



Arab-Zionist Perspectives on the Early Struggle for Justice in Palestine

LABEEB AHMED BSOUL

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*I dedicate this to my beloved brothers, sisters, students, friends, teachers,
and justice seekers.*

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CHAPTER 1

Introduction

The Arab-Israeli conflict is a multifaceted and enduring issue that dates back to the early twentieth century. One pivotal period in this dispute is the years between 1939 and 1948, encompassing the Second World War and the establishment of Israel. Palestine became embroiled in a contest between Arab and Zionist factions, each with their own interpretation of events.

The Arab viewpoint was that Palestine was their historic homeland, and they viewed the Zionist movement as an external colonial presence. They thought that creating a Jewish state in Palestine infringed upon their rights and endangered their existence. This resulted in extensive opposition to Zionist migration and settlement, culminating in armed confrontations between Arab and Zionist groups.

The Zionist view was that the Jewish people had a historical entitlement to reclaim their homeland in Palestine, from which they had been removed almost two thousand years ago. They argued that establishing a Jewish state in Palestine was not only fair but also indispensable for their survival, especially after the Holocaust.

The contrasting viewpoints have established the foundation for a prolonged and acrimonious dispute that persists up until the present time. This book continues the narrative from my previous works, namely

“Palestine and the Great Feud: Land Torn in Two; Zionism and the Infancy of Ideas (1897–1908)” and “Palestine in the Interwar Period: Between Internationalization and Revolution (1918–1939).” It offers a comprehensive analysis of this crucial era, delving into the positions of both parties and the occurrences that culminated in the formation of the new present-day Israel.

In this particular period, spanning from 1939 to 1945, the events in the region had a significant impact, especially regarding the contentious issue of Palestine. The period witnessed substantial advancements in the Arab and Zionist viewpoints of the future of Palestine. Both sides faced the challenging task of validating their respective causes.

The Arab perspective on Palestine during this period was shaped by a range of factors, including the rise of Arab nationalism, the failure of the League of Nations to enforce the 1937 Peel Commission’s recommendations, and the impact of the Holocaust on Jewish immigration to Palestine. Arab leaders, including Haj Amin al-Husseini, the Grand Mufti of Jerusalem, and the Arab Higher Committee, rejected the idea of partitioning Palestine and the establishment of a Jewish state, arguing that it would undermine Arab sovereignty and lead to the displacement of Palestinian Arabs. The Arab Revolt of 1936–1939, which saw widespread protests and violence against British rule and Jewish immigration, marked a turning point in Arab resistance to British colonialism and Zionist expansionism in Palestine.

The Zionist perspective on Palestine during this time period was marked by an increasing sense of urgency and determination to establish a Jewish state. In 1942, the Biltmore Programme called for the creation of a Jewish commonwealth in Palestine, signalling a departure from previous gradual settlement policies and accommodation of Arab interests. The impact of the Holocaust also strengthened the need for a Jewish homeland and rallied international support for Jewish migration to Palestine. Additionally, Zionist paramilitary organisations like the Haganah and Irgun carried out violent campaigns against British rule and Arab resistance, including the well-known Deir Yassin massacre in 1948.

The period between 1939 and 1948 was characterised by intense conflict as both Arab and Zionist viewpoints clashed over Palestine, each striving to promote their own interests and achieve justice for their people. The United Nations’ rejection of the 1947 Partition Plan, which aimed to divide Palestine into separate Jewish and Arab states, led to a new era of

conflict and displacement that persists today. This period's lasting impact on the Middle East continues to pose significant challenges for justice and peace in the region.

World War II had significant repercussions for many regions, including the Middle East. The struggle for control over Palestine during this time involved various Arab and Zionist perspectives and resulted in a complex series of events that continue to impact the region today. "Palestine, Challenge to Justice" offers a detailed analysis of the political, social, and cultural factors that contributed to this conflict through an exploration of primary sources and historical records. It provides comprehensive insights into the driving forces behind this conflict and sheds light on the ongoing battle for justice and peace in the region.

World War II has had a more profound impact on political history compared to the first. This can be attributed both to the nature of the war itself and to its consequences. The human loss resulting from World War II far exceeded that of World War I, with an estimated 60 to 70 million lives lost due to the conflict. Unlike World War I, which was largely confined to specific geographical regions, World War II was truly global in scope, spanning across Asia Pacific, Africa, Europe, and America. It holds a significant place in political history as it unfolded across all layers of the globe and involved warfare on land, at sea, and encompassed various landscapes such as air battles without clear front lines. During this time, the impact of wartime destruction extended beyond military personnel to civilians unlike ever before. The definition of war's victims expanded beyond solely military casualties.

The uniqueness of World War II lies in the fact that conflicting ideologies were merged together to confront a common enemy. Despite their opposing beliefs, the USSR and the USA united to fight against Nazi Germany. The use of nuclear weapons during the war caused significant changes to the international system in the post-war era. In August 1945, the US dropped atomic bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, which marked the beginning of the "Cold War" and shaped global politics for almost five decades. The profound political divisions that emerged at the beginning of World War II had far-reaching consequences that lasted for years.

The fall of Europe's global power, which began after World War I and continued after World War II, resulted in the shift of global power to two main wings—the USA and the USSR. Ideologies became more established parameters of the international system than ever before, dividing the world

into two opposing camps of communism and liberal capitalism and influencing almost every development in the international system with ideological polarisation. After World War II, the international system saw the process of decolonisation, and the Non-Aligned Movement emerged as a power outside of the two poles, formed by newly independent states. The Cold War was characterised by a systematic situation described as the balance of terror, which was based on the second strike capacity of the US and the USSR under nuclear weapons. Therefore, the systemic factor affecting the developments in international relations in the aforementioned process was the balance of terror and foreign policy attitudes towards maintaining this balance. Understanding the nature of World War II and the international system established afterwards is essential to comprehend international relations and the Arab-Zionist conflict.

However, the origins and outcomes of World War II place it in a unique position within world politics. While the causes of the war have been extensively discussed, it is important to recognise that certain factors held more influence than others. Blaming only Hitler for World War II as a pathological event and labelling Germany as Nazi Germany oversimplifies the complex political landscape at that time. This myth also needs to be dispelled when examining Zionism, which faced genocide during the war but seeks to justify its mistreatment of the Palestinian people—unrelated to the genocide itself—and hold accountable those responsible for such actions. To clarify, societal influences within European political climates paved the way for radical events like Hitler's rise to power and subsequently led to acts of genocide against Jewish communities. In summary, European support for Zionism allowed its exploitation by Western colonial powers; further exacerbating conflicts through relocating Jews deemed problematic within their own societies into an already volatile Middle Eastern region became a major catalyst for both war and aforementioned genocidal atrocities.

To fully understand the causes of World War II, we need to move beyond the conventional narrative of Hitler's policies as the main reason. While this approach does highlight the surface level of the issue, it fails to reveal the underlying contradictions. Instead, we need to examine the nature of the peace treaties signed after World War I, which ultimately paved the way for a new war.

The peace treaties were built on a foundation of revenge against the losing states of World War I, rather than focusing on establishing international peace and security. The Versailles Treaty signed with Germany is a

prime example of this, as it excluded Germany instead of integrating it into the international system, and burdened it with reparations debts.

France, in particular, saw Germany as its rival and enemy and had a significant influence on punishing Germany in this way. The seeds of World War II were thus sown immediately after World War I had ended. It's not surprising that the revisionist states of World War II (Germany, Italy, and Japan) were humiliated and did not receive what was promised to them after the war.

The spread of racist thoughts in Europe during the twentieth century is considered the second main reason for the outbreak of World War II. It is important to note that supporting racist thoughts, including those backed by theological arguments, has been a common practice of Western colonialism for centuries. In fact, prominent European political philosophers such as Hugo Grotius, Adam Smith, and John Locke legitimised the seizure of lands belonging to “inferior” societies by Europeans in the name of God and humanity. In the twentieth century, this tendency of European society to blame “others” within their own societies for social problems became more prevalent. Nazi Germany was not the first to implement racist laws, such as anti-Jewish laws, as some European states had already done so earlier. Although Japan (which was subjected to racism as the yellow race) requested the League of Nations to prohibit racism, this request was rejected by European powers. Thus, it can be observed that pathological cases like Hitler did not appear suddenly in Europe. On the contrary, the socio-political conditions that nurtured such individuals had already begun to take shape in Europe.

Thirdly, the leftist groups in Europe, particularly in Germany, are attributed as one of the causes of World War II. After World War I, these groups failed to capitalise on favourable conditions and support from society, leading them to be overshadowed by the far-right. Interestingly, a similar situation can be observed today where periods of crisis bring together ideologies that may seem opposite under normal circumstances. The linear political scale ranges from the far-left to the far-right, with various other ideologies in between such as Socialism, Social Democracy, Liberalism, Conservatism, and Nationalism.

In times of political, social, and economic turmoil, there is a rise in popularity of the far-right and far-left ideologies that advocate for a comprehensive overhaul of the system rather than moderate reformist approaches. This shift can be compared to pre-World War II Germany where deep political, economic, and social crises fuelled widespread

support for left-leaning groups initially. However, internal divisions among these leftist factions made it easier for the far-right to gain traction. For instance, Stalin's labelling of social democracy as "social fascism" led to fragmentation within the left German (extreme leftists, socialist leftists and social democrats), enabling the rise of right-wing forces like Hitler's National Socialism party. Consequently, Hitler targeted and suppressed leftist groups to solidify power in Germany. The inability of these leftist movements to resonate with German society played a role in setting the stage for World War II.

After Hitler came to power, Britain and France adopted an appeasement policy towards him, which unintentionally encouraged his aggression. The most notable example of this policy was the Munich Conference of 1938, where the Sudetenland region of Czechoslovakia was given to Germany in the hope of appeasing Hitler. However, Hitler invaded the rest of Czechoslovakia after this agreement and started World War II on September 1, 1939, thinking that Britain and France would remain silent to the invasion of the Danzig region of Poland. It's worth noting that Hitler was surprised by the reaction of Britain and France to his invasion of Danzig, after having violated Versailles and invaded the whole of Czechoslovakia. The appeasement policy adopted by Britain and France had an unintended result, and it contributed to the start of World War II.

According to the fourth reason, Hitler's policies were inclined towards Britain, France, and the USA, which eventually led to the outbreak of World War II. The primary concern for these states was their shared ideology, and they feared the alternative world paradigm offered by the USSR since the 1917 October Revolution. Hitler believed that even if Berlin was occupied, Western states would see him as "the last bastion against Asian barbarians" and approach negotiations. Harry S. Truman, who was a senator during Hitler's Operation Barbarossa against the USSR and later became the president of the United States, summarised the position of the U.S. in his speech at the Congress, stating that they would help whichever side suffered more casualties to continue the war so that Nazism and communism would consume each other. Additionally, Stalin demanded that the Allied states open the second front, but it was not until the USSR armies repelled the German armies on the Eastern front and began to advance towards the West that the Allies agreed.

It is important to note that the USA's passive stance during the post-World War I rebuilding of the global system due to its isolationist foreign policy, played a significant role in the emergence of World War II. For

instance, the exclusion of the League of Nations project proposed by the USA's President Woodrow Wilson rendered the organisation ineffective in the face of crises such as Abyssinia's occupation by Italy and Japan's occupation of Manchuria. Hitler's efforts to defeat Britain before the USA entered the war also created the impression that the war might not happen if the USA assumed global responsibility. Therefore, while Hitler was a final piece completing the puzzle, it is crucial to acknowledge that the weight of pathological events like Hitler in the outbreak of World War II was only in the form of a final piece completing the puzzle.

It is necessary to address the nature, consequences, and history of World War II to make sense of the rest of the twentieth century. Additionally, the war period had significant effects on the Arab-Zionist conflict's future. Hence, it is essential to examine the process that occurred until World War II and the establishment of the State of Israel afterwards to understand the Arab-Zionist conflict's nature in the rest of the twentieth century.

It is necessary to summarise the point that will be explained in the following parts of the study, which is the importance of the process starting from World War II until the establishment of the State of Israel in the Arab-Zionist conflict. Even the starting signals of World War II caused a change in Britain's Palestine policy. As a result, Britain decided to direct the process within the framework of its own initiative when the plans it put forward were not supported by Arabs and Jews. In 1939, the Mac Donald Report was published, which is an important document that shows Britain's policy change towards Palestine during World War II, which began to be felt in Europe. With this document, Britain aimed to prevent Arabs from going to war alongside Nazi Germany, considering the increasing importance of military facilities and oil in Arab countries. The document, also known as the 1939 White Book, promised that Palestine would be given independence within 10 years, Jewish immigration to Palestine would be limited to 75,000 for 5 years, and necessary measures would be taken to restrict illegal Jewish immigration to Palestine and the purchase of land. The document shows that Britain had a political agenda to establish a Jewish state in Palestine. The possibility of Arabs joining Nazi Germany in the war may have influenced this decision. There are two important points to consider. Firstly, while the Jewish community was not yet organised as a state, there were Arab states already established in the region. Secondly, Jews would not have supported Hitler, who was known to be anti-Jewish. However, during this period, the Arab states were

against both the Jews and the Western nations that supported them, due to British Mandate rule. Therefore, it is possible that the Nazis and Arabs could have united against Germany's common enemies.

During World War II, new players emerged in the Arab-Zionist conflict regarding the Palestinian cause. Jewish militia groups, such as Haganah, Irgun, and Lehi, postponed their struggle against Britain at the start of the war. However, towards the end of the war, these groups began to attack and sabotage the British. The attacks, which lasted about two years, caused significant damage to British soldiers and civilians, radar stations, and airports. The cost of the mandate administration itself, coupled with the destruction from World War II and international pressures, forced Britain to take action. As every international organisation reflects the will of its member states, the Palestinian issue was transferred to the victorious states of World War II and, therefore, became an international matter. In other words, the Palestine problem, previously under Britain's mandate administration, now falls under the responsibility of the United Nations Security Council due to its veto right.

Another significant consequence of World War II was the increased involvement of the United States in the Arab-Zionist conflict. Before the Palestinian issue was handed over to the UN, the US had already shown increased interest and had even differed in opinion with the UK. The USA, being one of the most powerful centres for the World Zionist Organisation with over 33 million people, was interested in the nature of Jewish immigration from Europe to Palestine. This interest was so great that the USA established a commission at the end of World War II to investigate the situation of Jewish refugees living in refugee camps in Europe. The commission emphasised the need to allow for the immigration of at least 100,000 Jews to Palestine, resulting in the US pressuring Britain to soften its immigration policy.

During the suggestion to the UK, the immigration policy of the USA remained unchanged. However, with the advent of World War II, the USA became more involved in the Palestinian problem and ended up confronting the UK on this issue. This led to the formation of the Anglo-American Committee, which was established solely to address the Palestinian issue of Jewish refugees. As a result, the United States became another actor besides the UN in dealing with the Palestine problem during World War II.

During World War II, the UK and the US were at conflict with each other. This conflict caused the Palestinian issue to get more attention on

the UN agenda. However, the issue became more complicated as the demands and expectations of the Palestinians and Jews began to differ. The Anglo-American Committee's report was initially not accepted by either party. When the UK submitted a report that was also not accepted, Britain decided to take the issue to the UN. With the arrival of new forces in the post-war period, the UN-Palestine Special Committee was established upon the UK's application. The committee found that despite the Arab boycott and the unanimous decision to give Palestine independence by ending the British mandate, Jews made up one-third of the total population of Palestine and about 6% of the entire population. In reference to the independence of Palestine, there was a committee that had opposing views. This led to the creation of two reports: Majority Report and Minority Report. The Majority Report recommended dividing Palestine into three regions: the Arab State, the Jewish State, and the Jerusalem Region. After two years, the Arab and Jewish states would become independent, while Jerusalem would be under the supervision of the UN. The Minority Report, on the other hand, suggested that the Arab and Jewish states should unite under the Federal Palestinian State. The Jews supported the Majority Report, while the Arabs who wanted a single independent Arab state in all of Palestine opposed both plans.

In the context of the impact of World War II on the Arab-Zionist conflict, it can be argued that the war played a significant role in the acceptance of the Majority report. The report's proposed boundaries likely took into account the Jewish refugees who were looking for a new homeland after the war. The feelings of guilt and compensation created by the genocide in Europe had a profound impact on the report's acceptance. It's important to recognise the Jewish diaspora's effective lobbying efforts during this time. However, the arguments put forward by the Jews supporting the Majority report reveal that Zionism learned a lot about racism from Western colonialism, even during the genocide. The Arabs warned the UN that they would respond to the plan within the framework of their right to defend themselves, which could exacerbate the Palestinian issue. Zionists rejected the proposal for a unified state supported by the Arabs. They argued that accepting this offer would result in Jews being marginalised and forced to conform to Arab socio-political standards due to their minority status. Additionally, they believed that an Arab majority would benefit from interacting with a progressive Jewish minority under such circumstances. This demonstrates how Zionists, influenced by Western colonialism and having experienced persecution in Europe, adopted

lessons from historical foes like “White man’s burden” and “civilising mission,” which were slogans used by France to justify past colonialism following British imperialism.

During and after the war, the balance of global power shifted from Europe to the USA and the USSR. This shift played a crucial role in determining the course of the Arab-Zionist conflict. The interests of the USA, the USSR, and Britain (as the former mandate state) were decisive in the report that proposed the division of Palestine. According to this plan, Britain stated that the consent of both Jews and Arabs must be obtained in any solution plans for the Palestine issue. If this consent is not obtained, Britain will not be responsible for the consequences of the plan and the responsibility will be assigned to the UN. The USSR supported the division decision in an effort to expand its spheres of influence towards the end of World War II. The USSR also advocated for the UN Security Council to be assigned to the Palestinian issue. This move was aimed at filling the geopolitical gap that would arise from Britain’s withdrawal from Palestine. The USA, aware of the gradual threat posed by the USSR, took a stand that the UK should remain in the region during the transition period. It is worth noting that the United States was initially opposed to the partition plan. The concern was that the Soviet Union’s influence in the region would expand, jeopardising the political and strategic interests of the West in the Middle East. Furthermore, there was a fear that access to Arab oil, which is vital for the US and its allies, would be endangered. However, due to the intense pressure from the Jewish diaspora in the USA, the United States eventually took a stance in favour of the partition. Therefore, the strategic calculations of the United States and the Soviet Union towards the region, as well as the refusal and non-cooperative attitudes of the Arabs, resulted in the approval of the Partition Plan.

The establishment of the Jewish State after World War II took the intercommunal conflict to a state level. The conflict between Arabs and Zionists began with the Partition Plan in the region. The situation worsened when Britain announced its withdrawal from Palestine on May 15, 1948. Just a few hours before the end of the mandate rule, the Zionists declared the establishment of the State of Israel on May 14, 1948. Immediately following the declaration, Egypt, Jordan, Syria, Lebanon, and Iraqi forces entered Palestine. As a result, the next phase of the conflict took shape as an inter-state war.



Power Imbalance and the Roles of the Allies, (1940–1948)

On September 3, 1939, Britain (along with France) declared war on Germany. Italy joined the war on the side of Germany on June 10, 1940, forming the Axis powers. Japan would later join the Axis powers as well. In June 1941, Germany invaded the Soviet Union, which led to the Soviet Union joining the Allies. Since the United States was providing logistical support to the Allies, Japan attacked and destroyed the American fleet at Pearl Harbour in Honolulu in December 1941, which forced the United States to enter the war. As a result, the war evolved from a conflict primarily in Europe to a global war that spread to Asia, Africa, and the oceans.

The interactions between Arabs and Zionists were influenced by the developments of the interwar years. While the Zionist movement had a clear strategy outlined in their first Congress in 1897, Arab and Palestinian efforts lacked a cohesive long-term approach to address the conflict with the Zionist-colonial alliance. Additionally, there was significant influence from British, French, and American sources on Arab political and intellectual leaders, leading to varying attitudes towards international allies as opposed to the unified stance of Zionists favouring the allies, with the exception of the Lehi organisation (Stern Gang).

On that day, both the Palestinian National Movement and the Zionist Movement rejected the White Paper for their own reasons. This was happening while the Palestinian revolution was ending. National leaders and members of the party were either exiled, imprisoned or in detention

centres. Thousands of revolutionaries and political activists were being held captive. Since there was no leadership in Palestine, there were no official political statements made by the National Movement regarding the war that was declared the day after.¹

During a time when World War II was raging, the Mufti—who was the head of the Arab Higher Committee—took refuge in Lebanon. While the committee was operating abroad, the Mufti didn't issue any official statement endorsing either the Allied or Axis powers. However, he sent a message to the French administration expressing gratitude for allowing him to take shelter in Lebanon. The message included a vague assertion of his position at the time.² On 15 September 1939, Colonel Richard Meinertzhagen, serving as Military Adviser to the Middle East Department of the British Colonial Office, recorded in his diary an overture made by the Grand Mufti of Jerusalem, Haj Amin al-Husayni. The Mufti had proposed to cooperate with Britain in the unfolding war effort in exchange for permission to return to Jerusalem. However, British authorities rejected both the proposal and the broader political implications it embodied. While the War Office and the Mandate Administration advocated for his arrest, the Foreign Office opposed such action on the grounds that detaining the Mufti might elevate his status and transform him into a political martyr.³

When the war was declared, the Mufti sensed French control tightening over him. He quickly left Lebanon and arrived in Baghdad on October 15, 1939, along with two hundred leaders of the revolution and its most prominent activists. In Baghdad, he was welcomed by Prince 'Abdallah, the trustee of the throne, Prime Minister Nuri al-Said, head of the royal court Rashid 'Ali al-Kailani, and leaders of parties supporting and opposing the government. The Mufti also received a warm welcome from the most prominent leaders of the army, especially members of the Golden Square Colonels: Fahmi Said, Kamil Shabib, Salah al-Din al-Sabbagh, and Mahmud Sulaiman. In anticipation of the possibility of being kidnapped by the British, the army provided him with the necessary protection. The

¹ Rashid Khalidi (2007). *The Iron Cage, the story of the Palestinian Struggle for Statehood* Boston: Beacon Press, pp. 114–117.

² Bayān Nuwīhiḍ al-Hout (1981). *Political leaders and institutions in Palestine, 1917–1948* (al-Qiyādāt wa-l-Mu'asasāt al-Siyāsiyah fī Falistīn, 1917–1948), p. 431.

³ Meinertzhagen, Richard (1959). *Middle East Diary, 1917–1956*. London: Cresset Press, p. 104; Mandel, Daniel (2004). *H.V. Evatt and the Establishment of Israel: The Undercover Zionist*. London: Routledge, p. 104; Mattar, Philip (1988). *The Mufti of Jerusalem: Al-Hajj Amin al-Husayni and the Palestinian National Movement*. New York: Columbia University Press, p. 235.

Mufti affirmed his commitment to not interfere in internal Iraqi affairs and to focus on his political activities with senior revolutionists.⁴

During the war between Germany, England, and France, the national elites of affiliation, popular masses, and the General Arab and Palestinian public did not view it as a war between dictatorship and democracy. Instead, they saw it as a conflict of colonial interests between two European powers. The Arabs living in their own country suffered from English, French, and Italian colonialism and did not benefit from democracy, while Germany had not colonised any Arab land. The British colonialism and its support for the Zionist project provided both objective and subjective reasons which caused the majority of Arab elites and masses to support Germany.

During the Second World War, the majority of intellectuals, especially the youth, sympathised with Germany. According to a study conducted by British intelligence in October 1940, 80% of the Arab population hoped for the victory of the Axis powers. The same study found that 100% of those surveyed were convinced that the Zionist Movement would be the sole beneficiary of the victory of the Allies.⁵ During the time when Nazism and fascism were on the rise, many people who were known for their support of liberalism or Marxist tendencies stood up to defend democracy and condemn these ideologies. However, some individuals like ‘Abd al-Raḥmān al-Shahbandar and a group of thinkers in Syria, as well as Ṭāhā Ḥussein and ‘Abbās Maḥmūd al-’Aqāad and their students in Egypt, deviated from this norm. They too spoke out against Nazism and fascism, despite their differing political views.⁶ In the aftermath of Germany’s invasion of the Soviet Union and the subsequent joining of the Allies, there was ample space for communist organisations. However, liberals and Marxists opposed the mass movement:

There is no doubt that the statements of some officials in the United States and Britain to support the Zionist aims were among the most severe obstacles to the masses’ conviction of the feasibility of meeting the Nazi resistance front.⁷

⁴ ‘Abd al-Karīm al-’Umar (1999). *Memoirs of al-Ḥāj Muḥammad Amīn al-Ḥusseinī* (Mudhakirāt al-Ḥāj Muḥammad Amīn al-Ḥusseinī), pp. 51–53.

⁵ ‘Abd al-Raḥmān ‘Abd al-Ghanī (1995). *Nazi Germany and Palestine 1933–1045* (Almāniā al-Nāziyyahwa-Falaṣṭīn, 1933–1945), p. 277.

⁶ Bayān Nuwīhid al-Ḥout (1981). *Political leaders and institutions in Palestine, 1917–1948* (al-Qiyādāt wa-l-Mu’asassāt al-Siyāsiyyah fī Falaṣṭīn, 1917–1948), p. 430.

⁷ Emile Touma (1978). *Sixty years of Palestinian Arab Nationalism*, (Sitūn ‘Āmman ‘alā al-Ḥarakah al-Qawmiyya al-’Arabiyyah al-Filistīniyya), p. 197.

The outbreak of the war led to a permanent cessation of the Palestinian revolution, and the national elements did not act in any way that could affect British interests. This was considered crucial assistance to Britain at that time as it provided its army, fleet, and flights with a vital and secure base in Palestine. Additionally, the leaders and supporters of the Defence Party quickly declared their loyalty to the Allies. In response to Sir Harold McMichael's call on behalf of the British High Commissioner for both Arabs and Zionists to set aside their differences upon Britain declaring war, a delegation from this group's leaders went directly to his headquarters where they expressed support for Britain's cause and willingness to aid in the war efforts alongside their allies.⁸

The censored press during that time period was known for its repetition of the Allies' propaganda. Its calls for recruiting were not only regrettable but also seemed to lack the urgency of fighting an emergency enemy. Instead, the press emphasised the prevention of Arab transgressions against each other and the purification of their hearts. This approach led to a suspension of focus on the root causes of the conflict and mismanagement of the situation.⁹ The Iraqi government and army reacted to the British aggression, perceiving it as a conspiracy that led to bloodshed. They claimed that several ministers had been politically killed, without specifying any names. The occupied Iraq was described as having peaceful and law-abiding citizens who only needed to carry out their daily activities and religious duties undisturbed. Following the British occupation of Damascus, *al-Difā'* reported relief among the people with the arrival of Allied forces.¹⁰

On June 8, 1940, the British War Minister announced acceptance of registering the Palestinians as volunteers in the various fighting units, such as the Engineers Division and the Royal Services Division. It will form a number of Palestinian battalions as units in the British Army to defend

⁸ Bayān Nuwīhid al-Hout (1981). *Political leaders and institutions in Palestine, 1917–1948* (al-Qiyādāt wa-l-Mu'asasāt al-Siyāsiyyah fī Falastīn, 1917–1948), p. 414.

⁹ *Palestine* newspaper, no. 4200 on 10/25/1939 and no. 4415 on 7/2/1940; 'Alī Muḥāfazāh (1989). *Political thought in Palestine from the end of the Ottoman rule to the end of the British Mandate, 1918–1948* (al-Fikir al-Siyāsī fī Falastīn min Nihāyat al-Ḥukum al-'Uthmānī ḥatā Nihāyat al-Intidāb al-Briṭānī, 1918–1948), p. 78.

¹⁰ *al-Difā'*/Defense newspaper, May 1941 and issue no. 1868 on 27/6/1941; 'Abd al-Raḥmān 'Abd al-Ghanī (1995). *Nazi Germany and Palestine 1933–1945* (Almāniā al-Nāziyyahwa-Falastīn, 1933–1945), pp. 318–319.

Palestine and its neighbouring countries.¹¹ Despite the resentment caused by British practices since the occupation of Palestine in 1917, particularly the state-sponsored terrorism against various groups of Palestinian Arabs during the 1936–1939 revolution, many volunteer and cooperative groups supported the war effort by calling for recruitment and purchasing war bonds. A wide array of politicians and intellectuals from Syria, Lebanon, Jordan, Iraq, and Egypt responded to this call. They believed that praising Anglo-Saxon democracy and its focus on the compatibility of Arab and British interests did not serve the Palestinian cause, and it allowed the Zionists to dominate the field.¹²

Throughout Palestine, conferences, festivals, press articles, and poetry readings were held to contest Britain's role in taking care of the Arab nation's causes, democratic values across the world, and respect for Islam. This was in opposition to Nazi Germany and Fascist Italy's known actions. Prominent figures who spoke out against this included Suleiman Tūqān, the mayor of Nablus, Sheikh Abd al-Qādir al-Mudhafar, Fakhūr al-Nashāshibī, leader of the Defence Party, and Sheikh Muṣṭafā al-Khairī, the mayor of Ramla. On August 26, 1940, Sheikh Muṣṭafā al-Khairī made a statement on the al-Quds radio station:

Have we heard that Britain usurped land from its people in these countries, established a colony on it, or stole from its families' real estate or money, or seized a piece of land without rent, rent, and compensation? Or I gave this land to another country? I swear to you by God to answer me as you know, and I am sure that your answer will be No. Let German and Italian radio stations know that the Arabs do not accept colonialism, and that the words of misleading radio stations do not affect them.¹³

¹¹ 'Alī Muḥāfazah (1989). *Political thought in Palestine from the end of the Ottoman rule to the end of the British Mandate, 1918–1948* (al-Fikir al-Siyāsī fī Falstīn min Nihāyat al-Ḥukum al-'Uthmānī ḥatā Nihāyat al-Intidāb al-Briṭānī, 1918–1948), pp. 78–80.

¹² Muḥammad 'Izzat Darwazah (1984). *The Palestinian Issue in its various stages: History, Dairy and Comments* (al-Qaḍiyya al-Filistīmiyya fī Mukhtalf Marāhilha: Tārīkh wa-Mudhakirāt wa-Ta'liqāt), pp. 142–143; Shabtai Teveth (1987). *Ben-Gurion and the Arabs* (Zionist personalities), vol. 2, p. 27.

¹³ *Palestine* Newspaper, issue 4483, on 27/8/1940; 'Alī Muḥāfazah (1989). *Political thought in Palestine from the end of the Ottoman rule to the end of the British Mandate, 1918–1948* (al-Fikir al-Siyāsī fī Falstīn min Nihāyat al-Ḥukum al-'Uthmānī ḥatā Nihāyat al-Intidāb al-Briṭānī, 1918–1948), p. 79.

According to documents from the “Research Centre” of the Palestine Liberation Organisation, the Arab Vanguard and Palestinian commandos were Arabs who fought alongside the British in France during the early years of the war in North Africa, Abyssinia, Greece, and Crete. Many of its members were killed or captured. The group also included three Arab teams of engineers and drivers who participated in the Montgomery campaign and with the Eighth Army in Italy.¹⁴ During the period from November 1940 to June 1944, Palestinian Arab volunteers contributed greatly to the war effort. In addition to the Sixteenth Arab Infantry Battalion, many volunteered to join the British Royal Aviation, the US Navy, and the Royal Signal and Services teams. The number of Palestinian Arab volunteers reached 19,182, compared to 28,859 Zionist volunteers.¹⁵ Farmers also played a significant role by doubling their agricultural production to meet the growing needs. Volunteering was not limited to men, as women were also invited to join the “volunteer services division” during a women’s meeting held in the Orthodox School Hall in Jaffa on November 17, 1942. These women were tasked with driving, nursing, clerical work, managing and organising warehouses, cooking, and drawing. Some Arab female volunteers received exceptional promotions as a result of their outstanding performance.¹⁶

After the outbreak of war, the Arab political map looked like this: Egypt and Iraq had limited political independence and combat capabilities due to treaties with Britain. Syria and Lebanon were fighting for their national sovereignty and political freedom against France. Saudi Arabia was politically independent, but had strong ties to the United States due to oil concessions and a historical relationship with Britain’s royal family. Yemen was politically independent, but suffered from underdevelopment and rigidity. The Gulf region and the eastern and southern coasts of the Arabian Peninsula were under “protection” agreements with Britain on

¹⁴Mustafa Ahmad Abbasi (2017). “Palestinians fighting against Nazis: The story of Palestinian volunteers in the Second World War,” *War in History*, 2017, pp. 15–17.

¹⁵‘Abd al-Rahīm Ahmed Ḥusseīn (1984). *Zionist activity during World War II 1939–1945* (al-Nashāt al-Ṣuhyūnī khilāl al-Ḥarb al-‘Ālamiyyah al-Thāniyya, 1939–1948) Beirut: al-Mu’asasah al-‘Arabiyyah lil-Dirāsāt, pp. 127–131; Mustafa Ahmad Abbasi (2017). “Palestinians fighting against Nazis: The story of Palestinian volunteers in the Second World War,” *War in History*, 2017, pp. 1–23.

¹⁶Mustafa Ahmad Abbasi (2017). “Palestinians fighting against Nazis: The story of Palestinian volunteers in the Second World War,” *War in History*, 2017, pp. 18–19.

harsh colonial terms. North Africa was directly colonised by France, while Libya and Somalia were under the colonial rule of the Italian fascist regime.

The Levant's eastern location and oil resources were important to the British Council, especially with the anticipated end of Britain's contact with its colonies in the east. To take over affairs of the region as if it were the ruler with full powers, the Council appointed a resident minister in Cairo. The Middle East command placed the British forces under the supervision of the resident British Minister. It became responsible for coordinating everything in the region, including production, supply, transportation, and political decisions, as well as participating in the military efforts necessary to achieve victory.¹⁷

During World War II, the Arab regimes lacked the necessary resources to make independent choices regarding their position in the international equation. As a result, no Arab regime declared war on the Axis until two years after the war began, and only after German and Italian forces had been defeated and fully withdrawn from North Africa. However, from a practical standpoint, all Arab regimes aligned with the Allies from the outset of the war. The Egyptian army took control of the Suez Canal and protected the British Eighth Army's supply lines. The Jordanian army participated in the suppression of the Rashid 'Alal-Kilani movement in Iraq, as well as in the British campaign against the French forces in Syria and Lebanon, which had declared their allegiance to the Vichy government. Additionally, about half a million Arab workers worked in military workshops, built roads, and fortifications while putting Arab transportation at the service of the Allied armies. Arab oil played a significant role in the war effort, and the Arab regimes also provided food to the Allied armies.¹⁸

The Arab governments did not have a unanimous stance, with the government of Nūrī al-Sa'īd taking immediate action to arrest and hand over Germans in Iraq to British forces upon the declaration of war by Britain. This led to political conflict in Baghdad between supporters of unlimited cooperation with Britain and those who believed that national interests required caution based on past exploitation during World War I. Some politicians and officers advocated for Iraq's adherence only to its obligations under the 1930 treaty, which prohibited Britain from mobilising

¹⁷ Moḥamed Hassanein Heikal (1996). *Secret Negotiations between the Arabs and Israel* (al-Mufawāḍāt al-Siriyyah bayn al-'Arab w-Isā'īl), p. 138.

¹⁸ Bayān Nuwīḥīd al-Hout (1981). *Political leaders and institutions in Palestine, 1917–1948* (al-Qiyādāt wa-l-Mu'asassāt al-Siyāsiyyah fī Falistīn, 1917–1948), pp. 430–431.

armies in Iraq or involving it in the war effort.¹⁹ As a result of increased British interventions, conflict erupted between the two Iraqi teams, leading to the formation of the Rashid Al-Kilen movement. More information about this movement will be provided later.

According to Muhammad Hassanein Heikal, the British imposed a military authority on Egypt after the war that was similar to what was imposed during the First World War when it was under British protection. As a part of this, the most prominent members of the “School of the East” structure, which advocated for Egypt’s interaction with the Levant, were arrested and put under house arrest. These measures were taken against people like Aziz al-Masry, Ali Maher, Ali Sharawi, Abd al-Rahman Azzam, and Muhammad Ali Aloba, as well as the leaders of various political parties, such as the Wafd Party, the National Party, and the Muslim Brotherhood. Some of the leaders who were arrested included Ahmed Hussein, Fatima al-Rawyan, and Nur ad-Din Farahat, along with Hassan al-Banna.²⁰ Amidst the accusation of King Farouk for his alleged communication with the Axis, he was compelled by the British forces to dismiss the Ministry of ‘Alī Māhir and appoint Muṣṭafā al-Naḥḥās to form a new Ministry by using their weaponry as leverage on February 4, 1942. On the same day, Miles Lampson, the British Ambassador, 1st Baron Killern, sent him an ultimatum containing his demands:

If I do not know before 6:00 pm today that Muṣṭafā al-Naḥḥās Pasha was invited to form the Ministry, then King Farouk bears the consequences of what is happening.²¹

In 1939, the Jewish Agency in Palestine declared its support for Britain before declaring war on Germany. On August 29 of the same year, Chaim Weizmann sent a message to British Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain confirming that the Jewish community stood by Britain and was ready to follow the British government’s directives. On March 9, 1939, a meeting was held for the Executive Committee of the Jewish Agency and the

¹⁹ ‘Abd al-Karīm al-’Umar (1999). *Memoirs of al-Ḥāj Muḥammad Amīn al-Ḥusseīnī* (Mudhakirāt al-Ḥāj Muḥammad Amīn al-Ḥusseīnī), pp. 54–57.

²⁰ Moḥamed Hassanein Heikal (1996). *Secret Negotiations between the Arabs and Israel* (al-Mufawaḍāt al-Siriyyah bayn al-’Arab w-Isā’īl), p. 144.

²¹ Muhammad Hassanein Heikal (2002). *The Fall of the Regime, why was the July 1952 Revolution Necessary* (Suqūt Nizām, limādhā kānat Thawrat Yūlyū 1952 Lāzimah) Cairo: Dar al-Shurūq, p. 13.

General Assembly of the Supreme Council for the Jews of Palestine. One of the decisions made during the meeting was to recruit young men and women to serve the settlement group Yishuv.²²

The White Paper issued in May 1939 was a severe blow to us, and so far, we will support with all our abilities the right of the Jewish people to their national homeland. As for the opposition of the White Paper, in any case it was not directed Against Great Britain or the British Empire. The war that has now been imposed on Great Britain by Nazi Germany is our war, and all the assistance that will be within our capabilities, which we will be allowed to provide to the British Army and to the British people, we will give it wholeheartedly.²³

The Weizmann message and the Jewish Agency statement suggest that the Zionist leadership believed that the Zionist Movement and global Judaism were major participants in the ongoing war alongside the allies. The Zionist leadership viewed this war as a decisive battle, the outcome of which would determine the future of the Zionist project. In the same way that the First World War led to the issuance of the Balfour Declaration, it was hoped that the current war might pave the way for the establishment of a Jewish state. Accordingly, the Jewish Agency and all Zionist organisations rallied behind the Allied war effort. They ceased all terrorist operations against the British in Palestine after the declaration of war and the Zionist gangs' radio broadcasts that had been ongoing for several months.²⁴

In October 1939, registration offices opened for volunteers between the ages of 18 and 50 years old. The offices specified the qualifications of each person in detail, along with an indication of their skills. The offices started ordering engineers, pharmacists, drivers, and bakers to participate. The number of people who registered their names until the end of 1940 was 85781 men, which was equivalent to 71% of the male population, and 50262 women, which was equivalent to 42% of females. Men between 18

²² Sa'īm Muḥammad 'Abd al-Ra'ūf (1990). *The Activity of the Jewish Agency for Palestine from its inception until the establishment of the State of Israel from 1922–1948* (Nashāt al-Wikālah al-Yahūdiyyah li-Falstīn mindh Inshā'ihā ḥatā qiām al-Dawlaj, 1922–1948), pp. 506–507.

²³ Bayān Nuwīḥīd al-Hout (1981). *Political leaders and institutions in Palestine, 1917–1948* (al-Qiyādāt wa-l-Mu'asassāt al-Siyāsiyyah fī Falistīn, 1917–1948), pp. 414.

²⁴ Ibid.