

ABSTRACT

Title of Thesis: CALL AND RESPONSE: THE EFFICACY OF
BRITISH WARTIME PROPAGANDA IN
PALESTINE AND BAHRAIN DURING THE
SECOND WORLD WAR

Jackelyn Gitlin, Master of Arts, 2018

Thesis Directed By: Professor Peter Wien, History Department

During the Second World War, Britain employed propaganda campaigns abroad to their vast empire in the hopes of maintaining their control over their territories in the face of Axis aggression. The mandate of Palestine and the protectorate of Bahrain both saw British propaganda efforts in both their respective countries. Britain hoped to counter Axis propaganda in both Palestine and Bahrain and attain their goal of maintaining influence across their territories. This thesis argues that this propaganda effort was ultimately not the motivating factor for why Arabs supported Britain and the Allies or quieted their outward anti-British sentiments. Local elites in both Palestine and Bahrain sought to gain favor and status with the British for their own personal agendas, rather than allying with Britain due to successful propaganda policies.

CALL AND RESPONSE: THE EFFICACY OF BRITISH WARTIME
PROPAGANDA IN PALESTINE AND BAHRAIN DURING THE SECOND
WORLD WAR

by

Jackelyn Gitlin

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Advisory Committee:

Professor Peter Wien, Chair

Professor Ahmet Karamustafa

Professor Shay Hazkani

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Introduction:

Propaganda in the Time of War

Historians have described the Second World War as a “war of words.”¹ This particular phrase refers to the emphasis of propaganda utilized in conjunction with the armed encounters across the European, Mediterranean, and Pacific theaters.

Propaganda was used as a tool for both the Allies and Axis powers during the war.

Words flew across continents with the hope that they could sway hearts and minds for their respective sides. Across the British spheres of influence from their colonies to the protectorates and their domestic homeland, propaganda was used to attempt to unite the empire and maintain Britain’s role around the world as an imperial power.

This thesis seeks to explore the use of propaganda in Palestine and Bahrain on the side of the British to understand their motivations and efficacy of their efforts to sway the minds of the Arabs within both regions during 1939-1945.

Palestine and Bahrain both serve as an illustrative example of British efforts in the Middle East. Palestine saw direct control by the British through the mandate government, established in 1920. For the British, Palestine was important as a gateway to the East and had seen resistance to their authority there from the Arab population in the 1930s. Bahrain, unlike Palestine, had local control in the form of their Shaykh who received advice from the British but could operate more

¹ Asa Briggs, *The History of Broadcasting in the United Kingdom*, volume 3 (London: Oxford University Press, 1961).

independently. Bahrain, however, like Palestine, was a key location for the British to maintain during the war, both to protect their oil interests but also to protect their naval capabilities in the Gulf region. The British, out of fear of a possible pro-Axis revolt, sought to keep the Arab population within Palestine and Bahrain on their side during wartime. British propaganda efforts in both regions were similar regarding the types of propaganda produced, and the purpose of using these two specific regions is to illustrate the similarity of the aims and goals towards a mandate and a protectorate in the Middle East. Both regions also serve to show how the effects on the Arab populations of the countries were not as effective for the reasons the British hoped. While the British failed to foster support towards uniting the British Empire, both Palestine and Bahrain did not outwardly support the Axis during the Second World War. The reasons for the lack of rebellion differed for Palestine and Bahrain, as Palestine Arabs were crippled after the failed revolts of the 1930s and Bahrain sought British protection even after the war.

This thesis will explore the attempts of propagandizing of the British in both regions and investigate the situations in both Palestine and Bahrain to examine how the outcome of those efforts. Through analysis of secondary works that have studied local responses, the development of British relationships in Palestine and Bahrain, a picture emerges of how Arab populations either supported or remained quiet in their anti-British sentiment in hopes of gaining key support from Britain after the war.

This work relies on secondary works published to analyze the response from the Arab populations in both regions as the primary source material is largely dominated by

sources situated within the British government. The primary source material is limited in the local Arab response, yet some periodicals exist discussing pro and anti-British support.² I seek to further the analysis of propaganda use by utilizing these secondary works as well as delving into the archival sources available to illustrate how propaganda targeted towards the Middle East and the types used in Palestine and Bahrain can help us better understand the British efforts during the Second World War.

As tensions rose during the war, Britain used propaganda as an instrument of policy for the governments of colonies and protectorates under their dominion. Books such as Kate Morris' *British Techniques of Public Relations and Propaganda for Mobilizing East and Central Africa during World War II*, shows that Britain's utilization of propaganda also caused a shift in Britain's mindset regarding their empire during 1939-1945.³ The focus of much of British propaganda did not seek to create a vibrant local identity, but bring together the colonies, mandates, and protectorates under a more imperial banner. Morris presents that there is a gap in the historiography of the British Empire. She characterizes the period from the end of the First World War to the outbreak of the Second showed a decline in faith and that after the Second World War, the process of decolonization begun.

² The periodicals primarily mentioned in this work come from *Falastin*, a newspaper which first was published in 1911 under the Ottoman Empire in Palestine and continued as a daily newspaper from 1929-1967.

³ Kate Morris, *British Techniques of Public Relations and Propaganda for Mobilizing East and Central Africa during World War II*. Studies in British History, V. 61. (Lewiston, N.Y.: Edwin Mellen Press, 2000)

The gap she points out is 1939-1945, a lacuna of time where this progression seemingly pauses the evolution of the British Empire. During the Second World War, the focus shifts not to how the Empire is changing or declining, but how it fought to maintain itself in the face of global war for the second time. Morris discusses an invigoration the war brought to Britain abroad, though I would claim that this new vigor is less motivated by imperial faith and motivated primarily by the desire to maintain British footholds overseas during a time of crisis. The British sought in the Second World War to unite the Empire to stabilize their reach across the globe, a necessity to operate in a war that threatened their colonial holdings and power across the globe. Britain utilized their colonial power with colonial troops, raw materials, and key geographic holdings that allowed them to hold fast against the onslaught of the Axis invasions that sought to destroy the Empire. The gap of study of the cultural influence and evolution of the Empire in 1939-1945 can be understood through examining their attempts at spreading propaganda through their colonial holdings. This work only seeks to explore this gap in the context of the Middle East and Arab populations in Palestine and Bahrain, as opposed to the wider colonies and territories. This focus is meant to illustrate how the British attempted to understand and successfully sway the minds of Arabs within regions under their influence in two distinct contexts, a mandate and a protectorate. However, they were not successful in their efforts to maintain control or stability through propaganda alone.

It is also important to understand the context of propaganda as a whole during 1939-1945. The Second World War was not the first war to utilize propaganda as a

tool for warring powers. World War I saw the creation of the Ministry of Information in Britain, the Committee on Public Information in America, and the Padua Commission in Italy to affect the tides of war. When the Second World War began in September of 1939, these more centralized efforts were restarted, with emphasis from the beginning to control the messaging coming into their respective home fronts and broadcasting messages out to foreign nations to colonial subjects and members of other nations and territories to support their causes.

It is important before moving further, to define propaganda. Propaganda as a term has the connotations and often-negative associations that crop up in association with World War II. Joseph Goebbels' fondness for the 'Big Lie,' as a common moniker for propaganda, is well known through his position as the Reich Minister of Propaganda under Adolf Hitler.⁴ The 'Big Lie' refers to the propaganda tool of a lie so colossal that no one would imagine that it could be anything but the truth, coined by Hitler. Goebbels criticized the British for their use of lies that made them look ridiculous, in his opinion. As Minister of Propaganda for the Reich, Goebbels sought to humiliate Britain and show their propaganda efforts as lies that painted them as absurd. There are certain negative connotations that carry over when faced with the atrocities perpetrated through the use of propaganda during The Second World War. Often, propaganda is viewed as "untruthful" or "misleading" by simply being labeled propaganda. In this work, the term propaganda is not intended to convey negative

⁴ Joseph Goebbels, *Die Zeit ohne Beispiel*. Munich: Zentralverlag der NSDAP, (1941), pp. 364-369.

meaning. Propaganda is used in a neutral sense to refer to the process in which a group or government intentionally communicates with an intended audience. The written, spoken, and filmed word or actions in propaganda convey information a government wishes a particular audience to receive. Many historians and contemporary writers now disagree with Leonard Doob's assertion that Propaganda is directed "towards ends considered unscientific or of doubtful value in a society at a time."⁵ Now, propaganda is a tool often used by governments and groups to promote agendas to a broad audience, and that value cannot be ignored when discussing the efficacy of propaganda programs.

The British Empire amassed a highly centralized propaganda effort during the Second World War, one that has been studied in regards to their home front and their efforts to impact American neutrality at the beginning of the war. However, there exists a gap in the study of propaganda when it comes to British propaganda efforts abroad in a number of their colonial and protectorate holdings. This is especially true in colonies formerly considered backwaters within Britain, which grew in prominence in the government's mind during the Second World War due to the threat of spreading Axis power in North Africa and the Middle East.

The Second World War saw many European empires threatened by the fighting, areas of the world that had previously been securely under imperial control felt unstable as the threat of war became a reality. For Britain, their power in their colonies and protectorates was crucial to supporting their influence in the war. Thus,

⁵ Leonard Doob, *Public Opinion and Propaganda* (New York: Hot, 1948), p. 390.

the British began to utilize their full toolbox of influence in their colonial holdings, including that of propaganda. During 1939-1945, the British used print media, radiobroadcasts, cinema, and news as propaganda in the effort to spread their message of faith in the Empire and the strength of Britain to their colonial holdings. The Deputy Under-Secretary for the Colonies, Sir Charles Jeffries, wrote that the “information work” done by the Colonial Office, was a “modern necessity” so that that empire might survive.⁶

This work seeks to explore the time period of 1939-1945 and investigate the efficacy of British propaganda efforts in two specific regions, Palestine and Bahrain. The reason for the focus on these two countries is due to their exposure to Axis propaganda efforts and that both received counter-propaganda efforts by the British. Both regions were influenced heavily by the British due to their role as a Mandate in Palestine’s case and as a protectorate under treaties in the case of Bahrain. Both regions had strategic importance to the war geographically. Palestine served as a gateway to the East and Bahrain served as a reserve of oil and its port that was used by both Britain and the United States in the Second World War. The most important questions to be answered by this study are: How did the British utilize propaganda in both regions to engender pro-British sentiment? How effective were these efforts in Palestine and Bahrain? Was propaganda what led to the lack of wide scale Arab support of the Axis in both regions?

⁶ Sir Charles Jeffries, *The Colonial Office*, (London, 1956), p. 182.

Palestine, which became a Mandate of the British in 1920, was under more direct control and faced a tumultuous domestic atmosphere in the mixing of Arab and Jewish populations, as well as British officials that resided within the country. From 1936-1939, Palestine faced an anti-British revolt from the Arab population, which was put down by the British military in the region. The potential gain for Axis powers in fostering anti-British sentiment led them to target Palestine and surrounding Arab countries with propaganda over the radio broadcasts and through other print media outlets. The British responded with propaganda of their own to foster pro-British feelings amongst the denizens of Palestine, specifically aimed at the Arabic populations with Arabic-language radio programs and cinema releases within the Mandate.

Bahrain, while not an official colony or mandate area, had treaties with the British that were established in 1820 with the British recognizing the House of Khalifa as the “legitimate” rulers of Bahrain.⁷ Similar agreements were signed over the course of the late 1800s, and in 1892, a treaty limiting the foreign policy abilities of Bahrain was signed, culminating in the restriction of disposing of territory to any country other than Britain.⁸ During World War II, Bahrain and the other Gulf States were affected by Axis propaganda, and while Bahrain’s ruling family were supportive of the British, the leanings of the population of Bahrain remained uncertain.

⁷ Fuad Ishaq Khuri,, *Tribe and State in Bahrain: The Transformation of Social and Political Authority in an Arab state* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980), p. 33

⁸ Talal Toufic Farah, *Protection and Politics in Bahrain, 1869–1915* (Beirut: American University of Beirut, 1985), p. 83-4

Neither region fell to German invasion during the war. Despite the fears of the British and the hopes of the Axis powers, the Arab populations did not find the proposed allure of the Axis powers propaganda appealing enough to act against the British who controlled and influenced both regions. Palestine, which had seen an Arab revolt just before the outbreak of the Second World War, had few resources to mount such an uprising. Bahrain sought to protect itself in the face of the military might of the Axis, without an army of their own Britain could provide that protection. While the British may have hoped that the lack of an anti-British revolt was due to the pro-British sentiment fostered by propaganda or genuine feelings in both regions, the reasons for that sentiment were born of practicality rather than love for an imperial master. There is little primary evidence beyond British reports of the feelings of the local populations and articles published in Arabic periodicals in Palestine to explain this sense of practicality. Therefore it is necessary to use the interpretations of the British as well as the secondary material such as Arayb Aref Najjar's work examining local Palestinian publications and the reports of the Political Agents of Bahrain and correspondences of the Shaykh of Bahrain in understanding their actions as a response to the feelings of the local population.⁹

Despite the hope of positive relations between colony and mother country, in Palestine and Bahrain, the populations of those areas remained pro-British or at least quieter in their anti-British sentiments during the war in hopes to leverage more

⁹ Arayb Aref Najjar, "Falastin Editorial Writers, the Allies, World War II, and the Palestinian Question in the 21st Century," *Simile: Studies in Media & Information Literacy Education* 3, no. 4 (2003).

independence or favor from Britain after the Second World War. Allying with Axis powers posed a risk of serving a new unknown master, and the Arabic populations within Palestine and Bahrain hoped to gain British support to advance their positions within their respective countries following “good-behavior” after the war. Agitating the British would only serve to hurt their chances for favorable independence or power-struggles outcomes should the Allies come out victorious, which they ultimately did.

Chapter 1

Call and Response: Britain's Wartime Propaganda Efforts

*'A province would be won when we had taught the civilians in it to die for our ideal of freedom.'*¹⁰

-T.E. Lawrence

The British revitalized the Ministry of Information created in the First World War for the duration of Second and it would be one of many departments to oversee the creation of propaganda for all of Britain, including Palestine and Bahrain, for the war effort. The Ministry of Information as an entity was created September 4th, 1939, four days after war was declared.¹¹

The task of this Ministry during the Second World War was the managing of communications at home and abroad to the colonies, mandates, and protectorates. This was not dissimilar to the functions of various offices within the Foreign Office and domestically that monitored and crafted communications in the interwar period. However, World War II would see a dramatic shift in the coordination of these efforts to align with the agenda of Britain during the war of a victorious and strong British

¹⁰ T.E. Lawrence, *Seven Pillars of Wisdom* (1935; reprinted 1997), 186.

¹¹ National Archives, "The Ministry of Information," The National Archives, May 06, 2005, <http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/theartofwar/inf3.htm>. Accessed February 2018.

Empire in the face of armed aggression. For Britain, propaganda would serve as a tool to help influence and control populations within Britain as well as abroad in their colonial holdings. This propaganda was focused on three main goals: uniting the empire, maintaining control of the empire, and bolstering troop morale. This work will focus on the motivations based on uniting the empire as well as the focus on maintaining control and influence within the British Empire.

The Ministry of Information as well as other offices within His Majesty's Government created a wide range of media to distribute to support the war effort across the Empire. The Ministry's primary function was to promote "the national case to the public at home and abroad."¹² The main product of the ministry of information included cinema, posters, newsreels, and radio broadcasts. The Colonial Office also engaged in propaganda efforts abroad, under the Colonial Office's Information Services, especially to regions like Palestine and Bahrain. The Colonial Office, however, had a difficult relationship with public relations work improving public opinion within the colonies. It was not until 1940 that the office's first Public Relations Officer was appointed.¹³ The consensus was that the larger organizations such as the Ministry of Information and the BBC would organize the production of propaganda for the empire. Until 1939, the Colonial Office regarding supporting

¹² Ian McLaine, *Ministry of Morale Home Front Morale and the Ministry of Information in World War II*, (London: Allen & Unwin, 1979), p. 12.

¹³ Morris, *British Techniques of Public Relations and Propaganda for Mobilizing East and Central Africa during World War II*, p.12

economic stability in the empire had only taken on propaganda.¹⁴ Ensuring economic stability served as the grounds for making the undertaking of propaganda efforts at the Colonial Office more palatable for the British officials within the Colonial Office. This message of gaining stability through propaganda within troubled regions such as Palestine or far-flung reaches of the empire was not exclusive to the Colonial Office either, as the need for maintaining a sense of security in empire and status quo was necessary at nearly all levels for Britain during the war. The Ministry of Information utilized similar justifications for propaganda at home as well as abroad.¹⁵

The Colonial Office saw the production of propaganda as distasteful, leading to a distinct lack of unified messaging for all colonies as war loomed on the horizon as well as during the early stages of the war itself. This allowed the governments of colonies and mandates to have more flexibility over the propaganda efforts within their respective countries. Oversight of propaganda production for the colonies remained with the Ministry of Information and Parliament itself, but the messaging and distribution of that propaganda often differed depending on its implementation by the more local officers in charge of the various colonies and mandates. The Ministry of Information initially had a strained relationship with the press and propaganda production, similar to the Colonial Office's strained relationship with the idea of

¹⁴ George Peden, 'A Matter of Timing: the Economic Background to British Foreign Policy, 1937-1939,' *History*, 1984, p.16.

¹⁵ National Archives, "The Ministry of Information," <http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/theartofwar/inf3.htm>. Accessed February 2018.

propaganda itself.¹⁶ The Ministry “was responsible for information policy and the output of propaganda material in Allied and neutral countries, with overseas publicity organized geographically.”¹⁷ Under the direction of the Ministry and its divisions, propaganda began to flow out to the United Kingdom, allied Nations, and the colonies within the Empire as the war began in 1939.

In a move that would help to define propaganda policy throughout the war, the Ministry of Information turned to a psychologist for direction to help ease its initial discordant start. Professor Friedrich Bartlett, of Cambridge, was approached and authored a work that informed the Ministry’s attitudes towards mass psychology and propaganda.¹⁸ In his 1940 book, *Political Propaganda*, Bartlett wrote:

In the modern world, political propaganda may be said to have been adopted as a weapon of State, but very nearly everywhere it has been adopted as the tool of a single political party within the State. This is precisely what can happen, except in a very incomplete way in a democratic country.¹⁹

Britain, as opposed to Fascist Italy and Nazi Germany, faced the issue that their country had multiple perspectives expressed within their political system. This meant that the Ministry and other propaganda units within Britain’s government had

¹⁶ David Welch, *World War II Propaganda: Analyzing the Art of Persuasion During Wartime* (Santa Barbara: ABC-CLIO, LLC, 2017), p. xv.

¹⁷ National Archives, "The Ministry of Information," <http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/theartofwar/inf3.htm>. Accessed February 2018.

¹⁸ Friedrich Bartlett, *Political Propaganda*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1940) p. 16.

¹⁹ *ibid*, p.16.

to be seen as above party politics. This would be especially important in messages sent to the colonies that often saw Britain as a hostile, “other” presence, as in the case of Palestine that had seen Arab revolts against British rule in 1936-1939. The British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC), offered various news programs targeted at British and foreign markets to help bolster the international propaganda efforts as the Ministry of Information focused on domestic propaganda and the colonial Office handled propaganda for the empire. The BBC helped to spread British news and media across the world, especially with the advent in the late 1930s of the BBC foreign language programs that were accessible to regions across the empire.

When Sir John Reith, a former director general of the BBC, was appointed as the new minister of information in 1940, he claimed that the news would serve as the front lines or “shock troops” of Britain’s propaganda efforts.²⁰ This meant that the news would serve as the first line of information about wartime events for the people of the Empire to maintain the trust of listeners around the world, including the embittered colonies. Presenting the news as truthfully as possible, the BBC could engender trust amongst its audience regardless of politics or citizenship.

The basic ground rules of propaganda for wartime were laid out in a document in June of 1939, declaring the principles of how Britain would operate any mass propaganda efforts or target propaganda efforts during the war.²¹ Samples of their general rules of propaganda are as follows:

²⁰ Sir John Reith, *Into the Wind* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1949), p.19.

²¹ U.K. National Archives, INF 1/724.

BASIC GROUND RULES OF BRITISH PROPAGANDA DURING WORLD WAR II

I. *General Ideas for Propaganda*

1. In a stratified society persuade the dominant group.
2. To convince the educated minority, propaganda must be subtle and indirect (Mark Antony's speech is a perfect example of cautious propaganda) on the feeling-its-way principle. (Hitler's method is the opposite.)
3. As regards the masses of people, appeal to their instincts and not to their reason.
4. Propaganda should fit the pre-conceived impressions, e.g., a Chinaman thinks every foreigner a cunning person who is prepared to use a concealed gun should wiliness fail.²²

The emphasis on appeals to preconceived notions, stereotypes, and appealing to the dominant group in a society marked how Britain would attempt propaganda efforts at home and abroad. This work does not deal with domestic propaganda, however the notion of taking into account the ideas of "pre-conceived impressions" of groups of peoples is telling of how the style of propaganda used in the Mediterranean and the Middle East was rooted in the British understanding of Arab peoples. They utilized similar tactics of news broadcasts primarily done through the BBC but catered to cultural aspects such as music and language-specific broadcasts to reach their targeted audience, trying to be more palatable to the local populations.

Despite the emphasis on "truthful" news, the BBC radio broadcasts, utilized across their empire, were often pre-censored, a fact known by the government, yet hidden from their listeners. BBC broadcasts were curated to provide this "straight

²² U.K. National Archives, INF 1/724.

news” approach. The Colonial Office utilized these broadcasts and news stories across the colonies and territories as propaganda, hoping to gain the trust of often suspicious or resentful local populations within the far reaches of the empire. The “straight news” policy helped to keep the overtly biased messaging from the colonies within the empire, so as not to be seen as preaching to groups Britain understood to be resistant to colonial rule. The emphasis on pro-British sentiment was especially important abroad as the friction between colonizers and colonized had grown before the war, especially in places such as Palestine. The messages sent to these areas were carefully crafted to cater to what the British believed would help them to foster strong ties with their colonies.

Across the Mediterranean and the Middle East, Britain worked to foster pro-democratic ties with native peoples, extolling the virtues and benefits of their democratic ways of life that could be, if only the democratic countries won the war.²³ However, these efforts were stilted at first due to the lack of experience that the Colonial Office had disseminating mass quantities of information across the Empire and the competition in the market of propaganda already going on.²⁴ The same June 1939 document that laid out the rules of propaganda emphasized radio and film propaganda for “minorities overseas” and cautioned that these were not tactics

²³ Stephanie Wichhart, "Selling Democracy During the Second British Occupation of Iraq, 1941—5." *Journal of Contemporary History*, 48, no. 3 (2013): 510.

²⁴ Fay Gadsden, "Wartime Propaganda in Kenya: The Kenya Information Office, 1939-1945." *The International Journal of African Historical Studies* 19, no. 3 (1986): 401.

isolated to the British.²⁵ The document further states that “the Italians have already employed travelling cinema vans” to show films in Palestine targeted to Arabs.²⁶ Germans and Italians in the Mediterranean and the Middle East, hoping to stir anti-British feeling among Arabs who they believed might be incited to revolt, employed radio broadcasts. The Axis powers had already beaten the Allies to the punch in propaganda efforts and even before the war began, the British were playing catch-up.

The Colonial Office and other British government organizations, aware of the threats posed by fascist countries like Italy and Germany, did not wait until the war broke out to begin pro-democratic messages. They allowed the BBC foreign language broadcasts in Arabic in 1936 to appeal to the Arab populations in the Mediterranean and Middle East.²⁷ The importance of these Arab-language services cannot be underestimated as the Italian and German created propaganda aimed at Arabic speaking people in British-dominated countries across the Middle East. Axis countries focused on propaganda in the Middle East to garner support aimed to destabilize British control in the region.

The Italians were the first to begin disseminating propaganda before the war in the mid-1930s, using radio and film to highlight the “greed[y] imperialism” of the

²⁵ U.K. National Archives, INF 1/724.

²⁶ *Ibid*, INF 1/724

²⁷ Morris, *British Techniques of Public Relations and Propaganda for Mobilizing East and Central Africa during World War II*, p.23.

British and gain territory for Italy.²⁸ Italy was known to be interested in the Mediterranean, looking for a “fourth shore” as early as 1911. By 1922, after a conflict with the Ottomans, Italy controlled much of Libya.²⁹ The efforts of Italy to control Libyan resistance to their rule were often brutal, with 250,000-300,000 Libyans dying at the hands of Italian subjugation from 1911-1943.³⁰ In an effort to expand Italian influence beyond Libyan in the Mediterranean and the prospect of swaying Arab minds from British control, Italy began funneling propaganda into Palestine as well Egypt. Their actions in Libya, however, colored the reactions Arab peoples across the Middle East viewed the Italians, coloring their opinions as that of yet another European oppressor.

Nazi Germany, though not first to broadcast, dominated the Arab wavelengths. German broadcasts began as early as the fall of 1939 and continued throughout the war until 1945.³¹ German radio broadcasts utilized Arab-lecturers and exiles from the Middle East, living in Germany to elicit support in the Middle East for the Third Reich.³² These native speakers provided an Arabic voice to the Reich’s messaging, often directed at Muslims in the Arab World to support the fascist causes.

²⁸ Seth Arsenian, "Wartime Propaganda in the Middle East." *Middle East Journal* 2, no. 4 (1948): 419.

²⁹ Dirk Vandewalle, *A History of Modern Libya*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012) 29-30.

³⁰ Ibid, p. 31.

³¹ Jeffrey Herf, *Nazi Propaganda for the Arab World* (New Haven Conn.: Yale University Press, 2009), 2.

³² Arsenian, "Wartime Propaganda in the Middle East," 419-420.

Direct appeals and the attempts to garner feelings of personal connection between the fascist countries and the Arabs of the Middle East forced the British to respond.

Fascist Italy and Germany had similar aims to the British to foster stronger ties with Arabs in the region. The creation of the BBC Arabic Service itself was a direct countermeasure to the spread of Italian propaganda in the mid-1930s.³³

Britain initially struggled in the Middle East, needing the BBC Arabic Service to reach Arabs in places like Egypt and Palestine as they had little traction with the Arabic populations.³⁴ Britain garnered little goodwill in Palestine after its response to the Palestine Revolt in the late 1930s before the outbreak of the Second World War. In Egypt and Iraq, they struggled to gain an audience who preferred more native radio broadcasts. The more anti-British sentiment before the war that existed across the region also had the British scrambling for traction against initial Italian propaganda efforts. However, Arabs found little common ground in Italian arguments against European imperialism when Arabs learned of Italian actions in Libya in their own colonial efforts.³⁵ The subjugation and oppression of Libyan resistance to Italian rule colored the Arab response to Italian propaganda within the Middle East and Mediterranean. With over 320,000 hectares of land given over to Italian colonists in Libya by 1931, it was clear that the Italians were interested in imperial aims over

³³ Callum A. Macdonald, "Radio Bari. Italian Wireless Propaganda in the Middle East and British Countermeasures, 1934-1938," in: *Middle Eastern Studies* 13. 1977, pp. 195-207.

³⁴ *ibid*, 204.

³⁵ Claudio Segre, "Italo Balbo and the Colonization of Libya." *Journal of Contemporary History* 7, no. 3/4 (1972): 141-55.

Arabs.³⁶ Italian propagandists' attempts to portray Britain as the greedy imperialists were thwarted by their own colonial desires in the region. When war broke out across the globe, the prospect of supporting the likes of fascist Italy were not entirely attractive.

The German broadcasts and propaganda efforts aimed at Arabs across North Africa and the Middle East focused on fostering other ties rather than anti-imperialist messages. The Third Reich aimed propaganda with "selective reading[s] of the Koran and a focus on the anti-Jewish currents within Islam combined with Nazi denunciations of Western imperialism."³⁷ They employed Arabic speakers and exiles from the Middle East to appeal to a sense of Arab nationalism in Egypt and colonies like Palestine. Berlin employed numerous Arabic speakers and notable figures like the controversial Amin al-Husseini, Grand Mufti of Jerusalem, exiled from Palestine by the British in 1937. While the Germans did not deny the anti-imperialist feeling within Arab countries, their efforts focused more heavily on Islam and "what they depicted as the ancient tradition of hatred of the Jews within Islam itself."³⁸ These efforts were mainly focused on Palestine, where Nazi Germany believed there to be large amounts of anti-Semitic feeling. The Grand Mufti of Jerusalem, Haj Amin el-Husseini, wrote in support of the Third Reich that the "current Jewish influence on

³⁶ Gary Fowler, "Italian Colonization of Tripolitania." *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 62, no. 4 (1972): 634.

³⁷ Jeffrey Herf, *Nazi Propaganda for the Arab World*, 5.

³⁸ *ibid*, 7.

economy and politics' was 'damaging everywhere and needed to be fought.'"³⁹

However, the Mufti did not speak for all Arabs, as Walter Schellenberg, who would take command as head of foreign intelligence, reported in 1943 that Palestine was not developing into the previously desired center for anti-British sentiment and in fact was being "guided" by the British away from any Axis propaganda.⁴⁰

Britain understood that countering Axis propaganda efforts was important to maintaining the status quo of their control in the Middle East and in all their colonial holdings. In Iraq, their pro-democracy based propaganda fell flat in the face of the realities of British intervention in the country.⁴¹ This led to military intervention and the "Second British Occupation of Iraq," a military intervention of the British into the country after the rise of a pro-Axis government in 1941. Britain's propaganda efforts were sullied by the realities of this occupation period and lost traction with Iraqis, utilizing local politicians and agents who borrowed pro-democracy and reform rhetoric for their own speeches and actions.⁴² The British learned in its dealings with Iraq that alienating a local population would lead to a failure of any propaganda they generated. This helped to inform their other propaganda efforts elsewhere, which emphasized a colonial atmosphere that held Britain in the position as the mother

³⁹ Ibid, 16.

⁴⁰ Schellenberg is quoted in René Wildangel, "The Invention of "Islamofascism: Nazi Propaganda to the Arab World and Perceptions from Palestine." *Die Welt Des Islams* 52, no. 3/4 (2012): 532.

⁴¹ Stephanie Wichhart, "Selling Democracy During the Second British Occupation of Iraq, 1941—5," 510.

⁴² Ibid, 510-511.

country or benefactor to the native population. BBC broadcasts in native languages offered the idea of connection, and the scheduled music broadcasts across the regions in the Middle East offered more local flavor offered recognition and appreciation of Arabic culture.

The production of propaganda to be disseminated in the colonies consisted of mainly radio broadcast and film. This did not limit the censorship of other voices, however, as the shuttering of some editorials and censorship of journals printed that were suspected of espousing anti-British sentiment.⁴³ This kept local anti-British views out of the airwaves and papers, freeing space for the British to fill with their own news. This allowed the British to focus on the only other source of anti-British propaganda, the Axis countries, through their BBC Arabic Service broadcasts and the local efforts.

The next two chapters of this work will focus on the specific actions in the regions of Palestine and Bahrain and the British efforts to sway hearts and minds to maintain their influence in both regions. Palestine, under more direct control, received heavy propaganda efforts, while Bahrain, an area of strategic importance but less direct control, saw propaganda aimed at maintaining current ties rather than broaden them. Both countries, however, did not respond positively due to mere pro-British feelings among the populace. Rather, both regions responded to propaganda in the hopes of gaining British favor once the war was over.

⁴³ "Palestine Anti-British Propaganda- Local Press Articles," UK National Archives, FO 371/24562/2962.

Chapter 2

Uniting Disparate Communities: British Propaganda in Palestine

Palestine became a Mandate under the authority of the British government in 1920 following the end of the First World War and the fall of the Ottoman state. The League of Nations in 1922 confirmed the Allied powers regarding the governing of Palestine under the British, writing:

Whereas the Principal Allied Powers have also agreed that the Mandatory should be responsible for putting into effect the declaration originally made on November 2nd, 1917, by the Government of His Britannic Majesty, and adopted by the said Powers, in favour of the establishment in Palestine of a national home for the Jewish people, it being clearly understood that nothing should be done which might 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...⁴⁴

⁴⁴ League of Nations, "The Palestine Mandate." accessed via "The Avalon Project: The Palestine Mandate," 2008, http://avalon.law.yale.edu/20th_century/palmanda.asp. Accessed February 2018.

The League of Nations placed Palestine under the control of the British and formalized the Balfour Declaration promise that Palestine would be established as a National Jewish homeland. The conflicting promises of the British with the Balfour Declaration, McMahon-Hussein Correspondence, and their own personal interest in Palestine complicated the tenure of the British as the rulers of Palestine. It was unclear from the beginning who meant to control Palestine in the future. This nebulous atmosphere created by British policy regarding future ownership caused frustration among Jews and Arabs alike in Palestine. Tensions rose between all three groups during the entirety of the mandate period, already causing alienation from the local populations. By the 1930s, Arab unrest regarding British rule and the influx of Jewish immigrants bubbled to the surface. Arab revolts began in 1936 and were ultimately crushed by the British military in 1939, on the eve of war with Germany.⁴⁵ For the Arabs of Palestine, they felt they had been betrayed and suppressed by the British at the heels of the revolt. Britain, fearful of the Arabs throwing their support behind the Axis, focused on presenting a more appealing demeanor to the Arab population specifically to counter Axis propaganda. Despite the revolts and tensions between all three populations of Palestine, Arabs and Jews alike were expected to support the British throughout the war as colonial holding.

⁴⁵ Gudrun Krämer, *A History of Palestine: From the Ottoman Conquest to the Founding of the State of Israel*, translated by Graham Harman, (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2008), 297.

Motivations for Propaganda in Palestine

Britain's use of propaganda in Palestine came as a direct result of trying to achieve their goals of unifying and cementing their influence within their empire. One primary motivation of those goals in Palestine was fear over Italian and German propaganda policies that were in place before the Second World War began.

The first propaganda attempts in Palestine began with Italy broadcasting propaganda over Radio Bari in 1935, seeking to sway Arab minds away from British influence in the region before the fighting commenced. Fortunately for Britain, the Italians made initial missteps in reaching a Palestinian audience however, utilizing Libyan broadcasters who did not understand the Palestinian dialect and whose speech was even ridiculed by Palestinians.⁴⁶ Libyan presenters were replaced with Egyptians and Palestinians, though Italy never saw a dedicated following to their broadcasts due to the content of their propaganda and the dislike of Italians by the Arabs in Palestine regarding the Italian operations in Libya, which will be discussed further in this chapter. Italian broadcasts gained listeners due to their more extensive Arabic-language entertainment broadcasts which was overshadowed by the shift to the BBC

⁴⁶ MacDonald, "Radio Bari, Italian Wireless Propaganda in the Middle East and British Countermeasures, 1934-1938," 196.

Arabic service by the British and the Palestine Broadcast Service established in the late 1930s.⁴⁷

German efforts in Palestine were more broad and intensive than that of the Italians.⁴⁸ Early in 1938, Berlin began broadcasting to Arabs across the Middle East, utilizing Arab exiles to support their Arabic-language programs. Arab exiles, motivated perhaps by a financial incentive through a broadcasters' salary, an academic incentive to finish their German degrees in university, or an ideological incentive that support of Germany may prove beneficial for Arab nationalism, translated and broadcast for Germany throughout much of the war.⁴⁹ The agenda of this broadcasting focused on the creation of a connection between Arab Muslims and Nazi ideology. From the beginning, Germany projected the image of Germany as informed and sympathetic to the Arab cause in the Middle East.⁵⁰ Palestine, as a hotbed of Arab and Jewish tension and anti-imperial sentiment held by both Arabs and Jews, was a prime target for Axis propaganda and the British developed their propaganda in the country to keep their grip on the country secure during the war. They attempted to draw parallels between Nazi ideology and the messages of Islam in

⁴⁷ For popularity of Radio Bari see Anna Baldinetti, "Fascist Propaganda in the Maghrib." *Geschichte Und Gesellschaft* 37, no. 3 (2011): 408-36. For the shift of Palestinian listenership to the Palestine Broadcast Service, see Andrea Stanton, *This Is Jerusalem Calling: State Radio in Mandate Palestine* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2013).

⁴⁸ Arsenian, "Wartime Propaganda," 419.

⁴⁹ Peter Wein, "The Culpability of Exile. Arabs in Nazi Germany," *Geschichte Und Gesellschaft*, 37, no. 3 (2011), 357.

⁵⁰ Jeffrey Herf, *Nazi Propaganda for the Arab World* (New Haven Conn.: Yale University Press, 2009), 36.

order to sway Arab minds to their cause. Despite its conquering of Europe, Germany also broadcast the message that it was the anti-colonial power in the war, seeking to end the oppression of imperialists, such as Britain. German radio broadcasts reached much of the same audience as the Italians and the British banned listening to either foreign radio-stations in an attempt to limit Axis influence.

Palestine experienced a unique set of circumstances, unlike many other British colonies. Not only were there colonizer-versus-colonized conflicts but also the mismatched promises of the British established a trifecta in Palestine: the Jews versus the Arabs versus the British. The British would have to contend with two possible adversarial populations to manage using propaganda and policy decisions. Their tactics before 1939 were often mismatched, seeking to claim or co-opt groups to use to bolster British sentiment such as encouraging Jewish and overall immigration after the 1920s. After 1920, the population of Palestine grew from nearly 700,000 to nearly 1.6 million people by the end of the Mandate in 1948.⁵¹ However, this immigration, mainly consisting of Jewish immigrants, created hostility from the Arabs of the region and the British attempted to heavily curtail Jewish immigration at the onset of World War II to dispel that resentment. Immigration was stilted and inconsistent during the war years, only fueling the tense relationship between the Arabs, Jews, and British in Palestine. With Jewish refugees coming from Nazi-occupied Europe, Mandatory Palestine struggled to account for and control the flux of

⁵¹ Anglo-American Committee of Inquiry on Jewish Problems of Palestine and Europe. *A Survey of Palestine: prepared in December 1945 and January 1946 for the information of the Anglo-American Committee of Inquiry*. Government Printer, South Africa, 1946.

Jewish immigrants. While not all of the immigration from 1920-1948 was spawned from seeking refuge from the Reich, the promises of the Balfour Declaration and the persecution facing Jews in Europe during the Second World War influenced these numbers. Arabs in Palestine saw this as a threat to their desire to gain control of the region after the end of the mandate. The White Paper of 1939 limited Jewish immigration to 15,000 annually, frustrating the Jews of Palestine.⁵² However, even these crackdowns were not enough to quell the fears of the Arabs in the region that they would be displaced or the frustration over the mixed messages of the British as to who would gain control after the mandate ended.

While this work does not focus on propaganda aimed at Jews within Palestine, the British did not ignore this population. However, their efforts to influence Jewish minds were far less elaborate by design. Fear over the potential risk of Arab hostility, Britain chose to focus their attention during the war on the Arab population specifically. The Jews of Palestine were told that the focus on calming and propaganda targeting the Arab populations in Palestine were in their best interest and “served the public good.”⁵³ Hebrew listeners were directed to short-wave radio receivers and to their own newspapers to receive news and programming from abroad. British officials believed this course of action to be easier for the wealthier Jewish community and were content to provide these excuses and continue to focus

⁵² "British White Paper of 1939," The Avalon Project, http://avalon.law.yale.edu/20th_century/brwh1939.asp.

⁵³ Andrea Stanton, *This Is Jerusalem Calling: State Radio in Mandate Palestine* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2013), 123.

on the Arabs of Palestine, who they saw as at risk to the lure of Italian and German propaganda efforts.

Britain first moved from rural Arabic broadcasts under the Palestine Broadcast Service to the BBC Arabic Service in the late 1930s to combat Italian and German propaganda efforts. The Arab communities within Palestine had few alternatives to the Palestine Broadcast Service and with the British operating the Service through stations in Jerusalem and Ramallah; they had direct local access and were able to hire Palestinian locals to serve as broadcasters. Prominent Palestinian elites, such as nationalist poet Ibrahim Tuqan and pan-Arabist Ajaj Nuwayhid, took on prominent roles with the broadcasting service.⁵⁴ This lent credibility and legitimacy to the program with local Arabs, who already had complicated and tense relationships with the British government ruling Palestine. The overall increase of Arabic-language service was primarily aimed at protecting this population from the threat of anti-British propaganda from Axis powers.

Palestine became strategically important to Britain during the war beginning in 1940. In 1940, the Wehrmacht marched on Europe, conquering Denmark, Norway, Belgium, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, and most of France. When France fell to the Germans, the Axis-friendly Vichy government took control of Algeria, Morocco, Tunisia, Syria and Lebanon.⁵⁵ Italy, who occupied Rhodes and Libya, joined Germany officially in the war during June of 1940. These movements by the fascist

⁵⁴ Stanton, *This Is Jerusalem Calling*, 124.

⁵⁵ *ibid*, 297.

powers threatened Britain's hold on the Mediterranean, establishing Palestine as a strategic point for the British during the war. Palestine was more important than ever for both sides of the war as the conflict spread across the globe. This importance resulted in a coordinated effort to maintain strength in the area for the British and an attempt by the Axis powers to gain a foothold in the region.

Propaganda Utilized in Palestine

The British utilized radio, cinema, and censorship as propaganda tools within Palestine. In regards to censorship, the British operated similarly to past exploits in silencing publications as they had done previously in the region when tensions were at a high during the Arab revolts of 1936-1939. They closely monitored publications within Transjordan, assisted by the French in Syria who reported on publications within their own colonial holdings through official correspondence with British agencies. The relationship between the French and British established routes of correspondence between the intelligence and propaganda agencies of both countries that sought out publications that mentioned anti-British and Allied sentiment.⁵⁶ These reports, often copies of French findings, were collected by the Foreign Office provided both translations of the articles as well as English language reports on the

⁵⁶ FO 684/12/39/2175/2.

feelings of Arab populations with regard to Britain and Britain's activities in the region.⁵⁷ Monitoring by the Allies was heavily used to keep a careful eye on the stirrings of the Arab populations of the region, vigilant for signs of influence from the Axis powers' propaganda efforts. Censorship was common enough to prevent dissemination of anti-British printed material, especially pamphlets and periodicals that were published by Arab journals and newspapers.⁵⁸ Similar shuttering of Arab press had occurred as punishment during the revolts of 1936-1939 due to Arab resistance against the British.⁵⁹

Censorship silenced dissenting voices, though some newspapers did publish support of the Allies, such as the Jaffa newspaper *Falastin*. *Falastin* published an encouragement to support the Allies cause early in the war, urging Palestinian Arabs to support the British in hopes of gaining favor after the war was won.⁶⁰ The emphasis on these sentiments was far more practical than emotional and not born of sympathy or influence of pro-British propaganda. There were no pleas for sympathy for Britain, rather a logical reasoning that Arab support in this war may mean British support for the Arabs control of Palestine when the war was won. *Falastin* itself

⁵⁷ *ibid.*

⁵⁸ *ibid.*

⁵⁹ Arayb Aref Najjar, "Falastin Editorial Writers, the Allies, World War II, and the Palestinian Question in the 21st Century," *Simile: Studies in Media & Information Literacy Education* 3, no. 4 (2003).

⁶⁰ "Arabs and War," *Falastin* (1939), pp. 1, 4.

continued to emphasize support for the British throughout the war, an outspoken voice in an already tense environment.

Falastin was allowed to continue publishing due to this outward pro-British sentiment and published many articles describing the war effort and encouraging support of Britain. Periodicals that discussed the complicated relationship with Britain continued to be published, discussing the macro and micro-level conflicts present in Palestine. At the larger universal level, as Orayb Aref Najjar refers to it, Britain fought against Nazism and for the freedom of oppressed peoples.⁶¹ At the local level, there existed the British and Arab conflict as colonizer and colonized. *Falastin* focused on the universal level throughout the war, setting the local concerns of Arab oppression by the British on the backburner to be dealt with when the larger conflict ended with British victory. The support of the Arabs for Britain sought to garner British support for the Arabs after the war was won. The articles published in *Falastin* provide a window into some of the dimensions of the local Arab sentiment present at the time. These writers, while elites, did have access to Arab readers and were not censored due to their outward pro-British statements. With British support firmly in hand, there could exist a chance for a Palestinian Arab state, fulfilling Arab nationalist goals. This, however, was not to be the case. Despite any goodwill earned from remaining outwardly pro-British in the war, the British promises to multiple

⁶¹ Najjar, "Falastin Editorial Writers, the Allies, World War I, and the Palestinian Question in the 21st Century."

parties and the international pressure for a Jewish homeland kept these hopes from becoming reality.

The British saw that loyalty from the Arabs or the Jews in Palestine could not be taken entirely for granted due to any feelings of being a citizen of the Empire.⁶² A more direct approach would be necessary. Jewish response to the White Paper and the subsequent British crackdown on immigration remained wholly aimed at propaganda and attempts to gain international pressure against Britain. Arabs were being courted, the all too recent animosity between the British and Arabs during the revolts on the mid-1930s still in the forefront of most minds.

In order to restore faith as well as increase the visibility of Britain in the region, police posts were reoccupied; both military and British civilian officials became more visible around Arab villages in order to engender Arab sympathy. One British police sergeant was told by an Arab shopkeeper at an event hosted by the Army Band that: “last year you [the Palestine Police Force] were blowing up our houses and shops, and now you’re courting us with your band concert.”⁶³ In 1940, British officials in Haifa even sent invitations out to a dance to support the war relief effort, as seen in the image below:

⁶² AJ Sherman, *Mandate Days: British Lives in Palestine, 1918-1948*, (New York, N.Y.: Thames and Hudson, 1998), 133.

⁶³ Robin Martin, “Reminiscences of service in the Palestine Police Force, 1936-1948, and in the Nyasaland Police Force, 1949-1964,” GB 161 MSS. Brit. Emp. s. 514.



British Police poster advertising a dance in aid of Lord Mayor of London's Relief Fund for victims of the Blitz, Haifa, 1940

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These events hoped to bring multiple populations together as a part of the Empire and celebrate the British Mandate and the government of Palestine with an effort to also distract from the tensions of the war.

Radio served as the primary means of disseminating propaganda for the British in Palestine after the creation of the Palestine Broadcast Service in 1936. In the 1930s, the presence of propaganda and radio operated by the British was limited. The British increased their efforts of radio broadcasting, especially to Palestinian

⁶⁴ Sherman, *Mandate Days*, p. 139.

Arabs, due to the rise of Axis broadcasts. By 1942, there were around 155,770 radio receivers in Palestine according to the U.S. Office of War Information.⁶⁵ The increase in prominence of radio in Palestine meant that radio was a more attractive method of propaganda for both the Axis and the British. The lack of internal infrastructure in Palestine meant for propaganda broadcasts, this led to a scramble between the Colonial Office, the Foreign Office, and the Palestinian government with input from the BBC.⁶⁶ The establishment of the BBC Arabic Service and the growth of the Palestine Broadcast service filled in the gaps of range the British initially struggled against that the Axis overcame through broadcasts from Germany and Italy itself.

Earlier in the war, the British had adjusted their wartime broadcasts to help boost troop morale in the Middle East, broadcasting more Anglophile news and entertainment focused on military morale within the regions that Britain stationed troops, rather than Arab or Hebrew listeners in the beginning of the war. This shift caused a backlash, dropping the number of Arabic and Hebrew listeners, the opposite of what the British wanted as the war continued into the 1940s. The initial push towards troop morale in early 1940 stalled the growth of new listenership in Palestine, especially native listeners. The stilted growth and even loss of Arab listeners worried the government, who created a Controller of Arabic Programs intending to re-energize Arab listenership during the war. The first to hold this new title was ‘Ajaj

⁶⁵ Joel Beinin, Joel. “Jeffrey Herf, *Nazi Propaganda for the Arab World* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 2009) *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 42, no. 4 (2010): 689–92.

⁶⁶ *ibid*, 93.

Nuwayhid, a pan-Arabist who publicly opposed British presence in Palestine. His reputation did not stymie the formation of Nuwayhid's relationship with the mandate government, who hired him in 1939. Nuwayhid's acceptance of the position speaks to the pragmatism of the viewpoint that support of the British now, in their hour of need, could reap benefits for the Arab cause after the war was won.

Under Nuwayhid's leadership, the broadcast service became immensely popular with increased religious content, children's programs, and more expansive musical choices.⁶⁷ The Palestine Broadcast Service's Arabic content flourished with live musical performances, literature discussions, and even a section on household management. While the latter may not sound particularly enthralling, the program on household management was an immensely popular series, earning full transcripts printed in *Falastin*. This emphasis on local news and culture earned new listeners to the British-run station.

Nuwayhid did not find many friends within his employment with the British. While at the Palestine broadcast service, Britain was uncomfortable with an Arab nationalist at the helm of the government's radio station.⁶⁸ The difference of agendas cut a clear divide between Nuwayhid and the British government. The British government sought to unite the mandate of Palestine under the banner of the British Empire and solidify their hold on the region during the Second World War. Nuwayhid sought to seek a stronger claim for an independent Palestine despite the war. The

⁶⁷ *ibid*, 137-138.

⁶⁸ *ibid*, 139.

disdain for his agenda is evidenced by the remarks of one British official who ran the English and Hebrew section of the PBS Ralph Poston, who claimed:

Soon after [Nuwayhid's] arrival in the PBS steps were taken by the PIO on his behalf to secure the dismissal of the two Arabs who had been trained as broadcasters and had run the Arabic programs since the inception of the station in 1936. He was thus in command of an important service of which he had not the least technical knowledge, and for which he received no training, with no support but comparatively junior announcers. He is a difficult personality who must be absolute master, and this led to the dismissal of the old staff at his instigation.⁶⁹

Poston saw Nuwayhid's actions as the head of the Arabic section as incompetent at times and ill intentioned. Poston did not disparage Nuwayhid's ability to attract listeners, but that the scope of his involvement in programming in the Arabic section to music, opinion, and politics was too far-reaching. These remarks are coming from a British official working for the government, so the bias against the Arab nationalist, who was seen as less than capable for this role, must be acknowledged. Poston saw much of Nuwayhid's efforts as a distraction and a detriment to the reputation of the station itself with the local populace.⁷⁰

Radio was not the only field of new media used as propaganda. Cinema was also utilized in Palestine as well as radio, though its spread to Arab populations was hindered by the lack of access to cinemas by local populations. Cities like Jerusalem and Haifa had cinemas enjoyed by the British, Jews, and Arabs. Jerusalem itself had

⁶⁹ British Propaganda in Palestine memorandum by Ralph Poston, July 1942, CO 733 442 3.

⁷⁰ For more information regarding Poston's remarks and views of local opinion to the British government, see his oral history interview with the Imperial War Museum, Palestine - Interview With Ralph Poston, 1977, <https://www.iwm.org.uk/collections/item/object/1060005484>.

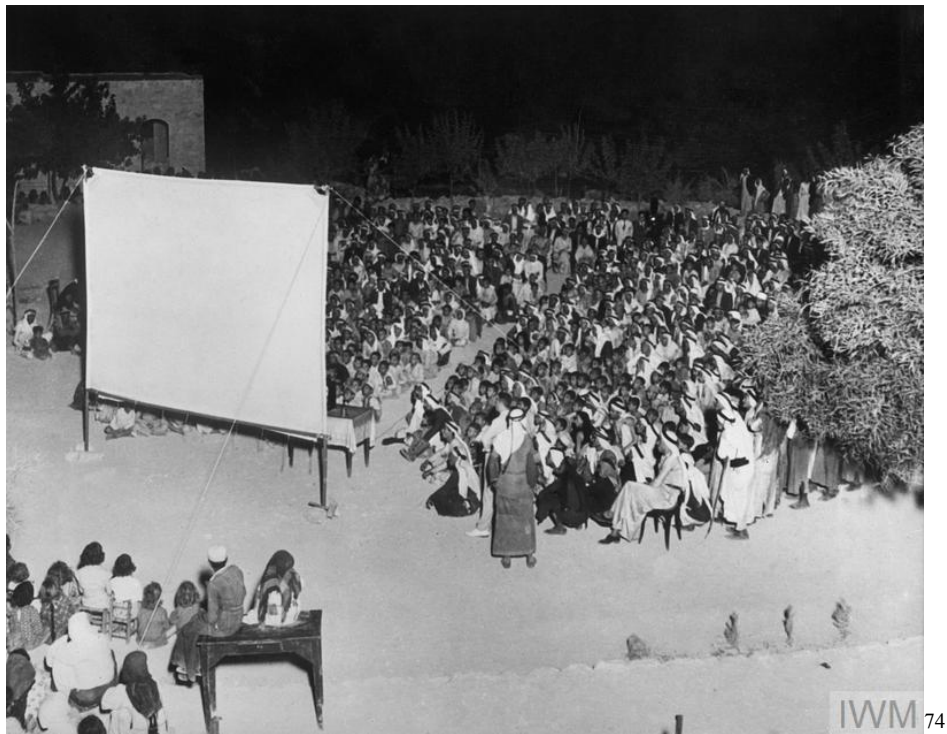
half a dozen cinemas that helped offer recreation to those seeking distraction from the war itself.⁷¹ The Ministry of Information created a series of newsreels such as the *War Pictorial News* that was shown to both military and local civilian populations across the Middle East.⁷² These films were shown domestically and to troops. Civilian population could watch the progress of the war, developments of interest to Arabs and Jews alike in Palestine as the North African campaign continued in the 1940s. These newsreels were censored to project the image of a more victorious Britain, an instance of the “straight” news approach of the Ministry of Information to keep outward bias as subtle as possible.

Films such as *Men of Africa* were shown to a wide range of audiences domestically in London and to troops abroad, highlighting the grandiosity of the British Empire, focusing on the positive contributions being made around the globe, even in Palestine. While the film does not have a list of countries or locations played beyond the domestic British locations, the film shows a clear indication of how Britain viewed their colonies and portrayed their relationship to a broad audience within their Empire and even in New York. The British show their colonies as serving in a supportive role and completely subservient to the will of their imperial masters. The film itself references the tensions in the region, highlighting the highly “disputed” nature of the region and the “fortitude” of the British who manage the

⁷¹ Sherman, *Mandate Days*, p. 165.

⁷² Lee Grieveson and Colin MacCabe, *Film and the End of Empire. Cultural Histories of Cinema*, (Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), 62.

mandate in Palestine.⁷³ To combat the problem of accessibility to the more rural populations, the British Public Information Office sent travelling cinema vans to villages around their colonies, including Palestine. This brought films and newsreels to the smaller communities without access to the cinemas of larger cities. These cinema vans brought crowds from the local populations, people often sitting on the ground, cross-legged, to watch the films brought by the British to their community. This is seen in the image below from the Imperial War Museum:



⁷³ “Men of Africa,” Film, Colonial Empire Marketing Board (Great Britain, 1940).

⁷⁴ *Film Propaganda*, March, 1943, Film And Photography During The Second World War, Imperial War Museum, London.

The photograph above highlights the crowds these cinema vans could draw from villages. Boys and men sit in chairs or on the ground in front of the screen and in the bottom left corner women and girls can be seen sitting behind the screen. This meant that the consumption of these films was not limited to just men and boys, but could be consumed by women and girls of Arab populations as well in these more rural places. Cinemas in the cities allowed both genders, often utilized by Jewish and British civilians as well as Arabs, but in the rural villages, the inclusion of Arab women and girls shows how far a reach these films could achieve under the guidance of the Public Information Office.

Efficacy of Propaganda

The success of British efforts of propaganda in Palestine is hard to quantify accurately. The focus on using British friendly news rather than outright attacks against the Axis as seen in Radio Bari or German broadcasts showed a marked difference in how the British attempted to sway minds. Due to the more subtle method of news reporting via radio transmission as opposed to the aggressive anti-British remarks of Bari or the Berlin broadcasts, the effect on the Arab population is imprecise. There was censorship of radio in the form of listening restrictions.

Falastin, the Jaffa newspaper, remarked that many cafes and business owners had to

display their licenses above their radios in case of inspection by the Palestine Police Force.⁷⁵ It was forbidden to listen to Axis broadcasts, though few were arrested for violating this. One particular exception was the arrest of Abd al-Rahman Hassan Mar'a who was arrested for listening to an unfriendly foreign station and fined 10 guineas.⁷⁶ Responses to anti-British broadcasts were likely subsequently censored if there was support shown to the Axis powers.

Arab response to propaganda is hard to measure from European archival sources, as public opinions of local populations was collected by British officials tasked with collecting local temperature, but not preserved within the archives. The Arab periodicals such as *Falastin*, offer some insight, though heavily edited due to the looming nature of British oversight. Outside anti-British publications from Transjordan such as in Syria and intercepted by the French seems to harp on the negative view of the imperialist attitudes of Britain leading up to the war, but the censorship of these opinions in pamphlets and publications silenced these voices.

Palestine did not see a pro-Axis Arab led revolt under the rallying cry of fascism. Despite Axis anticipation, Arabs in the region did not outwardly support the fascist cause in the war to the extent that was initially predicted. To the contrary, there was a broad public discourse supporting liberalism, democracy,

⁷⁵ "New Licenses for Radio Receivers," *Falastin* (June 9, 1940), p. 5 translated in Stanton, *This is Jerusalem Calling!* p. 128.

⁷⁶ Stanton, *This is Jerusalem Calling!* p. 129.

constitutionalism, and a direct rejection of totalitarianism.⁷⁷ Around 12,000 Palestinians volunteered to serve in the British military during the Second World War, supporting the Allied cause.⁷⁸ The imperialist nature of the fascist regimes in Europe was not more attractive than the current imperialist powers in charge of the region. Discussion in newspapers like *Falastin* showed that Arab journalists and intellectuals were participating in a discourse over Axis and Allied efforts.⁷⁹ With *Falastin* and other newspapers outwardly supportive of the allies in the war, they disparaged the Axis powers, repeatedly condemning Italian and German expansionary actions.⁸⁰

Radio programs were indicative of this discourse as well. Listenership to German radio broadcasts was only at 13% according to a poll of radio listeners taken in 1943.⁸¹ The most popular radio stations were between Cairo and Jerusalem's radio stations, though the popularity of local news is unsurprising. Most listeners preferred more relevant, local news compared to the broad and often far reaching broadcasts of Radio Berlin or Radio Bari. With the competition of Arabic-language programs closer to home, the stations broadcast from axis powers lost many key listeners. In

⁷⁷ Ulrike Freitag and Israel Gershoni, "The Politics of Memory. The Necessity for Historical Investigation into Arab Responses to Fascism and Nazism." *Geschichte Und Gesellschaft* 37, no. 3 (2011): 320.

⁷⁸ Mustafa Abbasi, *Palestinians Fighting against Nazis: The Story of Palestinian Volunteers in the Second World War*, *War in History*, 2017, 12.

⁷⁹ Muṣṭafā Kabahā, *The Palestinian Press As Shaper of Public Opinion 1929-39 : Writing Up a Storm*, (London: Vallentine Mitchell, 2007).

⁸⁰ René Wildangel, "The Invention of "Islamofascism: Nazi Propaganda to the Arab World and Perceptions from Palestine." *Die Welt Des Islams* 52, no. 3/4 (2012): 540.

⁸¹ Stuart C Dodd, *A Pioneer Radio Poll in Lebanon, Syria and Palestine* (Jerusalem: Government Printer, 1943), 19.

this aspect, British efforts were successful in Palestine utilizing the Palestine Broadcast Service to gain listeners, though with no other Palestinian options, it is hard to gage if those listeners were merely listeners of necessity or of choice. Nevertheless, there remained continued support of Britain over the Axis powers during World War II in Palestine.

Chapter 3

Under Our Protection: British Propaganda in Bahrain

By the end of the First World War, Britain had taken a more active role in Bahrain, expanding beyond their economic hegemony in the region after the treaties of the late 1800s.⁸² Before 1932, Bahrain functioned primarily as a naval outpost for the British Navy and traded in pearls, though that industry was crippled by the introduction of Japanese pearls into the market in the early 1930s.⁸³ Luckily for the country, Standard Oil of California discovered oil in 1932.⁸⁴ The discovery shifted attention to the newfound oil fields and increased the British presence in Bahrain to secure the production of oil for the Empire. Not only did the new oil fields increase employment opportunities for the people of Bahrain, hard hit after the decline of the pearl industry, it also increased the economic influence of the British in Bahrain as well.

The people of Bahrain gained more stable employment working in the oil fields, jobs provided by British and American companies, rather than the more

⁸² Abdul Lateef, "Bahrain: Emerging Gulf State," *Pakistan Horizon* 26, no. 1 (1973): 12.

⁸³ David Commins, *The Gulf States: A Modern History* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2014), 142.

⁸⁴ Daniel Yergin, "The Incessant Lure of Kuwait's Oil," *The New York Times*, January 13, 1991, <https://www.nytimes.com/1991/01/13/business/forum-the-incessant-lure-of-kuwait-s-oil.html?pagewanted=all&src=pm>. Accessed March 2018.

seasonal and fluctuating pearling industry. The British created oil refineries in the country to begin oil production for the empire. Bahrain's importance increased as Bahrain was only one of three locations in the Middle East that had access to oil at the time.⁸⁵ The outbreak of the Second World War ramped up the significance of these oil fields, as they would be crucial to the Allied war effort.

Unlike in Palestine, Bahrain enjoyed far more local control over their country, despite the British influence that was ever-present in their government structure. While Palestine was under mandate rule, Bahrain was a protectorate with their own political leader and therefore could act more independently than Palestinians could hope to. This does not mean that the leaders or people of Bahrain enjoyed total control, as they relied on Britain for protection and economic stimulus, however they enjoyed more of a partnership than Palestine and the British did. This is important to remember when addressing how the British attempted to sway Bahrain using propaganda, though in that instance, Bahrain had other motivating factors, quite similar to the agendas of local elites in Palestine for supporting or at the least, lowering their voices of dissent for the British during the Second World War.

Four months after Italy declared war on Britain and France in 1939, the Italians attacked Bahrain to try and cripple oil production for the Allied powers. Italian planes dropped bombs on Allied oil refineries in Bahrain, causing minimal

⁸⁵ "Bahrain Protectorate," *The British Empire*, <http://www.britishempire.co.uk/maproom/bahrain.htm>. Accessed March 2018.

damage.⁸⁶ This direct attack, however, solidified the nature of Britain's relationship as the protector of Bahrain. Similar bombings of Tel Aviv and Haifa by the Italians also saw an increased British military presence in Palestine similar to the response in Bahrain.⁸⁷ This military intervention brought more tension in Palestine than the military presence in Bahrain saw. Bahrain, a small Gulf State with little military abilities at the time, needed Britain to withstand the onslaught of the Axis. The treaties that put the British as the preeminent influencer and protector of the region were now backed by direct military actions from the Royal Air Force and the Navy that sought to safeguard Bahrain and British oil interests in the Gulf. As the Second World War continued, Bahrain served as a strategic point in the Persian Gulf, serving as a naval outpost and a supplier of oil for the British.

Many of Britain's decisions regarding Bahrain in the Second World War were motivated predominantly by defending their oil interests even among their own allies. In 1943, when the United States requested official representation in Bahrain, Britain denied the request.⁸⁸ In fact, the British Political Agent, a civilian representative from the British government, was the only foreign official the ruler of Bahrain was allowed

⁸⁶ "Southern Theatre: Record Raid," *Time*, October 28, 1940, <http://content.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,764881,00.html>. Accessed March 2018.

⁸⁷ "The Italian Bombing" Tel Aviv Municipality. Retrieved 10 September 2011, <http://tel-aviv.millennium.org.il/NR/exeres/A90C2246-AEE0-4273-9EC7-9BD7CAEC145B,frameless.htm?NRMODE=Published>, Accessed May 2018.

⁸⁸ Gennaro Errichiello, "Foreign Workforce in the Arab Gulf States (1930—1950): Migration Patterns and Nationality Clause." *International Migration Review* 46, no. 2 (2012): 396.

to communicate with.⁸⁹ The Political Agent was often the only advisor to the princely states in the Gulf, Bahrain included. In Bahrain, this meant that the Political Agent was the only representative of a foreign government that was allowed to have official influence with the ruling Shaykh and influence the decision making process regarding diplomatic relations. The United States was not allowed to have official government representation in Bahrain until after the Second World War.

While the Political Agent had influence over the country, the British respected the ruling family and local custom. Bahrain was not a mandate nor a colony and Britain did not flex political power over Bahrain lightly. They wished to cultivate a positive relationship with the ruling family, Al Khalifa, and respected local traditions and customs throughout their relationship with Bahrain.⁹⁰ This meant a lighter or subtler influencing of Bahrain's people by the British, though the Sheikhs often utilized their power over the locals with more force. Without the total control that Britain enjoyed in Palestine, and the reliance upon the Sheikhs, the evolution of propaganda evolved quite differently.

Types of Propaganda in Bahrain

⁸⁹ *ibid*, 397.

⁹⁰ Rabi Uzi, "Britain's 'Special Position' in the Gulf: Its Origins, Dynamics and Legac,." *Middle Eastern Studies* 42, no. 3 (2006): 355.

The publication of propaganda in Bahrain included radio, cinema, and printed propaganda. Evidence of printed propaganda beyond newspapers exists, records kept due to a clerical anomaly and an interesting archival stroke of luck, according to the Qatar Digital Library who published an article regarding posters that were preserved because financial accounts of Bahrain were printed on their reverse side.⁹¹ These posters are one example of the style of propaganda produced for the Middle East by Britain. Examples of two such posters are featured below. Figure A depicts a meeting of youths in Britain holding a meeting and Figure B depicts boys participating in training and lessons on skills necessary to be a soldier. Both the emphasis on youth and on militaristic skill is common in posters the British created for the Middle East, as the projections of youth movements and the increased rhetoric of so-called “manly” virtues of the military were prevalent, especially in areas such as Iraq, who saw youth nationalists and writers discussing the importance of self-sacrifice and the military mentality within youth movements in the country.⁹² While evidence of youth movements in Bahrain is not apparent in the archival sources as of yet, the British certainly were aware of the youth movements in other regions and utilized such themes in their own propaganda.

Figure A:

⁹¹ 'For the Sake of Freedom': British World War II Propaganda Posters in Arabic,” Qatar Digital Library, December 16, 2014, <https://www.qdl.qa/en/-sake-freedom-british-world-war-ii-propaganda-posters-arabic>. Accessed March 2018.

⁹² Peter Wien, *Iraqi Arab Nationalism: Authoritarian, Totalitarian and Pro Fascist Inclinations, 1932-1941* (London, New York: Routledge, 2006), 108. Kindle Version.



في «كلوبلاندا» وهي مثال لمجتمعات الشباب ببريطانيا يسرع الانضمام مراد في الاسبوع للتلقي في الميادين الثلاثة بالنادي وللمناقشة ما بين
 لهم من الشباب العامة وازداد بالصوره وهم يباحثون في مبادئ علمه طرحت على نشاط البحث الا وهي اعادة تخطيط مدينة لندن . ويهدف
 القبوله بنوع شيايب بريطانيا و هو افراد شعب لندن كريمة تحمل المسؤوليات التي يتلقون على عاتقهم . ويصل تنظيم هؤلاء الشباب خلال
 ساعات النهار للمصالح الخيرية او بالاساس للتدريب . وهكذا يقوم شباب بريطانيا دور هام في التنمية الشاملة لا ادى اليها الشباب بريطانيا .

تدريب الشعب
 اولاد وبنات بريطانيا يباحثون
 في اعادة تخطيط لندن

93 'File 19/176 VI Bahrain Finances', IOR/R/15/1/355. Translations of these posters were provided by Jonathan Allen, PhD candidate at University of Maryland.

These posters highlight the importance of school children in Britain to the war effort to help boost morale. The first poster, Figure A, reads:

“In Clubland—a type of assembly of British youth whose members come together once a week in order to examine issues having to do with club matters and to debate matters which pertain to them from among public issues. You see them in the picture discussing an important question put forth in the midst of the discussion, namely, the restoration of the urban fabric of the city of London. In this way British youth—the individuals of the nation of tomorrow—learn how to deal with matters which will be their responsibility in the future. Most of these young people occupy the hours of the day with war-related work or with drill-related activities. And thus British youth play a vital part in the total mobilization of manpower in Britain.”⁹⁵

Figure A’s [??] makes their emphasis on the importance of children and their role in the future of Britain clear. Children are depicted holding a mock parliament, emphasizing that the young people of Britain had a voice within the British political sphere. The “vital part” these children play seeks to show Britain in a positive and familial light, which they hoped would appeal to what they saw as the more tribal and kinship based family structures of the Arabs in Bahrain. This emphasis on democracy and young people helped to project a liberal and modern view of Britain, in direct contrast to Germany and Italy’s dictatorial styles of governance. The fascist states marched on Europe, North Africa, and Asia and Britain hoped portraying the Axis as totalitarian and focus on conquest, that support could be minimized.

The second poster, Figure B, reads as follows:

⁹⁵ *ibid.*

“It is possible for boys between the ages of fifteen and sixteen to volunteer in the service of the army in order to train in useful skills in respect to being instructed in [unclear] technical training in engineering, electronics, and carpentry. When they reach the age of eighteen and join the army, they have become skillful workers in the full sense of the word. A group (*farīq*) from among the children goes to be instructed in working in weapons and munitions factories, while another group is like the students drilling with the regular army in the field. In short, British children volunteer to train in those things which have great importance in preparing them for complete participation in the war effort. And thus British youth (*shabāb*) play an important part in the total mobilization of manpower in Britain.

This second poster shows the emphasis on British children once more, but highlights the strength and skills the British are focusing on training their children in. The focus on these skills, aligned with aspects of the military, sought to show how the British were prepared and had the skillset in place even among their children to win the war. These skills were necessary in future soldiers to protect the Empire and their protectorates, hoping to broadcast a vision of confidence and skill in protecting the people of Bahrain.

The content of both these propaganda posters demonstrates that the British were seeking to reassure and project their confidence in their own skills and training to the people of Bahrain, while targeting the subjects they thought would best impact the Arabs within the Bahrain, families and children while also promoting the ideals of democracy that the British championed against the pro-Axis propaganda encouraging support of fascism. This message of pro-democracy is somewhat at odds, however, with British actions in the 1920s when British officials removed the leaders of the

Bahrain National Congress, who opposed the rule of Shaykh Hamad bin Isa after his father was ousted by the British.⁹⁶

The local population did not overtly view the British as a positive influence in Bahrain, frustrated by what they saw as British supremacy in their country. This feeling of frustration and oppression is mirrored in Palestine, though the response broadcast to the British is noticeably different and far quieter due to the censorship by the ruling Sheikh. In Palestine, local Arab intellectuals, writers, poets, and politicians published their thoughts and expressed varied views, as there was no ruling family or centralized Palestinian Arab political power in the region. For Bahrain, they had a ruling Sheikh, one who was intent on remaining in favor with the British and had an enormous amount of power over the region. Response to propaganda was limited and records of any response remain in the court of the Sheikh, whose communications with the British were well-documented, though not local responses to Britain's presence.

During the Second World War, the ruler of Bahrain was the same Shaykh, Hamad Isa Al Khalifa, put in charge of the country after the British ousted his father. Hamad's ascension to Shaykh was mired in controversy due to the interference of the British and he was not formally acknowledged by his own family until the death of his father, Isa bin Ali Al Khalifa, in 1932.⁹⁷ Hamad instituted reforms aimed at

⁹⁶ Miriam Joyce, *Bahrain from the Twentieth Century to the Arab Spring*, (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), p. xii.

⁹⁷ Mahdi Abdalla Al-Tajir, *Bahrain, 1920-1945: Britain, the Shaykh, and the Administration* (London: Croom Helm, 1987).

modernizing the country under the guidance of the Political Agent, Clive Daly. The influence of British meddling can be seen in Hamad's reforms, as Britain took a strong guiding hand over the pace and speed of the Shaykh's attempts. One official, Francis Beville Prideaux, wrote in a letter expressing his concerns over the Shaykh's new activities: "...it makes it all the more incumbent on us to see that under the stimulus of these sentiments he is not encouraged to go too fast with reforms in his State. We have learnt by sad experience...that even autocrats are not always the best judges of the safe pace at which reforms should proceed."⁹⁸

British trust in the abilities of the Shaykh acting on his own, without British guidance, was precariously low. The interfering only served to highlight the increased frustrations of the populace who had attempted to gain a louder voice in Bahrain's political sphere that Britain preponderated the actions of Bahrain's ruler, though with the dissolution of the Bahrain National Congress, they had little opportunity for their voices to be heard.

When the war began to touch Bahrain's shores with the bombing of oil fields by the Italians, Bahrain was placed not only in a more prominent role, but also a dangerous one. Britain served as a shield and Bahrain relied on that protection due to its small size and lack of formal armed forces. Bahrain needed Britain and the Royal Air Force to defend it from Axis powers and Shaykh Hamad endeavored to remain in Britain's good favor. In one instance, when Hamad received a letter from Egypt that

⁹⁸ Letter from the British Government in India to the British Political Resident in the Persian Gulf, IOR/R/15/1/339.

was found to be particularly anti-British in tone, the British Agent advised the Shaykh “that ‘he would be ill advised to associate himself with [it] in any way.’”⁹⁹ This attitude would continue throughout the war, relying on the advising and instructions of the Political Agent to maintain a positive relationship with Britain. This could have been for purely practical motivations such as protection, but with the independence of Bahrain announced in 1971 followed immediately by a signing of a friendship treaty with the British, the motivations are more complicated than simple military protection.¹⁰⁰ After the war, Bahrain and Britain maintained a relationship that intertwined politics, economics, and military operations in the region that helped to support the growth of Bahrain as well as an economic boon for Britain.

The priority of maintaining a positive relationship with Britain throughout the war allowed for a smooth transition of power from the protectorate state under the British to the sovereign state of Bahrain. Thus, propaganda appeared to be less necessary to convince the ruler of Bahrain to remain on the Allied powers side during the war when there were incentives in place for the Shaykh of Bahrain to support Britain. Here, fear of the reach of the Axis caused Britain to continue propaganda efforts in Bahrain despite their overtly friendly relationship. Indeed, presence of a British-guided and friendly ruler did not quell British fears in Bahrain or the Gulf. Britain, anxious over anti-British propaganda circulated by the Axis powers in the

⁹⁹ Rosemarie Said Zahlan, "The Gulf States and the Palestine Problem, 1936-48." *Arab Studies Quarterly* 3, no. 1 (1981): 2.

¹⁰⁰ Albert Blaustein, Jay A Sigler, and Benjamin R Beede, *Independence Documents of the World*, (Dobbs Ferry, N.Y.: Oceana Publications, 1977), p. 45–58

form of radio, publications, and cinema, maintained propaganda efforts throughout Bahrain. Print propaganda is similar to the poster already mentioned, and the radio broadcasts and cinema efforts were not dissimilar to those cultivated in Palestine.

Radio came to Bahrain in a similar manner as to Palestine. While most of the population of Bahrain did not own a radio receiver themselves, often groups gathered to listen in public spaces such as cafes to listen to stations broadcast in Arabic.¹⁰¹ At the onset of the Second World War, Germany hired an Iraqi presenter, Yunis Bahri, to broadcast to the Gulf States.¹⁰² German radio broadcasts played throughout the Gulf where Allied governments held sway, such as in Bahrain and Sharjah in the United Arab Emirates, where it was reported a Political Agent donned a disguise to investigate if the ruling Shaykh was listening to German radio propaganda in the palace.¹⁰³ The agent found that the Shaykh of Sharjah was indeed listening to these broadcasts, prompting a frenzied response from the Shaykh who promised that Sharjah had “done nothing that will affect those strong bonds of friendship” that existed between Sharjah and Britain.¹⁰⁴ The intention of these messages was to remain in favor with the British, especially as these reports came out in 1940, on the heels of the fall of France and the Battle of Britain. To insinuate that any Gulf State harbored anti-British sentiment would be incredibly troubling to the British and the

¹⁰¹ Michael Frishkopf, *Music and Media in the Arab World* (The American University in Cairo Press, 2011) p 116–117.

¹⁰² *ibid.*

¹⁰³ Report of the British Residency Agent in Sharjah, IOR/R/15/1/281

¹⁰⁴ '14/201 II, Trucial Coast Miscellaneous, B 57', IOR/R/15/1/281

local rulers understood that it was imperative to remain in favor with Britain if they wished to receive further protection. While an allied victory was far from certain, the fascist governments of Germany and Italy were no more appealing to the Arabs in the Gulf than they were to the Arabs of Palestine.¹⁰⁵

Afraid of the anti-British and pro-fascist propaganda being broadcast by Berlin, the British established the first radio station in 1940.¹⁰⁶ Bahrain was a prime location for the establishment of the first Gulf radio station created by the British due to higher levels of education and infrastructure already in place in the country as compared to other Gulf States. The British supplied the news reports, featuring British-friendly news only, to the Arab staff that operated the station. Much of the programming was meant to appeal to the local populace, featuring religious readings, musical entertainment, and news reports provided by the BBC or British government. This is similar to the strategy of “straight” news in Palestine that silenced damaging reports that would feature Britain in a negative light and the inclusion of stories highlighting British success in the war.

Cinema as a form of propaganda saw a much larger impact in Bahrain. Beginning in 1934, The British began debating the merits of establishing a cinema in Bahrain. One British official wrote, “If the rumor is true, I think that the question of prohibiting the establishment of a cinema should be carefully considered, and in any

¹⁰⁵ Wildangel, "The Invention of "Islamofascism," p. 540.

¹⁰⁶ Frishkopf, *Music and Media in the Arab World*, p.116-117.

case censorship should be provided for.”¹⁰⁷ The worries over the populace having control over the films shown were a source of worry for the British, wary of the Axis propaganda films created by the Italians and Germans. The Bahrain Petroleum Limited Company sought to establish a cinema in 1934 for the viewership of their British and American employees and the Bahrain government in 1935 with specific restrictions granted this request. The Bahrain government would oversee censorship and the films would only be shown to British and American employees with no local or public screenings.¹⁰⁸ Both the British and the Bahraini government were wary of the effect of certain films being shown to the Arab populace and without clear control over the films and viewership, both parties were hesitant to allow more public viewings.

However, the demand for a public cinema within Bahrain increased. Local entrepreneurs approached one British official, Lieutenant-Colonel Percy Gordon Loch, who served as the political agent at the time, to seek approval for the establishment of a commercial theater.¹⁰⁹ While cautious to agree to the undertaking, the pressure of increased numbers of foreign visitors and workers who came to Bahrain helped to lead to the creation of commercial cinemas open to the public. The motivation for Bahrain to be seen as modern country within the sphere of Britain’s influence helped spur on the Shaykh’s decision to create public cinemas to help the

¹⁰⁷ File 32/7 (4/6) Bahrain Cinemas, IOR/R/15/2/817.

¹⁰⁸ *ibid.*

¹⁰⁹ *ibid.*

populace avoid the “humdrum routine of life, in common with the rest of the world.”¹¹⁰

The ability to show films at a public theater faced scrutiny by the British at first, who worried over what an Arab audience in the Gulf should consume during the war. Luckily, the government of Bombay published a guide outlining suggestions for all films shown during wartime to colonial holdings. According to the suggestions of the Bombay Board of Film Censors, a list of provisions was created detailing the provisions on which a film could be censored, including a film’s ability to:

- a) Extenuate crimes: or which a familiarise young people with crime...
- b) Undermine the teachings of morality...
- c) Exhibit indecorous dress...
- d) Bring into contempt public character acting as such e.g. soldiers wearing H.M. uniform, Ministers of religion, Minister of Crown, Ambassadors and official representatives...
- e) Are calculated to wound the susceptibilities of foreign nations or of members of any religion.
- f) Are calculated or possibly intended to foment social unrest and discontent...
- g) Are calculated to promote dissatisfaction or resistance to Government or promote a breach of law and order. ¹¹¹

These rules gave Britain’s Political Agents in Bahrain guidelines in 1936 to review and censor films they deemed in violation of any of the stipulation. By September of 1945, just after the war had ended, cinemas were so popular in Bahrain, that the British authorized the importation of over one hundred and twenty kilograms

¹¹⁰ *ibid.*

¹¹¹ 'File 32/7 (4/6) Bahrain Cinemas' (41-43/200), IOR/R/15/2/817.

of film with priority.¹¹² These priority shipments avoided delays and for the modest cinemas that existed in Bahrain, this points to the clear importance that film had in the country from the private cinemas of 1935 to the end of the war in 1945.

The cinemas created in Bahrain were not state of the art, as evidenced by the complaint in 1946, of the lack of an up-to-date cinema in Manama.¹¹³ However, the cinema did play films, most commonly British and American films that were produced either in English or Arabic by the Colonial Film Unit or distributed by Allied powers. A photograph of the theaters has not been found, but a sketch of an open-air cinema in Bahrain exists in the archives of the Imperial War Museum. This sketch is shown below:

¹¹² File 10/17 (10/26) Priority air freight for BAPCO cinema films', IOR/R/15/2/445

¹¹³ *ibid.*



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The film being shown on the screen shows Donald Duck, perhaps a reference to *Commando Duck*, a propaganda piece directed by Walt Disney in 1944 and directed by Jack Kirby.¹¹⁵ The cartoon was narrated in English and is one of the only Disney propaganda films to show combat with the enemy.¹¹⁶ The film itself depicts the hijinks of Donald Duck set in an unnamed country, but with stereotyped Japanese voices and language choices. The film is overtly pro-Allied as it was made in

¹¹⁴ Harold William Hailstone, *An Open-air Cinema at Bahrein, Persian Gulf, 1941-1944*, Imperial War Museum, London, ART LD 5268.

¹¹⁵ *Commando Duck*, by Jack King, directed by Walt Disney, (United States: Walt Disney Pictures, 1944). Available at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IWaf3dQxAfQ>

¹¹⁶ Richard Leskosky, "Cartoons Will Win the War: World War II Propaganda Shorts," in *Learning from Mickey, Donald and Walt: Essays on Disney's Edutainment Films*, by Van Riper Bowdoin (Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 2011),

America, and depicts the Axis powers as foolish and often bumbling in their attempts to win the battles they fight. The film, as a comedy, would have been more accessible to English speakers in the country, unless it was translated or given subtitles in Arabic.¹¹⁷ While this is not entirely confirmation that this specific film was shown during the war in Bahrain, it paints a picture as to the style of content shown by those visiting the cinema in Bahrain. This may be evidence of the cinemas frequented by British military officials though is an example of the types of films and propaganda pieces shipped to Bahrain and allowed to be shown within the country.

Efficacy of Propaganda in Bahrain

Britain's efforts at maintaining friendly messaging and communication during the war years seem to be marginally successful. There were no outbreaks of anti-British riots as the Axis powers tried to stir and despite evidence of local listenership to the Axis broadcasts and consumption of Axis propaganda, the position of Britain in the Gulf did not change. This could point to the success of Britain's propaganda policies, as Britain remained the primary power throughout World War II in the Gulf and particularly in Bahrain. However, the realities on the ground in Bahrain,

¹¹⁷ There is little evidence that *Commando Duck* was dubbed over in Arabic or many other foreign languages though it may have been subtitled or summarized by Arabic speaking officials or locals.

especially the level of control the Shaykh, who was staunchly pro-British throughout the war, must be remembered as well.

The reaction of the people of Bahrain to these broadcasts is not widely reported within the country itself. This is unsurprising as Bahrain's first newspaper, *Al Bahrayn*, was created in 1939 and stopped printing in 1944.¹¹⁸ During the years the newspaper operated at the same time as the war effort went on, the newspapers rarely reported on local responses to British broadcasts or local opinion. An article in published in 1973, one of the earliest reports on literacy rates in the secondary literature, placed the literacy rate in Bahrain at nearly 30 percent, one of the highest of the Gulf States at the time.¹¹⁹ During the Second World War, literacy rates can be assumed to be lower than that of 1973, though without accurate data to the fact, it cannot be stated for certain. With such high illiteracy rates even in 1973, the percentage of the population reading any newspapers published in Bahrain during the Second World War would be low, placing it as a low priority for propaganda for local opinion. The press was also subject to the Bahrain government's censorship, who sought to minimize anti-British sentiment, making it unlikely that any such articles would have been published through *Al Bahrayn*.

The popularity of cinema remains striking in the case of Bahrain. The increase demand for cinema, a medium that did not overtly require literacy, saw an increase during the war, enough to receive priority shipments by the end of the war

¹¹⁸ 127.

¹¹⁹ Abdul Lateef, "Bahrain: Emerging Gulf State," 11.

for more films sent to cinemas in Bahrain. While it is unknown as to the number or populations of those in attendance in Bahrain, it is known that there were cinemas open to the general public. Those first cinemas open only to foreigners brought increased demand for the public cinemas that were eventually established. There is not final count of the number of cinema opened in Bahrain, though there is record of at least two petitions for cinemas to be built, though whether they were completed under the terms of that petition or were altered according to the wishes of the Bahrain government is hard to know.¹²⁰ Still the evidence we do have of the presence of cinema point to it being a popular medium for Bahrain, under the control of the censorship of the British. This allowed for cinema to be the most approachable avenue for reaching local Arab populations that had access to the cinema, though without evidence of their responses to the films, we cannot know the impact these films had in Bahrain.

These censorship rules allowed the British to control the narrative, yet by the end of the war, the cinemas remained popular enough to request more and more film in 1946 to continue showing to the public.¹²¹ Radio, as another medium that did not require literacy, remained popular throughout the war. Hundreds of receivers were owned in Bahrain, placed in public areas that could be consumed by anyone in a cafe or market.¹²² While radio was a more variable medium for propaganda, as people

¹²⁰ File 32/7 (4/6) Bahrain Cinemas, IOR/R/15/2/817.

¹²¹ *ibid.*

¹²² Frishkopf, *Music and Media in the Arab World*, 116.

were able to listen to Axis propaganda as well, the control the British used in Bahrain coupled with the support of the British by the ruling family allowed for messaging to remain consistent. As in the case of the Sheikh of Sharjah, while some Arabs in Bahrain listened to the Axis propaganda, this was done in secret, and discovery meant prostrations before the British to ensure goodwill from the protectors. The pressure from the rulers in the Gulf was more focused on retaining British support for their own agendas, rather than being won over by the propaganda of the British.

Conclusion

While the Second World War raged on, Britain's propaganda efforts sought to achieve multiple aims. Not only did they seek to sway support towards the Allied cause, but they also sought to strengthen the Empire itself. While tensions existed in both regions, especially tensions between Britain and the local Arab populations of both Bahrain and Palestine, neither region was swayed towards the side of the Axis officially during the war. This outward quieting of dissenting voices, outward support such as those writers in *Falastin* in Palestine, or the outright support of the Shaykh of Bahrain, point towards a possible compromise during war time of those tensions versus the needs of the British during war. However, the overall support of the Arabs in both Palestine and Bahrain during the war arose due to the agendas and interests of the local elites rather than as a direct result of British propaganda. The efforts to control the narratives in Palestine and combat Axis propaganda certainly influenced the cultural products of radio, printed news, and cinema, however those efforts may not have been as necessary as the British believed.

The Arab population of Palestine, despite their initial anti-British leanings, were far more anti-imperial and saw the Axis as yet another European imperial power seeking to control the region, if not a worse option should they win the war. Similarly in Bahrain, which relied on Britain for protection in the form of their military support, the government did not wish to risk an uprising to throw their influence towards the Axis, who had already proven capable of bombing the area. Without British support,

Bahrain would have been open to Axis attack or invasion. Bahrain sought to retain their protector's endorsement for practical purposes more so than because of any influence by the propaganda published within the country itself.

The propaganda efforts did allow the British to establish a sense of more commonality with the subjects in both regions, a concerted effort to connect and at least appease the Arabs of both regions to a certain extent to retain local support. They did not tolerate anti-British writing or radio broadcasts in either region, the lingering fear of growing anti-British resentment high on their list of priorities. However, this did not gain them as much local support as did the realities of the war. Disapproval and anti-Axis sentiment spawned from the Italian treatment of Libya and the imperial actions of Germany and Japan across the globe influence the minds of local elites that the imperial overseer they knew already, the British, was a more preferable option to the fascist dictators that could take over their regions.

Palestine, for its part, had more evidence of resistance, as many of the publications were encouraging British-friendly attitude, perhaps speaking to a more vocal and understood hostility towards Britain after the revolts of the 1930s, which was crushed by the British military. There was a population of Arabs who were anti-British, one that made the British nervous, and who needed convincing of the reasons why they should support the British over the Axis during the war. Axis propaganda was also incredibly heavy in Palestine, hoping to draw on anti-Semitic rhetoric that the Germans believed to exist in Palestine due to the tensions between Arabs and Jews. The German hope to sway Arabs on these measures failed. The media in

Palestine condemned the Axis powers in certain cases.¹²³ For many Arabs, the fascist powers were perceived to be no better than imperialists, greedy for the same territory they struggled over with Britain. The motivation behind remaining on the Allies side could be described as “better the devil you know.”

The “devil” they knew, Britain, had designs to end their rule in Palestine by 1939, though the question remained: who would rule Palestine after Britain? The hope of an Arab state relied on the favor gained by Arabs with Britain and garnering that favor through support during the Second World War could swing the outcome in their favor. This was not ultimately realized in 1948, as the British did not choose their successor, handing the reins of the decision to the United Nations in 1947.¹²⁴

The United Nations Special Committee on Palestine (UNSCOP) began to make plans at the behest of the British Government to devise a partition plan to create two states, one for the Arabs and one for the Jews. The Arabs did not approve these plans, leading to a vacuum of power in 1948 when the British abandoned the mandate on May 15th and the United Nations had no formal agreement from either the Jews or

¹²³ Wildangel, "The Invention of "Islamofascism, 541.

¹²⁴ United Nations Special Committee On Palestine (UNSCOP), *Report To The General Assembly*, Official Records of the Second Session of the General Assembly, Supplement No. 11. <https://web.archive.org/web/20120603150222/http://domino.un.org/unispal.nsf/9a798adbf322aff38525617b006d88d7/07175de9fa2de563852568d3006e10f3?OpenDocument>.

Arabs as to how power would transfer. Despite Arab hopes of gaining favor and an advantage from the British, the British abandoned the responsibility of deciding who would inherit power in Palestine and left. Any good will earned by remaining pro-British was wiped clean by this decision.

Bahrain did not need to worry over a struggle for independence from within. The ruling family of Bahrain did not have another domestic power to compete with. While the British were a frustration to the local populace of Bahrain, their support meant stability for the Shaykh. With the protection of the British, the Shaykh maintained their control over the country. Even when independence was granted in 1971, it was *granted* and not *won*. Britain had announced a withdrawal from the Gulf in the late 1960s, already intending to end their protectorates in the region.¹²⁵ Bahrain benefitted from its importance due to the oil fields, gaining key British protection and economics interest from the Allied powers who protected them throughout the war. While the British meddled in the politics of the country, the wealth gained from the development of oil refineries financed by the British helped Bahrain to grow in power among the Gulf States. Their position and safety relied on the continued presence of the British. Thus, the pro-British sentiment expressed by the Bahrain government and the Shaykh sought to maintain this balance of power.

Without the British, Bahrain would be at risk of further bombings by Axis powers. The RAF protected British oil interests, but also Bahrain itself, which did

¹²⁵ J.C. Hurewitz, "The Persian Gulf: British Withdrawal and Western Security," *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 401 (1972): 106-.

not have an air force. Bahrain would not gain an air force until the mid-1980s, operating a limited helicopter force and did not gain F-16s until 1990.¹²⁶ The lack of military power during 1939-1945 limited the response ability of Bahrain to respond to any Axis aggression, necessitating the role of the British in the region as a military power. The Shaykh, endeavoring to maintain this status promulgated pro-British policy and responses within Bahrain. Any local responses were unfortunately either not put into the historical record or censored by the Bahrain government.

Both countries sought to maintain or grow positive relations with Britain in hopes of gaining power in their respective regions. Both countries also sought to capitalize on the favor gained from these positive relations to gain concessions from Britain in the future. We lack the sources for an in-depth study of local Arab population for Bahrain and Palestine, as it is difficult to know the individual motivations and leanings of the entire population of the countries. It would be far-fetched to claim that the responses mentioned in this work encompass the whole of Arab motivations for support for or resistance against the British during the Second World War. Censorship hinders the ability to fully understand the whole picture of Arab feeling towards the British and Allied powers. The war and information policy of Britain necessitated censorship to limit anti-British stories from spread to Arab countries or from Arab countries. The Arab press, radio broadcasters, and publishers were unable to express their views should they be anti-British or pro-Axis. This

¹²⁶ "Bahrain," Scramble, <http://www.scramble.nl/orbats/bahrain/summary>.

hinders our ability to accurately measure the temperature in both regions, especially Bahrain with their limited local press.

This work showed that the motivations behind the any expressed pro-Allied feelings or support for the British were not evidence of belief in the unifying message presented by the British, but an attempt for nationalist gains after the war. This was successful in the peaceful transition of power in Bahrain but did not come into reality until 1971. Bahrain did not negotiate for their independence until after the express intent of the British to withdraw from the region, and a friendship was established after independence was gained. Palestine, while not outright losing their independence efforts with the British, were shuffled off to a third party, the United Nations, to be partitioned instead of gaining as much territory as Arabs hoped. This led to a refusal to agree to the UN Partition Plan of 1947, and when the British ended the mandate, war broke out between Arabs and Jews over the land in dispute and the Arabs lost tremendous amounts of territory in the fighting. Palestinian hopes for British support were dashed thoroughly after the war as Britain ended their dominion of the territory. A state of Palestine did not come into being. In hindsight, historians know these realities and the timeline of events, yet at the time, Arabs had every expectation that they could garner support through support of their own in the war.

Further research into local responses could illuminate more of the story that is present in this work, looking for written or documented responses to the British during the war from both Palestine and Bahrain. The struggles of finding such documentation for both regions is daunting, however. Should they be found, they

could affect what we currently know and understand of the reasons that these countries remained with the Allies rather than falling to the enemy as the Axis had hoped. Both areas are essential to the legacy of British influence in the Middle East, and a complete understanding of their support of the British Empire in the global conflict of World War II helps to inform the complex relationships that exist there today.

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