a paper on the Anglo-American report and the difficulties likely to come from trying to implement, and "outline alternative policies which might be adopted".⁸⁹ In response Hall warned the Cabinet that if the Anglo-American recommendations were implemented, they "may be expected to lead to an Arab rising in Palestine" and also warned that the Jewish Agency would not accept anything short of a Jewish state in Palestine.⁹⁰ Hall went on to say these outcomes "would have a disastrous effect on Great Britain's position in the Middle East".⁹¹ Hall then concluded that implementing the Anglo-American Committee's recommendations would "imperil our position" in the Middle East, "involve us in military and financial commitments beyond our capacity" and that the Committee recommendations "taken as a whole, are unworkable."⁹² Hall then presented the Cabinet with provincial autonomy as a alternative solution. This idea had been developed by the Colonial Office during 1945 and was discarded by Bevin and the government while attempts were made for an Anglo-American solution. While Bevin was still in Paris, the Colonial Office asked the FO to endorse the provincial autonomy scheme. This led to inter-department discussions on the matter. Clayton argued that the Jewish Agency may accept provincial autonomy, but foresaw it gaining "a very poor reception"⁹³

⁸⁹ Cabinet, Item 2, July 1946, TNACAB 128/6 CM (46) 64

⁹⁰ Hall, Report of the Anglo-American Enquiry, 8 July 1946, TNACAB 129/11 CP (46) 258

⁹¹ Ibid.

⁹² Ibid.

⁹³ Clayton, Report on CP (46) 259, 8 July 1946, FO 371/52547/E7332/4/31G, TNA.

with the Arabs. Beeley agreed that “Clayton is probably right” and that “at first sight the Arabs will find the scheme of provincial autonomy less attractive than partition.” However Beeley went on to argue that provincial autonomy could be more advantageous for the Arabs, “as no part of Palestine is irrevocably lost to the Arabs... if events show that the Jews will never overtake the Arabs in numbers, a time may come when some sort of federation is advantageous.”⁹⁴ By the end of July 1946, the FO was therefore reluctant to support provincial autonomy, but did not reject it, and had no solution of its own, and was still hoping for some form of Trusteeship to be agreed with the Arabs, without a Jewish state. The FO had little time to discuss the matter fully as Brook met Bevin in Paris and presented the Colonial Office scheme, to which he agreed “he was ready to explore” and argued that “it should be discussed with the American officials.”⁹⁵ These developments did not undo the Anglo-American initiative Bevin was still advocating, as he sought to include them in discussions with Grady. The Colonial Office proposal for an alternative would therefore be used as a negotiating position for the British to discuss with the Americans as a possible solution. The FO did not endorse Hall’s proposal enthusiastically, nor did it reject it. Hall’s warning against agitating the Arabs and damaging Britain’s standing among the Arab states was a shared concern for the FO. During these developments the FO warnings continued to come from the Middle East, with Sir Hugh Stonehewer Bird (British Minister in Iraq) reporting on the dangers of allowing mass Jewish immigration, something that Bevin “did not feel able to oppose”.⁹⁶ Baxter highlighted his department’s warnings, writing that the views Stonehewer-Bird expressed were “important”.⁹⁷ The FO continued its previous warnings against agitating the Arabs and alienating Britain in the Middle East while the Harrison-Grady discussions

⁹⁴ Beeley, Minute, 6 August 1946, FO 371/52547/E7332/4/31G, TNA.

⁹⁵ Brook, Palestine. Note of Points agreed in conversation with the Foreign Secretary, 10 July 1946, CAB 127/280, TNA.

⁹⁶ Stonehewer-Bird, Telegram, Bagdad to FO, 13 July 1946, FO 371/52539/E6615/4/31, TNA.

⁹⁷ Baxter, Minute, 17 July 1946, FO 371/52539/E6615/4/31, TNA.

continued. The FO position did not change during this time, and it remained opposed to giving into American pressure, and allowing 100,000 Jewish immigrants entry into Palestine.

During July, while Bevin was in Paris, the FO reluctantly agreed to Hall's plan for provincial autonomy. Although Clayton along with Baxter and Stonehewer-Bird continued to warn against agitating the Arabs further, Beeley provided some evidence that the FO could accept provincial autonomy more enthusiastically, although he still viewed it as an intermediate solution, which the Arabs could reject later if they wished to. What is noticeable during these developments is that the FO did not provide any alternative to Bevin's Anglo-American initiative, nor against Hall's alternative proposal from the Colonial Office, despite providing clear and consistent warnings at upsetting the Arabs in favour of reaching accommodation with the United States. It was not until the creation of the London Conference that the FO would pursue a more active role in trying to find an alternative solution, with the Arabs and not the Americans as the main consideration in working out a solution.

The FO was released of its concerns of direct American involvement prejudicing its negotiations with the Arabs when the end of the Anglo-American initiative occurred. In a meeting on 30 July, the US Deputy Secretary of State, Dean Acheson, informed Inverchapel that the "President has regretfully decided he is unable to accept the recommended plan" and that "He hopes further study might produce a plan which would be likely of public acceptance in this country."⁹⁸ The plan received negative reactions in the American press, and the President was directly lobbied over the matter. Grady was portrayed as giving into the British position and accepting provincial autonomy, which the Jewish Agency would not accept. By 8 August 1946, Truman had informed Attlee that "that I do not feel able in present

⁹⁸ US State Department to Grady, Telegram, 30 July 1946, USNA867N.01/7-3046 Box 6756

circumstances to accept the plan proposed as a joint Anglo-American plan.”⁹⁹ The reasons behind the sudden rejection of the Anglo-American initiative, after all the negotiations, is beyond the scope of this chapter,¹⁰⁰ but it was now clear that the Anglo-American initiative was buried, and Truman told Attlee that he hoped the coming London Conference would provide a solution which “can obtain necessary support in this country and in Congress so that we can give effective financial help and moral support”.¹⁰¹ This was rebuffed by Attlee who wrote “... any solution must, as matter stand, be one which we can put into effect with our resources alone.”¹⁰² Inverchapel warned that continuing to find a solution without American involvement would create an “extremely unfortunate impression” in the United States, despite this concern it was clear that Attlee was now willing to use the London Conference for a British lead mediation of the issue, one which Eastern Department would have welcomed. It reduced the pressure of allowing 100,000 Jewish immigrants entry to Palestine and in implementing the Anglo-American Committee recommendations. This meant that discussions with the Arabs could commence at the London Conference without the need to accommodate the United States. An issue the Eastern Department had consistently argued would reduce Britain’s standing in the Middle East and isolate Britain from its regional allies.

The rise and fall of Bevin’s desired Anglo-American solution was not supported by the FO overall. Truman’s calls to scrap the White Paper and heed the Harrison Report’s recommendation for 100,000 Jewish immigrants entry into Palestine was met with alarm in the FO in July 1945, with Baxter Beeley and Smart warning of disastrous consequences. The

⁹⁹ Inverchapel, Telegram, Washington to London, 9 August 1946, FO 371/52551/E7713/4/31, TNA.

¹⁰⁰ For more information on the pressures Truman faced from Jewish lobbying in the United States and on the extent to which he was aware of the details of the Morrison-Grady discussions as they developed see; M.Jones, pp.136-9, R.Ovendale, *The English-Speaking Alliance, Britain, The United States, the Dominions and the Cold War, 1945-51*, p.146-164, P.Grose, pp.40-55

¹⁰¹ Truman to Attlee, Telegram, 13 August 1946, FO 371/52552/E8050/4/31G, TNA.

¹⁰² Attlee to Truman, Telegram, 19 August 1946, FO 371/52552/E8050/4/31G, TNA.

Cabinet's desire to share the burden with the United States and remove them as a critical spectator was championed by Bevin, and it was only in October 1945 when Howe agreed with a fresh approach of involving the US, that was supported by Sargent. This was met with immediate apprehension by Beeley and Baxter, who believed it would effectively kill any aspirations for a British trusteeship with continued military rights, something the COS argued was essential to maintaining British security. Howe's support for a fresh approach was limited and he still shared the concerns of his Eastern Department colleagues, around agitating the Arab and reducing Britain's position in the Middle East. This is shown when he agreed to inter-department discussions with the Colonial Office on alternatives, where Kinahan and Baxter made efforts to find a British solution to the matter. It was therefore clear that even at the start of the Anglo-American initiative, the FO was mostly in opposition to accommodating the United States over the Arabs. Bevin's desire for an Anglo-American solution was only backed fully by Sargent, who was mostly absent from his department concerns.

Brook's damning report on the Anglo-American Committee's recommendations helped fuel even more unity, with Wikeley condemning the calls for 100,000 and arguing against the treatment of the Arabs. Butler in the North American Department sympathized with all the concerns from the Eastern Department, suggesting rejecting the report and ways to limit the damage it could have on Anglo-American relations, which Beeley endorsed. Inverchapel also provides support against the Anglo-American initiative, as he warned of the unlikelihood of Truman hearing British concerns. A matter on which even Sargent agreed. Even more concerns from the Eastern Department came from Shone and Clayton who warned that accommodating the United States was damaging Britain's reputation among the Arabs and that it would not serve to keep Britain secure in the Middle East. This shows that as the Anglo-American initiative developed the FO was becoming more vocal and unified

against a solution with the United States. Howe searched for alternatives with the Colonial Office, and Sargent who was mostly absent from his department concerns started to acknowledge the difficulties of the Anglo-American initiative.

FO opposition to alienating the Arabs to gain an accommodation with the US is shown further when the FO partook in Colonial Office and the Cabinet discussions on an alternative to an Anglo-American solution, to which the Clayton and Beeley offered some support for provincial autonomy as a potential alternative to the Anglo-American initiative. During this time the Eastern Department remained consistent in its warnings against accommodating the United States over the Arabs, with Stonehewer-Bird warning that large scale Jewish immigration would ruin Britain's relationship with the Arabs, which was again endorsed by Baxter.

The FO was for the most part unified and consistent in warning against the dangers of allowing 100,000 Jewish immigrants entry into Palestine, and of the Anglo-American Committee's report. The only exceptions came from Howe and Sargent, who both offered some support to Bevin's Anglo-American solution. With the former sharing his colleague's concerns, and partaking in discussions for an alternative, and the latter still acknowledging some of the difficulties of an Anglo-American solution. The consistent and unified concerns within the Eastern Department from; Wikeley, Smith, Kinahan, Beeley, Smart, Stonehewer-Bird and Shone were frequently endorsed by Baxter, and were also heard the in the North American Department by Butler and Inverchapel. The FO believed that the Anglo-American initiative was damaging to Britain's position in the Middle East and was dismayed at times by Truman's consistent and public calls for allowing 100,000 Jewish people entry into Palestine. Truman pushed for this without any agreement being in place to which to consult the Arabs, alienating them, and resulting in Arab hostility to an Anglo-American solution.

Concerned over the effect this could have on Arab goodwill, the FO mostly likely met the death of the Anglo-American initiative with a sigh of relief.

The End of the Anglo-American Initiative and the London Conference

The collapse of the Anglo-American initiative dramatically reduced American influence upon the British government's Palestine policy. Truman had lost credibility with the British by rejecting the agreement between the Anglo-American expert's team, which for three months negotiated a practical application to the Anglo-American Committee of Inquiry recommendations. The end of the joint initiative and the reduction of future American influence is initially demonstrated by Attlee's rejection of Truman's offer to help fund a solution, when he declared any solution "must, as matter stand, be one which we can put into effect with our resources alone."¹⁰³ Such a position was welcomed in the FO's Eastern Department, with a general belief that Britain was now free to find its own solution with the Arabs. However, the failure of the Anglo-American initiative did not mute Truman over Palestine, and he still sought to encourage a solution desirable to the Americans. A month after the collapse of the initiative Truman reported to the US press that the Morrison-Grady plan, and a loan of \$300 million to assist in delivering a solution was "still under consideration."¹⁰⁴ This raised an immediate reaction within the FO, Beeley arguing that "No doubt (Truman) hopes that this half promise will enable him still to exercise indirectly some of the influence which he is no longer brining to bear directly."¹⁰⁵ Beeley was clearly hostile to Truman's attempts to try and interfere, after his rejection of the Morrison-Grady Plan. Beeley went on to telegram Sargent that;

"This promise is so vague, depending as it does upon the mood of Congress and on the almost incalculable reaction of the American public opinion, to whatever we

¹⁰³ Attlee to Truman, Telegram, 19 August 1946, FO 371/52552/E8050/4/31G, TNA.

¹⁰⁴ Inverchapel, Telegram, Washington to FO, 5 September 1946, FO 371/52559/E9506/4/31G, TNA.

¹⁰⁵ Beeley, Minute, 6 September 1946, FO 371/52556/E8883/4/31, TNA.

decide, that it would probably be unwise to take seriously into account the prospect of financial help from the United States in the framing of our Palestine policy.”¹⁰⁶

This was a continuation of the Eastern Department’s consensus against American involvement in finding a solution. Further American interference after the fall of the Anglo-American initiative seems to strike increasing frustration and resentment in the FO. This is demonstrated by the Eastern Department’s opposition to Truman’s demands insofar, and Beeley’s tone, and is supported by Jones who argued that the FO’s “disdain felt towards a US role is evident”, and that there was a “complete absence from the Foreign Office files of anything approaching self-criticism or an expression of regret at the demise of the Anglo-American initiative.”¹⁰⁷ The FO documents show that Wikeley, Smith, Kinahan, Beeley, Smart, Stonehewer-Bird, Shone, and Baxter all warned against Truman’s desires for the admission of a 100,000 Jews into Palestine, and against alienating the Arabs in favour of the Americans. Naturally, there would be little regret in the FO at the collapse of the joint initiative, which would have been welcomed. Beeley’s comments regarding Truman press statements demonstrate a continuation in the FO against cooperation with the United States at the expense of pursuing a solution with the Arabs, which was about to commence at the London Conference.

The unity in the Eastern Department, and the FO’s resistance to American demands were clear before the start of the London Conference. There was an exception to this, which went against the overall position of the FO. This was from Inverchapel and most notable before the start of the London Conference. Prior to the fall of the Anglo-American initiative Inverchapel had reported Truman’s inflexibility and a widening gulf between the two governments, however he did not display an opposing attitude to Butler in the North

¹⁰⁶ Beeley to Sargent, 16 September 1946, FO 371/52543/E7066/4/21G, TNA.

¹⁰⁷ M.Jones, *Failure in Palestine*, p.146

American Department or against the concerns of the Eastern Department previously mentioned. However, with the fall of the Anglo-American initiative, and a reduction in direct American influence on the negotiations, Inverchapel started to take a more active role in engaging with American policy ideas, which were contrary to the will of the Eastern Department and went beyond government policy. Just before the London Conference started, Nanhum Goldmann (Jewish Agency US Branch) was lobbying the US government to support his plan for a solution on Palestine, which was based on partition favourable to the Jews. Goldmann pressed for this to be accepted sooner rather than later, on the rationale that the Jewish Agency would become more militant if an acceptable solution was not found.¹⁰⁸ This gained traction in the American administration and Acheson wrote to William Averell Harriman, the US Ambassador to the UK, arguing that “In our view this recent development offers hope that (the) Jewish Agency will realistically join in (the) search for (a) practical solution...” and that the “British Government might let it be known that coming consultations will not be rigidly bound to (the) consideration (of) one plan”¹⁰⁹ a reference to the British intention of using provincial autonomy as the initial basis for discussions. Goldmann’s partition suggestion was then referenced by Truman to Attlee in a telegram after the breakdown of the Anglo-American initiative, writing that “I believe the search for a solution to this difficult problem should continue. I have therefore instructed our Embassy in London to discuss with you... certain suggestions that have been made to us.”¹¹⁰ This further demonstrates how the US continued to participate in discussions with the Jewish Agency and lobby the British government over these discussions. It is in these discussions that Inverchapel took an unsynchronized position to his colleagues in the FO. On 9 August 1946,

¹⁰⁸ Z.Ganin, *Truman, American Jewry, and Israel, 1945-1948* (New York: Holmes & Meier Pub, 1978) p.90

¹⁰⁹ Acheson to Harriman, Telegram, 12 August 1946, *FRUS 1946 VII*, [Accessed Online 12/03/2020] <<https://history.state.gov>>

¹¹⁰ Truman to Attlee, Telegram, 12 August, *FRUS 1946 VII*, [Accessed Online 12/03/2020] <<https://history.state.gov>>

Inverchapel met Goldmann and reported his partition plan back to the FO, where he stated Acheson “did not deny” the support Goldmann’s plan had gained in the American administration.¹¹¹ Goldmann claimed Inverchapel was receptive to his plan and that he said “this is first sign of light I have seen. Take it up with Bevin in Paris.”¹¹² Rather extraordinary, considering it went against the British government’s official position of using provincial autonomy as the basis for the London Conference, and by the fact partition was not supported in the FO by anyone so far. At this stage Inverchapel’s receptiveness to Goldmann’s plan and American support was somewhat premature, and it was not until Truman made his infamous Yom Kippur statement that Inverchapel’s differences from his colleagues in the FO can be substantiated.

The FO perspective on the London Conference will be explored more in the next chapter, due to the focus of the conference being on discussions with the Arab states. During the conference, the US had no direct involvement in the negotiations, but continued to indirectly push two matters. The first matter was Truman’s request that provincial autonomy not be the only solution discussed. This was to give Goldmann’s plan consideration. This was not a significant matter, as the British position was that provincial autonomy would be the initial basis for discussions, and this did not change that. Also, partition was not supported in the FO or by the Arab states. Therefore, the only attendees had no interests in partition, and it was unlikely to become problem. The second issue was Truman continued calls for the immediate allocation of 100,000 immigration certificates to be issued. By 14 August 1946, Inverchapel warned that Truman was likely to make more public calls for the 100,000 and for Goldmann’s partition plan to be discussed.¹¹³ This was met with little response by the FO. It was for the most part, a repetitive reminder of the American position, while the FO sought to

¹¹¹ Inverchapel, Washington to FO, 9 August 1946, FO371/52551/E7750/4/31G, TNA.

¹¹² Z.Ganin, p.91

¹¹³ Inverchapel, Washington to FO, 14 August 1946, FO371/52553/E7998/31G, TNA.

find a solution with the Arabs at the London Conference, as Jones surmised “While the hour of the Foreign Office was at hand and while the conference was underway, the US government had shrunk from all involvement.”¹¹⁴ The diminished American role, and the lack of credibility after Truman rejected the Morrison-Grady Plan resulted in little attention being paid by the FO to American considerations, the focus was on the Arab states, and finding a solution. When the conference adjourned 2 October 1946, this changed dramatically. The following day Truman telegraphed Attlee that he hoped for the admission of 100,000 Jews entry into Palestine be permitted “in the interim” and that the American public had grave concern over the displaced persons in Europe, and as a response “I find it necessary to make a further statement at once.”¹¹⁵ A draft of Truman’s intended statement was given to Inverchapel and Attlee, he called for the admission of 100,000 Jews entry into Palestine to be allowed immediately, and for a viable Jewish state to be created in Palestine. Attlee immediately replied that “I earnestly request you to postpone making your statement.”¹¹⁶ This would allow Attlee to consult with Bevin in Paris, and Bevin suggested to Byrnes that the British and Americans take a reasonable amount of the 100,000 as an immediate gesture, with a slight increase of immigration into Palestine. This flurry of activity triggered by Truman’s wish to make a statement on the Jewish holy day of Yom Kippur, immediately brought the Americans back into British consideration. The fact Bevin offered Byrne’s an Anglo-American immigration deal, with a slight increase in Palestine’s intake, shows just how concerned the British were with Truman becoming so publicly involved, and advocating Jewish Agency demands. The climax to Truman’s Yom Kippur statement came with Attlee’s furious reply;

¹¹⁴ M.Jones, p.170

¹¹⁵ Truman to Attlee, Telegram, 3 October 1946, *FRUS 1946 VII*, [Accessed Online 09/10/2020] < <https://history.state.gov> >

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*

“I have received with great regret your letter refusing even a few hours grace to the Prime Minister of the country which has the actual responsibility of the government Palestine in order that he might acquaint you with the actual situation and the probable results of your actions. These may well include the frustration of the patient efforts to achieve a settlement and the loss of still more lives in Palestine.

I am astonished that you did not wait to acquaint yourself with the reasons for the suspension of the conference with the Arabs. You do not seem to have been informed that so far from negotiations having been broken off, conversations with leading Zionists with a view of entering the conference were proceeding with good prospects of success. I shall await with interest to learn what were the imperative reasons which compelled this precipitancy.”¹¹⁷

Attlee’s telegram was likely well supported by the entire Eastern Department, as well as by Butler in the North American Department. Both had continuously warned against Truman’s desire to allow 100,000 Jews entry to Palestine, and his more recent calls for partition. Inverchapel, however, continued in his initial receptiveness to Goldman and Acheson mentioned previously, and even sympathized with Truman Yom Kippur speech, writing to Sargent that Truman was “threatened by immediate dangers” a reference to congressional elections in November.¹¹⁸ Acheson wrote of Inverchapel’s reaction to Truman’s speech, stating that he believed “while the statement would probably make London very angry, he believed that in the long run it might be beneficial to the solution of the whole question”, and that Inverchapel went on to request “If I could give him any information which he might use to ameliorate the feelings of London by indicating the difficulties of the President.”¹¹⁹

¹¹⁷ Telegram, Attlee to Truman, Telegram, 4 October 1946, *FRUS 1946 VII*, [Accessed Online 07/07/2020] <<https://history.state.gov>>

¹¹⁸ Inverchapel, Telegram, Washington to FO, 4 October, FO 371/52560/E9987/4/31, TNA.

¹¹⁹ Acheson, Memorandum, 3 October 1946, *FRUS 1946 VII*, [Accessed Online 07/07/2020] <history.state.gov>

Inverchapel's sympathetic ear to American considerations is further argued by Hugh Dalton, the British Chancellor of Exchequer, who stated that Inverchapel "thinks that Palestine is being badly handled by H.M.G. We must, he thinks, chose between friendship of (the) world and all Arab States. He is quite clear that we should prefer the former."¹²⁰ These statements demonstrate that the ambassador to the United States did not seem to share the hostility of the Eastern Department towards Truman's calls, and Inverchapel went against Butler who had suggested effectively ignoring Truman previously so as not to alienate the Arabs. Attlee and Bevin were clear on the potential damage of Truman's speech, yet Inverchapel seemed to against the views of his government and his office. This division from a mostly united FO was highlighted and criticized by Beeley, who wrote that "I think the time has come to ask the Embassy to justify their general policy on appeasing the Zionists. Its results are not up to now encouraging."¹²¹ This demonstrates that Acheson's, Goldmann's and Dalton's accounts of Inverchapel's sympathetic views were probably reliable, and that they were resented in the Eastern Department.

Another demonstration of Inverchapel going against the FO position - is when he was instructed to find out the US position on partition, a matter Bevin, the Cabinet, and the FO did not support at this time. On 22 November 1946, he met Acheson to discuss the matter, saying that "Mr. Bevin is moving rapidly towards acceptance of partition as the solution" but could not proceed "unless he knows with definiteness the attitude of the United States."¹²² Inverchapel went well beyond his instructions, which Bevin stated were to "find out from the State Department, as ambassador and not committing me, what their attitude really was

¹²⁰ Dalton, Diary Part I 34, 5 October, Imperial War Museum, Catalogue Number LBY 87/507, [Accessed Online 13/02/2020], < <https://www.iwm.org.uk> >

¹²¹ Beeley, Minute, 26 June 1946, FO 371/52531/E5785/4/31, TNA.

¹²² Acheson, Memorandum, 22 November 1946, FRUS 1946 VII, [Accessed Online 18/10/2020] < <https://history.state.gov> >

(regarding partition)".¹²³ This is another example of Inverchapel's clear sympathies to the Zionist cause, and is another demonstration of going against the concerns of the Eastern Department, and the overall FO view which did not back partition. A view still shared by Bevin and Sargent, who sought to proceed with the London Conference and provincial autonomy as the basis for a solution. The fact Inverchapel committed Bevin as "rapidly moving towards partition"¹²⁴ and that it was dependent on US support is astonishing. During November 1946, Bevin was still trying to obtain Jewish Agency attendance at the London Conference, he had met Silver and ruled out discussing partition at these meetings, and thereafter refused to accept Goldmann's plan as a condition for Jewish attendance, writing to Attlee "H.M.G's Government having called a conference of two parties cannot allow the agenda... to be dictated by one of them."¹²⁵ Inverchapel was therefore going beyond his instructions in being very sympathetic to the domestic pressures Truman faced, as well as to the partition proposals made by Goldmann. Inverchapel was therefore committing the British to new positions. This was against the majority view in the FO and created concern in the Eastern Department. This demonstration of division between Inverchapel and his FO colleagues should not be exaggerated though. Inverchapel influence on FO thought and action was limited, and his views did not gain traction elsewhere in the FO.

In response to British discussions of partition Beeley in collaboration with Brook, headed an Eastern Department effort to write off partition. During December, Brook, Beeley and the Eastern Department sent Bevin papers warning against partition. An Eastern Department paper 'A Note on Partition' argued that partition would be nearly impossible to proceed with, due to the inability to create two viable states in Palestine, and the opposition

¹²³ Bevin to Attlee, telegram, 26 November, FO 371/52566/E11785/4/31G, TNA.

¹²⁴ Acheson, Memorandum, 22 November 1946, FRUS 1946 VII, [Accessed Online 18/10/2020] <<https://history.state.gov>>

¹²⁵ Bevin to Attlee, telegram, 26 November, FO 371/52566/E11785/4/31G, TNA.

of the Jewish Agency to a minor state, as well as Arab opposition to partition in general. The paper argued that the matter would need United Nations approval something which the COS, Bevin and the FO sought to avoid. The paper concluded that this would result in “a decline of British influence, and an increase of Russian influence” in the Middle East.¹²⁶ The Eastern Department wrote a second paper on how to proceed, which discussed the potential to revise the Arab plan at the London Conference. Here the Eastern Department argued that the Arab proposals “cannot be accepted as the stand” and that proposals should be brought forward to allow at least half of the 100,00 to be accepted initially, followed by a lower monthly amount. The Eastern Department felt that if the Arab proposals were used as a “basis for negotiation... there is no reason to suppose that in those circumstances the Arab delegates could not be induced to make substantial concessions”.¹²⁷ The Eastern Department argued that the future choices were: to refer Palestine to the United Nations and withdraw, to partition Palestine and anger the Arabs, or, to proceed with British adaptations to the Arab proposals, which was support by the Eastern Department. These efforts from Beeley and the Eastern Department were a clear push against early mentions of partition in the British government which had been encouraged by a sympathetic Inverchapel.

This effort against partition demonstrates that the FO was consistently concerned with maintaining Arab goodwill. This was not to say that Beeley or the Eastern Department completely discarded the United States during the London Conference. They discussed the prospect of allowing 50,000 Jews initial entry into Palestine, and this demonstrates that American requests were being considered. The Eastern Department papers did consider a backlash from Truman and the United States administration if the 100,000 was not met, and if Goldmann’s partition plan was not given consideration. However, Eastern Department

¹²⁶ Eastern department, ‘A Note on Partition’, 18 December 1946, FO 371/52567/E12394/4/31G, TNA.

¹²⁷ Eastern department, Palestine Paper, 18 December 1946, FO 371/52567/E12394/4/31G, TNA.

concern was to a limited extent, and the December papers argued that United States anger was “doubtful to be either widespread or lasting”¹²⁸ if Britain failed to meet their desires. The papers also argued that any solution which did not appease the Jewish Agency fully would meet resentment in the United States. Meeting American demands was a consideration to the Eastern Department, but it was not vital, and focus was firmly on provincial autonomy, and working with the Arabs to find a common position instead. This was not to say that efforts towards inclusion of the Jewish Agency were not being made, their participation was being pushed, but would not be accepted under a precondition of their plan being the basis of the conference. Overall, it was clear by the adjournment of the London Conference that the Eastern Department had not changed its position. That maintaining a dialogue with the Arabs was vital, and that meeting American and Jewish Agency demands at a significant expense of Arab goodwill was not an option. The only noticeable division at the time was from Inverchapel, who was sympathetic to Truman’s domestic pressures, and receptive to Goldmann’s partition plan, however this was an isolated view in the FO. The Eastern Department was leading FO policy and pressing Bevin to hear their untied concerns. Beeley and Brook’s collaboration was a significant effort to prevent American requests being accepted by the British government. Believing that accommodating the Americans would sacrifice Arab goodwill and harm Britain’s increasingly precarious position in the Middle East.

The FO was consistently opposed to cooperation with the United States and Bevin’s attempts to find a solution with Truman. The Harrison Report’s recommendation for immediately permitting 100,000 Jewish immigrants into Palestine was unanimously opposed in the FO. Baxter warned that following US policy on Palestine would have a “deplorable

¹²⁸ Eastern department, ‘A Note on Partition’, 18 December 1946, FO 371/52567/E12394/4/31G, TNA.

effect on Anglo-Arab relations”¹²⁹ and Beeley reinforced this stating that 100,000 “would not be believed.”¹³⁰ The Anglo-American initiative was met with skepticism and even rejection by the Eastern Department, with Smith stating “they will start a fire here which we shall have to put out at considerable sacrifice to ourselves.”¹³¹ Limited deviation from the general FO line of caution and skepticism was shown when Howe and Sargent supported Bevin in his attempt to pursue an Anglo-American solution. This “fresh approach” was supported by Howe and Sargent to remove the US as an irresponsible critic, and make her “assume a share of the responsibility for the settlement.”¹³² Despite this deviation, Howe’s placed little faith in an Anglo-American solution and was involved in discussions for a British solution which was being orchestrated in the Colonial Office. Sargent did not oppose Bevin’s Anglo-American solution, however, he did share the key concerns of his colleagues, who consistently argued that scrapping the White Paper and allowing the entry of 100,000 Jews into Palestine would go against British interests. The FO actively sought alternatives to Bevin’s Anglo-American initiative. During the formation of the Anglo-American Committee, Baxter, Beeley and Kinahan with some involvement from Howe, discussed with Martin and Harris a FO-Colonial Office solution. Hostility against the Anglo-American Committee recommendations was further encouraged by Brook who informed Cabinet that it would have a “disastrous effect on our position in the Middle East.”¹³³ Encouraged, Wikeley joined Baxter, Beeley, Smith and Kinahan in pressing Bevin to reject the Anglo-American initiative. In the Northern American Department, Butler went so far to suggest rejecting Truman’s desires outright and Inverchapel warned that Truman position was unlikely to change, demonstrating unity between the two departments.

¹²⁹ Baxter, Minute, 11 July 1945, FO 371/45378 E5452/15/31G, TNA.

¹³⁰ Beeley, Minute, 29 August 1945, FO 37145379 E6562/15/31, TNA.

¹³¹ Smart, Memorandum, Cairo, 29 August 1945, FO 141/1021 129/33/45, TNA.

¹³² Howe to Bevin, 6 October 1945, FO 371/45380 E7479/15/31G, TNA.

¹³³ Brook, Report Palestine, 27 April 1946, CAB 129/9 CP (46) 173, TNA.

During the Morrison-Grady discussions, little changed, Inverchapel and Sargent warned that Truman was unlikely to be flexible on his calls for 100,000 Jews being permitted entry into Palestine, or for a national home for them. The repetitive warning in the Eastern Department by Beeley and Baxter were being support by Shone, Wikeley, Clayton and Stonehewer-Bird. American support for Zionism was viewed as “poising Arab thought” against Britain, who was increasingly being viewed as “the villain in the background”.¹³⁴ Events in Palestine became more violent during the summer of 1946, and this helped Bevin accept the Colonial Office’s provincial autonomy scheme as a basis for Morrison to use in negotiations with Grady. The FO did not enthusiastically support provincial autonomy, but without a scheme of its own it was viewed by Baxter and Beeley as a way to maintain the White Paper. This demonstrates the lengths at which the FO sought to avoid the Anglo-American initiative. The British negotiation during the Morrison-Grady discussions led to provincial autonomy being accepted jointly. Truman’s eventual rejection of the plan would have been met with relief by most in the FO. As it saw the United States removed from the formal negotiations for Palestine’s future, and limited the motivation to engage with American demands at the expense of Arab goodwill.

The rejection of the Morrison-Grady Plan did little to mute Truman’s repetitive calls for allowing 100,000 Jews entry in Palestine, and his demands to scrap the white paper and provide a Jewish national home in Palestine. Truman’s rejection removed the United States from the negotiating process, but this did not stop US attempts to influence the British position. The “half promise”¹³⁵ of \$300 million towards implementing a solution was resented by Beeley and failed to motivate Sargent to a new defence of an Anglo-American initiative. Attlee also made the British position clear by arguing that Britain could not

¹³⁴ Shone, Telegram, Beirut to London, 27 May 1946, FO 371/52526/E4922/4/31G, TNA.

¹³⁵ Beeley, Minute, 6 September 1946, FO 371/52556/E8883/4/31, TNA.

depended on American financial assistance in delivering a solution, and this was met with concurrence by Clayton who warned of Arab hostility to the idea. FO unity against Truman's calls for allowing 100,000 Jews entry into Palestine remained consistent during this period, and the concerns previously raised by Wikeley, Smith, Kinahan, Beeley, Smart, Stonehewer-Bird, Shone, and Baxter continued. All this demonstrates that the concerns the FO held during the Anglo-American Committee of Enquiry, and during the Morrison-Grady proposals, remained consistently against appeasing Truman's plans. When official negotiations broke off due to Truman's rejection of the Morrison-Grady Plan, there was little incentive to hear American desires, and during the London Conference the United States was, for the most part, absent from British thought. It was difficult for Bevin to push for Anglo-American cooperation, when Truman had rejected the joint conclusions which resulted from the Anglo-American expert discussions. Truman had reduced credibility, and formal negotiations with the United States ceased, which left the FO free to find their own solution via the London Conference, an outcome which the FO universally saw as the best way to secure Britain's position in the Middle East.

During the London Conference, American influence was mostly removed, however Inverchapel started to become a more sympathetic ear. He was receptive to Goldmann's partition plan, despite the fact provincial autonomy was the British position for the basis of discussions with the Arabs. He also was similarly understanding of Truman's repetitive calls allowing 100,000 Jews entry into Palestine. The most notable deviation from the FO line was Inverchapel, and this was to be demonstrated further by his lack of hostility to the Yom Kippur statement. This statement which the British government attempted to delay, went against the British position at the London Conference, and was clearly going to incite Arab hostility to the negotiations and widen the gulf between the Jews and Arabs. Truman's statement was met with hostility in the Eastern Department and wider FO. They believed it

would alienate the Arabs, strengthen Jewish demands, and that it could ruin the prospect of the London Conference finding a solution. This view was shared by Attlee, who showed clear opposition to Truman's actions and statement in his remarkable telegram where he effectively lectures the President of the United States. These facts help demonstrate just how out of touch Inverchapel was with his own office and government. Criticism from within the FO against Inverchapel, headed by Beeley in the Eastern Department, demonstrates how Inverchapel was isolated in his sympathetic approach to Zionism and American concerns. Finally, Inverchapel's views can be seen as irrefutably against the FO position, and that of his own Government's, when he was tasked to find out what the Americans thought of partition. Inverchapel went against Bevin's instructions, and went as far to say he was moving "rapidly moving towards partition"¹³⁶ and that Bevin needed American support before he could embark on this. This is another clear demonstration that Inverchapel was an isolated example against the general FO position of keeping the Arabs on side and not accommodating Truman's desires at the expense of Anglo-Arab relations. Aside from the sympathetic ear of Inverchapel, who may have encouraged American persistence, the United States only became a consideration during the London Conference because of Truman's Yom Kippur statement. The days between warning Attlee and releasing the statement showed a brief flurry of diplomacy and some consideration to addressing part of the 100,000. However, this all evaporated when Truman made his Yom Kippur statement, which was met with British hostility and diminished the influence of Truman's desires on Britain's Palestine policy. This was met with silent relief in the Eastern Department as it allowed more freedom in negotiations with the Arabs. Truman removed the United States from formal negotiations when he rejected the Morrison-Grady Plan, he then removed consideration to the American position with his Yom Kippur

¹³⁶ Acheson, Memorandum, 22 November 1946, FRUS 1946 VII, [Accessed Online 18/10/2020] <<https://history.state.gov>>

statement. The overall result of Anglo-American interactions after the fall of the Anglo-American initiative, and during the London Conference, was a fortification in the Eastern Departments perspective on the matter. This was being supported by Brook and as a result helped fuel the Cabinet, and eventually Bevin, to move away from focusing on Anglo-American cooperation over Palestine in order to find a solution.

The FO started this period opposed to cooperating with the United States on Truman's desire to scrap the restrictions of the White Paper and allow 100,000 Jews into Palestine. These calls were met with overwhelming opposition in the FO. Initially from the Eastern Department leading voices; Beeley, and Baxter, which were soon endorsed by Kinahan, Smart, Smith, Shone, Stonehewer Bird and Wikeley. During the Anglo-American Committee of Inquiry these individuals continued to raise concerns against alienating the Arab and the dangers of scraping the White Paper and the infeasibility of allowing 100,000 Jews into Palestine. When the Anglo-American Committee made its report, Butler suggested the possibility of ignoring Truman's desires, in a show of unity with Eastern Department concerns, and at this was not opposed by Inverchapel who reported similarly as Butler that Truman was unlikely to become flexible. Truman's rejection of the Morrison Grady Plan, and his Yom Kippur Statement caused Howe and even Sargent initial support for Bevin's Anglo-American initiative to pass, and the Colonial Office-FO provincial autonomy discussions encouraged by the Cabinet were eventually accepted by Bevin. Thereafter the only deviation in FO thought was from Inverchapels sympathetic discussions with Goldmann and Acheson, which were clearly isolated and not appreciated among his colleagues. Overall, the FO developed an increasingly unaccommodating approach towards American pressures, fueled in part, by actions Truman took which undermined British efforts. The FO was unwilling to recommend actions which would alienate Britain from her Arab allies, in order to accommodate Truman, and deviation from this general FO perspective was limited to the

fleeting efforts of Howe and Sargent to support Bevin, and the isolated Zionist sympathies of Inverchapel. Anglo-American cooperation was at times important, but not pivotal in determining the FO's perspective on the future of Palestine.

The Foreign Office Perspective on Withdrawal and the Arab States

The end of the Second World War resulted in a partition of Europe, with the Soviet Union moving from ally to adversary. Aside from limiting further expansion of Soviet influence in Europe, Britain sought to maintain its position in the Middle East, to prevent Soviet penetration and to maintain offensive abilities from the Middle East. The value of oil, the Suez canal, the importance of communications lines between West and East, placed the Middle East central in British strategic considerations. As a result of this, the FO's main preoccupation resulting from the Palestine crises, was trying to maintain Arab goodwill. This was vital to maintaining a paramount position in the Middle East, outlined as key to British security in the 'three pillar strategy', formed in the post-World War Two defence review. Without Arab goodwill and future Arab cooperation, Britain could lose her military rights to station forces in the Middle East, which could allow the Soviet Union to expand her influence in the Middle East substantially. The COS the Ministry of Defence (MOD) presented consistent and unyielding arguments of the strategic implications of the British withdrawal from Palestine. The FO sought greater influence on the COS, feeling FO matters were not being considered. As a result, to increase cohesion between these two departments the Services Liaison Department (SLD) was created, as an intermediary between the FO and SLD. The COS argued that "The preservation of our strategic position in the Middle East as a whole would be gravely prejudiced if our right to station British forces in Palestine were not retained."¹³⁷ The FO heard these concerns, but attempting to maintain strategic rights in Palestine proved increasingly difficult. To mitigate the impending strategic losses resulting from the withdrawal, which would be the probable loss of military rights in Palestine, the FO focused its energies on trying to maintain Arab goodwill. The FO believed this was

¹³⁷ Pierson Dixon to Ernest Bevin, 6th February 1947, FO800/487/PA47/3, [Accessed Online 21/11/2019] , < <https://nationalarchives.gov.uk> > , p.12

imperative to extend and gain military rights elsewhere in the region, seen as vital to retaining a paramount position in the Middle East. There was no coherent government view over Palestine. The COS prioritized maintaining military rights in Palestine, while the FO looked to Iraq, Transjordan, and Egypt to address the security dilemmas withdrawing from Palestine was going to create.

This chapter will focus on the FO's largest concern, the need to maintain Arab goodwill, and look at this from the perspective of the most relevant parts of the FO, being the Eastern Department and members of the British Diplomatic Service in the key embassies, which were in Transjordan, Egypt and Iraq. These Arab nations are most significant as they housed the largest British military garrisons in the Middle East, and the FO was actively trying to renew military rights with these states. Additionally, Iraq and Egypt were greater powers than their Arab neighbours and held most influence in the Arab League. Transjordan while smaller, neighbored Palestine and held a particularly special relationship with the British, as well hosting the Arab legion which the British had large influence on. The FO's concerns on the effect of withdrawal on relations with these states is of vital importance, and their recommendations on future actions will be presented. The extent of support offered from Sargent, will be included to highlight where there was consensus and division in these most relevant parts of the FO, and how this corresponded with government policy and taken actions. The resulting FO approach to the Arab states will be analyzed, if they focused on furthering British objectives with Arab states individually, or if they preferred to address collectively the concerns of the Arabs through the Arab League or the London Conference (September 1946 and February 1947). This line of inquiry provides the most relevant FO perspectives, resulting from the withdrawal and partition of Palestine, and shows how the FO tried to reduce the damage the crisis in Palestine was causing to Britain's position in the Middle East. This chapter will look at how Palestine affected British relations with the three

key Arab States, Egypt, Iraq, and Transjordan. It will be argued that the FO undertook large efforts to maintain British military rights in these nations central to their Middle Eastern policy, to mitigate the challenges Palestine was beginning to create to British dominance in the region. The pressures of Palestine and of growing Arab nationalism will be considered, and how they affected FO policy.

There is historical consensus on the desire to maintain Arab goodwill amongst the British government, the COS, and the MOD, but a focus of how Palestine influenced the FO, and its subsequent reactions are limited. Earlier studies from Fitzsimons¹³⁸ and Monroe¹³⁹ consider the British desire to maintain relations with Arab States but do so with an emphasis on rising Arab nationalism in the Middle East, and a rejection of western imperialism. These studies do not consider FO awareness of Arab nationalism, and do not contribute to understanding the FO perspective. Another early study by Bullard¹⁴⁰ similarly considers Britain's position in the Middle East during the Palestine crisis, with focus on Anglo-Egyptian relations. However, this study also neglects how Palestine and Arab nationalism effected FO views, and what advice they provided when Britain attempted treaty renegotiation with the Arab states.

More substantial contributions to understanding the British perspectives on the withdrawal from Palestine were published during the 1980's, coming from Ovendale¹⁴¹ and Louis.¹⁴² They provide comprehensive narratives of British negotiations and policy changes between the Morrison-Grady Plan and the United Nations Partition Plan for Palestine, announced on 29 November 1947. The former was discussed in the last chapter, and the latter

¹³⁸ A.Fitzsimons, *Empire by Treaty*, (London: Earnest Benn Limited, 1965)

¹³⁹ E.Monroe, *Britain's Moment in the Middle East*, (London: The John Hopkins press, 1963)

¹⁴⁰ R.Bullard, *Britain And the Middle East, From the Earliest Times to 1963* (London: Hutchinson University Library, 1964)

¹⁴¹ R.Ovendale., *Britain, The United States, And The End of The Palestine Mandate*, (New Hampshire: Royal Historical Society Studies, 1989); R.Ovendale, *The English-Speaking Alliance, Britain, The United States, the Dominions and the Cold War, 1945-51*, (London: George Allen & Unwin LTD, 1985)

¹⁴² R.Louis., *The British Empire in the Middle East 1945-51*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1984), Louis.R & Stookey.R, *The End of the Palestine Mandate*, (London: I.B.Tauris, 1986)

was the United Nations' majority plan, which recommended partition. Ovendale and Louis frequently recognised the desire of the British to maintain Arab goodwill. They both include some FO insight into the subject, but frame their narratives around the Foreign Secretary Ernest Bevin, the Cabinet and the COS. Louis does provide deeper insight into FO thought on Egypt, Iraq, and Transjordan. However, he does not frame these round events in Palestine specifically, preferring to look at the wider British strategic position in the Middle East. A more relevant contribution in the 1980's came from Jones.¹⁴³ He provides a critical account of FO policy and diplomacy surrounding withdrawal. Arguing that there was a "positive aversion in the FO towards anything which might fragment a unified Arab position..."¹⁴⁴ His main premise is that the FO was obsessed with maintaining Arab unity, to such an extent that it deliberately and repeatedly thwarted other attempts to find a solution to the deadlock. In order to force a solution via the FO orchestrated London Conference, where the Arabs had a unified position. This view fails consider successfully the domestic and political pressures the Arab states were under, which was to do right by their fellow Arabs. Consequently, Jones fails to appreciate the FO awareness of this problem and the effect it could have on Britain entire position in the Middle East.

More recent studies by Pappé,¹⁴⁵ Fieldhouse,¹⁴⁶ and Smith¹⁴⁷ fail to provide greater coverage of an FO perspective compared to their predecessors. Pappé is more relevant as his study focuses on the relationship between Kirkbride and Abdullah, exploring the relationship of Britain's closest Arab ally, one of the three Arab states this chapter focuses on. However, the author does not specifically frame his discussion around Palestine, and Kirkbride is but

¹⁴³ M.Jones, *Failure in Palestine, British and United States Policy after the Second World War*, (London: Mansell Publishing Limited, 1986)

¹⁴⁴ Jones, p.160

¹⁴⁵ I.Pappé, *Sir Alex Kirkbride and the Anglo-Transjordan alliance, 1945-50, Zametica.J, British Officials and British Foreign Policy 1945-50*, (London: Leicester University Press, 1990)

¹⁴⁶ D.Fieldhouse, *Western Imperialism in the Middle East 1914-1958*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006),

¹⁴⁷ C.Smith, *Palestine and the Arab-Israeli Conflict*, (Bedford: Bedford/ St Martins, 2001)

one of many different relevant figures working for and under the FO. Therefore, an overall FO perspective on the British withdrawal from Palestine is not gained. Smith focuses his work on the organisation and struggle between the Palestinian Arab and Jews, but his inclusion of a British perspective is based almost entirely on Bevin and Attlee, lacking any consideration of the FO. Fieldhouse provides the historical context to Britain's weakening position in the Middle, looking at increasing Arab rejection of western imperialism, and how this limited Britain's ability to maintain bases, and meet the requirements of the COS. However, his study does not look at the FO perspective of these events and fails to include FO sources. Overall, these studies provide historical coverage to the events surrounding the crises in Palestine, and how it affected Anglo-Arab relations and treaty renegotiation. These historians often choose to focus on, Bevin, Attlee, the COS, and the Colonial Office in demonstrating a British perspective. Louis and Ovendale include some FO thought, although to a limited extent, and Jones fails to provide balance to the FO sources he employs. This leaves room for greater use of FO sources in understanding the extent that the FO wished to maintain Arab goodwill and the motives behind this.

By 1947, the British position in the Middle East was becoming precarious, and the withdrawal from Palestine was going to significantly reduce Britain's military presence. Consequently, securing alliances became a priority for the FO. Palestine housed 100,000 British troops,¹⁴⁸ had naval facilities and British oil refineries in Haifa, and was connected to a major oil pipeline from Kirkuk in Iraq.¹⁴⁹ Trying to maintain these privileges in Palestine was of highest priority to the COS, and this was recognized by the FO and their attempts to form renewed alliances were to meet the general security concerns of the COS and British Army.¹⁵⁰ As Monroe notes, "Between March 1946 and January 1948, the British Government

¹⁴⁸ M.Jones, p.10

¹⁴⁹ C.Smith, *Palestine and the Arab-Israeli Conflict*, p.174

¹⁵⁰ C.Smith, p.174

attempted treaty re-negotiation everywhere.”¹⁵¹ The future governance of Palestine was uncertain, and maintaining any military rights there was increasingly unlikely to the FO. It was imperative that existing privileges in neighboring Arab states were kept where possible such as in Egypt and Iraq, and extended where they could be, such as in Transjordan.

From a militarily standpoint Egypt strategically was the most significant Arab state to consider. The importance of the Suez Canal to connect British possessions in Asia, Africa and Europe is well known, and Egypt was the lynchpin of British security plans in the Middle East. It was accepted that Iraq would be used for strategic bombing, but was undefendable, and that Palestine and to an extent Transjordan would be the screen to help protect Egypt.¹⁵² Before 1947 Egypt had housed up to 200,000 personnel “the largest reservoir of military strength outside India”¹⁵³ Maintaining the British position in Egypt was all the more vital with the potential loss of Palestine. It was during this time however that Egyptian demands for British evacuation began to reach a climax. The FO entered negotiations with Egypt on the prospect of revising the Anglo-Egyptian Treaty of 1936, which allowed the British significant military rights to protect the Suez Canal. The Ambassador to Egypt, Sir Ronald Campbell, summarized that 1947 started with “unpromising negotiations dragging on between the British and Egyptian Governments for a revised treaty.”¹⁵⁴ Despite Egypt having some interest in Palestine, Campbell argued they were focused on gaining autonomy over Sudan, “The Anglo-Egyptian dispute over the two uncompromising and so far inseparable Egyptian demands for the evacuation of British troops from Egypt and for undisputed sovereign rights in Sudan, took pride of place in the field of foreign relations during the

¹⁵¹ E.Monroe, p.156

¹⁵² E.Monroe, p.160

¹⁵³ M.Jones, p.10

¹⁵⁴ Sir Ronald Campbell to Mr Ernest Bevin, Egypt Annual Review for 1947, 20th April 1949, FO407/398/12066704/229, TNA.

greater part of the period under review.”¹⁵⁵ Before the pressures of Palestine, Anglo-Egyptian relations had already deteriorated significantly and Britain had accepted the reality of moving out of Egypt. Despite this, maintaining positive relations was still important. Egypt was strategically the most significant Arab state for Britain and limiting further damage to relations was a FO priority.

Palestine may have not been the Egyptian priority at the beginning of 1947, however Campbell went on to report that “At the end of the year Egyptian attention became more focused than previously on Palestine.”¹⁵⁶ Campbell argued that Anglo-Egyptian relations were being adversely affected by events in Palestine, which caused a “profound shock to the Egyptian political opinion.”¹⁵⁷ Campbell surmised Britain took “a share of the blame for being the villain in the background who was initially responsible for the creation of this problem.”¹⁵⁸ The FO was unable to pacify the Egyptian Prime Minister, Nokrashy Pasha, or King Farouk. In the backdrop of disagreements on treaty revision, Sudan, and Palestine, Egypt went to the United Nations Security Council where they “alleged that the British troops were stationed on Egyptian territory against the unanimous will of the people.” Growing anti-British sentiment in Egypt was clear, which resulted in pro-British organizations being attacked. The Anglo Egyptian Union, Cairo University Graduates’ Club and the Brotherhood of Freedom being targeted by protesters, which resulted in damages and the loss of a few British lives.”¹⁵⁹ Further political embarrassment was reported by the FO when King Farouk hoisted the Egyptian flag over the Kasr-el-Nil barracks in Cairo. Mitigating the loss of Palestinian military rights, with renewed Egyptian ones seemed unlikely and Campbell

¹⁵⁵ Campbell to Bevin, Egypt Annual Review for 1947, 20th April 1949, FO407/398/12066704/229, TNA.

¹⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁹ *Ibid.*

ultimately concluded such efforts were “doomed”.¹⁶⁰ It was hereafter the FO accepted that British forces would have to leave Egypt and based future contingencies upon leaving Egypt by 1956.

The potential loss of Palestine and Egyptian demand for British evacuation was to complicate relations with other Arab Nations too. Campbell reported,

“Egyptian influence continued throughout the year to predominate in the Arab League. At the league’s meetings the Arab States, some a little reluctantly expressed their support for the Egyptian claims against Britain and, later in the year, their unanimous decision to work for a united Arab Palestine.”

Campbell argued that Egypt was the leading power in the Arab League, and that confrontation over Palestine could engulf relations with the other Arab League powers. The Arab position was publicly unified in its demands at the London Conferences. An end to Jewish immigration, independence for Palestine ruled by the Arab majority at the end of the mandate, and a return to the White Paper which stated 50,000-75,000 Jewish immigrants were to be given entrance to Palestine for five years, thereafter any future Jewish immigration would be determined by the Arab majority in Palestine. Rising nationalism in Arab countries fueled by events in Palestine as well a growing rejection of British and French imperialism created a difficult environment for the FO to maintain Arab goodwill and gain base rights elsewhere. Britain’s withdrawal from Palestine was pending and any future rights there were unlikely. In Egypt, the British presence was being rejected and demands for withdrawal were clear and uncompromising. This was shown the growing anti-British sentiment in Egypt, demands from the government, which included the threat to involve the United Nations in Egypt’s demands for treaty revision. This left the FO with few options and maintaining

¹⁶⁰ Ibid.

military rights in Iraq and Transjordan were ever more important. It was in this context, that the FO tried to maintain Arab goodwill, in hope that future relationships with Iraq and Transjordan would not be prejudiced by the British withdrawal from Palestine.

As previously mentioned Britain's military footprint in Egypt was large, and these troops and military assets needed to be rehoused locally in the Middle East to ensure Britain's military position was not diminished, which the British believed would have only encouraged the Soviet Union to make gains in the Middle East. Troops and assets in Egypt were proposed to be moved to Libya and Ethiopia, in the increasingly likely event that rights in Palestine would be lost. Britain's remaining positions in Iraq and Transjordan were therefore ever more vital, the last significant shields that British forces were stationed in, between the Soviet Union and Egypt. If Palestine created large complications with Britain's last remaining military allies, resulting in a similar situation in Egypt, then Britain's military and therefore political clout in the Middle East would have been wholly diminished. This would jeopardize British security and remove her from being able to defend the Middle East from Soviet influence, and limit possibilities in offensive operations against the Soviet Union in the case of war.

In the former mandate power of Iraq, the FO sought to maintain the British position. Two British air bases in Habbaniyah and Shaiba were important to retaining British air power in the region and for the conduction of strategic bombing runs against the Soviets. The Anglo-Iraqi Treaty of Alliance of 1930 also gave Britain full access to the nation's infrastructure and full freedom of movement across Iraq.¹⁶¹ As in Egypt, growing discontent and demand for treaty revision was presenting issues. The Iraqi government was unpopular, and extremes on the right and left were making significant political gains in Iraq. The

¹⁶¹ D.Fieldhouse, pp.94-95

government was under large pressure to take a leading role in defence of Palestine and growing anti-British sentiment had led to demands for a revision of the Anglo-Iraqi Treaty of Alliance.

The FO recognized the issues, a Counsellor at the British Embassy in Iraq, Clinton Pelham, stated that some in the British government saw it as “unnecessarily rigid... to place Iraq too obviously in the position of a junior partner”. Furthermore, a member of the Iraqi government had issued a statement arguing “that the treaty was not a fit instrument for strengthening the ties of friendship between Iraq and the United Kingdom and rejected it.”¹⁶² The Iraqi government’s concerns were heard, and the FO understood the significant domestic pressures they faced, due to growing Iraqi nationalism. Douglas Busk, an official working in the Bagdad Embassy wrote “The tide of nationalism is rising in the Middle East... but perhaps slower in Iraq than elsewhere.”¹⁶³ There was growing awareness of the pressures Arab nations faced domestically, and the rise in Arab nationalism was causing a rejection of British imperialism in the Middle East, and this made maintaining military rights and a paramount position there increasingly unlikely. Further evidence of FO concern over anti-British nationalism in Iraq is displayed in Baxter’s writing, “The extreme Right and extreme Left are at one in vociferating against British ‘imperialism’ with particular reference to Palestine”.¹⁶⁴ The FO had to maintain British rights in Iraq, and rising nationalism and rejection of British imperialism in Iraq needed to be addressed. The need of Arab goodwill was therefore vital, and the FO sought to minimize any damage caused by Britain’s increasingly untenable position in Palestine, and from any policy decisions that followed thereafter.

¹⁶² Pelham to Attlee, Iraq: Annual Report for 1947, 6 January 1948, FO481/23/12066711/E834/27/93, TNA.

¹⁶³ Busk to Bevin, 1 August 1947, FO 371/61592, TNA.

¹⁶⁴ Baxter, Minute, 1 October 1947, FO 371/61594/E8789, TNA.

Louis believed that Busk and the Eastern Department understood the situation, and argued that they acknowledged the nationalist problem, “Busk believed it essential immediately to adopt a conciliatory attitude towards the nationalists...”¹⁶⁵ FO consideration of this is further shown when Michael Wright, also of the Eastern Department, argued that “Better a compromise now in Iraq which has a better chance of lasting, than to hang on a short time longer there on a wicket which will soon altogether become unplayable.”¹⁶⁶ To which Bevin replied: “I agree”.¹⁶⁷ This shows that the FO was aware of the potential for Iraq to become another Egypt, and that they needed to accommodate Iraq sooner rather than later to maintain a credible position in the Middle East. The FO sought to proceed with treaty revision with an understanding of the anti-British nationalist issue in Iraq. But as events in Palestine came to a head, and the UN voted for partition, the FO became increasingly concerned over Palestine’s ability to make treaty revision in Iraq improbable. Peter Garran, of the Eastern Department, wrote “although our own attitude over Palestine should serve to retain the goodwill of the Arabs, it may well become impracticable to proceed...”¹⁶⁸ Considering the events in Palestine Busk asked the Iraq Regent directly if the Iraqi government wished for a new agreement, stating “we would set the machine in motion at once” to which he stated “his government did want it”.¹⁶⁹ Despite this assurance, the following month the Iraq government stated that it faced three major issues: “Palestine, economic development and Treaty revision.”¹⁷⁰ The FO therefore saw Palestine as a major geopolitical problem, which was helping to fuel Arab nationalism against Western

¹⁶⁵ R.Louis, *The British Empire in the Middle East 1945-51*, p.327

¹⁶⁶ Memorandum by Wright, 30 July 1947, FO 371/61592

¹⁶⁷ Memorandum by Bevin, 3 October 1947, CP (47), 277, CAB 129/21, Minutes in FO 371/61594

¹⁶⁸ Minute by Garran, 14th October 1947, FO 371/61596/E10298, TNA.

¹⁶⁹ Minute by Busk, 16 October 1947, FO 371/61596, TNA.

¹⁷⁰ Beeley to Burrows, 1 November 1947, FO 371/61596/E10118, TNA.

imperialism and ultimately could result in further losses for Britain position in the Middle East.

During 1947-1948, work between the FO and Iraq on a treaty based more around the idea of equal partners was agreed, and by January 1948 the treaty was revised. The British agreed to share its airbases in Iraq and train Iraqi pilots. Also, the British would arm and supply the Iraqi army for the immediate future. Two clauses created a large backlash in Iraq. These were the joint planning board which decided Iraq's military planning and the control Britain would still maintain over Iraq's foreign policy. By May 1948, there was fierce opposition within Iraq in opposition to this. Strikes, riots and an eventual rejection of the treaty by the Regent himself destroyed all hopes of a renewed alliance with Iraq. Louis argued that "The Iraqi debacle did not increase the Foreign Offices faith in alliances with Arab governments."¹⁷¹ Wright displayed such feeling, writing to Busk, "as you may guess...one of the results at this end increase in doubts in many quarters of the wisdom of ever placing any reliance whatever on anything that Arab countries say or do..."¹⁷² Like in Egypt, anti-British nationalism resulted in demands for the British to leave. The FO had considered this outcome possible, and the FO clearly considered Palestine's major influence on Arab relations. Pelham noted "Iraqi opinion, in common with other Arab opinion, has grown steadily more and more concerned with what seems to them the manifest injustice of the National Home policy in Palestine..."¹⁷³ Frustrations were clear, and the argument that Palestine was causing major handicaps to FO diplomacy among the Arab world is reiterated by the Minster in Damascus, P.M.Broadmead "If it had not been for Palestine, we should have seen the treaty ratified."¹⁷⁴ From the FO's perspective Palestine was therefore a major

¹⁷¹ R.Louis, *The British Empire in the Middle East 1945-51*, p.336

¹⁷² Wright to Busk, draft letter dated 7 March 1948, FO 371/68446/EE2254, TNA.

¹⁷³ Pelham to Attlee, 25 January 1948, FO 371/68446, TNA.

¹⁷⁴ Broadmead to Bevin, 1 June 1948, FO 371/68386/E7801, TNA.

political issue, which undermined all its attempts to strengthen the wavering relations with Arab states. The withdrawal and future partition of Palestine had become not just about the major loss of Britain's largest military bases and garrisons, it had engulfed FO attempts to maintain and extend existing military rights in Egypt and Iraq, causing a significant reduction in Britain's future military position in the Middle East.

The future of British forces in Egypt and Iraq faced uncertainty during 1947-48. However, in Transjordan, Britain felt more secure. John Troutbeck, Head of the Middle East Department, argued that there was a tendency to "hold fast to Transjordan which is our only reliable ally, and let the rest hang."¹⁷⁵ Transjordan strategically was not as valuable to Britain as Iraq or Egypt in terms of facilities, however it did have the military garrison at Amman, the Arab Legion, and proximity to Palestine. Transjordan was also a communication center, connecting Egypt and Palestine with Iraq and Saudi Arabia. Sargent displayed concern that Transjordan might fall victim to a similar situation that had occurred in Egypt or Iraq, "Although we can easily make a new Treaties with certain friendly politicians or the local King or Regent, when we try to get them ratified we run up against a new force which the ruling classes can no longer control, namely a new Arab nationalism... which would be foolish to ignore."¹⁷⁶ Adding Transjordan to the growing list of disasters would have drastically reduced British power in the Middle East. Fortunately, the FO had many advantages in trying to maintain its alliance with Transjordan. Britain contributed £2 million in subsidies, provided officers for the Arab legion, had armed them, and King Abdullah's regime was created and backed by the British.¹⁷⁷ Louis argued, "in a sort of symbiotic relationship stretching over a quarter of a century, Abdullah had remained a steadfast friend

¹⁷⁵ Troutbeck to Micheal Wright, 3 March, 1949, FO 371/75064

¹⁷⁶ Memorandum by Sargent, 2 February, 1948, FO 371/68817/E1758, TNA.

¹⁷⁷ R.Louis, *The British Empire in the Middle East 1945-51*, p.346

of the British Empire, and the British had remained faithful to him.”¹⁷⁸ Furthermore, Kirkbride was personally on highly favourable terms with Abdullah. Pappe stated that “Britain’s dominate role in Transjordan was due to Sir Alec Kirkbride’s immense influence on King Abdullah.”¹⁷⁹ Pappe goes as far to claim that British policy towards the Palestine crises and “to a lesser extent towards the Middle East as a whole were based on a strong Anglo-Transjordan alliance.” Transjordan was substantially smaller than Egypt and Iraq, due to its size, resources, economy, and population. Nor did it enjoy leadership in the Arab League unlike Egypt and Iraq. However, the British did have one advantage in Transjordan relations. Kirkbride had been the British representative in Transjordan since 1920 and had welcomed Abdullah when he first arrived in Transjordan and had given him council when he became Emir of Transjordan. Their friendship is well documented,¹⁸⁰ and Kirkbride’s position as the Ambassador to Transjordan is important when looking at FO policy resulting from the withdrawal of Palestine. This is because Kirkbride had a large personal influence on the King, Transjordan was Britain’s closest ally, and the nation’s proximity to Palestine made it strategically important in any actions in Palestine from Arab neighbours. With the situation in Egypt “doomed”¹⁸¹ and rejection of the British in Iraq, Transjordan become increasingly relevant, as the British began losing its position elsewhere in the Middle East.

The British had recently signed a new treaty with Transjordan in March 1945, which gave the British military access to Transjordan in many forms. To develop the port of Aqaba, to transport troops and maintain two air bases at Amman and Mafrak. This treaty was valid for twenty-five years. Therefore, the FO did not have to focus on treaty revision dictating relations. The treaty was revised in 1948 to remove the control of the British Army over the

¹⁷⁸ R.Louis, *The British Empire in the Middle East 1945-51*, p.346

¹⁷⁹ I.Pappe, p.121

¹⁸⁰ I.Pappe, p.150 For details on the friendship between Kirkbride and Abdullah

¹⁸¹ Sir Ronald Campbell to Mr Ernest Bevin, Egypt Annual Review for 1947, 20 April 1949, FO407/398/12066704/229, TNA.

Arab Legion, and replace it with joint board of defence but was do so in an uncomplicated manner, and its changes were even recommend by the COS to give the appearance of lesser British control.¹⁸² Complications in the relationship over Palestine did emerge though. By September 1946, Abdullah's intentions had become clear. In a telegram to the FO, Campbell reported that "Abdullah who was in favour of partition and thought it best that (the) Arab State should be joined to Transjordan."¹⁸³ Abdullah's desire for Palestinian land became a major preoccupation for the FO causing divisions, notably, between Kirkbride and Sargent. These included reductions on subsidies and officers for the Arab Legion, combined with the decision to no longer issue new weapon orders left Kirkbride frustrated "I have been struck by the tendency, [to] present in telegrams concerning the attitude of the Arab States on the subject of developments in Palestine, to handicap our allies and to make the handicap most serve to these states which are most closely allied to Great Britain."¹⁸⁴ Kirkbride believed Britain was impairing its ability to maintain a paramount position in the Middle East by restricting its allies; "One of the greatest obstacles in the past to the achievement of our policy of securing regional defence agreements with the Middle East (or Arab) states has been the suspicion that such agreements would be used by His Majesty's Government as an indirect means of restricting the freedom of these countries."¹⁸⁵

Sargent, however, believed this to be an exaggeration. Saying Britain did "not (want) to put obstacles in the way of States who have had the courage to enter into and maintain satisfactory agreements... And I do not think that the decisions taken really have this effect."¹⁸⁶ Issuing new weapon orders would he believed, "cause serious controversy and lay

¹⁸² I.Pappe, p.121

¹⁸³ Cairo to Foreign Office, 2 February 1946, FO141/1090/12048140/1416, TNA.

¹⁸⁴ Kirkbride to Sargent, 18 November 1947, FO371/61584/12048415/ E11734/G/390, TNA.

¹⁸⁵ Ibid.

¹⁸⁶ Ibid.

us open to the most damaging accusations in the U.S.A.”¹⁸⁷ Correspondence between the two continued to show clear division with Kirkbride reiterating his objections to the intended measures, arguing that the close cooperation between His Majesty’s Forces and the Arab Legion had “at one time appeared to be a model of a defence arrangement between a small and great power”. Now Kirkbride argued “to take steps to cripple this tactical force.... will be a poor advertisement of our policy.”¹⁸⁸ Barring Arab nations from new weapon orders and limiting a key ally, Kirkbride argued would “undo part of what we have built up in the past, and probably ensure that no Arab State would bind itself to us in the military sense.”¹⁸⁹ Kirkbride believed that the Transjordan alliance was a model for other junior military allies, and was passionate about not prejudicing a nation for being an ally. Sargent did not believe this to be the case and was more concerned of the international problems that could stem from Britain’s closest regional ally becoming heavily and independently involved in Palestine.

Kirkbride wanted Abdullah to have the means and freedom in pursuing his desired course, which he believed would significantly strengthen Britain’s position after withdrawal. He saw the alternative as a “non-viable Palestine Arab State under the Mufti” as “not attractive”¹⁹⁰, the Mufti was strongly anti-British, actively opposing them in Palestine at the time. Despite the differences between Kirkbride and Sargent on obstructing Transjordan, both agreed on the advantage of Transjordan absorbing the Arab parts of Palestine, after the British withdrew. Sargent stated, “We entirely agree with you in seeing considerable advantage in the occupation of part or the whole of the Arab areas of Palestine by King Abdullah”.¹⁹¹ This is significant, as Britain was considering the benefits of Transjordan

¹⁸⁷ Sargent to Kirkbride, 22 December 1947, FO371/61584/12048415/ E11734/G, TNA.

¹⁸⁸ Kirkbride to Sargent, 29 October 1947, FO371/61584/12048415/ E11734/G/321, TNA.

¹⁸⁹ Kirkbride to Sargent, 18 November 1947, FO371/61584/12048415/ E11734/G/390, TNA.

¹⁹⁰ Ibid.

¹⁹¹ Sargent to Kirkbride, 22 December 1947, FO371/61584/12048415/ E11734/G, TNA.

annexing part of Palestine, in order to strengthen its ally, which could provide Britain with a way to maintain rights in Palestine via Transjordan annexation. However, this had the potential to backfire on the British and cause Arab resentment towards Britain and Transjordan for compromising on accepting a Jewish state.

Consensus on this end was met with difficulties in the meantime. Kirkbride showed concern that if Britain did not directly facilitate Transjordanian expansion, the British government would still be blamed regardless. Kirkbride argued that Britain should secure its interests regardless;

“Great Britain will be blamed in many quarters for what the Arab States do but we are so often blamed for what we do with the best of intentions and with the loss to our own interests, that we might, in this instance, secure our interests and disregard the criticism, which will, doubtless, follow as a matter of course whether it is deserved or not.”¹⁹²

As well as considering Britain’s reputation, there was concern in the FO and COS that damage to Transjordan’s position in the Arab world could have serious security ramifications for Abdullah.¹⁹³ Sargent wondered if annexation “could be done without either too serious trouble with the United Nations or the loss of Abdullah’s whole position in the Arab world.”¹⁹⁴ Beeley similarly expressed these concerns and argued that intervention from Transjordan could put Britain in a embarrassing international position, and if Abdullah acted without the support of other Arab states, he too would become alienated. Beeley believed that Abdullah would only gain the support of Arab states if he was to defy the UN partition plan. Occupying more territory than was allocated to the Arabs, which would have large

¹⁹² Kirkbride to Sargent, 18 November 1947, FO371/61584/12048415/ E11734/G/390, TNA.

¹⁹³ Memorandum by the Chiefs of Staff Committee to the Minister of Defence, 26th February 1948, [Accessed Online 11/11/19], <<https://nationalarchives.gov.uk/>>, FO800/487/PA/48/18, TNA, p.121

¹⁹⁴ Sargent to Kirkbride, 22nd December 1947, FO371/61584/12048415/ E11734/G, TNA.

consequences on Britain's international position.¹⁹⁵ Avi Shlaim assessed that Kirkbride opposed this and that he was the driving force in the FO to push for an endorsement of Abdullah's plans, arguing that "He was confident that the annexation... represented the best possible means to preserve British interests in the region and to prevent the spread of Soviet influence."¹⁹⁶ A matter which Shlaim concluded was not popular within the FO, arguing that this "was strongly disputed by Brigadier Clayton, Sir Ronald Campbell, and other British Officials."¹⁹⁷ The FO felt it could not publicly support Abdullah on this matter, despite Kirkbride's calls. Publicly endorsing such a move would damage relations with the United States and undermine the London Conference were the Arabs held a common position, and it had the potential to isolate both countries regionally, and internationally. However, this did not cause Britain or the FO to put pressure on Abdullah to abandon this plan.

Impending civil war in Palestine, and probable loss of rights there, alongside failure in Egypt and Iraq to extend Britain's military presence, made relations with Abdullah more valuable. Jones has argued that "Transjordan was expected to become more strategically valuable", and therefore "the British Government winked benevolently at Abdullah's ambitions."¹⁹⁸ This 'wink' was the result of a meeting between Tawfik Abu al-Huda (Prime Minister of Transjordan) and Bevin in London on 7 February 1948. John Bagot Glubb, British Commander of the Arab Legion and military adviser to Transjordan, translated during this secret meeting, and his personal account was extremely revealing. In Glubb's account Abu Al-Huda argued that Palestine would become dominated by the Jews or Mufti which "would not suit either Britain or Transjordan" and that Transjordan was "receiving many requests and petitions from Palestine Arab notables" for the protection of the Arab Legion. Abu Al-Huda

¹⁹⁵ Beeley, Possible Forms of Arab Resistance to the Decision of the United Nations, 22 December, FO 371/688864/13746, TNA.

¹⁹⁶ A.Shlaim, *Collusion Across the Jordan*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988), p.127

¹⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, p.127

¹⁹⁸ M.Jones, p.324

proposed that the Arab Legion should move into the Arab areas along the frontier of Transjordan, to which Bevin twice stated “It seems the obvious thing to do.” Bevin is said to have warned Abu- Al-Huda not go into Jewish areas, allocated under the UN partition plan, to which both men agreed. Glubb then goes on to state that “Mr. Bevin thanked Taufiq Pasha (Abu Al-Huda) for his frank exposition of the position of Trans-Jordan, and expressed his agreement with the plans put forward.”¹⁹⁹ Glubb’s account shows collusion between the two allies over the fate of Palestine, and Transjordan’s future role in it. The encounter is remarkable, it went against the position of the Cabinet, which Shlaim states offered “no comfort or reassurance whatever for the troubled ruler of Transjordan”²⁰⁰. It also went against the warnings within the Eastern Department, from Beeley, Clayton and Campbell, as well as Sargent’s own assessment of the potential risks of Abdullah’s plans. Despite concerns within the FO there was still some support for Kirkbride. Sargent and Beeley did consider the significant advantages of an enlarged Transjordan, however this did not remove the clear reservations that it could have disastrous consequences on Britain’s and Transjordan relations with the Arab states.

Overall, the FO did not seek to prevent Transjordan’s intended annexation of parts of Palestine which it later undertook, instead seeing the potential benefits to its last reliable regional ally who was willing to commit to a future with Britain. The British position in Palestine and the potential of partition was met with fierce opposition in Egypt and Iraq. As a result, Transjordan became a priority as Britain’s only reliable regional ally, and the FO tried to turn events in Palestine to their advantage. Bevin privately endorsed Abdullah’s annexation plan, however there was concern in the FO that it could alienate Abdullah among the Arab states, and Britain. The FO wished to prioritise Arab goodwill during the withdrawal

¹⁹⁹ J.Glubb, *A Soldier with the Arabs*, (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1957), p.63

²⁰⁰ A.Shlaim., p.102

from Palestine, in an attempt to engage in successful treaty renegotiation with other Arab states. This was needed to fulfill Britain's security requirements, and in the hope of finding a common position with the Arab states at the London Conference.

Arab Unity and the London Conference

The key challenges Palestine created for the FO when attempting to maintain Arab goodwill and its position among its three key regional allies has been discussed. However, the FO did not approach the Arab states on an entirely individual basis when trying to limit the damage Palestine was increasingly causing to the British position. The FO sought to maintain Arab goodwill in a general sense, this is frequently cited in countless FO documents surrounding the subject, as well as the historiography, Ovendale concluded that “The salient feature of this period was the persistent effort on the part of the British... to support the Arabs and thereby to sustain British power in the Middle East”.²⁰¹ While Jones argued that “the motivation was, as always, the concern to be seen to be doing the right thing by the Arab world, thereby safeguarding the strategic and commercial essential in the Middle East, Arab Goodwill.”²⁰²

The FO sought to maintain undivided Arab goodwill by dealing with them collectively under the union of the Arab League. To do this, the FO organised the London Conference of 1946-47, a series of meetings between September 1946 and February 1947. Here the British planned to mediate an agreement between the Arabs and Jews. The members of the Arab League, the Jewish Agency and the Palestine Arab Higher Executive were invited to attend in the hope of a resolution. Unfortunately, The Jewish Agency and Arab Higher Executive refused to attend. Despite this fact the conference went ahead, without Arab or Jewish representation from Palestine. This is as remarkable as it is important because it shows that the FO was still willing to mediate a settlement over Palestine, with the unified Arab position, without Palestinian representation being present from either side. This demonstrates the importance of maintaining the goodwill of historic Arab allies, as the FO mediated a

²⁰¹ R.Ovendale, p.396

²⁰² M.Jones, p.170

conference solely with them, with the two actual parties in Palestine in absence, showing what the FO priority was, keeping the goodwill of neighboring and allied Arab nations.

Jones argues that the FO placed too much priority on maintaining Arab goodwill, keeping the Arabs unified and dealing with them collectively. That this sole drive dominated all FO motives and that the FO missed opportunities to create compromise on Palestine. This is an argument present in more modern historiography and is used as a criticism to why negotiations failed. Jones argues that “There is evidence to suggest a positive aversion in the FO towards anything which might fragment a unified Arab position or facilitate a compromise deal on Palestine outside of the London Conference.”²⁰³ This criticism is founded in the argument that Palestine was not represented at the conference, yet the FO went ahead with its policy. The FO failed to apply possible pressures on the Arab states, which could have helped secured a compromise more acceptable to the Jewish Agency. Such pressures are mentioned within FO sources, Norman Young , the British Ambassador in Beirut, wrote “There is quite a lot of heat which we could if necessary turn on both in Syria and in Lebanon, as regard the former there is Greater Syria and as regards the latter there is Emile Edde.”²⁰⁴ The Greater Syria ‘leverage’ being the threat that Abdullah sought to unify Transjordan and Syria under his premier, John Beith of the FO’s Eastern Department noted “The Syrian Government are disproportionately sensitive about all this.”²⁰⁵ Emile Edde was the exiled former President of Lebanon, whom the Lebanese government feared may attempt to negotiate a return, with British assistance. This provides another example of possible leverages to use on the Arab states. These “trump cards”²⁰⁶ as Young stated, were not used and such pressures were not brought upon Syria or Lebanon to influence their positions at the

²⁰³ M.Jones, p.160

²⁰⁴ Young, Beirut to FO, 10 September 1946, FO 371/52544 E7164/4/31, TNA.

²⁰⁵ Minute, Beith, 5 August 1946 FO 371/52549 E7528/4/31/G, TNA.

²⁰⁶ Young, Beirut to FO, 3 September 1946, FO 371/52544 E7164/4/31, TNA.

London Conference. The FO was aware of the diplomatic leverage the British held and did not recommend applying due to the loss of Arab goodwill that would result, and possibly fragment the Arab position.

Further evidence that the FO could have pressed the Arab's to accept partition has been documented. Sassoon (Jewish Agency) held meetings with Sidky and Abdullah to get some form of Partition accepted from the Arab quarter. Reiterating Kirkbride's views from earlier, Wikeley stated "King Abdullah has I think always been inclined to favour Partition, as he hopes to absorb the Arab part of Palestine."²⁰⁷ The inclination of Kirkbride and Sargent towards this and the rationale for this were dealt with earlier, the importance of this is in the fact Transjordan was not the only key regional ally in the Arab League who privately expressed partition could be accepted. Among the pressures which could have been applied to Syria and Lebanon, FO sources also had cited some indifference to the whole affair in Egypt, and that partition could be favoured publicly if the British would be more proactive in pushing Egypt and the Arabs. An FO official in the Egyptian Department claimed that the Egyptian Government's "attitude will probably be a compromise between their fundamental lack of interest in the whole business of Palestine and the necessity of taking an extremist line in order to maintain their hegemony over the Arab League."²⁰⁸ Campbell's Annual Reports on Egypt (1947-48) support an argument for Palestine being of lesser importance for Egypt, with the focus on the evacuation of British troops, treaty revision and the Sudan issue previously mentioned.²⁰⁹ In a telegram Campbell argued that Egypt "do not feel so strongly as the Arabs about Palestine" and goes on to suggest "partially because they would like to conciliate us over Palestine in the hope we will respond by being conciliatory about the

²⁰⁷ Minutes Wikeley, 21 August 1946 FO 371/52553 E8106/4/31, TNA.

²⁰⁸ Egypt Department, 23 August 1946, FO 371/52553 E8106/4/31, TNA.

²⁰⁹ Campbell to Bevin, Egypt Annual Review for 1947, 20 April 1949, FO407/398/12066704/229, TNA.

Anglo-Egyptian treaty.”²¹⁰ This provides evidence that the FO saw potential for accommodation from Egypt in regards to the partition of Palestine. Campbell argued that Azzam Pasha, the Egyptian first Secretary-General of the Arab League was “afraid of getting the ball rolling” and that if “the initiative were taken by a representative of any other Arab state he would probably play up.”²¹¹ This is significant, while motivated by Abdullah’s ambitious, Transjordan was open to partition, and there is some evidence Egypt would have been if another Arab state supported it, or in return for British concessions on treaty revision and/or in Sudan.

The FO recognized potential exploits in the unified Arab position, it discussed; leverages over Syria and Lebanon, Abdullah’s desire to annex Arab Palestine, and possible concession to Egypt in treaty revision and the Sudan. These discussions however did not develop, Britain did not press Syria or Lebanon on these matters previously mentioned, and despite the ‘benevolent wink’ Britain gave to Abdullah’s vision, they did not become involved in the execution his plans. The London Conference had failed to provide a solution, Campbell reported that Egypt viewed the London Conference “with great apprehension” and saw “no chance of it being successful.” Despite low prospects of success at the London Conference, private diplomacy with Egypt failed to develop into high level discussions over concessions in Sudan to gain cooperation in Palestine. Sargent relayed the view of Bevin in a telegram to Campbell “You can leave him (Sidky) in no doubt that the interests of His Majesty’s Government are not, and never will be, the counters in a bargain of this kind.”²¹² Jones argued that “clearly the prospect of a deal over Palestine involving the Anglo-Egyptian treaty negotiations and above all Britain’s strategic requirements in the Middle East had

²¹⁰ Campbell, Telegram, Cairo to FO, 26 August, FO 371/52551 E7868/4/31G, TNA.

²¹¹ Ibid.

²¹² Bevin, Telegram, Paris to FO, 3 September, FO 371/52555 E8732/4/31G, TNA.

touched a raw nerve.”²¹³ Therefore, compromising on Sudan in order to fulfill the COS demands for bases in Palestine was rejected by Bevin and Sargent. Beeley displays the sentiments behind not pursuing this, “if we were to enter into a bargain of this kind we should quickly find ourselves in an embarrassing position” arguing “The other Arab states would not see the matter in the same light as Transjordan and Egypt – the two beneficiaries of the deal.”²¹⁴ This echoed Sargent’s concerns to Kirkbride, that supporting Transjordan could result in a fierce backlash in the Arab world. Considering these examples there is evidence that the FO was aware of the possibilities and benefits of dealing with the Arab states on an individual basis to force a compromise on Palestine. Jones criticized the FO “Dedication to the belief in maintaining the unity of the Arab world” which he argued “precluded the Foreign Office from making use of the rivalries and differences among the Arab states to bring diplomatic pressure to bear over Palestine.” Concluding that the FO failed to “discard Arab unity as fiction” and deny the Arabs “a right to meddle en masse.”²¹⁵ It is certainly plausible dealing with the Arab states together, at the London Conference was less likely to obtain compromise. Any deviation from the united Arab position would not only alienate a nation diplomatically but also could have serious ramifications from domestic pressures within the country itself. Senior FO officials including Kirkbride, Campbell, Young and Beith expressed potential diplomatic pressures or collaborations to pursue with respective individual states, urging actions outside of the joint discussions of the London conference, yet Sargent and Bevin declined to pursue additional pressures on the Arabs.

The Middle Eastern Department and senior FO officials had expressed potential ways to pressure individual Arab states, and it is certainly true that Sargent and Bevin did not pursue this course, rather seeking accommodation on Palestine. However, this does not mean that

²¹³ M.Jones, P.16

²¹⁴ Beeley, Minute, 5 September, FO 371/52555 E8732/4/31G, TNA.

²¹⁵ M.Jones, p.344

arguments from Jones that the FO was obsessed with dealing with the Arab states on an entirely collaborative basis over Palestine are correct. This fails to consider the FO's understanding and concern over the growing Arab nationalism, and the pressure the Arab governments were under to appease this growing sentiment, which Palestine helped fuel. The ability to gain individual concessions or cooperation from Arab states was severely limited due to their domestic situations. Engaging in a course separate to their Arab neighbors could cause a serious, if not fatal backlash in their respective nations.

There is historical consensus on the importance of rising Arab nationalism across the Middle East. Ovendale argued that “the Arab States were moving away from colonial tutelage”²¹⁶ and the nationalist pressures on the Arab governments is looked at by Fitzsimons who argued “The Arab governments were readily vulnerable to nationalist agitation.”²¹⁷ The pressures of these nationalist forces is similarly repeated in Louis' work, with focus given to Iraq,²¹⁸ and these are repeated by Monroe, arguing that the Iraqi people “no longer wanted the British milling around in their country”.²¹⁹ There is a large amount of evidence of that the FO understood this. Campbell reported the pressures of nationalism in Egypt, writing about the anti-British protests that the government endorsed.²²⁰ Baxter warned of the extreme sides in Iraq were “at one in vociferating against British imperialism”.²²¹ Busk argued to “adopt a conciliatory attitude towards the nationalists.”²²² Wright argued “Better a compromise now in Iraq (with the nationalists)”.²²³ Amhed Pasha (Iraq Government Official) told the FO that the Iraq was “desperate over Palestine and it was essential for any Arab Government which

²¹⁶ R.Ovendale, p.4

²¹⁷ A.Fitzsimons, *Empire by Treaty*, p.56

²¹⁸ R.Louis, p.307

²¹⁹ E.Monroe, p.115

²²⁰ Campbell to Bevin, Egypt Annual Review for 1947, 20th April 1949, FO 407/398/12066704/229, TNA.

²²¹ Baxter, Minute, 1 October 1947, FO 371/61594/E8789, TNA.

²²² R.Louis, *The British Empire in the Middle East 1945-51*, p.327

²²³ Memorandum by Wright, 30th July 1947, FO 371/61592, TNA.

wished to remain in power to take the lead in defence of Palestine.”²²⁴ Abdullah’s position In Transjordan was also not immune, with the FO entering treaty renegotiation in 1947, having only signed the last treaty two years prior, to give an impression of lesser British interference and reduce criticism domestically.

The warnings of rising Arab nationalism were heard by Sargent, who wrote that this new Arab nationalism “would be foolish to ignore”²²⁵ attributing Arab nationalism to causing the rejection of the revised Iraq treaty. The FO was acutely aware of the large pressures Arab states were under, Palestine had helped fuel Arab nationalism and this severely limited the abilities of the FO regarding Palestine. Arab nationalism and a rejection of imperialism had resulted in a rejection of the British position in Egypt, and the rejection of the current treaty. In Iraq, nationalism was fueling similar rejection of the British presence and resulted in the rejection of the revised treaty, and even in Transjordan treaty renegotiation had occurred only two years after ratification, to help strengthen Abdullah’s position. Despite an awareness of Arab nationalism, the FO did fail to obtain favorable terms to strengthening Britain position in the Middle East overall. However, the idea that the FO could have engaged in successful individual diplomacy outside of the London Conference, and pressured an Arab state or two to compromise against their own agendas, under the nationalist pressures they faced seems unlikely.

The withdrawal from Palestine immediately presented a major security dilemma for the COS and MOD and had the potential to substantially undermine British influence and power in the Middle East, which was regarded as essential to British security. The COS insisted on future military rights in Palestine, which without argued would “gravely

²²⁴ Baghdad Embassy, Memorandum, Undated, FO 624/124/12154884, TNA.

²²⁵ Sargent, Memorandum, 2 February 1948, FO 371/68817/E1758, TNA.

prejudiced”²²⁶ Britain’s strategic position. The future governance of Palestine was uncertain and both sides were unlikely to be sympathetic to British strategic considerations. The FO therefore had to mitigate the impending loss of Palestine. The only way to maintain a paramount position in the Middle East was to maintain existing rights with other Arab states, or ideally strengthen them. So, the FO prioritized favorable relations with the Arab states that already granted British military rights in their territories. Egypt, Iraq and Transjordan all had significant interests in the future of Palestine and were tied to British strategic plans, therefore the FO put priority on maintaining Arab goodwill, in the hope that it would enable renewal of ties with these nations.

Campbell reported little hope for a future renewal of Anglo-Egyptian ties. This was due to Egypt’s demand for British evacuation of their lands and demands for the future governance of Sudan. Campbell was therefore pessimistic over treaty negotiations with Egypt who began leading efforts in the Arab League “to work for a united Arab Palestine.”²²⁷ Egypt was seen as essential in preventing a hypothetical Soviet invasion of the Middle East and had housed by 1947 over 200,000 military personal. The FO did seek to maintain Arab goodwill but the situation in Egypt was becoming untenable in Egypt, even before Palestine became a more significant consideration in Egyptian foreign policy. Sidky had threatened to bring the matter of British evacuation to the United Nations. He was also vocal in the Arab League to its opposition to a continued British presence. Campbell reported that treaty revision was “doomed”²²⁸ due to Egyptian insistence on including Sudan in the negotiations, and the only potential for any compromise came from the reported meeting between Sassoon and Sidky. Where they allegedly discussed potential concession on Sudan and the demand for evacuation

²²⁶ Pierson Dixon to Ernest Bevin, 6th February 1947, FO800/487/PA47/3, [Accessed Online 21/11/2019], <<https://nationalarchives.gov.uk>> , p.12

²²⁷Campbell to Bevin, Egypt Annual Review for 1947, 20 April 1949, FO407/398/12066704/229, TNA.

²²⁸Ibid.

with the possibility of new rights in Palestine in a future Jewish state, an idea outright rejected by Bevin.²²⁹ This idea was only reported and not recommended to pursue by the FO, and with the only potential leverage rejected as off limits by Bevin and the FO began preparations on gaining new rights elsewhere. This placed greater importance on the need to maintain relations with Iraq and Transjordan, and Iraq was becoming increasingly engulfed by the Palestine problem and Transjordan becoming increasingly involved. The FO understood the importance of withdrawal to these nation reporting that main issue facing the Iraq government was Palestine.²³⁰ Rising Arab nationalism and a rejection of the British presence was not limited to Egypt. In Iraq, the government was facing similar demand for British evacuation, unlike in Egypt the FO did manage to successfully negotiate the Portsmouth Treaty of 1948 with the Iraqi government. This was embarked on as essential to maintaining any presence in Iraq. Busk, Pelham, Baxter and Wright all from the Eastern Department, reported rising nationalism and the need to accommodate Iraq, which was agreed upon by Sargent. The FO proceeded to improve relations with Iraq and granted a revised deal, however this failed to be ratified, and its unpopularity led to it being condemned by the Iraq people and then Regent after mass rioting and protest. Pelham²³¹, Busk,²³² and Beeley²³³ each spoke of how Palestine had prevented revision, a matter agreed upon by Sargent who reported the hopeless of negotiation when Arab nationalism would prevent any treaty being ratified.²³⁴ This left the FO in a serious predicament. The withdrawal from Palestine and failure to pacify Egyptian demands, as well as obtain a ratified treaty with Iraq left the FO with Transjordan, which Troutbeck stated “is our only reliable ally”.²³⁵ The FO

²²⁹ Bevin, Telegram, Paris to FO, 3rd September 1947, FO 371/52555 E8732/4/31G, TNA.

²³⁰ Beeley to Burrows, 1 November 1947, FO 371/61596/E10118, TNA.

²³¹ Busk, Minute, 16 October 1947, FO 371/61596, TNA.

²³² Pelham to Attlee, Iraq: Annual Report for 1947, 6 January 1948, FO481/23/12066711/E834/27/93, TNA.

²³³ Beeley to Burrows, 1 November 1947, FO 371/61596/E10118, TNA.

²³⁴ Memorandum by Sargent, 2 February 1948, FO 371/68817/E1758, TNA.

²³⁵ Troutbeck to Michael Wright, 3 March 1948, FO 371/75064, TNA.

was concerned of Palestine engulfing relations with Abdulla, but the close relations between the two nations and British financial and military involvement in the Transjordan meant that the FO faced few challenges in renewing ties. On 15 March 1948, the FO negotiated a successful revision of the Treaty of London 1946 and ties were renewed, with the British having extensive military rights; freedom of passage, the right to station troops, permission to develop two airfields at Amman and Mafrak and a port in Aqaba. This success ended the successive loss and rejections of future ties which started from Palestine, continued with Egypt, and ended in Iraq.

The extent of negotiations surmised above show the importance of Egypt, Iraq, and Transjordan to British defence plans. The diplomacy the FO undertook surrounding the withdrawal from Palestine was very considerate of maintaining Arab goodwill to help enable these negotiations to go successfully. The FO motivation to maintain Arab goodwill was important for successful future ties with these nations, and the FO believed this was in jeopardy, due to Arab nationalism. In Egypt, Iraq, and Transjordan this was helping fuel a more vocal and at times violent demand from their people for the British to leave. The Eastern Department started reporting this as a major concern during the last quarter of 1947, with Busk reporting that “The tide of nationalism is rising”²³⁶ and Baxter stating nationalist forces were “in one in vociferating against British ‘imperialism’”.²³⁷ The Eastern Department reported grave concern at the affect Palestine was having on Arab nationalism, and the effects it was having on relations on other Arab states. Baxter believed that Arab nationalists’ desires were in “particular reference to Palestine”²³⁸, and Beeley stated Palestine as the main issuing consuming Iraq. Pelham agreed with this and added that, Arab opinion was becoming “more and more concerned with what seems to them the manifest injustice of the National Home

²³⁶ Busk to Bevin, 1 August 1947, FO 371/61592, TNA.

²³⁷ Baxter, Minute, 1 October 1947, FO 371/61594/E8789, TNA.

²³⁸ Ibid.

policy in Palestine”.²³⁹ The FO held large concern over Palestine and rising Arab nationalism, and the prospect of future treaties with Arab states is shown further, when Garran stated “our own attitude over Palestine should serve to retain the goodwill of the Arabs” and then warned “that it may well become impracticable to proceed”.²⁴⁰ The attribution of failure to renewed ties because of Arab nationalism, and the importance of maintaining Arab goodwill was repeated by Broadmead when he argued that “that if it had not been for Palestine, we should have seen that treaty ratified”²⁴¹ in reference to the failure in Iraq. These concerns in the FO were not limited to the Eastern Department and evidence shows Sargent understood and shared these views. In his disagreement with Kirkbride over Transjordan, he was concerned of alienating both Abdullah and Britain if they endorsed Abdullah’s annexation plans in Palestine.²⁴² By February 1948 he even seemed disillusioned with Arab nationalism when he argued “we (have) run up against a new force which the ruling classes can no longer control, namely a new Arab nationalism... which would be foolish to ignore.”²⁴³ The FO prioritized and was united in the desire to maintain Arab goodwill, in order to pacify Arab nationalism, in the hope it could successfully negotiate future ties and military rights with these nations, in order to safeguard British strategic interests in the region and mitigate for the substantial loss of rights in Palestine and most likely Egypt.

The priority that the FO put on maintaining Arab goodwill is also reinforced by Jones. He argues the FO focused too much on keeping the Arabs united, and on side. The rationale for this is the FO focus on using the London Conference to mediate a solution for Palestine. A perceived failure of the FO to force some Arab states to go against their unified position within the Arab League, and their united rejection of partition and demands to end to efforts

²³⁹ Pelham to Attlee, Telegram, 25 January 1948, FO 371/68446, TNA.

²⁴⁰ Garran, Minute, 14 October 1947, FO 371/61596/E10298, TNA.

²⁴¹ Broadmead to Bevin, 1 June 1948, FO 371/68386/E7801, TNA.

²⁴² Sargent to Kirkbride, 22 December 1947, FO371/61584/12048415/ E11734/G, TNA.

²⁴³ Ibid.

to create a Jewish National Home in Palestine. It was argued in the previous chapter that the FO did not wish to alienate the Arabs in order to accommodate the Americans, and FO documents show a unified consensus in the need to maintain Arab goodwill. Owendale, Louis, Fitzsimons and Monroe also state that this was a FO objective, although none specifically dedicate their narratives of withdrawal around what the FO did and thought. Jones is more relevant than the others as he is dedicated to destroying the FO handling of withdrawal, arguing that failure in Palestine was because of a FO aversion to anything that may divide and agitate the Arab states. Jones believed that the FO failed to press Arab states when it could have successfully done so. Arguments that Egypt could have been coaxed into going against Arab opinion, against its own domestic pressures and against its own leading position in the Arab League seem highly unlikely. Egypt did want future governance of Sudan, and that was a possible leverage. However, Egypt did not suggest this regarding Palestine, only in relation to treaty revision, with Campbell reporting the two were inseparable.²⁴⁴ The only evidence of the idea being discussed in Egypt was from a reported 'police source' which stated that Sassoon and Sidky discussed the possibility. Hardly a strong foundation to an argument that Egypt would go against it's; regional allies, leading and vocal demands in the Arab League, as well as the political and public opinion in Egypt. The only Arab state the FO could have possibly applied pressure was on Abdullah, who wanted to annex the Arab population of Palestine and seemed happy to do so even at the expense of a new Jewish state in Palestine. Kirkbride did suggest that such a move could be beneficial, and Sargent even agreed to an extent, but he was more concerned with "the loss of Abdullah's position in the Arab world"²⁴⁵ if such action was taken, and there was greater concern from Sargent that it would do the same to Britain. This thereby reduced Arab goodwill and potentially isolated

²⁴⁴ Campbell to Bevin, Egypt Annual Review for 1947, 20 April 1948, FO407/398/12066704/229, TNA.

²⁴⁵ Sargent to Kirkbride, 22 December 1947, FO371/61584/12048415/ E11734/G, TNA.

Britain globally and from the United States. FO concern that backing annexation could have major implications for British relations with the entire Arab world outside of Transjordan, as well as its most important global ally the United States is an understandable position. The fact such action could also undo Abdullah's own position, Britain's only reliable Arab ally by the FO own assessment dismisses Jones argument, and shows just how concerned the FO was with maintaining Arab goodwill, not out of a single mindedness, but because of Arab nationalism the FO had extremely limited leverage which it could apply on any Arab state. Considering the FO could not even renew British rights and interests in Egypt and Iraq, and then had to renew ties with Abdullah, to satisfy an appearance of lesser British interference, it seems highly improbable that the FO could have forced Arab states to compromise on Palestine.

The British withdrawal from Palestine presented the FO with major problems. The FO could not fulfill COS requirements for future rights in Palestine, therefore the FO's prime focus was to retain Britain's position in Egypt, Iraq and Transjordan. It was united in believing that Arab goodwill was vital to secure future rights, and the Eastern Department's concerns of Arab nationalism were heard in London. Despite this awareness the FO failed to obtain successful treaty negotiation with Egypt or have its revisions with Iraq approved by parliament. Only in Transjordan did the FO find success, were it had far more advantages. The withdrawal from Palestine by the FO's assessment had hindered attempts to renew ties, due to fueling Arab nationalism and the demands this placed on the Arab governments. The FO did not fail to apply leverages on Arab states where it could have easily done so. In Iraq and Egypt, the FO could not protect existing British interests. Only in Transjordan did the FO have any real leverage. The FO was unwilling to press this, as it risked isolating both Britain and Transjordan from the Arabs and the US. Damaging the position of Abdullah, Britain's last reliable ally, posed the risk of a withdrawal from Palestine resulting in total loss of any

British position in the Middle East. The FO priority on retaining Arab goodwill is clear and was necessary for the FO to undertake any renewal of ties. The fact these failed, despite Arab goodwill being a priority, helps demonstrate just how strong rising Arab nationalism was, and how the withdrawal from Palestine had engulfed FO diplomacy in the Middle East.

Conclusion

During this period Britain's international position was changing. The Second World War helped fuel the deconstruction of large parts of the British Empire. As a result, Britain's military presence in many parts of the world was being reduced. This changing position was occurring during the Soviet Union's consolidation in Eastern Europe, with fears her reach may extend further into Europe and into the Middle East. The coming end of the British Mandate in Palestine created serious concerns for the COS, who consistently reiterated the importance of retaining military rights in Palestine, to retain Britain's favourable strategic position in the Middle East. To Britain, maintenance of her paramount position in the Middle East was vital to counter Soviet influence, and for use as a possible offensive in case of war. The loss of rights in Palestine was recognized as the most likely outcome of to any solution due to unfavorable views both communities held towards the British. Therefore, the retention of military rights in other Arab nations was essential for Britain to mitigate the loss of Palestine, and to secure future British security for the region. It was on this understanding that the majority view in the FO was to accommodate the Arab's, to retain goodwill and increase the likelihood of future British military rights being secured.

It was under these circumstances that the Eastern Department rationalized the importance of favoring Anglo-Arab relations, a matter which was not dismissed by the Northern American Department. The involvement of the United States, and Bevin's desire for an Anglo-American solution was met with little enthusiasm in the FO. Baxter, Beeley, Shone, Clayton, Stonehewer-Bird and Smart consistently warned against breaking the terms of the White Paper of 1939 to fulfill Truman's immigration desires. Bevin's desire for an Anglo-American initiative only gained limited support within the FO, from Howe and Sargent. The former still sympathized with Eastern Department concerns and was involved in the Colonial Office alternative solution, and the latter still sympathized with the concerns the Eastern

Department was raising. Therefore, opposition to the Eastern Department concerns were limited. In the Northern American Department Inverchapel continued to warn of Truman inflexibility on the matters and Butler's suggested rejecting Truman's calls. This showed unity within the FO with a general view that American demands would prejudice Britain's standing among the Arab states.

Continued opposition to American involvement is demonstrated in the FO's criticisms of the Anglo-American Committee of Inquiry recommendations. Baxter and Beeley warned that it would not provide a solution to the matter and that it would alienate the Arabs. Howe sympathized with this argument, going against his initial support for Bevin's Anglo-American initiative, to which Sargent reluctantly agreed. The concerns of the Eastern Department surrounding the Anglo-American Committee of Inquiry were shared in the Cabinet to some extent, and Brook's report condemning the committee recommendations was supported by Baxter and Beeley, who lead efforts to steer British policy away from the committee's recommendations. Truman's continued calls for permitting 100,000 Jews entry into Palestine concerned the Eastern Department so much that Beeley, Clayton, Kinahan, and Howe were willing to explore the Colonial Office's provincial autonomy scheme, despite concerns surrounding the policy, in order to compromise on a solution which would exclude going against the White Paper. This compromise helped lead to the provincial autonomy scheme being used in the Morrison-Grady discussions, which accepted the plan. Despite the mutual acceptance from the British and Americans, Truman ultimately rejected the plan. This officially removed the United States from formal negotiations on the matter, and reduced the credibility of Truman with the British, shown by Attlee's frustration, and Bevin's disappointment. For most of the FO however, the end of an Anglo-American solution meant that finding a solution without alienating the Arabs would be more probable, and therefore a welcome development due to the overwhelming rejection of Truman's calls.

The end of the Anglo-American initiative reduced the United States to the position of spectator, and during this time FO hostility to Truman's demands continued. When Truman stated that he might find congressional approval for financial assistance in delivering a solution, this was met with skepticism from Beeley and Sargent. When Goldmann presented his partition plan, which Acheson confirmed as a possible solution, Beeley and the Eastern Department rallied to warn Bevin it would ruin Britain's position in the Middle East. The limited deviation from Howe and Sargent to the FO line was not apparent after Truman's rejection of the Morrison-Grady plan, and Truman's Yom Kippur statement. Which incited anger from a previously sympathetic Attlee and Bevin, this left little challenge to FO opposition to American desires. The only notable deviation from the FO line during this period was from Inverchapel who seemed to go beyond his remit and suggest the British may become more accommodating to American desires than actually was the case. Inverchapel sympathy to Truman's domestic concerns and the case for partition did not have support from Butler, and Inverchapel was also openly criticized in the Eastern Department by Beeley. The Eastern Department was united in its opposition to American desires for the allowing 100,000 Jews entry into Palestine, and later for a viable state in Palestine. American requests to scrap the White Paper and Truman's attempts to influence a favourable outcome for the Zionist was met with hostility in the FO. Who saw such proposals as disastrous to Britain's attempts to retain its position in the Middle East.

The desire to retain Arab goodwill, and Britain's position in the Middle East was the FO priority. The FO reported that Britain's Palestine policy had the potential to engulf attempts to retain military rights in Egypt, Iraq, and Transjordan. Reports from Campbell, Pelham and Garran argued that Palestine was becoming increasingly important to Egypt and Iraq, and that British actions over Palestine could prejudice hopes of favourable treaty revision. This was shown by riots, unrest and political turmoil in these nations which called

for the rejection of continued British presence, and desired Palestine to remain a united Arab nation. The COS argued for the retention of rights in Palestine, a position the FO did not consider probable, however, to mitigate for this loss the Eastern Department sought to embark on successful treaty revision with Egypt, Iraq and Transjordan. It was in the continuation of military rights in these nations that the future of Britain's position in the Middle East could be secured. The determination in the FO to neglect American calls was in order to maintain Arab goodwill. This was the main consideration for the FO because Britain was not in a strong position to renegotiate military rights with Iraq and Egypt. Building on the warnings of Campbell and Pelham, Busk, Broadmead and Baxter warned that rising Arab nationalism could cause a loss of British rights in these Arab States unless a "conciliatory attitude towards the nationalists"²⁴⁶ was found. In Transjordan Kirkbride sought to gain British support for Abdullah's intended plan to annex part of Palestine, so not to alienate their only reliable regional ally, a matter which failed to gain official approval from Sargent, although the benefits of Abdullah's ambitions were recognized, and secretly endorsed by Bevin. This development did not remove FO concerns regarding the policy, and priority within the FO was on finding a solution which did not alienate the other Arab states.

The FO's desire to maintain Arab goodwill is proven during the London Conference, where Britain sought to negotiate with the Arab states without the pressures or fallout from an Anglo-American solution. The conference went ahead without the formal participation of the Jewish Agency or Arab Higher Committee. This shows that the FO was willing to find accord with the Arab states, due to the communities in Palestine not being represented. During the London Conference Arab demands were heard and discussed, and during this time the FO did not seek to apply significant pressures on the Arab states in order to find a solution more acceptable to the Jewish Agency. Pressures which could have been applied on

²⁴⁶ R.Louis, *The British Empire in the Middle East 1945-51*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1984) , p.327

Lebanon and Syria were not used, and following up Sassoon's claims that partition could be agreed with Egypt and Transjordan if Britain made the initial steps were not taken. The FO did not attempt or recommend applying such pressures, and the warnings from Busk, Broadmead, Baxter of the growing problem of Arab nationalism were given priority, a matter Sargent began to agree upon. Actions taken to divide or apply pressure to Egypt, Iraq and Transjordan could cause even greater domestic pressures on these governments to remove British influence. There was some division between Sargent and Kirkbride over Abdullah's annexation plans. This could have extended British military rights in the Arab parts of Palestine, and the decision to not support this, despite great motive, was not pursued to maintain Arab unity and goodwill. It was therefore apparent that the FO was unwilling to press the Arab states to accommodate Jewish or American demands.

The withdrawal from Palestine resulted in the FO trying to retain a British position in the Middle East which was becoming increasingly difficult due to rising Arab nationalism, which the FO believed was being fueled by events in Palestine. This was shown by demands for evacuation in Egypt, and the failure to get treaty revision ratified by the Iraqi parliament. Only in Transjordan could Britain manage to maintain its position, where it held considerable advantages. To the FO the Arab states were unlikely to go against their neighbors in the Arab League, and the public opinion of their nations. The priority was to not antagonize the Arab states further, in the hope of future military rights being granted. It was because of this the FO viewed Anglo-American cooperation with hostility, due to the insistence from Truman on scrapping the White Paper, which would greatly agitate the Arabs. The FO did not wish for wider Anglo-American cooperation to be affected; however, they were willing to argue against Truman's desires in order to protect Britain's own interests in the region. This occurred when the British sought to find a solution with the Arabs at the London Conference, where the United States was not present.

Overall, the Eastern Department, led by Baxter and Beeley called for the priority to be the maintenance of Arab goodwill, a view which was shared by the entire Eastern Department with the temporary and limited deviation from Howe. The Northern American Department lead by Butler shared these views, and the only deviation from Inverchapel was criticized. Sargent did not enthusiastically adhere to every call from his department, and attempted to support Bevin, however this support was largely absent after Truman's rejection of the Anglo-American initiative. After this, Sargent was more sympathetic to his office's views, and the damage alienating the Arabs was having on the prospects of Britain's future position in the Middle East. The FO was mostly consistent and united in its concerns and desire to maintain Arab goodwill, which was shown by reluctance to pressure or divide the Arab States at the London Conference. The withdrawal from the perspective of the FO had the ability to undo Britain's entire position in the Middle East if the Arab goodwill was not maintained. It was on this understanding that the FO was motivated to push for an Anglo-Arab solution, even at the expense of excluding the Americans. This was in the hope of retaining a credible military position in the Middle East and preventing Soviet influence in a region deemed essential to Britain's security.

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