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Towards Nakba: The Failure of the British Mandate of Palestine, 1922-1939

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Abstract

In 1922, with the issuance of the Churchill White Paper, the British government committed itself to assuming the responsibilities of the Balfour Declaration and create a bi-national state in the Mandated territory of Palestine. By 1939, the British, represented by the Mandatory Authority, found themselves trapped between a Palestinian-based Zionist movement, itself torn between two competing factions, and a Palestinian Arab nationalist movement whose leadership had collapsed. The internal split between Revisionist Zionism under Ze'ev Jabotinsky and Mainstream Zionism under Chaim Weizmann and, later, David Ben-Gurion prevented the British government from negotiating with a cohesive Zionist organization. The collapse of the highly centralized Palestinian Arab nationalist resistance, led by the Grand Mufti of Jerusalem Hajj Amin al-Husseini, in 1937 deprived the British government of a cohesive Arab movement with which they could negotiate. This thesis argues that the factional differences within the broader Arab-Zionist conflict caused the British to fail in accomplishing their goal of a bi-national state in Palestine.