

The 1917 Balfour Declaration and the Zionist Origins of Saudi Arabia

Part II

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Region: [Middle East & North Africa](#)

Theme: [History](#)

Abdel Aziz Ibn Saud's actions during WWI eventually led to the founding of Saudi Arabia. To document a historically accurate account of his role, we examined in [Part I](#) three official documents from WWI. In Part II, we will examine one more war time declaration and narrate what really took place during that period.

4. The Balfour Declaration

One of the most important statements of British foreign policy of the twentieth century, the 'Balfour Declaration' was no more than a short, vague letter that had no legal status. The Parliament didn't debate it. Yet, it was one of the most significant events leading ultimately to the creation of the state of Israel. Not to mention the conflict between Jews and Arabs ever since.

In this letter of November 2nd 1917, British Foreign Secretary, Arthur Balfour, wrote to Lord Lionel Walter Rothschild, as a figurehead of the Jewish community in Britain:

"His Majesty's government view with favour the establishment in Palestine of a national home for the Jewish people, and will use their best endeavours to facilitate the achievement of this object, it being clearly understood that nothing shall be done which may prejudice the civil and religious rights of existing non-Jewish communities in Palestine, or the rights and political status enjoyed by Jews in any other country."

Britain later incorporated this letter within the terms of its Mandate for Palestine. And so it became a legal requirement upon Britain.

To better understand the origins of the declaration, we examine a thoroughly documented [paper](#) by The Balfour Project. It documents critical details on why Britain's War Cabinet at the time were so fervently predisposed to support the establishment of a 'Jewish National Home' in Arab inhabited Palestine.

With exhaustive references to literally dozens of books, news reports and Cabinet memorandums from The National Archives of the UK, the [report](#) paints a vivid picture of an ingenious manipulation behind the scenes – shaping the drafting, deliberations and the eventual adoption of this declaration. The unusual convergence of so many powerful and influential figures in British politics – including a current and a former Prime Ministers – in support of the Zionist cause isn't lost on the authors. Detailed evidence suggest the entire British Empire, in its actions regarding the future of Palestine, behaved as a Zionist entity. In

its analysis of the events, the paper states,

“It was widely believed that some mysterious but well-organised Jewish conspiracy was bent on determining the outcome of the war; their influence and, above all, their money, could sway Russia, the United States or Germany, to Britain’s good or ill. To gain the international favour of the Jews was therefore in Britain’s vital interest; to offend could be fatal. Since Weizmann implied that Zionism spoke for the Jews of the world, it followed that the Zionists should be helped. It was, [Prime Minister] Lloyd George wrote later, a question of making ‘a contract with Jewry’.”

It’s important to note that the British Cabinet, while adopting the Balfour Declaration, acted under the impression that majority of Jewish people worldwide were Zionists who would applaud Britain’s actions. However, in reality, Zionists remained a very small minority among Jews for many years to come.

For instance, in his book *A Peace to End All Peace: Creating the Modern Middle East, 1914-1922* (Penguin, London, 1991), David Fromkin calculates that in 1913, the last date for which there were figures, only about one percent of the world’s Jews had signified their adherence to Zionism (p. 294). In other words, even though the official narrative claims that the Balfour Declaration was adopted to favour Jewish people worldwide, the underlying truth suggests it was rather the Zionists within the British Empire (which was pretty much everybody who was anybody in British government at the time) who orchestrated this declaration; using the Jewish people’s plight as an excuse to justify this unjust enterprise.

It’s also remarkable that the debates and deliberations which preceded adoption of this declaration, did not include any Arab representation; nor did they think it necessary to do so. While Britain accepted that Palestine should be reconstituted as *the* national home of the Jewish people, implying no place for the existing majority Arab population, very few Arabs were even aware that such a proposal was in the offing. And the Arabs in Palestine itself could not be consulted (then PM Lloyd George later argued) as they were in enemy territory, and were therefore deemed to be fighting against Britain.

Now, as we can see from reviewing the above four historical documents, British Empire, throughout their WWI campaign in the Middle East, played a cunning game of deception with the Arab people; making false promises with no intention of keeping them. A game all too common in empire-building, and certainly more so within the history of British imperialism. Nevertheless, as it always is the case, an empire cannot succeed in its treachery without a complicit, local cohort; a traitor from among the victims. And in this particular case, this cohort presented itself in the form of Abdel Aziz Ibn Saud.

To investigate Ibn Saud’s role, we examine a 2016 [essay](#) by independent researcher Nu’man Abd al-Wahid. Al-Wahid corroborates primary sourced evidence from a revealing [study](#) by Dr. Askar H. al-Enazy, titled *The Creation of Saudi Arabia: Ibn Saud and British Imperial Policy, 1914-1927* (London: Routledge, 2010) with other prominent works in history such as *The Birth of Saudi Arabia* (London: Frank Cass, 1976) by Gary Troeller and *The Desert King: The Life of Ibn Saud* (London: Quartet Books, 1980) by David Howarth etc., and presents a comprehensive account of the part Abdel Aziz Ibn Saud played between 1915 to 1926 as a battering ram for the British Empire. In essence, Ibn Saud’s muscleman role was what enabled the British to establish their imperial and Zionist goals. Goals borne out of the

Sykes-Picot Treaty and the Balfour Declaration.

As Dr. al-Enazy documents in his 2010 study, the Sharif of Hijaz, as soon as the war ended, wanted to hold the British to their wartime promises as expressed in the McMahon-Hussain correspondence. The British, on the other hand, wanted the Sharif to accept the Empire's actual vision for Arabia. A vision that divides the Arab world between them and the French, and implements the Balfour Declaration.

However, the Sharif declared he will never sell out Palestine to the Empire's Balfour Declaration. Nor will he accept new random borders drawn across Arabia by British and French imperialists.

After the Cairo Conference in March 1921, the Empire dispatched T.E. Lawrence (i.e. of Arabia) to meet the Sharif. Lawrence offered him an annual payment of £100,000 (al-Enazy 2010, p.111) but the Sharif refused to compromise. When financial bribery failed to persuade the Sharif, Lawrence threatened him with an Ibn Saud takeover.

While negotiating with Hussain, Lawrence also visited other leaders in the Arabian peninsula. He warned them against entering into an alliance with the Sharif. He informed, if they did, the Empire will unleash Ibn Saud and his Wahhabis on them. After all, Saud and his Wahhabis were at Britain's "*beck and call*" (al-Enazy, p.111).

Simultaneously, after the Conference, the then Colonial Secretary Winston Churchill travelled to Jerusalem. There he met with the Sharif's son, Abdullah, who the British appointed the Emir of a new territory called Transjordan. Churchill asked him to persuade "*his father to accept the Palestine mandate and sign a treaty to such effect,*"; if not "*the British would unleash Ibn Saud against Hijaz*" (al-Enazy p.107).

Meanwhile, the British devised plans to take down Ibn Rashid of Ha'il in the North. Ibn Rashid had rejected all propositions from the British Empire. Propositions made to him via Ibn Saud to become another one of Empire's puppets (al-Enazy p.45-46, p.101-102). Instead, Rashid expanded his territories north to the newly mandated Palestinian border. He also widened his territories to the borders of Iraq in the summer of 1920. Acting under a concern that Ibn Rashid may seek an alliance with Sharif Hussain, Churchill agreed with imperial officer Sir Percy Cox at the Cairo Conference that "*Ibn Saud should be given the opportunity to occupy Hail*" (al-Enazy p.104).

By the end of 1920, the British were showering Ibn Saud with "*a monthly 'grant' of £10,000 in gold; on top of his monthly subsidy. He also received abundant arms and supplies, totalling more than 10,000 rifles, in addition to the critical siege and four field guns*" with British-Indian instructors (al-Enazy p.104). Finally, in September 1921, the British unleashed Ibn Saud on Ha'il which officially surrendered in November 1921. It was after this victory the British bestowed a new title on Ibn Saud. He was no longer the "Emir of Najd and Chief of its Tribes" but "Sultan of Najd and its Dependencies". Ha'il had dissolved into a dependency of the Empire's Sultan of Najd.

With Ibn Saud now on Sharif Hussain's border, and armed to the teeth by the British, the Empire arranged a new round of talks with Sharif's son Abdullah; and drafted a treaty accepting Zionism. When it was delivered to the Sharif with an accompanying letter from his son requesting that he "*accept reality*", Sharif didn't even bother to read the treaty and instead composed a draft treaty himself rejecting the new divisions of Arabia, as well as the

Balfour Declaration, and sent it to London to be ratified (al-Enazy p.113).

After another three rounds of negotiations in Amman and London, the Empire realized Hussain will never relinquish Palestine to Great Britain's Zionist project or accept the new divisions in Arab lands (al-Enazy p.112-125).

In March 1924, the British announced that they had terminated all discussions with Sharif Hussain (al-Enazy p.129). Within weeks, the forces of Ibn Saud and his Wahhabi followers began to administer what the British foreign secretary Lord Curzon called "*the final kick*" to Sharif Hussain and attacked Hijazi territory (al-Enazy p.106). By September 1924, Ibn Saud had overrun the summer capital of Sharif Hussain, Ta'if.

Ibn Saud captured the holiest place in Islam, Mecca, in mid-October 1924. Sharif Hussain abdicated and went on exile to the Hijazi port of Akaba. His son Ali replaced him as the monarch and made Jeddah his governmental base. Fearing that Sharif Hussain may use Akaba as a base to rally Arabs against the Empire's own Ibn Saud, the British declared that Hussain must leave Akaba or Ibn Saud will attack the port. In response, Hussain countered that he had,

"never acknowledged the mandates on Arab countries and still protest against the British Government which has made Palestine a national home for the Jews." (al-Enazy p.119)

He was subsequently forced out of Akaba, a port Hussain himself liberated from the Ottoman Empire during the 'Arab Revolt'. On 18th June 1925, Hussain left Akaba on HMS Cornflower.

Ibn Saud began his siege of Jeddah in January 1925. The city finally surrendered in December 1925. This brought an end to over 1000 years of rule by the Prophet Muhammad's descendants. The British officially recognized Ibn Saud as the new King of Hijaz in February 1926. Other European powers followed suit within weeks. The British Empire rebranded the new unified Wahhabi state in 1932 as the "Kingdom of Saudi Arabia" (KSA). A certain George Rendel, an officer working at the Middle East desk at the Foreign Office in London, claimed credit for the new name.

In conclusion, any prudent observer of British Imperialism hardly finds it surprising that the British Empire betrayed their promises made to the Arabs for an independent Arab state after WWI. However, when an Arab leader does the betraying and becomes an agent for the British Empire; when this agent massacres Arabs who dare oppose the Zionist deceit; and finally, when he gets appointed 'King of Arabia' as a reward for his treachery - by the same treacherous Empire who deceived the Arab people; when an Arab Emir does this, he becomes a *traitor*. And he remains a traitor for eternity; because no amount of wealth or propaganda can change the plain truth: that Abdel Aziz Ibn Saud became the King of Arabia - and his Al Saud family 'Royals' - because he betrayed Arabs and became an agent of the British Empire; and henceforth executed the Empire's Zionist plans for the Arabian peninsula.

Indeed, the bitter irony isn't lost on Muslims in the know. That the two holiest sites in Islam are today governed by the Saudi clan and Wahhabi teachings because they helped the British Empire lay foundations for Zionism in Arabia during and after World War One.

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[Part I](#)

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