

THE ORIGINS OF THE IDEA OF ESTABLISHING A “ZIONIST CLIENT-STATE” IN ISLAMIC JERUSALEM

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Abstract

The idea of bringing the Jews to the region of Islamic Jerusalem (the Holy Land) and establishing an entity for them preceded the creation of Zionism. The idea stemmed officially during the failed attempt of Napoleon to occupy the Holy Land. His campaign instigated British interest mingled with the idea of the “Restoration” of Jews to Palestine as a prelude to the Second Coming of the Messiah. With the establishment of a British consulate in Jerusalem in 1838, Britain consolidated its influence and penetration of the region. The paper illustrates how the British were successful in fostering their colonial interest in the region through establishing a buffer state in Palestine against rival influences and later a Zionist Client-State that would continue to serve western interest in the region.

Keywords: Britain, Imperialism, Christian-Zionism, Zionism, Buffer State, Palestine

Introduction

The idea of the crusade to recapture the Holy Land was something that never vanished from the European mind since the fall of Jerusalem at the hands of Salah al-Din (2 October 1187). The failure of the third crusade, only instigated newer waves with Egypt becoming a pivotal station on these campaigns. Yet non-succeeded in achieving the aim of recapturing the Holy Land from the “infidel” Muslims. Christopher Columbus (1451-1506), who sailed to the “New World”, was determined to “save” Jerusalem from the Muslims, as a precondition to the “Second Coming” of Christ. He however was unable to raise sufficient funds for this expedition.¹ The dream was never forsaken, and many attempts failed in the process over the centuries. Moreover, one of the most successful was that of Napoleon in the late eighteenth century.

The idea of bringing the Jews to this region and establishing an entity for them emerged in the form of an official call while Napoleon was encamped at the shores of Acre. He called Jews from around the world to come and reclaim Palestine to re-establish ancient Jerusalem, as the “*Rightful heirs of Palestine*”.² There were no response from the Jewish community to his call. Within a few decades the situation was to become more viable for such reality.³ Moreover, what Napoleon’s expedition had attained is the reignition of memories of the crusades which was reflected in the growth of orientalism in Europe.⁴ This was to take a new form in the era of colonisation, as it instigated in the European mind the idea of bringing the Holy Land under their control once again.

Britain championed this cause both religiously and politically for the next century. The Jews were seen as a tool for Britain to gain a foothold in the region. British penetration started with evangelical protestant groups, who had no or little representation in the region. They were advocating the idea of “restoring” Jews in Palestine embedded with the apocalyptic belief in the “Second Coming” of Christ, which was gaining prominence in the west. British institutions were established, in the beginning of the 19th century,⁵ with the idea of converting Jews to Christianity and taking them to Palestine, such as The London Jews Society (The London Society for Promoting Christianity Amongst the Jews) in 1809 which established a Palestine Fund in 1825 to encourage its activity.⁶

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¹ Carol Delaney (2006), “Columbus’s Ultimate Goal: Jerusalem,” *Society for Comparative Study of Society and History*, Vol. 48, no. 2, pp. 260-292.

² M. Ould-Mey, “The Non-Jewish Origin of Zionism,” *International Journal of the Humanities*, Vol. 1, pp:597, 601; A. Dowty (2014), “Prelude to the Arab–Israel Conflict: European Penetration of Nineteenth-century Ottoman Palestine,” *Contemporary Review of the Middle East*, Vol. 1, no. 1, p. 4; P. Strathern (2009), *Napoleon in Egypt*. New York: Bantam Books, p. 353.

³ Dowty, “Prelude”, *op. cit.*, p. 4.

⁴ C. Hillenbrand (2004), “*The Legacy of The Crusades*,” T.F. Madden (ed), *Crusades: The Illustrated History*, Michigan: University of Michigan Press, p.202.

⁵ The British established a number of organisations to create a presence in the Levant in late eighteenth century such as *Church Missionary Society (CMS)* which was founded in 1799 and *London Jews Society (LJS)* in 1809. The latter had an influential and important role in Syria during this period. LJS was established by Rev. Joseph Frey due to CMS’s failure; see: M. Talbot (2013), “Divine Imperialism: The British in Palestine, 1753-1842,” M. Farr, and X. Guégan (ed), *The British Abroad Since the Eighteenth Century, Vol.2: Experiencing Imperialism*, New York: Palgrave Macmillan, p. 44; S. T. Buzpinar (2003), “Suriye ve Filistin’de Avrupa Nüfuz Mücadelesinde Yeni Bir Unsur: İngiliz Misyonerleri (19. Yüzyıl),” *İslami Araştırmalar Dergisi*, Vol.10, pp. 107-120.

⁶ Talbot, “Divine Imperialism”, *op. cit.*, p. 44; Buzpinar, “Suriye ve Filistin”, *op. cit.*, p. 109.

While the political establishment, saw that advocating the protection of the Jews would be their way in, just as France and Russia protect other minorities. Britain was only one of many western players competing for control over the Holy Land and to increase their influence. The British were the first foreign power to create a strong foothold through the establishment of a consulate in Jerusalem (1838) before the end of the occupation of Muhammad Ali Pasha (1831-1840). This was swiftly matched by other western powers. However, Britain was ahead in developing the idea of a buffer or client state, that would preserve its colonial interests. Also, through supporting missionary groups Britain was gaining a foothold in the region. Britain lobbied the Ottomans to allow Jewish immigrants settle in Palestine, and through its consulate extended protection to Jews in the region. These attempts were important in terms of the potential future presence of Britain in the region.

Britain's scheme was not approved by the Ottomans and although the Foreign Minister of Britain, Palmerston, was adamant to fulfil this project, however he was not successful but managed to lay the foundations for this client state. The inauguration of the Suez Canal and the later the occupation of Egypt were an important turning point for the British strategic penetration of the Holy Land.⁷ Also, nationalist ideas and the rising national movements which were becoming ripe was capitalise on by Britain. It managed to forge alliances with the newly formed movements of Zionism and Arab nationalisms in the early 20th century and managed with their support to occupy and colonise the Holy Land. During its occupation or *mandate* over Palestine, Britain continued to push its scheme forward and after preparing Zionist over a thirty-year period (1917-1948), it handed Palestine over to them to act as a client state, that would continue western imperialist and colonialist ideals.

This paper deals with the development of the idea of creating a Jewish client/ buffer state in Palestine, to serve the interest of colonialist powers, thus setting the historical background to the creation of the Zionist state in the Holy Land.

A Jewish Client/ Buffer State

Creating a Jewish entity in the region of Islamicjerusalem/ Palestine was an idea that developed in Christian minds prior to that of Jewish nationalists. It was officially suggested for the first time by Napoleon (1769-1821) at the end of the eighteenth century, with the aim of using the Jews for his own imperialist goals. He called upon Jews to march under his banner with the promise "to give them the Holy Land" and "to restore ancient Jerusalem to its pristine splendour".⁸ As Sokolow argues Jews in the Holy Land either did not trust Napoleon or were not aware of this proclamation, he adds that some historians speculate, with no evidence, that it was only a trick to win over the Jewish minister of the Pasha of Acre, Haim Mu'allim Fahri. However, one-year earlier discussions of this were taken place in France, as is documented in a letter of a French Jew published in 1798, likely reflecting the government's view at the time. The letter appealed not only to Jews, but to pan-French imperialists.⁹

The letter is quite interesting in suggesting that the land was under occupation and needs to be taken back to rebuild the temple; "*vile robbers possess that sacred land which our ancestors were compelled to yield to the Romans. They profane the holy City which we defended with so much courage... O my brethren! Let us rebuild the temple of Jerusalem*". It also proposes a country extending from Egypt to Palestine and talks of the strategic location of this area in controlling trade routes:

The country we propose to occupy shall include (liable to such arrangements as shall be agreeable to France) Lower Egypt, with the addition of a district of country, which shall have for its limits a line running from Ptomelais or Saint John D'Acre, to the Asphaltic Lake, or Dead Sea, and from the South point of that Lake to the Red Sea. . .

This position which is the most advantageous in the world, will render us, by the navigation of the Red Sea, masters of the commerce of Indian Arabia and the South and East of Africa; Abyssinia, and Ethiopia, those rich countries which furnished Solomon with so much gold and ivory.... Aleppo and Damascus will facilitate our commerce with Persia; and by the Mediterranean we may communicate with Spain, France, Italy and the rest of Europe.¹⁰

⁷ E. Bar-Yosef (2005), *The Holy Land in English Culture 1799-1917: Palestine and the Question of Orientalism*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp.2-3.

⁸ N. Sokolow, (1919), *History of Zionism*, London: Longmans Green and Co., vol.1, p.63. See also: Ould-Mey, "Non-Jewish Origin", *op. cit.*, pp.597, 601; Dowty, "Prelude", *op. cit.*, p. 4; Strathern, *Napoleon, op. cit.*, p. 353.

⁹ Sokolow, *History of Zionism, op. cit.*, vol.1, pp. 65-66, vol.2, pp. 220-222; A. El-Awaisi (2013), *The Roots of the Palestinian Issue: 1799-1923 (Juthur al-Qadiyah al-Filistinyah)*, Algeria: Dar al-Khaldoniyah, pp.164-165.

¹⁰ Sokolow, *History of Zionism, op. cit.*, vol.2, p. 221.

This would in turn benefit France, through sharing the commerce of India with “merchants of France *only*”.¹¹ This seems to have been the first Zionist aspiration to occupy Palestine, yet due to the failure of Napoleon’s expedition, it seems to have stopped this plan in its tracks.¹² However, Napoleon did not give up this dream, and he gathered 96 Jewish Deputies at Paris in 1806, at his international Jewish conference and Grand Sanhedrin, to discuss solutions to the Jewish question in Europe. The idea of the creation of Jewish state was reported in the Scots Magazine:

It is rumoured that he proposes to rebuild the Temple at Jerusalem and reestablish the Jewish Hierarchy and Government in all their ancient splendour in the Holy Land, to which he will invite that people from all the nations of the earth.¹³

Nevertheless, Napoleon could not fulfil the dream of a Jewish state serving French interest. However, England seems to have taken this project forward, only a few decades later the situation seemed more viable for such reality.

British Propositions

The French interest in the region seem to have been the main driving force for British interest, following the invasion of Napoleon and the convening of the conference and Sanhedrin in Paris.¹⁴ The adoption of the idea of ‘Jewish restoration’ by evangelical Christians moved it into a new reality, later becoming British policy for the region. In 1800 James Bicheno published a book entitled, “The Restoration of the Jews, the Crisis of all Nations”, in which he proposed that the British help ‘restore’ the Jews to Palestine. He was suspicious of France’s intentions and that they may use the Jews in order to secure their foothold in the East, through establishing Jews in Palestine and entering in a commercial Treaty with them. If this would happen then England’s “ruin in the east would not be far distant”. Thus, trying to arouse the British to take over this project and suggesting that Britain should use its influence over the Ottomans to achieve such goals: “let the rulers of this country use their influence with the Porte to give up part of their territory from which the Jews have been expelled, to its rightful owners and thus... prevent those possible consequences which would prove most fatal to our government and commerce”.¹⁵

The initial suggestion was to use the good relations between Britain and the Ottomans, especially after uniting against the French and forcing them out of Palestine, in order to secure a home for the Jews in the region. This does not seem to have been taken forward by the British government for a few decades. The idea seems to have become more viable following the occupation of Muhammad Ali Pasha to the whole region of Syria, during which many things changed in favour of western influence. Following the establishment of a consulate in Jerusalem, it was officially requested through the British Ambassador in Istanbul, for the protection of the Jews in Palestine as Britain was now claiming to be their protector. Palmerston also ordered the new Vice-Consul in Jerusalem, William Young, to push forth the protection of Jews in Palestine, as is documented in a number of letters following the establishment of the consulate.¹⁶

In the late 1830’s the Foreign Secretary of Britain, Palmerston, was strongly influenced by the views of his evangelist stepson-in-law, Lord Shaftesbury. The closely intertwined family relationship between both of them brought them into close contact,¹⁷ this relationship goes back as early as 1830, when Shaftesbury marries the daughter of the mistress of Palmerston.¹⁸ From around 1838 there is evidence that Shaftesbury’s ideas seem to have appealed to Palmerston. As he was seen to be encouraging him to adopt the idea of the ‘Restoration’ of Jewish people to Palestine as being within British Interest. Levine argues on the appealing of these ideas to Palmerston that: “the idea of an Anglicized Jewish colony in Palestine, strongly sympathetic to British interests and dependent on British aid (and presumably, the stationing of British troops to “protect” it) grew in appeal as a

¹¹ Sokolow, *History of Zionism*, *op. cit.*, vol.2, p. 222.

¹² El-Awaisi, *The Roots*, *op. cit.*, p.165.

¹³ *The Scots Magazine and Edinburgh Literary Miscellany (1806)*, Vol. LXVIII. Edinburgh: Ruthven and Sons, pp. 942-943.

¹⁴ A. M. Hyamson (1918), “British Project for the Restoration of Jews to Palestine,” *Publications of the American Jewish Historical Society*, no. 26, pp. 128-129.

¹⁵ M. Scult (1978), *Millennial Expectations and Jewish Liberties: A Study of the Efforts to Convert the Jews in Britain, up to the Mid Nineteenth Century*. Leiden: Brill, pp.80-81. Such thoughts were already in circulation such as the works of Joseph Priestley (1733-1804), Thomas Newton (1704-1782), John Jortin (1698-1770), and Richard Hurd (1720- 1808), see Hyamson, “British Project”, *op. cit.*, p.130.

¹⁶ A. Tibawi (1961), *British Interest in Palestine 1800-1901: A Study of Religious and Educational Enterprise*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, p.33.

¹⁷ R. Turnbull (2010), *Shaftesbury: The Great Reformer*. Oxford: Lion, pp.41, 172.

¹⁸ Palmerston in about 1808 began a relationship with his mistress Lady Cowper (the mother of the wife of Lord Shaftesbury) whom he eventually married in 1839. It needs to be noted that they lived constantly together while in the county for seven years, see E. Hodder (1887), *The Life and Work of the Seventh Earl of Shaftesbury*, London: Cassell & Company Ltd, Vol.1, pp. 232, 315. It is also claimed that Emily is the illegitimate daughter of Palmerston, see F. Mort (2000), *Dangerous Sexualities: Medico-Moral Politics in England Since 1830*, London: Routledge, p. 68.

result of subsequent historical developments”¹⁹ Again, as with the French letter, trying to appeal to the colonialist interests is quite apparent, thus the creation of client-state or protectorate colony would be serving the colonial power that would help facilitate it in the region.

This official interest from the British establishment in the ‘restoration’ of the Jews, was clearly reflected in the exchange of letters between the Foreign Ministry and the Embassy in Istanbul. Further, El-Awaisi argues that a number of these documents expose the real imperialist goal which Britain wished to achieve in the erection a human barrier, a colonial Jewish settler-state, in Palestine to serve its imperial interests.²⁰

These ideas seem to have become mainstream and more accepted within the British political elite, as Lord Lindsay wrote in *The Times* newspaper in 1838 on the idea of the restoration of Jews to Palestine. Lord Shaftesbury presented his scheme to Palmerston in August 1838 and six months later, in January 1839, published an article in the *Quarterly Review* about the increasing desire amongst European Jews to emigrate to Palestine.²¹ In the same month a memorandum²² addressed to the “Protestant Powers of the North of Europe and America”²³ urging the “restoration of the Jewish people to the land of Palestine” as a duty upon “Protestant Christendom” to the Jews.²⁴ Palmerston forwarded the petition to Queen Victoria, expressing that her “pious feelings” would “be excited to give the Scriptural hopes and expectations therein set forth your earnest attention, considering the high station it hath pleased Almighty God to call this Protestant land to, as the great seat of the church”.²⁵ As Green argues this is not just rhetoric, it is the influences of Palmerston’s son-in-law, Shaftesbury. According to *The Times*, this became a matter for “serious political consideration”.²⁶ This was even followed by Parliamentary discussions on the Jewish question in 1840. Yet, the issue was whether the Jews actually wished to leave Europe and migrate to Palestine and live under the Ottomans, especially at a time where Jews in Syria were facing serious problems.

On 30 April 1840, following a meeting with British Jews, headed by Sir Moses Montefiore, Palmerston promised to use his influence both with Muhammad Ali Pasha and the Ottoman Sultan to put a stop to atrocities against the Jews in the region. Following which he requested his Ambassador in Istanbul to urge the Ottomans to conduct a strict enquiry immediately. As well as aiding protection to a Jewish delegation from Britain and France to investigate the matter of Jewish persecution in 1840 in Syria.²⁷ Montefiore set forth on his journey and made a stop in Istanbul, where he had an audience with the Sultan and was issued with a *Firman* (decree) on Jewish rights. Together with Palmerston eagerness for the protection of Jews, the idea of them migrating to Palestine, was also being pushed. Lord Shaftesbury kept pressing, his father-in-law, the Foreign Secretary, on this issue, there is a record of these conversations from Shaftesbury’s diary in July 1840. Now to Palmerston this issue was no longer a “mystical dream” but rather a practical possibility and now the time was right for moving diplomatically on this issue.²⁸ Following which Palmerston requested that his Ambassador in Istanbul, Lord Ponsonby, intercedes with the Ottoman Sultan on allowing the Jews to settle in Palestine. This has been taken by some academics to refer to Palmerston seeking to establish an outright political protectorate over the Jews in Palestine,²⁹ with the view of countering French and Russian influence and enhancing British influence.³⁰ Palmerston instructions were “to open an intercourse with Reschid Pasha respecting protection and encouragement to the Jews”. Also, to point out to the Ottomans that such plan would be “highly advantageous to the Sultan”.³¹ In the letter dated 11 August 1840, Palmerston wrote:³²

¹⁹ G. Levine (2003), *The Merchant of Modernism: The Economic Jew in Anglo-American Literature 1864-1939*, London: Routledge, p. 47.

²⁰ El-Awaisi, *The Roots*, op. cit., pp.174-175; A. Al-Kayyali (1990), *Palestine: A Modern History (Tarikh Filistin al-Hadith)*, Beirut: Al-Mu’sasah al-Abriyah Ili-Dirasat wal-Nashir, p.24. See also F.O. 78/874 (no.20) dated 7 November 1851 and F.O.78/427 (no.33) dated 17 February 1840, the latter document was approved by Queen Victoria.

²¹ A. Green (2010), *Moses Montefiore: Jewish Liberator, Imperial Hero*, Massachusetts: Belknap Press, p. 146.

²² Shafir mentions that this was following a mission of inquiry sent by the Church of Scotland to Palestine.

²³ Namely Monarchs of Britain, Ireland, Prussia, Netherlands, Sweden, Norway, Denmark, Hanover and Württemberg. As well as the rulers of Germany, the government of Cantons of Switzerland and the United States. *The Times* newspaper in March 1840 mentions this memorandum and it was later published in full on 26 August 1840.

²⁴ Hyamson, “British Project”, op. cit., pp.135-137; Green, *Moses Montefiore*, op. cit., p. 146.

²⁵ Green, *Moses Montefiore*, op. cit., p. 146.

²⁶ I. Friedman (1968), “Lord Palmerston and the protection of Jews in Palestine 1839-1851,” *Jewish Social Studies*, Vol. 30, no. 1, pp. 29.

²⁷ Together with Palmerston eagerness for the protection of Jews, the idea of them migrating to Palestine, was also being pushed. Montefiore mentioned to Palmerston the desire for Jews in Palestine to be employed in farming, later hearing from Young that the country is able to support large agricultural population. This was followed by a memorandum from E. S. Calman, on 3 August 1840, who mentioned that if security is provided, through European Powers, then there are good prospects for the colonisation of Palestine. See Friedman, “Lord Palmerston”, op. cit., pp. 27-31.

²⁸ Ibid., pp. 30-31.

²⁹ L. Wolf (1919), *Notes on the Diplomatic History of the Jewish Question with Texts of Protocols, Treaty Stipulations and other Public Acts and Official Documents*, London: The Jewish Historical Society of England, pp. 102-103.

³⁰ Tibawi, *British Interest*, op. cit., p. 35.

³¹ Hyamson, “British Project”, op. cit., pp.138-139; M. Vereté (1970), “Why was a British Consulate established in Jerusalem,” *The English Historical Review*, Vol. 85, no. 335, p. 316; M. Eliav (1997), *Britain and The Holy Land 1838-1914*. Jerusalem: The Hebrew University, The Magnes Press, p. 29.

³² Tibawi, *British Interest*, op. cit., p. 35; A. M. Hyamson (1975), *The British Consulate in Jerusalem in Relation to the Jews of Palestine 1838-1914*, New York: AMS Press, Vol. 1, pp.33-34.

My Lord,

There exists at present among the Jews dispersed over Europe a strong notion that the time is approaching when their nation is to return to Palestine and consequently their wish to go thither have become more keen, and their thoughts have been bent more intently than before upon the means of realizing that wish. It is well known that the Jews of Europe possess great wealth; and it is manifest that any country in which a considerable number of them might chose to settle, would derive great benefit from the richers which they would bring into it.

Whether Mehemet Ali accepts the first or the second offer which is to be made to him, in either case, it would be of manifest importance to the Sultan to encourage the Jews to return to, and to settle in Palestine, because the wealth which they would bring with them would increase the Resources of the Sultan’s Dominions; and the Jewish people, if returning under the sanction and protection, and at the invitation of the Sultan, would be a check upon any future evil designs of Mehemet Ali or his Successor.

I have to instruct Your Excellency to bring these Considerations confidentiality under the notice of the Turkish Government, and strongly to recommend to hold out every just encouragement to the Jews of Europe to return to Palestine.

It is obvious that full and complete security of person is the necessary Foundation upon which any such invitation could rest, and it is also manifest that no such security could exist unless all arbitrary Proceeding and all acts of Capricious Authority can be prevented, and unless impartial Courts of Justice can be constituted, before which Jew and Mahometan might be equally sure of obtaining a just Sentence.

But even if the encouragement held out by the Sultan to the Jews were not practically to lead the Settlements of any great number of them within the Limits of the Ottoman Empire, still the Promulgation of some Laws In their Favour would be spread a Friendly Disposition towards the Sultan among the Jews in Europe; and the Turkish Government must at once see how advantageous it would be to the Sultan’s Cause thus to create useful friends in many countries by one single Edict.

Palmerston here tries to appeal to the Ottomans, at a period when they were trying to force Muhammad Ali Pasha out of Syria and Palestine with British help. This came following Muhammad Ali’s rejection of the terms of the London Convention in 15 July 1840. Such scheme would help curb the strength of Muhammad Ali Pasha. Adding if the Jews are invited to settle in Palestine by the Ottomans, this “would be a check upon any future evil design of Muhammad Ali or his successor”. As well as the political front, Palmerston was trying to make an economic case, since the Ottoman economy was in serious disarray. In turn the coming of the Jews would bring all their riches and “would increase the Resources of the Sultan’s Dominions”, which would assist in stabling the Ottoman economy. The clear instruction, in confidence, from Palmerston to Ponsonby was to urge the Ottomans, at a time of need for British support, “to hold out every just encouragement to the Jews of Europe to return to Palestine” and such actions would win over besides the Jews of Europe, many friends to the side of the Ottomans; “the Turkish government must see how advantageous it would be to the Sultan’s cause thus to create useful friends in many countries by one single Edict”.³³ He writes to Ponsonby again on 4 September, just less than a month later.

During these correspondences, Montefiore arrives in Istanbul for an audience with the Sultan, which took place on 28 October 1840. During which Ponsonby presents the Sultan with a gift taken from the army of Ibrahim Pasha few weeks earlier, the *Sacred Standard*, and gives a speech, stating that this *standard* is evidence of the strength of the Sublime Porte and the demise of the power of “the late Pasha of Egypt”. There were no discussions of any other issue, such as those requested by Palmerston. In response the Sultan acknowledged England’s support or “friendly assistance” and wished a stronger alliance with the Queen of England.³⁴

³³ Hyamson, *The British Consulate, op. cit.*, p. 33-34; J. Frankel (1997), *The Damascus Affair: 'Ritual Murder', Politics, and the Jews in 1840*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, p. 307.

³⁴ *Parliamentary Papers, Accounts and Papers: Affairs of the Levant: State Paper (1841)*, London: House of Commons, Vol. 8, p. 32; Green, *Moses Montefiore, op. cit.*, p. 149.

Following which Montefiore met with the Sultan, and after praising the Sultan and assuring him that the Jews are “the most peaceful and loyal subjects” and asked for a proclamation against the killing of Jews in Damascus. Montefiore was assured by the Sultan that his requested will be granted and Jews will be treated well under Ottoman rule. The Sultan issued the *Firman* which was delivered to Montefiore ten days later and it clearly stated that the “Jewish nation shall possess the same privileges as are granted to the numerous other nations who submit to our authority. The Jewish nation shall be protected and defended”. Montefiore was thrilled with this *Firman* calling it, “the Magna Carta for the Jews in the Turkish dominions”, and it exceeded his expectations.³⁵ Green argues that the text was carefully worded, the first part being a reiteration of the *Hatti Sherif* of *Gülhane* issued a year earlier, while the second part made clear commitment to Jewish rights, to make it easier for the Sultan to reject Palmerston’s more substantial request.³⁶

Palmerston received on 21 November 1840, the letter from Ponsonby regarding his meeting with the Sultan (dated 28 October). He writes to Ponsonby again a few days later, on the 24 November, urging Ponsonby not to lose sight of the issue of Jews migrating to Palestine and to push it further with the Ottomans. Noting that this scheme would be under Ottoman Sovereignty, and the Jews as subjects of the Sultan, reflecting the *Firman* given to Montefiore. It was seen that having a stable Ottoman state, would strengthen England’s position and reduce the influence of England’s enemies, namely France and Russia. All these discussions were before the Ottomans even regained the region from Muhammad Ali Pasha. However, these ideas were not properly addressed to the Ottomans, Ponsonby delegated this task to Frederick Pisani, a Chief Dragoman (interpreter) at the British Embassy in Istanbul, a Greek of Italian origins.³⁷ Who, as Friedman argues, misrepresented England’s scheme and stressed on other issue, making no mention of the British government’s recommendations on the Jewish settlement in Palestine. Ottoman response to the first part on England’s representation of Ottoman Jews was negative, as the *Gulhane Hatti Sharif* Edict gave rights to such minorities without the need of foreign intervention or representation. Therefore, Ponsonby’s reply to Palmerston on 21 January 1841, was disappointing. It is not clear why Ponsonby delegated this task to one of his interpreters and did not pursue them himself.³⁸ It seems that Ponsonby was anticipating that this would be rejected by the Ottomans, as with the case of building a church in Jerusalem, being aware of Ottoman law, he did not want to push this idea forward. Yet due to the insistence of Palmerston it seems he delegated the task to one of his subordinates. Tibawi also argues that Ponsonby was not in favour of such scheme, this was also the case with the predecessor of Palmerston, the Earl of Aberdeen.³⁹ However, Ponsonby wrote in his letter that he hoped that in the future to be successful in obtaining “more direct powers for the protection of Jews”. Palmerston requested again that Ponsonby stress the economic benefits of the Jewish immigration to Palestine for the Turkish Empire but again with little change on the Ottoman side, Palmerston thus had to put this scheme on hold,⁴⁰ as the Porte was not impressed by such argument.⁴¹ The Sultan curtly rejecting such proposal did not mean that this project was abandoned, rather “the British did not let go of it for the next century”.⁴² Not long after Ponsonby, who was successful twice in the promotion of the establishment of two buffer states,⁴³ was relieved of his duties at Istanbul. Also, Palmerston resigned as Foreign Minister and was succeeded by the Earl of Aberdeen.

Conflicting Schemes

At this stage, keeping the Ottoman state intact was important for British interest and thus Britain did support the Ottomans in forcing Muhammad Ali out of Syria and Palestine before the end of 1840. Their aim was to gain more influence in the region and with the Ottomans in order to consolidate their power and push forth their scheme. Yet Britain was not the only one with interest in the future of Palestine other powers had their own ideas for its future. Thus, during the process of forcing Muhammad Ali Pasha out of Syria, discussions concerning the future of Palestine started and four schemes were presented on this issue, with the aim of establishing stronger influence for western powers or their full control over the Holy Land. The Jewish element however received little attention in these other schemes, as the powers were trying to achieve maximum control for themselves. Wolf

³⁵ A. Dundes (2004), *The Blood Libel Legend: A Casebook in Anti-Semitic Folklore*, Wisconsin: The University of Wisconsin Press, p. 202; Green, *Moses Montefiore*, *op. cit.*, p. 150.

³⁶ Green, *Moses Montefiore*, *op. cit.*, p. 150.

³⁷ F. Castiglione (2014), “‘Levantine’ Dragomans in Nineteenth Century Istanbul: The Pisanis, the British, and Issues of Subjecthood,” *Osmanlı Araştırmaları / The Journal of Ottoman Studies*, Vol. XLIV, pp. 169-195.

³⁸ Friedman, “Lord Palmerston”, *op. cit.*, pp. 34-35.

³⁹ Tibawi, *British Interest*, *op. cit.*, p. 35.

⁴⁰ Friedman, “Lord Palmerston”, *op. cit.*, pp. 34-35.

⁴¹ Tibawi, *British Interest*, *op. cit.*, p. 35.

⁴² G. Shafir (2017), “British Christian Zionism and the Balfour Declaration,” in *Balfour 100: the Fathom Essays*, London: Fathom, p. 17.

⁴³ As a British diplomat, Ponsonby was sent twice for the promotion of establishing buffer states for the protection of British interests. The first was Uruguay, between Argentina and Brazil, the second was Belgium, both of which still survive today; see Kirkpatrick, F.A. (2014), *A History of the Argentine Republic*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, p.138.

presents these schemes in his book “Notes on the diplomatic history of the Jewish question” published in 1919. The first scheme he states was apparently proposed by France, suggesting the “creation of a small autonomous Ecclesiastical State, consisting of Jerusalem, constituted as a Free City, with a limited rayon of territory”. It was proposed that it is to be governed by a Christian municipality, under the protection and administration of the Great Christian Powers. Objections to this were presented by Russia in October 1840, who was keen together with Austria to preserve Turkish control over the region and presented counter-proposals. This may be due to the fear that their *enemies* would have more influence, if the Ottoman state was to collapse or give up this land. Russia presented a scheme where Palestine would become a separate *Pashalik* (province), where the Church of the Orient be restored, and the Greek Patriarch would resume his residence in Jerusalem. This together with the establishment of a special Church and Monastery for Russian clergy and pilgrims. Whereas the Austrians proposed that Turkish administration would continue as it is, with one exception relating to jurisdiction over Christians. The Austrian scheme was opposed by Russia, where a fourth scheme was proposed by Prussia, that suggested a “European Protectorate of the Holy Cities of Jerusalem, Bethlehem, and Nazareth, and a sort of national autonomy for the various Christian sects which might be extended to the Jews, the whole to be governed by three Residents appointed by the Christian Powers. Each Resident was to have a small military guard”. Austria and Russia opposed this scheme and correspondence with Palmerston show that England also opposed it, but it seems to have had some acceptance in France.

Due to the differences amongst these Christian powers, as well as the likely objection of the Ottomans, all these schemes were not taken forward with Ottoman officials before regaining the region. Thus, eventually no conditions were laid on the Ottomans on returning to rule Palestine.⁴⁴ Nevertheless, these discussions are important in showing the extent of colonial ambitions over the Holy Land by these powers, and what each of these countries aimed to gain in Palestine. The idea of making this region a European protectorate or a small autonomous Christian state or a separate province was aimed at curbing or ending Ottoman control in the region and increasing foreign penetration and possible occupation of it. Following the failure of the western powers to agree on the four proposed schemes, led to developing individual schemes for Palestine.⁴⁵

Individual Schemes

The whole of Historical Syria including Palestine, however, was brought back under Ottoman rule. Ottomans together with their allies, including the British, entered Damascus in early 1841. Amongst the British officers who took part in taking Damascus was Colonel Charles Henry Churchill. He became the British Consul in Damascus in February 1841. Ever since Muhammad Ali Pasha took over Syria, Colonel Churchill urged England to bring both Syria and Egypt under its influence: “if England’s Oriental supremacy is to be upheld, Syria and Egypt must be made to fall more or less under her sway or influence”.⁴⁶ His views diverged from that of Palmerston, where Col. Churchill wanted Syria under direct British control, Palmerston wished to keep the Ottoman state intact, fearing its collapse will only strengthen England’s enemies.⁴⁷

Colonel Churchill’s remarks on the creation of a Jewish entity and provoking a united Jewish/ Zionist response are quite remarkable, well over half a century before the creation of such a Zionist body. With little acceptance of his views by the British establishment, he tried to arouse Jews to take this initiative forward. He wrote to the President of the Board of Deputies of British Jews, Sir Moses Montefiore, urging him and Jews to put forth an application to the British government on this regard. In his letters he proposed a strategy for the creation of a state for the Jews. In his letter dated 14 June 1841, he wrote:⁴⁸

My dear Sir Moses,

I have not yet had the pleasure of hearing from you, but I would fain hope that my letters have reached you safe. I enclose you a petition which has been drawn by the Brothers Harari, in which they state their claims and their earnest desire to be immediately under British protection... I cannot conceal from you my most anxious desire to see your countrymen endeavour once more to resume their existence as a people. I consider the object to be perfectly attainable. But, two things are indispensably necessary. **Firstly, that the Jews will themselves take up the matter universally and unanimously. Secondly, that the European Powers will aid them in their**

⁴⁴ Wolf, *Notes on Diplomatic History, op. cit.*, pp. 105-119.

⁴⁵ For more discussion on these schemes see: Wolf, *Notes on Diplomatic History, op. cit.*

⁴⁶ A. B. Cunningham (1950), *Britain and the Pacification of the Lebanon 1841-1845 (master’s thesis)*, London: University of London, p. 51.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 8, 51.

⁴⁸ Wolf, *Notes on Diplomatic History, op. cit.*, pp. 121-122.

views. It is for the Jews to make a commencement... and that you would end by obtaining the sovereignty of at least Palestine. **Syria and Palestine, in a word, must be taken under European protection and governed in the sense and according to the spirit of European administration...** I have... prepared a rough petition which will be signed by all the Jews here and in other parts of Syria, and which I shall then forward to you... Supposing that you and your colleagues should at once and earnestly interest yourselves upon this important subject of the recovery of your ancient country, it appears to me (forming my opinions upon the present attitude of affairs in the Turkish Empire) that it could only be as subjects of the Porte that you could commence to regain a footing in Palestine. **Your first object would be to interest the Five Great Powers in your views and to get them to advocate your view with the Sultan upon the clear understanding that the Jews, if permitted to colonise any part of Syria and Palestine, should be under the protection of the Great Powers, that they should have the internal regulation of their own affairs...**

Over a year later he wrote again on the 15 August 1842, presenting the formal “Proposal of Colonel Churchill” to Montefiore, he adds specific steps that need to be taken for the issue to move forward.⁴⁹

My proposition is that the Jews of England conjointly with their brethren on the Continent of Europe should make an application to the British Government through the Earl of Aberdeen to accredit and send out a fit and proper person to reside in Syria for the sole and express purpose of superintending and watching over the interests of the Jews residing in that country.

It is clear from these correspondences, that Colonel Churchill’s view was to bring Palestine under direct British control or protection. This could be as a consequence of earlier proposed schemes on the future of Palestine, which did not bear fruit. His scheme was to promote the Jews to be agents of Britain in the proposed colonisation of Palestine and seek the endorsement of European powers. Churchill suggest that initially after convincing western powers of this, contact must be made with the Ottomans to convince them to allow Jews as subjects of the Sultan to reside there with some autonomous rule under British protection. Churchill went a step further to get Jews in Syria to sign a petition on the matter asking for British protection. He was more enthusiastic about this subject than British Jews, he was to arouse their concern about this issue and press them to take action. His persistence on this matter did not however convenience the Board of Deputies of British Jews to join in his scheme. As Wolf argues, reception to his proposal was “curiously frigid” and “whilst piously blessing Colonel Churchill’s proposals, the Board declined to take any initiative”. Montefiore wrote back to him over following his second letter, on 8 November 1842, stating that any measure should emanate from the general body of the Jews throughout Europe.⁵⁰ Also, it seems they were satisfied with the Ottoman response and the *Firman* procured from the Sultan and did not want to push this idea forward at the time, as well as not wanting to jeopardise their settlement initiatives in Palestine.

Moreover, these ideas and schemes were becoming more acceptable in British circles. They were gradually filtered down to the British masses, as is reflected in letters published in *The Times*, not only advocating the ‘restoration’ of the Jews to Palestine but appealing to the British people to buy Palestine for the Jews.⁵¹ As well as stressing that this would be in “the interest of not only of England but other European nations”.⁵² The same scheme was pushed officially by the newspapers, namely *The Times* and *The Global*, which were distancing themselves from the theological discussion, yet pushing that Jews would play an important role in the reconfiguration of Syria and enable them to fulfil their historic role as *agents of civilisation in the Middle East*. This not only reflecting editorial shift at the newspapers, but a clear governmental change in policy.⁵³

More publications on this issue were cropping up in British circles, such as that of Rev. Bradshaw in 1844 emphasising that this was the duty of the Christian states and requested that the British Parliament grant four million pounds and another million to be collected by Churches to achieve this goal. The idea of British involvement came through another publication in 1845 entitled, “An *appeal on behalf of the Jewish nation, in connection with British Policy in the Levant*”. In which Edward L. Mitford⁵⁴ puts forward a proposal for the “re-

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 122-123.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 103, 119-124.

⁵¹ This idea was suggested earlier by the German Rabbi Zvi Hirsch Kalischer to Moses Montefiore and to the Rothschild family of bankers, that Palestine be bought from Mehemet Ali in 1836.

⁵² Hyamson, “British Project”, *op. cit.*, p.137.

⁵³ Green, *Moses Montefiore, op. cit.*, p. 147.

⁵⁴ He was a member of the Ceylon Civil Service, part of the Government of Ceylon (Sri Lanka) under British colonial rule. He also lived in Morocco and Syria and was acquainted with the Jewish population there.

establishment of the Jewish nation in Palestine as a protected state, under the guardianship of Great Britain”. Thus, initially their establishment as a protected state but as a prelude to “their final establishment as an independent state... to allow of their governing themselves”, following a period regulating their advances. He further argues if England was to implement this for the “harmless race” then in return “would be attended with political advantages of incalculable importance to Great Britain, tending to restore the balance of her power in the Levant, and giving her the command of a free and uninterrupted communication with her Eastern possessions”, stressing the control over the steam communication and bringing it in British hands. In trying to appeal to British interest in the region, he goes further to state that this “would quickly return in blessings on England and be felt in the wretched hearts and homes of the poor manufacturers of Manchester, Birmingham and Glasgow”.⁵⁵

This was to be advocated by further influential figures, such as the British military administrator, Colonel George Gawler,⁵⁶ who pushed for the same scheme, of creating a Jewish Colony in Palestine under British protection. He wrote in 1845 a booklet supposedly devised as a memorandum to the Foreign Office entitled, “*Tranquilization of Syria and the East: Practical Suggestions in Furtherance of the Establishment of Jewish Colonies in Palestine, the Most Sober and Sensible Remedy for the Miseries of Asiatic Turkey*”. In it he discusses from his experience as a colonisation expert and previous governor of South Australia, the best arrangements for transporting Jewish emigrants and their baggage from England, and the timing of it as well as how to avoid “exciting the prejudices of the native population”.⁵⁷ He was the first to articulate the that “Palestine is a land without a people” waiting for “the people without a land”, i.e. the Jews.⁵⁸ He visited Palestine in 1849 with Sir Moses Montefiore and returned filled with “visionary zeal”.⁵⁹ Following which,⁶⁰ he establishes an organisation for the promotion of Jewish settlement and colonisation of Palestine.

Later he wrote another small booklet in 1853 entitled “*Syria and its near Prospects*”.⁶¹ In it he states that “Divine providence has placed Syria and Egypt in the very gap between England and the most important regions of her colonial and foreign trade”. Therefore, in order to protect its trade in India and China and even Australia, England needs to control this connecting region. He argues, that even if England does not want to increase its territory, it “most urgently needs the shortest and fastest line of communications to the territories already possessed”. He adds that both Syria and Egypt are “in intimate connection” and that if these regions would fall into the hand of “a foreign hostile power in either would soon endanger British trade and communications through the other”. Thus, Britain need to follow suit in Syria as it has done in Egypt; “Egypt has improved greatly by British influence, and it is now for England to set her hand to the renovation of Syria, through the only people whose energies will be extensively and permanently in the work”. Here following a detailed presentation of British interest, he implores England to put its trust in the “real children of the soil, the sons of Israel”.⁶² His plan was for a gradual colonisation of the land starting with a few experimental one and then expanding thereon, this came at a time when war was breaking out over holy places in Jerusalem.⁶³ Although many of these schemes stayed on paper, they helped reshape the public opinion and create a real discussion on the future of Palestine as well as that of the Jews. In Britain where Emancipation of the Jews took place in the 19th century, anti-Semitic sentiment was still quite high, and the prospect of moving the Jews somewhere else would have appealed to a large section of society. Even Shaftesbury who pushed the idea of moving Jews to Palestine was strongly against the emancipation in Britain. This may have also been why Jewish British institutions were not wholeheartedly behind these schemes.

⁵⁵ Hyamson, “British Project”, *op. cit.*, pp.143-144.

⁵⁶ Gawler was influenced by the views of John Thomas and was also close to Moses Montefiore. He became distinguished following the Peninsular War and the Battle of Waterloo after which he become religious and started converting people, he served in a number of countries and made a name for himself as a military author and was appointed as the second governor of South Australia. See Green, *Moses Montefiore, op. cit.*, p. 214. He also established penal colonies in Australia for British convicts.

⁵⁷ Hyamson, “British Project”, *op. cit.*, p.144; Green, *Moses Montefiore, op. cit.*, pp.214-215.

⁵⁸ Ould-Mey, “Non-Jewish Origin”, *op. cit.*, p. 605. On the other hand, Shafir argues that this is first attributed to a member of the mission Church of Scotland to Palestine, Alexander Keith, who spoke of “a people without a country; even as their own land [...] is in a great measure a country without a people”. See Shafir, “British Christian Zionism” *op. cit.*

⁵⁹ Green, *Moses Montefiore, op. cit.*, pp.230-231.

⁶⁰ He was sacked due to an authorised deficit of £155,000; see Green, *Moses Montefiore, op. cit.*, p.214.

⁶¹ This was delivered as a lecture in the Young Men’s Christian Association lecture room, Derby, on Tuesday, 25th January 1853, while Resident Commissioner of the province of South Australia.

⁶² G. Gawler (1853), *Syria and Its Near Prospects: The Substance of an Address Delivered in the Young Men’s Christian Association Lecture Room, Derby*, London: Adams Hamilton, p.49; *The Scottish Christian Journal* (1853), Edinburgh, V. I, p.217; L. Kamel, (2015), *Imperial Perceptions of Palestine: British Influence and Power in Late Ottoman Times*, London: I.B. Tauris, p. 9.

⁶³ The idea was later suggested by James Finn, British Consul in Jerusalem, in a letter to the Foreign Secretary on 15 September 1857, with the suggestion of settling Jews in Palestine as farmers.

The Impact of the Crimean War

The Crimean war (1853-1856) which was about Catholic and Orthodox struggle for the control of Christian holy places in Islamic Jerusalem. This was instigated by the French request in 1850 to the Ottomans to restore their protectorship of holy places⁶⁴ supported by other Catholic states.⁶⁵ The Ottomans responded to this request by setting up a commission in order to investigate this issue. However, Russia sent a diplomatic note to the Sultan demanding that the status quo be upheld and later threatening to withdraw their ambassador from Istanbul.⁶⁶ The French objected to this especially as the situation in the Holy Land was in the favour of the Catholics and also threatened to dispatch a warship and blockade the Dardanelles, if the Ottomans did not rule in their favour. The Ottomans were in a difficult position between these two powers. The commission concluded their investigation and the Ottomans issued an imperial decree (*Firman*) on 9 February 1852, accepting its findings and announcing it.⁶⁷ The Ottomans informed the French they would accept most of their demands. While on the other hand the notifying Russia, that the status quo in the Holy Land will be maintained.⁶⁸ However, Russia demanded a pertinent decree on the upholding of the status quo.⁶⁹ The Ottomans were thus stuck in between these two powers and although both sides were initially satisfied with the perceived outcome, it did not resolve the dispute. Thus, the issue of controlling the holy places became a problematic issue between Russia, France and the Ottomans.

The French angry at the outcome of events sent a warship to the Dardanelles in May 1852 and the situation from thereon started to escalate. Russia promised the Ottomans support in case of a French attack.⁷⁰ Later sending a mission to Istanbul accompanied with a warship, demanding the acceptance of their requests on the question of holy places and to give the Russians protecting rights over the Ottoman Orthodox subjects.⁷¹ The Ottomans attempted to negotiate with a number of states the resolving of this issue, issuing another *Firman*, imperial decree defining the rights and authority of each side.⁷² Russia refused to accept a compromise later sent troops into Ottoman lands without declaring war. Britain and France took the side of the Ottomans against Russia. Therefore, Russia tried to win over to its side the Austrian and Prussian. But these states preferred to remain neutral. Then Austria, Prussia and Germany joined Britain and France, thus Russia was on its own. With Russia starting to suffer heavy losses, they had to accept an end to this war. The Ottomans, Russia, France, Britain, Austria, Prussia and Sardinia-Piemonte signed the Paris Peace Treaty on 30 March 1856. The Ottomans issued an imperial decree on reforms (*Islahat*) that it announced to the foreign states on 28 February 1856, proclaiming religious equality throughout its territory.⁷³

For a war to start over control of Holy sites in Jerusalem, shows the extent of which these powers were trying to gain as much control as possible on the ground. Maintaining the status quo was quite a difficult task for the Ottomans with each power trying to gain more ground within the Holy Land. These powers threatening the Ottomans with war and sending their warships to its territory show how fragile the situation was and the difficulty the Ottomans faced in intra-Christian conflicts. Yet the *Islahat Firman* or the imperial reform decree was in a way to try to halt any interference between the Sultan and his subject from foreign powers, and in the internal administration of the Ottomans.

British Economic Interest

The idea of a “Jewish Client-State” in Palestine was to become more established during and following the Crimean War (1853-1856). This to many in Britain as Clayton put it, “was to ensure a British presence in a strategically vital area”, while to others the idea of “a Jewish client-state would constitute a key link (and a buffer against the French) in the Middle Eastern chain”.⁷⁴ In May 1854 a special request was sent to the Ottoman authorities from the British Foreign Minister of the time, George Villiers, to own land in Greater Syria.⁷⁵ Levine

⁶⁴ The French pressed the sultan to restore the earlier status quo, appealing to the capitulations of 1535, 1673 and 1740, which had given protectorship of some places to the Catholic, since 1757. The Orthodox were able in recent years to secure similar rights and privileges recognised by the Sultan. They did undermine many of the rights of the Catholics, who were determined to re-establish and assert their rights

⁶⁵ These were Austria, Spain, Portugal, Sicily and Tuscany.

⁶⁶ A. L. Macfie (2014), *The Eastern Question 1774-1923*, London: Routledge, pp. 27-28.

⁶⁷ I. Işık Bostancı (2006), *XIX. Yüzyılda Filistin (İdari ve Sosyo-Ekonomik Vaziyet)*, (PhD thesis). Elazığ: Fırat University, Turkey, p. 48.

⁶⁸ Macfie, *The Eastern Question*, op. cit., p. 28.

⁶⁹ Işık Bostancı, *XIX. Yüzyılda Filistin*, op. cit., p. 48.

⁷⁰ Macfie, *The Eastern Question*, op. cit., p. 28.

⁷¹ E. Z. Karal (1999), *Osmanlı Tarihi, c.V.*, Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu, pp. 222-228; F. Armaoğlu (1999), *19. Yüzyıl Siyasî Tarihi 1789-1914*, Ankara: Alkım Yayinevi, pp.231-236; Işık Bostancı, *XIX. Yüzyılda Filistin*, op. cit., p. 48.

⁷² Ibid.

⁷³ Işık Bostancı, *XIX. Yüzyılda Filistin*, op. cit., p. 49.

⁷⁴ A. Clayton (1986), *The British Empire as a Superpower 1919-39*, Hampshire: The Macmillan Press, p. 138; Kamel, *Imperial Perceptions*, op. cit., pp. 8-9.

⁷⁵ Kamel, *Imperial Perceptions*, op. cit., p. 9.

argues that such a client state was important for colonial interest in India: “A Jewish client state in Palestine was increasingly seen as vital to British colonial interests, particularly in India”. He quotes the British colonial officer, Mitford, stating that such a client-state would put the management of steam communication in British hands, as the steamships coming from India, needed refuelling on route, and Palestine was an ideal place for this.⁷⁶

The same scheme was reiterated by Dr Thomas Clarke in 1861, who published a pamphlet entitled, *Palestine for the Jews*, and argued that it was essential for England to control this corridor as a political necessity stating: “If England is ... relying upon its commerce as the cornerstone of its greatness; if one of the nearest and best channels of that commerce is across the axis of the three great continents; and if the Jews are essentially a trading ... people, what so natural as that they should be planted along that great highway of ancient traffic”.⁷⁷ A few months later he published another pamphlet entitled, *India and Palestine: or, the Restoration of the Jews, Viewed in Relation to the Nearest Route to India*. He reiterated the same points on the importance of Palestine for connecting with India, adding that Acre has to be occupied by the British together with the whole of Palestine. Again, stressing the Jews as natural allies of Britain and its true friend, in addition to their historical connection with the Holy Land, thus making this land their home would at the same time act as a defence for Britain and its interest.⁷⁸

A client state that would serve British colonial interests was thus vital to be established in the region. This became more pressing following discussions of establishing the Suez Canal in 1854 and commencing it in 1859 and its opening in 1869. Following the opening of the Suez Canal in 1869 and the pressing need for British control, Isaac Ashe in *The Jewish Chronicle* in 1871 and 1872, urged the Jews to develop themselves and prepare themselves for self-governing and independence. He called on the British, in order to combat French influence, to construct another canal that would act as alternative to the Suez Canal, from Akabah on the other end of the Red Sea, ensuring for the British a second route to India. He also proposed the establishment of an Anglo-Jewish company that would cooperate with the Ottomans.⁷⁹ The British government took a different approach and instead of confronting the Ottomans and through agreement with them took Cyprus in 1878. Later directing its attention to Egypt, and bringing it under its control in 1882, thus detaching it away from Historical Syria.

Conclusion

The idea of reclaiming the Holy Land never vanished from western imagination and Napoleon’s expedition had reignited memories of the crusades. France was the first country during the Ottoman period to attempt the penetration of the Holy Land both through creating a political presence and later through military occupation. Both these attempts failed, but it alerted another western power, namely Britain, who was much more successful in its endeavour. Napoleon’s military action into Egypt and Palestine was seen as a threat to Britain and its colonial interests in India, thus it took on this project and implemented it on its own. Britain succeeded where France failed; it created the first longstanding consulate and later managed to occupy this land.

Britain which had no foothold in the region, unlike France who enforced their influence through the protection of Catholics. With no protestant to protect in the region, Britain saw that if it could extend protection to the Jews it would create a foothold therein. Missionaries were interested in converting the Jews to Christianity and were quite instrumental in the process of creating a British presence. They were indeed the first to promote the idea of establishing a British consulate, and through lobbying they would very much likely have contributed to the decision making. Indeed, they were successful in expanding the remit of the Vice-Consul in Jerusalem to include the protection of Jews in the region. The British Foreign Secretary was quite instrumental in pushing the idea of allowing Jews to migrate to Palestine and creating an entity for them, but although he was not successful, he managed to lay the foundation for the client-state idea.

The negotiations that took place at the end of Muhammad Ali Pasha’s occupation of Palestine, expose the real motivations of western powers for the future colonisation of the Holy Land. The numerous schemes put forward around making this region a European protectorate or a small autonomous Christian state or a separate province was aimed at not only limiting Ottoman control but aiming to bring the region under their sovereignty. As already observed, until the twentieth century, exclusive control of the Holy Land by European powers was aspired to but was not possible. These ideas were never abandoned by Britain and through eliminating its western rivals from the region and particularly from Egypt, Britain was getting closer to its goal. It wanted to control this land through using the Jews a tool in the process. Thus, the evoking of Jewish nationalism in the form of Zionism helped realise

⁷⁶ Levine, *The Merchant of Modernism*, *op. cit.*

⁷⁷ Sokolow, *History of Zionism*, *op. cit.*, pp. 138-139; Kamel, *Imperial Perceptions*, *op. cit.*, pp. 9-10.

⁷⁸ Friedman, “Lord Palmerston”, *op. cit.*, pp. 151-152.

⁷⁹ Hyamson, “British Project”, *op. cit.*, pp.152-153.

this goal. The ideas of Zionism indeed did not stem from Jewish circles, rather it was an influence of a long tradition of Christian Zionism, that led to the birth of the Jewish Zionist movement. After which a formal alliance was to be forged with the Zionist movement and soon after these dreams were brought into reality. Britain pushed its scheme more than any other western power and its idea of establishing a client-state that would serve its long-term imperialist interest was reflected in its wish to erect a human barrier, a colonial Jewish settler-state, in Palestine.

These ideas were reflected in various sections of British society and were filtered down to the masses. Many pamphlets, books and newspaper articles were published and appealed to British colonial interest in the region stressing that the blessing of such actions will be felt in Britain. This is besides the theological discussions which necessitated the 'restoration of Jews' and creating an entity for them as a prelude to the coming of the Messiah. Thus, Jews were seen as a useful tool in the hands of imperialist powers, and namely Britain, both for trade and military support in the region, as well as fulfilling the biblical prophecies. The British establishment tried to keep a distance from missionary propaganda and concentrate officially on its imperialist goals. Nevertheless, influence of evangelical Christian ideas on the decision making have been documented, such as that of Palmerston and Shaftesbury.

Therefore, under British protection the establishment of Palestine as a buffer state against rival influences and as a client state for British imperial interest became part of the British policy for the region. Its policy on the Jews was to help them migrate to Palestine and afford them protection as a prelude to their establishment as state serving its interest. This policy bore its fruits at the beginning of the twentieth century and Britain publicly promised Palestine to the Jews in 1917, in what became known the Balfour Declaration. This was not just a British declaration,⁸⁰ its text was approved by the American and French governments before it was issued, also the Italian government and the Catholic Pope expressed their sympathy on this issue. Therefore, Britain gained to its side the support of other western governments before issuing this statement, thus it cannot just be seen solely as a British scheme. The British then set forth from Egypt, together with ally forces, to take the Holy Land and General Allenby was ordered by the Prime Minister of the time David Lloyd George to capture Jerusalem by Christmas. The British did not shy away from evoking the crusading past although officially they were told not to engage in crusading rhetoric.⁸¹ This illustrates the connection between the crusade and the British 'liberation' of Jerusalem in the British imperialist mind. Today It is perhaps fitting for the American President to continue on this route, by choosing to announce that the first western embassy to be established in Jerusalem at the centenary of Balfour's declaration, showing continuity in the western imperialist mindset over the colonisation of the Holy Land.

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⁸⁰ The Balfour Declaration was preceded by a French declaration of sympathy in the same year. The letter dated 4th June 1917 states that it was in response to a Zionist presentation of their project of "*the development of Jewish colonization in Palestine*" and that the French government "*can but feel sympathy for your cause*".

⁸¹ J. Kitchen (2010), "'Khaki crusaders': crusading rhetoric and the British Imperial soldier during the Egypt and Palestine campaigns, 1916–18," *First World War Studies*, Vol. 1, no.2, pp. 141-160; E. Bar-Yosef (2001), "The Last Crusade? British Propaganda and the Palestine Campaign, 1917-18," *Journal of Contemporary History*, Vol. 36, no. 1, pp. 87-109.

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