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1948: War and War of the Historians

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### Palestinian Nationalism and the Development of Social Capital

The events of 1948 did not occur in a vacuum. The history of Palestinian society and the winding path of Palestinian nationalism both help to explain the total collapse of the society in 1947 and 1948, as does the idea of social capital. Robert Putnam is a Harvard Professor whose books and articles discussing the building of democratic institutions have revolutionized the idea of cultural and historical issues in nation building. He writes about social capital as the "cure all" to building democratic, functional institutions and cohesive nation-states. Social Capital, as Putnam describes it, is a theory for national development begins with the idea that a nation ruled along feudal subsistence farming develops differently than a nation whose economy is based on commerce and finance. In a feudal, subsistence economy, neighbors don't often have close links with each other and different villages or settlements aren't closely tied. In a society based on trade, a certain level of trust and even of simply interacting is required between neighbors and villages/settlements. From these relationships of trust that develop along business lines among what become closely knit communities, other groups – recreational or political form.

Robert Putnam's theory holds that nongovernmental groupings: recreational/political clubs stemming from the business/financial interactions within an economy based on commerce among equals are responsible for building up the levels of trust in a society necessary to foster real growth and cooperation within that society. What Robert Putnam identifies as "horizontal" (among equals) groups, based on trade, finance, and finally on any sort of collective action all

contribute to a society's potential for growth. Without social capital, functioning institutions and a more cohesive national society are not possible.

In this paper I will first examine the history of Palestinian nationalism as an evolution from a Pan-Arab/Greater Syria viewpoint to the more focused Palestinian nationalism to the Islamic nationalism of the 1920's, and the clash of the elite families. This paper will use this history to substantiate a correlation to Robert Putnam's theory on social capital as an institutional and national foundation and its failure to develop in pre-1948 Arab Palestine. Finally, I will present a brief explanation of the correlation between this lack of Social Capital and the extreme fragmentation of Palestinian society and ultimate dissolution in 1948. As far as my research can determine, Robert Putnam's theory has never been applied to pre-1948 Palestine. My purpose in this paper is not a defense of his theory and while I will include an explanation pertinent for the ultimate aims of this paper, I will leave refutations or critiques of this theory up to another author. Much other data could have listed here to substantiate this theory, but in the interests of time and space I will summarize to give a more complete, if not as detailed of a picture.

Palestinian nationalism and identity was well established among Palestine's educated elite early on, but the everyday Palestinian – the ones who in the end became the refugees who still exist today – lacked a strong connection to their leaders and to other members of their society, based on the deep rifts and fragmentation historically imposed upon society. These compounded rifts reinforced the lack of social capital in Palestinian society and led to the dissolution of Palestinian society in 1947-48.

#### **OTTOMAN HISTORY AND NATIONALISM:**

*"Zionism emerged about a quarter of a century earlier than Arab nationalism, a head start in political consciousness and organization that proved vital to the Jews' success and to the Palestinian Arabs' failure during the following decades of conflict. There were, during the nineteenth century, centers of disaffection with Ottoman rule in Arab provinces. But the Arabs shared an abiding millennium-old loyalty to the encompassing Islamic polity,*

*buttressed by a vague awareness that the European powers were ready to pounce should the empire falter.*<sup>1</sup>

The Ottoman Empire lasted from 1299 to 1918 and at the height of power spanned from southeast Europe to North Africa to Persia in the east, with Constantinople at its epicenter. The Ottoman rule over Palestine<sup>2</sup> lasted four hundred years, beginning in 1517 with Sultan Selim I and ending in 1917/1918 as the British seized control of the Levant. Just prior to the Ottoman conquest of Palestine, the area was held by the Mamluk's with a period of great decline from 1382 onwards as the Mamluk's fought against the Mongols.<sup>3</sup>

At first, the Ottoman Empire ruled Palestine indirectly through a local notable while local revenues were recorded in the Ottoman surveys until, based on these records, more direct administration was set up.<sup>4</sup> For peasants in Palestine, life under the Ottomans was likely unchanged from life under the Mamluk's with the exception perhaps, of being more organized on an administrative level. Local elites may have been more affected by the military, financial, and judicial workings of Ottoman officials, but they too, seemed to adjust fairly quickly.<sup>5</sup>

The territory of Palestine was listed under the province of Damascus and the usage of the term "Palestine" mostly disappeared while "Southern Syria" was used instead.<sup>6</sup> Palestine after the mid-nineteenth century was ruled under the Beirut Wilaya (province) until the 1870's when Jerusalem became an independent district (a smaller part of the country was incorporated into the Damascus Wilaya). As part of the Beirut Wilaya, Jerusalem was divided into four smaller districts and then into further local districts or qasas.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Morris, *Birth of the Palestinian Refugee Problem*, 26

<sup>2</sup> As a note of clarification, when I use the term "Palestine" either under the Ottoman time or under the British mandate I am referring to the area currently considered Israel and the Palestinian territories.

<sup>3</sup> Shahin, 12

<sup>4</sup> Singer, 4

<sup>5</sup> Singer, 8

<sup>6</sup> Singer, 10

<sup>7</sup> Khalaf, 9

In 1873, Jerusalem was established as an autonomous unity responsible directly to Constantinople, shrinking the Beirut Wilaya north of Jaffa. During the four centuries of Ottoman rule, the term "Filastin" referred not to a specific Ottoman province or district with clearly defined borders, but instead a vaguely defined region within the Syrian lands.<sup>8</sup> The term was used among Arab geographers and in official and scholarly discourse, but those who lived within the borders of what would become Palestine thought of themselves not as "Palestinians" in a national sense. Those individuals thought of themselves instead as the ethnic, kin, or professional groups they belonged to; or as residents of particular towns, regions, neighborhoods, villages, or simply subjects of the Ottoman sultan. As Issa Khalaf writes, "before 1919... Jerusalem was a vague geographical entity...as recent as the late nineteenth century, a peasant living north of Nabulus most probably felt himself to be a resident of the province of Beirut...if he lives south of the Dead sea a resident of the Syrian province."<sup>9</sup>

The beylerbeyi (provincial governor) of the province of Damascus controlled ten districts including Jerusalem with district officials including district governors, cavalry officers, and soldiers as policemen backed by janissaries.<sup>10</sup> Ottoman administration focused on collecting taxes and ensuring production levels while individual village leaders who were responsible for the payment of local taxes to the Ottoman government held immediate rule over peasants and the local community.<sup>11</sup>

Peasants in Ottoman Palestine were not "feudal" in the same sense as European feudal peasants; European peasants were feudal to their King or ruler, but Ottoman peasants were feudal on a more local level rather than to the Empire. Additionally, in Palestine it seems more

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<sup>8</sup> Lockman, 21

<sup>9</sup> Khalaf, 10

<sup>10</sup> Singer, 24

<sup>11</sup> Singer, 24

appropriate to discuss feudalism as tied to clan solidarity and affiliation rather than a European-style relationship of feudal protection. In essence, lines of patronage and allegiances were deeper and more concrete than simply as mutually beneficial relationships, and hence, far more permanent. Ottoman authority, however, in both a "religious-judicial" sense and "military-administrative" sense had the ultimate authority over local notables.<sup>12</sup> On a religious level, if the Ottomans were not separated by four hundred years from the earlier Abbasids they "would surely have deserved the esteemed designation of high caliphate".<sup>13</sup> The Ottoman administration of Palestine as a descending feudalist form is discussed by David Kushner as "[characterizing] a process, which led to the emergence of a fragmented power structure, to the usurpation of politico-legal authority by local lords combined with direct socioeconomic control of a dependent peasant population."<sup>14</sup>

Later, Ottoman Palestine was an agrarian society where land was the main form of capital.<sup>15</sup> Most peasants (the majority of the population) were sustenance farmers and any surplus produce was appropriated by the Ottoman states, at first through tax-farmers and later through landowners.<sup>16</sup> Government officials and rural elites annually auctioned on the rights to tax-farming; a local feudalist arrangement when a notable paid the taxes for his area to the Ottoman government and kept the remainder of production from the famers on that land for himself.<sup>17</sup> Many tax-farmers kept private armies and passed on their land and farmers to their descendents, which the state recognized so long as taxes were paid.<sup>18</sup> Village land was often held in common trusts and divided into sections distributed among all members of the

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<sup>12</sup> Singer, 13

<sup>13</sup> Kamrava, 23

<sup>14</sup> Kushner, 141

<sup>15</sup> Khalaf, 11

<sup>16</sup> Khalaf, 11

<sup>17</sup> Khalaf, 11

<sup>18</sup> Khalaf, 11

community, with allocation held to the whims of the tax-farmer. In summation, Ottoman policy in Palestine and all of the empire was based on varying levels of control with dependence on local elites to ensure collection of taxes, ensuring them a stable position within the society.

Before the institution of reforms, between the Hebron, Jerusalem, and Nablus areas there were eighteen ruling clans with its own village based on family and clan ties.<sup>19</sup> The villages were mostly self-supportive and self governing without any real central power. All forms of collective responsibility and social control were done by the all-powerful sheiks within the village.<sup>20</sup> These alliances and allegiances based on clans cut across district and religious lines and "preserved a vertical social structure" backed by networks of patronage. Wealthy landlords began moving to the towns and using these clan alliances to protect their land, reinforcing "the relationship and reciprocal loyalty between patron and client...through pride in common descent."<sup>21</sup>

The Ottoman Reforms beginning in 1840 mitigated the power of rural sheiks as the Tanzimat reforms worked to centralize control and develop more effective institutions. The power of these rural leaders shifted to those already powerful urban notables. The 1858 Ottoman Land Code in particular had an important affect on many areas. In the hill regions of Palestine where small plots and individual ownership had been common, the law did not affect peasants in an overly negative way.<sup>22</sup> However, in the lowland areas, where mostly grain was farmed, the new law facilitated the registration of agricultural land in the names of individual owners. Most of this land had never been actually registered before, but simply treated as traditional property

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<sup>19</sup> Khalaf, 12

<sup>20</sup> Khalaf, 12

<sup>21</sup> Khalaf, 13

<sup>22</sup> Khalidi, 95

of one family or another.<sup>23</sup> For the first time now, a peasant could be kept from living, cultivating, or passing land on to heirs that while not formally theirs in name, had been held for generations so long as the land taxes were regularly paid.<sup>24</sup> As these communal, traditional rights were ignored, village sheiks, tax collectors, and urban members of the upper class began registering large areas of land as their personal properties. Peasants did not register their land mostly out of fear of taxation and Ottoman conscription.<sup>25</sup> The greatest beneficiaries of these land reforms were the newly prosperous merchants of the coastal cities.<sup>26</sup>

These urban notables now took the job of tax collection for the empire as heads of the new Administrative Councils and were comprised of powerful families from all across the Syrian province.<sup>27</sup> As heads of the Administrative Councils, the urban notables were able to prevent any reforms that could have affected their status. The Wilayat Law of 1864 was meant to control the role of administrative councils, but the stipulation that candidates for the council had to pay a high tax cemented authority in the hands of the wealthy urban notables.<sup>28</sup> Villagers' fears of conscription prompted many to register their lands under the names of clan heads. Peasants continued to farm communally as the notables living in the cities or even outside of Palestine were able to take advantage of debts and acquire large portions of land. Ties with the Ottoman's and the entrance of many notable families into the Ottoman aristocracy by way of schools and bureaucracy cemented the power of the urban notables and the notable families "pervaded" local politics.<sup>29</sup> At this time, urban notables were not cohesive or stable but the provincial leadership

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<sup>23</sup> Khalidi, 95

<sup>24</sup> Khalidi, 95

<sup>25</sup> Khalidi, 95

<sup>26</sup> Khalidi, 95

<sup>27</sup> Khalaf, 15

<sup>28</sup> Khalaf, 15

<sup>29</sup> Khalaf, 17

was strong and secure within each respective areas of influence.<sup>30</sup> Many of these notables put their money back into land in Palestine, similar to patterns in other Arab lands, yet in Palestine, much of this land was soon bought by Zionists and the patterns materializing in other nations, failed to appear in Palestine.<sup>31</sup>

Palestinian society itself at the end of Ottoman rule was arranged in a "pyramidal" structure where political ties were maintained from the peasants in villages to the towns onward to the "national elite" via clan alliances topped by the urban notables in Jerusalem and back down to the villages by virtue of the clan connections of extended families.<sup>32</sup> The head of a hamula (an institution of all those of one family) in a small village would sometimes align himself with a larger and more influential family in the same district, and this in turn might be linked to one of the more powerful landowning families which formed part of the urban upper classes."<sup>33</sup> As a result, political alliances resembled factions centering on the chief personalities of one or another of these major landed families. The extended clan family "constituted the basic social and economic unit" in villages and towns.<sup>34</sup> The dominant, "hamula" clan structures perpetuated family and clan consciousness, a tradition that helped to ensure the continuing power of the landowning urban notables.<sup>35</sup> From the beginning of the nineteenth century, "village life was characterized by insecurity...[and] endemic factionalism."<sup>36</sup>

During Ottoman rule, ideas of Arab independence or separatism from the empire were not widespread in Palestine, due in no small part to the idea of a historic loyalty to Islam

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<sup>30</sup> Khalaf, 19

<sup>31</sup> Khalidi, 95

<sup>32</sup> Khalaf, 19

<sup>33</sup> Khalaf, 19

<sup>34</sup> Khalaf, 19

<sup>35</sup> Khalaf, 19

<sup>36</sup> Khalaf, 19

correlated to the Ottoman Empire.<sup>37</sup> A minority movement held mostly by the landowning elites, in a bid to extend and strengthen their hold on power, put forth the idea of Greater Syria or Pan-Arab Nationalism. The idea was not popular and probably barely discussed by everyday peasants. By the end of the 1870's, however, a small group of Arabs were calling for at least some independence from the empire.<sup>38</sup> Earlier groups had formed for the promotion of Arab culture in Damascus in Beirut with Lebanese Christians holding dominant roles. Butrus al-Bastani, a Lebanese Christian leader, repeatedly advocated for a Syrian nation that transcended religion, combining both Lebanon and Syria.<sup>39</sup>

The Turkish Caliph Abdullhamid's unsuccessful war with Russia had resulted in hundreds of Arab casualties together with the dissolution of the constitutions stoked Arab unrest.<sup>40</sup> Whispers were everywhere and posters appeared in many cities calling for movement.<sup>41</sup> However, Arab nationalism, "never more than the plaything of a thin layer of intellectuals" seemingly disappeared after calm returned. Abdullhamid's emphasis on Islamic orthodoxy coupled with subsidies and patronage paid to religious institutions helped to calm Arab notables.<sup>42</sup>

In the first decade of the 1900's, Arab nationalism had a new awakening from intellectuals like Abd al-Rahman al-Kawakibi, Rashid Rida, and Najib Azouri, who were apparently not aware of the nationalist stirrings of 1877-1881 and never mentioned them in their

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<sup>37</sup> Muslih, 67

<sup>38</sup> Morris, *Righteous Victims*, 26

<sup>39</sup> Morris, *Righteous Victims*, 26

<sup>40</sup> Morris, *Righteous Victims*, 26

<sup>41</sup> Morris, *Righteous Victims*, 27

<sup>42</sup> Morris, *Righteous Victims*, 27

writings.<sup>43</sup> In 1905, Azouri wrote *The Awakening of the Arab Nation in Turkish Asia*, advocating for a united, unitary Arab nation:

The Arabs, whom the Turks tyrannized, have become conscious of their national, historical, and racial homogeneity, and wish to detach themselves from the worm-eaten Ottoman trunk in order to form themselves into an independent State. This new Arab Empire will extend to its natural frontiers, from the valleys of the Tigris and Euphrates to the Isthmus of Suez, from the Mediterranean to the Sea of Oman.<sup>44</sup>

Later, Azouri actually established contact in 1912 and 1914 with the British, French, and Italians to ask for help in leading a revolt away from the Ottomans with no response.<sup>45</sup> At the same time, change was coming to the Ottoman Empire and to Palestine. The revolution of the Young Turks, the new Constitution and the reestablishment of the parliament in 1877 gave dozens of Arabs a “taste” of national-level, or rather international level, politics for the first time.<sup>46</sup>

The movement reemerged fully in the wake of the 1908 Young Turk movement, which reintroduced the 1876, Constitution, Freedom of the Press, and the Ottoman Parliament. According to a British Citizen, in the Arab world: “Muslims were seen embracing Christians and Jews, and inviting one another to receptions and feasts. The pent up feelings of the populace everywhere burst forth in loud hurrahs...Syria has never seen such rejoicing.”<sup>47</sup> According to Benny Morris, while there were rallies, meetings, and celebrations in Beirut, Damascus, Haifa, and Jerusalem, the urban notables “linked by tradition and financial benefit to the Hamidian regime” were far from enthusiastic.<sup>48</sup>

Soon, however, the Ottoman emphasis on Turkish symbols and language called “Turkism,” helped to spark the development of several Arab nationalism groups, including Fatat. Modeled at the beginning on the Young Turks themselves, these groups aimed at gaining rights within the empire. Two

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<sup>43</sup> Morris, *Righteous Victims*, 27

<sup>44</sup> Morris, *Righteous Victims*, 28

<sup>45</sup> Morris, *Righteous Victims*, 28

<sup>46</sup> Morris, *Righteous Victims*, 27

<sup>47</sup> Morris, *Righteous Victims*, 29

<sup>48</sup> Morris, *Righteous Victims*, 29

of the founding members, Abd al-Hadi and Rafiq al-Tamiami (both of Nabulus) went on to play prominent roles in Palestinian nationalism. The society, composed of “Greater Syrian Muslims,” was geared at the beginning towards preserving the “natural rights” of the Arab nation in a policy of decentralization rather than independence. Most interesting at this time was the establishment in 1911 of the biweekly newspaper entitled *Falastin*, which expressed its opposition to decentralization (even while taking a name that suggested otherwise) in light of growing resentment to the Zionists, stating that such a policy would allow Zionists to infiltrate Palestine more easily.<sup>49</sup>

A growing number of confrontations between Zionists and now-homeless Palestinian Arabs over land sold to the Zionists by absentee landlords began to increase tensions between the two groups and between the Palestinian Arabs and the CUP, Committee of Union and Progress which ruled the Empire. The al-Fula incident of 1911, in particular was an example of the greater Ottoman Empire ignoring the concerns of the Palestinian Arabs.<sup>50</sup> Palestinians saw the “fortress” of al-Fula as a treasure built by Saladin, while it was actually the remains of a crusader castle; its sale to the Zionists was criticized strongly in newspapers like the Damascene *al-Muqtabas*.<sup>51</sup> The Ottoman government and other nations ignored speeches made in the Ottoman Parliament in May 1911 warning against the dangers of Zionism. Meanwhile, in Palestine, a local patriotism focused on Palestine as the historical holy land was growing, not a nationalism per se, but rather a sort of local loyalty within a general Arabism.<sup>52</sup>

Fatat, by 1913, had moved from the idea of decentralization to a platform based on “the liberation of the Arab nation.”<sup>53</sup> The idea was revolutionary and “could not become widespread among the Arabs in a day... for the centuries their ultimate loyalty belonged to Islam, and their political

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<sup>49</sup> Muslih, 65

<sup>50</sup> Khalidi, 109

<sup>51</sup> Khalidi, 31

<sup>52</sup> Khalidi, 32

<sup>53</sup> Morris, *Righteous Victims*, 30; Muslih, 67

allegiance to the Islamic Umma and to the dynastic sovereign of the Islamic state.<sup>54</sup>

The outbreak of World War I proved to be a setback, as most of the Ottoman citizens and remained loyal to it during the war and even al-Fatat “closed ranks” with fellow Muslims.<sup>55</sup> In name it was still working for the “liberation and independence” of the Arab provinces, but its Supreme Committee in Damascus ruled “...in the event of European designs appearing to materialize, the society shall be bound to work on the side of Turkey in order to resist foreign penetration of whatever kind or form.”<sup>56</sup>

A small number of mostly Christian Arabs secretly worked for an Arab victory and talks between the British and the Hashemite emir of Mecca, Sharif Hussein and the Emir Abdullah began even before the war began.<sup>57</sup> Links between the Hashemite and nationalists in Damascus and Beirut led to a slow British recognition of the principle of Arab independence in at least some portions of the future-British Empire, articulated in the Hussein-McMahon Correspondence of 1915-1916 to Husayn bin Ali, the Sharif of Mecca.

Faysal, the son of Husayn bin Ali, was dispatched to Syria in March 1915 to assess the extent to which the Arab nationalists there were prepared for a revolt and met with leaders of al-Fatat and the Iraqi-dominated al-'Ahd.<sup>58</sup> During Faysal's stay, he, along with leaders of al-Fatat and al-'Ahd, drew up a document, known as the Damascus Protocol, enunciating the conditions upon which they would cooperate with England against the Ottomans. The document outlined two fundamental principles: complete Arab independence from any foreign power, and Arab unity. Independence required security against all forms of foreign interference including property capitulations of the type that Ottoman sultans had given to friendly nations. Arab independence

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<sup>54</sup> Muslih, 67

<sup>55</sup> Morris, 31

<sup>56</sup> Morris, 31

<sup>57</sup> Muslih, 31

<sup>58</sup> Kramer, 18

meant the establishment of a unitary Arab state made up of Syria (Lebanon and Palestine included), Iraq, and the Arabian Peninsula.<sup>59</sup>

The Turks became aware of these secret talks and agreements and feared a revolt from the nationalists in Damascus and Beirut. Jamal Pasha, the military general of the greater Syria region began a "reign of terror" against Arab nationalists, resulting in the tortures and public hangings of many in 1915 and 1916. Thousands of Palestinian Arabs (and Jews) were deported inland away from likely points of Allied invasion. This "reign of terror" along with the Ottoman military commandeering of crops began to change the attitudes of peasants in Palestine and across the Ottoman Empire.<sup>60</sup> According to Muslih, Jamal's policies in Greater Syria "widened the gulf between Arab reformers and Turks, and made some of the former opt for Arab independence and secession from the empire (92). Most Palestinian notables, including the Husseini and Nashashibi families still held their allegiance to the Ottoman Empire, mostly out of a desire to hold onto their powerful and influential positions, until its collapse became overly obvious.<sup>61</sup> *Falastin* continued to advocate for the CUP and to advocate for the unity and for a partnership all races and sects in the empire, even as its own name anachronistically advocated for a different view.

By this time between 1908 and 1914, many Palestinian Arabs had realized what Zionism actually meant and that it could be achieved only at the expense of their own aspirations, whether Pan-Arab or Ottoman.<sup>62</sup> Palestinian notables began to speak out against the Zionists as the angry reactions of peasants to "increased Jewish land purchases and replacement of Arabs [by Jewish

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<sup>59</sup> Kramer, 94

<sup>60</sup> Muslih, 90

<sup>61</sup> Khalidi, 109

<sup>62</sup> Khalidi, 24

workers]" reached a new level.<sup>63</sup> The addition of the new press freedoms also helped make the cause a "shared urban-rural perception."<sup>64</sup>

Historian Benny Morris describes there having been two currents of Arab frustration with the Ottoman Empire, an "active" discontent backed by Britain in Arabia and a "dormant" discontent in Syria and Lebanon.<sup>65</sup> He describes both groups coming together in September and October 1918 as the Arabian rebels rushed northward through Transjordan and occupied Damascus. The Arabian rebels together with their "hosts" established a Syrian Arab state ruled by Emir Faysal with Syrian, Lebanese, Palestinian, and Iraqi advisors.<sup>66</sup>

In December 1917, Jerusalem and soon after Beirut fell to Allenby - effectively ending the Ottoman Empire.<sup>67</sup> Under the British and the French, the nations of Syria, Lebanon, Transjordan/Jordan, and Iraq all emerged, as did the problem of Palestine where two nationalistic dialogues, Arab and Jewish, competed for control.

In the last few years of the Ottoman Empire, the idea of Arab nationalism and political independence from the Ottoman Empire had begun to spread. The policies of the late-Ottoman Empire, specifically the CUP doctrine of Turkism was "the critical factor" sparking the emergence of movements calling for political and cultural independence for Arabs as a distinct group.<sup>68</sup> The idea failed to spread beyond Arab intellectuals and disenchanted members of upper class families however. At the time, the movement was led by a narrow class base of men attempting to serve their own interests who failed to transform the idea into a more widespread and organized loyalty during World War I, but ultimately sowed the seeds for a political

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<sup>63</sup> Khalidi, 94

<sup>64</sup> Khalidi, 94

<sup>65</sup> Morris, *Righteous Victims*, 32

<sup>66</sup> Morris, *Righteous Victims*, 32

<sup>67</sup> Morris, *Righteous Victims*, 32

<sup>68</sup> Muslih, 60

movement that would later rise again.<sup>69</sup>

### **SOCIAL CAPITAL AND THE OTTOMAN PERIOD:**

*“Clientelism [feudal patronage] is the product of a disorganized society and tends to preserve social fragmentation and disorganization”<sup>70</sup>*

Rashid Khalidi asks: if the Palestinians were aware so early of the danger that Zionism was to them, why were they not “more effective in their resistance” to the movement? The successful expression of Palestinian identity – the “achievement of a greater measure of an independent national existence up to and including sovereignty” was obstructed by internal factors.<sup>71</sup> These internal factors resulted largely from the “nature of the social structure of Palestine in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.”<sup>72</sup>

The feudalist society filled with divisions rather than the cooperation marked in finance-driven societies, “one feels too much the ‘I’ and too little the ‘we’” quotes Robert Putnam, by way of explanation.<sup>73</sup> Putnam points out that when the struggle to “obtain work or be able to cultivate a little land” is among neighbors, the interest in class solidarity decreases. This lack of interest in collectivism is not to be confused with apolitical (which Palestine certainly was not), but rather the distinction is between a reliance on social connections and political cunning rather than on dependence on institutions.<sup>74</sup>

“Cliental” are the only relationships/associations which actually show real efficient energy in a civil society which has been divided within itself for centuries and which people unite not on the basis of trust but when forced to by necessity.<sup>75</sup> Putnam discusses the power of

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<sup>69</sup> Muslih, 67

<sup>70</sup> Putnam, 144

<sup>71</sup> Khalidi, 24

<sup>72</sup> Khalidi, 24

<sup>73</sup> Putnam, 144

<sup>74</sup> Putnam, 144

<sup>75</sup> Putnam, 144

these patronage relationships by stating that they unite society in the only sensible and rational path that a peasant can take, though it is one that ultimately leads only to more of the same; “in the absence of horizontal [mutual] solidarity...vertical dependence is a rational strategy for survival-even when those who are dependent recognize its drawbacks.”<sup>76</sup> The formation of villages as completely individualized and almost completely self-dependent falls along the lines that Putnam traces of reinforcing the enmity and distrust between villages. With no need for one village to speak to another for trade, relationships that could have eclipsed the strong tribal or clan boundaries were never created.

Peasants in Palestine were trained by the cleavages in their society and the by the Ottoman tradition of taxation to accept these lines in their society, these cleavages which would impede incredibly the development of a national identity and cohesive society.

#### **HISTORY AND NATIONALISM IN THE BRITISH MANDATE OF PALESTINE:**

*Even though the class that produced members of nationalist groups was virtually unassailable from below for nearly four decades after the disintegration of the Ottoman state, the nationalism in whose name the two groups waged their struggle was not created by either one of them*<sup>77</sup>.

Arguably, the largest motivation for Palestinian nationalism was Zionism and the spark that lit the fire was the Balfour Declaration of 1917, promising a “Jewish National Homeland” in Palestine. As the War continued, nationalism and the idea of a Greater Syria grew in the British and French-occupied Middle East. Morris points to the 1918 establishment of local “Muslim-Christian Associations” (MCA) as being among the first semi-political Palestinian nationalist organizations. Along with other groups, the MCA's did not self-define as political organizations and opposed Zionism, the Balfour Declaration, and the division of Palestine from Syria. The Husseini family soon founded Al-Muntada al-Adabi (The Literary Club) and the Nashishibi family established al-Nadi al-Arabi (the Arab Club), both advocated for a single Syria-Palestine.

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<sup>76</sup> Putnam, 145

<sup>77</sup> Muslih, 224

In 1919, al-Nadi founded a Jerusalem newspaper, tellingly named *Suriyya al-Janubiyya* (Southern Syria).<sup>78</sup> A 1920 article in the paper discussed a speech made by Sir Herbert Samuel, the British High Commissioner, and stated: "our country is Arab, Palestine is Arab, and Palestine must remain Arab."<sup>79</sup>

Reflecting what James Gelvin calls the "sentiments of indigenous elites," the MCA's called for Palestinian autonomy within a federated Syrian state.<sup>80</sup> All of the groups whether MCA's, clubs, or salons were composed of the same, high level of society and he points out that "it appears that the proliferation of these sorts of nationalist groups often had more to do with individuals and families jockeying for position than with disputes over the political future of Palestine."<sup>81</sup>

More populist organizations, branches of the Damascus-based Higher National Committee, spread to Palestine from Syria in early 1919 and also opposed the mandate, the division of Palestine from Syria, and the Balfour Declaration.<sup>82</sup> The leadership of these organizations was made up of lower-middle class religious dignitaries, shopkeepers, merchants, and tribal leaders who all appealed to peasants and non-elite urbanites.<sup>83</sup> These peasants and townsmen were gathered into militias to resist both Zionist settlement and the French occupation of Syria and framed their struggle as one of egalitarianism and anti-elitism.<sup>84</sup> They were immediately popular with their nationalist calls of "death to those who would betray Palestine."<sup>85</sup>

Both organizations sent representatives to meet in Damascus in 1920 in the first Palestine

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<sup>78</sup> Morris, *Righteous Victims*, 35

<sup>79</sup> Khalidi, 166

<sup>80</sup> Gelvin, 96

<sup>81</sup> Gelvin, 97

<sup>82</sup> Gelvin, 97

<sup>83</sup> Gelvin, 97

<sup>84</sup> Gelvin, 98

<sup>85</sup> Gelvin, 97

General Congress. A leaflet was distributed soon after on the streets of Damascus outlining Palestine as an "integral part of Syria" and the opposition to Zionism expressed in language reminiscent of Wilson's principles of self-determination.<sup>86</sup>

The French proceeded to send an army into mainland Syria to establish control, curtail resistance, and dismantle the Damascus-based nationalist organizations.<sup>87</sup> The Muslim-Christian organizations, all based within Palestine, managed to survive and even established an Arab Executive in 1920 to coordinate activities. By the mid 1920s however, factionalism and the lack of momentum behind the Palestinian Arab nationalist movement proved to be their end.<sup>88</sup>

These groups and ideas failed for several reasons. Working through institutions would have been an advantage, but most institutions in the country were left over from the Ottoman era, or had been established by the British who the Arabs refused to work with, so instead of working through established institutions, nationalistic organizations actually had to compete with them.<sup>89</sup> Other legacies of the Ottoman-era also impeded the development of groups and institutions, namely the ever-present factionalism in society. In urban society, religious groups took care of their own in a legacy of the foreign protection of religious minorities. The old divisions between clans, families, and villages still remained.<sup>90</sup>

The popularity of the idea of Palestine as an integral and inseparable part of Syria peaked in 1920 when Emir Faysal was installed as the King of Syria. The idea of joining Faysal's kingdom was supported by the elite families who saw Faysal's Syria as a way for their economic

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<sup>86</sup> Gelvin, 97

<sup>87</sup> Gelvin, 99

<sup>88</sup> Gelvin, 99

<sup>89</sup> Gelvin, 100

<sup>90</sup> It is worth noting as Gelvin does, that the Zionists came to the country and had no choice but to begin building their own institutions which were always instruments of ideology

and political power to survive Zionism, and “pervaded” the Nabi-Musa events that year.<sup>91</sup> The Nabi-Musa was a huge religious pilgrimage to the shrine of Moses occurring every year and including both Christians and Muslims. In 1920, the speeches given by local notables against Zionism and the British mandate whipped participants into riots that lasted for days. This was the first major demonstration against the Zionists and the British and, more importantly, was the first in which everyday people, rather than elites, were the real participants, if not the engineers.<sup>92</sup> Additionally, the Nabi-Musa riots are among the first examples of a combination of nationalist and religious symbols in Palestine and had the affect of making the two seem inseparable.<sup>93</sup> From then on, the dominant form of nationalist rhetoric on a mass scale was based on Islam, which the elites saw as the “most effective weapon” on both a national and international level as “[n]o other idiom was as comprehensible to the Palestinian masses, among whom the concept of secular nationalism was foreign.”<sup>94</sup>

According to Benny Morris it was now, between the wars that the first stirrings of a distinctly Palestinian local identity began to be heard.<sup>95</sup> This “tendency” or “orientation” crawled forward, almost completely in reaction to the growing Zionist build up.<sup>96</sup> Until 1920, the majority of Palestinian had always looked to an independent Greater Syria with Palestine as the southwest corner. There were a handful of nationalists that had preferred an individual state, but until 1920, for the vast majority, the idea of Arab sovereignty was immovably linked to Syria.<sup>97</sup> The change in nationalistic ideas appeared in the span of only four months from April until July 1920 when an attack organized and carried out by Damascus Arabs on the Tel Hai

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<sup>91</sup> Johnson, 21

<sup>92</sup> Johnson, 21

<sup>93</sup> Johnson, 20-21

<sup>94</sup> Johnson, 16

<sup>95</sup> Morris, *Righteous Victims*, 34

<sup>96</sup> Morris, *Righteous Victims*, 34

<sup>97</sup> Morris, *Righteous Victims*, 35

Jewish settlement was overwhelmingly defeated by British forces. As calls within Palestine for incorporation within Faysal's Syria had increased, Damascus believed the attack would spark a larger revolt. With its defeat, and the subsequent collapse of Faysal's regime, the *ayan* (urban notables) realized that with Faysal gone and Syria held by the French, they were on their own.<sup>98</sup>

Faysal's expulsion from Syria by the French in 1920 ended the idea of Greater Syria completely and in an abrupt turnaround from statements like "We see Palestine as part of Arab Syria," the second Meeting of the Palestinian Congress in 1920 urged the British to create a "native government" and representative assembly.<sup>99</sup> There was no mention of "Southern Syria" or the unity of Palestine and Syria, which had so incredibly dominated the previous Congress and the resulting literature. Faysal became King of Iraq and Christians in Lebanon now demanded their own independence, with no other alternative, Palestinian nationalism and the idea of independent Palestine was now the dominant nationalism, even if only among the local elite.<sup>100</sup>

In 1922, with the solidification of the British Mandate over Palestine, the British established the Supreme Muslim Council to keep track of the Muslim Waqfs and Sharia Courts in Palestine. The head of the council, Hajj Amin al-Husseini was a member of one of the leading families of Palestine. The Supreme Muslim Council controlled the legal system in Arab Palestine with control over the appointment of judges, and held extraordinary power in the message delivered by all the mosques in the country.<sup>101</sup> From the creation of the council in 1922, the Mufti managed to transform the holy sites in Jerusalem into resistance symbols and soon, the articulation of nationalist goals couched in Islamic terms came to dominate the national

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<sup>98</sup> Morris, *Righteous Victims*, 35

<sup>99</sup> Morris, *Righteous Victims*, 36

<sup>100</sup> Morris, *Righteous Victims*, 33

<sup>101</sup> Johnson, 19

sphere.<sup>102</sup>

When the creation of a Legislative Council composed of all the religious and ethnic groups in Palestine was proposed in 1922, the Arab response was a swift refusal. The Legislative Council would be unable to debate the mandate and Arab leaders felt that they could not agree to the Legislative Council without giving recognition to the Balfour Declaration and accepting the unlimited immigration of Jews into Palestine. The Supreme Muslim Council successfully instituted a boycott by using the Friday Jumna sermons at the mosques to spread the message that boycotting the elections was a religious duty. For those who weren't convinced, the message was accompanied by the threat of excommunication for those who disobeyed. They were overwhelmingly successful, especially in areas of conservative-Muslims, and the Legislative Council never came into being.

The Supreme Muslim Council seemed to speak for all Arab Palestinians, but the formation of the National Muslim Society shows the deep cleavages between the two main families in Palestine at the time—the Nashashibis and the Husseinis. With the Hussein family firmly in control of the Supreme Muslim Council, the opposition formed around the Nashashibi clan and took a stand far from their rivals by accepting the British Mandate and working within it. The National Muslim Society attempted to harness Islam for their aims with an announcement tying a quotation from the Koran criticizing civil strife to the Supreme Muslim Council and the Hussein family.<sup>103</sup> Though the National Muslim Society ultimately failed, the fact that it was established at all shows the increasing awareness on behalf of the elites that Islam was a powerful uniting tool.

The Wailing Wall Riots were among the first crystallizations of the strong religious

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<sup>102</sup> Kramer, 218

<sup>103</sup> Johnson, 23

undertones to what had before, mostly been rural conflicts between Jewish settlers and their Arab neighbors. The 1929 riots were sparked by rumors for over a year that both sides were attempting to restrict the others access to their respective holy site.<sup>104</sup> The riots spread quickly to Hebron, Jaffa, and Safad - resulting in the deaths of 133 Jews and 116 Arabs before British troops were able to stop the rioters.<sup>105</sup> The subsequent Shaw Commission and the Passfield White Paper of 1930 addressed some Arab grievances, but was essentially withdrawn by the "Black Letter" written by PM MacDonald. The withdrawal of the Passfield White paper so soon after it had been released reinforced the hopelessness and frustration of much of Arab Palestine.

Pertinent at this juncture, is an overview and discussion of Palestinian Arab society within the mandate itself. In rural society, encompassing most of Palestinian society, there was extreme poverty and incredibly frustration with elites. Out of a total population of 1,319,434 – between 700,000 and 800,000 (around 60%) lived in the countryside as subsistence farmers.<sup>106</sup> Land sales from absentee landlords to Zionists and the resulting homelessness of the former residents led to congestion in villages nearby and an increased land scarcity in those villages as well as a great deal of understandable frustration and enmity towards those elites.<sup>107</sup> Additionally, there were problems stemming from the Islamic laws on inheritance that required equal shares for all sons and broke already small portions of land into smaller and smaller portions, making it impossible for families to subsist on what they had.<sup>108</sup>

British policy sought to maintain the existing rural life and seeming stability, seeking in Palestine to "perpetuate a social structure that itself was rapidly changing" through their

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<sup>104</sup> Gelvin, 93

<sup>105</sup> Gelvin, 93

<sup>106</sup> Khalaf, 26

<sup>107</sup> Khalaf, 27

<sup>108</sup> Khalaf, 27

administrative, political, economic policies.<sup>109</sup> Issa Khalaf, names a weak state authority in the rural areas as well as the historical regional divisions (based on clans) as hindering integration of society and the development of a "broader communal identity."<sup>110</sup> Palestinian politics tended to be most influenced by the hill areas where religious, clan, family, and parochial perspectives and rivalries were more deeply entrenched and widely felt than in the cities or towns, leaving disconnects of many kinds embedded in society.<sup>111</sup> Forced out from the rural areas, landless Palestinians settled in the cities and received little assistance from the British or their own notables, leaving them even more bitter and resentful than before.

Khalaf describes British policy as contributing "significantly" to enforcing and continuing the divisions in Palestinian society by giving priority to "public order and efficient collection of taxes."<sup>112</sup> Innovation in the form of social, economic, and educational programs or services were limited by the broad colonial policy of having Palestine pay for its own services.<sup>113</sup> Despite the mandatory emphasis on not interfering beyond taxation and on preserving rural social structure, urbanization was being forced by Jewish land sales and many Arab Peasants held the British responsible for not interceding. The British were more visible in Palestine than the Turks had ever been and the new generation came to expect more in terms of education and development from the colonial power, but the British were unwilling both to meet these expectations and to give up power, something that was increasingly called for.<sup>114</sup>

The 1929 Western Wall Riots drew from these huge numbers of poor, unhappy, and desperate peasants. Rashid Khalidi points out that while it is correct that Palestinian nationalism

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<sup>109</sup> Khalaf, 32

<sup>110</sup> Khalaf, 31

<sup>111</sup> Khalidi, 95

<sup>112</sup> Khalaf, 31

<sup>113</sup> Khalaf, 31

<sup>114</sup> Khalaf, 32

developed in response to the challenge of Zionism, “this modern nationalism was rooted in long-standing attitudes of concern for the city of Jerusalem and for Palestine as a sacred entity which were a response to perceived external threats. The incursions of the European powers and the Zionist movement in the late nineteenth century were only the most recent examples of this threat.”<sup>115</sup> It only followed then that the rational turn for Palestinian nationalism to take would be that which it did in a gradual “Islamization” of the nationalistic dialogue, cumulating in the 1936 Arab Revolt. The “patriotism” of the past concerning Palestine’s holy sites, especially Jerusalem, had fully blossomed.

Growing discontent in the Arab community led to more challenges to the leadership of Hajj Amin and the Supreme Muslim Council, but this time instead of the challenger representing a more moderate view, it was more radical. Representing another rupture of Palestinian society and a general dissatisfaction with the leadership, the Istiqlal, was composed of Muslim notables who advocated **for** more direct action against Britain and stronger ties with other Arab nations.<sup>116</sup> Hajj Amin effectively neutralized the Istiqlal itself, but its demands for a greater degree of militancy were representative of most the Palestinian Arab population in Palestine.<sup>117</sup> This deepening factionalism between elites had the result of making many lower and working class Palestinians feel, correctly so, that the elites did nothing but protect their own power.<sup>118</sup> The 1930’s saw the formation of several new political parties, all united by their firm opposition to Zionism. The Palestine Arab Party was led by Jamal al-Husseini and backed by the Mufti. It called for a complete termination of the mandate and the immediate creation of an independent Arab Palestine. The National Defense Party was headed by the Nashashibi family and closely

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<sup>115</sup> Khalidi, 30

<sup>116</sup> Cleveland, 251

<sup>117</sup> Cleveland, 251

<sup>118</sup> Johnson, 36

linked with the Emir of Transjordan, advocating an independent Palestine closely linked to Britain by treaty. The Independence Party was the only pan-Arab party that called for the unification of Arab-lands and was formed by a lawyer from Nablus with support from young Palestinian professionals.

The old landowning elites – especially the Husseini and Nashishibi families had used Islam as a means to their ends of maintaining their hold on power, creating the popular rhetoric of Islamic nationalism. The elites repeatedly failed to adequately respond to the complaints of Palestinian peasants, who were drawn to a more local identity, rather than a nationalist following behind the elites.

The Arab Revolt of the spring and summer of 1936 was a "spontaneous popular reaction against Zionism, British imperialism, and the entrenched Arab leadership."<sup>119</sup> The revolt began when a Jewish bus was attacked and the resulting Haganah retaliation resulted in the deaths of two Arab farmers. Sheikh Izz al-Din al-Qassem channeled the frustration of lower-class workers and farmers into large-scale resistance in the form of the Arab Revolt by first calling for a general strike to continue until the British restricted Jewish immigration and land sales. Huge numbers of uprooted peasants and poor urbanites supported the strike and carried out attacks on Jewish individuals and organizations. The Arab notables were taken by surprise, especially at the intensity of the lower-class, and many different groups including the Istiqlal, the Supreme Muslim Council, and the Nashishibi family formed the Arab Higher Committee under the chairmanship of the Mufti.

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<sup>119</sup> Cleveland, 251

All levels in Palestinian society, from the peasants to city merchants and the emerging working class, played a part in the Revolt.<sup>120</sup> While the Revolt was certainly motivated by anger at Jewish land sales and immigration, it was also working against the traditional elite families and turning the popular Islam that they had seized on for their own power, into a powerful lower-class weapon instead.<sup>121</sup> The local elite was eventually left with no choice but to support the Revolt, even though the strikes and disruptions hurt them badly in their businesses and industries and took the focus of political power out of their hands, something they had never had to sacrifice beforehand. The Revolt was calmed to allow for the British Peel Commission to investigate which came to the conclusion that the only solution for Palestine was partition; a finding rejected by both sides in the conflict and leading to the resumption of the revolt. Again, the resumption of violence was spontaneous and locally led rather than premeditated or nationally organized.

Sheikh Izz al-Din al-Qassem had died by this time, proving that the revolt was no cult of personality organized behind him, but rather a clear “nationalist politicization of the Palestinians” as well as the real spread of nationalist ideas to social groups outside of the elite, and now outside of their control.<sup>122</sup> The “folk Islam” and “folk revolt” can be seen as a reaction against the nationalism of the elites. In villages under rebel control, debt collectors from the urban elites were denied entry and wealthy landlords were coerced into making "donations" to the Revolt.<sup>123</sup> The Revolt was eventually put down at a high cost.

According to Issa Khalaf, the “activism of the thirties was largely missing [after the Arab revolt]...due to the harsh suppression of the rebellion and the enforced exile of the leaderships

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<sup>120</sup> Schulz, 28

<sup>121</sup> Schulz, 28

<sup>122</sup> Schulz, 29

<sup>123</sup> Cleveland, 253

along with restrictions on press and political activity during the second world war”<sup>124</sup>. By the outbreak of World War II, Palestine had been "pacified." The first phase of the Arab Revolt had strengthened the Mufti and the AHC, but the Arab economy and society had suffered incredibly - 294. The strike, boycott, and armed revolt had weakened the Arab economy at the expense of strengthening the Jewish economy and defense institutions. While the Arabs gained a short-term victory in the form of the MacDonald White Paper, the striking weakening of Arab leadership at the same time as the Yishuv grew stronger was a direct result of the Arab Revolt.<sup>125</sup>

James Gelvin calls the 1936 Revolt "the most significant turning point in modern Palestinian history" aside from the events of 1948.<sup>126</sup> The 1936 Revolt and its ramifications on Palestinian society could be the subject of a book itself. But in short, the Great Revolt marks the first time that a mass-based, individual Palestinian nationalism can be confidently discussed. The Revolt engaged a huge sector of Palestine in coordinated movements and rallying behind symbols (the example of al-Qassem) that were uniquely Palestinian rather than Syrian, Ottoman, or Pan-Arab.

Yet, at the same time, the revolt led to the exile of the elite political and societal leadership, who though they were disliked and out of touch, were among the only possible leaders in society at the time. Their exile provided a vacuum in Palestinian society that was never quite filled. Many of the most educated and wealthiest Palestinians fled the country both to escape from the violence and the revenge of the peasant rebels.

The Great Revolt can be considered as the first Nakba of modern Palestinian history and

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<sup>124</sup> Khalaf, 1

<sup>125</sup> Kramer, 295

<sup>126</sup> Gelvin, 113

it certainly paved the way for what followed.<sup>127</sup> The reasons behind the revolt and its repercussions may even be the primary reasons why 1948 turned out to be such a full disaster for, and in fact, the dissolution of Palestinian community and society.<sup>128</sup>

### **COLLAPSE:**

*“The Palestinian refugee problem was born of war, not by design, Jewish or Arab. It was largely a by-product of Arab and Jewish fears...”<sup>129</sup>*

The Palestinian peasant in 1947 and 1948 every day saw the “spectacle of abandonment” by their ‘betters,’ as anyone with money fled the country.<sup>130</sup> Shops, schools, medical clinics, and public service posts were abandoned leading to a steady decline in morale from a people who had little to begin with. Benny Morris writes that: “there is probably no accounting for the mass exodus that followed without understanding the prevalence and depth of the general sense of collapse, of falling apart’ and of a centre that ‘cannot hold’, that permeated Arab Palestine, especially the towns, by April 1948.<sup>131</sup>

On the local level, there were attempts (mostly in Haifa and in Jerusalem) to stem the exodus by threatening confiscation of property or punishment for leaving, but enforcement was weak and haphazard.<sup>132</sup> Militiaman and irregulars often encouraged the exodus so they could use the homes as quarters and money could be made from “protecting” the empty houses.<sup>133</sup>

Arab leadership inside and outside Palestine was disorganized and ineffectual, not least because it was incredibly distrusted by Palestinians themselves.<sup>134</sup> Overwhelming confusion, and disparate policy orders characterized the weekly changes in information while there seemed to be

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<sup>127</sup> Gelvin, 114

<sup>128</sup> Gelvin, 114

<sup>129</sup> Morris, *Birth of the Palestinian Refugee Problem*, 286

<sup>130</sup> Morris, *Birth of the Palestinian Refugee Problem*, 591

<sup>131</sup> Morris, *Birth of the Palestinian Refugee Problem*, 591

<sup>132</sup> Morris, *Birth of the Palestinian Refugee Problem*, 593

<sup>133</sup> Morris, *Birth of the Palestinian Refugee Problem*, 594

<sup>134</sup> Morris, *Birth of the Palestinian Refugee Problem*, 593

no central command or guiding control to tell the peasants what to do.<sup>135</sup> In short, Palestinian society completely collapsed from the ground up and from the top down.

### **SOCIAL CAPITAL IN THE PALESTINIAN MANDATE:**

*“if there is one characteristic feature of Palestinian politics and society during the mandate, it is the pervasiveness of factionalism...manifestation of traditional, largely agrarian societies dominated by vertical cleavages, identity, and divisions. In Palestinian society, the central cleavages were based on family, kinship, and clan.”<sup>136</sup>*

Rashid Khalidi points out that from 1918 until 1948, the Palestinians demonstrated less ability to rise above the local, family, and political rivalries and unify than did other nations (Egypt in 1919, Tunisia in the mid-1950s, etc.).<sup>137</sup> Khalidi himself blames the “lack of access...to state *structures* or the inclusion of Arabs in any meaningful level of the government.”<sup>138</sup> Other Arab states were under foreign rule, why did they manage to assume some formal and unified level of social cohesion? Robert Putnam quotes Johan Olson:

Institutions affect the flow of history...actions taken within and by...institutions change the disruption of political interest, recourses and rules by creating new actors with criteria of success and failure...Institutions affect the ways in which individuals and groups become activated within and outside established institutions, the level of trust between citizens and leaders, the shared understanding of the community...<sup>139</sup>

Putnam’s theory, that institutions create the state can be seen clearly in the example of Palestine. Khalidi points to other Arab states as having their own institutions from the previous state or the creation of such institutions by the European powers under the Mandate terms. Mandatory Palestine however, had none of these real, working institutions. Any organization was manned almost completely by the upper class nobility. The Supreme Muslim Council, the ultimate institution of Palestinian Arabs under the British, was kept firmly in hand by its head Hajj Amin who rarely delegated and kept most power to himself. His relatives, other members

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<sup>135</sup> Morris, *Birth of the Palestinian Refugee Problem*, 593

<sup>136</sup> Khalaf, 1

<sup>137</sup> Khalidi, 25

<sup>138</sup> Khalidi, 25; emphasis added

<sup>139</sup> Putnam, 17

of the powerful Husseini family, held many other positions on the council. As an institution they were able to completely put a stop to any plans for a Legislative Council, what could have been a groundbreaking institution for Palestinian society.

As Muhammad Muslih points out, there were some middle-class individuals who participated in Palestinian politics in this period, but none attained a top leadership position in Ottomanist, Arab nationalist, or Palestinian nationalist group. They were members of a class with “no tradition of influence or leadership,” therefore neither their society nor the Ottoman or British viewed them as natural leaders with natural and local sources of political power.<sup>140</sup> The leaders of every political party, MCA, or salon waged their struggle for nationalistic identity and sovereignty without the creators of that very nationalism every being involved. Putnam emphasizes the importance of institutions and societies as being “horizontal” – relationships among equals; regional and elitist politics continue only the status quo with no movement forward.<sup>141</sup> These civil society organizations of MCA’s and political parties were flatly horizontal with the power held by those elites who always held power. The populist organizations held promise, but crucially, were created in Damascus, not in Palestine. Their disbandment, leaving only the elitist groups, was perhaps one of the most crucial blows to Palestinian society.

Perhaps this wouldn’t have mattered and eventually, with time the mandate would have been cast off and Palestine would have been like any other post-colonial state except for one fact: Zionism. Zionism complicated Palestine, Zionism was the extra ingredient, the X factor – the difference that made the Legislative Council unfeasible and that made every small governing structure part of a cog in a larger wheel that only focused on one path. Should Palestine be

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<sup>140</sup> Muslih, 220

<sup>141</sup> Putnam, 23

compared to anything, it would be a powder keg, with the ever-present factionalism of society as the gunpowder, the frail casing around it the self-serving posturing of the elites, and Zionism as the match. Other postcolonial countries took years to come to any sort of social cohesion, but they had no real competition. When other societies fought and factionalized, only the colonial powers were waiting to step in, and they would eventually always step out. In Palestine, Palestinians didn't realize that they were in a race for national cohesion against the Zionists. The Zionists were able to establish their own national institutions geared entirely towards one, singular nationalist goal. Their settlements depended on each other, and their national organizations were strong from being freshly built and reinforced after the 1936 Arab Revolt. Any fragmentation in society was eclipsed by the cohesive goal of Zionism. For Palestinian society, there was no social glue strong enough to override the legacy of history.

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