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STATELESSNESS AND CONTESTED SOVEREIGNTY IN THE MIDDLE EAST: THE UNITED STATES, PALESTINIAN REFUGEES, THE MUSLIM BROTHERHOOD, SYRIAN ETHNIC MINORITIES, AND THE EARLY COLD WAR, 1945 – 1954

John Perry
University of Kentucky, johnperry2345@yahoo.com
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John Perry, Student

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DISSERTATION

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in the College of Arts and Sciences
at the University of Kentucky

By
John Perry
Lexington, Kentucky
Director: Dr. Tracy Campbell, Professor of History
Lexington, Kentucky
2021

ABSTRACT OF DISSERTATION

STATELESSNESS AND CONTESTED SOVEREIGNTY IN THE MIDDLE EAST: THE UNITED STATES, PALESTINIAN REFUGEES, THE MUSLIM BROTHERHOOD, SYRIAN ETHNIC MINORITIES, AND THE EARLY COLD WAR, 1945 – 1954

This dissertation examines the significance of America's interactions with stateless actors. It argues that it was groups such as the Muslim Brotherhood, Palestine's refugees, and ethnic minorities, not the U.S. and Soviet governments, nor the state governments of the region, which dictated how the Cold War unfolded in the Middle East. These groups transformed the policy decisions, strategies, and alliances of both native regimes and the superpowers. Traditionally, historians have looked at the global politics of the Cold War through the lens of state-to-state relations. How have state governments interacted with each other and how did this influence the strategies and alliances of the superpowers? However, this work challenges state-centric models and points to new factors in the history of the United States and the world. Furthermore, much of the literature on groups such as Palestinian refugees and ethnic minorities has characterized them as victims, or actors without agency. Far from victims, this study contends that the Muslim Brotherhood, Palestine's refugees, and minority groups such as the Armenians and Kurds defined the history of the period and, in key ways, were the primary agents of change. Not only does such research demonstrate the significance of non-state actors with regards to the Cold War, it also highlights the limits of postcolonialism. The non-state groups of this study did not fit into the nation-state system that developed in the Middle East after World War II. While these actors fit within imperial modes of power, the transition from Empire to nation-state left them stateless. As a result, they contested the nation-state system that came into being in the Middle East in the late 1940s and 1950s.

KEYWORDS: United States and the World, Global Cold War, Postcolonialism, Palestinian Refugees, the Muslim Brotherhood, Syria's Armenians and Kurds

John Perry

(Name of Student)

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Date

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By
John Perry

Tracy Campbell
Director of Dissertation

Amy Murell Taylor
Director of Graduate Studies

04/26/2021
Date

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CHAPTER ONE. INTRODUCTION

Palestinian refugees, the Muslim Brotherhood, and Syria's Armenian and Kurdish populations transformed the Cold War in the Middle East. These stateless actors defined, and then often redefined, the policies, aims, and alliances of both the superpowers and the regional governments of the Middle East. Traditionally, the historiography on the Cold War has focused on state-to-state relations.[1] However, this dissertation challenges such work by arguing that non-state actors were primary agents of change. Palestinian refugees, the Muslim Brotherhood, and Syria's ethnic minorities confounded the strategies of U.S. policymakers and forced them to reassess America's Cold War in the Middle East.

Palestinian refugees, more than any other group, defined the regional context U.S. strategy operated in. In 1948, the partition of Palestine went into effect and refugees poured into neighboring countries. The United States was considered having the most responsibility for the refugee crisis to local and regional populaces. Therefore, it became extremely difficult for Arab nations to publicly work with the U.S. government. If Arab governments had dealings with Washington, or even were perceived to, they risked significant civil conflict erupting within their borders. Similarly, the Muslim

[1] John Lewis Gaddis, *The United States and the Origins of the Cold War, 1941 – 1947*, Columbia University Press, 1972; Peter L Hahn, *The United States, Great Britain, & Egypt, 1945 – 1956*, The University of North Carolina Press, 1991; Melvyn P Leffler, *A Preponderance of Power: National Security, the Truman Administration, and the Cold War*, Stanford University Press, 1992; Salim Yaqub, *Containing Arab Nationalism: The Eisenhower Doctrine and the Middle East*, The University of North Carolina Press, 2004.

Brotherhood defined U.S./Egyptian relations. By the mid-1940s, the Muslim Brotherhood had become so powerful that it could openly challenge the Egyptian state. In response to government policies it disagreed with, the Brotherhood organized massive rallies and demonstrations, which often turned into violent riots. Moreover, the organization routinely carried out assassinations and guerilla attacks on state officials. Such conflict erupted most often when the state had dealings with the West, including the United States. Because of the Brotherhood, U.S. policymakers failed to enlist Egypt into a security network for the Middle East. In Syria, the Armenians and the Kurds greatly complicated Washington's Cold War policies. Both groups were considered dangerous populations by American officials because of their ties with the Soviet Union. Therefore, Washington supported authoritarian elements in Syria, including dictatorship, in the hope of containing such populations. However, this strategy failed as it only created further instability in Syria.

Palestinian refugees, the Muslim Brotherhood, and Syria's ethnic minorities transformed U.S. strategy in the Middle East. In key ways, these non-state actors defined the history of the period. However, these groups also demonstrate the limits of postcolonialism. After World War II, when the Middle East transitioned from empire to nation-state, the Palestinians, the Muslim Brotherhood, the Armenians, and the Kurds were left out of the new system that was imposed on the region. The Palestinians lost their country when the United Nations voted for partition to create the state of Israel in 1948. The creation of a secular Egyptian state in the 1950s resulted in the violent suppression of Islamic traditions, an abhorrent development to the Muslim Brotherhood. During World War I, both the Armenian and Kurdish homelands were carved up by the

British and the French. By the 1950s, the United Nations had still failed to address their losses. As a result, all of these groups contested the sovereignty of the nation-state system that developed in the Middle East after the Second World War.

In many ways, these groups represent the periphery of the periphery, the illegitimate movement for freedom, or minority nationalism.[2] Each was part of a wider push to remove colonial authority from the region. However, once liberation was attained, groups such as the Palestinians, the Brotherhood, and ethnic minorities were left out of the new modes of power. The nationalist groups that gained dominance usually had a strong history with Western institutions such as the League of Nations and/or the United Nations. Having a documented past with Western organizations often determined which anti-colonial nationalist movements were legitimate and which were illegitimate. Zionists had a well-documented record with both the League of Nations and the United Nations. The Palestinians, before the 1940s, did not. Secular anti-colonial nationalists in Egypt also had a strong history with both institutions. Religious groups such as the Muslim Brotherhood, as with the Palestinians, lacked such connections. Although ethnic groups such as the Armenians and Kurds petitioned the League after the First World War, their plight was largely ignored because they had become minority populations within the borders of Turkey and Iraq, both important members of the international community that came into being after the signing of the Treaty of Versailles. Dominant forms of anti-colonial nationalism failed to address the needs of groups such as the Palestinians, the Muslim Brotherhood, the Armenians, and the Kurds. Such actors challenged the post-

[2] Lydia Walker, "Decolonization in the 1960s: On Legitimate and Illegitimate Nationalist Claims-Making," *Past and Present*, no. 242 (Feb. 2019): 227.

colonial world and the majority nationalists that held power in the new nation-state system. Furthermore, minority nationalists challenged international organizations such as the United Nations and the international order that protected the nation-state system. The inability of these institutions to recognize such groups and the failure to incorporate them into the nation-state demonstrates the limits of postcolonial liberation.[3]

These limits become further apparent when one considers the nation-state's inability to accommodate difference in relation to empire. In many ways, imperial modes of power better suited difference than those of the nation-state.[4] The latter defines itself by the singularity of its people, even if the reality is much different, and aims to homogenize, sometimes violently, those under its sovereignty. Furthermore, it usually aims to exclude those beyond its borders, also sometimes violently. However, empire defined itself by the different ethnic, religious, cultural, and/or linguistic groups both within and outside its domain. Reaching out to coercively draw new people into its realm was a fundamental dimension to empire. As a result, a system that could accommodate diversity was needed. Such modes of power led empire to develop the politics of difference that was defined by the inclusion of dissimilar peoples.

The Palestinians, the Muslim Brotherhood, and Syria's ethnic minorities contested the sovereignty of the nation-state system because the new modes of power excluded them. Therefore, these actors demonstrate the limits of both the postcolonial

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[3] Ibid.

[4] Jane Burbank and Frederick Cooper, *Empires in World History: Power and the Politics of Difference*, Princeton University Press, 2010; Frederick Cooper, *Colonialism in Question: Theory, Knowledge, History*, University of California Press, 2005.

nation-state and postcolonial liberation. Nevertheless, in challenging the nation-state, these actors transformed the early Cold War in the Middle East. Not only did they contest the nation-state system that was imposed on the Middle East after World War II, they also defined the strategies and alliances of the governments working in the region.

In key respects, the refugee crisis laid the foundations to U.S. foreign policy in the Middle East. No other single event influenced the successes and failures of American strategy in the region as much as the partition of Palestine. Even before the United Nations voted for partition, populations throughout the Middle East made it clear that they would not tolerate any injustice done to the Palestinians. The conflict between the Jewish and Palestinian populations was one of the few issues that united all Arabs, as nearly all Arabs agreed the rights of local populaces needed to be safeguarded. Therefore, in 1945, when American and British officials announced that 100,000 new Jewish migrants would be arriving, local inhabitants made their feelings clear. Protests broke out across the region and Middle Eastern governments informed Washington that such action would have extreme and negative consequences. As the U.N. vote on Palestine approached, Middle Eastern populaces continued to make clear that the entire region would fight to protect the rights of the Palestinians. Marches and rallies were held weekly. Petitions in support of Palestine flooded into regional governments and U.S. legations. Newspapers, newsletters, and magazines ran daily articles – both accurate and inaccurate – on the status of the situation. Propaganda was a key factor in the rising instability. Before the refugee crisis even occurred, the simple potential for it to happen played a fundamental role on U.S. diplomacy in the Middle East.

U.S. officials came to understand the region's rising instability as the result of Soviet interference. The more unstable the situation became, the more Washington suspected communism. As a result, U.S. policymakers tilted in favor of supporting the British in the region. Given the circumstances, British military strength might be the only force capable of defending the Middle East against the Soviet Union. However, by supporting the British, U.S. officials fueled further instability. Local populaces interpreted the relationship between Washington and London as an imperial alliance that aimed to exploit the region for its own gain. Local nationalists needed look no further than the dual support both countries gave to the new round of Jewish migrants. Throughout the mid 1940s, instability in the Middle East continued to rise, which, in turn, led Washington to see rising Cold War threats.

In 1948, partition became a reality and the first Arab-Israeli war began soon after. A steady stream of reports of human rights violations against the Palestinians flowed in from the warzones. As these reports became public knowledge, regional instability went from dangerous to disastrous. Over 700,000 Palestinians were now refugees. Life was miserable for them. Huge numbers lived in dirty, makeshift camps for decades and generations of future Palestinians were also forced to live in them. The plight of the refugees further enflamed regional populations. The suffering of the refugees created significant obstacles for regional governments working with Washington. Because the United States was seen as bearing the most responsibility for the partition of Palestine, anti-Americanism began to develop in a deep seeded and long lasting way. This dynamic fueled the paradox: by seeking stability through centralized state-building, Washington exacerbated instability among stateless peoples. U.S. officials deemed the refugees one

of the most, if not the most, vulnerable population to Soviet influence in the region. Washington came to see the refugee camps as breeding grounds for communist activity and potential Soviet agents. The refugees became a central feature to how American policymakers interpreted the Cold War in the Middle East. This reality was especially important because Washington's understanding of the refugees, again, like their understanding of the situation generally, was incorrect. It was not communism that motivated the refugees or local populaces throughout the region, rather, it was anti-colonial nationalism.

In the 1940s, the Muslim Brotherhood emerged as a key player in shaping Egypt's domestic and foreign policies and, therefore, held a central role in shaping U.S.-Egyptian relations. The Ikhwan was a powerful force in Egyptian society, almost as powerful as the state. Its platform rested on removing all foreign influences from the country, especially the British. In 1945, London still had some 100,000 troops stationed at the Suez Canal but local populaces saw no reason why they needed to stay now that World War II was over. The presence of the British led to further discontent which, in turn, increased the Muslim Brotherhood's popularity. Because of the immense influence the organization developed, it was able to openly challenge the state almost anytime it chose. In protest of the Egyptian government's inability to remove the British, the Brotherhood routinely carried out bombings, assassinations, and guerrilla attacks. Furthermore, the organization regularly orchestrated student demonstrations, worker rallies, political marches, and general riots. By the late 1940s, the Muslim Brotherhood's influence in Egyptian society was as powerful, if not more powerful, than the state itself.

U.S. officials deemed Egypt a key component to the defense of the Middle East. It was vital the country's resources be organized for a potential confrontation with the Soviet Union. Not only did Egypt control the strategically vital Suez Canal, it also often took the lead on Arab issues generally and, therefore, wielded tremendous influence in the region as a whole. Washington hoped to enlist Egypt in a regional security apparatus for the Middle East much like the North Atlantic Treaty Organization. As such, American policymakers initially supported Egyptian independence over British attempts to maintain influence. However, as the chaos on the streets of Cairo unfolded in the latter half of the 1940s, some U.S. officials tilted back towards supporting the British. Communism was again the primary culprit for this instability to Washington. But American support to the British simply made matters worse. Marches, rallies, violent riots, guerilla attacks, bombings, and assassinations increased in relation to Washington's support to London. With the partition of Palestine in 1948, such developments in Egypt increased exponentially, as the creation of Israel was interpreted by local peoples as simply another example of violent colonialism. Moreover, because of partition, groups such as the Muslim Brotherhood began to see the United States as their primary foreign enemy. By the end of the 1950s, London was no longer the epitome of colonialism. Washington had replaced it.

The Muslim Brotherhood played a key role in the U.S. failure to enlist Egypt into a Cold War alliance. Any move by the Egyptian government seen as favorable to the United States almost always led to a new round of guerilla attacks and/or rioting on the streets. Egyptian leaders understood that any cooperation with the U.S. government made them vulnerable to attacks from domestic opponents such as the Brotherhood. The

real threat came from within to local governments of the region, the Cold War was a distant secondary concern. Washington interpreted Egypt's reluctance to join a security apparatus for the region as a result of Soviet influence in the country. However, the true motivation for the Egyptian government's refusal to join America's Cold War alliances was because of the danger anti-colonial nationalist groups, such as the Muslim Brotherhood, posed if it attempted to ally with Washington.

As with the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt, ethnic minorities played a fundamental role in shaping Washington's understanding of Syria's Cold War security. U.S. officials came to see the Armenians and the Kurds in Syria as dangerous, Soviet-backed populations. However, this was not necessarily accurate. Both groups were denied nations of their own when the British and French created the borders of the Middle East during the First World War. As a result, the Armenians and the Kurds embraced anti-colonial nationalism in large numbers. Their aims were to regain their homelands. Their relationship with Moscow was the means to the end of achieving statehood. However, their relations with the Soviet Union led U.S. policymakers to again misinterpret anti-colonial nationalism as communism. This mischaracterization played a key role in the relations between the U.S. government and the various Syrian regimes that came to power in the 1940s and 1950s.

In 1945, the Syrian people were largely concerned with removing the French from the country. As in Egypt, Washington initially supported independence as the best way to stabilize Syria, thus, securing it from the Soviets. However, once the French withdrew, American officials began to see rapidly rising Soviet influence in the country. The Armenians and the Kurds were a key component of the spreading communism to

U.S. policymakers. Moreover, the Muslim Brotherhood had an active branch in the country and after 1948 the refugee crisis played the same role in Syria as it did elsewhere. This led Washington to support right-wing, authoritarian regimes in Syria as means to combat these threats. However, in seeking stability, U.S. officials again wrought instability.

In March 1949, Colonel Husni al-Zaim seized control of Syria's democratically elected government. It soon was apparent that a dictatorship held sway over the country. Washington supported Zaim because it believed he could stabilize the country and roll back the growing communism. However, Zaim's rule was short-lived and he was overthrown a few months after taking power. Many Syrians interpreted American support to Zaim as further evidence of U.S. imperialism and anti-American activity increased markedly. This process repeated itself when Zaim's successor, Colonel Muhammad Sami al-Hinnawi, began implementing dictatorial policies similar to his predecessor. Washington again tilted to support of the Syrian government when it looked as though Hinnawi might stabilize the country through authoritarian measures. However, Hinnawi's time in office was even shorter than Zaim's and in December 1949 he was overthrown by Colonel Abid al-Shishakli. Washington's support to Hinnawi, as with its support to Zaim, led to a flurry of anti-colonial and anti-American activity from various groups in Syria, including the Armenians and the Kurds, which, again, led U.S. officials to see rising Soviet threats in the country.

Shishakli attempted to restore democracy in Syria but without a strong, authoritarian government, U.S. officials believed the country was ripe for exploitation by the Soviet Union. Due to the mounting instability, Washington believed Syria was in real

danger of becoming a Soviet satellite. However, what was again at play was not so much communism but anti-colonial nationalism. The rise in the activity of anti-colonial groups, such as the Armenians and the Kurds, was directly related to developments surrounding U.S. support to Zaim and Hinnawi, as well as events such as the partition of Palestine. The same process played out yet again when in November 1951, Shishakli, after having given up power, turned away from democratic reform and seized control of the government for a second time. Washington tilted in support of Shishakl and anti-colonial groups increased their activities. Ultimately, it was the Armenians and the Kurds, as well as the Muslim Brotherhood and the refugees, that led U.S. officials to support dictatorship in Syria. Backing authoritarian regimes was deemed the best way to combat the growing danger of these groups.

The literature on Palestinian refugees, the Muslim Brotherhood, and Syria's Armenian and Kurdish populations has largely characterized them as casualties of forces outside their control. However, far from helpless, I argue that these groups were primary agents of change. The superpowers and regional governments were reacting to these actors as much as the inverse. American Cold War security in the Middle East was imperiled by the instability caused by rising anti-colonial nationalism. Non-state groups were arguably the most significant anti-colonial nationalists of the time and region. Their aims, objectives, alliances, and policies dictated the Cold War threat level for American policymakers. In the minds of U.S. policymakers, success or failure for groups such as the refugees, the Brotherhood, and/or ethnic minorities equated to success or failure for the Soviet Union's strategy in the Middle East.

Nevertheless, in the historiography on the United States and the world, these groups are often characterized as helpless victims. Casualties of European colonialism or superpower politics, these actors are usually denied agency in U.S. foreign relations literature that covers the 1940s and 1950s. For example, Simon A. Waldman, in, *Anglo-American Diplomacy and the Palestinian Refugee Problem, 1948-1951*, argues that there was significant opportunity for the U.S. government to solve the refugee crisis from 1948 – 1951. He focuses on policy decisions and relations between Washington and London. For Waldman, had the British and American governments interacted with the Arab states as individual units, instead of grouping them together as a bloc, the refugees could have been successfully settled in host countries.[5] Similarly, Joshua Landis, in, "Early U.S. Policy toward Palestinian Refugees: The Syria Option," focuses on state relations between the U.S. and Syrian governments. He argues that between 1951 and 1952, the State Department made serious attempts to settle 500,000 Palestinians in Syria and came close to achieving this.[6] However, both Landis and Waldman's emphasis on state relations implies that the refugees were simply victims at the mercy of larger forces. With such frameworks, the Palestinians have no agency.

With regard to Palestinian historiography, it is heavy in the era before and during partition and after the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) entered the scene in the

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[5] Simon A. Waldman, *Anglo-American Diplomacy and the Palestinian Refugee Problem, 1948 – 51*, (Palgrave Macmillan, 2015).

[6] Joshua Landis, "Early US Policy toward Palestinian Refugees: The Syria Option," in Joseph Ginat and Edward J. Perkin, *The Palestinian Refugees: Old Problems – New Solutions*, (University of Oklahoma Press, 2001).

early 1960s.[7] Those works that engage the period from 1948 – 1964 focus largely on how and why Palestinians left their homes during the war and identity formation in the post-partition era.[8] Such scholarship makes important contributions to understanding the agency of Palestinians. However, more often than not, this period is still characterized as a time of mourning, retreat, and regrouping for the Palestinians. This dissertation challenges such assertations by pointing to ways refugees altered the political landscape.

The literature on Syria parallels that of Palestine. Most studies on U.S./Syrian relations in the 1940s and 1950s focus solely on state-to-state relations. How did the U.S. government interact with the Syrian state and how did this affect the Cold War? What role did the instability of the Syrian state in the 1950s play? How did colonial powers

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[7] For example, see Fouad Ajami, *The Arab Predicament: Arab Political Thought and Practice Since 1967*, (Cambridge University Press, 1981); Paul Chamberlin, *The Global Offensive: The United States, the Palestine Liberation Organization, and the Making of the Post-Cold War Order*, (Oxford University Press, 2012); Burton I. Kaufman, *The Arab Middle East and the United States*, (Twayne Publishers, 1996); Avi Shlaim, *The Iron Wall: Israel and the Arab World*, (W. W. Norton & Company, 2012); David Fromkin, *A Peace to End All Peace: The Fall of the Ottoman Empire and the Creation of the Modern Middle East*, (Henry Holt and Company, 1989); Rashid Khalid, *Palestinian Identity: The Construction of Modern National Consciousness*, (Columbia University Press, 1997); Edward W. Said, *The Question of Palestine*, (Vintage Books, 1979); Glenn E. Robinson, *Building a Palestinian State: The Incomplete Revolution,* (Indiana University Press, 1997).

[8] For example, see Benny Morris, *The Birth of the Palestinian Refugee Problem Revisited*, (Cambridge University Press, 2004); Nafez Nazzal, *The Palestinian Exodus from Galilee 1948*, (The Institute for Palestine Studies, 1978); Rosemary Sayigh, *The Palestinians: From Peasants to Revolutionaries*, (Zed Books, 1979); Fawaz Turki, *The Disinherited: Journal of a Palestinian Exile*, (Monthly Review Press, 1972).

interact with the United States and Syria? Most works explore the aims, objectives, and decision making of top American, British, French, and Syrian officials.[9] They focus on policy and strategy and outline the history of how these governments interacted. However, few works have examined the role of non-state actors in Syria. There are especially few studies that have explored Syria's Armenians and Syria's Kurds in the 1940s and 1950s. As with the Palestinians, the literature largely focuses on the period before World War II and after the 1950s.[10] Little has been written about Syria's ethnic minorities from 1939 – 1960. But the history of the United States and Syria and the history of the global Cold War has been fundamentally shaped by non-state actors such as the Armenians and the Kurds. Exploring such narratives sheds light on vitally important histories largely missing from the discourse.

Regarding the historiography on Egypt, again, few studies have investigated non-state actors in the 1940s and 1950s. Most works covering the 1940s and 1950s investigate government officials and their belief structures. Did Nasser and the Free Officers rely on fully formed ideological beliefs to guide their actions during the revolution or did they improvise and develop Arab nationalism piecemeal? Questions

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[9] Sami M. Moubayed, *Damascus Between Democracy and Dictatorship*, Lanham, Maryland: University Press of America, 2000; Daniel Neep, *Occupying Syria Under the French Mandate: Insurgency, Space, and State Formation*, Cambridge University Press, 2012; Andrew Rathmell, *Secret War in the Middle East: The Covert Struggle for Syria, 1949 – 1961*, New York: Taurus Academic Studies, 1995; Gordon H. Torrey, *Syrian Politics and the Military, 1945 – 1958*. The Ohio State University Press, 1964.

[10] Harriet Allsopp, *The Kurds of Syria: Political Parties and Identity in the Middle East*, New York: I. B. Tauris, 2014; Jordi Tejel, *Syria's Kurds: History, Politics, and Society*, New York: Routledge, 2009.

such as these framed the discourse.[11] However, some works such as Richard P. Mitchell's, *The Society of the Muslim Brothers,* examined the role of non-state actors. Mitchell outlined the history, ideology, and organizational structure of the Muslim Brotherhood from its beginnings in 1928 to its liquidation by Nasser in 1954. Although playing a vital role in the 1952 revolution, Mitchell argued that religious groups, such as the Brotherhood, were largely a flash in the pan. For him, the unique conditions of World War II provided the means to the Brotherhood's rise in the 1930s and 1940s. But the group's conservative, religious platform and ultimate defeat by Nasser in 1954 led Mitchell to postulate that the organization had reached its pinnacle. We now know this was wrong. Other than Mitchell, few works have studied the Brotherhood in this period. The vast majority of the literature explores the 1970s onwards. However, this dissertation creates new narratives on the Brotherhood.

Palestinian refugees, the Muslim Brotherhood, and Syria's ethnic minorities share a gap in their historiography for the 1940s and 1950s. Both the Palestinians and Syria's minorities have a strong historiographical record before the Second World War and after the 1960s. The Muslim Brotherhood's historiographical record is mostly made up of works pertaining to the 1970s and afterwards. These gaps are largely a result of source work. Although these groups have primary sources, materials by them from the 1940s and 1950s are often missing from the archives. In large part due to the messiness of the

[11] For example, Selma Botman, *Egypt from Independence to Revolution, 1919 – 1952*, (Syracuse University Press, 1991); Arthur Goldschmidt Jr., *Modern Egypt: The Formation of a Nation State*, (Westview Press, 2004); Joel Gordon, *Nasser's Blessed Movement: Egypt's Free Officers and the July Revolution*, (Oxford University Press, 1992); and P.J. Vatikoitis, *Nasser and his Generation*, (St. Martin's Press, 1978).

transition from empire to nation-state, written and published documents from these actors are scattered for this time period. Works by groups such as the Muslim Brotherhood and ethnic minorities were often outlawed because of their use as propaganda. The Brotherhood published several newsletters that were key components of their campaign against the Egyptian state. As a result, the Egyptian government often banned its newspapers and destroyed its publications. In Syria, both the Armenian and the Kurdish languages were suppressed. After the French withdrew, the Syrian state banned non-Arabic languages in an attempt to homogenize its population. Written and published works by Armenian and Kurdish populations were often rounded up and destroyed. Palestinian refugees lived in camps. Although written and oral testimony was created in the camps, archiving such work in the years it was produced was extremely difficult given the circumstances. These factors all contribute to the limitations scholars have regarding these groups in this period.

Nevertheless, this dissertation demonstrates the agency of these groups through their influence on both U.S. strategy and the unfolding of the Cold War in the Middle East. Additionally, my research relies heavily on local Arabic newspapers from the 1940s and 1950s. Such sources are vital to give voice to Middle East actors. Regarding Palestinian refugees, newspapers throughout the Middle East printed daily frontpage articles on their plight. The Palestine/Israel conflict was likely the most reported story in the press in this period. Therefore, Arabic articles on the conflict are vital to understanding how native populaces viewed the refugee crisis. The same is true for the Muslim Brotherhood. As mentioned above, the Brotherhood published several newspapers, the most popular being, *Al-Ikhwan Al-Muslimin*. It had a huge readership.

By 1945, the Muslim Brotherhood had close to 500,000 members and its paper crucially influenced how Egyptians interpreted the politics of the country. As such, *Al-Ikhwan Al-Muslimin*, despite the random, disorganization of surviving copies from the 1940s and 1950s, is a vital window into understanding the Brotherhood's motivations, activities, and policies. Similarly, newspapers provide a means to understand how Armenian and Kurdish nationalism affected Syria. The Armenian and Kurdish struggle for independent nations redefined how U.S. officials understood Syria's security situation. Newspapers offer a window into understanding how local populations interpreted these developments. The use of Arabic sources gives voice to local actors and helps highlight the crucial role they played in the history.

With regards to Cold War historiography and the historiography on the United States and the Middle East, most works focus on the state and most works rely on English language sources. Far fewer studies have been published that investigate local, stateless actors and/or that rely on foreign language sources. During the 1980s, historians of American foreign relations engaged in a series of fierce debates about the strategies of the Cold War. The post-revisionist turn moved the discourse away from focus on the economy and towards the objectives, aims, policies, and strategies of state governments. In the 1990s, the field further splintered and emphasis on the Third World became an important dimension to the discourse. Historians such as Peter Hahn and Douglas Little examined the history of the United States and the Middle East. Hahn, in his study, *The United States, Great Britain, and Egypt, 1945 – 1956: Strategy and Diplomacy in the Early Cold War*, investigated how and why the Suez Crisis occurred. He examined the strategies of the U.S. government and its relations with the Egyptian government in the

immediate post-World War II period. Hahn argued that American officials focused on the dual policies of stability and security in Egypt as part of the global strategy to combat the Soviet Union. He highlighted the complex state relations that took place between the United States and Egypt in the lead up to the Suez Crisis. Similarly, Little, in his work, *American Orientalism: The United States and the Middle East since 1945*, examined various dimensions to America's relationship with the Middle East. He focused on the U.S. government's interactions with countries such as Saudi Arabia, Israel, Egypt, and others, as well as U.S. interest in the Middle East's oil reserves. Works such as Hahn and Little's laid the foundations to the modern historiography on the United States and the Middle East.

Nevertheless, these studies privileged U.S. and British perspectives. Middle Eastern voices are largely missing from such works. In the 2000s, historians such as Salim Yaqub, in, *Containing Arab Nationalism: The Eisenhower Doctrine and the Middle East*, addressed these gaps in the literature. Through the use of Arabic documents, Yaqub laid out the evolution of the Eisenhower Administration's relationship with Gamal Abdel Nasser. Yaqub argued that U.S. officials were initially hopeful when Nasser came to power in 1952. However, by the end of the Suez Crisis in 1956, Washington concluded that Nasser could not be counted on to carry out American initiatives in Egypt. In response, the Eisenhower administration attempted to contain Nasser and Arab nationalism. It failed and Washington was forced to swing back to accommodating Nasser by the 1960s.

Yaqub's work was one of the first important studies that used Arabic sources. Like Hahn and Little, his study focused on the state but it moved the discourse towards

the inclusion of local narratives. Within the field of the United States and the Middle East, most scholarship relies on English language sources. As a result, most works focused only on American perspectives. But Yaqub's research helped move the discourse towards the inclusion of local voices, a dimension crucially missing from the field. Nevertheless, most works, including Yaqub's, still revolved around the study of the state. How did the government of the United States interact with the government of Egypt in the 1950s and 1960s? What role did the Syrian state's instability play with regards to U.S./Syrian relations? How did U.S. relations with the governments of the Middle East affect the Cold War? In the 2010s, examination of local, non-state actors emerged within the historiography. Such players are fundamental to the history of the Middle East but were largely missing from the discourse.

Ussama Makdisi, in, *Faith Misplaced: The Broken Promise of U.S. – Arab Relations: 1820 – 2001*, explored the earliest interactions between the United States and the Middle East. He investigated the interactions between America's first emissaries to the region, Protestant missionaries, with the local populace. Makdisi highlighted how Americans "discovered" the Arab world and how Arabs "discovered" America through these relationships. Furthermore, Makdisi charted the evolution of U.S./Arab relations from the relatively positive interactions that took place between the missionaries and local actors in the 1800s to the development of anti-Americanism with the partition of Palestine in 1948 to the attack on the World Trade Center on 11 September 2001. By using Arabic sources and focusing on local actors, Makdisi followed in the footsteps of Yaqub. However, Makdisi helped introduce a vitally important new dimension to the

historiography – the role of non-state actors. His focus on non-state actors of both the United States and the Middle East greatly helped complicated the history.

Similarly, Paul Thomas Chamberlin's *The Global Offensive: The United States, the Palestine Liberation Organization, and the Making of the Post-Cold War Order* examined the role of non-state actors of the Middle East and their influence on U.S. foreign relations. Chamberlin investigated how the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) used global, transnational networks to gain international attention. Through a combination of guerilla campaigns in the Middle East, engagement with the international community, and the forging of alliances with Latin American revolutionaries, North Vietnamese communists, and other similar groups, the PLO was able to persuade the United Nations to take up their cause. Chamberlin argued that the victory of the PLO was won not so much on the battlefield but, rather, on the global political stage. The transnational connections the PLO developed with other revolutionary groups played as significant, if not more significant, a role in its victory as did success in ground campaigns. Like Makdisi, Chamberlin highlighted the role of local, non-state actors. His work argued that such players fundamentally shaped the strategies, alliances, and policies of the United States.

My research follows in the vein of these scholars. Groups such as Palestinian refugees, the Muslim Brotherhood, the Armenians, and the Kurds transformed how the Cold War played out. Previously, scholarship has focused on the impact of U.S. policies on local populations. For instance, the U.S. government supported a dictatorial regime in Tehran, which in turn fueled the rise of anti-Americanism in Iran. My research complicates state-centric frameworks by inverting this model. I argue that stateless

groups defined, and then often redefined, the strategies of both the U.S. government and the governments of the region. They transformed the strategic and political landscape of the Middle East and, therefore, transformed the history of the Cold War in the region. Local actors shaped global developments. Such frameworks are largely missing from the scholarship on U.S. foreign relations. This dissertation challenges the existing frameworks by showing the ways in which local peoples transformed the landscape of America's Cold War in the Middle East.

Non-state actors such as Palestinian refugees, the Muslim Brotherhood, and Syria's ethnic minorities played a fundamental role in the history of the period. Nevertheless, the significance of these groups is not relegated just to the early Cold War. Their story is deeply connected to world changing events that occurred both before and after their time. In the late 1940s and 1950s anti-Americanism first took root in the Middle East in any lasting or meaningful way. This period is the beginning of the long road leading to the attack on the World Trade Center on 11 September 2001 and the 2011 Arab Spring. Other actors and processes were involved in both the attack and the Arab uprisings but U.S. action in the Middle East during the early Cold War greatly influenced these developments. In Chapter 5, these processes are overviewed to highlight the connections the actors of this study share with major global events that came after their time.

However, to understand the development of anti-U.S. sentiments in the Middle East, one must understand the development of anti-colonial nationalism in South Asia. The British Empire in the Islamic World first began in South Asia in the 18th century. It would take nearly another century before the British incorporated significant portions of

the Middle East into their territories. Once they did, anti-colonial groups in the Middle East were greatly influenced by their predecessors in South Asia. This relationship is important to the development of the anti-Americanism that emerged in the Middle East during the 1940s and 1950s. The Prologue overviews this story as an introductory context for understanding the United States in the Middle East.

PROLOGUE. MODERNITY IN THE MIDDLE EAST AND SOUTH ASIA

Introduction

In the 18th century, European powers controlled vast swaths of territory in the Americas and Asia. Over the next two centuries, these empires grew even larger. By the end of World War I, all of Africa, and most of the Middle East, was also incorporated into Europe's colonial domains. The British and French had the largest empires but other countries such as Germany, Belgium, and Holland had significant colonial empires as well. The Spanish, who once controlled nearly all of the Americas, lost most of their colonies in the 1800s. But at the turn of the 20th century, Spain still controlled Cuba and the Philippines. It was through these colonial empires that modernity was brought to the non-European world. However, modernity had significantly different meaning to the periphery than it did to the metropole.

For the West, modernity was largely defined by freeing the individual from feudal, religious, and/or economic restraints of the Old Regime. In the 18th and 19th centuries, notions such as liberalism, secularism, capitalism, and socialism came to the fore as expressions of these contexts. At the same time, European thinking moved away from focus on Christianity and towards world views based on reason and, ultimately, science. Faith in industry and technology replaced faith in religion. Scientific innovations, such as modern technology and modern medicine, represent modernity's scientific dimension. [12] However, modernity contains two primary dimensions. The other half is its cultural expression. Notions such as secularism, liberalism, capitalism,

[12] Anthony Giddens, *The Consequences of Modernity*, Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1990.

and socialism represent modernity's cultural side.[13] However, when modernity was brought to the colonies, many local peoples did not interpret it the same way Europeans did. For non-Western peoples, modernization was often the justification for the occupation and exploitation of their countries. Indeed, the "White Man's Burden" and the "Civilizing Mission," both used by Europeans to justify their colonial empires, argued that it was the duty of more developed peoples, such as Europeans, to "modernize" less developed peoples, such as Native Americans, Africans, and Asians.

By far, the British had the largest empire. In the 19th and 20th centuries, it controlled much of the Americas, Africa, the Middle East, and Asia. Through it, cultural frameworks for society based on liberalism, capitalism, secularism, and other Western ideas, were forced, often violently, on local populations. In the Islamic World, local traditions and religious practices were systematically eliminated and replaced with Western customs. From seemingly mundane notions such as fashion all the way to comprehensive programs for government and society, Western culture came to define what "modern" was, often to the chagrin of native populations.[14]

Anti-colonial nationalism in the Middle East and Southwest Asia was an expression of modernity. It was an expression of individuals caught between worlds. Beginning in the 19th century, the Islamic World was increasingly contested by Western

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[13] Jurgen Habermas's *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity*, Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press, 1987.

[14] Akbar S. Ahmed and Hastings Donnan, "Islam in the age of postmodernity," Anita M. Weiss, "Challenges for Muslim women in a postmodern world," Helen Watson, "Women and the veil: Personal responses to global process," in Akbar S. Ahmed and Hastings Donnan (eds.) *Islam, Globalization, and Postmodernity,* New York: Routledge, 1994.

hegemony and Western culture. Anti-colonial nationalism crystallized around the resistance of these notions. Native groups wanted a society with the technological and scientific advancements of modernity but without the forced imposition of the West's cultural traditions.[15] Individuals and groups who resisted cultural modernity were not opposed to modernity's scientific dimensions but they wanted them without the forced imposition of Western culture. They desired the freedom to develop an authentic cultural base for the technological and scientific advancements of modernity. In the Islamic World, these notions first came to fruition in Southwest Asia in response to British colonialism.

Islamic Anti-Colonial Nationalism in the 19th Century

In the mid-19th century, Islam began to be used to directly challenge the British. Theorists and organizations fused the Islamic faith with anti-colonial nationalism to contest cultural modernity and the Western customs that defined it. In the second half of the 19th century, the Deobandi Movement developed in response to growing British power. It challenged Western influence in Southwest Asia and aimed to preserve the customs and practices of the Islamic faith. The movement gained a huge following and established branches in Pakistan, India, and the United Kingdom.[16] At the same time, one of the most important thinkers of the region, Jamal ad-Din "al-Afghani," came to

[15] Basam Tibi, *The Challenge of Fundamentalism: Political Islam and the New World Disorder*, Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2002.

[16] Barbara Daly Metcalf, *Islamic Revival in British India: Deoband, 1860 – 1900*, Princeton University Press, 1982.

prominence. Al-Afghani was born in 1838 in what today is Iran.[17] During his life, he traveled widely throughout the Middle East, South Asia, and Europe propagating an anti-colonial, pan-Islamic ideology. He is considered one of the architects of modern Islamic political thought, as he was one of the first individuals to frame Islam, and the international Muslim community, in terms relating to modern global developments, such as British colonialism. To al-Afghani, "Western" science and technology was the means to colonists' political and economic power.[18] For him, these were things such as steam power, rail roads, and modern military institutions. He believed Muslims needed to develop a culturally authentic society that also used the scientific and technological developments of modernity. Only a society that worked with, not against, the scientific dimensions of the modern world would have the power to challenge the West. Nevertheless, it was central to al-Afghani that this technology develop within native cultural frameworks, specifically, Islamic frameworks.

Al-Afghani was one of the first of the modern age to frame Islam in ways used purely for political purposes.[19] He used Islam to engage the masses in a culturally authentic context that aimed to end colonialism in Southwest Asia. His use of the faith was intended to alter political conditions in the region. It was not used for theological matters. To al-Afghani, and those that followed in his footsteps, religion was simply the means to political ends. Al-Afghani and the Deobandis were just a few of the many

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[17] Nikki, R. Keddie, *An Islamic Response to Imperialism: Political and Religious Writings of Sayyid Jamal ad-Din "al-Afghani,"* Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1983.

[18] Ibid.

[19] Ibid.

individuals and groups that used Islam as the basis for anti-colonial nationalism in the 19th century. This fusion of anti-colonial nationalism and Islam proved to be a powerful and lasting force. Groups such as the Muslim Brotherhood, Hamas, and others used it throughout the 20th century and groups such as Al-Qaeda, the Taliban, and I.S.I.S. continued to use it in the 21st century. Although these groups have crucial, fundamental differences, they all rely on the model first propagated in 19th century South Asia.

Often the Middle East is situated as the origin place of Islamic anti-colonial nationalism. However, the British had a presence in South Asia long before they did in the Middle East. Theorists such as al-Afghani and organizations such as the Deobandi Movement were some of the first to use Islam to combat colonialism. Therefore, Southwest Asia, not the Middle East, was where such frameworks first emerged in modern times. As colonialism increased in the Islamic World so too did the use of Islam as the basis for anti-colonial nationalism. In the Middle East, the British invaded and occupied Egypt in 1882. By the mandate period following the First World War, individuals and groups in the Middle East were well acquainted with the work of their South Asian counterparts.

The United States and Anti-Colonial Nationalism

Anti-colonial nationalists first came to see the United States as a potential great power ally at the Paris Peace Conference of 1919. During the negotiations, President Woodrow Wilson pledged to bring popular sovereignty to all peoples, including those living in the colonies. As a result, local delegates from the colonial world excitedly swarmed the Paris meeting. However, at the conclusion of the peace talks, these delegates were dismayed to find that the British and French had only strengthened their

hold over their colonies.[20] This enflamed colonial populations around the world. A significant portion of the blame was placed on the United States because Wilson had publicly declared his support for popular sovereignty and specifically stated it would be given to colonial populations. Nevertheless, the United States was still a relatively new player on the world stage. Although U.S. businesses were developing informal networks in the Middle East, Washington, unlike London and Paris, did not have a tangible presence in the Islamic World.[21] As such, anti-colonial nationalists placed most of the blame on European powers.

In the Middle East, opinion of America began to shift after World War II. In 1945, the British were still the hegemonic power of the region. However, by 1956, with the conclusion of the Suez Crisis, the United States had replaced the United Kingdom as the hegemon of the Middle East. In tandem with this development, from 1945 – 1956, Middle Eastern populations turned from seeing the United States as a possible patron to viewing Washington as simply the new imperial power, little different from the British or the French.

Decolonization framed American Cold War strategies. In the 1940s and 1950s, U.S. policymakers focused on stabilizing the Middle East to secure it from Soviet influence. However, Middle Eastern populations were in the midst of decolonization. In the late 1940s and 1950s, local populaces in Egypt and Syria were finally able to remove

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[20] Erez Manela, *The Wilsonian Moment: Self-Determination and the International Origins of the Anticolonial Nationalism,* Oxford University Press, 2007.

[21] Matthew F. Jacobs, *Imagining the Middle East: The Building of an American Foreign Policy, 1918 – 1967*, The University of North Carolina Press, 2011.

the British and the French from their countries. However, the United States quickly filled the gap. Furthermore, the U.S. government played an instrumental role in the partition of Palestine – a development considered by regional populations to be one of the greatest catastrophes in modern history. The fact that U.S. officials were concerned with Cold War security in the region, not colonialism, meant little to peoples who had fought so long to free themselves from European powers.

CHAPTER 2. FROM CRITICAL TO CATASTROPHIC: PALESTINIAN REFUGEES AND THE EARLY COLD WAR, 1945 – 1952

2.1 Introduction

In November 1947, the United Nation's officially adopted Resolution 181 (II), also known as the partition of Palestine. As the plan went into effect, the region's instability went from critical to catastrophic. By May of 1948, open hostilities between the newly created state of Israel and most of the surrounding Arab countries had broken out. Over 700,000 Palestinians were forced to flee their homes during the First Arab-Israeli War.[22] Fawaz Turki, in his personal account of becoming a refugee, summed up the plight that was beginning for him and so many like him:

> I was robbed of my sense of purpose and sense of worth as a human being and was forced to line up obsequiously outside […] food depots each month; and that when for two decades I feared, I feared only the cold of twenty winters, and when I dreamed, I dreamed only of the food that others ate. […] How did it come about that a whole nation found itself suddenly in exile and its two million people afflicted by defeat, hunger, and humiliation, repudiated by men, despised by host countries and forgotten by the world, left to live as pariah refugees, their disinherited souls empty of hope and devoid of meaning?[23]

The U.N. partition plan and the ensuing Arab-Israeli War set off the refugee crisis. As the conflict ensued, hundreds of thousands of displaced Palestinians flooded into

[22] U.S. Department of State, *Foreign Relations of the United States 1949: Volume VI The Near East, South Asia, and Africa*, 687-689.

[23] Fawaz Turki, *Soul in Exile: Lives of a Palestinian Revolutionary,* New York: Monthly Review Press, 1988, 15-16.

neighboring countries.[24] There, the refugees were forced to live in horrible, makeshift camps. One refugee described his first year living in such conditions:

> We gathered, not less than fifty or sixty villages, in a large mass at Bourj al-Shemali, east of Tyre. Life was difficult. As many as seven families to a tent, sometimes from different villages. Sharing a tent with strangers was painful for us because of our traditions. There weren't enough tents for everyone so families had to live in caves. There was sickness and overcrowding. Many old people and children died because of the bad conditions.[25]

As the number of refugees continued to grow throughout the late 1940s and afterwards, few families were aware of just how long the road ahead would be. Generations of future Palestinians would grow up in these camps. In the years directly following partition, life was dark for the refugees and there were was little hope on the horizon. Nevertheless, Palestinian refugees found ways to assert their agency and transformed the political and strategic landscapes of the Middle East in the process.

The refugees redefined the domestic and foreign policies of the countries that housed them and, in key ways, redefined those countries' interactions with the United States. In host countries, the refugee camps put tremendous economic and social strain on the communities around them. These communities, in turn, put pressure on their national governments to assist them and the Palestinians. However, the governments of the region were woefully unable to aid such large numbers of people, a point that U.S. officials were aware of before the U.N. plan went into effect. Not just local communities

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[24] U.S. Department of State, *Foreign Relations of the United States 1949: Volume VI The Near East, South Asia, and Africa*, 687-689.

[25] Rosemary Sayigh, *The Palestinians: From Peasants to Revolutionaries*, New York: Zed Books, 1979, 108.

but also the region's general populaces were appalled by the refugees' plight. The partition of Palestine was thought of as just one more example of violent colonialism. Middle Eastern populations largely blamed the United States. As a result, this made it extremely difficult for Middle Eastern governments to work with Washington. Protests, strikes, riots, bombings, guerilla attacks, and regime change were all potential developments that could take place if a local government worked with, or even appeared to work with, the United States. As such, Middle East regimes avoided publicly cooperating with the U.S. government and often challenged U.S. initiatives. In the minds of the Arab people, America held the most fault for the refugees' tragic conditions. Anything less than challenging U.S. policy left Arab states open to serious internal danger. The partition of Palestine was at the heart of the deep-seated and long-lasting anti-Americanism that developed in this period and it transformed U.S./Middle East relations at a fundamental level.

After 1948, the refugees redefined the strategic situation in the Middle East for U.S. officials. The displaced Palestinians were greatly troubling to American policymakers. Washington believed the refugees were an important part of the Soviet strategy to undermine the West, and especially the United States, in the Middle East. It was thought that through the Palestinians, and other non-state groups, the Soviets would attempt to destabilize the region in the hopes of bringing to power communist regimes. In the minds of U.S. officials, the terrible conditions of daily life coupled with almost no opportunities to alleviate their circumstances left the refugees extremely vulnerable to communism – the camps themselves were considered breeding grounds for Soviet agents.

Throughout the 1940s and 1950s, the refugees framed how U.S. officials envisioned the security situation in the Middle East. However, this vision was deeply flawed.

The Palestinians, and most of the Middle East, had suffered from the effects of colonialism for over half a century. Following World War II, as the British and French empires began to recede, anti-colonial nationalism increased significantly in the Middle East. When Israel was created in 1948, these sentiments exploded. Arab populations, and the refugees in particular, desired a great power ally that would defend their land and their rights – whether this was the Soviet Union, the United Nations, the United States, or any other power. The Soviet Union was sometimes willing to take on this role, even if its true motivations had little to do with Arab rights. Nevertheless, what motivated the refugees, along with other stateless actors that worked with Moscow, was not communism, rather, it was anti-colonial nationalism. The Soviet Union provided assistance to the Palestinians in their fight to reattain their homeland, that's all that mattered to the refugees. The fact that Moscow also supported communism was irrelevant to them. These points escaped many U.S. officials and led them to profoundly misinterpret the security situation in the Middle East.

The U.S. government desperately wanted a resolution to the refugee crisis. American officials calculated that the instability caused by the partition of Palestine worked favorably to the interests of the Soviet Union. Stabilizing the region to secure it from communism was key to Washington's strategy in the Middle East. First and foremost, something had to be done for the refugees. Despite sponsoring several programs aimed at helping the Palestinians, including the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees, the U.S. government failed to provide significant

relief to the refugees. The lack of adequate aid led both the refugees and regional populaces to routinely carry out strikes, marches, and riots in protest of Palestine's partition. Moreover, the refugees' struggle was also often the motivation for violent attacks on local officials. The worse conditions became for the Palestinians, the local communities that housed them, and the regional governments dealing with the crisis, the more U.S. policymakers perceived communist threats in the region. This misreading of the region's instability defined American strategy in the Middle East.

In 1945, the U.S. government largely supported the Middle East's fight to free itself from the British and the French. Supporting independence movements was thought to be the best way to stabilize the region. However, the rising instability of the late 1940s led American policymakers to tilt in support of British positions, for example, the 100,000 troops London still had stationed at the Suez Canal. Such resources might be the only force capable of stopping what Washington thought to be rapidly growing Soviet influence. However, Washington's support of London was simply another example of Western colonialism to local populaces. Therefore, the more Washington aligned itself with London, the more Middle East populations challenged U.S. policies. The rising security threats in the region were not a result of Soviet agitation, rather, they resulted from America's relationship with the British and developments such as the partition of Palestine.

Even before the 1947 U.N. vote on Palestine, populations throughout the Middle East made it clear how seriously they viewed the brewing conflict. In the years leading up to partition, countless petitions in defense of the Palestinians were sent to Washington. Both the region's governments and non-state organizations such as the Muslim

Brotherhood pleaded with the American government to create a fair and just resolution. Furthermore, both groups warned that if the rights of the Palestinians were not protected, extreme consequences would result. Some Middle East officials proved prophetic when they warned Washington that the issue of Palestine could lead to a complete reconfiguration of how the United States was viewed in the region. If handled incorrectly, they cautioned that deep-seated hatred for America could develop that would last generations.

2.2 Warning signs, 1945-1948

On 3 November 1945, the U.S. legation in Egypt reported to Washington that riots and strikes broke out across the country in protest of U.S. policy on Palestine. In the Smart Shopping District of Cairo, violent protests erupted and the district was completely destroyed. At Fouad University and Al-Azar University, the students were on strike and the legation had received hundreds of official appeals from them.[26] In Alexandria, 10 protestors were killed and 300 wounded when police fired on rioting crowds. At the U.S. Port Command windows were smashed, a U.S. mail convoy was attacked, and 4 American personnel were injured.[27] The Jerusalem daily, *Al-Difa'a*, on 15 November, wrote:

> […] Palestine will not solve the Jewish refugee problem and it is in the interest of humanity that the Jews should remain in the countries in which they lived. […] [the British] have encumbered

[26] U.S. Department of State, *Foreign Relations of the United States Diplomatic Papers 1945: Volume VIII The Near East and Africa*, 807.

[27] The Consul General (Doolittle) at Alexandria to the Secretary of State, *Confidential U.S. State Department Central Files: Palestine and Israel Internal Affairs and Foreign Affairs*, *1945-1949*, microfilm collection, telegram from 3 November 1945.

> them [the Palestinians] with something worse than the mandate and brought into partnership the United States of America, which has been unreservedly pro-Zionist, to share in the destinies of Palestine.[28]

Three years before the partition of Palestine and Arab/Jewish tensions were already very high. The Arab population was not willing to allow injustice befall the Palestinians and they made this clear to Western authorities. The mere potential for a Jewish state contributed to further destabilization of a region already plagued with instability.

Following World War II, the U.S. government looked to stabilize the Middle East. The region was a hodgepodge of colonies, former colonies, various ethnic groups, religious tension, and all of it situated at a vitally important strategic location. Should war break out with the Soviets, Washington calculated that Europe would probably be lost. However, U.S. policymakers deemed the Middle East the staging point for a counter assault. Swinging up through the underbelly of the Soviet Union was estimated necessary should the two countries go to war. Moreover, the region's oil reserves were a vitally important dimension to U.S. interests. However, decolonization was having a significant effect on the area. In Palestine, the British were withdrawing and the Jewish-Palestinian conflict was coming to a head. For Washington, the security of the Middle East could only move forward if the region was stabilized.

The seriousness of Palestine's problems was apparent in 1945. Since the 1920s, Jewish immigration to Palestine was fairly steady. However, from 1936 – 1939, Arabs revolted over Jewish settlement and, following the war, the British restricted further immigration to the country. This left bitter sentiments between the British, the Jewish

[28] *Al-Difa'a*, 15 November 1945.

population, and the local Arabs. In 1945, nearly every Arab state argued that serious consequences would arise should a Jewish state, in any form, come to being. In 1944, President Franklin Delano Roosevelt informed King Ibn Saud of Saudi Arabia that no decisions regarding a Jewish state would be made without first consulting with Arab leaders. In 1945, F.D.R. did not see support of Jewish immigration to Palestine as betraying this promise. He supported those European Jews, who had suffered so greatly during the Holocaust, that chose to resettle in Palestine. However, the regional populace saw the issue in a different light.

For example, in March 1945, the U.S. legation in Syria informed Secretary of State, Edward Stettinius Jr., that students across the country, including those from Syria University, were on strike to protest F.D.R.'s support of Jewish immigration to Palestine. Moreover, numerous petitions had been signed and submitted to the U.S. legation in support of the student protests.[29] On the same day, the Director of the Office of Near Eastern and African Affairs, Wallace Murray, informed the Secretary of State that the government of Saudi Arabia had notified his office that there would be significant bloodshed should the Arab population have to defend Palestine.[30] Two days after the student strikes; the U.S. delegation in Syria received a written protest from the Committee Against Zionism. It was comprised of leading politicians, editors, and

[29] U.S. Department of State, Department of State Publication 8427, Historical Office, Bureau of Public Affairs, *Foreign Relations of the United States Diplomatic Papers 1945: Volume VIII The Near East and Africa,* (United States Government Printing Office, Washington, 1969), 693-695.

[30] Ibid.

professional men.[31] It made clear that the leaders of Syria were of one mind with the Syrian people on the matter of Palestine.

In April 1945, the Deputy Director of Near Eastern and African Affairs informed the Acting Secretary of State that his office had received cables from Iraq, Lebanon, Saudi Arabia, and Syria in protest of U.S. approval on Jewish settlement in Palestine. They declared that if Zionists got their state, the consequences would be disastrous for U.S. interests and regional stability generally.[32] Furthermore, the deputy director pointed out that no public U.S. position on Palestine had been developed yet. He argued that such ambiguity only hurt the United States in the minds of the native population. As a result, 7 days before his death, F.D.R. sent a personal note to King Saud reiterating his promises not to take any action hostile to Arab interests without first consulting with Arab leadership. But a clear U.S. plan for Palestine would have to wait.[33]

After the passing of F.D.R., Harry Truman occupied the office of the President and he differed greatly from his predecessor on how things should go in the Middle East. On 1 May 1945, the Acting Secretary of State sent a detailed memorandum to Truman outlining the complex workings of the region. The gravity of Palestine and the promises

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[31] U.S. Department of State, *Foreign Relations of the United States Diplomatic Papers 1945: Volume VIII The Near East and Africa*, 695-696.

[32] U.S. Department of State, *Foreign Relations of the United States Diplomatic Papers 1945: Volume VIII The Near East and Africa,* 698-702.

[33] U.S. Department of State, *Foreign Relations of the United States Diplomatic Papers 1945: Volume VIII The Near East and Africa*, 698.

F.D.R. made to Arab leaders were underscored.[34] Two weeks later, these sentiments were made apparent when the Acting Secretary of State informed the President that Transjordan had joined Iraq, Lebanon, Saudi Arabia, and Syria in their protest of Jewish immigration to Palestine.[35] Egypt joined suit the following month.[36] Moreover, on 2 June 1945, the American Consulate in Jerusalem informed the State Department that a rally of 7,000 people was held to support the Palestinians. Prayers and calls for the end of Zionist designs echoed throughout the demonstration. The consulate specified that the Arabs in the area were becoming more enflamed over the issue and had begun sending volunteers to Lebanon and Syria to undergo training should hostilities break out.[37] In August 1945, the U.S. delegation in Egypt reiterated the sentiments of the consulate in Jerusalem when it informed Washington that the problem of Palestine was already deeply ingrained in the minds of the Arab population. Any move seen as prejudicial to the Palestinians would set the region towards violence on a mass scale.[38]

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[34] U.S. Department of State, *Foreign Relations of the United States Diplomatic Papers 1945: Volume VIII The Near East and Africa*, 705-706.

[35] U.S. Department of State, *Foreign Relations of the United States Diplomatic Papers 1945: Volume VIII The Near East and Africa*, 706-707.

[36] U.S. Legation in Jerusalem to Washington, *Confidential U.S. State Department Central Files: Palestine and Israel Internal Affairs and Foreign Affairs*, *1945-1949*, microfilm collection, Telegram from 2 June 1945.

[37] U.S. Department of State, *Foreign Relations of the United States Diplomatic Papers 1945: Volume VIII The Near East and Africa*, 708.

[38] U.S. Department of State, *Foreign Relations of the United States Diplomatic Papers 1945: Volume VIII The Near East and Africa*, 713-727.

In response to the growing tension, the State Department drew up four potential options. 1) A Jewish State 2) An Arab state 3) Partition 4) A trusteeship of responsibility to be held between the United States, the Soviet Union, the United Kingdom, and France. The first two options presented obvious problems and the third was considered equally unfeasible due to the insurmountable obstacles it would create in maintaining peace and stability.[39] No good options were available but the latter was determined as the only viable one. It was hoped those four powers could maintain peace in the country until it was ready to hold democratic elections and create a single state.[40] But problems emerged immediately. The War Department informed the State Department that roughly 300,000 U.S. troops would be necessary to keep order in the country should Jewish immigration increase. Furthermore, British and French troop levels would need to increase as well due to the disturbances that would arise from such a significant U.S. presence.[41] This in turn, would create even more conflict with local populations. No plan seemed feasible so Washington continued to delay any public statements on the future of Palestine.

However, the lack of a clear stance itself jeopardized U.S. interests. In October, the U.S. Minister to Saudi Arabia, William A. Eddy, who was in Washington at the time, informed the Director of Near Eastern and African Affairs, Loy Wesley Henderson, that the longer the United States delayed in sponsoring a design for Palestine the more U.S.

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[39] U.S. Department of State, *Foreign Relations of the United States Diplomatic Papers 1945: Volume VIII The Near East and Africa*, 727-730.

[40] Ibid.

[41] U.S. Department of State, *Foreign Relations of the United States Diplomatic Papers 1945: Volume VIII The Near East and Africa*, 742-743.

prestige was hurt. To the Arab population, the hesitation by Washington could only mean that the United States was moving towards Zionism.[42] The U.S. ministers to Lebanon-Syria and Egypt, who were also in Washington at the time, relayed similar sentiments to Henderson.[43]

Throughout October 1945, Henderson and Acting Secretary of State, Dean Acheson, reiterated to Truman that F.D.R. had made promises to the Arabs, via his correspondence with King Saud of Saudi Arabia. Acheson and Henderson emphasized that it was vitally important to craft a careful strategy for Palestine because it threatened U.S. interests not just in the Middle East but throughout the world. The entire international community was watching how Palestine would be handled and wrong action could have serious international consequences.[44]

In late 1945, Truman suggested assisting 100,000 new Jewish immigrants from Europe to go to Palestine. Acheson and Henderson had obvious concerns. They underscored the repeated protests against Jewish settlement Washington received that year from the Arab world.[45] Moreover, on 2 October 1945, President Truman received a note from King Saud that further highlighted Acheson and Henderson's apprehensions.

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[42] U.S. Department of State, *Foreign Relations of the United States Diplomatic Papers 1945: Volume VIII The Near East and Africa,* 790-791.

[43] U.S. Department of State, *Foreign Relations of the United States Diplomatic Papers 1945: Volume VIII The Near East and Africa*, 793-794.

[44] U.S. Department of State, *Foreign Relations of the United States Diplomatic Papers 1945: Volume VIII The Near East and Africa*, 753-755.

[45] U.S. Department of State, *Foreign Relations of the United States Diplomatic Papers 1945: Volume VIII The Near East and Africa,*, 763-764.

The King emphasized that dire effects would result should the U.S. government officially endorse 100,000 migrants to the area. Truman, in his correspondence back to the King, simply assured him that the U.S. government planned to uphold its agreements with the Arab world and would soon make public statements as such.[46]

On 2 November 1945, Alexander C. Kirk, political advisor to the Supreme Allied Commander of the Mediterranean Theatre, informed the Secretary of State of the ground level effects that would emerge should Washington formally sanction a new round of immigration. Riots, strikes, demonstrations, and general disorder would develop throughout the region. This, in turn, would give advantage to terrorist organizations and give rise to attacks on U.S. personnel and U.S. institutions. Furthermore, worldwide anti-U.S. propaganda would result.[47]

On the following day, the American Consulate in Jerusalem reported that the Arab Front held a massive meeting at Jaffa. All echelons of Arab society attended. There, they passed several resolutions. The most important of which was the re-establishment of the Arab Higher Committee. Its purpose was to provide the Arab League, a regional institution that loosely affiliated Arab countries together, with an organization to function at the front lines of the Palestinian conflict.[48] The same week,

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[46] U.S. Department of State, *Foreign Relations of the United States Diplomatic Papers 1945: Volume VIII The Near East and Africa,*, 769-770.

[47] U.S. Department of State, *Foreign Relations of the United States Diplomatic Papers 1945: Volume VIII The Near East and Africa,*, 806-807.

[48] U.S. Legation in Jerusalem to Washington, *Confidential U.S. State Department Central Files: Palestine and Israel Internal Affairs and Foreign Affairs*, *1945-1949*, microfilm collection, telegram from 3 November 1945.

the popular newspaper, *Falastin*, printed, "The [British] implicitly recognize the promises made to the Jews and completely ignore those made to the Arabs […]. This admission of British promises to the Jews and the intentional disregard to the Arabs […] [demonstrates] clear partiality.[49] Throughout 1945, native populaces made obvious to Washington that they took the rights of Palestinians deeply serious. U.S. legations in the Middle East and certain officials in Washington heeded these warnings. Palestine was fundamentally connected to the maintenance of stability in the area. If it was handled incorrectly, it could have disastrous consequences for U.S. interests. Along with a global loss of prestige and the development of worldwide anti-U.S. propaganda, the issue of Palestine greatly threated the security of the region. If stability could not be maintained, series opportunities for Soviet influence would develop.

In 1945, to U.S. officials, there were semi-alarming signs regarding the Soviets in the Middle East. For example, on 29 January 1945, the State Department circulated an office memorandum that suggested Palestinians were tilting towards the Soviet Union in the hope it would champion their cause. Faith in Britain and the United States was beginning to be questioned and the Soviets were the natural choice to fill the gap. On 28 February 1945, the U.S. Consulate in Jerusalem warned Washington that Jewish communists openly supported the Soviet Union and violently opposed the British. As well, Palestinian communists were developing stronger networks with communists in

[49] *Falastin*, 16 November 1945.

Lebanon and Syria.[50] In March, the Director of the Office of Near Eastern and African Affairs sent the Secretary of State a memorandum outlining how continued support of Jewish immigration and/or support of a Jewish state would push Arab populations into the arms of the Soviets.[51] These fears were exacerbated in July when the U.S. legation in Jerusalem cabled Washington to inform the State Department that three Soviet military officers were active in Palestine and their purpose was unclear. While relatively minor, in comparison to the years to follow, the security situation to U.S. officials presented developments that needed to be carefully watched. But for the time being, successfully resolving the Palestine issue was the best way to safeguard the security of the Middle East.

Throughout the first few months of 1946, the Arab population again made clear that it did not support the continuation of Jewish immigration.[52] For example, in March, the Arab League submitted a memorandum to U.S. officials, it stated:

> It is a monstrous injustice to force the Arabs of Palestine to accept in their country a foreign people whose avowed intention is to wrest that country from its owners and occupants. […] Most of the Arab countries themselves have Jewish communities whose security and tranquility Zionism threatens. For Zionism seeks to detach the loyalty of the Jewish communities from the

[50] U.S. Legation in Jerusalem to Washington, *Confidential U.S. State Department Central Files: Palestine and Israel Internal Affairs and Foreign Affairs*, *1945-1949*, microfilm collection, telegram from 28 February 1945.

[51] U.S. Department of State, *Foreign Relations of the United States Diplomatic Papers 1945: Volume VIII The Near East and Africa*, 694-695.

[52] "Strike in Support of Continued Immigration, U.K. Issuing 1,500 Visas per Month" and "Arab Protest in Response to Jewish Strike and Immigration," *Al-Hayat*, Issue 4, January 1946.

> countries in which they live in spite of the fact that these communities have lived in harmony and friendship with the Arabs for hundreds of years. […] For all these reasons, the Arab League is opposed to the foundation of a Jewish state in Palestine, to the continuation of Jewish immigration into Palestine, and to the transfer of land from Arab to Jewish hands by any means whatever.[53]

The same week, American officials met with numerous leaders from the Arab world, including Hassan al-Banna, the Supreme Guide of the Muslim Brotherhood. They reiterated the sentiments of the Arab League and warned that if the Western powers ignored the rights of the Palestinians, dire consequences would result.[54]

Nevertheless, in April 1946, Truman officially endorsed 100,000 new European Jews to immigrate to Palestine.[55] Fundamentally, Truman had a choice between appeasing the British and the European states that housed the Jewish refugees or appeasing the Arab states that would have to deal with the consequences of 100,000 new Jewish migrants. The President chose the former because he deemed Europe more strategically important than the Middle East. Truman was focused on Europe. The Middle East came second. However, many U.S. officials deemed the Middle East as important as Europe. Acheson and Henderson believed American interests in Egypt,

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[53] The Arab League to the U.S. Legation in Cairo, *Confidential U.S. State Department Central Files, Internal Affairs and Foreign Affair/Egypt, 1945 – 1949,* microfilm collection, memo from 4 March 1946.

[54] U.S. Legation in Egypt to Washington, *Confidential U.S. State Department Central Files, Internal Affairs and Foreign Affair/Egypt, 1945 – 1949,* microfilm collection, memo from 13 March 1946.

[55] U.S. Department of State, Department of State Publication 8490, Historical Office, Bureau of Public Affairs, *Foreign Relations of the United States 1946: Volume VII The Near East and Africa,* (United States Government Printing Office, Washington, 1969), 588-589.

Syria, Lebanon, Iraq, and Saudi Arabia equaled, if not surpassed, those in Europe.[56] Moreover, they informed the President that the military needs associated with 100,000 new migrants would exceed British capabilities and would require a significant U.S. buildup.

In his public address, Truman argued that the human and political rights of Arabs would not be threatened and would be guaranteed, despite the new wave of immigrants.[57] Earlier in the year, Truman authorized a special U.S. committee to travel to the Middle East to study and assess the Palestine issue. It returned to Washington several days before the President made his announcement and reported that a significant refugee problem already existed. Any future plans for immigration had to take into account the current displaced Palestinians. Moreover, the basic human rights, as set forth by the United Nations, of those already displaced needed to be addressed. Due to the political and economic conditions of the region, there was no hope of settling refugees outside of Palestine. In sum, the committee reiterated the designs of the State Department and argued for a trusteeship until the country was ready to democratize with regard to all races and religions.[58] However, neither the committee, nor the President referenced how such plans would be accomplished.

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[56] U.S. Department of State, *Foreign Relations of the United States 1946: Volume VII The Near East and Africa*, 597-599; U.S. Department of State, *Foreign Relations of the United States 1946: Volume VII The Near East and Africa*, 604-605.

[57] Ibid.

[58] U.S. Department of State, *Foreign Relations of the United States 1946: Volume VII The Near East and Africa*, 585-587.

The Arab world exploded in reaction to Truman's announcement. Moreover, the U.S. report on Palestine was made public and reactions were extremely critical. On 2 May 1946, the U.S. legation in Jerusalem informed the Secretary of State that Arabs were greatly distressed by Truman's statements. A general strike was called for 3 May and the Arab Higher Committee declared that Arabs everywhere will fight U.S. policy.[59] The following day, the American legation in Cairo cabled the Secretary that similar developments were occurring in Egypt. The legation stated that the Egyptian government and the Egyptian press considered the U.S. government's stance disastrous for Arab rights. Furthermore, the Arab League stated that until now the British were seen as the enemy and the United States as a potential savior. But now it was clear the U.S. government was also at fault. Every Arab country was in agreement with the League. Throughout May, each country sent official petitions to American delegations. Non-state organizations, such as the Arab Union, the Arab Palestine Society, the Muslim Brotherhood, and the Muslim Youths, also appealed U.S. legations.[60]

Throughout 1946, U.S. officials observed a steady increase in communist agitation. For example, in February, the American Consulate General in Jerusalem sent a detailed memo to the Secretary of State outlining socialist activity in the area. The official communist party of the country was comprised of roughly 5,000 individuals and the organization had a large number of affiliated supporters. Recently, it had moderate

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[59] U.S. Department of State, *Foreign Relations of the United States 1946: Volume VII The Near East and Africa*, 590-591.

[60] U.S. Department of State, *Foreign Relations of the United States 1946: Volume VII The Near East and Africa*, 592-595.

success in local elections and had developed a sophisticated propaganda program that distributed literature to students and workers. Two other major Arab Socialist parties existed also – the League of National Liberation and the Palestine Communist Party. Both were gaining considerable prestige amongst the Arab populace, developing stronger connections with international trade unions in Britain and France, and winning local elections. Moreover, U.S. officials believed Palestinian communists were developing stronger ties to communists in Lebanon because it was there that communications with the Soviets took place. All communist parties refused to accept the American committee's report and called for the Soviet Union to be consulted on the Palestine problem. U.S. legations reported that the propaganda of these groups was having a stronger effect on Palestinians then ever previously.[61]

By September 1946, the Jerusalem delegation reported that the communists had made serious gains in the politics of the country. Electoral success was steady and ties to socialists in Britain and France were strengthened. As well, connections with communist groups in India, South Africa, Bulgaria, Greece, Holland, the United States, and Canada had developed. Robust recruitment methods resulted in significant advances and the communists now had numerous sympathizers in government and intellectual positions. Ties to the Soviet Union were also clearer than ever, as numerous meetings between Soviet officials and Palestinian socialists were reported. Armenian communists in the area, along with their support of the Palestinians, were agitating for Soviet intervention to

[61] U.S. Legation in Jerusalem to the Secretary of State, *Confidential U.S. State Department Central Files: Palestine and Israel Internal Affairs and Foreign Affairs*, *1945-1949*, microfilm collection, telegram from 25 February 1946.

establish an Armenian state. All groups continued to manage complex networks of propaganda publication and distribution. For instance, earlier in the year, a workers strike was called that united Arab and Jewish communists in common protest against U.S. and British policies.[62]

To make matters worse, on 22 November 1946, the C.I.A. reported that Lebanese and Syrian agents were infiltrating Palestine under the pretense of merchants but their real purpose was the smuggling of large quantities of arms and ammunition into the country. Along with the distribution of these arms, their goal was to disseminate anti-Jewish, anti-American, and anti-British propaganda. Intelligence officials believed that certain Palestinians were eagerly awaiting instruction to begin attacking Jewish settlements.[63] In January 1947, the C.I.A. reported that the Palestine Communist Party had developed contingencies for functioning underground if authorities increased pressure on it. A secret committee was formed whose members underwent special training. Should it be needed, they were to continue operations clandestinely and work closely in coordination with Moscow. The Arab Communists Party developed similar contingencies. Finally, the agency reported that Moscow had recently sponsored a

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[62] U.S. Legation in Jerusalem to the Secretary of State, *Confidential U.S. State Department Central Files: Palestine and Israel Internal Affairs and Foreign Affairs*, *1945-1949*, microfilm collection, telegram from 27 September 1946.

[63] The CIA Records Search Tool, CIA Intelligence Report, *Arming of Palestinian Arabs: Anti-Jewish Propaganda*, CIA-RDP82-00457R000100560010-2, Washington DC, 22 November 1946, https://www.cia.gov/library/readingroom/docs/CIA-RDP82-00457R000100560010-2.pdf, (accessed 9 June 2019).

cultural exchange mission and several Lebanese and Syrian communists were traveling to the Soviet Union.[64]

The best way to combat these security threats to Washington was to stabilize the region. This meant resolving the Palestine issue. On 24 January 1947, Truman wrote to King Saud underscoring that the U.S. government wanted nothing but friendship between it and Saudi Arabia, the Arab people, and the Muslim World. The President argued that a Jewish homeland could exist without violating Arab rights and the new wave of immigrants would not harm the Arab people. As well, Truman reiterated that his office would make no move over Palestine without first consulting with Arabs.[65] But British authorities were now issuing 1,500 visas per month to Jewish migrants. Furthermore, London refused to develop any clear policy for the area and looked to the United Nations and the United States to determine the future of the country.[66] The U.S. government was forced to take the lead on the issue because if it didn't, Moscow would have exploited the

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[64] The CIA Records Search Tool, CIA Intelligence Report, *Soviet Penetration in Palestine*, CIA-RDP82-00457R000300070003-2, 23 January 1947, https://www.cia.gov/library/readingroom/docs/CIA-RDP82-00457R000300070003-2.pdf, (accessed 9 June 2019) and *Communists and the Palestine Question: Missions to Russia: New Head of Armenian Communists*, CIA-RDP82-00457R000300760003-6, 1 January 1947, https://www.cia.gov/library/readingroom/docs/CIA-RDP82-00457R000300760003-6.pdf, (accessed 9 June 2019).

[65] U.S. Department of State, Department of State Publication 8592, Historical Office, Bureau of Public Affairs, *Foreign Relations of the United States 1947: Volume V The Near East and Africa,* (United States Government Printing Office, Washington, 1971), 1011-1014.

[66] U.S. Department of State, *Foreign Relations of the United States 1947: Volume V The Near East and Africa,* 1048-1049.

situation for its own gain. As a result, the U.S. government sponsored a U.N. committee to study Palestine before any further decisions were made.[67]

But throughout the summer of 1947 the U.N. team faced constant pressure from local Arab populations. Before it even arrived in the Middle East, the Arab Higher Committee called for a general boycott of the committee and most Arabs enthusiastically agreed.[68] When it landed on the ground in June, the U.N. group was met with applause and greeting from Jewish groups but this only confirmed to Arabs that the study was biased.[69] In July 1947, the Arab League declared that the U.N. team would not be recognized, as the League was not consulted in its creation and mandate. By September 1947, the U.N. study was finished and both it and the U.S. government supported a plan to partition the country. Arab countries were not consulted. This had an obvious effect on local populations.

On 16 August 1947, the U.S. Consulate in Jerusalem reported that anti-Jewish rioting had occurred over the last six days and terrorist attacks were rampant. It recommended that U.S. citizens and the families of consulate members be evacuated if

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[67] U.S. Department of State, *Foreign Relations of the United States 1947: Volume V The Near East and Africa*, 1064-1065.

[68] U.S. Department of State, *Foreign Relations of the United States 1947: Volume V The Near East and Africa*, 1102.

[69] U.S. Department of State, *Foreign Relations of the United States 1947: Volume V The Near East and Africa,*, 1113-1116.

such trends continue.[70] The Arab Higher Committee declared that all its resources would now be put to disrupting the plan. It began stockpiling weapons and preparing attacks on Jewish settlements.[71] U.N .delegates from Iraq, Syria, Lebanon, Egypt and Saudi Arabia were also unanimous in condemning the U.S. government. They saw its plan as blatant support for Zionism. Prince Faisal of Saudi Arabia stated that this was the most dangerous step the U.S. government had ever taken in the Middle East.[72] Moreover, the U.S. Consulate in Jerusalem reported that Arab groups were hoarding arms and that the Palestine government declared it only a matter of time before general attacks on Jewish populations began.

On 3 October 1947, the Arab Higher Committee demanded the termination of Britain's mandate, the creation of an Arab democratic state, and the withdrawal of all British military personnel.[73] Arab delegates at the United Nations submitted similar petitions. For them, Palestine should be unitary and undivided, and Jerusalem should be its capital. The government should be republican and function democratically.

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[70] U.S. Legation in Jerusalem to the Secretary of State, *Confidential U.S. State Department Central Files: Palestine and Israel Internal Affairs and Foreign Affairs*, *1945-1949*, microfilm collection, telegram from 16 August 1947.

[71] U.S. Legation in Jerusalem to the Secretary of State, *Confidential U.S. State Department Central Files: Palestine and Israel Internal Affairs and Foreign Affairs*, *1945-1949*, microfilm collection, telegram from 15 September 1947.

[72] U.S. Department of State, *Foreign Relations of the United States 1947: Volume V The Near East and Africa*, 1152-1153.

[73] U.S. Department of State, *Foreign Relations of the United States 1947: Volume V The Near East and Africa*, 1170.

Safeguards for religious rights of Jews, Christians, and Muslims should be fundamental to its character. And full cultural freedom for all ethnic groups should be guaranteed.[74] In December, the Arab League issued the following statement:

> … the heads and representatives of…[the Arab] Governments have decided that partition is void from its very beginning. They have also decided, in deference to the will of their peoples, to take such drastic measures as would, with the will of God, defeat the unjust partition plan and give support to the right of the Arabs.[75]

These sentiments were underscored on 20 October 1947 when a "pamphlet bomb" exploded in Jerusalem. Although causing no damage, it dramatically distributed propaganda leaflets in explosive fashion. In the pamphlets, the Arab Holy War Committee stated that America had no right to create a Jewish state nor to permit Jews to immigrate to the country. It also warned that U.S. personnel would be targeted if measures were not taken to remedy the situation.[76]

The Office of Near Eastern and African Affairs had outlined the risks of partitioning Palestine as early as fall 1945. In September 1947, as the United Nations was releasing its plan, the Director of the Office of Near Eastern and African Affairs plainly informed Secretary of State Acheson that partition would have serious, negative

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[74] U.S. Department of State, *Foreign Relations of the United States 1947: Volume V The Near East and Africa*, 1176-1177.

[75] Muhammad Khalil, *The Arab States and the Arab League: A Documentary Record* in Nafez Nazzal, *Palestinian Exodus from Galilee 1948*, 9.

[76] U.S. Legation in Jerusalem to Washington, *Confidential U.S. State Department Central Files: Palestine and Israel Internal Affairs and Foreign Affairs*, *1945-1949*, microfilm collection, telegram from 20 October 1947.

consequences for U.S. interests. Support from Arab countries was necessary to effectively carry out U.S. strategy in the Middle East. Regional governments needed to be coordinated with Washington in case of a Soviet attack and this still had not come to fruition. Furthermore, these regimes were necessary to suppress nationalist uprisings that threatened the stability of the region. If the United States supported partition, these outcomes would be lost. America would be seen as the enemy of the Arab people making it near impossible for Arab states to align with the U.S. government and the likelihood of uprisings would increase due to the regional instability brought on by partition.[77]

The C.I.A agreed. It reported that Palestine was a vitally important area whose politics was capable of moving the entire Arab world towards revolution and alliance with the Soviet Union. Moreover, the agency stated that the current situation in Palestine bordered on chaos as a result of Arab/Jewish tension. By January 1948, nationalist and religious fervor had groups in Syria, Lebanon, Jordan, Iraq, Egypt, and Saudi Arabia determined to fight against any force that tried to create a Jewish state. Although the Arab governments were not expected to declare war officially, they were more than happy to help their people fight. The C.I.A. estimated that these countries could field an army of 100,000 – 200,000 well-armed guerilla fighters. Without significant outside aid,

[77] U.S. Department of State, *Foreign Relations of the United States 1947: Volume V The Near East and Africa*, 1153-1159.

the C.I.A. calculated that a Jewish state could only holdout for a maximum of two years.[78]

From 1945 – 1948, the U.S. government focused on stability and security, not just in the Middle East but globally. However, maintaining stability in one region of the world could destabilize another and, in turn, create new security threats. Ultimately, Truman focused on stabilizing Europe at the expense of the Middle East. This led to increased Jewish immigration and, as a result, increased tension with Arab states. From 1945 – 1948, Arab populations moved from seeing the United States as a potential patron or savior to seeing it as a new colonial power. Furthermore, various non-state groups progressed towards more radical positions regarding the United States as a result of these developments. Both the Arab people and their governments made clear their deep regard for the Palestinians and made equally clear what the consequences of ignoring them would be.

The security situation in the region deteriorated as instability grew in the Middle East. Throughout these years, the number of groups disaffected with the U.S. government grew strongly. As a result, U.S. officials observed multiplying threats related to the Soviet Union. Rioting, protests, and terrorist activity, was interpreted as communist agitation. Most such activity was anti-colonial in nature but Washington saw

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[78] The CIA Records Search Tool, *The Current Situation in Palestine*, CIA-RDP78-01617A003000120004-1, 20 October 1947, https://www.cia.gov/library/readingroom/docs/CIA-RDP78-01617A003000120004-1.pdf, (accessed 10 June 2019) and *The Consequences of the Partition of Palestine*, CIA-RDP78-01617A003000180001-8, 28 November 1947, https://www.cia.gov/library/readingroom/docs/CIA-RDP78-01617A003000180001-8.pdf, (accessed 10 June 2019).

the Soviet Union. These developments moved the U.S. government to see British troops in the area as a vital component to the security of the region.

2.3 Palestinian Refugees, 1948 – 1952

During the Arab-Israeli War of 1948, Washington deemed the dual strategy of stability and security more important than ever. The security situation in the Middle East, and worldwide, was heating up significantly. However, while the U.S. government worried about its strategic designs, Palestinians had more pressing issues to deal with. Hundreds of thousands of Palestinians lost their homes, were forced to flee in terror, and sought shelter in neighboring countries. The specific circumstances of Palestinians' forced flight varied from place to place but common themes resounded in most experiences. For example, Salih Muhammad Nassir, a farmer from the settlement of Saffuriya, described the destruction of his village:

> Three Jewish planes flew over the village and dropped barrels filled with explosives, metal fragments, nails and glass. They were very loud and disrupting … They shook the whole village, broke windows, doors, killed or wounded some of the villagers and many of the village livestock.[79]

Umm Abid al-Qiblawi was among those who surrendered at the village of Majd al-Kurum. She recounted:

> During the morning of October 30, a few villagers decided to carry white flags and meet the Jews west of the village. They were to tell the Jewish soldiers that the villagers had gotten rid of the ALA and that the village was safe and prepared to surrender. We were surprised when suddenly another Jewish force approached the village from the east. The Jews joined up at the village and

[79] Salih Muhammad Nassir, interviewed at Ain al-Hilwah Camp. Sidon, Lebanon, 20 January 1973 in Nazzal, *Palestinian Exodus from Galilee 1948*, 75.

> soon after ordered us to assemble at 'Ain Majd el Kurum in the center of the village. Jewish soldiers picked twelve of our men at random, blindfolded them, and shot them in front of us.[80]

Muhammad Ahmad Hamid, a mechanic from the village of Ein ez Zeitun, recalled:

> I decided not to leave the village as we retreated. Instead, I hid in a nearby stable, close to my house. I remained in hiding for a while and then decided to join the people assembled at Mahmud Hamid's courtyard… As I was crossing the street, I was caught. The Jewish soldiers took me to the center of the village, near the spring of 'Ein ez Zeitun from which the village derives its name. There I saw Jamil Ahmad Idris crucified on a tree. I was beaten and questioned […].[81]

The Arab Higher Committee brought these, and many other, incidents to the attention of the United Nations when it submitted the petition, "Jewish Atrocities in the Holy Land." It outlined dozens of similar massacres and demanded to know how such acts were justified.[82] As the war unfolded, numerous reports of like events streamed into the United Nations but little to nothing was done about them.[83]

The disorder, chaos, and violence that ensued from partition was not surprising to U.S. officials. Policymakers in both the C.I.A. and the State Department had warned of the dangers of partition. However, neither the U.S. government nor the United Nations

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[80] Umm Abid al Qiblawi, interviewed at Shatila Camp, Beirut, Lebanon, 1 February 1973 in Nazzal, *Palestinian Exodus from Galilee 1948*, 92.

[81] Muhammad Ahnmad Hamid, interviewed in Beirut, Lebanon, 8 February 1973 in ibid, 35.

[82] U.S. Legation in Egypt to Washington, *Confidential U.S. State Department Central Files, Internal Affairs and Foreign Affair/Egypt, 1945 – 1949,* microfilm collection, 30 July 1948.

[83] U.S. Legation in Egypt to Washington, *Confidential U.S. State Department Central Files, Internal Affairs and Foreign Affair/Egypt, 1945 – 1949,* microfilm collection 12 August 1948; U.S. Legation in Jerusalem to Washington, *Confidential U.S. State Department Central Files: Palestine and Israel Internal Affairs and Foreign Affairs*, *1945-1949*, microfilm collection, 12 November 1948.

had any forthcoming solutions. This further alienated the Palestinians, local communities, and Arab governments who had to deal with the growing refugee crisis in their countries. Publicly siding with the U.S. government, even if it was in the state's interest, was now extremely dangerous for any Arab regime because it risked inciting violent riots, guerilla attacks, or even revolution.

In August 1948, the C.I.A. informed the White House of several alarming developments. One source stated that Arabs were lobbying the Soviet Union to intervene in the Palestine war. Although an unlikely scenario, the C.I.A. did deem the war working to Moscow's advantage. U.S. officials believed the chaos of the conflict allowed the Soviet Union to implement policies that destabilized the region. The displaced Palestinians represented a most troubling potential dimension to the Soviet's plan. The C.I.A. regarded the Palestinians the most important population of refugees to develop since the Second World War and Arab countries had neither the economic resources nor political stability necessary to absorb them. Furthermore, Israel's refusal to allow those that fled to return home, left Arab regimes fearful of popular uprising should they be seen to negotiate with Israel or the West.[84] On 25 October 1948, the C.I.A. reported that Soviet officials were meeting with Palestinians to provide them with support. In the

[84] The CIA Records Search Tool, *Arabs Seek Soviet Aid on Palestine Question*, CIA-RDP82-00457R001800590009-3, 27 August 1948, https://www.cia.gov/library/readingroom/docs/CIA-RDP82-00457R001800590009-3.pdf, (accessed 10 June 2019) and *Possible Developments from the Palestine Truce*, CIA-RDP78-01617A003200140002-9, 31 August 1948, https://www.cia.gov/library/readingroom/docs/CIA-RDP78-01617A003200140002-9.pdf, (accessed 10 June 2019).

same memo, the agency reported that a wave of sympathy for communism and the Soviet Union was growing amongst the refugees.[85] And on 5 November 1948, the C.I.A. outlined how the Syrian Minister of Defense was ordering officers of refugee camps to create an army battalion composed of displaced Palestinians, 75 refugees began officer training in October.

The increasing security threats to U.S. officials were a result of the war's destabilizing effect. On 9 November 1948, the U.S. delegation in Haifa stated that communists gained control of Arab labor in Nazareth and now had control over the roughly 10,000 Arabs living there.[86] On the same day the legation in Jerusalem informed Washington that dozens of communists were arrested in Nablus for distributing propaganda and the Arab Military Governor of Jerusalem warned that sympathy for communism was growing rapidly in the camps.[87]

On 10 November 1948, the U.S. consulate in Jerusalem reported that the refugee population was beginning to starve, unemployment was widespread, normal trade traffic

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[85]The CIA Records Search Tool, *Activity of Soviet Officials among Palestinian Refugees in Syria and Lebanon*, CIA-RDP82-00457R002000070003-3, 25 October 1948, https://www.cia.gov/library/readingroom/docs/CIA-RDP82-00457R002000070003-3.pdf, (accessed 10 June 2019).

[86] U.S. Legation in Haifa to the Secretary of State, *Confidential U.S. State Department Central Files: Palestine and Israel Internal Affairs and Foreign Affairs*, *1945-1949*, microfilm collection, telegram from 9 November 1948.

[87] U.S. Legation in Jerusalem to the Secretary of State, *Confidential U.S. State Department Central Files: Palestine and Israel Internal Affairs and Foreign Affairs*, *1945-1949*, microfilm collection, telegram from 9 November 1948.

closed, there was a considerable typhoid outbreak, hospitals were unable to cope with the amount of patients, and the water situation was approaching dangerous levels. One refugee described the situation, "I had a younger brother who died aged seven in Kar'oun, at the beginning of winter. Many children died. They put us in barracks, 20 to 30 families to a section. I remember there was a child among us who went out to the toilet in the night and was found frozen stiff next morning."[88] The U.S. consulate argued that something had to be done soon or large numbers of dead would result. Furthermore, on 14 January 1949, the Acting Secretary of State reiterated to the President the urgent need to address the refugee crisis. He warned that the situation was already critical and immediate assistance was needed to avert great human catastrophe.[89] According to the U.S. legation in Jordan over 250,000 refugees were in Egypt, close to 90,000 in Jordan, over 300,000 in Palestine, 90,000 in Lebanon, around 100,000 in Syria, and these numbers were growing. Moreover, the crisis had created a serious and constant drain on the non-existent resources of the host countries.

The refugees themselves were utterly demoralized and impoverished. For the villages and towns that housed them, the refugees were an extreme economic burden, as unemployment was already rampant and there were no signs that conditions would

[88]Sayigh, *The Palestinians: From Peasants to Revolutionaries*, 109.

[89] U.S. Department of State, Department of State Publication 8885, Historical Office, Bureau of Public Affairs, *Foreign Relations of the United States 1949: Volume VI The Near East, South Asia, and Africa,* (United States Government Printing Office, Washington, 1977), 663-665.

change.[90] Fawaz Turki recalled his own experience, writing, "Gradually, Palestinians, finding themselves unwelcome guests in host countries with depressed economies reluctant to absorb or aid them, capitulated and started to line up each month at the newly set up U.N.R.W.A. food depots."[91] One refugee in Jordan remembered how on national days of commemoration:

> The camps are always more supervised on certain dates, for instance 15 May [the establishment of Israel]. When we were children in school, […] the tanks would surround the camps so that no demonstration could take place against the Uprooting. On those days they would make the school children walk in single file, three or four metres apart, and we were forbidden to talk together. When we reached our street each one of us had to go straight to his home and stay there. […] Soldiers filled the camp all the time and used to listen at the windows to hear which station we were listening to.[92]

Rather than relief, the refugees' condition worsened over time. In early 1949, the Israeli government announced that it was initiating a set of "absentee" laws regarding the property of Palestinians who fled. Their property was to be absorbed by the Israeli state and used for new Jewish settlement. The Special Representative of the United States in Israel urged the Israeli government to allow refugees to return home, or at the least

[90] U.S. Department of State, *Foreign Relations of the United States 1949: Volume VI The Near East, South Asia, and Africa*, 687-689.

[91] Turki, *Disinherited*, 44.

[92] Sayigh, *The Palestinians: From Peasants to Revolutionaries*, 114.

compensate them. However, the Israeli government had other plans.[93] U.S. officials urgently needed an adequate resolution to resolve these dangerous developments.

Several U.S. policymakers felt American recognition of Israel in May 1948 transformed the political situation in the Middle East from critical to catastrophic. Arab resentment towards the U.S. government had intensified enormously. By January 1949, many Arab states realized Israel was there to stay but could do little publicly to withdraw from the conflict.[94] With countries housing refugee populations in the hundreds of thousands, no regime risked alienating their domestic populations by opening negotiations, even if it privately wanted to. Although anti-colonial nationalism was the primary cause of this development, Washington was more concerned with Soviet influence.

On 13 January 1949, the U.S. legation in the Soviet Union cabled the Secretary of State and outlined the objectives of Moscow in the Middle East. U.S. officials believed the Soviets' primary goal was to remove colonial and Western backed regimes. Moscow considered this accomplished in Palestine. Now the Soviets would look to limit the power and territorial growth of the Israeli government. Their second aim was to install communist governments throughout the region. Syria was considered particularly

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[93] U.S. Legation in Damascus to the Secretary of State, *Confidential U.S. State Department Central Files: Palestine and Israel Internal Affairs and Foreign Affairs*, *1945-1949*, microfilm collection, telegram from 1 February 1949; U.S. Department of State, *Foreign Relations of the United States 1949: Volume VI The Near East, South Asia, and Africa*, 722-723.

[94] U.S. Department of State, *Foreign Relations of the United States 1949: Volume VI The Near East, South Asia, and Africa*, 703-705.

vulnerable. There, the populace had lost confidence in the United Nations and Moscow was using much effort to exploit the situation.[95] By March, the C.I.A. reported that high officials in the Syrian government were moving towards a pro-Soviet position.[96] In May, the agency further relayed that Palestinian communists were now working with the Arab Higher Executive to implement a two-pronged assault. Through armed attacks, they planned to remove the colonial government in trans-Jordan and replace it with a communist one, then the new regime would annex Palestine in coordination with Moscow.[97]

By summer 1949, reports of increased communist activity amongst the refugees dramatically increased as well. On 29 July 1949, the U.S. embassy in Egypt informed Washington that 33 Palestinian communists were arrested in Gaza for attempting to organize a "fifth column" of refugee fighters in the event of an Israeli attack.[98] The same month, 17 Palestinian socialists were arrested in trans-Jordan for attempting to carry out

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[95] U.S. Department of State, *Foreign Relations of the United States 1949: Volume VI The Near East, South Asia, and Africa*, 637-639, 656-658.

[96] The CIA Records Search Tool, *Communist and Pro-Soviet Activities in Syria*, CIA-RDP82-00457R002500010001-6, 10 March 1949, https://www.cia.gov/library/readingroom/docs/CIA-RDP82-00457R002500010001-6.pdf, (accessed 10 June 2019).

[97] The CIA Records Search Tool, *Cooperation between Palestinian Arab Communists and the Arab Higher Executive*, CIA-RDP82-00457R002700340003-6, 9 May 1949, https://www.cia.gov/library/readingroom/docs/CIA-RDP82-00457R002700340003-6.pdf, (accessed 10 June 2019).

[98] U.S. Legation in Cairo to Washington, *Confidential U.S. State Department Central Files: Palestine and Israel Internal Affairs and Foreign Affairs*, *1945-1949*, microfilm collection, telegram from 29 July 1949.

similar operations.[99] On 5 October 1949, the American Embassy in Tel Aviv cabled Washington that communists in the country had gained considerable material strength and represented a serious potential threat to U.S. interests. Newsstands were always plentiful with pro-communist literature. The Soviet film industry had a wide audience. There was a large population of communist sympathizers who had the ability to travel in and out of the country and Israel's mass immigration policies left the door open to further Soviet penetration. It was believed 3,000 Bulgarian communists had entered the country over the summer alone.[100] U.S. officials reported that in the refugee camps complex networks operated that linked communists with the refugees. Socialist agents were active at every site and had created mechanisms for party membership, recruitment, and propaganda.[101] To U.S. officials, the camps themselves were considered breeding grounds for communist and revolutionary activity. The giant numbers they housed and their deplorable conditions rendered those living in them especially vulnerable to Soviet

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[99] U.S. Legation in Amman to Washington, *Confidential U.S. State Department Central Files: Palestine and Israel Internal Affairs and Foreign Affairs*, *1945-1949*, microfilm collection, telegram from 19 July 1949.

[100] U.S. Legation in Tel Aviv to the Secretary of State, *Confidential U.S. State Department Central Files: Palestine and Israel Internal Affairs and Foreign Affairs*, *1945-1949*, microfilm collection, telegram from 5 October 1949.

[101] U.S. Legation in Tel Aviv to the Secretary of State, *Confidential U.S. State Department Central Files: Palestine and Israel Internal Affairs and Foreign Affairs*, *1945-1949*, telegram from 5 October 1949; U.S. Legation in Jerusalem to Washington, *Confidential U.S. State Department Central Files: Palestine and Israel Internal Affairs and Foreign Affairs*, *1945-1949*, microfilm collection, telegram from 5 October 1949.

influence. Therefore, the refugee camps became a serious factor in Washington's assessment of the region's security.

The campsite at Jericho housed 30,000 refugees; Ramallah 14,000; Bethlehem-Hebron 11,000; and Nablus 17,000.[102] Within the camps, life was dark for the refugees. One man remembered, "There were three, four, five families to a tent. We had a long time without washing. Dirt increased. We lived a life that I am ashamed to describe, even if it's necessary."[103] Another recalled, "Abu Hussain is ashamed to say that we had lice, and he is ashamed to say that we used to live waiting for a sunny day so as to get rid of them. We lived like animals."[104] Along with the squalid, filthy conditions, the camps made significant disruptions to both the family unit and traditional social relations. A woman whose father had been a prosperous farmer reported:

> Each section of the barracks had six families. Separating us there was only a thread and a blanket. Everything took place in public, eating, washing, sleeping. Those who had six children wouldn't have a place to spread their feet at night.
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> […] When I got married we had nothing. I went to live with my husband […]. He had seven brothers, three sisters, his father and mother. We all lived in one room, half the size of this one.[105]

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[102] U.S. Legation in Jerusalem to Washington, *Confidential U.S. State Department Central Files: Palestine and Israel Internal Affairs and Foreign Affairs*, *1950-1954*, microfilm collection, telegram from 14 January 1950.

[103] Sayigh, *The Palestinians: From Peasants to Revolutionaries*, 108.

[104] Ibid, 108.

[105] Sayigh, *The Palestinians: From Peasants to Revolutionaries*, 120.

U.S. officials believed the widespread poverty and discontent in the camps worked strongly to the advantage of the Soviets. The poor conditions of refugee life and their continued seclusion from normal society was considered a potential catastrophic development for U.S. interests.[106]

The refugees to Washington were a security threat. To Arab populations they represented the disastrous effects of colonialism. The United States was beginning to supplant the British and the French in the minds of the Arab populace as the country holding the most responsibility for the Middle East's problems. According to a memorandum issued by the Assistant Secretary of State for Near Eastern, South Asian, and African Affairs, the U.S. government had lost the confidence of the Arab people by this point.[107] As a result, Arab governments were further restricted in their ability to publicly work with the United States.

The refugee crisis was the most significant issue facing society to the regional populace. On 13 February 1950, the Higher Council for Aid to Arab Refugees, located in Cairo, called for a 5-day show of public support for the refugees. Crowds gathered and collected food, blankets, and clothing – goods the refugees desperately needed. The Arab League, furthermore, declared that no country would make peace with Israel

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[106] U.S. Legation in London to Washington, *Confidential U.S. State Department Central Files: Palestine and Israel Internal Affairs and Foreign Affairs*, *1950-1954*, microfilm collection, telegram from 23 January 1950.

[107] U.S. Department of State, Department of State Publication 8927, Historical Office, Bureau of Public Affairs, *Foreign Relations of the United States 1950: Volume V The Near East, South Asia, and Africa,* General Editors Frederick Aandahl and William Z. Slany, (United States Government Printing Office, Washington, 1978), 730-734.

unilaterally.[108] Although unrealistic, it did demonstrate the attitude of the Arab people. For instance, the Egyptian government could not explore an end to conflict with Israel for fear of being seen as a Western puppet.[109] Similarly, the U.S. legation in Damascus reported that a former high-ranking Syrian official publicly announced that to the Arab people, everything the United States now does, no matter how it may be labeled with unselfishness and impartiality, is suspected as camouflaged means of furthering Israel's interests. In the same cable, Washington was informed that the Saudi Arabian government considered its relationship with the United States greatly poisoned as a result of U.S. policy on Palestine.[110] As increasing numbers filled the refugee camps, disillusionment with the U.S. government grew. Washington continued to focus on stabilizing the crisis in the hopes that it would alleviate the growing security concerns but its programs had little effect.

U.S. officials initiated the Palestine Refugee Relief and Works Agency to function through the United Nations. Its purpose was to provide direct relief to the refugees and help assimilate them into their host countries. As well, U.S. officials pressured the Israeli government to allow refugees to return home, or at the least

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[108] *Al-Nahar*, issue 4407, 21 January 1950 and U.S. Department of State, *Foreign Relations of the United States 1950: Volume V The Near East, South Asia, and Africa*, 839-840.

[109] "The Consequences of Renewed Fighting Between Egypt and Israel: Would the U.S. Succeed in Maintaining Peace?" and "Defeat Resettlement," *Al- Nahar*, Issue 4397, 10 January 1950 and U.S. Legation in Cairo to Washington, *Confidential U.S. State Department Central Files: Palestine and Israel Internal Affairs and Foreign Affairs*, *1950-1954*, microfilm collection, telegram from 22 March 1950.

[110] U.S. Department of State, *Foreign Relations of the United States 1950: Volume V The Near East, South Asia, and Africa*, 890-891.

compensate them. However, the Israelis simply ignored the U.S. requests and continued to give confiscated Palestinian land to Jewish immigrants.[111] And although the Palestine Refugee Relief and Works Agency provided some relief in the camps, it did little to address the root causes of the problem.[112] In effect, the agency treated the symptoms of the disease while doing nothing to remedy the disease itself. For example, one refugee stated:

> We felt that the UNRWA had a certain policy that aimed at settling us. They wanted us to forget Palestine, so they started work projects to give us employment. This was part of the recommendations of the Clapp Report. […] We opposed all this, through publications and secret meetings, night visits and *diwans* – these weren't prohibited. Politically conscious people used to go to these gatherings, and take part in the conversation. We opposed these projects because we felt that, living in poverty, we would stay attached to our land.[113]

As American programs failed to address the root causes of the problem – the loss of the Palestinian homeland – discontent continued to grow. As discontent grew so too did U.S. officials' security concerns. Over the following months, Washington received a deluge of reports describing increased Soviet activity and general anti-U.S. protest.

In March 1950, Secretary of State Acheson reported that a real threat of the Soviets taking hold of the Middle East now existed. Therefore, it was vital that Arab

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[111] U.S. Department of State, *Foreign Relations of the United States 1950: Volume V The Near East, South Asia, and Africa*, 763-766.

[112] "The Lebanese Refugee Employment Program," *Al-Nahar*, issue 4526, 10 June 1950, "Refugees Satisfied with Employment Program," *Al-Nahar*, issue 4533, 17 June 1950, and "2,500 Palestinian Refugees Employed by Kennedy Agency," *Al-Nahar* issue 4552, 7 September 1950.

[113] Sayigh, *The Palestinians: From Peasants to Revolutionaries*, 112.

countries had both the means and will to defend Soviet attacks, whether covert or military. These regimes, furthermore, needed to take up as much responsibility as possible in the defense of the region.[114] The U.S. legation in Jerusalem reported that on 3 April 1950 crowds gathered in Nablus, which, according to the legation, was quickly becoming the hub of communist activity in the area, and threw hand grenades at selected targets. Only after mounted police arrested 35 people did the situation stabilize. The legation reported that communist agents infiltrating the area from Israel inspired the attacks.[115] It was believed that agents under the guise of Polish and Czechoslovakian immigrants; and Greek Orthodox clergy members, were funneling funds and logistical communications to communists in the Jerusalem area.

The delegation reported that a sophisticated network had developed between these agents and militant fanatics in the Hebron-Bethlehem-Nazareth region and it was in this area where communists had their greatest success.[116] On 12 April 1950, the Officer in

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[114] U.S. Department of State, *Foreign Relations of the United States 1950: Volume V The Near East, South Asia, and Africa*, 799-802.

[115] U.S. Legation in Jerusalem to the Secretary of State, *Confidential U.S. State Department Central Files: Palestine and Israel Internal Affairs and Foreign Affairs*, *1950-1954*, microfilm collection, telegram from 3 April 1950; U.S. Legation in Jerusalem to Washington, *Confidential U.S. State Department Central Files: Palestine and Israel Internal Affairs and Foreign Affairs*, *1950-1954*, microfilm collection, telegram from 14 April 1950.

[116] U.S. Legation in Jerusalem to Washington, *Confidential U.S. State Department Central Files: Palestine and Israel Internal Affairs and Foreign Affairs*, *1950-1954*, microfilm collection, telegram from 5 May 1950; U.S. Legation in Jerusalem to Washington, *Confidential U.S. State Department Central Files: Palestine and Israel Internal Affairs and Foreign Affairs*, *1950-1954*, microfilm collection, telegram from

charge of Syria-Lebanon-Iraq Affairs described how communist activity had increased significantly in both volume and effectiveness. Unless something was done to demonstrate to the Arab people that the U.S. government cared about their position, there was a very real danger of communism gaining control of the area. Syria, according to the cable, was especially close to becoming a Soviet satellite.[117]

In June, Secretary of State Acheson received a memo that outlined how nearly all Syrians, both in public and in private, now saw any U.S. action as support for Israel. Anti-American sentiments in the country reached a crescendo when the Syrian Minister of National Economy, Marouf al-Dawlibi, declared that the people of Syria, regarding the U.S. government, have become disillusioned to the point of desperation. The U.S. legation in Syria believed this declaration was probably the work of Soviet agents. Regardless, officials from Egypt, Iraq, Lebanon, and Saudi Arabia reiterated similar positions with respect to their own people over the following weeks.[118] Atrocities committed against both Arabs in Israel and the refugees continued to be reported. These reports enflamed native populaces.[119] In the refugee camps, the C.I.A. reported that

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24 May 1950; U.S. Legation in Tel Aviv to Washington, *Confidential U.S. State Department Central Files: Palestine and Israel Internal Affairs and Foreign Affairs*, *1950-1954*, microfilm collection, telegram from 20 June 1950.

[117] U.S. Department of State, *Foreign Relations of the United States 1950: Volume V The Near East, South Asia, and Africa*, 852-855.

[118] U.S. Department of State, *Foreign Relations of the United States 1950: Volume V The Near East, South Asia, and Africa*, 915-942.

[119] "Arabs in Jewish Occupied Territory Persecuted and Destitute," *Al-Difa'a*, 8 June 1950; "Refugees Still Deprived of Rations," *Al-Difa'a*, 10 September 1950.

communist agents were the cause of constant demonstrations against the U.N. relief program. The communists were now working towards getting the refugees to strike against the United Nations altogether.[120] Moreover, the agency reported that the Soviets had given their go-betweens specific instructions on how to undermine U.S. policy. Communist agents were to increase propaganda amongst the refugees, move towards clandestine acts of sabotage against Middle East regimes, and secure caches of arms to be marked on maps.[121] The next month, authorities raided a communist headquarters in Jordan. Two former Palestinian refugees rented the building and there they coordinated operations with 60 other cells in and around Nablus.[122]

The refugee crises presented a conundrum to the U.S. government. Stabilizing the region was paramount but it hinged on working with local regimes. Because of the refugee crisis, it was becoming increasingly dangerous for Arab governments to publicly work with Washington. Middle Eastern governments unwillingness to work with Washington led U.S. officials to see ever greater Soviet influence in the area, especially amongst refugee populations. However, what was growing was anti-colonial nationalism, not communism. Regardless, U.S. policymakers continued to see the

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[120] The CIA Records Search Tool, *Communist Agitation Among Palestinian Refugees*, CIA-RDP82-00457R005000130009-7, 5 June 1950, https://www.cia.gov/library/readingroom/docs/CIA-RDP82-00457R005000130009-7.pdf, (accessed 10 June 2019).

[121] The CIA Records Search Tool, *Soviet Instructions to the Middle East Communist Parties*, CIA-RDP82-00457R005400100001-4, 27 July 1950, https://www.cia.gov/library/readingroom/docs/CIA-RDP82-00457R005400100001-4.pdf, (accessed 10 June 2019).

[122] U.S. Department of State, *Foreign Relations of the United States 1950: Volume V The Near East, South Asia, and Africa*, 958-960.

dangers of Soviet agitation. Washington's fear of Soviet influence derived not just from the Middle East's instability but also global factors. The Korean War was the first hot action of the Cold War and it had a significant effect on how the U.S. government viewed the situation in the Middle East, as well as how local populations viewed the U.S. government.

In June 1950, the Korean War began. The conflict in Korea further complicated Palestine for U.S. officials. In August 1950, the U.S. embassy in Haifa reported that the slogan, "the murderers of the Korean people are not wanted in Israel," was graffitied near the U.S. and British consulates and was repeated all over the city in both Arabic and Hebrew. Four Arab communists believed to have been the perpetrators were apprehended.[123] The next month, the C.I.A. reported that since the beginning of the Korean War, an unprecedented increase in communist activity and anti-American propaganda had developed, notably amongst the refugees.[124] In July, the National Liberation League, a communist front organization, released a pamphlet titled, *Thou Brutal Imperialists! Hands Off Korea, Nations Want Peace and Liberation*.[125] The Korean War added a global dimension to the already complicated situation in the Middle

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[123] U.S. Legation in Haifa to Washington, *Confidential U.S. State Department Central Files: Palestine and Israel Internal Affairs and Foreign Affairs*, *1950-1954*, microfilm collection, telegram from 14 August 1950.

[124] The CIA Records Search Tool, *Communist Activities*, CIA-RDP82-00457R005600560009-4, 1 September 1950, https://www.cia.gov/library/readingroom/docs/CIA-RDP82-00457R005600560009-4.pdf, (accessed 10 June 2019).

[125] National Liberation League, *Thou Brutal Imperialists! Hands Off Korea, Nations Want Peace and Liberation*, (Jerusalem: National Liberation League, July 1950).

East for U.S. policymakers. Because of Korea, American officials believed there was now an even greater danger for anti-U.S. propaganda to develop.

The State Department specified that Israel was currently unable to control its communist parties and the Israeli government was allowing the Soviet Union to gain a foothold in the country.[126] Israeli immigration in particular was leaving the door wide open for communist penetration. The American legation in Jerusalem argued that the U.S. government needed to stop marveling at the creation of Israel and needed to end its paternalistic relationship with the country. The legation believed the dramatic increase in anti-Americanism in the region was clearly derived from the moral and material support the U.S. government gave Israel. It was now time to salvage relations with the rest of the Middle East by accommodating the Arab countries and the refugees.[127]

The refugee crisis was pushing Arab regimes further away from alignment with the U.S. government. The American government was the primary cause of the problems in Palestine to the Arab people and these problems were now spread across the entire region. On 21 September 1950, the Acting Assistant Secretary of State reported that the Palestine Conciliation Committee was unable to promote any kind of agreement between Israel and the Arab states for one reason – the refugee situation.[128] Furthermore, the

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[126] U.S. Department of State, *Foreign Relations of the United States 1950: Volume V The Near East, South Asia, and Africa*, 986-988.

[127] U.S. Legation in Jerusalem to Washington, *Confidential U.S. State Department Central Files: Palestine and Israel Internal Affairs and Foreign Affairs*, *1950-1954*, microfilm collection, telegram from 14 September 1950.

[128] U.S. Department of State, *Foreign Relations of the United States 1950: Volume V The Near East, South Asia, and Africa*, 1015-1017.

Officer in Charge of Egypt and Anglo-Egyptian Affairs conveyed to Washington similar stances by the Arab League. The League informed Washington that before the creation of Israel it had looked upon the United States as a fair and just country. However, now the Arab people had real disillusionment with America and a very deep pain had developed. Repeated stories of brutalities committed against the Palestinians ensured that this pain was palpable. For instance, on 5 November, *Al-Difa'a* printed an article that described the murder of three children:

> Three children, not more than ten years of age, whose feet are unable to bear their bodies as consequence of weakness and three years dispersal, were shot in their breasts by the bullets of a race which we, the Arabs, have been told is carrying us the message of the civilized West to the backward East.
>
> […] Should the civilized world ask the crime those children committed that led to their death, they would find no other reason save that they were collecting dry bushes in a territory unfortunately adjacent to that of the Jews…[129]

In the press, articles like these were printed daily. They highlighted the continued ill treatment and horrendous conditions of the refugees.[130] Such stories ensured that resentment against the United States continued to rise. The creation of Israel was itself catastrophic to Arab populations but the fact that the U.S. government appeared to do nothing to alleviate the refugees circumstances made it all the worse.[131]

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[129] "A Tantalizing Crime," *Al-Difa'a*, 5 November 1950.

[130] "Rights of the Palestine Arabs," *Al-Difa'a*, 1 February 1951; "This Ragged Scheme, the Arab Delegations Should Refute It," *Falastin*, 8 December 1950.

[131] U.S. Department of State, *Foreign Relations of the United States 1950: Volume V The Near East, South Asia, and Africa*, 1017-1061.

Throughout January 1951, U.S. officials reported that communists were actively working with refugees in Jerusalem and were holding demonstrations to protest U.S. policy on Israel, the Korean conflict, and the rearming of Germany.[132] On 19 January 1951, 800 refugees met with American officials. They demanded the U.S. government live up to the promises it made to them.[133] In February, the U.S. consulate in Jerusalem reported that communists had greatly increased their propaganda work, with Korea and Germany being their primary focus. Communists also had a large mailing list for socialist leaflets and their homes were used to hold secret gatherings. In the Nablus-Hebron-Bethlehem-Nazareth area, communists repeatedly cut telephone and telegram lines and the governor of Jerusalem openly admitted that the limited budget of his office prevented him from maintaining authority over the area.[134]

On 6 February 1951, the State Department circulated a policy statement on Israel. It described how U.S. relations with Israel derived from its plans for peace, stability, and economic prosperity for the entire region. Friendship between the U.S. government and the people of the Middle East was vital for American interests. Now, however, any

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[132] U.S. Legation in Jerusalem to Washington, *Confidential U.S. State Department Central Files: Palestine and Israel Internal Affairs and Foreign Affairs*, *1950-1954*, microfilm collection, telegram from 16 January 1951.

[133] U.S. Legation in Beirut to Washington, *Confidential U.S. State Department Central Files: Palestine and Israel Internal Affairs and Foreign Affairs*, *1950-1954*, microfilm collection, telegram from 19 January 1951.

[134] U.S. Legation in Jerusalem to Washington, *Confidential U.S. State Department Central Files: Palestine and Israel Internal Affairs and Foreign Affairs*, *1950-1954*, microfilm collection, telegram from 14 February 1951.

action taken in relation to Israel could threaten the stability of the entire region.[135] Despite this, Israel became an important dimension to U.S. security designs. American policymakers wanted to cultivate Israel's economic viability, via the exportation of oil, and develop its strategic capabilities to defend against a potential Soviet invasion. The Acting Deputy Director for International Security Affairs argued that Israel was now capable of mobilizing 200,000 soldiers, the largest army of any single Middle East country. It had two types of military industrial potential – facilities for light military equipment and civilian industries easily capable of being altered to military equipment if needed. Israel also had various ports and airfields of important economic and military potential.[136]

However, a strong relationship with Israel threatened the stability and security of the rest of the Middle East. The refugees were living in intolerable conditions and Israel allowed only a very limited number to return home.[137] Officially, Israel considered

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[135] U.S. Legation in Jerusalem to Washington, *Confidential U.S. State Department Central Files: Palestine and Israel Internal Affairs and Foreign Affairs*, *1950-1954*, microfilm collection, telegram from 6 February 1951.

[136] U.S. Legation in Damascus to the Secretary of State, *Confidential U.S. State Department Central Files: Palestine and Israel Internal Affairs and Foreign Affairs*, *1950-1954*, microfilm collection, telegram from 15 February 1951.

[137] "131,000 Refugees in Lebanon," *Al-Nahar*, issue 4939, 1 January 1951; "Lebanon Provides New Tents to Refugees," *Al-Nahar*, issue 4954, 19 January 1951; "Refugee Protest," *Al-Nahar*, issue 4703, 12 January 1951; "Storms and Refugees," *Al-Nahar*, issue 4955, 20 January 1951; "To All Refugees:," *Al-Nahar*, issue 9 January 1951; "UNRWA Director Suggests the Need for Refugee Villages," *Al-Nahar*, issue 4808, 30 June 1951.

compensating the refugees but few governments thought this a likely outcome.[138] Within the camps, the refugees were moving towards more radical positions. One individual, years later, recalled:

> […] there was a demonstration in the camps and I was there, a boy, walking in the demonstration, and shouting 'Syria, make us soldiers! We want to fight!' It was right in the middle of the camp, in the main street. It was suppressed by the Lebanese Army, not the FSI, and they acted with great thoroughness. They gathered all the men in the camp, threw them into the barracks, and beat them. They wanted to crush the Palestinian voice and show that there's no more connection between us and our land. They beat us so that we would feel that it was dangerous to talk about Palestine.[139]

Another remembered:

> We in school were demonstrating, and being suppressed. We had to struggle to get correct books on the geography and history of Palestine. For instance, there was one they gave us called *The History of My Country* – we demonstrated against it, and wrote down twenty-five reasons for rejecting it. I was chosen to explain to the UNRWA inspector why we refused it. He was Palestinian, but he hit me in the face. He hit me, but they withdrew the book.[140]

Such sentiments are not difficult to understand, especially when one considers that most of the camps were run by a military government. One Palestinian described:

> It was really military government, though it wasn't called that. Once the army came at 4 a.m. and surrounded the camp and searched all the homes. There were two stations near the camp, one for

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[138] U.S. Department of State, Department of State Publication 9114, Historical Office, Bureau of Public Affairs, *Foreign Relations of the United States 1951: Volume V The Near East and Africa,* General Editor William Z. Slany, (United States Government Printing Office, Washington, 1982), 570-577.

[139] Sayigh, *The Palestinians: From Peasants to Revolutionaries*, 140.

[140] Ibid.

> the ordinary police the other the DB – the two used to compete with each other to see which could arrest the largest number of people, so as to report this to their chiefs. Almost every day, and sometimes at night, they'd come to take people away. Once they came to our house to arrest my brother, and because he wasn't there they took me in his place.[141]

U.S. officials felt experiences such as these left the refugees dangerously susceptible to communism. In April 1951, the American legation in Jerusalem reported that refugee numbers were growing, Soviet agents were active in the area, and the Nablus region continued to be a hotbed of socialist activity. The legation also warned that if the Korean crisis goes bad, the situation would become unalterably worse.[142]

The dual U.S. strategy of stability and security straddled the refugee crisis as both a solution to and a source of its problems. A security alliance with Israel would further destabilize the region unless the refugees were aided but U.S. officials also believed the refugees were an important dimension to the Soviet's strategy. American policymakers supposed a significant proportion of the refugee population was already under its sway. The lack of proper relief to the refugees was itself a symptom of U.S./Israeli cooperation. In spring 1952, the U.S. legation in Jordan reported to Washington that the U.N. relief agency had failed to alter the refugee situation in the country. The legation argued that the 350,000 – 500,000 displaced Palestinians needed to settle outside the country, as Jordan was utterly unable to cope with the situation. The previously inadequate Jordanian resources were now completely maxed out and there was no capacity to help

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[141] Ibid, 144.

[142] U.S. Legation in Jerusalem to Washington, *Confidential U.S. State Department Central Files: Palestine and Israel Internal Affairs and Foreign Affairs*, *1950-1954*, microfilm collection, telegram from 12 April 1951.

anymore.[143] Nearly every Arab country was managing a similar problem and no solution was forthcoming.

At the end of 1952, the U.S. consulate in Jerusalem underscored the importance of the refugees to all governments operating in the Middle East. It stated that the refugees had the potential for explosion that could erupt at any time. The embassy thought it a marvel such an incident hadn't occurred already. The refugees were entering their fifth winter living in the camps and there was absolutely no reason to expect this to change. They had no jobs and, as a result, could do nothing but sit and brood creating the ripest possible conditions for agitation and ferment. They were displaying a new, articulate understanding of internal and international events, almost as if someone had been briefing them, and were developing a palpable attitude of hostility towards westerners generally. The legation reported that when one walked into a camp, one could now feel a tangible tension and aggression that did not exist even six months ago. The refugees had lost all confidence in both their native governments and the western powers. The U.S. and British governments were seen as the primary architects of their circumstances and the refugees were steadily moving towards more extreme positions. The American

[143] U.S. Department of State, Department of State Publication 9447, Historical Office, Bureau of Public Affairs, *Foreign Relations of the United States 1952-1954: Volume IX The Near East and Middle East Part 1,* Editor John P. Glennon, (United States Government Printing Office, Washington, 1986), 910-913.

consulate ended their cable with a caution outlining how the refugee problem would continue to be a permanent danger to any party involved in the Middle East.[144]

2.4 Conclusion

The limits of postcolonial nation building are demonstrated by the Palestinian refugee crisis. In many ways, the Palestinians are unique with regards to how they fit into the nation-state system that developed after World War II. Unlike religious organizations such as the Muslim Brotherhood or ethnic populations such as the Armenians and the Kurds, the Palestinians were, and are, truly stateless. The former groups were assimilated into various countries that were created when the British and French withdrew. These groups contested the legitimacy of their new states but they were granted citizenship in those states nonetheless. One of the defining features of being Palestinian is the denial of citizenship.[145] After 1948, hundreds of thousands of Palestinians were forced to live in refugee camps in countries such as Lebanon, Syria, Jordan, Egypt, and others. Most families were not able to escape the camps and generations of Palestinians grew up in them. Over time, the number of people in the camps rose dramatically. By the 1980s, there were over 2 million registered Palestinian

[144] U.S. Legation in Jerusalem to Washington, *Confidential U.S. State Department Central Files: Palestine and Israel Internal Affairs and Foreign Affairs*, *1950-1954*, microfilm collection, telegram from 22 December 1952.

[145] Rashid, Khalidi, *Palestinian Identity: The Construction of Modern National Consciousness*, Columbia University Press, 1997.

refugees living in U.N.W.R.A areas of operation.[146] Nevertheless, these populations were never assimilated into their host countries and never granted citizenship. The Palestinians, perhaps more than any other group in the Middle East, exemplify the limits of the postcolonial nation-state system.

Although the Palestinians supported movements to rid the British and the French from the Middle East, they did not want to give up their country in the process of removing colonial authority. As a result, Palestinian visions of a postcolonial world clashed with majority nationalist movements of the region. Whereas the removal of the French from Syria led to an independent Syrian state and the removal of the British from Egypt led to an independent Egyptian state, the removal of the British from Palestine led to the creation of a Jewish state. Therefore, the anti-colonial nationalism of Palestinians did not fit within the wider movement to free the Middle East from European powers. The Palestinians were minority nationalists – the periphery of the periphery – and, as such, their struggle has often been characterized as an illegitimate fight for freedom. The limits of postcolonial liberation are demonstrated by such processes. Furthermore, these processes help explain why groups such as the Palestinians contested the nation-state system that replaced empire after the Second World War.

Nevertheless, the Palestinians were just one of many groups that challenged this system. Religious organizations such as the Muslim Brotherhood were also left outside the nation-state's modes of power. By its very nature, the nation-state is a secular

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[146] United Nations, United Nations Relief and Works Agency, *Report of the Commissioner-General of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East*, New York, NY: UN Headquarters: June 2004.

institution. It is a product of modernity, in particular, it is a product of cultural modernity. Therefore, the nation-state is, at least partly, defined by secularism. In the 1940s and 1950s, the Muslim Brotherhood challenged the secularism of the state.

CHAPTER 3. THE THREAT FROM WITHIN: THE MUSLIM BROTHERHOOD AND THE EGYPTIAN STATE

3.1 Introduction

On 12 February 1949, Egyptian police shot Hasan al-Banna, the "Supreme Guide" of the Muslim Brotherhood, killing him as he entered a taxi.[147] Al-Banna was revered by Brotherhood members and he commanded cult-like loyalty and devotion. His death deeply affected the organization. In its newspaper, *Al-Ikhwan Al-Muslimin*, the Brotherhood mourned the passing of its leader and warned of coming retribution. One article, titled, *A Prostitute Government Assassinates a Muslim Leader*, stated:

> They [the Egyptian government] have assassinated al-Banna because he was a dangerous menace to them, threatening to undermine their power. But let them know that Hassan al-Banna has left behind him a well-equipped army and well-trained soldiers. We shall dog and chase this band of iniquity; we will curb every haughty head; and we will twist every neck that boasts in vanity. Let them therefore seek shelter in tunnels in the bosom of the earth, or climb some ladder to heaven. No fortified citadel or well-defended palace will rescue them.[148]

These, and other, events set off a protracted and bloody conflict between the Muslim Brotherhood and the Egyptian state that lasted years. Both sides resorted to assassinations, guerilla attacks, and secret operations. However, by the end of 1953, open war between the Muslim Brotherhood and Egypt's national government seemed possible.

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[147] U.S. Legation in Egypt to Washington, *Confidential U.S. State Department Central Files, Internal Affairs and Foreign Affair/Egypt, 1945 – 1949,* microfilm collection, numerous telegrams from December of 1948 to February of 1949 describe these events, as does Mitchell, *The Society of Muslim Brothers.*

[148] *Al-Ikhwan Al-Muslimin*, "A Prostitute Government Assassinates a Muslim Leader," (Cairo: Al-Ikhwan Al-Muslimin, February 1949).

In October 1953, the Brotherhood held a massive conference at its headquarters in Alexandria. Over 5,000 undergraduates of Alexandria University and students of various religious institutions attended. In a cable to Washington, titled, "Muslim Brothers Are 'Ready for Battle," Jefferson Caffery, the head of the American legation in Egypt, reported that the organization seemed poised to launch an all-out insurrection. At the conference, the Brotherhood passed several resolutions, including:

1) The undergraduates and students expressed their readiness to wage a decisive battle to drive the 'Imperialists' out of their fatherland.
2) They applauded the creation of the National Guard and urged all able-bodied young men to join it.
3) They asked the Ministry of Education to draw up an Islamic cultural program to enable the youth to properly understand the teaching of Islam and their duties towards the fatherland.
4) They appealed to the Arab governments to abandon the policy of protesting to and relying upon the United Nations and other international organizations, which have proved themselves to be in the service of the Imperialists only.
5) They appealed to all suppressed nations to draw up a joint policy to rid themselves of servitude, since it has become quite clear that the imperialistic powers work hand in hand to subjugate the weak nations.[149]

The immense popularity of the Muslim Brotherhood gave it the power to challenge the state. Government policies the Brotherhood disagreed with were usually met with extreme civil conflict. Whenever it chose, the organization could instigate intense political marches, hostile workers' strikes, and/or violent riots. Furthermore, the

[149] U.S. Legation in Egypt to Washington, *Confidential U.S. State Department Central Files, Internal Affairs and Foreign Affair/Egypt, 1950 – 1954,* microfilm collection, memo with the subject line: "Moslem Brothers Are 'Ready for Battle," from 31 October 1953.

Brotherhood routinely carried out bombings and shootings against government officials. As such, the Muslim Brotherhood defined the domestic and foreign policies of the Egyptian state.

From the mid-1940s – 1954, the Brotherhood regularly pressured the state in response to its policies related to the British, the United States, and/or the West generally. The Brotherhood cited foreign influence in Egypt as the motivation for both the violent attacks and fierce political rallies it employed. The threat the Muslim Brotherhood posed to the state greatly complicated the Egyptian government's relations with the United States. In the late 1940s and 1950s, the U.S. government attempted to enlist Egypt into a Middle East defense network similar to the North Atlantic Treaty Organization. American policymakers deemed the Middle East one of the most strategically significant regions in the world. If war broke out with the Soviets, control of the Middle East would be vital to Washington and Egypt was an important part of this plan. However, the Muslim Brotherhood prevented the Egyptian government from joining such a security pact. American attempts to recruit Egypt failed largely due to the Brotherhood's activities on the ground. If the Egyptian government worked with the United States, the Muslim Brotherhood caused extreme domestic upheaval. The risks of such conflict were too great for Egyptian officials, as a result, American attempts to enlist Egypt into a security apparatus failed.

The Brotherhood's actions in Egypt transformed how Washington envisioned the security of the country. The instability caused by the Brotherhood was interpreted by American policymakers as rising Soviet influence. As elsewhere, Washington misinterpreted anti-colonial nationalism for communism. Due to what it perceived as

rising Soviet influence, the U.S. government tilted towards support of the British in Egypt. However, U.S. support to the British simply created more instability. Local populaces interpreted Washington's cooperation with London as a new colonial alliance designed to exploit Egypt. As a result, the Muslim Brotherhood carried out ever growing operations that led to brutal assaults on government officials and violent rioting on the streets.

If not for the Brotherhood, Gamal Abdel Nasser may not have come to power. Assistance from the Muslim Brotherhood was an important part of the Free Officer's coup in July 1952. Without the Brotherhood's support, the Free Officers would not have been able to execute a bloodless takeover. It is likely Washington also provided the Free Officers with intelligence and logistical support during their coup, although there is no direct evidence of America's role. Once in power, both the Brotherhood and Washington wanted the Free Officers to help them achieve their strategic goals. The former desired the creation of a religious state while the latter wanted Egypt to join a regional defense network. Ultimately, both parties failed to achieve their aims. Nevertheless, the Muslim Brotherhood played a fundamental role in Nasser coming to power – a pivotal moment in both Middle East and Cold War history. By assisting the Free Officers, the Muslim Brotherhood redefined Egypt's political landscape and, in the process, reconfigured how the Cold War unfolded in the Middle East.

The Muslim Brotherhood did not always wield such power. Initially, the organization was a local, religious club that provided social and spiritual fraternity. It was formed in 1928 by Hassan al-Banna in the small town of Ismailia, located near the Suez Canal. In the 1930s, the Brotherhood developed a staunch, anti-colonial

platform and rapidly grew in popularity and sophistication. After World War II, the Egyptian people wanted Britain to remove its remaining troops from the Suez Canal. In 1945, London still had 100,000 soldiers stationed in Egypt. Created unilaterally by the British in 1922, the constitutional monarchy of Egypt was considered a puppet of the British by its people. In large part due to its inability to remove the British, many Egyptians lost faith in their national government and turned to the Muslim Brotherhood as an alternative. The organization's popularity was largely due to the British in Egypt. Less than two decades after its creation, the Brotherhood had roughly 500,000 members, millions of sympathizers, and branches in several countries including Lebanon, Jordan, Palestine, and Syria.[150] In Egypt, the Brotherhood had strong representation in various public institutions such as labor parties, student groups, the police, the army, and in large private establishments, such as advertising firms, transportation businesses, publishing and printing companies, and textile mills. By the 1940s, the Muslim Brotherhood's power had grown to the point that it could directly challenge the state.

3.2 Post-WWII Egypt

In November 1945, riots erupted around the U.S. consulate in Egypt. "Gangs of hoodlums and street urchins" attacked the buildings of the American Embassy with stones and sticks to protest the anniversary of the Balfour Declaration. The police were

[150] The CIA Records Search Tool, CIA Intelligence Report, "Activity of the Ikhwan al-Muslimin," CIA-RDP82-00457R002200760006-2, Washington D.C., 7 January 1949, https://www.cia.gov/library/readingroom/document/cia-rdp82-00457r002200760006-2 (accessed 11 November 2019).

called in and they fired on the mob leaving 10 dead, 300 wounded, and 1,000 arrested.[151] The Office of Strategic Service, precursor to the C.I.A., concluded that the Muslim Brotherhood was responsible. The same month, the Brotherhood submitted several letters of protest to the U.S. legation. One read:

> On this, the day of the ill-omened Balfour Declaration, the Labban Branch of the Muslim Brotherhood, Alexandria, declares its indignation and condemns every attempt which aims at transforming Palestine – the throbbing heart of the Arab world – into a Zionist country. The Muslim Brotherhood urges that Jewish immigration to Palestine should be prohibited, that Zionists should be disarmed, and that those of them who have illegally entered Palestine should be expelled.[152]

Palestine was an important part of the Muslim Brotherhood's platform. Protecting the rights of all Arabs, not just those in Egypt, was fundamental to the organization. In Palestine, the Brotherhood had roughly 20,000 followers. The division there was growing rapidly, as it received strong support from the Brotherhood headquarters in Egypt. Furthermore, the organization's branches in Lebanon and Syria were also rapidly growing.[153] The Brotherhood had a complex hierarchy and administrative composition

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[151] U.S. Legation in Egypt to Washington, *Confidential U.S. State Department Central Files, Internal Affairs and Foreign Affair/Egypt, 1945 – 1949,* microfilm collection, telegram from10 November 1945 and U.S. Legation in Egypt to Washington, *Confidential U.S. State Department Central Files, Internal Affairs and Foreign Affair/Egypt, 1945 – 1949,* microfilm collection, telegram from 7 January 1946.

[152] Abdel Aziz Amir, *Abdel Aziz Amir, Deputy of the Ikhwan Al-Laban Branch to the U.S. legation in Egypt, 14 November 1945*, Letter.

[153] The CIA Records Search Tool, CIA Intelligence Report, "Arab Para-Military Groups," CIA-RDP82-00457R000100570002-0, Washington D.C., 13 December 1946,

that crisscrossed several countries. It had broad support from the region's populace and had heavy monetary backing from individual and institutional donors.[154]

The Brotherhood routinely carried out attacks on the government and held powerful political rallies in protest of the British in the Middle East. As with the Palestinians, the Egyptian people wanted to free themselves from colonial rule. The rise in violence was a direct response to the continued British presence in Egypt. London's refusal to withdraw from the country created a volatile and uncertain political landscape. In 1945, the Muslim Brotherhood carried out three major assassination attempts on top Egyptian officials. On 6 January 1946, Amin Osmin Pasha, a high-ranking Egyptian minister, was shot and killed. Such attacks were the result of the deep-seated resentment to British rule that was present everywhere.[155] In February 1946, on their way to protest the British, students clashed with police on Abbas Bridge. 300 were wounded and 80 hospitalized. In support of the students, demonstrations took place at universities across Egypt that resulted in further riots and 12 more student fatalities. These fatalities, in turn,

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https://www.cia.gov/library/readingroom/document/cia-rdp82-00457r000100570002-0 (accessed 11 November 2019).

[154] U.S. Legation in Egypt from the Office of Strategic Service, Cairo, *Confidential U.S. State Department Central Files, Internal Affairs and Foreign Affair/Egypt, 1945 – 1949,* microfilm collection, memo titled, "'Office of Strategic Services' analysis of protests received by the Legation at the time of the November Riots," 27 February 1946.

[155] Ibid.

led to additional protests, demonstrations, riots, and looting that lasted weeks. The Muslim Brotherhood played a major role in organizing these events.[156]

The Brotherhood believed the Egyptian monarchy was simply a puppet of Western powers largely due to its failure to remove the British.[157] At the end of August, the Brotherhood held its annual meeting in Cairo. There, resolutions were passed and later published in the organization's newspaper, *Al-Ikhwan Al-Muslimin*:

1. To declare that negotiations have failed and that they were a British trick to waste time and disseminate the seeds of dissension among the Egyptians; and to warn the nation, by a manifest, of the Colonizer's tricks and real intentions.
2. To declare that the 1936 Treaty is null and void.
3. To request the British Government to withdraw its troops from the Nile River within a period that should not exceed one year from the date of the request.
4. To refuse the conclusion of any treaty or alliance (with Great Britain) before complete evacuation.
5. To declare that the maintenance of any British or foreign troops in Egypt is a violation of Egypt's sovereignty and independence which will involve legal and factual consequences.
6. To submit the Egyptian case to the UN Security Council.[158]

The Brotherhood made clear that it had lost faith in the government's ability to resolve the 1936 agreement allowing Britain to station troops in Egypt. Furthermore, additional resolutions stated that should the Egyptian government fail to address these issues within the next month, the Brotherhood would consider the state a direct threat to Egypt's

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[156] U.S. Legation in Egypt to Washington, *Confidential U.S. State Department Central Files, Internal Affairs and Foreign Affair/Egypt, 1945 – 1949,* microfilm collection, telegram from 12 February 1946.

[157] "Muslim Brotherhood Demands*," Al-Hayat*, Issue 99, April 1946.

[158] "Resolutions of the General Assembly," *Al-Ikhwan Al-Muslimin*, 29 August 1946.

independence. Jihad would then be waged against the government if it still refused to void the treaty.[159]

The immense popularity of the Brotherhood enabled the organization to challenge the government almost anytime it chose. However, the more the Muslim Brotherhood confronted the state, the more Washington feared the potential for Soviet influence in the country. U.S. officials were aware of the power the Brotherhood wielded and kept a careful eye on it. But this was done through the context of communist agitation, not anti-colonial nationalism, the true driving force of the Muslim Brotherhood. As a result, Washington began to tilt towards favoring the British over Egyptian independence. In May 1946, U.S. officials intervened on behalf of the United Kingdom in the ongoing negotiations. Washington argued the need for British troops at the Suez Canal was not just in the interests of the West but it was also in the interest of Egypt's national security. London, and now also Washington, contended that should war break out with the Soviets, Egypt would greatly benefit from the British presence in the country.

To the Muslim Brotherhood, it now appeared that both the United Kingdom and the United States looked to exploit Egypt for their own gain. The British were long seen as a colonial power but now increasingly the United States was too. Ultimately, the Brotherhood felt it was the Egyptian monarchy that allowed foreign powers to exploit the country. Therefore, on 15 October 1946, the Brotherhood announced that it was working with the Wafd to combat the ills of the country.[160] In the 1920s, the Wafd was the most successful and popular political party in Egypt. However, over the following decade, the

[159] Ibid.

[160] "Alliance with the Wafd," *Al-Ikhwan Al-Muslimin*, 15 October 1946.

Egyptian people accused it of betraying the country as the British strengthened their position. By the mid-1940s, the Wafd had fallen out of political favor with the Egyptian masses. Nevertheless, it still had a well-organized and solid base of support. In 1946, the Wafd and the Muslim Brotherhood were the two largest political factions in the country. With their union, they could openly challenge the state for control of the country.

The Egyptian monarchy was aware of the danger this new alliance presented and moved to counter it before the Brotherhood and the Wafd could take action. In November, the Egyptian government arrested 56 Brotherhood members for the "incitation of 'certain' crimes involving the safety and security of the state."[161] The Brothers retaliated by printing articles in their newspaper with front page headlines such as, "Government Resorts to Terrorism to Cow the Nation, the Alexandria branch of the Muslim Brotherhood is Searched by the Police, Fifty-six Brothers Arrested.[162]" Some Brothers deemed violence the only appropriate retaliation and six police stations were bombed. In response, authorities arrested the organization's leadership, seized its headquarters and records, and shut down its newspaper.[163] Most of the Brothers were released and their property returned but these incidents set the stage for a protracted

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[161] U.S. Legation in Egypt to Washington, *Confidential U.S. State Department Central Files, Internal Affairs and Foreign Affair/Egypt, 1945 – 1949,* microfilm collection, telegram from 23 November 1946.

[162] "Government Resorts to Terrorism to Cow the Nation, the Alexandria Branch of the Al-Ikhwan Al-Muslimin is Searched by the Police, Fifty-six Brothers Arrested," *Al-Ikhwan Al-Muslimin*, 23 November 1946.

[163] U.S. Legation in Egypt to Washington, *Confidential U.S. State Department Central Files, Internal Affairs and Foreign Affair/Egypt, 1945 – 1949,* microfilm collection, telegram from 3 December 1946.

conflict between the Muslim Brotherhood and the Egyptian state that lasted until Nasser's liquidation of the organization in 1954.

In 1948, war broke out between Egypt and the newly created state of Israel. American endorsement of a Jewish state infuriated the Egyptian populace, especially the Muslim Brotherhood. Demonstrations, protests, riots, bombings, and shootings occurred regularly across the year. The volatile conditions of the war made the Soviet menace now, more than ever, a significant threat to U.S. policymakers. Imagining the region's instability as an open door to communism, Washington worked to help negotiate a settlement between the Arab states and Israel. In February 1949, Egypt and Israel signed an armistice but the instability of the war led U.S. officials to further tilt towards support of the British.[164] In large part, American backing of British positions was due to the Muslim Brotherhood's activities. The Brotherhood believed the Egyptian state, by not continuing the war, was complicit with the West and, therefore, had to be destroyed .

Throughout 1948, the Egyptian government and the Muslim Brotherhood waged war against one another. In January, the government announced that after a gun battle with the Brotherhood, it had discovered 165 bombs and cases for arms being stored by the organization. In March, a respected judge, Ahmad al-Khazindar, was assassinated by two Brothers on his way to work. Numerous attempts were also made to take the life of Nahhas Pasha, who had previously served as Egypt's Prime Minister. In May, two days before the Egyptian offensive against Israel, the government declared martial law.

[164] Ibid.

However, martial law had little effect. The Brotherhood, in response to these measures, blew up several houses in the Jewish quarter of Cairo.[165]

The Brothers also waged a successful propaganda campaign against the state through its various newsletters. On 7 January 1948, the Brotherhood printed an article that alleged "a branch of the Jewish agency [was] in Cairo and more Zionist dens in other Egyptian towns" existed with the purpose of carrying out American and Jewish sabotage in the country.[166] Articles and pamphlets attacking Egypt's Jewish population were released regularly throughout the year. Several argued that Egypt's Jews should be stripped of their nationality and their property confiscated due to their secret financial machinations in the country.[167] Other Brotherhood articles focused on rousing Arab pride. Headlines with titles such as, "Arabs Wake Up," and "Arabs Depend on Yourselves," littered the front pages of Brotherhood papers. Such articles argued that Arabs must not rest until Zionism was destroyed because the United Kingdom and the United States planned to use Palestine as a base to gain control of the entire Middle East. War had to be fully waged now before the imperialists had a foothold in the region. Moreover, the Brothers highlighted the horrendous conditions 300,000 Palestinian

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[165] U.S. Legation in Egypt to Washington, *Confidential U.S. State Department Central Files, Internal Affairs and Foreign Affair/Egypt, 1945 – 1949,* microfilm collection, telegrams from January to December 1948 make clear that throughout the year the Egyptian state faced disorder, confusion, and bedlam. This coincides with Richard P. Mitchell, *The Society of Muslim Brothers,* (Oxford University Press, 1969).

[166] *Al-Ikhwan Al-Muslimin*, 7 January 1948.

[167] *Al-Ikhwan Al-Muslimin*, 10 May 1948; *Al-Ikhwan Al-Muslimin,* 11 May 1948*; Al-Ikhwan Al-Muslimin,* 14 May 1948; Al-Ikhwan Al-Muslimin, *Manifesto of the Muslim Brotherhood Society: The Palestine Question*, (Cairo: Al-Ikhwan Al-Muslimin, 10 August 1948).

refugees were now living in as a result of the sheer terror of the initial phases of partition. The Brotherhood blamed the United Kingdom, the United Nations, and the United States.[168]

In October, the Egyptian government discovered another cache of arms on the estate of a prominent Brother. In several newspaper articles, the organization defended its buildup of weapons and its use of violence, writing:

> […] The British troops are still occupying our territory at the Canal area. The British policy is still endeavoring to separate the northern part of the Nile valley from the southern part. Would it be safe for a country, in such condition as Egypt; to leave her different elements in such discord for only personal reasons not related at all to any national or patriotic consideration?[169]

Violent means were used by the British to gain control of Egypt. Violent means were justified to remove them in the minds of the Brotherhood. In another article, the Brothers explained what the ultimate aim of such violence was, writing, "The scope of our

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[168] The CIA Records Search Tool, Daily Review of the Arabic Press, CIA-RDP83-00415R001100020016-9, Washington D.C., 26 June 1948, https://www.cia.gov/library/readingroom/document/cia-rdp83-00415r001100020016-9 (accessed 11 November 2019); CIA-RDP83-00415R001100020015-0, Washington D.C., 13 July 1948, https://www.cia.gov/library/readingroom/document/cia-rdp83-00415r001100020015-0 (accessed 11 November 2019); CIA-RDP83-00415R001100100003-4, Washington D.C., 11 August 1948, https://www.cia.gov/library/readingroom/document/cia-rdp83-00415r001100100003-4 (accessed 11 November 2019); CIA-RDP83-00415R001300100012-2, Washington D.C., 17 August 1948, https://www.cia.gov/library/readingroom/document/cia-rdp83-00415r001300100012-2 (accessed 11 November 1948); CIA-RDP83-00415R001300100016-8, Washington D.C., 22 August 1948, https://www.cia.gov/library/readingroom/document/cia-rdp83-00415r001300100016-8 (accessed 11 November 2019).

[169] "The Brotherhood and the Parties," *Al-Ikhwan Al-Muslimin*, 5 September 1946.

movement is to establish a Muslim social order in the Muslim countries and to spread the Muslim doctrine throughout the world. We shall struggle for this task, live or die for it, of Brotherhood established schools, hospitals, clinics, and mosques for the good of the people and the welfare of the poor.[170]" Although violence might be necessary, the end goal for the Muslim Brotherhood was to reorder society within an Islamic context that better helped the masses.

The following month, the police seized a jeep filled with covert documents referencing the "secret apparatus" of the Muslim Brotherhood. Thirty-two members of the organization were immediately arrested .[171] The "secret apparatus" was a clandestine wing of the organization that developed sometime between 1939 and 1942. After establishing the "Rovers and Military Training Committee in 1940," Hassan al-Banna developed the "secret apparatus" as a front for guerilla training of the most devout and loyal members of the Brotherhood. This branch was responsible for funding, organizing, recruiting, and executing bombings and assassinations. It led most of the operations in Palestine and the guerilla campaign in Egypt.[172]

Following the discovery of the "secret apparatus," the state officially outlawed the Muslim Brotherhood. On 8 December 1948, police surrounded the Brothers'

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[170] "The Brotherhood and the Elections," Ibid.

[171] U.S. Legation in Egypt to Washington, *Confidential U.S. State Department Central Files, Internal Affairs and Foreign Affair/Egypt, 1945 – 1949,* microfilm collection, telegrams from January to December 1948.

[172] Abd Al-Fattah Muhammad El-Awaisi, *The Muslim Brothers and the Palestine Question, 1928 – 1947*, (Tauris Academic Studies, 1998).

headquarters, arrested everyone inside, confiscated its property, and shut down its newsletters. However, these arrests did little to stabilize the situation. On 28 December, Egypt's prime minister, Mahmoud an-Nukrashi Pasha, was assassinated by the Brotherhood as he entered the Ministry of the Interior. The C.I.A. believed the government measures taken against the Brotherhood were utterly ineffective. The agency reported that Hasan al-Banna was still in constant contact with the organization and was using the Young Men's Muslim Association as a meeting place, two more large stores of arms at Behera and Sharkia were discovered, and assassination threats were made on King Faruq, the Minister of National Defense, and the Commandant of the Cairo Police.[173]

The Egyptian government was unable to stabilize the situation. The Muslim Brotherhood had strong support from the general populace because of the government's inability to influence the continued British presence and events such as the partition of Palestine. The current regime in Egypt was seen as a pawn of Western powers. The people's disdain for the monarchy created the conditions for the Muslim Brotherhood-Wafd alliance to form a new government. U.S. officials had deep concerns with the way things were going in Egypt. In December 1948, the C.I.A. circulated an intelligence summary of the Brotherhood that described the group as an "organization of 500,000 violently, nationalist and fanatically religious Muslims." The agency had come into

[173] The CIA Records Search Tool, CIA Intelligence Report, "Activity of the Ikhwan al-Muslimin," CIA-RDP82-00457R002200760006-2, Washington D.C., 7 January 1949, https://www.cia.gov/library/readingroom/document/cia-rdp82-00457r002200760006-2 (accessed 11 November 2019).

possession of detailed Brotherhood plans to continue terrorist activities in the region. The aim was to overthrow the current regime and replace it with a Wafd led government. Moreover, despite its prohibition in Egypt, the Brotherhood's branches in other countries were functioning effectively.[174] In early 1949, the agency reported that ten Brothers arrived in Beirut with the purpose of coordinating demonstrations demanding the Lebanese government resume fighting in Palestine. At the same time, a high-level meeting between Brotherhood branch deputies was held in Tripoli. There, the Lebanese and Syrian delegates were also ordered to resume the war on Israel. Furthermore, the C.I.A. reported that the Soviet Union was using its legation in Cairo to provide the Muslim Brotherhood with financial support. At the Brotherhood headquarters in Ismailia, correspondence between the Soviets and the organization was found, along with yet another cache of arms.[175]

On 12 February 1949, the leader and founder of the Muslim Brotherhood, Hassan

[174] The CIA Records Search Tool, CIA Intelligence Summary, "Intelligence Summary for Week Ending 15 December 1948 Vol. III No. 49," CIA-RDP78-01617A004700010033-3, Washington D.C., 15 December 1948, https://www.cia.gov/library/readingroom/document/cia-rdp78-01617a004700010033-3 (accessed 11 November 2019).

[175] The CIA Records Search Tool, CIA Intelligence Report, "Alleged Finaincial Support of the Ikhwan al-Muslimin by Soviets," CIA-RDP82-00457R002400240004-9, Washington D.C., 24 February 1949, https://www.cia.gov/library/readingroom/document/cia-rdp82-00457r002400240004-9 (accessed 11 November 2019).

al-Banna, was assassinated by the police.[176] His death was a huge loss to the organization and it was clear the Brotherhood would respond strongly. However, before retaliatory operations could commence the Brotherhood had to choose a new leader. Ultimately, Hassan Ismail al-Hudaibi, a moderate, former judge, was chosen. When the "secret apparatus" was formed in the early 1940s, the Brotherhood began to splinter into two factions. Members of the apparatus wanted more violent action against the government and were unsure if al-Hudaibi was up to the task. But the majority faction of the Brotherhood, who took a more conservative approach, embraced al-Hudaibi. It argued violence should only be used when other measures failed.[177] With al-Banna's death, these groups became more partisan but the organization maintained overall unity and looked to strengthen its alliance with the Wafd.

The Brotherhood and the Wafd made an agreement whereby the latter promised to reestablish the former in return for electoral support in the upcoming parliamentary elections. No other group in Egypt commanded the popular support the Muslim Brotherhood did, even with it being outlawed. In January 1950, the Wafd won 225 of 319 seats to Egypt's House of Representatives. The Brotherhood expected the ban to be lifted immediately but the new government had serious reservations about reinstating an organization that could so easily alter the makeup of the government.

U.S. officials hoped the Wafd would be more amenable to joining a Middle East

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[176] U.S. Legation in Egypt to Washington, *Confidential U.S. State Department Central Files, Internal Affairs and Foreign Affair/Egypt, 1945 – 1949,* microfilm collection, numerous telegrams from December of 1948 to February of 1949 describe these events, as does Mitchell, *The Society of Muslim Brothers.*

[177] El-Awaisi, *The Muslim Brothers and the Palestine Question*.

security network than the previous government. Bringing the important countries of the Middle East, led by Egypt, together in an official defense apparatus would negate the need for British troops. Supporting the Egyptian government over the British would stabilize the country by appeasing Egyptian nationals, while also maintaining security measures to counter the Soviet threat. During the Second World War, the Middle East Command, or M.E.C., was created to coordinate British resources in the region. America joined M.E.C. and by the 1950s had largely taken command of it. Later changed to the Middle East Defense Organization, or M.E.D.O., it was hoped that this program would unite the United States, Europe, and Middle East countries in a defense organization aimed at securing the region from foreign threats. However, the Wafd was unable to explore this option largely due to the Muslim Brotherhood. No talks with the West could succeed without first removing the British from the Suez. The Wafd was fully aware that violent protest, attacks on the government, or even regime change could occur should it be seen to be dealing with the United Kingdom or the United States.

Throughout the 1940s, the Muslim Brotherhood openly challenged the state and demonstrated that it could fundamentally affect who controlled the government. The Brotherhood's influence on the Egyptian state redefined how U.S. policymakers interpreted the situation in Egypt. The Muslim Brotherhood was a powerful, destabilizing force that appeared to have backing from the Soviet Union. As a result, Washington could not wholly abandon the notion of supporting a British presence in Egypt. Circumstances were unstable and U.S. officials feared the Soviets would exploit them. British troops could work as both a deterrent and a counter measure to Soviet aggression. But the British presence led to further instability as the Muslim Brotherhood

exploited the political circumstances and continued to openly undermine the state.

3.3 The Muslim Brotherhood, Nasser, and the United States, 1950 – 1954

In July 1952, with the help of the Muslim Brotherhood, the Free Officers seized control of the Egyptian government. Because of this alliance, Egypt was finally able to free itself from British rule. However, the partnership between the Free Officers and the Brotherhood was short-lived. The new regime outlawed the Brotherhood less than two years after the Egyptian revolution began. In response, the Muslim Brotherhood released a statement to the press:

> Seeing that the leaders of the Revolution have stepped into a mistaken policy which resulted in repeated British attacks on unarmed civilians, because of statements made by the politicians, because of the exploitation by the Jews of the present situation and their massing of military forces along the borders of Jordan and Syria, […] it is in the interest of internal stability to restore the Muslim Brotherhood as a comprehensive Islamic organization. This is not only in the interest of the Muslim Brotherhood, as some uninformed persons might think, but rather in the interest of internal stability. Former periods of crisis have proven that the order dissolving the Muslim Brotherhood has been detrimental to the domestic opponents of the Brotherhood than to the Brotherhood itself.[178]

Conflict was inevitable as a secular nation-state began to come into being in Egypt. Nasser wanted to modernize the country, the Muslim Brotherhood wanted to create a religious state. These divergent forces set the stage for the final showdown between the Brotherhood and the state.

In 1950, a similar situation was developing between the Muslim Brotherhood and the Wafd government. The Brotherhood expected to be reinstated, as per its agreement

[178] "Muslim Brothers," *Al-Misri*, 25 March 1954.

with the Wafd. However, the Wafd hesitated. It had experienced firsthand how the Brothers could manipulate the politics of Egypt and was wary of reestablishing the organization. The Brotherhood responded in typical fashion. In April 1950, the Brothers held demonstrations in the Sayida Zeinab section of Cairo. Pictures of the organization's former leader, and founder, Hassan al-Banna, were distributed and the crowds shouted "Long live al-Banna!" and "Down with the Wafd!" Police arrived on the scene, shots were fired into the air, and 10 demonstrators were arrested.[179] The cooperation between the Muslim Brotherhood and the Wafd, as quickly as it came into being, just as quickly deteriorated.

In February 1951, the C.I.A. circulated an intelligence report describing the Egyptian government's conflict with the Muslim Brotherhood. It stated that the Wafd was aware of Brotherhood plans to overthrow it and replace it with an Islamic government. In response, the regime was attempting to sow dissension within the Brotherhood by exploiting its factionalism. The agency reported that there was a definite split in the organization now, one group led by al-Hudaibi, the other led by Saleh Ashmari. Egyptian officials made offers to back al-Hudaibi as the Supreme Leader if he agreed to restrict certain activities of the Brotherhood but Al-Hudaibi refused. The Brotherhood warned that if the law banning it was not lifted soon, all out conflict would erupt. In response, the Egyptian government increased surveillance on the Brotherhood

[179] U.S. Legation in Egypt to Washington, *Confidential U.S. State Department Central Files, Internal Affairs and Foreign Affair/Egypt, 1950 – 1954,* microfilm collection, memo with the subject line: "Demonstration By Moslem Brothers," from 3 April 1950.

and planned to crush it by May 1951.[180] But the state's plan never came to fruition. In the summer of 1951, a "highly confidential" source informed American officials that a meeting between the opposition groups – the Muslim Brotherhood, the Nationalists, the Socialists, and the Communists – had met to collectively affirm their opposition to the current regime. [181] Then in October 1951, violent protest over Britain's military presence erupted. At the protest, the Brotherhood blamed the Wafd for failing to remove the troops and demanded their evacuation immediately.

The Brotherhood helped bring the Wafd to power the previous year and now, just as swiftly, threatened to destroy it. The Brothers continued to highlight the government's inability to influence the British presence in Egypt and the partition of Palestine. These were effective means in gaining the general populations support. For many Egyptians, the government appeared to side with the Western powers over its own people.[182] The

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[180] The CIA Records Search Tool, CIA Intelligence Report, "Fu'ad Siraj al-Din and the Ikhwan," CIA-RDP82-00457R007100070004-6, Washington D.C., 28 February 1951, https://www.cia.gov/library/readingroom/document/cia-rdp82-00457r007100070004-6 (accessed 11 November 2019).

[181] U.S. Legation in Egypt to Washington, *Confidential U.S. State Department Central Files, Internal Affairs and Foreign Affair/Egypt, 1950 – 1954,* microfilm collection, memo with the subject line: "Report of a meeting of Opposition and Extremist Egyptian Groups," from 17 July 1951 and U.S. Legation in Egypt to Washington, *Confidential U.S. State Department Central Files, Internal Affairs and Foreign Affair/Egypt, 1950 – 1954,* microfilm collection, memo with the subject line: "Meetings of Political Groups Sponsoring August 26 Demonstrations," from 30August 1951.

[182] U.S. Department of State, Department of State Publication 8927, Office of the Historian, Bureau of Public Affairs, *Foreign Relations of the United States 1950: Volume V The Near East, South Asia, and Africa*, (United States Government Printing Office, Washington, 1978), 303.

threat the Brotherhood posed to the state transformed the Egyptian government's ability to interact with the United States. U.S. officials could not move forward with their plans to incorporate Egypt into a security network without first resolving the Anglo/Egyptian talks. However, the Egyptian government made it clear that there could be no hope of resolution without first withdrawing the British troops.[183] The two most important issues for Egyptians were the Palestine crisis and the British presence. These two developments needed to be resolved before any negotiations with the West could take place.[184]

Nevertheless, U.S. officials argued that Egypt's security was more important than its current political aspirations. If the Russians invaded, which was a possibility due to Moscow's recent moves in the Near East, Egypt would have no way to defend itself without British support. Egypt was a key factor in defense of the region for Washington. Lessons learned from Korea led U.S. policymakers to desire military strengthening of strategically important areas in peacetime. The Middle East needed to build coordinated resources now so that the burden didn't fall on one nation in the event of invasion.[185] The British military presence in Egypt was an important part of this plan. If London withdrew its forces, there was no force capable of defending the region from a Soviet

[183] U.S. Department of State, *Foreign Relations of the United States 1950: Volume V The Near East, South Asia, and Africa*, 284.

[184] U.S. Department of State, *Foreign Relations of the United States 1950: Volume V The Near East, South Asia, and Africa*, 293.

[185] U.S. Department of State, *Foreign Relations of the United States 1950: Volume V The Near East, South Asia, and Africa*, 293 and 297.

invasion.[186]

In October 1950, Secretary of State Dean Acheson met with the Foreign Minister of Egypt, Mohamed Salahedin Bey, to discuss the current and future defense of the Middle East. Acheson reiterated the importance of the British not just to Western interests but also to Egypt's national security. However, Bey was adamant that British troops had to be removed. The minister even suggested that if the United States was unable to accommodate Egypt's removal of British forces, the government would seek assistance from the Soviet Union.[187] Moreover, for some years, the Egyptian government had requested U.S. military aid with no success. The lack of assistance from Washington left the Egyptian government bitter, as it felt the West's refusal to supply it with military equipment, while simultaneously supporting Israel, was a "conspiracy" concocted to weaken Egypt. U.S. officials certainly did not want Egypt to seek Soviet aid and agreed that Egypt should be strengthened militarily.[188]

However, the current Anglo-Egyptian talks made it impossible for Washington to provide arms to the government. As a result, both the Secretary of State and the head of the U.S. legation in Egypt agreed that, at least for the moment, maintaining British troops in Egypt was vital to the security of the region. In a cable to the Secretary of State, the

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[186]U.S. Department of State, *Foreign Relations of the United States 1950: Volume V The Near East, South Asia, and Africa*, 304.

[187]U.S. Department of State, *Foreign Relations of the United States 1950: Volume V The Near East, South Asia, and Africa*, 310.

[188]U.S. Department of State, *Foreign Relations of the United States 1950: Volume V The Near East, South Asia, and Africa*, 304 and 312

U.S. legation in Egypt reported that the Palestine crisis and the Wafd's inability to develop effective foreign and domestic policies left the situation in Egypt extremely vulnerable. Not only did the legation state that it was vital the British remain in the country but it also suggested that it might be advantageous for the U.S. government to develop its own military bases in Egypt.[189]

In early 1951, the C.I.A. reported that communism was rising in the country and frequent strikes were occurring, a result of the great dissatisfaction that continued to grow amongst the working classes.[190] The agency stated that the increasing social unrest was being successfully exploited by socialist organizations. Moreover, the government was currently in talks with the Soviet Union to sell Egyptian cotton in return for purchases of Russian wheat. Some voices in Egypt were even calling for a non-aggression treaty with the Soviet Union.[191] U.S. officials needed to resolve the Anglo/Egyptian talks urgently. If not, Egypt's rising instability could spread to other countries of the region.

Egyptians argued that Arab nations can, and should, defend the Middle East in the event of an attack. They argued that if the Soviet Union invaded, Arabs would take up

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[189]U.S. Department of State, *Foreign Relations of the United States 1950: Volume V The Near East, South Asia, and Africa*, 321 and 322.

[190] The CIA Records Search Tool, Daily Review of the Arabic Press, CIA-RDP83-00415R000800040018-9,

Washington D.C., 6 March 1946, https://www.cia.gov/library/readingroom/document/cia-rdp83-00415r000800040018-9 (accessed 11 November 2019).

[191] Ibid and U.S. Department of State, Department of State Publication 9114, Office of the Historian, Bureau of Public Affairs, *Foreign Relations of the United States 1951: Volume V The Near East and Africa,* (United States Government Printing Office, Washington, 1982), 376 – 337.

the initial military responsibility and then, if needed, outside powers could intervene.[192] The U.S. government supported the rights of the Arab people to defend their land. However, the U.S. government also supported the continuation of British troops in Egypt. In August 1951, the Undersecretary of State wrote to the Secretary of Defense explaining that tensions between Egypt and the British were reaching a pinnacle, as both sides had become entrenched to the "point of dangerous potentiality." The State Department postulated that due to recent developments, the British presence might now be more of a liability then an advantage and sought the Defense Department's opinion on the matter.[193] The Secretary of Defense and the Joint Chiefs of Staff disagreed and argued that British troops were of extreme importance to U.S. interests. Furthermore, the Defense Department stated that it was vital the British have primary military responsibility in the region because the United States was unable to fill the role due to its other global responsibilities. The department had no confidence in the ability of Egyptian troops to defend the area and recommended that the U.S. government support the British over the Egyptians in the ongoing negotiations.[194] Washington tilted back and forth between support of the British and support of Egyptian independence. However, in backing both, Washington's policies led to further instability.

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[192] U.S. Department of State, *Foreign Relations of the United States 1951: Volume V The Near East and Africa,* 352-355.

[193] U.S. Department of State, *Foreign Relations of the United States 1951: Volume V The Near East and Africa,* 376-378.

[194] U.S. Department of State, *Foreign Relations of the United States 1951: Volume V The Near East and Africa,* 378-381.

On 8 October 1951, the Egyptian government unilaterally abrogated the 1936 treaty. Soon after, a mob emerged at Ismailia, the origin city of the Muslim Brotherhood, and began violently protesting London's presence in the country. British troops fired on the crowds and killed five protestors. At the same time, in Port Said, looting and burning of British homes took place and sermons at mosques preached that it was not a sin to kill British citizens. Widespread anti-British articles littered newspapers across the country. In response, the British immediately began planning possible military action. The 16th Parachute Brigade was brought to the Suez area as additional support to troops levels.[195] Then the British cut off the fuel supply of the civilian population. This eliminated the electrical power for telephones, telegrams, railroads, bakeries, mills, factories, and industrial facilities. In a cable to Washington, the head of the U.S. legation in Egypt, Jefferson Caffery, reported that the country had enough fuel reserves to last ten days, after that, the population would explode.[196] Unsurprisingly, the Egyptian government informed Washington that it was now impossible for it to have any kind of agreement with the British. Although London ultimately lifted the fuel restrictions, such extreme action enraged the civilian populace. Soon after the incident, Caffery informed Washington that a Brotherhood meeting was held where members took oaths to kill 13

[195] U.S. Department of State, *Foreign Relations of the United States 1951: Volume V The Near East and Africa,* 398-405 and 405-406.

[196] U.S. Department of State, *Foreign Relations of the United States 1951: Volume V The Near East and Africa,* 407-408.

individuals, with the King of Egypt and Prime Minster Nahas at the top of the list.[197]

The circumstances in Egypt were becoming untenable and, in the words of Caffery, had "past the 'do' phase of the do or die situation."[198] Nevertheless, Washington chose to double down on its policy of stability and security and continued to support both the British and the Egyptians. U.S. officials backed the current British position but opposed cutting off fuel supplies and any increase in British troops.[199] In November 1951, the U.S. legation in Egypt received reports that a potential overthrow of the government could happen in the near future. Caffery cabled Washington his hopefulness for such a change. He stated that unless things improved soon, the canal zone would erupt creating repercussions that would drive Egypt into the arms of the Soviets.[200] Widespread demonstrations against the government were occurring regularly throughout the country, extremists were making more radical demands, guerilla commandos had become local heroes, and the public was daily calling for bigger and more spectacular attacks on the British.[201]

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[197] U.S. Department of State, *Foreign Relations of the United States 1951: Volume V The Near East and Africa,* 409.

[198] U.S. Department of State, *Foreign Relations of the United States 1951: Volume V The Near East and Africa,* 411-412.

[199] U.S. Department of State, *Foreign Relations of the United States 1951: Volume V The Near East and Africa,* 413-414, 415-416, and, 417-419.

[200] U.S. Department of State, *Foreign Relations of the United States 1951: Volume V The Near East and Africa,* 428-430.

[201] U.S. Department of State, *Foreign Relations of the United States 1951: Volume V The Near East and Africa,* 430-431.

On 12 December 1951, a meeting between the U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff was held. They summarized the situation in Egypt by highlighting how the British were absolutely detested there. The hatred was general, intense, and shared by almost everyone. Attacks on foreign personnel were increasing and 11 British soldiers were recently murdered. The Muslim Brotherhood had developed a sophisticated network for carrying out assassinations and local communists were successfully exploiting the chaos in the country. The chiefs stated that it would be impossible for Egypt to join an American led security coalition unless a solution presented itself urgently.[202] The chiefs assessment of Egypt proved correct. On 26 January 1952, Cairo erupted in rioting, looting, and fire. Hundreds of buildings were destroyed. The riots, orchestrated in large part by the Brotherhood, were in reaction to the killing of 50 Egyptian policemen by British troops.[203]

The U.S. legation in Cairo met with the Brotherhood leadership to assess the current situation. The representative of the Brotherhood, Sheikh al-Baquri, a member of the Executive Council, stated that the organization had "made the mistake of supporting outsiders [the Wafd] who promised to back its program but that always when the occasion arose, these persons failed to 'come through.'"[204] Soon after, Al-Hudaibi, the

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[202] U.S. Department of State, *Foreign Relations of the United States 1951: Volume V The Near East and Africa,* 434-437.

[203] Mitchell, *The Society of the Muslim Brothers*.

[204] U.S. Legation in Egypt to Washington, *Confidential U.S. State Department Central Files, Internal Affairs and Foreign Affair/Egypt, 1950 – 1954,* microfilm collection, memo with the subject line: "Conversation with Sheikh Al Baquri, Executive Council, Moslem Brotherhood," from 6 January 1952.

Brotherhood's new leader, echoed similar sentiments in a letter to the Egyptian Prime Minister:

> Regarding the internal situation: The first thing we ask for is that martial law be abolished and the country be freed from all the extravagant restrictions imposed on liberties, public meetings and writings. This is because the events which led to the proclamation of martial law – though we do not think that they justified it – have disappeared totally. Security has been firmly re-established, according to the highest authorities in the matter. What benefit would then accrue to the country from the continuance of martial law, at a time the country is in a bitter fight against its enemies for the sake of liberty.[205]

The Brotherhood wanted the restrictions on both itself and society lifted. If the Wafd would not do it, other means would have to be explored. In response, the Wafd initiated a crackdown on the Brotherhood but it had the opposite effect intended. Government attacks on the Brotherhood simply gave it more popularity. Egyptians generally were focused on national aspirations and greatly sympathized with the Brothers. As a result, the state's confrontation with the Brotherhood further alienated the people from the national government.

Nevertheless, U.S. officials maintained support for the regime largely due to its anti-communist stance.[206] Washington assisted the government in the hope it could contain the Brotherhood and stabilize the country. In late February, the Egyptian government asked Washington's help in creating three "special" mobile police units to be

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[205] Hassan Ismail al-Hudaibi, *Hassan Ismail al Hudaibi, Supreme Leader of the Muslim Brotherhood to the Prime Minister of Egypt*, 2 April 1952, Letter.

[206] U.S. Department of State, *Foreign Relations of the United States 1952 – 1954: Volume IX The Near and Middle East, Part 2,* 1759.

stationed in Cairo and Alexandria. The purpose of these units was to deal with domestic disturbances quickly and efficiently. U.S. officials deemed the request "extremely important" and a "high priority." Not only might these units help with the chaotic situation on the ground, which communists were daily exploiting, such assistance to Egypt might also create a stepping stone for further negotiations regarding the country's membership to M.E.D.O.[207]

But in early March, Caffery cabled Washington a telling summary of conditions in the country. He stated that if the Anglo/Egyptian negotiations were not resolved straightaway there was no hope of Egypt joining M.E.D.O. because the population would revolt. There was little to no chance of stabilizing the Middle East if that happened. Caffery recommended that the U.S. government push the British to accommodate Egyptian demands. If they failed to do so, the U.S. government should disassociate with the British in the Middle East because of the global implications such association would have. The legation believed this was now the only option left and if it failed, the United States would have to pull out of the region entirely. Then the Soviet Union would undoubtedly fill the void.[208]

In late March 1952, the C.I.A.'s representative in the Middle East, Kermit Roosevelt Jr., cabled Washington about a faction of the Egyptian military called the Free

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[207] U.S. Department of State, *Foreign Relations of the United States 1952 – 1954: Volume IX The Near and Middle East, Part 2,* 1765-1766.

[208] U.S. Department of State, *Foreign Relations of the United States 1952 – 1954: Volume IX The Near and Middle East, Part 2,* 1773-1777.

Officers. This group seemed poised to attempt a takeover.[209] Furthermore, on 28 March, Hassan Ismail al-Hudaibi, the new head of the Brotherhood, sent a message to the Egyptian Prime Minister, stating, "neither the central organization of the Brotherhood nor individual members would participate in the [upcoming governmental] elections in any form.[210]" The Muslim Brotherhood had other plans. On 23 July, the Free Officers executed their bloodless coup. The Brothers helped with logistical and financial aspects of the takeover and, perhaps more importantly, they gave the new regime legitimacy, without which it would not have lasted long.[211] In return for its support, the Brotherhood wanted the Free Officers to initiate its program of Islamic social policies.

For the U.S. government, the Free Officers were a new, and encouraging, option in resolving the situation in Egypt. By supporting the new regime, Washington hoped the Free Officers would be amenable to joining a defense network for the region. On 20 August 1952, Caffery met with the Free Officers and reported that although young and largely inexperienced, their intelligence and aims were impressive.[212] Caffery believed

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[209] Barry Rubin, "America and the Egyptian Revolution, 1950 – 1957," *Political Science Quarterly*, Vol. 97, No. 1 (Spring, 1982).

[210] U.S. Legation in Egypt to Washington, *Confidential U.S. State Department Central Files, Internal Affairs and Foreign Affair/Egypt, 1950 – 1954,* microfilm collection, memo with the subject line: "Current Attitudes of the Muslim Brotherhood," from 2 April 1952.

[211] U.S. Department of State, *Foreign Relations of the United States 1952 – 1954: Volume IX The Near and Middle East, Part 2,* 1844-1847.

[212] U.S. Legation in Egypt to Washington, *Confidential U.S. State Department Central Files, Internal Affairs and Foreign Affair/Egypt, 1950 – 1954,* microfilm collection, memo with the subject line: "Egypt's New Era – The First Three Weeks," from 18 August 1952.

they were well intentioned, patriotic, and filled with a duty to help Egypt and its people. They expressed a deep willingness to work with the United States and demonstrated their disdain for the Soviet Union by arresting communists in large numbers.[213] Moreover, Caffery reported that they were ready to move to the next stage of the revolution that included working with Washington. But to do so, they needed to sell the United States to the Egyptian people – this required military and financial assistance from the U.S. government.[214]

On the domestic front, the Free Officers implemented a temporary measure eliminating political parties from public life while they formed a new government. All social groups in the country were required to outline their platforms and submit them for review so the regime could determine social clubs from political organizations. The Muslim Brotherhood was one of the first to respond and freely provided their platform to the new Revolutionary Command Council, or R.C.C.[215] By September of 1952, the Brotherhood remained the sole political party operating in Egypt. The U.S. legation reported that the R.C.C. was aware of the danger the Brotherhood posed but believed it could control them. American officials, wary of the R.C.C.'s ability to do so, set up a

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[213] U.S. Department of State, *Foreign Relations of the United States 1952 – 1954: Volume IX The Near and Middle East, Part 2,* 1851-1852.

[214] U.S. Department of State, *Foreign Relations of the United States 1952 – 1954: Volume IX The Near and Middle East, Part 2,* 1860-1861.

[215] U.S. Legation in Egypt to Washington, *Confidential U.S. State Department Central Files, Internal Affairs and Foreign Affair/Egypt, 1950 – 1954,* microfilm collection, memo with the subject line: "Political Parties Present New Programs," from 9 August 1952.

meeting with the Brotherhood to assess the situation for themselves.[216] In late December 1952, Caffery met with al-Hudaibi and reported that the Brotherhood, at least for the time being, was willing to accommodate the R.C.C. and its dealings with the United States.[217]

Both Washington and the Muslim Brotherhood had high hopes for the Free Officers. Both believed the new government would help them attain their strategic objectives. For the U.S. government, Egypt might now finally be able to join M.E.D.O. To expedite this, Washington made military and financial assistance to Egypt a top priority. For example, in November 1952, the Secretary of State wrote to the Secretary of Defense outlining the vital need to provide the R.C.C. with military supplies. Such supplies were deemed crucial to attaining Egyptian participation in M.E.D.O.[218] The Defense Department agreed.[219] Furthermore, U.S. officials outlined an economic aid program in the amount of $100 million to help Egypt with the construction of a new Aswan dam, including hydroelectric stations for the dam, iron and steel industries, electric powerplants, the building of essential roads, the rehabilitation of railways, the

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[216] U.S. Legation in Egypt to Washington, *Confidential U.S. State Department Central Files, Internal Affairs and Foreign Affair/Egypt, 1950 – 1954,* microfilm collection, memo with the subject line: "Role of the Muslim Brotherhood (Ikhwan El Muslimin) Under Egypt's New Regime," from 27 September 1952.

[217] U.S. Legation in Egypt to Washington, *Confidential U.S. State Department Central Files, Internal Affairs and Foreign Affair/Egypt, 1950 – 1954,* microfilm collection, memo with the subject line: "Views of the Supreme Guide, Moslem Brotherhood, on Current Political Situation," from 24 December 1952.

[218] U.S. Department of State, *Foreign Relations of the United States 1952 – 1954: Volume IX The Near and Middle East, Part 2,* 1889-1892.

[219] U.S. Department of State, *Foreign Relations of the United States 1952 – 1954: Volume IX The Near and Middle East, Part 2,* 1898-1900.

improvements of telecommunications facilities, and land reform schemes.[220] Washington believed such assistance would help attain Egypt's membership to M.E.D.O.[221]

Nevertheless, by 1953, the relationship between the Brothers and the Free Officers, like the relationship between the Brotherhood and the Wafd before it, had soured. The deterioration of the their relationship resulted largely from factionalism in both groups. Two factions in the R.C.C emerged – one aligned behind General Muhammad Naguib, the other behind Lieutenant Colonel Gamal Abdel Nasser. Similarly, the Brothers also now had two distinct blocs. By this point, the "secret apparatus" had broken away from the Brotherhood and was acting independently of al-Hudaibi's command. It planned and carried out operations against the entire Egyptian state and acted autonomously from the Brotherhood's official policies. Al-Hudaibi and his supporters aligned themselves with Naguib. By supporting Naguib, al-Hudaibi's faction hoped to gain official state recognition as the legitimate representation of the Muslim Brotherhood.

Throughout the summer of 1953, Caffery met with al-Hudaibi several times. In cables sent to Washington, Caffery made clear that the tension between the Muslim Brotherhood and the Free Officers was growing. Al-Hudaibi hoped to rally support for

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[220] U.S. Department of State, *Foreign Relations of the United States 1952 – 1954: Volume IX The Near and Middle East, Part 2,* 1908.

[221] U.S. Department of State, *Foreign Relations of the United States 1952 – 1954: Volume IX The Near and Middle East, Part 2,* 1910.

Naguib in an attempt to shift power away from Nasser.[222] Nasser, in particular, needed to be eliminated from the new government because, according to al-Hudaibi, his national policies were secular policies that prevented the creation of an Islamic state.[223] Moreover, al-Hudaibi declared that the Brotherhood would now take all possible measures to drive out the British. The embassy's "secret source" within the Brotherhood confirmed these plans and suggested that future action against the British would derive from civilian commando operations.[224] Nevertheless, Nasser was ready for the conflict and implemented a massive, state-sponsored propaganda campaign against the Brothers. Al-Hudaibi especially felt the brunt of this program, as Nasser focused on driving a wedge between the two Brotherhood factions.

Nasser was the clear choice to support to Washington. Naguib's alliance with the Brotherhood made it nearly impossible for him to work with the United States. On 12 May 1953, Caffery met with Naguib to discuss Egypt's future. Naguib underscored to Caffery that of primary importance was the removal of British troops from the canal

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[222] U.S. Legation in Egypt to Washington, *Confidential U.S. State Department Central Files, Internal Affairs and Foreign Affair/Egypt, 1950 – 1954,* microfilm collection, memo with the subject line: "Muslim Brotherhood Probably Not Involved in Republic Move," from 23 June 1953.

[223] U.S. Legation in Egypt to Washington, *Confidential U.S. State Department Central Files, Internal Affairs and Foreign Affair/Egypt, 1950 – 1954,* microfilm collection, memo with the subject line: "Transmitting Memorandum of Conversation with Supreme Guide of the Muslim Brotherhood," from 5 August 1953.

[224] U.S. Legation in Egypt to Washington, *Confidential U.S. State Department Central Files, Internal Affairs and Foreign Affair/Egypt, 1950 – 1954,* microfilm collection, memo with the subject line: "Views of the Muslim Brotherhood On Current Situation," from 20 July 1953.

zone. Without this, Naguib felt Egypt would simply be a slave to the West if it joined M.E.D.O. Naguib further discussed how Egypt and the Arab people had always viewed the United States as a country of freedom, a friend to weak nations, and a sympathizer to national aspirations. But the partition of Palestine significantly weakened the U.S. government in the eyes of the Arab people. Bitterness previously reserved for the British was now positioned at the United States. The Arab people daily saw images of miserable refugees in horrible conditions and they blamed the America. As a result, Naguib stated that the Egyptian state could never make a pact with the United States nor the United Kingdom unless significant action was taken to demonstrate that Egypt would not be a puppet of the West. Removing British troops, would be a big first step in that direction. If they were not removed, however, Naguib warned chaos would reign in Egypt.[225]

On the recommendation of the Muslim Brotherhood, Naguib cut off further negotiations with British and American officials. Naguib's refusal to meet left London and Washington concerned with how to protect 20,000 British nationals if mob violence erupted. A high-level meeting between top U.S. officials including the President; the Defense Secretary; the Acting Secretary of State; the Treasury Secretary; the Vice President; the Director of the C.I.A.; and the secretaries of the army, navy, and air force; met to discuss the situation. Reports were coming in that stated the Soviet Union was making overtures to Egypt to assist with the removal of "imperialist" forces from the country. Some reports argued that the Soviets considered the British troops in the canal zone the last Western stronghold of the Middle East. Therefore, it was vital to American

[225] U.S. Department of State, *Foreign Relations of the United States 1952 – 1954: Volume IX The Near and Middle East, Part 2,* 2065-2069.

policymakers that London's forces remained there. Circumstances were so dire that President Eisenhower openly postulated what a Soviet takeover of the area would look like.[226]

In June, Caffery reported to Washington that the hour for the West was far later than U.S. officials thought. The will of the Egyptian people was now blatantly anti-Western and Egypt was open to assistance from any enemy of the United States.[227] Nevertheless, Caffery also reported that Nasser's campaign against the Muslim Brotherhood was one of the few reasons why Egypt hadn't totally fallen into chaos.[228] Nasser was successfully undermining Naguib and consolidating his own power in the process.[229] Caffery further reported that Nasser had always been the brains and the sparkplug of the movement and he openly admitted he wanted to build a good relationship with the United States.[230] To do this, he needed to attain arms and economic

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[226] U.S. Department of State, *Foreign Relations of the United States 1952 – 1954: Volume IX The Near and Middle East, Part 2,* 2074-2076.

[227] U.S. Department of State, *Foreign Relations of the United States 1952 – 1954: Volume IX The Near and Middle East, Part 2,* 2086-2087.

[228] U.S. Department of State, *Foreign Relations of the United States 1952 – 1954: Volume IX The Near and Middle East, Part 2,* 2104.

[229] U.S. Department of State, *Foreign Relations of the United States 1952 – 1954: Volume IX The Near and Middle East, Part 2,* 2102-2103.

[230] U.S. Department of State, *Foreign Relations of the United States 1952 – 1954: Volume IX The Near and Middle East, Part 2,* 2104.

packages for Egypt.[231] Caffery informed Washington that Nasser expressed real patience with and realistic understanding of the British situation. He was still open to negotiation with the British but explained the will of the Egyptian people necessitated that he get a gesture of good faith from the West first. Washington made clear it wanted to help.[232] U.S. officials recommended $20 million - $27.5 million in economic aid for Egypt.[233] American policymakers believed the British would probably do everything they could to prevent Egypt from attaining it but, at this point, the situation could only be salvaged by giving Egypt priority.[234] In November, Secretary of State Dulles wrote to London informing the British government of Washington's reasoning. It was now imperative for the United States to provide aid to the Arab states to counter balance the aid it had provided Israel.[235]

Nasser represented a new opportunity for American interests in the Middle East. It was crucial the U.S. government take advantage of it. Given the significance of Egypt to U.S. strategy in the region, all efforts had to be made to bring Nasser into alignment

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[231] U.S. Department of State, *Foreign Relations of the United States 1952 – 1954: Volume IX The Near and Middle East, Part 2,* 2104-2105.

[232] U.S. Department of State, *Foreign Relations of the United States 1952 – 1954: Volume IX The Near and Middle East, Part 2,* 2125-2126.

[233] U.S. Department of State, *Foreign Relations of the United States 1952 – 1954: Volume IX The Near and Middle East, Part 2,* 2162.

[234] U.S. Department of State, *Foreign Relations of the United States 1952 – 1954: Volume IX The Near and Middle East, Part 2,* 2158-2159.

[235] U.S. Department of State, *Foreign Relations of the United States 1952 – 1954: Volume IX The Near and Middle East, Part 2,* 2165-2166.

with America. Reports of Soviet offers to assist Egypt were coming into Washington regularly. In early 1954, Caffery reported that the Soviet Minister of Trade made an attractive proposal to Nasser through the Egyptian economic mission in Russia. Two members of the mission returned home to Egypt to personally deliver the message to Nasser. The dispatch was "cleverly" tailored directly to Nasser, offering Soviet assistance in the construction of the High Aswan Dam, as well as offers for general economic aid.[236] Caffery believed Nasser would probably accept the offer, despite preferring to work with the West because U.S. aid had still failed to materialize. He underscored to Washington how the R.C.C. needed to show its people results and unless economic and/or military assistance was made available soon, the regime would have no choice but to turn to the Soviets. Therefore, Caffery recommended that the U.S. government unilaterally aid Egypt despite the effect it would have on U.S./U.K. relations.[237]

Nevertheless, Nasser's primary focus was still on the domestic front. The superpower rivalry was of distant, secondary importance to him. The real threat came from within. On 16 September 1953, the Egyptian government announced the establishment of a revolutionary tribunal. According to a cable transmitted to Washington, it was created "to disrupt and weaken, if not destroy, the Muslim

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[236] U.S. Department of State, *Foreign Relations of the United States 1952 – 1954: Volume IX The Near and Middle East, Part 2,* 2215-2216.

[237] U.S. Department of State, *Foreign Relations of the United States 1952 – 1954: Volume IX The Near and Middle East, Part 2,* 2216-2217.

Brotherhood.[238]" In response, on 30 October, the Brotherhood held a meeting at its headquarters in Alexandria and thousands attended. There, the Brothers and their supporters made clear they would fight the injustices of the state. But in January 1954, hundreds of Brothers were arrested when the government discovered a substantial arms depot. Moreover, the government claimed it received intelligence that the Brotherhood was conspiring with the British to overthrow the new regime. An alliance between the Brotherhood and the British was ridiculous but this fabrication allowed Nasser to reinstate the ban on the organization.[239] In response, protests supporting the Brotherhood erupted in March and April. In one incident, the army clashed with protestors. According to a telegram to the Secretary of State, the "military had been warned that dangerous elements among the crowd were armed. When the crowd approached the army detachment, it fired volley over-head.[240]" Dozens were seriously wounded, arrests were made and, as a result, further protests occurred over the following weeks.

Nasser's conflict with the Muslim Brotherhood was an extension of his conflict with Naguib, and vice versa. Naguib frequently met with the Brothers and coordinated

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[238] U.S. Legation in Egypt to Washington, *Confidential U.S. State Department Central Files, Internal Affairs and Foreign Affair/Egypt, 1950 – 1954,* microfilm collection, memo with the subject line: "Attitude of RCC Toward Muslim Brotherhood," from 19 September 1953.

[239] U.S. Legation in Egypt to Washington, *Confidential U.S. State Department Central Files, Internal Affairs and Foreign Affair/Egypt, 1950 – 1954,* microfilm collection, memo with the subject line: "Dissolution of the Muslim Brotherhood," from 15 January 1954.

[240] U.S. Legation in Egypt to Washington, *Confidential U.S. State Department Central Files, Internal Affairs and Foreign Affair/Egypt, 1950 – 1954,* microfilm collection, two memos marked "priority" from 1 March 1954.

his efforts with them. In February 1954, Nasser forced Naguib to resign from his position as President but cavalry officers from the Egyptian Army ambushed Nasser and convinced him to return Naguib to his post. The cavalry officer plot was likely orchestrated by the Muslim Brotherhood.[241] The Brothers were focused on Nasser as their enemy. But Nasser was keeping close tabs on the Brotherhood. He informed the U.S. legation that both the Muslim Brotherhood and Naguib were his primary focus and he believed a showdown with them was now inevitable.[242]

In June 1954, al-Hudaibi left to visit King Saud of Saudi Arabia, largely to assess Brotherhood support outside of Egypt. But his departure from Egypt effectively marked the end of al-Hudaibi's leadership.[243] By his return, propaganda efforts against him, by both Nasser and the "secret apparatus," had rendered him simply a figurehead of the organization. However, before leaving for Saudi Arabia, al-Hudaibi sent a personal letter to Nasser demanding that the organization be reinstated. Al-Hudaibi warned that if parliamentary life was not restored and if the restrictions on the press and martial law were not lifted, series consequences would result for the regime.[244]

In mid-July, the American legation in Egypt wired Washington to inform it that relations between the Muslim Brotherhood and the Egyptian government were

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[241] U.S. Department of State, *Foreign Relations of the United States 1952 – 1954: Volume IX The Near and Middle East, Part 2,* 2221-2222 and 2224-2225.

[242] U.S. Department of State, *Foreign Relations of the United States 1952 – 1954: Volume IX The Near and Middle East, Part 2,* 2242-2244.

[243] Mitchell, *The Society of the Muslim Brothers*.

[244] Hassan Ismail al Hudaibi, *Hassan Ismail al Hudaibi, Supreme Leader of the Muslim Brotherhood to Premier Lt. Col. Gamal Abd al-Nasser*, 4 May 1954, Letter.

disintegrating rapidly. Rumors of violence planned by the Brotherhood were enough for Nasser to directly warn the Brothers that any outbreak would be dealt with harshly and swiftly. Nevertheless, violent clashes between the R.C.C. and the Brotherhood occurred throughout July, August, and September.[245] This conflict culminated on 27 October 1954, when 8 shots rang out in an attempt on Nasser's life. The gunman, Mohamad Abdel Latif, a member of the Muslim Brotherhood, missed his mark and was quickly apprehended. But this incident provided Nasser with the means to eliminate the Muslim Brotherhood. Eight Brothers were sentenced to death, including al-Hudaibi, but at the last minute his sentence was curtailed to life in prison. The group's leadership, as well as thousands of lower and mid-level members were jailed, while Naguib and his followers were removed from office and put under house arrest.[246] A ban on the Muslim Brotherhood went into effect that lasted until the early 1970s.

Although Nasser was able to publicly outlaw the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt, it continued to function underground. Moreover, the Brotherhood's branches outside of Egypt continued to play an important role in the region's politics. The Brotherhood divisions in Jordan and Syria functioned similarly to the Brotherhood in Egypt. At times, the Brothers were an important ally that helped legitimize the rule of Jordan's King

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[245] U.S. Legation in Egypt to Washington*, Confidential U.S. State Department Central Files, Internal Affairs and Foreign Affair/Egypt, 1950 – 1954,* microfilm collection, memo with the subject line: "Regime's Attitude Towards The Muslim Brotherhood," from 12 July 1954.

[246] U.S. Department of State, *Foreign Relations of the United States 1952 – 1954: Volume IX The Near and Middle East, Part 2,* 2316.

Hussain, while at other times, it was a danger to the monarchy that had to be contained.[247] Likewise, in Syria, the Brotherhood tilted back and forth from support of the state to outright hostility towards it. For example, in 1958, the Syrian Muslim Brotherhood was a staunch supporter of unifying Syria with Egypt, even going so far as to send Nasser a personal correspondence that offered the organization's resources to him.[248] Whether in Egypt, Jordan, or Syria, anti-colonial nationalism was the driving force behind the Brotherhood's motivations.[249] If the Brotherhood believed the state was allying with Western powers, it became a serious danger to the government. However, if the Brotherhood believed the state had the potential to implement religious policies, it could be a powerful ally to the government.

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[247] "Muslim Brotherhood Congratulates King Hussain," *Al-Insha*, Issue 4652, 18 March 1957; "Muslim Brotherhood in Jordan and Syria: All Arabs Must Unite Against Colonialism," *Al-Insha*, Issue 4743, 18 July 1957; "Muslim Brotherhood Deny Relationship with Disoqi," *Al-Insha*, Issue 4745, 21 July 1957; "The Muslim Brotherhood Makes Statement About Current Arab Issues," *Al-Insha*, Issue 4747, 23 July 1957; "Muslim Brotherhood Ready for Battle and Awaiting Orders," *Falastin*, 7 November 1956.

[248] "Muslim Brotherhood Announcement: The Organization Willing to Cooperate," *Al-Insha*, 7 January 1958; "Muslim Brotherhood Supports Unity," *Al-Insha*, Issue 4909, 4 February 1958; "Muslim Brotherhood Sends Letter to Nasser," *Falastin*, 1 November 1956; "The Muslim Brotherhood and its Potential in Battle," *Falastin*, 6 November 1956; "Muslim Brotherhood Ready for Battle and Awaiting Orders," *Falastin*, 7 November 1956.

[249] "Muslim Brotherhood Congratulates King Hussain," *Al-Insha*, Issue 4652, 18 March 1957; "Muslim Brotherhood in Jordan and Syria: All Arabs Must Unite Against Colonialism," *Al-Insha*, Issue 4743, 18 July 1957; "The Muslim Brotherhood Makes Statement About Current Arab Issues," *Al-Insha*, Issue 4747, 23 July 1957; "Muslim Brotherhood Announcement: The Organization Willing to Cooperate," *Al-Insha*, 7 January 1958.

3.4 Conclusion

From 1945 – 1954, the Muslim Brotherhood transformed the politics of Egypt and, in doing so, transformed the country's relations with the United States. The Brotherhood complicated America's Cold War in the Middle East because the organization was a constant threat to the Egyptian government. In less than four years, the Brotherhood brought to power two different regimes. At any moment, the Brothers could inspire violent riots and intense political rallies. Sometimes these disturbances led to new factions taking power. Working with the United States, the United Kingdom, or any other Western power was a sure way for the Egyptian government to provoke such action from the Brotherhood. The Muslim Brotherhood's influence in Egypt was a primary factor for Washington's failure to achieve its strategic goals in the country, including the failure to enlist Egypt into a regional defense network. U.S. officials turned to supporting British military positions in the hope that they could secure the country amidst the rising instability. However, American support to the United Kingdom simply led the Brotherhood to instigate further problems on the ground.

The Muslim Brotherhood's fight against the Egyptian state highlights the limits of the nation-state system that developed in the Middle East after World War II. The nation-state, by its very nature, is a secular institution. Within this mode of power, religion is left outside the confines of the state. The state does not enforce adherence to religion and religion does not affect the legitimacy of the state. Furthermore, the nation-state aims to create conformity to secular society, sometimes through violent means. Such forces pressure populations that hold their faith as a basic part of their daily lives to give up their religious practices. Groups such as the Muslim Brotherhood resisted these

forces.

The Muslim Brotherhood is a minority nationalist group. Although it was part of a larger movement to free Egypt from the British, the Brotherhood's aims conflicted with the majority nationalists of the country. The majority movement in Egypt desired the creation of a modern, secular state. Individuals such as Nasser believed that modernization was key to preventing Egypt from exploitation by foreign powers. However, significant parts of the population disagreed with the creation of a secular state, as was made apparent by the immense popularity of the Muslim Brotherhood. The Egyptian nation-state that came into being failed to accommodate these populaces. Conflict between religion and secularism in Egypt has continued into contemporary times. Today, the Egyptian Army and the Muslim Brotherhood are still the two primary factions fighting for control of Egypt.

The inability of the nation-state to deal with such unlike populations runs in contrast to empire's ability to accommodate religious difference. Empire brought together populations with varying spiritual beliefs. The nature of empire necessitated an effective system that dealt with the divergent peoples that were pulled, often violently, into its domain. Where the nation-state largely fails to achieve such integration, empire often succeeded. This is not to say that under empire religious violence did not occur – it did. However, there were extended periods when different religious groups lived side by side in harmony. For example, the extreme religious violence seen in the Middle East in contemporary times did not exist under the Ottoman and Persian Empires. Within imperial organization, Muslims, Jews, Christians, and many others, lived peacefully for the most part. The intense religious conflict in the Middle East today only came about

after the region began to transition from empire to nation-state.

CHAPTER 4. THE MOST DANGEROUS COUNTRY IN THE MIDDLE EAST: SYRIA, ETHNIC MINORITIES, AND ANTI-COLONIAL NATIONALISM

4.1 Introduction

In November 1950, the Syrian Communist Party released a pamphlet that argued the "principal aim of the American colonizers and their partners is to restore military occupation of Syria and Lebanon and reinforce the military occupation of Egypt, Jordan, and Iraq.[250]" The Syrian Communist party especially focused on distributing literature to the ethnic communities in Damascus, even going so far as to print in non-Arabic languages such as Armenian.[251] One communist newsletter stated, "America's true countenance – aggressor, imperialist, and warmonger – has finally been shown to the natives of this globe. It had never before been so isolated as it is today. Its prestige is practically gone, and Truman's billions would not regain it.[252]" Similar sentiments were present in Syria's younger generations. The League of Democratic Youth in Syria released a tract that reiterated the communist articles, stating:

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[250] Syrian Communist Party, *Appeal to All Honest and Sincere Patriots of Syria and Lebanon for Unity Against Great Perils Menacing Our Country*, (Damascus: Syrian Communist Party, November 1950).

[251] U.S. Consulate in Damascus to Washington, *Confidential U.S. State Department Central Files, Syria: Internal Affairs and Foreign Affairs, 1950-1954*, microfilm collection, telegram from 12 February 1951; U.S. Consulate in Damascus to Washington, *Confidential U.S. State Department Central Files, Syria: Internal Affairs and Foreign Affairs, 1950-1954*, microfilm collection, telegram from 13 February 1951; U.S. Consulate in Damascus to Washington, *Confidential U.S. State Department Central Files, Syria: Internal Affairs and Foreign Affairs, 1950-1954*, microfilm collection, telegram from 15 February 1951.

[252] U.S. Consulate in Damascus to Washington, *Confidential U.S. State Department Central Files, Syria: Internal Affairs and Foreign Affairs, 1950-1954*, microfilm collection, telegram from 15 February 1951.

> O, youth, male and female, cooperate with your colleagues in other parts of the world, in Egypt and the Arab world, in Korea and Vietnam, and with all the struggling youth of the world against imperialism and war. Your cooperation will strengthen the front of peace and freedom, weaken the front of war and colonization, and hinder the outbreak of war. The imperialist will not dare to occupy our countries as long as we cooperate with the forces of freedom and peace.[253]

In 1951, Syria looked as though it might become a satellite state of the Soviet Union. Certain U.S. officials even went so far as to say it was the most dangerous country in the Middle East.[254] The American legation in Syria reported that the national government was helpless to do anything about the rising security threats.[255] In the cities, the Muslim Brotherhood and the communists regularly organized demonstrations that were becoming a powerful force. In the country's northern frontier, the Kurds were an ever-present menace that not only challenged Syria's sovereignty but also Iran, Iraq, and Turkey's. Both the Kurdish and Armenian populations in Syria had strong connections with the Soviet Union.

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[253] League of Democratic Youth in Syria, *The Aims of the Democratic Youth in Syria*, (Damascus: League of Democratic Youth ,1951).

[254] U.S. Consulate in Damascus to Washington, *Confidential U.S. State Department Central Files, Syria: Internal Affairs and Foreign Affairs, 1950-1954*, microfilm collection, telegram from 7 February 1951; U.S. Consulate in Damascus to Washington, *Confidential U.S. State Department Central Files, Syria: Internal Affairs and Foreign Affairs, 1950-1954*, microfilm collection, telegram from 15 February 1951.

[255] U.S. Consulate in Damascus to Washington, *Confidential U.S. State Department Central Files, Syria: Internal Affairs and Foreign Affairs, 1950-1954*, microfilm collection, telegram from 7 February 1951; U.S. Consulate in Damascus to Washington, *Confidential U.S. State Department Central Files, Syria: Internal Affairs and Foreign Affairs, 1950-1954*, microfilm collection, telegram from 15 February 1951.

Furthermore, the growing number of Palestinian refugees in the country continued to complicate U.S. strategy. American officials reported that opportunities for the Soviet Union to exploit were ever growing amongst the refugees.

Although the Armenians and the Kurds, as well as the Muslim Brotherhood and Palestine's refugees, directly threatened Washington's Cold War strategy in the Middle East, these actors were not necessarily interested in the superpower rivalry. The primary aim of these groups was to reattain their homeland, or in the case of the Brotherhood to create a country in line with its cultural and religious beliefs. These actors sometimes cooperated with the superpowers. Both the refugees and the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood occasionally worked with the United States, while the Armenians, the Kurds, and the Syrian Muslim Brotherhood occasionally worked with the Soviet Union. However, this cooperation was simply means to an end. These actors were willing to work with any great power if it would assist them in their nationalist endeavors. Anti-colonial nationalism, not Cold War interests, was the motivation for the policies, aims, and activities of the Armenians and the Kurds, as well as the Brotherhood and the refugees.

When the British and the French carved up the Middle East with the infamous Sykes-Picot agreement in 1916, they created borders that denied the Armenians and the Kurds countries of their own. Instead, both groups became minority populations in Iran, Iraq, Syria, and Turkey. Protest for independent Armenian and Kurdish countries was strong in the 1920s and 1930s. In the late 1940s and 1950s, this protest transformed the Cold War in the Middle East. The primary threat to any regime in Syria came, first and foremost, from within. The U.S./Soviet rivalry was a distant, secondary concern for the

Syrian government. The real danger was the threat groups such as the Armenians and the Kurds posed. As seen in previous chapters, actors such as the Muslim Brotherhood and the refugees could instigate violent protest, open battle with the state, and even regime change. The Armenians and the Kurds had similar power in Syria. If the Syrian government cooperated with Washington, it could lead to chaos on the streets and/or open rebellion in the countryside. The Armenians and the Kurds greatly complicated U.S./Syrian relations and they defined the country's security to American officials. The instability they caused and the potential future danger they posed led Washington to support right-wing, authoritarian governments, including dictatorships, in Syria. American policymakers hoped such regimes would stabilize the country and roll back the growing security threats. However, in seeking stability, U.S. officials again created further instability. Washington's support of authoritarian regimes, and its ambivalence to Syrian attempts to create democratic governments, led to huge upsurges in anti-American activity in the country.

Although anti-colonial nationalism was the true reason for the increase in anti-American activity, U.S. officials often only saw the presence of the Soviet Union. Washington believed Moscow aimed to destabilize countries in the Middle East, such as Syria, then, when circumstances were right, Washington believed Moscow would bring to power communist regimes. American policymakers deemed Armenian and Kurdish calls for independent states as deriving from Soviet agitation. Supporting authoritarian governments in Syria was thought by U.S. officials to be the best way to counter such developments. However, such policies only led to further destabilization in the country.

4.2 Decolonizing Syria

In October 1945, the C.I.A. reported that a regular stream of contraband including arms, munitions, food, and clothing was flowing to Syria's Kurds from the Soviet Union. Sources stated the secretary of the Kurdish Democratic Party of Turkey was planning a revolution for the spring of 1947 that would be coordinated with Moscow. Sources also described how the Soviet Union intended to include parts of Northern Syria in the creation of a Kurdish state. Key to this strategy was the linking of communists in Beirut and Damascus with the Kurds in the north of Syria. Informants reported that fifty to sixty Kurds were traveling to Beirut per week, with similar numbers for Damascus. Furthermore, the agency reported that Ali Agha Kakakhan, a leading Kurd in Iraq, publicly backed these plans when he declared, "the Kurds of Lebanon and Syria need only be patient because next spring a great event would take place that would bring them all freedom. He reminded the public that Kurdish revolts against the British had failed in the past but this time "the man with the moustache [Stalin] is behind us.[256]"

Disturbances in Syria's northern frontier increased as the country transitioned from empire to nation-state. After World War II, the primary issue for most of Syria's populace was the removal of the French. However, Paris had occupied Syria since 1920 and had no intention of leaving the Levant. The British still had a strong presence in the region and the French did not want Syria to fall under London's influence, a likely scenario if Paris withdrew. Old colonial rivalries influenced much of the decision-

[256] The C.I.A. Records Search Tool, C.I.A. Intelligence Report, *Conditions Among the Kurds*, CIA-RDP82-00457R000100070010-6, Washington D.C., 28 October 1945, https://www.cia.gov/library/readingroom/document/cia-rdp82-00457r000100070010-6, (accessed 9 June 2019).

making made by both powers. Throughout 1945, anti-colonial protest rose in the country and the French strengthened their military positions in response. The U.S. government cautioned Paris against increasing their military personnel in Syria. American officials argued that additional French troops would only weaken the French position because it would instigate the local populace, further destabilizing the country. Washington's prime objective was to stabilize Syria. If it failed to, circumstances ripe for the Soviets to exploit could develop. Therefore, U.S. policymakers supported Syrian independence and lobbied Paris to pull out of the region.

On 16 February 1945, the U.S. government informed Paris that it desired settlement with the Levant states to be based on the Atlantic Charter. Syria declared war on the Axis Powers and joined the United Nations so Washington saw no reason why full independence, including full control over the military, should not be granted to Syrians. Moreover, the U.S. government warned that it would look with disfavor on any French military action that aimed to strengthen their position in the area.[257] But in late April, Washington was informed of French plans to send additional troops to the Levant. U.S. officials cabled Paris they believed this greatly hurt the prospect for future negotiations in

[257] U.S. Department of State, Department of State Publication 8427, Historical Office, Bureau of Public Affairs, *Foreign Relations of the United States Diplomatic Papers 1945: Volume VIII The Near East and Africa,* (United States Government Printing Office, Washington, 1969), 1044-1045; U.S. Department of State, *Foreign Relations of the United States Diplomatic Papers 1945: Volume VIII The Near East and Africa,* 1056-1057.

Syria and Lebanon, as it would undoubtedly enflame Levant populations and arouse suspicion from the British.[258]

Nevertheless, Paris sent an additional 1,500 troops, by warship, to the Levant insisting that the region would simply be occupied by the British if they were to lose control of the area.[259] U.S. officials' prediction proved prophetic as the stationing of a French warship in Beirut harbor enflamed the city's populace.[260] Protests broke out across the country and disorder quickly deteriorated into open conflict between local populations and the French.[261] In response to the capturing of French troops, Paris bombed the major cities of Syria. In Damascus alone, 400 civilians were killed, 500 seriously wounded, and 1,000 moderately wounded.[262] Nevertheless, the general population of Syria was determined to remove the French from the country at all costs.

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[258] U.S. Department of State, *Foreign Relations of the United States Diplomatic Papers 1945: Volume VIII The Near East and Africa,* 1060-1061.

[259] U.S. Department of State, *Foreign Relations of the United States Diplomatic Papers 1945: Volume VIII The Near East and Africa,* 1063-1064; U.S. Department of State, U.S. Consulate in Damascus to Washington, *Confidential U.S. State Department Central Files, Syria: Internal Affairs and Foreign Affairs, 1945-1949*, microfilm collection, telegram from 7 June 1945.

[260] U.S. Department of State, *Foreign Relations of the United States Diplomatic Papers 1945: Volume VIII The Near East and Africa,* 1118-1119.

[261] U.S. Department of State, *Foreign Relations of the United States Diplomatic Papers 1945: Volume VIII The Near East and Africa,* 1118-1119; U.S. Consulate in Damascus to Washington, *Confidential U.S. State Department Central Files, Syria: Internal Affairs and Foreign Affairs, 1945-1949*, microfilm collection, telegram from 7 June 1945.

[262] U.S. Department of State, *Foreign Relations of the United States Diplomatic Papers 1945: Volume VIII The Near East and Africa,* 1118-1119.

For the common Syrian, the country's "25 years of torment" under French rule was now over and the people would fight to ensure this outcome became reality. Paris, however, was only willing to explore Syrian independence if it received guaranteed economic relations and military bases in the country.[263] Such aims troubled Washington and U.S. officials recommended to Paris that it completely rethink its strategy.[264]

The British were now threatening to intervene militarily because they feared the conflict could spread to Egypt. If the conflict spread, it would seriously threaten London's vital communication lines through the Suez Canal.[265] In July, after deploying British troops to the area as a mediating force, Churchhill met with Truman. Churchill informed the President that he now saw no way for French troops to withdraw because if they did, it would lead to a massacre of French nationals in the country. He argued for a "privileged" French position in Syria in return for independence. Although the President agreed on Syrian independence, such Old World thinking regarding a "privileged" position for the French was something Truman could not get behind.[266] As a result, Washington looked for ways to accommodate Syria's struggle for independence.

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[263] U.S. Consulate in Damascus to Washington, *Confidential U.S. State Department Central Files, Syria: Internal Affairs and Foreign Affairs, 1945-1949*, microfilm collection, telegram from 7 June 1945.

[264] U.S. Department of State, *Foreign Relations of the United States Diplomatic Papers 1945: Volume VIII The Near East and Africa,* 1118-1119.

[265] U.S. Department of State, *Foreign Relations of the United States Diplomatic Papers 1945: Volume VIII The Near East and Africa,* 1116-1117.

[266] U.S. Department of State, *Confidential U.S. State Department Central Files, Syria: Internal Affairs and Foreign Affairs, 1945-1949*, microfilm collection, State Department office memorandum from 23 July 1945.

In August, the U.S. legation in Damascus received a request from the Syrian government for military arms and training.[267] The request was sent up the chain to Secretary of State Dean Acheson. He was open to the idea but first wanted to study its legal and financial aspects, and discuss it with the French.[268] However, by October, the Syrian government had still not heard back from Washington. The Syrian President, Shukri al- Quwatly, personally informed the U.S. legation in Damascus that he was disappointed his country was unable to attain American assistance. It was a most pressing need, as Quwatly informed the legation that Syria was struggling to maintain order and security in the country. Syria hoped the United States would assist it because the country could not go to the British or the French due to their history of colonialism.[269] Soon after, U.S. officials met with the French, and the British, to discuss American military aid to Syria. Neither party was amenable to the idea. But U.S. aims were different than the colonial powers. American policymakers believed that aiding Syria would help secure U.S. interests, even if it displeased the British and the French.[270]

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[267] U.S. Consulate in Damascus to Washington, *Confidential U.S. State Department Central Files, Syria: Internal Affairs and Foreign Affairs, 1945-1949*, microfilm collection, telegram from 8 August 1945; U.S. Consulate in Damascus to Washington, *Confidential U.S. State Department Central Files, Syria: Internal Affairs and Foreign Affairs, 1945-1949*, microfilm collection, telegram from 17 August 1945.

[268] U.S. Consulate in Damascus to Washington, *Confidential U.S. State Department Central Files, Syria: Internal Affairs and Foreign Affairs, 1945-1949*, microfilm collection, telegram from 18 September 1945.

[269] U.S. Consulate in Damascus to Washington, *Confidential U.S. State Department Central Files, Syria: Internal Affairs and Foreign Affairs, 1945-1949*, microfilm collection, telegram from 3 October 1945.

[270] U.S. Consulate in Damascus to Washington, *Confidential U.S. State Department Central Files, Syria: Internal Affairs and Foreign Affairs, 1945-1949*, microfilm collection, telegram from 7 October 1945; U.S.

Although relatively minor, at least in comparison to the years to come, disturbing signs were coming in regarding the security of the country.

In the fall of 1945, Washington received reports that the Soviet legation in Syria was developing strong ties with the Communist Party of Lebanon and Syria. Since August, communist newspapers were printing more and grander anti-Western articles and U.S. officials believed that the Russian legation now had a sophisticated intelligence and propaganda machine. Furthermore, the Soviet mission planned to soon open an economic bureau to facilitate and organize trade between the two countries.[271] U.S. officials determined the best way to prevent further Soviet influence from developing in Syria was to assist its citizens in gaining full independence.

In December, the Syrian government laid out its three primary aims with regards to the sovereignty of its country – 1) The removal of all French troops, 2) the acquisition of public services still controlled by French firms, and 3) the conversion of French representation into an ordinary diplomatic mission. However, the French now were not necessarily concerned with losing Syria, they were concerned with losing Syria to the British. Paris argued that the British troops stationed in the Levant would simply fill the vacuum left in the wake of a complete French withdrawal.[272] Old colonial rivalries

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Consulate in Damascus to Washington, *Confidential U.S. State Department Central Files, Syria: Internal Affairs and Foreign Affairs, 1945-1949*, microfilm collection, telegram from 15 October 1945.

[271] U.S. Consulate in Damascus to Washington, *Confidential U.S. State Department Central Files, Syria: Internal Affairs and Foreign Affairs, 1945-1949*, microfilm collection, telegram from 9 November 1945.

[272] U.S. Consulate in Damascus to Washington, *Confidential U.S. State Department Central Files, Syria: Internal Affairs and Foreign Affairs, 1945-1949*, microfilm collection, telegram from 10 December 1945.

continued to complicate the situation for Washington. Over the next few weeks, British and French officials met to discuss the withdrawal of their forces. However, when a copy of the treaty was submitted, U.S. officials were distressed to see that both countries had merely designed new spheres of influence such as those they created during the First World War.[273]

Demonstrations throughout the months of December and January repeatedly exhibited the determination and will of the Syrian people to resist such plans. They called for a complete withdrawal of French, and British, forces. Furthermore, at the U.N. Security Council, the United States applied additional pressure on the British and the French. Ultimately, both countries were forced to radically rethink their strategies in the Levant.[274] Over the following months, the British and French completely evacuated their forces. A three-day celebration in Damascus was held to celebrate Syrian independence.

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[273] U.S. Department of State, *Foreign Relations of the United States Diplomatic Papers 1945: Volume VIII The Near East and Africa,* 1178-1180.

[274] U.S. Consulate in Damascus to Washington, *Confidential U.S. State Department Central Files, Syria: Internal Affairs and Foreign Affairs, 1945-1949*, microfilm collection, telegram from 13 December 1945; U.S. Consulate in Damascus to Washington, *Confidential U.S. State Department Central Files, Syria: Internal Affairs and Foreign Affairs, 1945-1949*, microfilm collection, telegram from 13 December 1945; U.S. Consulate in Damascus to Washington, *Confidential U.S. State Department Central Files, Syria: Internal Affairs and Foreign Affairs, 1945-1949*, microfilm collection, telegram from 11 January 1946; U.S. Consulate in Damascus to Washington, *Confidential U.S. State Department Central Files, Syria: Internal Affairs and Foreign Affairs, 1945-1949*, microfilm collection, telegram from 1 February 1946; U.S. Consulate in Damascus to Washington, *Confidential U.S. State Department Central Files, Syria: Internal Affairs and Foreign Affairs, 1945-1949*, microfilm collection, telegram from 18 February 1946.

The head of the U.S. legation in Damascus wrote to the Secretary of State that for the first time since 1943, when the American delegation was formed in Syria, the people are concerned with economic and administrative issues instead of the all-consuming quest to remove the French. Soon there would not be any vestiges of French administration, which, according to the ambassador, wrought untold troubles on the Syrian people for the last 25 years.[275] Moreover, on 27 April, the first new government since the French withdrawal was formed under Prime Minister Saadallah al-Jabri. It received a vote of confidence from the Syrian Parliament in early May.[276] Initially, some U.S. officials doubted the new, democratic regime's ability to maintain stability in the country. However, in August, the U.S. Vice Consul traveled throughout Syria to assess the economic and political conditions of the country. He reported that at both the local and national level the government had strong support.[277] In 1946, hope was high in Syria.

After World War II, the U.S. government largely supported Syrian independence over their traditional allies the British and the French. The British and the French were simply holding onto Old World colonialism to American officials. Indeed the European powers hoped to maintain what remained of their empires but the tide was turning against imperialism. Such colonial meddling was causing much of the instability not just in the

[275] U.S. Consulate in Damascus to Washington, *Confidential U.S. State Department Central Files, Syria: Internal Affairs and Foreign Affairs, 1945-1949*, microfilm collection, telegram from 13 April 1946.

[276] U.S. Consulate in Damascus to Washington, *Confidential U.S. State Department Central Files, Syria: Internal Affairs and Foreign Affairs, 1945-1949*, microfilm collection, telegram from 19 June 1946.

[277] U.S. Consulate in Damascus to Washington, *Confidential U.S. State Department Central Files, Syria: Internal Affairs and Foreign Affairs, 1945-1949*, microfilm collection, telegram from 7 August 1946.

Middle East but throughout the Third World to the U.S. government. As a result, Washington supported Syrians' right to independence. By the summer of 1946, the British and French had completely withdrawn from the region and both Syrian and U.S. officials were hopeful such positive trends would continue. However, once the French were gone, new problems began to present themselves.

4.3 Trouble on the Horizon

By 1947, the Syrian press had largely turned on the United States and it urged its readers to see the United States for what it was – an imperial power.[278] *An Nazir*, an Aleppo daily, wrote, "if the American and British companies are unable to supply us with fuel [in a fair manner], there are other [Soviet] companies that want the job, that are anxious to take the place of the Anglo-American.[279]" A manifesto distributed by the Syrian Communist Party (SCP) went further, writing, "The Anglo-American petroleum companies want to colonize Syria, starve its people, and destroy its economy. Unite to defend national industry, irrigation, and the people against foreign imperialism and capitalist greed.[280]"

Following Syria's independence, security concerns greatly increased for U.S. officials. On 4 September 1946, the U.S. legation in Beirut was bombed, although there

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[278] U.S. Consulate in Damascus to Washington, *Confidential U.S. State Department Central Files, Syria: Internal Affairs and Foreign Affairs, 1945-1949*, microfilm collection, telegram from 4 April 1947.

[279] *An-Nazir*, 14 November 1947.

[280] Syrian Communist Party, *Manifesto of the Political Bureau of the Syrian Communist Party*, (Damascus: Syrian Communist Party, 8 November 1947).

were no serious injuries it was a portent of things to come.[281] In the countryside, there were developments that were deeply troubling to U.S. officials. In late October 1946, U.S. attaché Daniel Dennet took a two-week trip to assess Northern Syria and the Jazira region. The legation was receiving reports from tribal cattle herders that the Kurds of the area were receiving arms from the Soviet Union. Allegedly, the Soviets were funneling weapons and funds through Kurds in Iran to Kurds in Iraq and Syria. When the legation asked the British, they confirmed these reports, as well as adding that vague plans for a Kurdish uprising were also being circulated. Syrian officials received analogous accounts so frequently they admitted to the U.S. legation that a "Kurdish problem" was emerging in the north.[282]

In Northern Syria, Dennet met with various Kurdish leaders to discuss the rumors. He reported that they did indeed receive substantial amounts of arms from Iran, but the Kurds argued they were for local and cultural reasons. Dennet reported that no overt Soviet influence was in the area and the Kurds denied any such involvement. However, he also stated such claims would be expected if they were receiving transmissions from the Soviets. According to Dennet, the Kurds had ample motivation for developing a relationship with the Soviet Union. They were fed up with attempts to assimilate their people and wanted the freedom to practice their cultural and religious traditions. The British and the French had already attempted to assimilate them into Turkey and Iraq and

[281] U.S. Consulate in Damascus to Washington, *Confidential U.S. State Department Central Files, Syria: Internal Affairs and Foreign Affairs, 1945-1949*, microfilm collection, telegram from 4 September 1946.

[282] U.S. Consulate in Beirut to Washington, *Confidential U.S. State Department Central Files, Syria: Internal Affairs and Foreign Affairs, 1945-1949*, microfilm collection, telegram from 28 October 1946.

both attempts failed. Now it was time to move towards the creation of a Kurdish state and if the United States and Great Britain refused to help them they would have no other option but to seek aid from the Soviet Union.[283]

The following month, the C.I.A. reported that a conference of Kurdish leaders was held in Damascus. There, the Kurds declared they would move towards alignment with the Soviet Union if the western powers continued to ignore their plight.[284] In May 1947, the agency further verified that 40 Barzani Kurds from Iraq had emigrated to Northern Syria and the Soviet legation in Beirut funded the operation. Moreover, several individuals from this group later met with the Soviet Minister in Lebanon, Daniel Solod, before traveling to Damascus to meet with Syria's Kurdish leadership.[285] For U.S. officials, a Kurdish state would significantly jeopardize the stability and security of the entire Middle East. Although Kurdistan was unlikely to come to fruition, the instability the Soviets could cause in assisting the Kurds in their struggle for nationhood was enough to alarm Washington.

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[283] Ibid.

[284] The C.I.A. Records Search Tool, C.I.A. Intelligence Report, *Conference with Kurdish Leaders*, CIA-RDP82-00457R000100840005-7, Washington D.C., 12 November 1946, https://www.cia.gov/library/readingroom/document/cia-rdp82-00457r000100840005-7, (accessed 9 June 2019).

[285] The C.I.A. Records Search Tool, C.I.A. Intelligence Report, *Barzani Kurds in Lebanon and Syria*, CIA-RDP82-00457R000600370010-8, Washington D.C., 28 May 1947, https://www.cia.gov/library/readingroom/document/cia-rdp82-00457r000600370010-8, (accessed 9 June 2019).

In October, U.S. policymakers also learned that the Muslim Brotherhood was opening an Aleppo chapter. The Brotherhood had been active in the city for at least ten years previously so when the new division opened it had thousands of already established members. The Aleppo chapter received its orders from the Brotherhood's "secret apparatus." Its purpose, along with the usual duties, was to recruit fanatical individuals to be trained in guerilla tactics. These units would then be used to attack foreign influence in the country.[286] The first overt signs of mob violence toward the new government occurred shortly after the Muslim Brotherhood opened its new headquarters.[287] From 13 November – 15 November, student demonstrations shut down normal traffic in Damascus. Two students were shot and killed by police as they protested the government's educational legislation. The U.S. legation reported that things would not have gotten out of control had it not been for the agitation of undercover opposition groups who exploited the demonstrations.[288] By the end of the year, Syrian officials were asking Washington for small arms shipments to better equip their police

[286] U.S. Consulate in Beirut to Washington, *Confidential U.S. State Department Central Files, Syria: Internal Affairs and Foreign Affairs, 1945-1949*, microfilm collection, telegram from 28 October 1946.

[287] U.S. Consulate in Damascus to Washington, *Confidential U.S. State Department Central Files, Syria: Internal Affairs and Foreign Affairs, 1945-1949*, microfilm collection, telegram from 4 December 1946.

[288] U.S. Consulate in Damascus to Washington, *Confidential U.S. State Department Central Files, Syria: Internal Affairs and Foreign Affairs, 1945-1949*, microfilm collection, telegram from 14 November; U.S. Consulate in Damascus to Washington, *Confidential U.S. State Department Central Files, Syria: Internal Affairs and Foreign Affairs, 1945-1949*, microfilm collection, telegram from 26 November 1946.

forces. They requested 140 Thompson submachine guns and 550 M1 Garand rifles. U.S. officials agreed this was a modest request and fulfilled it.[289]

In February 1947, the Secretary of State received a distressing message from the U.S. legation in Saudi Arabia. It stated that the Saudis had deep concerns with how events were unfolding in Syria. They believed the British secretly planned to put a Hashemite ruler at the head of the government in an attempt to unite Syria with Iraq and Jordan, which would prevent Syria from allying with Egypt and Saudi Arabia. The Saudis believed this plan was designed to increase British influence in the region and they believed it to be imminent.[290] The U.S. government disagreed.

However, American officials had their own concerns with how events were unfolding in Syria.[291] In March 1947, the American legation in Damascus telegrammed Washington, stating, "March was the worst month in many a moon in Syro-American relations." Suspension of negotiations regarding the TAPCO oil pipeline were most troubling for U.S. policymakers. The Syrian government was now expressing firm opposition to U.S. influence with the project and this opposition was drawing praise from all quarters of the population. Public protest against the United States, largely unheard of

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[289] U.S. State Department, *Confidential U.S. State Department Central Files, Syria: Internal Affairs and Foreign Affairs, 1945-1949*, microfilm collection, State Department memo from 12 December 1946.

[290] U.S. Consulate in Jidda to Washington, *Confidential U.S. State Department Central Files, Syria: Internal Affairs and Foreign Affairs, 1945-1949*, microfilm collection, telegram from 11 February 1947.

[291] U.S. Consulate in Damascus to Washington, *Confidential U.S. State Department Central Files, Syria: Internal Affairs and Foreign Affairs, 1945-1949*, microfilm collection, telegram from 2 January 1947.

previously in Syria, was now occurring daily from the government, the press, and the people.[292]

On 7 April 1947, the U.S. legation reported that Damascus, Homs, Hamas, and Idlib "were plagued with one of the most distressing ills of this young republic." Elementary school children, aged 8 – 10, went on strike in protest of the government's new electoral laws. They marched on the American supported Damascus University and threw stones into the buildings' windows while classes were being held.[293] Two weeks later, students in nearly all major Syrian cities went on strike. They ordered the government to revise the electoral process and provide direct elections. A few days later, the Syrian government was forced to meet the students' demands.[294]

Leaders of the Syrian and Lebanese communist parties declared that the Middle East was now one of the principle regions of U.S. imperialism. They argued that American officials were working with the British on the pipeline project and aimed to exploit Syria. In response, the communists pledged to defend not only the Levant but also Palestine from foreign colonialism.[295] By late 1947, socialist groups in both Syria and Lebanon were holding regular demonstrations in protest of the partition plan for

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[292] U.S. Consulate in Damascus to Washington, *Confidential U.S. State Department Central Files, Syria: Internal Affairs and Foreign Affairs, 1945-1949*, microfilm collection, telegram from 4 April 1947.

[293] U.S. Consulate in Damascus to Washington, *Confidential U.S. State Department Central Files, Syria: Internal Affairs and Foreign Affairs, 1945-1949*, microfilm collection, telegram from 7 April 1947.

[294] U.S. Consulate in Damascus to Washington, *Confidential U.S. State Department Central Files, Syria: Internal Affairs and Foreign Affairs, 1945-1949*, microfilm collection, telegram from 24 April 1947.

[295] U.S. Consulate in Damascus to Washington, *Confidential U.S. State Department Central Files, Syria: Internal Affairs and Foreign Affairs, 1945-1949*, microfilm collection, telegram from 8 April 1947.

Palestine. Furthermore, communists in the Levant were developing connections with Palestinian communists while also broadening their relations with the Soviet Union.[296] Communism in Syria was becoming a serious threat to U.S. officials. However, problems continued to mount as a new danger emerged from another ethnic minority population of the country.

Since January 1947, the U.S. government had monitored the repatriation of Armenians back to Soviet Armenia. Twenty thousand were scheduled to make the trip in the spring of that year.[297] In April, the American legation in Damascus cabled the Secretary of State writing that three Armenians, who previously gave up their nationality and emigrated to the Soviet Union, had slipped back into Syria. They were expelled to Turkey but the Syrian Director of Public Security informed the legation that more Soviet Armenian agents were sure to come, if they hadn't already. Syrian officials believed these individuals would act as a fifth column in the country when the time was right for the Soviets.[298] In July, a local paper, *Al-Qabas*, announced that the Soviet Union was

[296] The C.I.A. Records Search Tool, C.I.A. Intelligence Report, Communists and the Palestine Question: Missions to Russia: New Head of Armenian Communists, CIA-RDP82-00457R000300760003-6, Washington D.C., undated, https://www.cia.gov/library/readingroom/document/cia-rdp82-00457r000300760003-6, (accessed 9 June 2019).

[297] U.S. Consulate in Damascus to Washington, *Confidential U.S. State Department Central Files, Syria: Internal Affairs and Foreign Affairs, 1945-1949*, microfilm collection, telegram from 7 January 1947.

[298] U.S. Consulate in Damascus to Washington, *Confidential U.S. State Department Central Files, Syria: Internal Affairs and Foreign Affairs, 1945-1949*, microfilm collection, telegram from 8 April 1947.

accepting an additional 7,000 Armenians.[299] According to the U.S. legation in Moscow, Soviet Armenia expected 110,000 new migrants by the end of the year.[300]

The Armenians, like the Kurds, were left without a country after World War I. Their population was spread across several nations including Turkey, Syria, Iraq, Iran, and the Soviet Union. Primary amongst their aims was the creation of an Armenian homeland. Many Armenian populations developed strong ties to the Soviet Union in the hope that Moscow would assist them in this endeavor. Such relations made them a dangerous security threat to U.S. officials. In December 1947, the C.I.A. reported that Soviet Armenians were calling on their brothers in Lebanon and Syria to join the fight against the partition of Palestine. Moreover, the agency argued that a recent string of bombings in Damascus, including one near the American legation, was perpetrated by an Armenian socialist who was a member of the local communist club.[301]

Security threats in Syria were reaching dangerous levels for U.S. officials. Groups such as the Armenians, the Kurds, the Muslim Brotherhood, and the communists were all rising threats to U.S. interests in the country. For the most part, the rising discontent was a result of anti-colonial nationalism. But Washington largely interpreted it as deriving from Soviet meddling. Primary amongst the aims of U.S. policymakers

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[299] *Al-Qabas*, 16 July 1947.

[300] U.S. Consulate in Damascus to Washington, *Confidential U.S. State Department Central Files, Syria: Internal Affairs and Foreign Affairs, 1945-1949*, microfilm collection, telegram from 7 July 1947.

[301] The C.I.A. Records Search Tool, C.I.A. Press Review, *Joghovourti Tzain – Armenian Newspaper, 3 December 1947, Demonstrations in Aleppo,* CIA-RDP83-00415R000800040013-4, Washington D.C., 7 December 1947, https://www.cia.gov/library/readingroom/document/cia-rdp83-00415r000800040013-4, (accessed 9 June 2019).

was to prevent Soviet influence in the area. Therefore, U.S. officials supported developing the Syrian government's security forces.

Since 1946, the U.S. and Syrian governments had cooperated in an air force training program. Four hundred Syrian pilots had been trained by the United States thus far. In April 1947, the Syrian government requested additional ammunition for continued training exercises. U.S. officials approved the request and 5,400,000 rounds of .30 caliber airplane machine gun, plain; 1,800,000 rounds of .30 caliber airplane machine gun, tracer; 96,000 M38 100 pound practice bombs; and 90 .30 caliber airplane machine guns were shipped out. In the fall, the Syrian government requested an additional 100 pilots be trained after also requesting 20,000 rifles; 5,000 carbines; 150 armored cars; 50 light tanks; 1 year spare parts; and 1 year worth of ammunition. For Middle East governments, the primary threat came from within. Suppressing domestic uprisings superseded the superpower rivalry. However, as Washington increased its assistance to Syria's military, anti-Americanism continued to grow. By the summer of 1948, instability in Syria was reaching critical levels.

The turn of the new year brought more distressing news for American officials. On 17 January 1948, the U.S. legation in Damascus cabled the Secretary of State, writing that Solod, the Soviet Minister in Lebanon, recently met with the Syrian Foreign Ministry Director of Political Affairs in Damascus. After a series of conferences, both officials called for closer cultural relations between the Soviet Union and Syria. Moscow hoped to soon reopen its charter schools in the country.[302] Such developments provided Syrian

[302] U.S. Consulate in Damascus to Washington, *Confidential U.S. State Department Central Files, Syria: Internal Affairs and Foreign Affairs, 1945-1949*, microfilm collection, telegram from 17 January 1948.

communists with political capital to burn. In early June, the U.S. legation in Syria attained a copy of a clandestine communist newspaper, *Nidal Ash-Sh'ab*, that was widely distributed in Damascus. The paper argued that it was the greatest national and democratic duty of Syrians to defend the rights of the people from the foreign backed regimes that have succeeded the French colonizers. Moreover, it was also the duty of Arabs everywhere to defend the rights of the Palestinians from the American backed partition plan.[303] The popularity of anti-colonial nationalism was rising and the communists were successfully exploiting it.

However, in mid-June, Syrian police arrested large numbers of communists in Damascus. One source informed the U.S. legation that police focused on Armenians, especially those Armenians who coordinated emigration to the Soviet Union.[304] Three such individuals were brought to Damascus for trial.[305] The communists, particularly Armenian and Kurdish communists, continued to threaten the stability of Syria for American officials. Furthermore, by July, discontent with the situation in Palestine was opening new doors for Soviet exploitation.

In July, the American legation in Syria informed Washington that the Arab people were completely disillusioned with Europe and the United States. The Arabs pointed to the fact that they fought with the allies in World War I and were rewarded with repressive

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[303] U.S. Consulate in Damascus to Washington, *Confidential U.S. State Department Central Files, Syria: Internal Affairs and Foreign Affairs, 1945-1949*, microfilm collection, telegram from 16 June 1948.

[304] U.S. Consulate in Damascus to Washington, *Confidential U.S. State Department Central Files, Syria: Internal Affairs and Foreign Affairs, 1945-1949*, microfilm collection, telegram from 22 June 1948.

[305] *Al-Qabas*, 25 June 1948.

colonial mandates. During World War II, they again fought with the allies and were rewarded with the partition of Palestine.[306] The legation warned that anti-American activity was sure to rise as partition went into effect. On 16 July, the Syrian Chief of Police ordered Americans to remain indoors as an anti-U.S. demonstration was forming outside of Omayid Mosque.[307] A few days later, at the same location, the Muslim Brotherhood gave fiery speeches to a crowd that applauded the organization's anti-American rhetoric.[308] In July 1948, resentment towards the United States grew exponentially as 60,000 Palestinian refugees poured into Syria.[309]

On 4 August, Nassouh Ayubi, the Director of Refugee Relief for Syria, confided to the U.S. legation that the arrival of an additional 10,000 refugees has moved the situation from critical to hopeless. He believed the Syrian budget could not possibly withstand the strain of the refugees and things would quickly get out of hand unless substantial foreign aid arrived immediately.[310] A few days later, the Acting Foreign Minister of Syria personally confirmed to the legation that the total number of refugees in

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[306] U.S. Consulate in Damascus to Washington, *Confidential U.S. State Department Central Files, Syria: Internal Affairs and Foreign Affairs, 1945-1949*, microfilm collection, telegram from 14 July 1948.

[307] U.S. Consulate in Damascus to Washington, *Confidential U.S. State Department Central Files, Syria: Internal Affairs and Foreign Affairs, 1945-1949*, microfilm collection, telegram from 16 July 1948.

[308] U.S. Consulate in Damascus to Washington, *Confidential U.S. State Department Central Files, Syria: Internal Affairs and Foreign Affairs, 1945-1949*, microfilm collection, telegram from 24 July 1948.

[309] U.S. Consulate in Damascus to Washington, *Confidential U.S. State Department Central Files, Syria: Internal Affairs and Foreign Affairs, 1945-1949*, microfilm collection, telegram from 31 July 1948.

[310] U.S. Consulate in Damascus to Washington, *Confidential U.S. State Department Central Files, Syria: Internal Affairs and Foreign Affairs, 1945-1949*, microfilm collection, telegram from 4 August 1948.

the country was over 100,000 and 80 percent of them were completely reliant on government aid. The percent of refugees reliant on this aid was expected to increase as the crisis continued to unfold. As a result, government funding for important public works projects such as running water, sewage, etc. was suspended. The suspension of such programs put tremendous strain on the communities that housed the refugees.[311] Local blame for the refugee problem was placed on the United States and the United Nations. Opinion of America was swinging from that of a benevolent nation, friendly to colonized peoples, to that of an imperial power, bent on supporting Zionism.[312]

On 19 August, the Arab Higher Committee issued a manifesto titled, "Arab Accounts of the Defense of Jerusalem." It called on kings, chiefs, and governments of the Arab world to the defense of the ancient city. The tract argued that it was vital to prevent the Jews from occupying Jerusalem because they planned to make it the new capital of Israel.[313] In response, the President of Syria, Shukri al-Quwatli, having recently returned as head of state, called for the mobilization of the country's resources to rescue Palestine. The Muslim Brotherhood, in their Syrian newsletter, *Al-Manar*, asserted that an honorable death was better than a life of submission under Jewish rule. Moreover, the paper published several pro-Soviet articles that argued Arab countries

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[311] U.S. Consulate in Damascus to Washington, *Confidential U.S. State Department Central Files, Syria: Internal Affairs and Foreign Affairs, 1945-1949*, microfilm collection, telegram from 11 August 1948.

[312] U.S. Consulate in Damascus to Washington, *Confidential U.S. State Department Central Files, Syria: Internal Affairs and Foreign Affairs, 1945-1949*, microfilm collection, telegram from 4 August 1948.

[313] U.S. Consulate in Damascus to Washington, *Confidential U.S. State Department Central Files, Syria: Internal Affairs and Foreign Affairs, 1945-1949*, microfilm collection, telegram from 19 August 1948.

should move towards alliance with the Soviet Union.[314] In July, the C.I.A. reported that the Soviet Minister to Lebanon traveled to Syria where he met with both refugees and the Aleppo chapter of the Muslim Brotherhood. He pledged his desire to help both groups as he felt a great injustice had been done to them. Furthermore, he personally pledged to ensure that the Soviet government would do everything in its power to assist them.[315] The U.S. legation in Damascus recommended to Washington it carefully weigh Palestine with regards to any future policies in Syria. Any failure, or even seeming failure, to understand the reality of the situation would further alienate the Arab people and greatly increase the likelihood of future conflict. Weighing the possible, if not probable, dangerous ramifications of these developments were necessary for the future stability of Syria.[316]

As 1948 wound down, the continued protests over Palestine in Syria began to turn violent. On 29 November, the U.S. legation in Damascus reported that the anniversary of the U.N. partition vote set off angry student marches in the city. At one point, a mob broke into the General Motors sales room and destroyed many of the vehicles on display. The students blamed the Arab leadership, including Syria's, for the failure to defend Palestine. They demanded both an admission of guilt by the Arab states and a renewal of

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[314] *Al-Manar*, August 1948.

[315] The C.I.A. Records Search Tool, C.I.A. Intelligence Report, *Arabs Seek Soviet Aid on Palestine Question,* CIA-RDP82-00457R001800590009-3, Washington D.C., 27 August 1948, https://www.cia.gov/library/readingroom/document/cia-rdp82-00457r001800590009-3, (accessed 9 June 2019).

[316] U.S. Consulate in Damascus to Washington, *Confidential U.S. State Department Central Files, Syria: Internal Affairs and Foreign Affairs, 1945-1949*, microfilm collection, telegram from 31 August 1948.

hostilities. The American embassy informed Washington that the "young generation" in Syria was unanimous in denouncing partition and was intent on returning to warfare.[317] On 1 December, U.S. officials cabled Washington that the demonstrations continued into a third day. Schools were closed and students marched in the streets of Damascus where they battled the police. [318] Firm action by security forces eventually dispersed the mob but not before 3 students and 15 police officers were killed.[319] The legation highlighted that these fatalities may force the resignation of the current government.[320]

On Syria's frontier, things looked no less ominous. In October, the C.I.A. reported that a Russian agent traveled to Damascus where he stayed with Mahmud Jamil Pasha, a Kurdish leader of the Jazirah region, for three months. The agency stated that Pasha was organizing the Kurds of the North and the Soviets were assisting him, particularly with the spread of propaganda. The newspapers *Al Siyasah* (Damascus), *Al Jihad* (Aleppo), *Barada* (Damascus), *Abadil* (Sidon), and *Al Tariq* (Beirut) all received funding from the Soviet Union.[321] Furthermore, planes from the U.S.S.R. delivered

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[317] U.S. Consulate in Damascus to Washington, *Confidential U.S. State Department Central Files, Syria: Internal Affairs and Foreign Affairs, 1945-1949*, microfilm collection, telegram from 30 November 1948.

[318] U.S. Consulate in Damascus to Washington, *Confidential U.S. State Department Central Files, Syria: Internal Affairs and Foreign Affairs, 1945-1949*, microfilm collection, 1 December 1948.

[319] Ibid.

[320] Ibid.

[321] The C.I.A. Records Search Tool, C.I.A. Intelligence Report, *Soviet Propaganda,* CIA-RDP82-00457R002100150006-0, Washington D.C., 24 November 1948, https://www.cia.gov/library/readingroom/search/site/CIA-RDP82-00457R002100150006-0, (accessed 9 June 2019).

newsletters to the Kurds, a radio station based in Soviet Azerbaijan targeted them by broadcasting in Kurdish, and the official newsletter of the Kurdish Democratic Party was secretly being distributed in the north of Syria. The paper argued that the Kurds should organize, unite, and fight for an independent state.[322] When the U.S. legation met with Syrian officials to discuss the Kurds, the Syrian government admitted that the Kurds were a "unique problem," as they were a separate issue from the other tribal peoples of the country. Damascus believed a significant relationship between the Kurds and the Soviet Union already existed. As well, Syrian officials argued that the Free Kurdistan Movement was far from dead and Kurdish nationalism was an issue with many avenues for exploitation by the Soviets. Because of the potential danger of the Kurds, the Syrian government informed the American legation that they kept a close eye on the north at all times.[323]

The rising instability and accompanying security threats were largely a result of non-state actors such as the Kurds, the Armenians, the refugees, and the Muslim Brotherhood. These groups framed the security situation in Syria for the U.S. government. As the partition plan in Palestine went into effect, these groups took on even more significance in the minds of American policymakers. Things were getting out

[322] The C.I.A. Records Search Tool, C.I.A. Intelligence Report, *Formation of a Kurdish National Government,* CIA-RDP82-00457R002100650009-2, Washington D.C., 10 December 1948, https://www.cia.gov/library/readingroom/document/cia-rdp82-00457r002100650009-2, (accessed 9 June 2019).

[323] U.S. Consulate in Damascus to Washington, *Confidential U.S. State Department Central Files, Syria: Internal Affairs and Foreign Affairs, 1945-1949*, microfilm collection, 29 December 1948.

of hand and something had to be done to stabilize the country. Washington had participated in arms transfers and military training programs with Syria in the hope of countering what it believed to be rising, Soviet influence. However, this proved ineffective. A new strategy was needed.

4.4 Regime Change

On 30 March 1949, Husni al-Zaim, a high ranking army officer, seized control of Syria's government in a bloodless coup. Allegations that the U.S. government coordinated the takeover quickly gained popularity with local populaces. Newsletters throughout the country attacked both the United States and the new regime, declaring, "Down with colonization and dictatorship! Unite and struggle for the deliverance of our country from Anglo-American plots." Pamphlets painted the coup as an inevitable result of American colonialism and urged the Syrian people to defend their country.[324] One handbill argued that the Zaim government was simply a terrorist organization. The tract was printed by the National Committee for Defense of Liberties and Political Detainees, which formed in the wake of the Zaim coup to serve as secret opposition to the regime. The organization's grievances derived from the new government's suppression of civil liberties, the imprisonment and torture of political prisoners, the dissolution of political parties, and Zaim's cooperation with governments thought responsible for the Palestine crisis.

Competing interests at the local, national, and global levels contributed to the numerous regime changes that occurred from 1949 – 1954 in Syria. At the local level,

[324] Syrian Communist Party, *Appeal to the Noble Syrian People*, (Damascus: Syrian Communist Party, May 1949).

non-state actors such as the Kurds, the Armenians, the refugees, and the Ikhwan challenged not only the legitimacy of the Syrian state but also the whole nation-state system of the Middle East. The Kurds and Armenians each wanted a nation of their own, the Palestinians fought to hold onto what remained of their country, and the Muslim Brotherhood desired a state based on the principles of Islam. At the national level, these groups defined the Syrian state's policies. Actors such as the Armenians and the Kurds were primary threats to Syria's government. However, they were also primary threats to U.S. interests in the country. Therefore, once in power, Washington supported Zaim in the hope he could neutralize these dangers and move Syria towards alliance with the U.S. government. American policymakers wanted to stabilize Syria, secure it from the Soviet Union, and develop it economically.

In January 1949, before Zaim's coup, the State Department informed the U.S. Senate that future oil concessions in Syria looked ripe for competitive bidding from U.S. companies.[325] Several American businesses were exploring the expansion of their activities in Syria. One such business, the Middle East Pipelines Company planned to build a channel that transferred oil from Iran and Kuwait to the Mediterranean.[326] However, when U.S. officials met with Syria's Prime Minister, he informed them that all issues involving America were now tainted by Palestine, including the pipeline project. For Syria to develop positive relations with the U.S. government, the refugee crisis had to

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[325] U.S. Consulate in Damascus to Washington, *Confidential U.S. State Department Central Files, Syria: Internal Affairs and Foreign Affairs, 1945-1949*, microfilm collection, telegram from 7 January 1949.

[326] U.S. Department of State, *Confidential U.S. State Department Central Files, Syria: Internal Affairs and Foreign Affairs, 1945-1949*, microfilm collection, State Department memorandum from 11 January 1949.

be addressed. The Prime Minister recognized that strong ties to the Western democracies would greatly benefit Syria and informed the U.S. legation that the council ministers of Syria had approved the pipeline. However, the Prime Minister also pointed out that Parliament would not ratify the project until the refugees and the host countries received significant assistance.

In February, when the U.S. legation met with President Quwatly, he agreed with the Prime Minister, stating that working with the West, especially the United States, would be greatly beneficial to Syria. But this now was extremely difficult because all relations with the U.S. government were influenced by Palestine. The President emphasized the dire plight of the refugees and argued that urgent action was necessary to alleviate their circumstances.[327] The American consulate agreed with both the President and the Prime Minister and cabled Washington that unilateral support to Israel was leading to tragic consequences for U.S./Arab relations. U.S. officials in Syria argued it was crucial Washington not overlook the strategic importance of Arab countries. Unless relations between the United States and the Arab nations improved immediately, the Middle East would be driven into the arms of the Soviets.[328]

To some American policymakers, it appeared this trend was already underway. For example, on 1 March a communist organized anti-Tapline demonstration occurred in Damascus that led to twenty socialist leaders' arrest. On the same day, students went on strike and held large protests where they distributed leaflets attacking the Tapline as

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[327] U.S. Consulate in Damascus to Washington, *Confidential U.S. State Department Central Files, Syria: Internal Affairs and Foreign Affairs, 1945-1949*, microfilm collection, telegram from, 14 February 1949.

[328] Ibid.

American imperialism.[329] One pamphlet condemned the Prime Minister of Iraq, Nuri Said Pasha, due to his treatment of communists in Iraq. The pamphlet accused him of being a Western agent, writing, "The miserable spy, Nuri Al-Said, the enemy of the Arab people, executes leaders of the nationalist and popular movement in Iraq.[330]" These demonstrations continued into the following week and grew more intense each day.[331]

On 10 March, the C.I.A. reported recent evidence suggested communism was growing in Damascus, despite government measures to suppress it. The executive committee of the Syrian Communist Party held weekly and semi-weekly meetings and most of those who attended worked in the government. Both communist party members and government workers met with Soviet officials regularly. The C.I.A. reported that the former Defense Minister of Syria, Ahmad Sharabati, met with the Soviet Minister to Lebanon and Syria in Beirut above the Hollywood Cinema, Place Des Canons.[332] The agency further stated that preparations were underway for a Kurdish/Communist uprising in the Jazirah region of Syria to begin on 27 March. It would be led by Jaladat Badrkhan,

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[329] U.S. Consulate in Damascus to Washington, *Confidential U.S. State Department Central Files, Syria: Internal Affairs and Foreign Affairs, 1945-1949*, microfilm collection, telegram from 1 March 1949.

[330] Syrian Communist Party, *The Miserable Spy, Nuri al-Said, the Enemy of the Arab People, Executes Leaders of the Nationalist and Popular Movement in Iraq*, (Damascus: Syrian Communist Party, 1949).

[331] U.S. Consulate in Damascus to Washington, *Confidential U.S. State Department Central Files, Syria: Internal Affairs and Foreign Affairs, 1945-1949*, microfilm collection, telegram from 8 March 1949.

[332] The C.I.A. Records Search Tool, C.I.A. Intelligence Report, *Communist and Pro-Soviet Activities in Syria,* CIA-RDP82-00457R002500010001-6, Washington D.C., 10 March 1949, https://www.cia.gov/library/readingroom/document/cia-rdp82-00457r002500010001-6, (accessed 9 June 2019).

a Kurdish Nationalist Leader, who was in contact with Soviet officials in Damascus and Beirut. Large scale communist instigated strikes were also timed for the end of the month.[333] However, before these developments could come to fruition, the Syrian Army, led by Husni al-Zaim, seized control of the government.

After arresting President Quwatly and his cabinet, Zaim assured American officials that he desired to work with the United States and the West. Furthermore, he informed Washington that he planned to dissolve Syria's current Parliament and hold new elections.[334] U.S. officials reported that there was no bloodshed, nor any major disturbances in the country. Normal business and traffic went uninterrupted and the population appeared to accept the coup. Pro-Zaim demonstrations were held with no issues.[335] The crowds shouted anti-Quwatli slogans and tore down pictures of him throughout the city. Quwatli refused to cooperate with Zaim which created a problem of

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[333] The C.I.A. Records Search Tool, C.I.A. Intelligence Report, *Kurdish and Communist Uprisings in Syria*, CIA-RDP82-00457R002500650003-4, Washington D.C., 24 March 1949, https://www.cia.gov/library/readingroom/document/cia-rdp82-00457r002500010001-6, (accessed 9 June 2019).

[334] U.S. Consulate in Damascus to Washington, *Confidential U.S. State Department Central Files, Syria: Internal Affairs and Foreign Affairs, 1945-1949*, microfilm collection, telegram from 30 March 1949; U.S. Consulate in Damascus to Washington, *Confidential U.S. State Department Central Files, Syria: Internal Affairs and Foreign Affairs, 1945-1949*, microfilm collection, telegram from 31 March 1949.

[335] U.S. Consulate in Damascus to Washington, *Confidential U.S. State Department Central Files, Syria: Internal Affairs and Foreign Affairs, 1945-1949*, microfilm collection, telegram from 1 April 1949.

legitimacy for the new government but the populace largely gave the army its support and approval.[336]

Nevertheless, troubling signs concerning Zaim's rule began shortly after the coup. In early April, he decreed that a new constitution, with new electoral laws, would be formed. Furthermore, Zaim would hold the positions of Prime Minister, Minister of Defense, and Minister of the Interior in the new government.[337] The following month, Zaim severely restricted civil liberties when he closed down the press and outlawed all political parties. The U.S. legation in Syria cabled Washington that a permeant dictatorship was taking form and, if successful, it could unite the various political factions of the country into a potent regional force.[338]

American policymakers calculated that Zaim's regime could assist them in attaining their strategic goals in Syria. Although democracy was preferred, dictatorship was more than sufficient to meet the U.S. aims of stability and security. Zaim could suppress the rising threat of Soviet agitation, most importantly amongst groups such as the Kurds and Armenians. As well, he appeared willing to accommodate the Tapline project. This venture could help stabilize the Syrian economy, provide a new source of

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[336] Ibid.

[337] U.S. Consulate in Damascus to Washington, *Confidential U.S. State Department Central Files, Syria: Internal Affairs and Foreign Affairs, 1945-1949*, microfilm collection, telegram from 2 April 1949.

[338] U.S. Consulate in Damascus to Washington, *Confidential U.S. State Department Central Files, Syria: Internal Affairs and Foreign Affairs, 1945-1949*, microfilm collection, telegram from 24 May 1949; U.S. Consulate in Damascus to Washington, *Confidential U.S. State Department Central Files, Syria: Internal Affairs and Foreign Affairs, 1945-1949*, microfilm collection, telegram from 30 May 1949.

funding to the refugees, and benefit American oil firms. Finally, the stability that derived from such developments would further deter Soviet influence in the country.

In April, Zaim demonstrated his desire to partner with the U.S. government when he arrested 250 communists and then informed the U.S. legation that he was building a new prison to hold socialists and other agitators.[339] The following month, Zaim met with the head of the U.S. legation and reported he wanted to model Syria after America. For him, the first step in doing so was to ratify the Tapline agreement.[340] A few days later, Zaim pushed the project through by "legislative decree.[341]" The legation informed Washington that, "Whatever one may think of Colonel Zaim's methods, one cannot but be impressed by the weight of his sincerity and his driving will to serve his country's best interests as he interprets them. His energy and will to action are in marked contrast to the traditional indolence which has characterized his predecessors.[342]" After receiving the cable, the Secretary of State informed President Truman that Zaim was firmly in control of the country. At the same time, the Trans-Arabian Pipeline Company and the Arabian

[339] U.S. Consulate in Damascus to Washington, *Confidential U.S. State Department Central Files, Syria: Internal Affairs and Foreign Affairs, 1945-1949*, microfilm collection, telegram from 14 April 1949.

[340] U.S. Consulate in Damascus to Washington, *Confidential U.S. State Department Central Files, Syria: Internal Affairs and Foreign Affairs, 1945-1949*, microfilm collection, telegram from 12 May 1949.

[341] U.S. Consulate in Damascus to Washington, *Confidential U.S. State Department Central Files, Syria: Internal Affairs and Foreign Affairs, 1945-1949*, microfilm collection, telegram from 6 April 1949.

[342] U.S. Consulate in Damascus to Washington, *Confidential U.S. State Department Central Files, Syria: Internal Affairs and Foreign Affairs, 1945-1949*, microfilm collection, telegram from 4 June 1949.

American Oil Company met with the State Department and informed American officials that the Tapline would be completed by August 1950.[343]

Relations between the U.S. government and the government of Syria were improving. However, internal threats to Zaim's regime still existed. In June, Zaim was "elected" President of Syria. Soon after, he renewed his requests for military assistance. Zaim argued that such supplies were necessary for the internal security of the country. With such assistance, he further argued, Syria could be invaluable to the U.S. government in helping prevent a potential invasion by the Soviet Union.[344] Military aid was crucial to the regime to suppress domestic threats and Zaim made it clear he hoped Washington could supply assistance rather than Moscow.[345] In August, the Chief of the Military Cabinet of Syria, conveyed a formal request to the U.S. government.[346] Both American officials and Zaim agreed that there were several security developments that needed to be addressed and both hoped military assistance would help stabilize the situation.[347]

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[343] U.S. Consulate in Damascus to Washington, *Confidential U.S. State Department Central Files, Syria: Internal Affairs and Foreign Affairs, 1945-1949*, microfilm collection, telegram from 25 May 1949.

[344] U.S. Consulate in Damascus to Washington, *Confidential U.S. State Department Central Files, Syria: Internal Affairs and Foreign Affairs, 1945-1949*, microfilm collection, telegram from 15 June 1949.

[345] U.S. Consulate in Damascus to Washington, *Confidential U.S. State Department Central Files, Syria: Internal Affairs and Foreign Affairs, 1945-1949*, microfilm collection, telegram from 1 August 1949.

[346] U.S. Consulate in Damascus to Washington, *Confidential U.S. State Department Central Files, Syria: Internal Affairs and Foreign Affairs, 1945-1949*, microfilm collection, telegram from 1 August 1949.

[347] U.S. Consulate in Damascus to Washington, *Confidential U.S. State Department Central Files, Syria: Internal Affairs and Foreign Affairs, 1945-1949*, microfilm collection, telegram from 11 August 1949.

In August, hand grenades were thrown into a Synagogue killing 6 and wounding 27.[348] The communists were not the only threat in the country. The Muslim Brotherhood and its secret activities were still a clear and present danger. However, before Zaim could address these issues he was arrested and executed by Colonel Muhammad Sami al-Hinnawi on the morning of 14 August 1949. After arresting Zaim's cabinet and executing the Prime Minister, Hinnawi lifted all the decrees of the previous regime. He then created a provisional government with the purpose of restoring constitutional rule. Hinnawi was chosen as President and Hashim al-Atasi as Prime Minister.[349] Four days after the coup, the U.S. legation cabled Washington and reported that things were stable in Syria. There were no demonstrations, businesses were running as usual, and optimism was high on the streets.[350] As well, the new government was expected to uphold the promises made by Zaim regarding the Tapline.[351] In September, the Secretary of State recommended to the President that the regime be formally recognized.[352]

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[348] U.S. Consulate in Damascus to Washington, *Confidential U.S. State Department Central Files, Syria: Internal Affairs and Foreign Affairs, 1945-1949*, microfilm collection, telegram from 7 August 1949.

[349] U.S. Consulate in Damascus to Washington, *Confidential U.S. State Department Central Files, Syria: Internal Affairs and Foreign Affairs, 1945-1949*, microfilm collection, telegram from 14 August, 1949.

[350] U.S. Consulate in Damascus to Washington, *Confidential U.S. State Department Central Files, Syria: Internal Affairs and Foreign Affairs, 1945-1949*, microfilm collection, telegram from 18 August, 1949.

[351] U.S. Consulate in Damascus to Washington, *Confidential U.S. State Department Central Files, Syria: Internal Affairs and Foreign Affairs, 1945-1949*, microfilm collection, telegram from 14 September 1949.

[352] U.S. Department of State, Department of State Publication 8885, Historical Office, Bureau of Public Affairs, *Foreign Relations of the United States 1949: Volume VI The Near East, South Asia, and Africa* (United States Government Printing Office, Washington, 1977), 1635-1636.

Nevertheless, by October, there were reports that Hinnawi was becoming like his predecessor. He now headed a supreme war council that commanded the government. It met more often than his official cabinet and its rulings could not be challenged.[353] Such rule created further discord as Syria's political parties became further divided over which direction the country should go.[354] Similarly, morale in the army was reaching new lows. Feelings of uncertainty, confusion, and dissatisfaction were leading soldiers to disobey orders. Some regretted overthrowing Zaim and the lack of discipline that developed worried U.S. officials that ill-conceived action might be taken by the army.[355] The civilian population was only able to look on apathetically. Given the various competing political forces in the country, they too were divided on all points except antipathy toward Israel and foreign influences.[356] None now felt society was stable given that two coups had occurred in less than five months.[357] To further complicate things, on 7 November, three armed men attempted to assassinate British Colonel Michael Stirling,

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[353] U.S. Consulate in London to Washington, *Confidential U.S. State Department Central Files, Syria: Internal Affairs and Foreign Affairs, 1945-1949*, microfilm collection, telegram from 3 October 1949.

[354] The C.I.A. Records Search Tool, C.I.A. Intelligence Report, *Pre-Election Activities,* CIA-RDP82-00457R003600260003-5, Washington D.C., 25 October 1949, https://www.cia.gov/library/readingroom/document/cia-rdp82-00457r003600260003-5, (accessed 9 June 2019).

[355] U.S. Consulate in Damascus to Washington, *Confidential U.S. State Department Central Files, Syria: Internal Affairs and Foreign Affairs, 1945-1949*, microfilm collection, telegram from 7 October 1949.

[356] U.S. Consulate in Damascus to Washington, *Confidential U.S. State Department Central Files, Syria: Internal Affairs and Foreign Affairs, 1945-1949*, microfilm collection, telegram from 3 October 1949.

[357] Ibid.

the head of British intelligence in Syria. Stirling and his associate were both seriously wounded. This event enabled the regime to implement rigid control and strict security measures over society.[358]

Hinnawi's coup was largely in response to the repressive policies implemented by Zaim. Once in power, Hinnawi initially looked like he might reinstate democracy in Syria. However, he quickly tilted towards dictatorship in the months following his takeover. Dictatorship did not contradict U.S. aims in Syria. American officials' primary objective was to stabilize the country. Democracy was ideal but if it could not be attained dictatorship worked as well. Stability through autocracy in Syria was better than chaos on the streets. Economic development and security against the Soviet Union could both be had with dictatorship.

Nevertheless, the rising threats perceived by Washington did not derive from the Soviet Union. The instability caused by groups such as the Armenians, the Kurds, the Muslim Brotherhood, and Palestine' refugees was a result of anti-colonial nationalism. The partition of Palestine greatly affected stability not just in Syria but throughout the region. The United States was seen as the primary country responsible for the refugee crisis. Such developments led to huge surges in anti-Americanism throughout the Middle East. In Syria, the U.S. government appeared to favor the repressive regimes of Zaim and Hinnawi and the U.S. government also appeared to stifle any attempts to restore democracy in the country. These actions by Washington further exacerbated the tension that already existed in Syria due to events such as the partition of Palestine.

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[358] U.S. Consulate in Damascus to Washington, *Confidential U.S. State Department Central Files, Syria: Internal Affairs and Foreign Affairs, 1945-1949*, microfilm collection, telegram from 7 November 1949.

4.5 Democracy and Disorder

Hinnawi's time in power was even shorter than Zaim's. On 19 December 1949, the U.S. legation in Damascus cabled the Secretary of State and reported that a third coup, in less than 8 months, had occurred. Colonel Abid al-Shishakli was now in control of the country. Reports varied on the motivation for the coup. Some believed Hinnawi was arrested because he was planning to unite Syria with Iraq and the United Kingdom and Shishakli took action to prevent it. Others supposed Shishakli had turned the tables on Hinnawi when he attempted to move Shishakli and his supporters away from power within the government. And yet others believed Shishakli took power to return republican ideals to the country.[359] Regardless of the reasons why he seized power, Shishakli remained a crucial figure to the Syrian government for the next five years. After arresting Hinnawi, Shishakli restored the country to democratic rule. The government then created a new constitution and held new elections. However, from 1950 – 1952, relations between Washington and Damascus soured. The lack of an authoritarian regime to hold the country together led American officials to see rising security threats. However, when the democratic government faltered at the end of 1951, Shishakli again seized power and instituted a dictatorship. Washington then tilted back towards accommodating the Syrian government and attempted to renew a positive relationship with Damascus.

On 23 December 1949, the U.S. legation informed Washington that the situation in Syria was both very uncertain and unstable. There was currently no government to

[359] U.S. Consulate in Damascus to Washington, *Confidential U.S. State Department Central Files, Syria: Internal Affairs and Foreign Affairs, 1945-1949*, microfilm collection, telegram from 19 December 1949.

have relations with, normal or otherwise.[360] Moreover, the instability caused by continued regime change in Syria threatened to spread throughout the region. U.S. officials argued that Syria was the most troubling, and potentially dangerous, country in the entire Middle East.[361] On 4 January 1950, several thousand students demonstrated in the streets of Damascus. Students handed out resolutions that called for the army's return and they chanted slogans calling for the return of republicanism and an end to imperialism.[362] Two days later, the Director General of Police and Security informed the U.S. legation that the amount of Armenians returning to northern Syria had increased to the point that the government was forced to implement new measures to combat their numbers.[363]

The Palestine issue was still hugely important to the Syrian people. Syrian public opinion largely believed that the United States and the United Nations had violated international law when Palestine was carved up to create Israel.[364] By the spring of 1950,

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[360] U.S. Consulate in Damascus to Washington, *Confidential U.S. State Department Central Files, Syria: Internal Affairs and Foreign Affairs, 1945-1949*, microfilm collection, telegram from 23 December 1949.

[361] U.S. Consulate in Baghdad to Washington, *Confidential U.S. State Department Central Files, Syria: Internal Affairs and Foreign Affairs, 1945-1949*, microfilm collection, telegram from 31 December 1949.

[362] U.S. Consulate in Damascus to Washington, *Confidential U.S. State Department Central Files, Syria: Internal Affairs and Foreign Affairs, 1950-1954*, microfilm collection, telegram from 4 January 1950.

[363] U.S. Consulate in Damascus to Washington, *Confidential U.S. State Department Central Files, Syria: Internal Affairs and Foreign Affairs, 1950-1954*, microfilm collection, telegram from 6 January 1950.

[364] U.S. Department of State, Department of State Publication 8927, Office of the Historian, Bureau of Public Affairs, *Foreign Relations of the United States 1950: Volume V The Near East, South Asia, and Africa* (United States Government Printing Office, Washington, 1978), 1205-1206.

the refugees in Damascus had lived in horrible circumstances with minimal aid for two years. The U.S. legation in Damascus reported that the communists wasted no time in exploiting the refugees' plight. Pamphlets were distributed to them daily that outlined their rights and communists called on them to take action against their oppressors. As a result, considerable upswings in communist activity was observed amongst the refugees. Moreover, U.N.R.W.A. workers found it increasingly difficult to carry out their efforts as the refugees became more resentful to the United States. The organization stated that the Soviet Union had found fertile ground in the refugees because they were desperate and easily inflammable.[365] The director of U.N.R.W.A. for Palestinian refugees stated that 600 – 800 refugees left the camps each month to live and work in areas controlled by the communists.[366]

In April 1950, an explosive containing 4 kilograms of dynamite was thrown over the walls that guarded the U.S. embassy. In the following months, similar bombings took place in the Jewish quarter of Damascus and at Syria's parliament building.[367] Although these attacks caused few casualties, they demonstrated the rising instability overtaking

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[365] U.S. Consulate in Damascus to Washington, *Confidential U.S. State Department Central Files, Syria: Internal Affairs and Foreign Affairs, 1950-1954*, microfilm collection, telegram from 22 May 1950.

[366] U.S. Consulate in Damascus to Washington, *Confidential U.S. State Department Central Files, Syria: Internal Affairs and Foreign Affairs, 1950-1954*, microfilm collection, telegram from 12 March 1951.

[367] U.S. Consulate in Damascus to Washington, *Confidential U.S. State Department Central Files, Syria: Internal Affairs and Foreign Affairs, 1950-1954*, microfilm collection, telegram from 15 May 1950 and U.S. Consulate in Damascus to Washington, *Confidential U.S. State Department Central Files, Syria: Internal Affairs and Foreign Affairs, 1950-1954*, microfilm collection, telegram from 27 June 1950.

the Syrian state. Without a strong government to combat them, U.S. officials believed the opposition groups in Syria were free to increase their activities. In August, the U.S. legation in Damascus cabled Washington that left-wing groups had swept the elections amongst the Armenian community. The twelve-man community council that governed the affairs of the Armenian population in Damascus was now comprised entirely of socialist sympathizers. One such individual was known to frequent the Soviet legation and was formerly the head of the Armenian immigration board in Damascus. The legation reported that of the 800 Armenian families in Damascus, 600 were "leftists."[368]

Amongst the Kurds, the C.I.A. described an unprecedented outbreak of anti-Americanism.[369] The most intensive communist propaganda campaigns were administered in the North of Syria.[370] A source informed the agency that an agreement between the Soviet Union and the Kurds now existed that designated the area that would make up the future Kurdish state. Furthermore, the C.I.A. was informed that the first move made by the Soviets in the Middle East would be through the Kurds.[371] The Soviet

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[368] U.S. Consulate in Damascus to Washington, *Confidential U.S. State Department Central Files, Syria: Internal Affairs and Foreign Affairs, 1950-1954*, microfilm collection, telegram from 22 August 1950.

[369] The C.I.A. Records Search Tool, C.I.A. Intelligence Report, *Communist Activities,* CIA-RDP82-00457R005600560009-4, Washington D.C., 1 September 1950, https://www.cia.gov/library/readingroom/document/cia-rdp82-00457r005600560009-4, (accessed 9 June 2019).

[370] U.S. Consulate in Damascus to Washington, *Confidential U.S. State Department Central Files, Syria: Internal Affairs and Foreign Affairs, 1950-1954*, microfilm collection, telegram from 31 December 1950.

[371] The C.I.A. Records Search Tool, *C.I.A. Intelligence Report, Kurdish Activity in the Middle East*, CIA-RDP82-00457R005600590003-7, Washington D.C. 1 September 1950,

Union had long pushed for an independent Kurdish state as part of their general policy to destabilize the Middle East. Therefore, by 1950, the Kurds were already well organized for sabotage and rebellion. However, the Kurds were now receiving considerable arms and ammunition through secret Russian channels and they were also being trained at Nakhichevan in the Soviet Union. Clandestine radio stations broadcast from the U.S.S.R. urged the Kurds to militant action. Russian go-betweens visited Kurdish tribes in Syria, Iran, and Iraq without difficulty. And, Mullah Mustafa Barzani, a Kurdish leader from Iraq, had assembled 500 – 700 Kurds near the Syrian/Iraqi border after visiting Moscow and Beirut. In Beirut, he met with several Kurdish Syrian army officers.[372]

In September, the U.S. legation met with the Kurdish delegates to Parliament to assess the situation. They affirmed to American officials that the Soviet Union was exploiting Kurdish nationalist aspirations by cultivating a revolutionary movement. They claimed that a Russian backed revolution could occur within two years. It would take place in the mountain regions of Kurdistan with the aim to spread to the region's oil fields. They estimated that 10,000 Kurds were in Soviet Armenia undergoing training and given the geographical terrain, it would be relatively easy for them to cross back into Syria. Furthermore, the Kurdish delegation informed U.S. officials that although they

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https://www.cia.gov/library/readingroom/document/cia-rdp82-00457r005600590003-7, (accessed 9 June 2019).

[372] The C.I.A. Records Search Tool, *Summary of Trends and Developments*, CIA-RDP79-01090A000300020006-1, Washington D.C., 5 September 1950, https://www.cia.gov/library/readingroom/document/cia-rdp79-01090a000300020006-1, (accessed 9 June 2019).

preferred to work with America, they too, in ever greater numbers, were finding it appealing to work with the Soviet Union.[373]

Indeed, by November, U.S. officials recognized that communist organizations in Syria had increased in size, numbers, membership, audacity, activity, and effect. One of the most successful and prominent new groups was the Partisans of Peace. The U.S. legation reported that this organization had successfully built an efficient collection of communists and dependable sympathizers. There was a hardcore nucleus to the group that was successfully recruiting, carrying out operations, and administering propaganda. Members often met with the Soviet legation to discuss ways to assist each other's programs in Syria.[374] At the end of 1950, the U.S. legation in Damascus informed the Department of State that, given the developments of the last 18 months, a complete review of communist activity in the region needed to go into effect. Especially since the outbreak of the Korean War, a huge increase in overt and covert socialist operations was observed. The Syrian Communist Party, estimated to have close to 20,000 members, was successfully printing and distributing articles, petitions, and various other publications on a daily and weekly basis. As well, they held regular demonstrations that noticeably

[373] U.S. Consulate in Damascus to Washington, *Confidential U.S. State Department Central Files, Syria: Internal Affairs and Foreign Affairs, 1950-1954*, microfilm collection, telegram from 11 September 1950.

[374] U.S. Consulate in Damascus to Washington, *Confidential U.S. State Department Central Files, Syria: Internal Affairs and Foreign Affairs, 1950-1954*, microfilm collection, telegram, 15 November 1950.

increased in numbers since the beginning of the year, especially in northern Syria and Latakia.[375]

Nevertheless, by September, a new constitution was in effect and a new parliament elected in Syria. Hashim al-Atasi was chosen as President.[376] The head of the American legation in Syria informed the Secretary of State that the current government appeared on solid ground. The army was still a potential problem but Shishakli maintained discipline over it for now.[377] However, on 12 October, 4 men attempted to assassinate Shishakli while he was driving in his car. Two Egyptians, one Iraqi, and one Palestinian refugee were captured and openly admitted to the crime. They also admitted to a series of terrorist attacks, including the bombing of the U.S. legation and the bombing of the Jewish quarter of Damascus.[378] As their trial unfolded, these individuals revealed the existence of the "Arab Suicide Battalion," a secret organization tasked with carrying out assassinations and terrorist attacks. Along with the assaults on the U.S. legation and the Jewish quarter, its members carried out the shooting on Lt. Colonel Sterling, an attack on a Jewish synagogue, the bombing of the Alliance School in Beirut,

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[375] U.S. Consulate in Damascus to Washington, *Confidential U.S. State Department Central Files, Syria: Internal Affairs and Foreign Affairs, 1950-1954*, microfilm collection, telegram from 31 December 1950.

[376] U.S. Consulate in Damascus to Washington, *Confidential U.S. State Department Central Files, Syria: Internal Affairs and Foreign Affairs, 1950-1954*, microfilm collection, telegram from 1 September 1950.

[377] U.S. Department of State, *Foreign Relations of the United States 1950: Volume V The Near East, South Asia, and Africa*, 1215-1217.

[378] U.S. Consulate in Damascus to Washington, *Confidential U.S. State Department Central Files, Syria: Internal Affairs and Foreign Affairs, 1950-1954*, microfilm collection, telegram from 27 October 1950.

and the bombing of the U.N.R.W.A. building. Ultimately, 23 people were charged. The 4 individuals that attempted to assassinate Shishakli were executed.[379]

The situation in Syria was critical. By 1951, rising instability led many U.S. officials to deem Syria the most troubling country in the Middle East. American policymakers reported that the Syrian government was helpless to do anything about the continued security threats in the country. Communists regularly organized demonstrations that were becoming a powerful force in opposition to the government.[380] On 6 February, student protests got so out of hand that the government was forced to suspend classes. Numerous injuries were reported amongst the police, students, and bystanders.[381] In mid-February, the government was again forced to close schools when student demonstrations again got out of hand.[382] The press too appeared to be turning

[379] U.S. Consulate in Damascus to Washington, *Confidential U.S. State Department Central Files, Syria: Internal Affairs and Foreign Affairs, 1950-1954*, microfilm collection, telegram from 13 November 1950; U.S. Consulate in Damascus to Washington, *Confidential U.S. State Department Central Files, Syria: Internal Affairs and Foreign Affairs, 1950-1954*, microfilm collection, telegram from 26 March 1951.

[380] U.S. Consulate in Damascus to Washington, *Confidential U.S. State Department Central Files, Syria: Internal Affairs and Foreign Affairs, 1950-1954*, microfilm collection, telegram from 7 February 1951; U.S. Consulate in Damascus to Washington, *Confidential U.S. State Department Central Files, Syria: Internal Affairs and Foreign Affairs, 1950-1954*, microfilm collection, telegram from 15 February 1951.

[381] U.S. Consulate in Damascus to Washington, *Confidential U.S. State Department Central Files, Syria: Internal Affairs and Foreign Affairs, 1950-1954*, microfilm collection, telegram from 7 February 1951.

[382] U.S. Consulate in Damascus to Washington, *Confidential U.S. State Department Central Files, Syria: Internal Affairs and Foreign Affairs, 1950-1954*, microfilm collection, telegram from 15 February 1951.

against the United States, as anti-American publications appeared regularly on newsstands throughout the summer and into the fall of 1951.[383]

U.S. policymakers were desperate to alter developments in Syria. Things were going from bad to worse and Washington believed the current Syrian government incapable of altering the country's circumstances. In the cities, the Muslim Brotherhood and communist organizations were successfully exploiting the government's weakness. In Syria's northern frontiers, the Kurds were an ever-present menace that threatened to disrupt the entire nation-state system of the Middle East. And both the activities of the Armenians and Palestine's refugees continued to be an evolving security problem with multiple avenues for Soviet manipulation.

4.6 Dictatorship and Direction

At the end of November 1951, Shishakli seized power once again. The coup was carried out with no disturbances, violence, or loss of life by a few junior officers under Shishakli's personal command. Over the following days, the constitution was set aside and the president, and his cabinet, were relieved of their duties. Shishakli was then

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[383] U.S. Consulate in Damascus to Washington, *Confidential U.S. State Department Central Files, Syria: Internal Affairs and Foreign Affairs, 1950-1954*, microfilm collection, telegram from 12 February 1951; U.S. Consulate in Damascus to Washington, *Confidential U.S. State Department Central Files, Syria: Internal Affairs and Foreign Affairs, 1950-1954*, microfilm collection, telegram from 13 August 1951; U.S. Consulate in Damascus to Washington, *Confidential U.S. State Department Central Files, Syria: Internal Affairs and Foreign Affairs, 1950-1954*, microfilm collection, telegram from 5 October 1951; U.S. Consulate in Damascus to Washington, *Confidential U.S. State Department Central Files, Syria: Internal Affairs and Foreign Affairs, 1950-1954*, microfilm collection, telegram from 28 November 1951.

appointed head of state before he dissolved parliament.[384] Nevertheless, U.S. officials were hopeful with Shishakli's return. A strong government under his command could bring order to the instability that plagued Syria. Moreover, Shishakli was friendly to the West and the United States. Soon after seizing power, he informed the U.S. legation that he was willing to join the Middle East Command, even if Egypt did not.[385] Suddenly, with the return of Shishakli, there were new opportunities for Washington to advance U.S. interests in Syria. Through him stability and security might finally be achieved.

First and foremost, American officials needed to address Syria's repeated request for arms. Washington deemed the fulfillment of these requests vital to solidifying American interests in the country. Having failed to fulfill similar needs previously was believed by U.S. policymakers to be a primary reason for Zaim's downfall.[386] By the end of December, the State Department and the Department of Defense, with endorsement

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[384] U.S. Department of State, *Foreign Relations of the United States 1951: Volume V The Near East, South Asia, and Africa*, 1084-1085; U.S. Consulate in Damascus to Washington, *Confidential U.S. State Department Central Files, Syria: Internal Affairs and Foreign Affairs, 1950-1954*, microfilm collection, telegram from 3 December 1951.

[385] U.S. Department of State, *Foreign Relations of the United States 1951: Volume V The Near East, South Asia, and Africa*, 1087.

[386] U.S. Consulates in Ankara, London, Paris to Washington, *Confidential U.S. State Department Central Files, Syria: Internal Affairs and Foreign Affairs, 1950-1954*, microfilm collection, telegrams from 6 December 1951.

from the Joint Chiefs of Staff, approved moving forward with military aid to Syria.[387] However, not all in Syria were open to such developments.

In early January 1952, the anti-American news organ, *Al-Hurriyat*, printed several articles with titles such as, "Joint Defense Means Slavery and Extermination." It argued, "[M.E.C.] is the pretext of defending the Middle East from an imaginary enemy, whereas their [the U.S. government] true intention is to abolish the independence of the countries of this part of the world and make them become a center for their military bases, their airfields, and a bridge to exterminate the people of these countries in the coming conflict.[388]" The same month, the Muslim Brotherhood organized protests and demonstrations against the new government. On 16 January students throughout the country went on strike in opposition to Shishakli's return.[389] On 18 January, students at the University of Damascus and members of the Muslim Brotherhood clashed with police as security forces attempted to restrain them. Several were injured on both sides and 150 protestors were arrested.[390] On 19 January, protesting students in Aleppo fought with police officers and several students were killed, classes were suspended for one week.[391]

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[387] U.S. Department of State, *Foreign Relations of the United States 1951: Volume V The Near East, South Asia, and Africa*, 1095-1096.

[388] "Joint Defense Means Slavery and Extermination," *Al-Hurriyat*, 10 January 1952.

[389] U.S. Consulate in Damascus to Washington, *Confidential U.S. State Department Central Files, Syria: Internal Affairs and Foreign Affairs, 1950-1954*, microfilm collection, telegram from 18 January 1952.

[390] U.S. Consulate in Damascus to Washington, *Confidential U.S. State Department Central Files, Syria: Internal Affairs and Foreign Affairs, 1950-1954*, microfilm collection, telegram from 18 January 1952.

[391] U.S. Consulate in Damascus to Washington, *Confidential U.S. State Department Central Files, Syria: Internal Affairs and Foreign Affairs, 1950-1954*, microfilm collection, telegram from 22 January 1952.

Shishakli's use of force against the protesters was an encouraging sign to U.S. officials.[392] This trend continued as Shishakli began to systematically suppress the Muslim Brotherhood. He started by arresting the organization's entire leadership. Then limits on religion in the public were put in place through "legislative decree" followed by a ban on the Brotherhood's newsletter in Syria. The U.S. legation in Damascus cabled Washington that future relations with Syria looked hopeful, as the elimination of the Muslim Brotherhood from public life was the last major organized resistance to the new government in the cities.[393]

Shishakli worked closely with the Syrian Social Nationalist Party (S.S.N.P.) and the Arab Socialist Al-Ba'ath Party. The S.S.N.P. had formed in 1932 in opposition to French rule. It aimed to unite Syria with Jordan and Iraq to create a unified state spanning the Fertile Crescent. Since Syrian independence, the S.S.N.P. grew to have considerable influence. The Ba'ath Party was led by former Minister of Defense Akram Hawrani who helped form the organization in 1947. Since then, it had developed into a radical pan-Arab organization with active branches in several countries. It believed fundamental socio-economic reform was needed in Syria. Hawrani participated in all three of the coups and had a strong influence in the army.[394] By Shishakli's return, the Ba'ath party was a potent force. Allying with the S.S.N.P. and the Ba'ath gave Shishakli

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[392] Ibid.

[393] U.S. Consulate in Damascus to Washington, *Confidential U.S. State Department Central Files, Syria: Internal Affairs and Foreign Affairs, 1950-1954*, microfilm collection, telegram from 18 January 1952.

[394] U.S. Consulate in Damascus to Washington, *Confidential U.S. State Department Central Files, Syria: Internal Affairs and Foreign Affairs, 1950-1954*, microfilm collection, telegram from 11 September 1950.

firm control over Syria. However, the Ba'ath and the S.S.N.P. were often at direct odds with each other, when they weren't at direct odds with the government. It was a shaky alliance. However, while it held, stability seemed possible in Syria for Washington.

In April, the U.S. legation reported that Shishakli aimed to dissolve the country's remaining political parties and he planned to create both a pro-government party and an "opposition" party, with both being controlled by the army.[395] A few days later, Shishakli abolished Syria's political parties and outlawed the dissemination of "harmful propaganda." These decrees gave Shishakli total control over public information. American officials cabled Washington that they hoped such trends would continue, as some semblance of stability was finally emerging in Syria.[396]

By July, however, Shishakli had failed to mobilize a single, pro-government party. U.S. policymakers confirmed that although he was still in control of Syria, Shishakli was losing popularity.[397] In September, the U.S. legation met with him. Shishakli informed the American legation that Palestine was still the major issue negatively affecting his country. Most Arabs blamed the United States solely for the creation of Israel. Shishakli informed the legation that although he wanted to align Syria with the United States and hoped to model Syria after the Western nations, the refugee

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[395] U.S. Consulate in Damascus to Washington, *Confidential U.S. State Department Central Files, Syria: Internal Affairs and Foreign Affairs, 1950-1954*, microfilm collection, telegram from 1 April 1952.

[396] U.S. Consulate in Damascus to Washington, *Confidential U.S. State Department Central Files, Syria: Internal Affairs and Foreign Affairs, 1950-1954*, microfilm collection, telegram from 8 April 1952.

[397] U.S. Consulate in Damascus to Washington, *Confidential U.S. State Department Central Files, Syria: Internal Affairs and Foreign Affairs, 1950-1954*, microfilm collection, telegram from 11 July 1952.

crisis made any public arrangements with the West, and particularly the United States, nearly impossible.[398]

Throughout August, newspaper articles in Syria attacked Israel's attempts to make peace with the Arab states. *Al-Nasr*, wrote, "Israel has not proved that it adds to the stability of the Middle East, it is a cancer that needs to be amputated from the region.[399]" Similarly, *Al-Insha*, declared, "Israel dares to ask for peace when the victims of its crimes are still scattered in the camps and desserts, and when its aggressions on the Arab frontiers continue day and night.[400]" U.S. officials agreed with Shishakli that Syria's stability was linked to the Middle East's stability generally. Unfortunately, the Middle East's stability was dictated by the Palestine issue. Therefore, American policymakers pushed for immediate assistance to both the Palestinians and the host countries. Through state-building programs and proper compensation, U.S. officials believed resettlement of refugees in Syria could work.[401]

In January 1953, the U.S. legation in Syria informed Washington that Shishakli continued to consolidate his strength. Although he alienated many influential political figures in the country, including Akram Hawrani, whom he exiled, along with other

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[398] U.S. Department of State, Department of State Publication 9447, Office of the Historian, Bureau of Public Affairs, *Foreign Relations of the United States 1952 – 1954: Volume IX The Near East and Middle East* (in two parts) Part 1 (United States Government Printing Office, Washington, 1986), 1009-1011.

[399] *Al-Nasr*, 22 August 1952.

[400] *Al-Insha*, 21 August 1952.

[401] U.S. State Department, *Confidential U.S. State Department Central Files, Syria: Internal Affairs and Foreign Affairs, 1950-1954*, microfilm collection, State Department memorandum from 15 November 1952.

opposition leaders at the beginning of the year, his control over the army and his policies imposing the maximum penalty for spreading "harmful propaganda" left his regime well established.[402] In May, Shishakli announced that a new constitution was imminent and elections for Parliament would be held in the fall. Although token gestures, American officials believed such action would help stabilize Syria by giving the government an air of legitimacy. Furthermore, Shishakli informed American officials that he might be willing to make substantive concessions to Israel and join M.E.D.O. in return for military and economic aid.[403] In June, Washington laid out ambitious economic plans for Syria. Water development and transportation projects would be the centerpiece to a modernization program for Syria similar to the Tennessee Valley Authority. U.S. officials believed this program would bring Syria both stability and security.[404]

However, when parliamentary elections were held on 9 October, rather than legitimizing Shishakli's regime, they enabled renewed opposition to his government. As the elections approached, overt communist activity increased and rallies were held by

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[402] U.S. Consulate in Damascus to Washington, *Confidential U.S. State Department Central Files, Syria: Internal Affairs and Foreign Affairs, 1950-1954*, microfilm collection, telegram from 6 January 1953; U.S. Consulate in Damascus to Washington, *Confidential U.S. State Department Central Files, Syria: Internal Affairs and Foreign Affairs, 1950-1954*, microfilm collection, telegram from 20 March 1953; U.S. Department of State, *Foreign Relations of the United States 1952 – 1954: Volume IX The Near East and Middle East* (in two parts) Part 1, pg 1204-1209.

[403] U.S. Department of State, *Foreign Relations of the United States 1952 – 1954: Volume IX The Near East and Middle East* (in two parts) Part 1,1204-1209

[404] U.S. Consulate in Damascus to Washington, *Confidential U.S. State Department Central Files, Syria: Internal Affairs and Foreign Affairs, 1950-1954*, microfilm collection, telegram from 24 June 1953.

communists throughout the country.[405] On the day of the election, the public was apathetic. Less than 10% of the population voted.[406] Syrian newspapers alleged U.S. interference in the elections, leading to further questions of the regime's legitimacy.[407] At the end of the month, mounting pressure on Shishakli forced him to allow Hawrani and other opposition leaders to return to Syria.[408]

Although Shishakli was still in control of the government, significant resistance to his rule was present by the end of 1953. In December, the headquarters of the Arab Liberation Movement, Shishakli's newly established pro-government party, was bombed.[409] The U.S. legation reported that both the Syrian Communist Party and the Muslim Brotherhood maintained effective underground operations and it was likely one, or both, of them carried out the attack.[410] Both groups continued to spread propaganda clandestinely and regularly released political tracts attacking Shishakli's rule. Such

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[405] U.S. Consulate in Damascus to Washington, *Confidential U.S. State Department Central Files, Syria: Internal Affairs and Foreign Affairs, 1950-1954*, microfilm collection, telegram from 7 October 1953.

[406] U.S. Consulate in Damascus to Washington, *Confidential U.S. State Department Central Files, Syria: Internal Affairs and Foreign Affairs, 1950-1954*, microfilm collection, telegram from 12 October 1953.

[407] U.S. Consulate in Damascus to Washington, *Confidential U.S. State Department Central Files, Syria: Internal Affairs and Foreign Affairs, 1950-1954*, microfilm collection, telegram from 9 October 1953.

[408] U.S. Consulate in Damascus to Washington, *Confidential U.S. State Department Central Files, Syria: Internal Affairs and Foreign Affairs, 1950-1954*, microfilm collection, telegram from 29 October 1953.

[409] U.S. Consulate in Damascus to Washington, *Confidential U.S. State Department Central Files, Syria: Internal Affairs and Foreign Affairs, 1950-1954*, microfilm collection, telegram from 16 December 1952.

[410] U.S. Consulate in Damascus to Washington, *Confidential U.S. State Department Central Files, Syria: Internal Affairs and Foreign Affairs, 1950-1954*, microfilm collection, telegram from 16 October 1952.

pamphlets were successfully distributed to the public and argued for an end to Syria's military dictatorship and its alliance with American imperialists.[411] The U.S. legation believed it only a matter of time before the Muslim Brotherhood resumed overt activity.[412]

At the end of the year, protests erupted in Syria. On 29 November, students at Damascus University held public demonstrations against the government.[413] A few days later, high school students in downtown Damascus went on strike.[414] Then, widespread anti-government and anti-American protests broke out across the country. The U.S. legation reported that the size and intensity of the marches had not been seen in Syria for several years. The police were forced to use tear gas on the crowds and when that didn't work shots were fired. Several people were seriously injured. Education centers were forced to shut down and roving gangs of students made sure that schools remained closed, even those that tried to reopen.[415] Demonstrations, protests, and strikes continued

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[411] U.S. Consulate in Damascus to Washington, *Confidential U.S. State Department Central Files, Syria: Internal Affairs and Foreign Affairs, 1950-1954*, microfilm collection, telegram from 16 October 1952.

[412] U.S. Consulate in Damascus to Washington, *Confidential U.S. State Department Central Files, Syria: Internal Affairs and Foreign Affairs, 1950-1954*, microfilm collection, telegram from 13 October 1953.

[413] U.S. Consulate in Damascus to Washington, *Confidential U.S. State Department Central Files, Syria: Internal Affairs and Foreign Affairs, 1950-1954*, microfilm collection, telegram from 10 December 1953.

[414] Ibid.

[415] U.S. Consulate in Damascus to Washington, *Confidential U.S. State Department Central Files, Syria: Internal Affairs and Foreign Affairs, 1950-1954*, microfilm collection, telegram from 12 December 1953; U.S. Consulate in Damascus to Washington, *Confidential U.S. State Department Central Files, Syria: Internal Affairs and Foreign Affairs, 1950-1954*, microfilm collection, telegram from 15 December 1953.

into the new year. One protest got so out of hand that the army was called in and two students were killed.[416] On 4 January, classes recommenced but a week later they were again canceled, this time for an indefinite period, when protests again erupted throughout the country.[417]

On 29 January, Shishakli imposed martial law in an attempt to restore order.[418] He also arrested many of the oppositions' leaders, including Hawrani, but in the mind of the public this action further weakened Shishakli's legimitacy.[419] The regime's repressive policies had alienated almost all of society. By the end of February 1954,

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[416] U.S. Consulate in Damascus to Washington, *Confidential U.S. State Department Central Files, Syria: Internal Affairs and Foreign Affairs, 1950-1954*, microfilm collection, telegram from 22 December 1953.

[417] U.S. Consulate in Damascus to Washington, *Confidential U.S. State Department Central Files, Syria: Internal Affairs and Foreign Affairs, 1950-1954*, microfilm collection, telegram from 14 January 1954; U.S. Consulate in Damascus to Washington, *Confidential U.S. State Department Central Files, Syria: Internal Affairs and Foreign Affairs, 1950-1954*, microfilm collection, telegram from 15 January 1954; U.S. Consulate in Damascus to Washington, *Confidential U.S. State Department Central Files, Syria: Internal Affairs and Foreign Affairs, 1950-1954*, microfilm collection, telegram from 27 January 1954.

[418] U.S. Consulate in Damascus to Washington, *Confidential U.S. State Department Central Files, Syria: Internal Affairs and Foreign Affairs, 1950-1954*, microfilm collection, telegram from 29 January 1954.

[419] U.S. Consulate in Damascus to Washington, *Confidential U.S. State Department Central Files, Syria: Internal Affairs and Foreign Affairs, 1950-1954*, microfilm collection, telegram from 27 January 1954; U.S. Consulate in Damascus to Washington, *Confidential U.S. State Department Central Files, Syria: Internal Affairs and Foreign Affairs, 1950-1954*, microfilm collection, telegram from 8 February 1954; U.S. Consulate in Damascus to Washington, *Confidential U.S. State Department Central Files, Syria: Internal Affairs and Foreign Affairs, 1950-1954*, microfilm collection, telegram from 8 February 1954.

Shishakli lost support from the army.[420] When it was clear Shishakli no longer held sway over the armed forces, the National Pact revealed itself. It was an organization comprised of 143 prominent Syrian politicians that secretly formed in 1953 to overthrow Shishakli.[421] Through their organization and leadership, anti-regime forces were able to quickly defeat the few remaining army units loyal to Shishakli. On 25 February 1954, Shishakli resigned and fled to Lebanon.

From 1949 – 1954, Syria had six different regimes. With Shishakli's resignation, this period finally came to a close. Shukri al-Quwatly returned as Syria's President and he attempted to restore democracy in Syria. However, in 1954, another powerful force was rising in the Middle East. In Egypt, Gamal Abdel Nasser was consolidating his own rule. Over the next few years, Nasser rose to prominence not just in the Middle East but internationally as he became a hero to anti-colonial peoples throughout the Third World. After the Suez Crisis, his influence was so powerful he was able to unite Egypt and Syria to create the United Arab Republic in 1958. But this union was short lived. In 1961, Syria withdrew from the coalition. Over the next 18 months, a series of coups in Syria led to instability similar to that of 1949 – 1954. However, in March 1963, the Ba'ath party seized power. It consolidated control over Syria and created a national government that finally lasted.

4.7 Conclusion

[420] U.S. Consulate in Damascus to Washington, *Confidential U.S. State Department Central Files, Syria: Internal Affairs and Foreign Affairs, 1950-1954*, microfilm collection, telegram from 25 February 1954.

[421] U.S. Consulate in Damascus to Washington, *Confidential U.S. State Department Central Files, Syria: Internal Affairs and Foreign Affairs, 1950-1954*, microfilm collection, telegram from 26 February 1954.

American strategy in Syria was confounded by non-state actors such as the Armenians, the Kurds, the Muslim Brotherhood, and Palestine's refugees. The Armenians and the Kurds threatened not only the sovereignty of Syria but the whole nation-system of the Middle East. Both groups wanted independent nations of their own. However, creating Kurdistan or an autonomous Armenia meant carving up the borders of Syria, Turkey, Iraq, and Iran – an unthinkable plan to U.S. officials. Furthermore, in Syria, the Muslim Brotherhood was extremely active. The organization had strong support from the country's urban populations and it effectively carried out violent guerilla operations against the state. As it did in Egypt, the Brotherhood in Syria greatly undermined the government's ability to work with the United States. Similarly, the emergence of the Palestinian refugee crisis profoundly complicated the U.S. government's strategy in Syria, as it did elsewhere. Not only did the refugees become rallying points for anti-colonial nationalists in the country, they also became a fundamental dimension to U.S./Syrian relations. After 1948, nearly all negotiations between the two countries hinged, at least partially, on how the refugees would be aided. In sum, each of these groups undermined U.S. strategy in Syria and helped transform America's Cold War in the Middle East.

In many ways, Syria has some of the most striking examples of the post-colonial nation-state's limits. Not only were there significant portions of Syria's population that contested the secular nature of the nation-state, as seen with the popularity of the Muslim Brotherhood in Syria, there were also two separate ethnic populations – the Armenians and the Kurds – that contested the Syrian state's right to rule over them. All three of these groups were minority nationalists. Each fought to remove European powers from

the region. However, each was also left out of the nation-state system that came into being after World War II. The Brotherhood fought against the development of secular states in Syria, Egypt, Jordan, and Palestine, while the Armenians and the Kurds challenged the sovereignty of Syria, Turkey, Iran, and Iraq in their attempts to create independent homelands. The transition from empire to nation-state left all three groups uniquely, and perhaps tragically, situated. Each struggled against not a single nation but, rather, against the entire nation-state system that governed the Middle East.

The plight of these groups demonstrates the limits of both post-colonial liberation and the post-colonial nation-state. Under empire, the Armenians and the Kurds fit within the imperial modes of power that administered the region. Yes, violence sometimes occurred for these groups, for example, the Armenian Genocide. However, incidents such as this were more the result of the messiness associated with the beginnings of the transition from empire to nation-state rather than with empire itself. For centuries, the Armenians and the Kurds lived peacefully under the Persian and Ottoman Empires. The nature of imperial systems necessitated the incorporation of unlike populations. On the other hand, the nature of the nation-state is to exclude dissimilar peoples, sometimes violently. Study of non-state actors such as the Armenians and the Kurds demonstrates empire's ability to accommodate difference while simultaneously highlighting the inability of the nation-state to do so.

CHAPTER 5. EPILOGUE: POSTCOLONIALISM AND THE LONG ROAD TO 9/11

5.1 Introduction

From 1945 – 1954, America's foreign policy was transformed by non-state actors of the Middle East. Groups such as the Muslim Brotherhood, Palestine's refugees, and Syria's ethnic minorities defined, and then often redefined, the strategies, alliances, and policies of the U.S. government and the regional governments of the Middle East. However, in this period, another important shift was occurring. From 1945 – 1956, the United States and the United Kingdom competed fiercely over the region's resources. After the Suez Crisis in 1956, the United States replaced the United Kingdom as the hegemonic power of the Middle East.[422] This transition did not escape the attention of anti-colonial nationalist groups such as the Brotherhood, the refugees, and the Kurds. These groups, and others like them, began to see the United States as a dangerous, new enemy in 1948 with the partition of Palestine. In the years directly after 1948, the U.S. government intervened in the politics of several countries, including Egypt, Syria, and Iran. Such intervention was interpreted by local populaces as blatant imperialism. By the mid-1950s, the United States was not only the lead power in the region, it was also the primary enemy of anti-colonial nationalists, a position previously reserved for the British and the French.

The U.S. government maintained a dominant presence in the Middle East and throughout the latter half of the 20th century Washington continued to intervene in the

[422] Peter Hahn, *The United States, Great Britain, & Egypt, 1945 – 1956*.

politics of the region. In response, anti-colonial nationalists continued to interpret U.S. action as imperialism. Aversion to the United States grew with Washington's continued presence in the area. This process culminated on 11 September 2001 with al-Qaeda's attack on the Twin Towers. However, the long road to 9/11 was a non-linear and complicated process.

Four primary developments represent the origins of the Twin Tower attack – British colonialism in 19th century South Asia, the partition of Palestine, the rise of U.S. hegemony in the Middle East, and the Soviet-Afghan War. Each played a fundamental role in how and why the assault on the Twin Towers occurred. The Islamic platforms used by al-Qaeda and the Taliban were first used by groups in Southwest Asia to combat British colonialism in the 19th century. Groups from the 19th century influenced how individuals and organizations' in the 20th century used Islam in relation to anti-colonial nationalism. For example, in the 1930s and 1940s, the Muslim Brotherhood developed a form of Islamic anti-colonial nationalism very similar to that of their predecessors in Southwest Asia. However, the Brotherhood was the first to use this platform against the United States. In the 1950s, America replaced the United Kingdom as the hegemonic power in the Middle East. However, this shift was also the starting point for anti-Americanism in the region. The partition of Palestine played a significant role in this shift. After the 1950s, U.S. hegemony in the region grew and so too did the use of Islamic, anti-colonial nationalism against it. In the 1980s and 1990s, individuals and groups in Afghanistan borrowed heavily from the beliefs of organizations such as the Brotherhood. These ideologies were then used to recruit from vulnerable populations,

especially refugee populations, to assist in the creation of what became al-Qaeda and the Taliban in the 1990s.

Groups such as al-Qaeda and the Taliban, and the Muslim Brotherhood before them, are an expression of modernity. They represent the quest to maintain a culturally authentic society in the face of overwhelming force. Modernity has largely unfolded within the context of Western cultural customs such as liberalism, capitalism, socialism, secularism, etc. – ideas originally foreign to native societies in the Middle East and South Asia. Furthermore, colonialism and violent Western intervention were often the means by which modernity was imposed on these regions. Radical, anti-colonial nationalists see violence as the only way to safeguard their societies from foreign intrusions. Global processes, such as colonialism or the Cold War, intersecting with local issues, such as decolonization or the preservation of local tradition, created a crisis in culture for these groups. Al-Qaeda and the Taliban see violence as the only way to protect their people and way of life from an enemy perceived to have limitless resources. For them, and others like them, local peoples suffered violent colonial domination for centuries. Only through the use of their own violence can they restore a lost, "pure" form of Islamic society.

The partition of Palestine is a fundamental dimension to the ideologies of these groups. Palestine is often cited as the most glaring example of Western intrusion into the Middle East in the 20th century. Not only were the West's cultural traditions replacing local customs, violent colonialism was also ripping the region apart to build Western backed nation-states. Anti-colonial nationalists point to Palestine as a blatant demonstration of the unjust power the West has used, and will continue to use, in the

region. The plight of the Palestinians is at the heart of Middle Eastern apprehension with America today. In 1948, widespread and long-lasting trepidation with the U.S. government took root.

Nevertheless, al-Qaeda, the Taliban, and other similar groups are not new. They fall in line with the Islamic, anti-colonial nationalist traditions of Southwest Asia that began in the 19th century. Organizations have been using Islam as the basis for anti-colonial nationalism long before the Muslim Brotherhood. In the Middle east, these movements developed largely as a result of the messiness associated with the transition from empire to nation-state. The secular nature of the nation-state left religious groups outside the new system. However, groups such as the Kurds were also struggling against the nation-state, albeit for different reasons. The Kurds were completely left out of the region's new modes of power as their homeland was divided up between Turkey, Iraq, Iran, and Syria. The Kurdish populations in each of these nation-states faces different challenges. Such divisions make it all the more difficult for the Kurds to create an independent nation.

The Kurds are minority nationalists, as such their divided populations are pitted against the majority nationalism of several different countries. As populations contesting the sovereignty of different states, the Kurds represent a threat not only to the states that house them but also to any state that contains minority nationalist movements.[423] Few nations are willing to assist the Kurds for fear of similar assistance to minority nationalists within their own borders. Consequently, the United Nations has developed

[423] Lydia Walker, "Decolonization in the 1960s: On Legitimate and Illegitimate Nationalist Claims-Making," *Past and Present*, no. 242 (Feb. 2019).

policies of nonrecognition to groups deemed "secessionist." For example, in January 1970, the U.N. Secretary General, U Thant, responded to a reporter's question on the Congo:

> You will recall that the United Nations spent over $500 million on the Congo primarily to prevent the secession of Katanga from the Congo. So, as far as the question of secession of a particular section of a Member State is concerned, the United Nations' attitude is unequivocable […]. As an international organization, the United Nations has never accepted and does not accept and I do not believe it will ever accept the principle of secession of a part of its Member States.[424]

While the United Nations characterizes populations such as the Kurds, the Katangese, and many others as secessionists, these populations invoke the right of self-determination, a concept fundamental to the U.N. charter. As minority nationalists, the Kurds, and other groups, face challenges not just with the nation-state system but also with the international order that took form after World War II. Nevertheless, the Kurds have remained an important part of the geopolitical landscape of the Middle East. They have been both a threat and an ally to governments operating in the region and have greatly complicated the politics of the Middle East.

When empire gave way to the nation-state after World War II, many in the Middle East celebrated the end of imperial rule. However, the post-colonial nation-states that replaced the European mandates created new fissures in the region. The new system failed to address populations such as the Kurds who lost their homeland with Sykes-Picot. The failure to address their plight by both Western powers and international institutions such as the United Nations perpetuated the instability of the region after the

[424] Nadar Entessar, *Kurdish Politics in the Middle East*, Lanham, Maryland: Lexington Books, 2010, 222.

Second World War. Similarly, the Palestinians lost their homeland when the nation-state replaced empire. The refugee crisis that ensued from Palestine's partition set off regional and international repercussions that are still playing out today. Finally, the nation-state system failed to address the needs of religious populations. Indeed, the nation-state attempted to forcibly assimilate religious populations into secular society. Such coercion set the stage for the development of extreme violence, in the name of religion, in the decades to come.

5.2 U.S. Hegemony and Postcolonialism in the Middle East

In the eyes of certain populations, the United States became the primary imperial power in the Middle East after World War II. Thanks to the work of individuals and organizations in 19th century Southwest Asia, a well-established and culturally authentic model already existed for resisting U.S. policies. However, in 1945, Washington supported the rights of local peoples in the Middle East, rather than supporting the continuation of British colonialism, and most people in the region looked favorably on America.[425] This changed in 1948. Populations not just in the Middle East but throughout the Islamic World decried the partition of Palestine.

In the Middle East, a political shift occurred. After 1948, no Middle East regime could publicly work with the United States without risking significant civil unrest. Much of the regional populace blamed local governments as much as the U.S. government for the failure to aid Palestine. The state itself was a Western conception and anti-colonial groups argued that regional governments' failure to assist the Palestinians was part of the state's program to Westernize. The liberal, secular customs taking shape in countries

[425] As outlined in the previous chapters.

such as Egypt, Syria, and Iraq were leading their governments to turn their backs on the traditional culture of local populations. What's worse, the plight of the Palestinians continued well into the decades that followed 1948. Arrival at the camps was only the beginning for an overwhelming number of refugees. Most families were forced to remain in the camps and generations of Palestinians grew up in them. Their continued suffering ensured that anti-American attitudes lasted well into the future.

By the time of Palestine's partition, the Cold War was in full swing. The Middle East was especially important to U.S. officials in the global strategy formulated to combat the Soviet Union. However, Washington believed the region was dangerously vulnerable to communism. U.S. policymakers believed the instability that plagued the Middle East in the late 1940s and 1950s was both a symptom of Moscow's influence and an open door to further Soviet penetration. To counter such developments, Washington supported right-wing, authoritarian regimes, including dictatorships. These regimes, often with the consent and support of Washington, brutally suppressed any dissension from their citizens. American support to such cruel governments confirmed in the minds of the people that the United States was the new colonial power in the region. The partition of Palestine was a blatant act of American imperialism to regional populaces, U.S. support to oppressive regimes was simply more evidence of such action.

In the 1950s and 1960s regimes in Egypt, Syria, and Iraq began to adopt forms of government that borrowed heavily from the West. Leaders such as Nasser determined that the West's ability to influence the Developing World derived largely from modernity's technological innovations. However, some of modernity's cultural dimensions were also deemed necessary to bring regional nations up to speed with their

Western counterparts. In Egypt, Syria, and Iraq secular forms of society were implemented from the top down. It was hoped that such policies would help overcome archaic traditions and bring these countries into the modern world. Nevertheless, there was significant resistance from local populations, especially from conservative groups such as the Muslim Brotherhood.

Although in Egypt the Brotherhood was banned in 1954, it continued to function underground. The Brotherhood in Egypt, as well as the Brotherhood in Palestine, Syria, and Jordan, bitterly resisted the secular societies that developed in the 1960s. Groups such as the Brotherhood blamed their regional governments for the loss of local traditions, especially those revolving around Islam. To them, the state chose Western culture over native customs. By turning its back on Islam, the state was complicit with colonial powers. Therefore, throughout the 1960s and 1970s, organizations such as the Muslim Brotherhood used anti-colonial nationalism fused with Islam, as their predecessors in the 19th century did, to undermine the governments in Egypt, Syria, and Iraq.

In response, the state viciously repressed their activities. Thousands were imprisoned and tortured. However, thousands who had limited association with these groups, or no association at all, were also imprisoned and tortured. This radicalized many who previously had no issue with their government or the United States.[426] For example, in the 1960s, the Muslim Brotherhood printed in its newsletter, "thousands are in prison, many of whom die under torture—from electrical shock to severe beating. All

[426] Emmanuel Sivan, *Radical Islam: Medieval Theology and Modern Politics*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990.

suffer deliberate degradation. Those who do not die see their property sequestrated and are deprived of the right to legal defense."[427] Similarly, a prisoner in Egypt wrote:

> I am writing to you, from the fearful Bastille of Egypt, from that sinful military prison. The whole of Egypt is imprisoned….I was arrested despite my immunity as a judge, without an order of arrest….My sole crime being my critique of the non-application of the Shari'a….This is the scum which rules Egypt.[428]

The brutality of these regimes radicalized many who previously had no anti-government or anti-Western sentiments. For many of the individuals who joined violent groups in the 1980s, prison time and torture was often the crucial, formative experience. Not only did cruel imprisonment breed resentment, a desire for revenge, and alienation, to some, it also confirmed that the West had fully corrupted the state. The governments that were supposed to protect Islamic traditions were now violently attempting to replace them with Western culture.

The shared experience of illegal incarceration and torture created new networks of people who blamed the United States and the West for society's problems. New dimensions to anti-colonial nationalist platforms developed as a result. For example, in the 1960s, Sayyid Qutb, a Brotherhood member, developed his doctrine of *jahiliya* while imprisoned. Qutb was arrested in 1954 for plotting to assassinate Nasser. His work systematically attacked the secular governments of the region and blamed the West for the Islamic World's troubles. His theories became very popular and were an important

[427] Ibid, 44.

[428] Ibid, 43.

influence on the generation of anti-colonial nationalists that came to prominence in the 1970s and 1980s.

In the 1970s and 1980s, religious minority nationalists began to make significant gains in challenging the secular nation-state. Individuals such as Sayyid Qutb, Abul A'la Maududi, and Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini transformed Islam's role in society across the Middle East and South Asia.[429] Similarly to Qutb's theories, Maududi's writings inspired huge numbers in India and Pakistan. In 1941, Maududi founded the Jamaat-e-Islami, the largest Islamic organization in South Asia. After the partition of India in 1947, he and his followers promoted the use of Islam as the basis for society and government. By the 1970s, religion was firmly entrenched in Pakistani politics. Furthermore, in 1979, the Iranian revolution redefined the nation-state when an Islamic regime, led by Ayatollah Khomeini, came to power. The establishment of an Islamic state in Iran challenged the secularism in countries such as Egypt, Iraq, Syria, and others. A religious regime in Iran or Pakistan meant it was possible for similar developments to occur in other countries. The creation of religious states provided Islamic anti-colonial nationalists with strong political capital that they used to challenge secular governments throughout the Middle East.

Nevertheless, not all groups contesting the nation-state system of the Middle East were focused on religion. The Kurds were split between Iran, Iraq, and Turkey. Each population faced unique challenges but each population faced similar, unequal center-

[429] Gilles Kepel, *Jihad: The Trail of Political Islam*, Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2002, Introduction.

periphery relations.[430] In Iran, the uneven modernization of the pre-1979 government left the Kurds in impoverished economic zones controlled by the political machinery of Tehran. The class structures that developed in these zones created dependency relations that kept the Kurds vulnerable to economic policies of the government. In Iraq, the Kurds had strong representation in Iraqi society in the 1960s and early 1970s. They shared the same economic and political rights of Arab citizens and Kurdish cultural institutions were promoted by the government. However, after 1975, with the Algiers Agreement between Iraq and Iran, the Iraqi government reimposed its hegemony over Kurdish affairs. Programs of Arabization increased, as did government policies aimed at eliminating Kurdish cultural practices from the public sphere. In Turkey, the Kurds have been subject to officially sanctioned government discrimination and neglect for a long time. The nation-state of Turkey has focused on creating a single Turkish identity within its borders. The Turkish state has reacted violently to any ethnic groups that challenge this notion. Kurdish demands for self-determination are viewed as tantamount to treason by nationalist Turks. Because of the severe discrimination against them, the Kurds in Turkey often have a more uncompromising platform than their counterparts in Iran or Iraq. Turkish Kurds often argue that nothing less than the creation of an independent Kurdish state will suffice. While Kurds in Iran and Iraq, although open to an independent homeland, also argue for autonomy within their current borders.[431]

The Kurds, as with religious minority nationalists, highlight the limits of the postcolonial nation-state. When the nation-state system replaced empire in the Middle

[430] Entessar, *Kurdish Politics in the Middle East*.

[431] Ibid.

East, it also replaced empire's politics of difference with a structure that aimed at homogenization. The multiethnic empires of the Middle East, such as the Ottoman and Persian Empires, were characterized by conditions of diversity with unity. However, the nation-state attempts to suppress difference, often through violence. Only after the nation-state was imposed on the region did ethnic and religious conflict erupt on the scale seen in contemporary times. In the 1980s and 1990s, some religious groups placed an especially important emphasis on violence and terror as means to challenge the new modes of power.

5.3 The Soviet-Afghan War

In 1979, the Soviet Union invaded Afghanistan. A call to help defend the country went out to all Muslims. Many who had been imprisoned in Egypt, Syria, and/or Iraq took up the call and joined the Afghan guerrilla fighters the Mujahadeen. For those that journeyed to Afghanistan, the Soviet Union was yet another foreign power attempting to invade the Islamic World. By fighting the Soviets, individuals and groups could actively defend local Muslim populaces without having to struggle against the repressive governments of their home countries. In Afghanistan, a disproportionate amount of aid sent to the Mujahadeen from countries such as Pakistan, the United States, and Saudi Arabia went to the most radical groups operating in the country.[432] Such aid helped drive the Soviet Union out of the country by 1989. However, it also helped create deep divides that led to civil conflict in the 1990s. After the Soviets withdrew, the United States and other countries withdrew their aid. Afghanistan descended into civil war and, by most

[432] Andrew Hartman, "'The red template': US policy in Soviet-occupied Afghanistan," *Third World Quarterly*, Vol. 23, No. 3, 2002.

accounts, the Afghan civil war was far more destructive than the war with the Soviets. Ultimately, the Taliban emerged victorious and gained control of most of the country in 1996.

Throughout the Soviet/Afghan War and the Afghan Civil War, refugees poured into neighboring countries. Pakistan hosted over 3 million Afghan refugees during the 1980s. Most refugees were forced to settle in awful, makeshift camps in Pakistan's Northwest Frontier Province. As with the Palestinian refugee camps, the camps along the Afghan/Pakistan border are still there today and are still inhabited by refugees. Entire generations have grown up in these camps. The long-term displacement of Afghan refugees, continued civil war, power politics, and lack of cultural structures within the camps contributed to the emergence of the Taliban.[433]

The individuals who grew up in the Afghan refugee camps, as with the individuals in the Palestinian camps, had little experience with their cultural traditions in conventional settings. They emerged as a generation that had no experience with their farms, their villages, their homeland, or peace, but knew largely only war and suffering. They had no memories of their neighbors or the complex ethnic mix which made up their villages. They were products of war, rootless and restless, they had few job opportunities, were untrained, even in the traditional occupations of their fathers such as farming, herding, or the making of handicrafts, were economically deprived and, as a result, had little self-knowledge. War became something for them to aspire to; as it was the only constant they had known. Their simple belief in a puritanical strand of Islam

[433] Susan Schmeidl, "(Human) security dilemmas: long-term implications of the Afghan refugee crisis," *Third World Quarterly*, 23.1 (2002).

that was drilled into them in the camps was the only set of principles they could hold onto which gave their lives meaning. As a result, they often willingly flocked to the all-male brotherhoods leaders offered access to. These brotherhoods offered not just religious significance to their lives but a full way of life which provided a meaningful existence.[434] Strong parallels exist between the experiences of Afghanistan's refugees in the 1980s with Palestine's refugees in the late 1940s and 1950s. Both Afghanistan and Palestine had a history of British colonialism, both refugee crises were set off by international developments beyond the confines of their respective regions, both refugee populations confounded the politics of their individual territories, and both refugee populations redefined the global strategies of the U.S. government.

Furthermore, ethnic divides in Afghanistan and Pakistan mirror the ethnic troubles associated with the nation-state system in the Middle East. In particular, the ethnic group the Pashtuns, whose homeland stretches across the Afghan/Pakistan border, share a similar story to the Kurds. As with the Kurds, the Pashtun homeland was carved up by European powers. Throughout the 19th century, a series of violent conflicts, known as the Anglo-Afghan Wars, broke out between the British and Russian Empires over their territorial borders in Southwest Asia. Ultimately, the state of Afghanistan was created as a buffer zone between the British and the Russians, largely to prevent further conflict from breaking out. However, when London and St. Petersburg drew the border that

[434] Fiona Terry, *The Paradox of Humanitarian Action: Condemned to Repeat?* Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 2002 and Helga Baitenmann "NGOs and the Afghan War: The Politicisation of Humanitarian Aid," *Third World Quarterly*, 12.1 (1990).

separated Afghanistan from India,[435] they drew it right down the middle of the Pashtun homeland. These borders remained in place and became the territory of the Afghan nation-state after World War II. Similarly to the Kurds, the Pashtuns desire the creation of an independent country, or at the very least, they desire autonomy within Afghanistan and Pakistan.

As with the Middle East, the transition from empire to nation-state in South Asia left many groups without a country. Ethnic minority nationalists such as the Pashtuns, as with the Kurds, challenged the nation-state because the new modes of power left them on the outside looking in. The significance of such processes in South Asia becomes even more clear when one considers the conflict that erupted with the partition of India in 1947. The creation of Pakistan led to substantial violence and, again, highlights the stark contrast between empire's ability to accommodate difference and the nation-state's struggle to do so. Within imperial modes of power, unlike populations – whether they were ethnic or religious groups – were brought together, not separated. With the nation-state, different ethnic and religious groups are often brutally separated. By the 1980s and 1990s, the challenges some religious groups faced with the secular nation-state led them to deem violence and terror the only way forward.

There is not a straight line from Hassan al-Banna to Osama bin-Laden. There are stark and fundamental differences between the Muslim Brotherhood and al-Qaeda or the Taliban. Although the former has used violence, especially in the immediate post-World War II period, violence is not a primary dimension to its platform. The Muslim Brotherhood is often considered by the Egyptian people to represent the true interests of

[435] In 1947, Pakistan was partitioned from this section of India.

the country, in contrast to Egypt's secular national government. In 2012, the Brotherhood won the Presidential election in Egypt and briefly held control of the Egyptian government. Nevertheless, the Taliban and al-Qaeda borrowed heavily from groups such as the Muslim Brotherhood or, more accurately, borrowed from offshoots of the Muslim Brotherhood. For example, both the Taliban and al-Qaeda considered themselves waging war on two fronts, one against the "near enemy," the other against the "far enemy." The former was composed of any Muslim regime considered corrupted or backed by the West. The latter was the United States and its Western allies.[436] These beliefs were often attractive to individuals in refugee camps because they provided meaning and direction to young men that had neither. Nevertheless, the Taliban's belief structure was not new, nor was its recruitment of individuals from vulnerable refugee populations. In the 1940s and 1950s, the Muslim Brotherhood waged battle with a "near enemy," local governments, and a "far enemy," the United States and the United Kingdom. Furthermore, the Brotherhood in Palestine often recruited from Palestinian refugee camps.

Another idea borrowed from the Muslim Brotherhood was Al-Qaeda and the Taliban's belief that violence was necessary to return to a lost "pure" form of Islamic society. Texts written by Islamic jurists, often from as far back as the Middle Ages, were taken out of context and used by the Taliban to depict what Islamic society looked like

[436] Christina Hellmich, "Al-Qaeda—terrorists, hypocrites, fundamentalists?" The view from within," *Third World Quarterly*, 26.1 (2005).

before the West corrupted it.[437] These depictions were attractive to individuals and groups who felt alienated by Western modernity. Individuals such as Qutb and Maududi played a significant role in propagating these ideas in the 1960s and 1970s. However, the Taliban and al-Qaeda went beyond confrontation with local governments, the principal enemy of anti-colonial nationalist groups before the 1980s. Moreover, they placed a special emphasis on violence. Whereas the Muslim Brotherhood claimed violence was necessary only as a last resort, al-Qaeda and the Taliban made violence the centerpiece to their platform. They globalized violence by making attacks on American civilians, on American soil and abroad, a fundamental dimension to their ideology and strategy.

In the 1980s, globalization began transforming the world at a rapid pace. Culture was de-territorialized and was no longer confined to specific geographical spaces. For violent, anti-colonial nationalists, the loss of tradition was now especially a danger to Middle East civilization. Not only were Western forms of society replacing local ones, Western material culture was also altering the morals and principles of Islamic culture. Groups such as the Taliban and al-Qaeda believed the secular regimes that developed in Egypt, Syria, and Iraq were the chief reasons for this cultural corruption. After World War II, American hegemony was established in the Middle East. By the 1980s, American material culture was also firmly rooted in the region. Often cultural corruption was more abhorrent to local populaces than the threat of foreign military or political force.

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[437] Nazih Ayubi, *Political Islam: Religion and Politics in the Arab World*, New York: Routledge, 1991, Chapter 1 and Sivan, *Radical Islam: Medieval Theology and Modern Politics*.

If a single event could be posited as the basis for bin-Laden's disdain for the United States, one could make a strong argument for the Gulf War. In 1990, after Saddam Hussein invaded Kuwait, Saudi Arabia permitted U.S. troops to be stationed in the country to defend it from Iraq. However, Islam's two holiest cities, Mecca and Medina, are both located within Saudi Arabia. The Saudi government's reliance on the United States, rather than Muslim armies, to protect Mecca and Medina moved bin-Laden to conclude that the United States was the primary threat to Islamic civilization. Corrupted, Middle East regimes, such as the governments in Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Syria, or Iraq, were now secondary. The power that propped up and maintained support to these evil governments – the United States – first had to be defeated before regional governments could return to their pure forms.[438]

Groups such as al-Qaeda and the Taliban relied on a culture of violence because of their confrontation with Western concepts such as secularism, capitalism, and the overall development of the modern state. To them, societal developments appeared to be dictated not by native traditions but by outside forces that aimed to exploit local populaces, often through violence. Modernization for the Middle East and Southwest Asia has occurred largely from colonialism and pressure from Western powers. Western development formulas, such as Arab Nationalism, appeared unsuccessful. Islam provides a template for society that addresses the perceived failures of secular institutions and Western culture. To groups such as al-Qaeda and the Taliban, the failures of secularism and capitalist institutions might be overcome by using Islam as the basis for society.

5.4 Conclusion

[438] Hellmich, "Al-Qaeda—terrorists, hypocrites, fundamentalists?" The view from within."

On 11 September 2001, al-Qaeda carried out a spectacular, coordinated attack on the Twin Towers in New York City and on the Pentagon in Washington D.C. Close to 3,000 civilians were killed. However, according to scholars such as Gilles Kepel, these attacks represented the last gasp for Islamic organizations that use extreme violence to attain political goals.[439] Kepel argues that the success such groups had in Afghanistan in the 1980s began to decline in the 1990s and by the 2000s the movement had largely petered out. After the U.S. government invaded Afghanistan, the Taliban was quickly destroyed. In the years that followed, Washington also rolled back al-Qaeda's ability to conduct operations and eventually crushed the organization entirely. Nevertheless, the U.S. invasion and occupation of Iraq had serious problems. American missteps in Iraq created deep fissures in Iraqi society that enabled new groups, such as I.S.I.S., to emerge. In Iraq, as well as in Afghanistan, huge numbers of civilian casualties resulted from the U.S. invasion and occupation. Conservative estimates put the number of civilians killed around 500,000 while liberal estimates put the number well over 1 million. Furthermore, these wars created millions of refugees and internally displaced peoples. In Afghanistan, many made their way to the camps in Pakistan that were established during the Soviet-Afghan War. Although al-Qaeda and the Taliban have been destroyed,[440] U.S. action in Iraq and Afghanistan may lead other groups to take their place.

It is important to remember that groups such as al-Qaeda, the Taliban, and I.S.I.S. are not new. The long road to 9/11 was a long and complex process. There were four

[439] Kepel, *Jihad*, Introduction.
[440] In recent years the Taliban has had somewhat of a resurgence, as the U.S. government has withdrawn nearly all of its troops from Afghanistan.

primary points of origin to the attack. First, British colonialism in South Asia. Second, the partition of Palestine. Third, the rise of U.S. hegemony in the Middle East. And fourth, the Soviet-Afghan War. However, a fifth dimension is also necessary to properly contextualize the attack on the Twin Towers. Problems with the postcolonial nation-state cannot be overlooked. The nation-state system that was imposed on the Middle East, and South Asia, after World War II is vital to understanding the violence of groups such as al-Qaeda or the Taliban. Since its implementation after the Second World War, the secular nation-state has attempted to suppress religion, often violently. Because the nation-state had few, if any, avenues to accommodate difference, some religious organizations felt as if there was no option but to engage in violence themselves. The messiness of the transition from empire to nation-state, not just in the Middle East but also in South Asia, helps explain why religious minority nationalists contested the sovereignty of the nation-state system and the international order that protected it.

Nonetheless, religious minority nationalists were not the only ones left out of the nation-state system. The nation-state also failed to accommodate ethnic minorities such as the Kurds. As ethnic minority nationalists, the Kurds continue to contest the postcolonial system that was imposed on the Middle East after World War II. With their homeland divided between Turkey, Iran, Iraq, and Syria, the challenges the Kurds face are varied and sometimes divisive. But like religious nationalists, the Kurds bring to light the limits of postcolonial liberation. Since its inception in the Middle East, the nation-state has attempted to stamp out Kurdish identity. In each of the countries Kurds find themselves, the state has repeatedly attempted to limit, or even eliminate, Kurdish identity and culture within its borders. Such conflict did not exist under empire. Imperial

modes of power created unity with difference. Empire used structures that accommodated different religious, ethnic, linguistic, and/or cultural populations. This politics of difference was an important reason why empire lasted for thousands of years.

CHAPTER 6. CONCLUSION

Stateless actors such as Palestinian refugees, the Muslim Brotherhood, the Armenians, and the Kurds, transformed how the Cold War unfolded in the Middle East. These non-state actors complicated and confounded the strategies of both the superpowers and the regional governments of the Middle East. Palestine's refugees changed the political landscape of the region and defined the context U.S. strategy operated in. After 1948, no Middle East government could publicly work with the U.S. government without risking significant domestic conflict. Palestinian refugees were perhaps the single most significant non-state population to American officials in the late 1940s and 1950s. Their importance to the history of the entire Middle East cannot be overlooked. The Muslim Brotherhood prevented U.S. officials from enlisting Egypt into a security network. The Brotherhood wielded tremendous power in Egyptian society. Its power was so great that the organization openly challenged the state over both its domestic and foreign policies. If the Egyptian government flirted with joining American programs, the Muslim Brotherhood created chaos on the streets. Because of the Muslim Brotherhood, U.S. strategy in Egypt failed. The Armenians and the Kurds shaped how U.S. policymakers envisioned security in Syria. The ethnic minorities of Syria were considered dangerous, Soviet backed populations by Washington. The activities of groups such as the Armenians and the Kurds moved the U.S. government to support authoritarian elements in Syria, including dictatorship. However, rather than stabilizing the country, support to dictatorship only led to further instability. In contesting the nation-state system of the region, the Armenians and the Kurds also greatly confounded U.S. strategy in the Middle East.

Non-state actors such as Palestinian refugees, the Muslim Brotherhood, and Syria's ethnic minorities are key agents of change with regards to the history of United States in the Middle East, the modern history of the Middle East, and Cold War history. However, these actors also demonstrate the limits of postcolonialism. Specifically, these groups highlight the nation-state's inability to accommodate difference. The nation-state aims to create unity, sometimes violently, within its borders. Furthermore, it attempts to exclude those outside its territory, also sometimes violently. Minority nationalists such as Palestinian refugees, the Muslim Brotherhood, the Armenians, and the Kurds all experienced this violence when they were left outside the national modes of power that developed in the Middle East after World War II.

The Palestinians lost their home when the United Nations voted to partition Palestine at the end of 1947. When partition went into effect in 1948, the Palestinians were thrust outside the nation-state system that took shape in the Middle East. In Egypt, the Muslim Brotherhood faced a secular state that violently suppressed religion. The nation-state is a secular institution. Therefore, in Egypt, the nation-state attempted to eliminate religious groups such as the Brotherhood. Both the Armenians and the Kurds lost their homelands when the British and the French carved up the Middle East during World War I. Their countries were fragmented to create the nation-states of Turkey, Iran, Iraq, and Syria. When the nation-state system was imposed on the Middle East, the Armenians and the Kurds were rendered minority populations in these new nations. Therefore, the Palestinians, the Muslim Brotherhood, and Syria's ethnic minorities contested the sovereignty not just of their individual countries but of the whole nation-state system that governs the Middle East.

The limits of the nation-state are one side of the coin, on the other is empire and its politics of difference. The nation-state is less than a century old, whereas empire existed for thousands of years. Imperial systems were designed to deal with difference, they could not have survived as long as they did otherwise. Coercion and violence were sometimes part of daily life under empire but successful empires created systems that effectively managed unlike populations. The production of new ways to exploit and rule grew largely from the desire for profit but the politics of difference developed in tandem with this exploitation. The "other" that was created by the metropole is an important example. A tremendous amount of effort was put forth by colonial officials to maintain the idea of the "other," both in the metropole and the periphery. Such effort makes little sense unless the distinction of difference was important to maintaining the imperial systems in use. Empire wanted loyalty, not likeness. Distinct communities and their specific resources were fundamental to profitmaking. As a result, local leaders were usually chosen to manage "their" people. The various forms of intermediaries – settler, slave, local elite, etc. – that developed demonstrated empire's ability to accommodate peoples with dissimilar societal and political makeups. Correspondingly, different organizations of power – colony, protectorate, dominion, mandate – were employed to suit the vast territories and varied landscapes that made up imperial realms. These processes help explain how empire lasted as long as it did and suggests that the transition to nation-state was not destined or preordained.[441]

Nevertheless, violence and coercion still occurred under empire. Religious and ethnic conflicts sprung up in most empires. However, the level of religious and ethnic

[441] Burbank, Cooper, *Empires in World History*.

conflict seen in the Middle East today is unparalleled. This degree of violence began during the transition from empire to nation-state and has continued largely because of the nation-state's inability to accommodate unlike populations. Under the Ottoman and Persian Empires, diverse populations of various religious and ethnic groups lived peacefully together. Yes, conflict did arise amongst different populations but nothing like the deep seeded, long-lasting conflicts seen in contemporary times. The unity of the region changed during the Middle East's mandate period. When the British and the French carved up the Middle East during World War I, the seeds of profound problems were sown. Although still imperial in nature, the mandate period is better defined as the beginning of the nation-state system, rather than part of empire. Europe's Middle East mandates ultimately led to the borders of the nation-state system that was imposed on the region. Ethnic and religious conflict took shape in tandem with the development of the nation-state in the Middle East. The origins of issues related to the Palestine/Israel conflict or ethnic violence in countries such as Turkey, Iran, Iraq, or Syria are rooted in the region's transition from empire to nation-state.

In sum, Palestinian refugees, the Muslim Brotherhood, and Syria's Armenian and Kurdish populations transformed the history of the Middle East and the history of the United States in the Middle East. These stateless actors defined the policies, objectives, fears, and alliances of the superpowers and the state governments of the region. In key ways, these groups were primary agents of change. Nevertheless, these actors also demonstrate the limits of the postcolonial nation-state and postcolonial liberation. Under empire, these groups fit within the modes of power that governed the Middle East. Only when the region transitioned to the nation-state did serious problems begin to emerge.

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Al-Hurriyat.

Al-Ikhwan al-Muslimin.

Al-Insha.

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VITA

-University of Kentucky, Ph.D. (expected)
New York University, M.A.
Rutgers University, B.A.
-University of Kentucky, Instructor
Union County College, Adjunct Instructor
Atlantic-Cape Community College, Adjunct Instructor
Middlesex County College, Adjunct Instructor.
-Bryan Dissertation Fellowship, History Department, University of Kentucky
Albisetti Dissertation Research Fellowship, History Department, University of Kentucky
Samuel Flagg Bemis Dissertation Research Grant, The Society for Historians of American Foreign Relations
Dorothy Leathers Graduate Fellowship, History Department, University of Kentucky
Leslee K. Gilbert and Daniel E. Crowe Fellowship, History Department, University of Kentucky.
-"Shifting Sands: The United States, Great Britain, and the Muslim Brotherhood, 1945 – 1954." *Global Politics Review*. Vol. II, Issue I (April, 2016).
-John Perry