



**THE BEGIN-SADAT CENTER
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**Bar-Ilan
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The San Remo Conference 100 Years On: How the Jewish National Home Entered International Law

Efraim Karsh



Mideast Security and Policy Studies No. 172

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The San Remo Conference 100 Years On: How the Jewish National Home Entered International Law

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

There is probably no more understated event in the history of the Arab-Israeli conflict than the San Remo Conference of April 1920. Convened for a mere week as part of the post-WWI peace conferences that created a new international order on the basis of indigenous self-rule and national self-determination, the San Remo conference appointed Britain as mandatory for Palestine with the specific task of “putting into effect the declaration originally made on November 2, 1917, by the British Government [i.e., the Balfour Declaration], and adopted by the other Allied Powers, in favour of the establishment in Palestine of a national home for the Jewish people, it being clearly understood that nothing shall be done which may prejudice the civil and religious rights of existing non-Jewish communities in Palestine, or the rights and political status enjoyed by Jews in any other country.”¹ This mandate was then ratified on July 24, 1922 by the Council of the League of Nations—the postwar world organization and the UN’s predecessor.

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The importance of the Palestine mandate cannot be overstated. Though falling short of the proposed Zionist formula that “Palestine should be reconstituted as the national home of the Jewish people,” it signified an unqualified recognition by the official representative of the will of the international community of the Jews as a national group—rather than a purely religious community—and acknowledgement of “the historical connection of the Jewish people with Palestine” as “the grounds for reconstituting their national home in the country.”²

It is a historical tragedy therefore that 100 years after this momentous event, the Palestinian leadership and its international champions remain entrenched in the rejection not only of the millenarian Jewish attachment to Palestine but of the very existence of a Jewish People (and by implication its right to statehood). Rather than keep trying to turn the clock backward at the certain cost of prolonging their people’s statelessness and suffering, it is time for this leadership to shed its century-long recalcitrance and opt for peace and reconciliation with their Israeli neighbors. And what can be a more auspicious timing for this process than the 100th anniversary of the San Remo Conference?

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From the Balfour Declaration to the Paris Peace Conference

Though relegated since Roman times to a small minority in the Land of Israel (renamed Palestine by the Romans) under a long succession of imperial occupiers, not only was Jewish presence there never eliminated but the longing for the ancestral homeland occupied a focal place in Jewish collective memory and religious ritual for millennia, with Jews returning to Palestine from the earliest days of dispersion, mostly on an individual basis but also on a wider communal scale.

In the 1880s, however, a different type of returnees began arriving: young nationalists who rejected diaspora life and sought to restore Jewish national existence in the historic homeland. In August 1897 the First Zionist Congress was held in the Swiss town of Basle, defining the goal of Zionism as “the creation of a home for the Jewish people in Palestine to be secured by public law” and establishing institutions for its realization.

This goal was achieved on November 2, 1917 when the British government issued a formal statement (in the form of a letter from Foreign Secretary Arthur Balfour to Lord Rothschild) pledging to “use its best endeavours to facilitate the... establishment in Palestine of a national home for the Jewish people” provided that “nothing shall be done which may prejudice the civil and religious rights of existing non-Jewish communities in Palestine, or the rights and political status enjoyed by Jews in any other country.”³

Reached after months of negotiations with the Zionist movement, several British cabinet deliberations, and consultation with US President Woodrow Wilson and prominent Anglo-Jewish leaders, this recognition of the Jewish right to national rebirth by the then

foremost world power was not only endorsed by Britain's war allies but also by prominent pan-Arab nationalists including Emir Faisal ibn Hussein of the Hashemite family, the celebrated hero of the "Great Arab Revolt" against the Ottoman Empire and the effective leader of the nascent pan-Arab movement. On January 3, 1919, he signed an agreement with Chaim Weizmann, upcoming leader of the Zionist movement, which endorsed the creation of a Jewish national home in Palestine in line with the Balfour Declaration and urged "all necessary measures... to encourage and stimulate immigration of Jews into Palestine on a large scale."⁴

Armed with this agreement, on February 27 the Zionists asked the postwar peace conference, which had begun its deliberations in Paris the previous month, to recognize "the historic title of the Jewish people to Palestine and the right of the Jews to reconstitute in Palestine their National Home" and to appoint Britain as "Mandatory of the League [of Nations]," tasked with creating "such political, administrative and economic conditions as will secure the establishment there of the Jewish National Home and ultimately render possible the creation of an autonomous Commonwealth, it being clearly understood that nothing shall be done which may prejudice the civil and religious rights of existing non-Jewish communities in Palestine or the rights and political status enjoyed by Jews in any other country."⁵

The mandatory system to which the Zionists referred was enshrined in Article 22 of the Covenant of the League of Nations, which sought to steer those "colonies and territories" of the defunct Ottoman and German empires that were "inhabited by peoples not yet able to stand by themselves under the strenuous conditions of the modern world" toward independence as "a sacred trust of civilization." By way of doing so, each colony/territory was to be administered by a League mandatory that was to guide it toward self-governance in accordance with the distinct "stage of development of the people, the geographical situation of the territory, its economic condition and other similar circumstances." More specifically, it stipulated that "Armenia, Syria, Mesopotamia, Palestine and Arabia must be completely severed from the Turkish Empire" and that certain communities in these territories "have reached a stage of development where their existence as independent nations can be provisionally recognized subject to the rendering of administrative advice and assistance by a mandatory power until such time as they are able to stand alone."⁶

The implementation of Article 22, however, was easier said than done, as historic rivalries and political differences among the great powers that had been suppressed by the necessities of war-winning resurfaced at the peace conference. While Britain and France sought the immediate designation of mandates—the former as a means to reduce the financial burden of keeping a million-strong army in the Middle East and to

undo the 1916 Sykes-Picot agreement by bringing Palestine and the oil-rich region of Mosul under its auspices;⁷ the latter in the hope of bringing “Greater Syria” under its wing—President Wilson, though architect of the mandate system (or indeed the League of Nations, which the US eventually failed to join), insisted on sending an inter-Allied commission to Syria to gauge opinion there. However opposed to the idea, neither British Prime Minister David Lloyd George nor his French counterpart Georges Clemenceau felt able to dismiss the plan out of hand. Instead they embarked on an intricate game of procrastination that drove the exasperated Wilson to send a purely American commission to Syria, co-headed by Henry King, Oberlin College president, and Charles Crane, a Chicago valve manufacturer and influential Democratic Party donor, whom Wilson deemed “particularly qualified to go to Syria because they knew nothing about it.”⁸ By the time the commission telegraphed the gist of its recommendations on July 10, 1919 (submitting the full report at the end of August),⁹ the Treaty of Versailles between the Allies and Germany had been signed and Wilson had left for America without bothering to send the report to the deliberations on the Turkish peace treaty that continued apace, with its contents not made public until 1922—long after the mandate issue had been decided.

It was thus left to Britain and France (with a little help from Italy) to complete the dissolution of the Ottoman Empire and the creation of a new regional order on its ruins. This proved no easy task as the two war allies quickly found themselves at loggerheads over the region’s future. Lt. Gen. Edmund Allenby, commander of the Egyptian Expeditionary Force (EEF) that had driven the Ottoman armies from the Levant, was openly contemptuous of the meager French contribution to the fighting. He encouraged local Arab leaders to resist the French attempts to enforce their authority in areas designated to them by the Sykes-Picot Agreement. He also cultivated Faisal as the “supreme authority in Syria on all Arab matters whether administrative or military,” giving the emir free rein to intimidate political opponents and promising him participation in the decision-making process over the Levant’s future. No less galling for the French was the British refusal to withdraw the EEF from the Levant before the peace conference had reached its decision. Requests to increase the number of French troops in Syria were peremptorily declined; Britain remained firmly in control, leaving the French with a gnawing sense of impotence.¹⁰

During a visit to London in December 1918, Clemenceau, one of the least imperialistically minded of French politicians, acquiesced to Lloyd George’s request that Britain be given control over Palestine (the northern half of which was designated by the Sykes-Picot Agreement as an international zone) and Mosul (included in the French sphere) in return for recognition of France’s Syrian mandate. As the British seemed to be dragging their feet on the promised evacuation of troops from Syria, the two leaders locked horns time and

again at the Paris Peace Conference.¹¹ Even after the conclusion of a formal agreement on the withdrawal of British forces from Cilicia and Syria beginning on November 1, 1919 and their replacement by French troops “west of the Sykes-Picot line” and by an Arab force “at Damascus, Homs, Hama, and Aleppo,” Clemenceau would not forgive Lloyd George for what he considered an attempted double-cross.¹²

Faisal’s imperial dream

To complicate matters further, Anglo-French differences were skillfully exploited by Faisal to further his grandiose ambitions. Already during the anti-Ottoman revolt the emir had begun toying with the idea of having his own “Greater Syrian” empire, going so far as to negotiate this option with key members of the Ottoman leadership behind the backs of his British war allies.¹³ When this initiative came to naught, Faisal tried to insert his imperial dream into the postwar peace agreements, and by way of doing so he sought to win over the Zionist movement, which he believed had great influence in the Western chancelleries. On June 4, 1918, several months before the end of WWI, the emir hosted Chaim Weizmann at his camp near Aqaba, on the northern tip of the Red Sea, where he acknowledged “the necessity for cooperation between Jews and Arabs” and “the possibility of Jewish claims to territory in Palestine.”¹⁴

When they met again in London in December 1918, Faisal was far more forthcoming. By then he had established a foothold in Syria under Allenby’s protective wing, and he hoped to expand this opening into a full-fledged empire with US backing and support. “The Arabs had set up some form of government centered in Damascus, but it was extremely weak,” Weizmann wrote about this interview with Faisal. “His great hope was in America, which he thought would be able to destroy the [Sykes-Picot] agreement.” Were the Zionists to help in swinging American public opinion behind his cause, he “was quite sure that he and his followers would be able to explain to the Arabs that the advent of the Jews into Palestine was for the good of the country, and that the legitimate interests of the Arab peasants would in no way be interfered with.”¹⁵

These alleged sentiments culminated in the historic Weizmann-Faisal agreement. Two months later, with his candor questioned after publicly describing the prospective Jewish national home as a potential source of regional conflict,¹⁶ Faisal sought to reassure the Zionists of his continued adherence to the agreement. “We Arabs, especially the educated among us, look with the deepest sympathy on the Zionist movement,” he wrote to Felix Frankfurter, a prominent American Zionist (and future US Supreme Court justice), “and we regard [the Zionist demands] as moderate and proper. We will do our best, in so far as we are concerned, to help them through: we will wish the Jews a most hearty welcome home.”¹⁷ “Between the Arab leaders, as represented by Faisal, and

ourselves there is complete understanding, and therefore complete accord," an evidently relieved Weizmann wrote Balfour.¹⁸

Weizmann's optimism was largely misplaced. Faisal was speaking from both sides of his mouth. In his testimony to the Paris peace conference a month after signing the agreement with Weizmann the emir refrained from mentioning, let alone endorsing, the Balfour Declaration, proposing instead to leave Palestine's future "for the mutual consideration of all parties interested."¹⁹ This phrasing not only gave the country's non-Jewish population a veto power over the establishment of a Jewish national home (in contrast to the Balfour Declaration that rendered them "civil and religious rights" but no say over Palestine's future): it also made Sharif Hussein of Mecca, Faisal's father and notional leader of the "Great Arab Revolt" who sought to establish a unified Middle Eastern empire, and presumably Faisal himself (as would-be king of Syria) serious contenders to Palestine's inclusion in their prospective kingdoms. As the emir put it on one occasion, since Syria was a "merchandise which has no owner," it was only natural for Britain, France, and himself to "try to appropriate it before the others."²⁰

Hence, no sooner had Faisal promised Clemenceau (during a Paris meeting on April 13) "to use his efforts with the people to secure a French mandate for Syria"²¹ than he embarked on a spirited effort to tarnish this pledge by manipulating the King-Crane Commission against the French (and the Zionists). Within this framework he assembled a "General Syrian Congress" that would "make clear the wishes of the Syrian people to the American Commission of Enquiry,"²² launched an extensive propaganda campaign, orchestrated mass demonstrations, and intimidated political opponents and ordinary citizens alike. "Feisal has taken the whole of the political campaign into his hands and has sent instructions to all parts of the country," reported the EEF's chief political officer Brig. Gen. Gilbert Clayton. "The people have been told to ask for complete independence for Syria, and, at the same time, to express a hope that it will be granted to other Arab countries."²³

Convened for the first time on June 3, 1919, about a week before the commission's arrival, the General Syrian Congress was anything but representative. No real elections had ever been held and its delegates belonged by and large to the small circle of (mostly Iraqi) nationalists who had fought alongside Faisal during the war and manned his administration in its wake. One need only note that 35 of the Congress's 120 seats were held by members of the tiny nationalist group *al-Fatat*, which even after the war numbered a mere 200, or that only two of the 16 delegates who allegedly represented the predominantly Christian Lebanon were Maronites, to appreciate the non-representative nature of this assembly.²⁴

Such were Faisal's hopes that the King-Crane Commission ("the best thing he had ever heard of in his life" to use his own words) would facilitate his imperial dream that he was not deterred from threatening to set the region ablaze should it fail to arrive in the region, or should the British forces be withdrawn from the Levant in favor of a French mandate. "Unless you can at once enable me to reassure Faisal and tell him that the Commission is coming out and will decide the future of the country, it is certain he will raise the Arabs against the French and ourselves," Allenby warned Balfour. "If this rising under Faisal should take place, it will not only endanger the position of British troops in Syria, but... will also seriously jeopardize the whole situation in Palestine and Syria."²⁵

Faisal's machinations did not escape the commission's notice. "There were evidences of considerable pressure exerted by the Government to secure the union of all elements upon one program. Government agents tried hard to persuade, cajole, or threaten all, Christians and Moslems alike, into subscribing," read a confidential appendix to its report designed "For the use of Americans only."²⁶ Yet ignoring the flimsiness of the "evidence" submitted to the commission, King and Crane preferred the General Syrian Congress's suggestions to those of some of their advisors, recommending that "Emir Faisal be made the head of the new united Syrian State." Paying lip service to the "natural desires" of predominantly Christian Lebanon, which "have already had a measure of independence," the commission's report insisted that "For the sake of the larger interests, both of Lebanon and of Syria... the unity of Syria has to be urged."²⁷ (This at a time when according to a British estimate only 15% of Lebanese favored Hashemite rule and when Lebanon's Christian religious leaders pleaded with the peace conference that the country "should not be placed in any way under an Arab and Moslem Government.")²⁸

Similarly, while feigning "a deep sense of sympathy for the Jewish cause," the commission dismissed the millenarian Jewish attachment to Palestine as valid justification for the establishment of a Jewish national home there. Effectively treating the Jews as a religious community rather than a nation, it recommended that "Jewish immigration should be definitely limited, and that the project for making Palestine distinctly a Jewish commonwealth should be given up," thus relegating the country's Jewish community to a permanent minority in Faisal's prospective Syrian kingdom. "There would then be no reason why Palestine could not be included in a united Syrian State, just as other portions of the country," the commission wrote, "the holy places being cared for by an International and Inter-Religious Commission, somewhat as at present, under the oversight and approval of the Mandatary and of the League of Nations. The Jews, of course, would have representation upon this Commission."²⁹

These conclusions were based on what the commission heard from the General Syrian Congress as well as the 1,863 petitions it received—most of which were known to be "not

proportional to their respective populations,” to reflect “the influence of organized propaganda,” or to have been “fraud[ul]ently secured.”³⁰ Ignoring these facts altogether, as well as the Congress’s highly unrepresentative and self-serving nature, the King-Crane report uncritically cited its assertions at some length as if they were statements of fact rather than a propaganda ploy to promote Faisal’s Syrian kingdom:

We oppose the pretensions of the Zionists to create a Jewish commonwealth in the southern part of Syria, known as Palestine, and oppose Zionist migration to any part of our country; for we do not acknowledge their title, but consider them a grave peril to our people from the national, economical, and political points of view. Our Jewish compatriots shall enjoy our common rights and assume the common responsibilities.

We ask that there should be no separation of the southern part of Syria known as Palestine nor of the littoral western zone which includes Lebanon from the Syrian country. We desire that the unity of the country should be guaranteed against partition under whatever circumstances.³¹

In other words, at a time when he reassured the Zionists of his continued commitment to the creation of a Jewish national home in Palestine, Faisal was busy manipulating the peace conference into eschewing this very goal, describing Jewish national self-determination as a clear and present danger to the local population, and demanding the abandonment of the idea altogether and the suspension of all Jewish immigration.

Nor was Faisal deterred from accompanying his political machinations with intimidation attempts whenever he deemed it necessary. As the peace conference reconvened in London on February 12-April 10, 1920 (with the salient absence of the United States) to discuss the Turkish peace treaty, it was warned by Allenby that “any decision incompatible with Arab aspirations concerning Syria Palestine or Mesopotamia taken without Faisal’s presence will not be acknowledged by Arabs and will cause great difficulties in the future for which [the Arab] nation declines all responsibility.”³²

This was of course a hollow threat given Faisal’s unpopularity among his would-be Syrian subjects, who resented their domination by this foreign ruler and his batch of alien associates. As late as November 1919, a year after the Ottoman surrender, the EEF’s new chief political officer, Col. Richard Meinertzhagen, reported that “the whole movement” in Syria was still “Pro-Turk and Anti-Sherifian.” So much so that Faisal’s younger brother Zeid, who deputized for him in his absence (the emir spent nine and a half months of his twenty-two-month-long Syrian spell in Europe), was forced to plead for Druze protection against his Damascene subjects.³³

Ignoring this reality altogether, Allenby kept amplifying the seriousness of his protégé's threat. As the emir was about to convene the General Syrian Congress for a special session that would declare Syria's independence and crown him as king, Allenby warned Lord Curzon, who, in October 1919, had replaced Balfour as foreign secretary, that the only way to prevent this development was for the London Conference to recognize Faisal "as representative of [the] Arab State including [the] British provinces of Mesopotamia and Palestine and [the] French provinces of Lebanon and [the] littoral."³⁴

No sooner had Curzon told Allenby to warn Faisal off any "irresponsible action" that would "seriously compromise" Syria's future³⁵ than he was informed that on March 8, 1920, the General Syrian Congress had proclaimed the emir as King Faisal I of Syria "within its natural boundaries, including Palestine," in political and economic union with Iraq.³⁶ And while the proclamation demanded that France and Britain vacate the country's western (Lebanon) and southern (Palestine) parts, Allenby sought to sweeten the pill to his superiors by passing Faisal's assurance that neither the "proclamation of [independence] nor his own advent to the throne of Syria will change the friendly relations between Syria and Great Britain." Rather, these moves were a desperate bid to urge the peace conference to end its inordinate delay in deciding the fate of the defunct Ottoman territories and "fulfil its promises" to the "Arab people."³⁷

As Curzon remained unimpressed, instructing Allenby "to inform Amir Faisal at once that H.M. Government cannot recognize the right of Damascus Congress, of whose composition or authority they know nothing, to settle [the] future of Syria, Palestine, Mosul or Mesopotamia," the field marshal upped the ante. Were Britain and France to persist in rejecting Faisal's enthronement, he said in an echo of the emir's threat, war was certain to ensue and Britain would be dragged by the French into a conflict that ran counter to its own interests and for which it was ill prepared. The only way to avert this debacle was for the peace conference to acknowledge Faisal's sovereignty "over an Arab nation or Confederation embracing Syria, Palestine and Mesopotamia, the Administration in Syria being secured to France and that of Palestine and Mesopotamia to [the] British."³⁸

The foreign secretary would have nothing of this effective resuscitation of the Sykes-Picot Agreement. While Britain had no wish for a war with Faisal or a new military campaign in the Middle East, and while it was not averse to the emir's proclamation as King of Syria "by a properly constituted Syrian authority," this was hardly the case here. The General Syrian Congress was a "self-constituted body without representative character or authority" that sought to confront the League of Nations with a fait accompli at a time when it was drawing up the mandates for Palestine, Mesopotamia, and Syria. Did Allenby propose to dispense with the entire mandate system to accommodate Faisal's ambitions? And how would the proposed arrangement be reconciled with the Balfour Declaration?

Above all, what business did Faisal have with Mesopotamia in the first place given the unanimous opposition by its sociopolitical elites to Hashemite rule? If the emir was truly interested in resolving the Syrian imbroglio rather than imposing his own grand ambitions, he should come to Europe to (yet again) make his case to the peace conference, “with corresponding recognition of [the] special positions of France in Syria and Lebanon and [the] British in Palestine, the latter including obligation to provide a national home for Zionists in that country.”³⁹

Curzon proved prescient. Allenby’s doomsday scenario failed to materialize. The only outburst of violence was a pogrom in Jerusalem (on April 4-7) under the demand for Palestine’s incorporation into Faisal’s newly proclaimed kingdom in which five Jews were murdered and 211 wounded. But this had no perceptible impact on the London Conference decisions, which laid the groundwork for the long envisaged award of the Syria and Lebanon mandate to France and the Palestine and Mesopotamia mandates to Britain.

Zionist problems and misconceptions

Faisal’s blatant machinations notwithstanding, the Zionist leaders were surprisingly trusting of the emir. Though alarmed by the incitement emanating from Damascus to the extent of trying to attach a liaison officer to the King-Crane Commission and obtaining an American pledge that Palestine would be “specifically excluded” from the commission’s terms of reference,⁴⁰ they would not see Faisal for the duplicitous and subversive force he was. In a letter to Balfour on April 9, Weizmann praised the emir’s (supposed) effort “to exercise all his influence towards having his estimate of the Zionist cause and the Zionist proposals as ‘moderate and proper’ shared by his following.”⁴¹ A few weeks later he wrote Faisal, together with Frankfurter, to express “deep gratitude of [his] continued efforts towards friendliest relations between Arabs and Jews” and to assure him of the Zionist movement’s determination to “further the happiest cooperation.”⁴²

As late as October 1919 Weizmann still considered Faisal a staunch ally who appreciated the immense potential of Arab-Jewish cooperation, advising his Zionist colleagues to ignore the emir’s latest definition of Palestine (in an interview with a London Jewish newspaper) as an inextricable part of the prospective Arab kingdom.⁴³ “He is very upset about his own affairs, of course, and is dead-set against the French,” he wrote to a Zionist friend after a London meeting with Faisal in late September. “This naturally complicates our relations with him, but I think he’ll just have to put up with it.”⁴⁴ Another meeting with the emir left him even more upbeat. “He is ready to take Jewish advisers and is willing, even anxious, to have Zionist support in the development and even administration of the Damascus region,” Weizmann wrote Balfour:

We, of course, would be willing to make a very great effort to help Faisal, as it would help us very much towards establishing good relations with the Arabs both in Palestine and Syria. The agitation against us in Palestine is conducted from Damascus. By cooperating with Faisal we would gain the goodwill both of Damascus and of Mecca, we would have peace in Syria and Palestine and, incidentally, get out of the impasse into which the present Anglo-French-Arab negotiations have got.⁴⁵

It was only Faisal's March 1920 self-enthronement that forced the Zionist leadership to acknowledge the true nature of his ambitions. On March 31, days before the Jerusalem pogrom, Weizmann warned Maj. Gen. Sir Louis Bols, chief military administrator in Palestine, of the grave regional consequences attending the appeasement of Faisal. "If F. has to be recognized as King of Syria (possibly also Mesopotamia), not for any inherent reasons of justice but simply because we cannot afford to fight him, in other words because of our weakness," he argued,

F. would know that we have yielded to pressure, and would utilize his enhanced position to make us yield more and more. It is evident from the way how F.'s ambitions grew. Two years ago he was a Bedouin sheik, a capable but modest soldier; at present he is attempting to play the role of a Near Eastern Napoleon and to set up an Arab Empire from the Euphrates almost to the Nile.⁴⁶

Unbeknownst to Weizmann, the appeasing line of Allenby and his anti-Zionist administrators in Palestine had by now been eclipsed by the Anglo-French rejection of Faisal's self-enthronement. Yet this did not automatically translate to a Zionist gain as France's rejection of the emir's imperial ambitions implied neither a corresponding readiness to reduce the territorial scope of its Syrian mandate nor acceptance of the British and Zionist interpretation of the Palestine mandate.

This had not always been the case. As early as June 4, 1917, five months before the Balfour Declaration, Jules Cambon, secretary-general of the French foreign ministry, issued a letter (on Prime Minister Ribot's authority) that endorsed the national rebirth of the Jewish People in its ancestral homeland. "You consider that, circumstances permitting, and the independence of the Holy Places being safeguarded on the other hand, it would be a deed of justice and of reparation to assist, by the protection of the Allied Powers, in the renaissance of the Jewish nationality in that Land from which the people of Israel were exiled so many centuries ago," he wrote to the Zionist leader Nahum Sokolow. "The French Government, which entered this present war to defend a people wrongly attacked, and which continues the struggle to assure the victory of right over might, can but feel sympathy for your cause, the triumph of which is bound up with that of the Allies. I am happy to give you herewith such assurance."⁴⁷

Though French support for the Jewish national home slackened as the government realized that this gesture would not sway the Zionist movement behind its demand of Palestine's internalization, and while Paris was not consulted during the formulation of the Balfour Declaration and feared its detrimental implications for the Sykes-Picot Agreement, Sokolow managed to obtain (on February 10, 1918) a public statement from Foreign Minister Stephen Pichon that "there is complete agreement between the French and the British governments in matters concerning the question of a Jewish establishment in Palestine." In a public clarification issued four days later, Pichon substituted "the creation of a national home for the Jews in Palestine" for the original statement's "a Jewish establishment in Palestine."⁴⁸

By then the Philo-Semitic Clemenceau (who played an important role in the rehabilitation of the falsely imprisoned French Jewish officer Alfred Dreyfus in the face of rampaging antisemitism)⁴⁹ had reassumed the premiership after a decade-long absence and Franco-Zionist relations had improved. Shortly after the Zionist appearance before the Paris peace conference in late February 1919, André Tardieu, a member of the French delegation (and future prime minister of France), issued an official statement saying the French government would neither oppose the placement of Palestine under British trusteeship nor the establishment of a Jewish State there—a goal the Zionists dared not openly pronounce at the time.⁵⁰

In its testimony to the conference, the Zionist delegation outlined the boundaries of the prospective Jewish national home whereby the northern border was to run from a point on the Mediterranean south of Sidon along the Litani River (in today's Lebanon) past Mount Hermon to the vicinity of the Hijaz Railway (some 30 miles east of the Jordan River), which was to constitute Palestine's eastern frontier.

These boundaries were largely commensurate with the British definition, which envisaged Palestine as comprising the biblical territory from "from Dan to Beersheba" with the northern border extending "up to the Litani on the coast, and across to Banias, the old Dan, or Huleh in the interior."⁵¹ Yet since this line also signified the southern border of Syria, which was to become a French mandate, and since it went way beyond Sykes-Picot's internationalization of Palestine's northern half, the Zionists sought to win France's support for their proposal before the matter was decided by the peace conference.

On September 11, 1919, Weizmann met the French chief advisor on Syrian affairs who intimated that "the French would accept the Litani river line without difficulty."⁵² He was left with a similarly upbeat impression after a meeting with Pichon, who indicated that while the French were not "deeply interested in the details of this or that line of the Palestinian-Syrian frontier, provided there is general satisfaction of France over the Syrian question" they "would *like to show* that they are also doing something for Zionism."⁵³

By the time the peace conference reconvened in London, however, these positive sentiments had all but vanished. In late January 1920 Clemenceau had resigned his post and his successor, Alexandre Millerand, not only shared nothing of his predecessor's affinity to Zionism and Jews but sought to resuscitate Sykes-Picot's defunct internationalization scheme in an attempt to undermine the Jewish national home and the British mandate to facilitate its implementation. "I have satisfied myself from documentary evidence that French propaganda has greatly increased in Palestine during last two months and is now working actively against Zionism and for a French Palestine in a unified Syria," Meinertzhagen informed Curzon on March 2, as the conference was deliberating the region's future. "You will realize how easy it is in Palestine to conduct a very dangerous propaganda and how easy it will be to wreck at its outset our administration and policy of His Majesty's Government. I am of opinion that the French aim at nothing less."⁵⁴

Matters came to a head when Lloyd George read a telegram from US Supreme Court Justice Louis Brandeis, leader of the American Zionists and President Wilson's close confidant, warning that the application of the Sykes-Picot Agreement to Palestine "would defeat full realization of [the] promise of [a] Jewish [National] Home" by dividing the country "in complete disregard [of its] historic boundaries," and that the only way to implement the Balfour Declaration, which had been "subscribed to by France as well as other Allies and Associated Powers," was to concede the proposed Zionist boundaries.⁵⁵

This sent Philippe Berthelot, secretary-general of the French foreign ministry, who led most of the negotiations at the London Conference and who was "very scornful of the idea of a Jewish National Home" (to use Lloyd George's words), into a tirade.⁵⁶ Disparaging Brandeis as having "an exaggerated sense of his own importance" (effectively contradicting his own earlier claim that "President Wilson was entirely guided by Mr. Brandeis"), he dismissed the Zionist proposal as "too extravagant to be considered for a single moment" before proceeding to lament Allied support for the "largely mystical" Zionist movement, which in his view was based on the misconceived hope of "rescuing large numbers of wretched Jews in Russia and Central Europe" at a time when "the great majority of these so-called Jews [probably] had very little real Jewish blood in their veins."⁵⁷

Having propagated the Zionist position at the beginning of the conference in the hope of persuading his French counterparts "to take a liberal view of their obligations in regard to the settlement of the future boundaries of Palestine,"⁵⁸ Lloyd George didn't demur against Berthelot's outburst. By now the two powers had agreed the text of the Palestine clause in the Turkish peace treaty, which was broadly based on Lloyd George's own definition ("Palestine: the boundaries to be defined in accordance with its ancient limits

of Dan to Beersheba, and to be under British mandate”), and the British prime minister was happy to leave the precise demarcation of the borders to a later stage and to inform Brandeis that his “geography was at fault, and that it might be as well if he studied more authoritative and accurate maps than were apparently at present at his disposal.” Berthelot seemed to relent somewhat at this stage, asking Lloyd George to inform Brandeis that its rejection of his “extravagant claims” notwithstanding, France “had no intention of adopting a hostile attitude, but was quite prepared to make liberal arrangement for the supply of water for the Zionist population.”⁵⁹

San Remo

This feigned affinity proved extremely short lived. When the Supreme Allied Powers met again on April 19-26, 1920 in the Italian resort town of San Remo to finalize the Turkish peace treaty, the French were back to their old game. Enraged by what he considered the less than unequivocal British rebuff of Faisal’s self-enthronement, which he feared would reduce the French mandate in Syria to a mere façade for the emir’s effective rule, Prime Minister Millerand exploited the Palestine mandate as a springboard for improving France’s regional position. As a result, the French delegation to San Remo did not content itself with disputing Palestine’s northern border but questioned the British and Zionist interpretation of the Palestine mandate, or indeed the notion of a Jewish National Home, in an attempt to recover Sykes-Picot’s envisaged Anglo-French condominium for Palestine.⁶⁰

No sooner had Curzon requested that the Balfour Declaration, “which had been accepted by the Allied Powers,” be written into the Palestine mandate “in the precise form in which it had been originally given” than Berthelot brushed aside the idea. Conceding that “the whole world was sympathetic to the aspiration of the Jews to establish a national home in Palestine” and expressing France’s willingness to do its utmost “to satisfy their legitimate desire,” he nevertheless proposed to reconsider this project altogether. Instead of writing the Balfour Declaration into the mandate, he argued, the Palestine question should be submitted to the League of Nations—not least since “he could not recall that general acceptance had [ever] been given to Mr. Balfour’s declaration by the Allied Powers.”⁶¹

Curzon was taken aback. “M. Berthelot was possibly not fully acquainted with the history of the question,” he corrected his French counterpart with quintessential English understatement. The terms of the declaration had been communicated in February 1918 to Foreign Minister Pichon and approved by him, as they had been by President Wilson and also by Italy, Greece, China, Serbia, and Siam. “He thought, therefore, he was quite justified in saying that Mr. Balfour’s declaration had been accepted by a large number of

the Allied Powers.” Berthelot wouldn’t budge. Since the declaration had neither been officially endorsed by the French government nor accepted as a basis for Palestine’s future administration, he argued, France was categorically opposed to “any reference in an official instrument, such as the Turkish treaty, to an unofficial declaration made by one Power, which had never been formally accepted by the Allies generally.”⁶²

The Italian prime minister, Francesco Nitti, interceded. “It was useless to go into past history,” he said. “It appeared to him that in principle the Powers were generally in agreement as to the desirability of instituting a national home for the Jews.” Yet the discussion had revealed Anglo-French differences regarding the rights of Palestine’s non-Jewish communities, and had, moreover, raised the entire issue of the status of Roman Catholics in the East. Hence, without questioning Britain’s ability to effectively carry out its mandatory obligations, it was thought that it might be advisable to set up an international commission that would propose new regulations for the Holy Places in lieu of the existing ones, as well as methods for the adjudication of interfaith disputes.⁶³

This drew Millerand into action. Already at the London Conference the French had used the issue of Christianity’s holy sites as a vehicle for reintroducing the internalization of Palestine envisaged by the Sykes-Picot Agreement, only to run into unwavering British opposition.⁶⁴ Now that his Italian counterpart had reintroduced the issue, the French prime minister wouldn’t miss the opportunity to gain a say in administering Palestine at Britain’s expense. “He was not precisely informed as to what had transpired during the discussions which Mr. Lloyd George had held with M. Clemenceau on the [holy sites] subject,” Millerand said. And while he had no objection to the award of the Palestine mandate to Britain, “he was equally sure that Mr. Clemenceau had not contemplated that this mandate should carry with it the renunciation of the traditional rights of the inhabitants of Palestine.” The way he saw it, the Palestine question involved three real issues: “The first was that there should be a national home for the Jews. Upon that they were all agreed. The second point was the safeguarding of the rights of non-Jewish communities. That again, he thought, offered no insuperable difficulties. The third was the question of existing traditional rights of non-Jewish bodies.” And despite his certainty that Britain “would display her well-known liberal spirit in dealing with this question,” he would like the conference to factor into its decisions “the moral situation in France created by centuries of sacrifice” in the Holy Land.⁶⁵

Lloyd George would not fall for this honey trap. While it made sense for a European power to act as protector of the Roman Catholic community so long as Palestine was under Ottoman rule, he said, this was no longer the case. Britain was not Turkey as far as the treatment of religious and ethnic minorities was concerned and it was inconceivable to subject it to the same conditions “which had been imposed upon the Turks by force after a

series of bloody wars." Making France the protector of Palestine's Catholics at a time when Britain was in charge of administering the country would not only be "insulting and humiliating to Great Britain" but would "simply lead to a dual administration by two Great European Powers." Had this only been a matter of form, Britain would have done its best to meet the French sensitivities, Lloyd George argued. But:

The present trouble, however, was a practical one. It was most undesirable to have two mandatories in Palestine; one of the mandatories would incur all the trouble and expenses and cost, and yet would have no power at all in regard to religious bodies. The other mandatory would, it was suggested, have full authority in regard to religious matters... To have two mandatory Powers in Palestine would make it quite impossible for Great Britain to administer the country, and it might even easily raise difficulties in regard to her relations with France.⁶⁶

This view prevailed. The French backed down, only to resume the attack on the writing of the Balfour Declaration into the terms of the mandate. Berthelot dismissed the declaration as "a dead letter" and claimed that "all the Jews in France were anti-Zionist, and had no desire at all to go to Palestine," whereas Millerand suggested to repeat the declaration's substance while omitting the provision that "The mandatory will be responsible for putting into effect the declaration originally made on the 8th [2nd] November, 1917, by the British government and adopted by other Allied powers."⁶⁷

Curzon seemed at a loss as to what exactly the French were opposing. Were they against a Jewish national home in the first place or were they concerned with protecting the rights and privileges of Palestine's non-Jewish communities? He had understood that France was agreeable to inserting the Balfour Declaration into the peace treaty, albeit not in its precise phrasing and without noting that it had been originally made by the British government at a certain date. He had endeavored to meet those objections, however misconceived they might have been. But now the French delegation seemed to have substituted its own draft for the insertion of the declaration in the peace treaty, even in a modified form, which was something that Britain, as the designated mandatory for Palestine, couldn't possibly accept. Besides, "the Jews regarded the declaration of Mr. Balfour in its entirety as the charter of their rights, and they attached great importance to reference being made to the original declaration in the Treaty of Peace." And though the French might believe that the Jews "had no reason to attach capital importance" to the declaration's insertion in the treaty, "[t]he fact remained...that they did attach such importance, and, after all, they were the best judges of their own interests." In these circumstances, was it really necessary to continue squabbling over an issue on which the British government had taken up a position from which it was practically impossible for it to retreat?⁶⁸

Effectively evading Curzon's points, Millerand shifted the discussion to the need to safeguard "the civil and political rights of the French community in Palestine," triggering yet another exchange with the British foreign secretary, who failed to see what "political rights" meant in French law and in what ways they differed from the Balfour Declaration's civil rights:

In the British language all ordinary rights were included in "civil rights." He was anxious to avoid introducing in the treaty a word which might have a different meaning for the French and for the British, and might revive the "religious" rights which has [had] just been disposed of.⁶⁹

Yet again Nitti stepped into the fray to facilitate a French climb-down. It seemed to him that this latest difference was a matter of form rather than substance, he said; and much as he understood the French point regarding political rights, there was no reason for further procrastination on the matter as the conference was "quite agreed as to what was intended and designed."⁷⁰ With Millerand acquiescing in Nitti's request on condition that the relinquishment of French religious privileges not be formally mentioned in the treaty and that France's point on political rights be recorded in a procès-verbal, the terms of the Palestine Mandate were quickly agreed, and incorporated into the Turkish Peace Treaty that was signed four months later in the French town of Sèvres:

The High Contracting Parties agree to entrust, by application of the provisions of Article 22 [of the Covenant of the League of Nations], the administration of Palestine, within such boundaries as may be determined by the Principal Allied Powers, to a mandatory to be selected by the said Powers. The mandatory will be responsible for putting into effect the declaration originally made on November 2, 1917, by the British Government, and adopted by the other Allied Powers, in favour of the establishment in Palestine of a national home for the Jewish people, it being clearly understood that nothing shall be done which may prejudice the civil and religious rights of existing non-Jewish communities in Palestine, or the rights and political status enjoyed by Jews in any other country... The terms of the mandates in respect of the above territories will be formulated by the Principal Allied Powers and submitted to the Council of the League of Nations for approval.⁷¹

Epilogue

"Among the more satisfactory items of news from San Remo is the statement that Great Britain is to receive a mandate for Palestine which will be considered, in terms of Mr. Balfour's Declaration, a national home for the Jews," read a London *Times* editorial on April 27, 1920:

We recently called attention to attempts there were being made to invalidate that Declaration, which embodied wisely, albeit tardily, the only sound policy the Allies could adopt towards the Jewish people... But though this opposition was at length overcome, and the promise given, the opponents of the promise have not wearied in their efforts to render it nugatory. They dislike the idea that the Jews should have a national home of their own and would fain persuade the non-Jewish world that the Jews are merely a religious denomination without special race character.

This observation proved prescient. The drafting of the terms of the mandate and their ratification by the League of Nations Council, necessary to make them operative, proved a far more arduous and prolonged process than the Zionists envisaged. On the territorial demarcation issue, to mention one major obstacle, they had to contend not only with France's minimalist perception of Palestine's northern border but also with Britain's effective exclusion (by the March 1921 Cairo Conference) of Transjordan from the territory of the Jewish national home and the appointment of Emir Abdullah ibn Hussein of Mecca, Faisal's elder brother, as its temporary ruler.

A no less crucial problem related to the mandate's ultimate goal. With their original demand that "Palestine should be reconstituted as the national home of the Jewish people" already watered down by the Balfour Declaration, the Zionists asked the peace conference to recognize "the historic title of the Jewish people to Palestine and the right of the Jews to reconstitute in Palestine their National Home... [which would] ultimately render possible the creation of an autonomous Commonwealth,"⁷² as states were often called at the time. Yet while prominent British politicians (notably Lloyd George and Colonial Secretary Winston Churchill) had no qualms about conceding in private their vision of the Balfour Declaration as culminating in full-fledged statehood,⁷³ British drafters watered down the Zionist demand for a self-governing commonwealth to "self-governing institutions" thus obfuscating the National Home's ultimate aim and insinuating these institutions' relevance to Palestine's non-Jewish communities. "I should much prefer myself to see the phrase 'self-governing institutions' omitted entirely," Weizmann lamented. "[T]his means little or nothing and preceding, as it does, the reference to the Jewish National Home serves to circumscribe the meaning of the latter."⁷⁴ Yet this formulation was eventually inserted in the July 1922 League of Nations' mandate:

The Mandatory shall be responsible for placing the country under such political, administrative and economic conditions as will secure the establishment of the Jewish national home, as laid down in the preamble, and the development of self-governing institutions, and also for safeguarding the civil and religious rights of all the inhabitants of Palestine, irrespective of race and religion.⁷⁵

But the thorniest bone of contention revolved around the demand—considered by Weizmann “the most important part of the Mandate”⁷⁶—that the preamble to the mandate include explicit recognition of “the historic title of the Jewish people to Palestine.” In early June 1920, just over a month after the San Remo conference, the Zionists found to their horror that the first official British draft of the mandate deleted the reference to “the historical connection of the Jewish people with Palestine and the claim this gives them to reconstitute Palestine as their National Home,” driving Weizmann to urge Balfour and the newly installed High Commissioner for Palestine, Sir Herbert Samuel, among others, to have this reference reinserted.⁷⁷ This was quickly done, only to have it removed yet again from the next draft of the mandate four months later. “You told me once that you thought the clause unnecessary because the San Remo decision definitely fixed the status of Palestine and nothing more was required,” Weizmann wrote to Curzon on October 30. “That is, of course, true from the purely legal point of view. But it is not unnecessary or unimportant from the standpoint of those of us who must seek from the Jews of the world the sacrifice and treasure required to make Palestine again a healthful and happy land, to which we hope England may look with pride and satisfaction in the years to come.”⁷⁸

No friend of Zionism, Curzon didn’t fail to identify the unspoken cause of Weizmann’s alarm. “What they really want this particular clause in the Mandate for,” he wrote to Lloyd George, “is that this sentence may be the foundation on which, at every stage, they may hold a claim for preferential treatment in Palestine, and ultimately for the complete government of the country.... I won’t have it.”⁷⁹ Unimpressed by his foreign secretary Lloyd George had the clause reinserted, albeit in a watered down form. And thus it was that rather than viewing “the historical connection of the Jewish people with Palestine” as underpinning the claim “to reconstitute Palestine as their National Home,” this millenarian attachment was mentioned in the preamble to the mandate as “the grounds for reconstituting their national home in that country.”

These difficulties notwithstanding, it was an extraordinary feat of diplomacy that within less than five years of its issuance the Balfour Declaration had been endorsed by the official representative of the will of the international community: not in the “technical” sense of supporting the creation of a Jewish national home in Palestine but in the deeper sense of recognizing the Jews as a nation deserving self-determination in its ancestral homeland. This is something that successive Palestinian leaderships have been loath to acknowledge to date.

Notes

- ¹ "British Secretary's Notes of a Meeting of the Supreme Council, held at the Villa Devachan, San Remo, on Saturday, Apr. 24, 1920, at 4 p.m.," in E.L. Woodward & Rohan Butler (eds.), *Documents on British Foreign Policy*, Ser. 1 (London: HMSO, 1960; hereinafter DBFP), Vol. 8, pp. 176-7.
- ² Avalon Project, "[The Palestine Mandate](#)," July 24, 1922, Preamble.
- ³ Walter Laqueur, *The Israel-Arab Reader* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1970), p. 36.
- ⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 37-8.
- ⁵ "[Secretary's Notes of a Conversation Held in M. Pichon's Room at the Quai d'Orsay](#), Paris, on Thursday, 27th February, 1919, at 3 p.m.," *Foreign Relations of the United States. Paris Peace Conference 1919* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1942-47), Vol. 4, pp. 161-4 (hereinafter *FRUS – Paris Peace Conference*).
- ⁶ "[Secretary's Notes of a Conversation Held at Mr. Pichon's Room](#) at the Quai D'orsay, Paris, on Thursday, January 30, 1919, at 11a.m. - Draft Resolutions in Reference to Mandatories," *ibid.*, Vol. 3, pp. 795-6; "[The Paris Covenant for a League of Nations](#). Text of the Plan adopted by the Peace Conference April 28, 1919," Article 22 (New York: League to Enforce Peace, 1919).
- ⁷ The Sykes-Picot Agreement provided an Anglo-French undertaking "to recognize and protect an independent Arab State or a Confederation of Arab States... under the suzerainty of an Arab chief" that would be established on the ruins of the Ottoman Empire. Occupying vast territory, from Aleppo to Rawandaz and from the Egyptian-Ottoman border to Kuwait, the new state was divided into two spheres of indirect influence in which Britain and France respectively were to have "priority of right of enterprise and local loans" as well as the exclusive right "to supply advisers or foreign functionaries at the request of the Arab State or Confederation of Arab States." In the areas excluded from the Arab State, Britain and France were "allowed to establish such direct or indirect administration or control as they desire and as they may think fit to arrange with the Arab State or Confederation of Arab States." The area of direct French control, the "Blue Zone," extended from Cilicia to the Iranian frontier in the east and to Acre in the south, including the Syrian coastal strip, the Lebanon and the northern Galilee. The area of direct British control, the "Red Zone," encompassed southern Mesopotamia including Baghdad, the northeastern Arabian coast, including Kuwait, and the

ports of Haifa and Acre in Palestine. Palestine itself was split into two: the southern part, or the Negev, was to be included in the Arab State (and to fall within the British sphere of indirect influence); its northern part, except for the northern Galilee, included in the zone of direct French rule, was to be placed under “an international administration, the nature of which is to be decided upon in consultation with Russia, and subsequently in consultation with the other Allies, and the representatives of the Sharif of Mecca.” For the text of the agreement see The National Archives (Kew), CAB 42/11/9.

- ⁸ [“Minutes of the Daily Meetings of the Commissioners Plenipotentiary, Thursday, March 27th, 1919.”](#) *FRUS – Paris Peace Conference*, Vol. 12, pp. 133-4.
- ⁹ [“Mr. C.R. Crane and Mr. H.C. King to the Commission to Negotiate Peace,”](#) Beirut, July 10, 1919, *ibid.*, pp. 749-50; [“Report of the American Section of the International Commission on Mandates in Turkey, Submitted by the Commissioners: Charles R. King and Henry Churchill Crane,”](#) Paris, Aug. 28, 1919, *ibid.*, pp. 751-848.
- ¹⁰ See, for example, Allenby to Faisal, Oct. 13, 1918, FO 371/3384/175365; Faisal to Allenby, Nov. 2, 1918, and Allenby’s response, FO 371/3384/182643; Allenby to War Office, Oct. 19, 21, 22, 1918, FO 371/3384/175365, 175481 & 177569; F. Georges-Picot’s telegram of Nov. 14, 1918, in E. Brémond, *Le Hedjaz dans la Guerre Mondiale* (Paris: Payot, 1931), p. 308.
- ¹¹ See, for example, [“Notes of a Conference Held in the Prime Minister’s Flat at 23 Rue Nitot, Paris, on Thursday, March 20, 1919, at 3p.m.,”](#) *FRUS - Paris Peace Conference*, Vol. 5, pp. 1-9; [“Notes of a Meeting Held in President Wilson’s House, Place des Etats-Unis, Paris, on Wednesday, May 21, at 11a.m.,”](#) *ibid.*, pp. 756-63; [“Notes of a Meeting Held at Mr. Lloyd George’s Residence, 23 Rue Nitot, Paris, on Thursday, May 22, at 11a.m,”](#) *ibid.*, pp. 808-12.
- ¹² See, for example, Clemenceau to Lloyd George, Nov. 9, 1919, DBFP, Vol. 4, p. 521.
- ¹³ Efraim and Inari Karsh, *Empires of the Sand: The Struggle for Mastery in the Middle East 1789-1923* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1999), pp. 194-7.
- ¹⁴ Kinahan Cornwallis, “Zionists and Syrians in Egypt,” *Arab Bulletin*, No. 87, Apr. 30, 1918, FO 882/27; Chaim Weizmann to Nahum Sokolow, Apr. 18 & July 17, 1918, *The Letters and Papers of Chaim Weizmann* (New Brunswick & Jerusalem: Transaction Books & Israel Universities Press, 1977), Ser. A, Vol. 8, pp. 137, 233-4; Jeremy Wilson, *Lawrence of Arabia. The Authorized Biography of T. E. Lawrence* (London: Minerva, 1990), pp. 511-13.

- ¹⁵ “Weizmann’s memorandum as sent to Crowe of his interview with the Emir Faisal at the Carlton Hotel on 11 Dec. 1918. Colonel T.E. Lawrence acted as their interpreter,” *The Letters and Papers of Chaim Weizmann*, Vol. 9, pp. 69-71; Weizmann to David Eder, Dec. 17, 1918, *ibid.*, pp. 71-72.
- ¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 119, fn 7.
- ¹⁷ Laqueur, *The Israel-Arab Reader*, pp. 38-40.
- ¹⁸ Weizmann to Balfour, Apr. 9 1919, *The Letters and Papers of Chaim Weizmann*, Vol. 9, p. 129.
- ¹⁹ [“Secretary’s Note of a Conversation Held in M. Pichon’s Room at the Quai d’Orsay, Paris](#), on Thursday, 6 February, 1919, at 3p.m., *FRUS – Paris Peace Conference*, Vol. 3, p. 891.
- ²⁰ Zeine N. Zeine, *The Struggle for Arab Independence* (Beirut: Khayat’s, 1960), p. 50.
- ²¹ “M. Clemenceau to the Emir Feisal,” Apr. 17, 1919 & Clayton to Foreign Office, May 21, 1919, *DBFP*, Vol. 4, pp. 252-3, 265, fn 3.
- ²² For the complete memorandum submitted by the General Syrian Congress to the commission see Abu Khaldun Sati al-Husri, *Yawm Maisalun: Safha min Tarikh al-Arab al-Hadith* (Beirut: Dar al-Ittihad, 1964), pp. 262-4.
- ²³ “Report by British Liaison Officer on Political Situation in Arabia,” Damascus, May 16, 1919, *DBFP*, Vol. 4, p. 264.
- ²⁴ Eliezer Tauber, *The Formation of Modern Syria and Iraq* (London: Frank Cass, 1995), p. 15; Khairiyya Qasmiyya, *al-Hukuma al-Arabiya fi Dimashq bayna 1918-1920* (Cairo: Dar al-Maarif, 1971), p. 67, fn 2.
- ²⁵ Allenby to Balfour, May 30, 1919, *DBFP*, Vol. 4, p. 256; [“Notes of a Meeting Held in M. Pichon’s Room at the Quai d’Orsay, Paris, on Saturday, May 31, 1919, at 5:30 p.m.”](#), *FRUS - Paris Peace Conference*, Vol. 6, pp. 136-7.
- ²⁶ [“Confidential Appendix to the Report Upon Syria - For the Use of Americans Only,”](#) Aug. 28, 1919, *FRUS – Paris Peace Conference*, Vol. 11, pp. 848-50.
- ²⁷ [Report of the American Section of the International Commission on Mandates in Turkey](#), *ibid.*, Vol. 12, pp. 789-91.

- ²⁸ Reports by Clayton (Beirut), Oct. 15, 31 1918, FO 371/3384/173729 & 181781; Forbes-Adam (Paris), Sept. 26, 1919, DBFP, Vol. 4, pp. 439-40.
- ²⁹ [“Report of the American Section of the International Commission on Mandates in Turkey,”](#) *FRUS – Paris Peace Conference*, Vol. 12, pp. 794-5.
- ³⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 764-5.
- ³¹ *Ibid.*, p. 793.
- ³² Meinertzhagen to Curzon, Feb. 19, 1920, DBFP, Vol. 13, p. 218.
- ³³ Meinertzhagen to Curzon, Oct. 21, Nov. 10, Dec. 2, 1919, *ibid.*, Vol. 4, pp. 495, 523, 565-6, 615.
- ³⁴ Allenby to Curzon, Mar. 7, 8, 1920, *ibid.*, Vol. 13, pp. 221, 223.
- ³⁵ Curzon to Allenby, Mar. 8, 1920, *ibid.*, p. 222.
- ³⁶ For the text of the proclamation see Husri, *Yawm Maisalun*, pp. 278-8.
- ³⁷ Allenby to Curzon, Mar. 13, 14, 1920, DBFP, Vol. 13, pp. 224-5, 229-30. The same excuse was made by Nuri Said, Feisal’s right-hand man, during a London meeting. See Hubert Young, “Situation in Syria,” Apr. 1, 1920, FO 371/5034/E2681.
- ³⁸ Curzon to Allenby, Mar. 13, 1920, DBFP, Vol. 13, p. 225; Allenby to Curzon, Mar. 18, 20, 1920, *ibid.*, pp. 231, 233-4.
- ³⁹ Curzon to Allenby, Mar. 19, 22, 1920, *ibid.*, pp. 231-2, 235. See also House of Commons Hansard, [“Syria,”](#) [Mar. 18](#) & [Mar. 19](#), 1920, Vols. 126-7.
- ⁴⁰ Weizmann to Simon, Mar. 27, 1919, *The Letters and Papers of Chaim Weizmann*, Vol. 9, p. 125.
- ⁴¹ Weizmann to Balfour, Apr. 9, 1919, *ibid.*, p. 130.
- ⁴² Weizmann and Frankfurter to Faisal, May 19, 1919, *ibid.*, p. 142.
- ⁴³ Weizmann to the London Zionist Bureau, Oct. 16, 1919, *ibid.*, p. 233.
- ⁴⁴ Weizmann to Bella Berligne, Sept. 22, 1919, *ibid.*, p. 222.
- ⁴⁵ Weizmann to Balfour, Sep. 27, 1919, *ibid.*, p. 231.

- ⁴⁶ Weizmann to Sir Louis Bols, Mar. 31, 1920, *Ibid.*, Vol. 9, pp. 332-3.
- ⁴⁷ Leonard Stein, *The Balfour Declaration* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1961), pp. 416-17.
- ⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 590-1; Martin Kramer, "[The Forgotten Truth About the Balfour Declaration](#)," *Mosaic*, June 5, 2017.
- ⁴⁹ Barnett Singer, "Clemenceau and the Jews," *Jewish Social Studies*, 43/1 (Winter 1981), pp. 47-58.
- ⁵⁰ Chaim Weizmann, *Trial and Error* (New York: Schocken, 1966), p. 245.
- ⁵¹ David Lloyd George, *The Truth about the Peace Treaties* (London: Victor Gollancz, 1938), Vol. 2, p. 1144. Likewise, Balfour maintained that Palestine "should obtain the command of the water-power which naturally belong to it, whether by extending its borders to the north, or by treaty with the mandatory of Syria, to whom the southward flowing waters of H[er]mon could not in any event be of much value." See: "Memorandum by Mr. Balfour (Paris) respecting Syria, Palestine, and Mesopotamia," Aug. 11, 1919, DBFP, Vol. 4, p. 347; Balfour to Curzon, July 2, 1919, *ibid.*, p. 302.
- ⁵² Weizmann to Philip Kerr, Sept. 11, 1919, *The Letters and Papers of Chaim Weizmann*, Vol. 9, p. 213.
- ⁵³ *Ibid.* (emphasis in the original); Weizmann to Balfour, Sept. 26, 1919, *ibid.*, p. 227.
- ⁵⁴ Meinertzhagen to Curzon, Mar. 2, 1920, DBFP, Vol. 13, p. 220.
- ⁵⁵ "British Secretary's Notes of an Allied Conference held at 10, Downing Street, London, SW1, on Saturday, February 21, 1920, at 11a.m.," *ibid.*, Vol. 7, pp. 183-4.
- ⁵⁶ Lloyd George, *The Truth about the Peace Treaties*, Vol. 2, p. 1162.
- ⁵⁷ DBFP, Vol. 7, pp. 107, 184.
- ⁵⁸ "British Secretary's Notes of an Allied Conference held at 10, Downing Street, London, SW1, on Tuesday, February 17, 1920, at 3.30p.m.," *ibid.*, p. 105.
- ⁵⁹ "British Secretary's Notes of an Allied Conference held at 10, Downing Street, London, SW1, on Saturday, February 21, 1920, at 11a.m.," *ibid.*, pp. 182, 185.

- ⁶⁰ Lloyd George, *The Truth*, vol. 2, p. 1155; Jan Karl Tanenbaum, "France and the Arab Middle East, 1914-1920," *Transactions of the American Philosophical Society*, 68/7 (1978), p. 39.
- ⁶¹ "British Secretary's Notes of a Meeting of the Supreme Council, held at the Villa Devachan, San Remo, on Saturday, Apr. 24, 1920, at 4 p.m.," DBFP, Vol. 8, pp. 159-60.
- ⁶² *Ibid.*, pp. 160, 168.
- ⁶³ *Ibid.*, p. 162.
- ⁶⁴ "British Secretary's Notes of an Allied Conference held at 10, Downing Street, London, SW1, on Tuesday, February 17, 1920, at 3.30p.m.," *ibid.*, Vol. 7, pp. 103-6, 108-12.
- ⁶⁵ "British Secretary's Notes of a Meeting of the Supreme Council, held at the Villa Devachan, San Remo, on Saturday, Apr. 24, 1920, at 4 p.m.," *ibid.*, Vol. 8, pp. 163-5.
- ⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 164, 66.
- ⁶⁷ "British Secretary's Notes of a Meeting of the Supreme Council, held at the Villa Devachan, San Remo, on Saturday, Apr. 24, 1920, at 4 p.m.," *ibid.*, pp. 163, 167.
- ⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 167-9.
- ⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 169.
- ⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 170.
- ⁷¹ "The Treaty of Peace between the Allied and associated Powers and Turkey. Signed at Sèvres, August 10, 1920, <http://www.hri.org/docs/sevres/part3.html>, Articles 95-7.
- ⁷² "Statement of the Zionist Organization regarding Palestine," Feb. 3, 1919, *The Letters and Papers of Chaim Weizmann*, Vol. 9, p. 391.
- ⁷³ *Ibid.*, Vol. 10, xix.
- ⁷⁴ Weizmann to Herbert Samuel, July 29, 1920 & to Curzon, Aug. 11, 1920, *ibid.*, pp. 2, 14.
- ⁷⁵ Avalon Project, "[The Palestine Mandate](#)," July 24, 1922, Article 2.
- ⁷⁶ Weizmann, *Trial and Error*, p. 280.

- ⁷⁷ Weizmann to Herbert Samuel, July 29, 1920, *The Letters and Papers of Chaim Weizmann*, Vol. 10, pp. 2-3.
- ⁷⁸ Weizmann to Curzon, Oct. 30, 1920, *ibid.*, p. 77.
- ⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, fn. 4; Weizmann, *Trial and Error*, p. 280.

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