

Combating Insurgency in British Palestine

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Abstract

Insurgencies are the new normal of warfare in this emerging century. Of course, resistance against an opposing armed force is nothing new, but globalization and the ever-present eye of international attention on these conflicts creates a completely new dynamic. Such was the case during the turbulent years prior to the establishment of Israel in British Palestine. To date, much of the research on this topic has lacked a comprehensive discussion of the international context of the British occupation of Palestine in addition to insurgent and counterinsurgent forces. As one of the first major insurgencies following the Second World War, Palestine serves as an excellent model for demonstrating the complexities of the insurgent-counterinsurgent relationship, and how this relationship changes once the international community starts observing. This analysis will use the “Tri-Partite Counter-Insurgency Model” developed by Andrew Mumford as a starting point for examining the end of the British Mandate in Palestine. The model contends that a comprehensive study of an insurgency should consider the interactions of three critical actors in an insurgency situation: the insurgents themselves, the counter-insurgent power, and concerned international interests. It is this interplay between these three forces in Palestine that is the focus of this article. This paper, while not attempting to “prove” the model, will use it as a point of departure for a comprehensive examination of the influences at work in the British withdrawal from Palestine. Throughout the last years of the Mandate, from around 1944 to 1947, the British faced considerable opposition to their management of Palestine from primarily Jewish insurgent groups. Chief among these was the Irgun Zvai Leumi. The Irgun and other insurgent groups such as the Haganah and the Stern Gang carried out a number of deadly attacks on British military targets throughout this time, which helped create an atmosphere of lawlessness and disgust with the British presence in the region. The British in turn devoted significant resources to ending the insurgency, but were ultimately unsuccessful in maintaining control of the situation as their tactics focused too broadly on the general population rather than individual insurgent groups. Finally, international pressures and waning public support in Britain further encouraged the British withdrawal. Ultimately, primary source research from Irgun and British administration documents show that these three factors all coalesced to facilitate the British withdrawal from the Palestinian Mandate.

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Not long after midday on July 22nd, 1946, an explosion rocked the King David Hotel in Jerusalem, collapsing most of its southwest wing and the British Colonial Occupation Headquarters. Though the group responsible for the attack, the Irgun Zvai Leumi, had allowed some time for evacuation of the building, the operation took the lives of nearly one hundred British administrators and civilians. Throughout the postwar years of the British occupation of Palestine, the Irgun, and other violent groups, fought against the British to end its control over the Mandate. They waged a war of attrition against the administration, slowly wearing down the British until they had no reasonable choice but to withdraw from the Palestinian Mandate. This struggle was one of the first in a long string of insurgencies the British would face in the coming decades. Just days before the bombing, the Irgun issued a proclamation of their beliefs: “Britain has declared war on the Jewish people. The Jewish people will reply with war. Jewish resistance will continue, Jewish resistance has only just begun...Down with the Nazi-British regime. Out with the unclean sons of Titus from the Holy Land...Long live the Jewish State.”¹

Insurgencies are the new normal of modern warfare in this emerging century. Nearly every conflict involving a foreign ground force occupying another group of people generates some type of insurgent resistance. Of course, resistance against an opposing armed force is nothing new, but the increasing globalization of the world and the ever-present eye of international attention on these conflicts create a compelling new dynamic. Armed conflicts are no longer solely the concern of the parties involved and their allies. Countries both large and small feel the need to concern themselves with wars that appear to have almost no measurable effect on them. Case in point is the decades-long Arab-Israeli conflict. From the Balfour Declaration to the election of Hamas in the Gaza Strip, nations throughout the world have put pressure on one side or another to resolve the fighting. This influence was important in shaping Britain’s decision to end the Palestinian Mandate in 1947; however other critical conditions were also influential.

Throughout the last years of the Mandate, from around 1944 to 1947, the British faced a considerable opposition to their management of Palestine from primarily Jewish insurgent groups. Chief among these was the Irgun

¹ Ely J. Tavin and Yonah Alexander, eds., *Psychological warfare and propaganda: Irgun documentation* (Wilmington: Scholarly Resources, 1982), 18.

Zvai Leumi (hereafter referred to as the Irgun or IZL)². Other groups such as the Stern Gang and the Haganah also played an important role in the insurgency against the British, but the Irgun remained Britain's chief antagonist throughout this period. The Irgun and these other insurgent groups carried out a number of deadly attacks on British military targets throughout this time and helped create an atmosphere of lawlessness and disgust with the British presence in the Middle East. The British in turn devoted significant resources to ending the insurgency, but were ultimately unsuccessful in maintaining control of the situation. It is this interplay between the insurgents, counter-insurgency, and the constant watch of the international community that will be the focus of this article.

Significant debate has already ensued over the efficacy of British counter-insurgency during the years of decolonization and the effects of the Irgun on British withdrawal. Saul Zadka in his book *Blood in Zion* argues that the Irgun could be defeated and was at times on the verge of disintegration.³ The sources seem to confirm this assumption, but Zadka appears to downplay the significance of the insurgency in determining British withdrawal and assumes the withdrawal from Palestine to be the inevitable result of decolonization. This process of colonial powers granting independence to large regions of the world was in many ways hastened by the devastating effects of the Second World War. Still, both the British and the French attempted to hold on to their colonial possessions for as long as possible. Additionally, Andrew Mumford's book *The Counter-Insurgency Myth: The British Experience of Irregular Warfare* contends that, "The British, far from being the counter-insurgent exemplars that history has benevolently cast them, have in fact, consistently proven to be slow learners and slow strategic burners in the realm of counter-insurgency warfare."⁴ As this examination will show, the same holds true for the British experience in Palestine.

Historians and military theorists have also engaged in significant debate over methods, models, and the nature of insurgencies. Much of this previous scholarship either fails to take a more comprehensive look at the situations discussed or forgets to include the critical international context. One such work is David Charters' *The British Army and Jewish Insurgency in*

² Saul Zadka, *Blood in Zion: How the Jewish Guerrillas Drove the British out of Palestine* (London: Brassey's, 1995). 1.

³ *Ibid.*, 32.

⁴ Andrew Mumford, *Puncturing the Counterinsurgency Myth: Britain and Irregular Warfare in the Past, Present, and Future* (Carlisle Barracks: Strategic Studies Institute, United States Army War College Press, 2011). 1.

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Palestine.⁵ Here, Charters conducts an efficient and accurate look at the situation within Palestine from 1945-1947. However, while his book excellently addresses the situation on the ground in Palestine, it fails adequately to address the changing effects of insurgency in Britain. Little is mentioned of the international context and the battle for Palestine predominantly remains a one-way street from metropole to Mandate. An article by Andrew Mack titled "Counterinsurgency in the Third World: Theory and Practice" makes a similar mistake.⁶ While Mack's article focuses on the American counter-insurgency in Vietnam, the dynamics of such a conflict are similar to those faced in Palestine. His article rightfully attributes the success or failure of operations to the situations both on the ground in the occupied country and at home in the metropole. However, the wider international context is not discussed because it was not as much of an issue during the Vietnam War due to the political circumstances of the Cold War. The bipolar nature of international relations at this time gave the Americans a more free hand in operating; conversely, as this examination will show, the significant international concern for Palestine hindered the British in their counter-insurgency efforts.

One such counter-insurgency model which fails in its comprehensiveness is the Cost-Benefit Model. This theory states that both insurgents and counter-insurgents will rationally weigh the costs and benefits of fighting and will end their struggle if the costs outweigh the benefits. An article by Richard Shultz titled "Coercive Force and Military Strategy: Deterrence Logic and the Cost-Benefit Model of Counterinsurgency Warfare" sufficiently debunks much of this theory.⁷ He correctly argues that insurgents do not act in a rational way when confronted with coercive force. Rather, increased force often increases the severity of the response of the insurgents. The insurgency in Palestine makes a compelling case study for this point. However, in discussing the situation in Vietnam, Shultz does not comment on the attitude of citizens at home in the metropole. The low support for the Vietnam War is what arguably cost the war for the United States following the perceived disaster of the Tet Offensive. In Vietnam as in Palestine, the attitude at home was critical.

⁵ David A. Charters, *The British Army and Jewish Insurgency in Palestine, 1945-47* (London: Macmillan, 1989).

⁶ Andrew Mack, "Counterinsurgency in the Third World: Theory and Practice," *British Journal of International Studies* 1, no. 3 (1975): 226 – 53.

⁷ Richard Shultz, "Coercive Force and Military Strategy: Deterrence Logic and the Cost-benefit Model of Counterinsurgency Warfare," *The Western Political Quarterly* 32, no. 4 (1979): 444 – 66.

Finally, the most flawed view of the insurgent/counter-insurgent dynamic lies in Ivan Arreguin-Toft's theory of "asymmetric conflict."⁸ His article titled "How the Weak Win Wars" breaks down insurgent conflicts into diametrically opposed monoliths of a "weak" and a "strong" actor. This theory contends that the strong actor will win if it uses a direct or indirect force at the same time that the weak actor matches that level of force, and that a weak actor will win if it uses direct force against the indirect force of a strong actor, and vice versa. However, this theory does not account for the complexity of individual situations. By reducing conflicts into "weak" and "strong" actors, Toft does not account for the multifaceted reality of multiple weak and strong actors working for or against each other. While some mention is made of the political will of each actor to fight, his argument ultimately breaks down by assuming the strong and weak actors use only direct or indirect strategies rather than a mixture of the two. As we will see, the Palestine situation was far more complicated than that.

In contrast, the theory proposed by Andrew Mumford in his latest book on British counter-insurgency provides an excellent point of departure for examining this subject. His "Tri-Partite Model" is the attempt to include three interactive and interdependent factors including the counter-insurgent, the insurgent, and the international political context. He states that these three elements comprise the major causal and impacting factors contributing to the success or failure of counter-insurgency operations.⁹ In the insurgency aspect, Mumford looks at the organization, strategy and tactics, and the internal and external support for the insurgent organizations. With counter-insurgency, he considers the military tactics employed, political situations of the occupied area, and the structure and efficacy of the intelligence gathering apparatus. Finally, the international aspect examines pressure put on the counter-insurgent government by international groups as well as the pressures of regional actors on both sides. Here too, this article will include a look at public support in the metropole for and against the continued operation. However, where Mumford falls short is in the application of his method. He uses this model to analyze British counter-insurgency in Malaya, Kenya, South Arabia, and during the Irish "Troubles," but does not extend his analysis back into Palestine. This examination will do exactly that.

⁸ Ivan Arreguin-Toft, "How the Weak Win Wars: A Theory of Asymmetric Conflict," *International Security* 26, no. 1 (2001): 93 – 128.

⁹ Mumford, *Puncturing the Counterinsurgency Myth*: 1 – 2.

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This analysis will take all of these factors into account to provide a more comprehensive and complete look at the British withdrawal from Palestine. While it will in no way attempt to scientifically “prove” the model as this is not the intent of historical study, it will use the model as a point of departure for utilizing a more appreciated look at the insurgent/counter-insurgent relationship. Ultimately, it will show that the nature of the Jewish insurgency and the subsequent mishandling of the situation by the British, as well as international pressure from what eventually became known as the World Zionist Organization and other prominent groups are the combined factors which influenced the British departure from the Palestinian Mandate.

Brief mention should be made about what will not be included in this examination. This analysis will focus almost exclusively on Jewish insurgencies. This is not to say that there were no Arab groups participating in violence against the British, but their role was limited and the effects marginal compared to the IZL. There was a significant Arab Revolt prior to the onset of the Jewish insurgencies, but this had subsided by the spring of 1939. This was due in large part to concessions made by the British government to limit the number of Jewish immigrants to Palestine under the White Paper of 1939.¹⁰ As we will see, this paper would have far-reaching consequences for the British. Additionally, the Irgun also worked to ensure that the Arab groups were not a problem for them. As Naomi Shepherd states in her book *Ploughing Sand: British Rule in Palestine 1917-1948*, “Menachem Begin, commander of the Irgun, did not regard the Arabs as an independent factor in Palestine and always thought of them as an instrument used by the British against the Jewish community. The first Irgun operations had emphasized this state of affairs. Begin concluded: ‘The first aim was achieved in the early stages of the revolt, we succeeded in nullifying the Arab factor.’”¹¹ Additionally, the military correspondence, diplomatic papers, and Parliamentary discussions on Palestinian insurgency make few references to the actions or significance of any Arab insurgencies during this period.

Before beginning the task of using the Tri-Partite Model to explain the situation in Palestine prior to the independence of Israel, it is important to provide a quick summary of the history of the last years of the Palestinian Mandate. With the collapse of the Ottoman Empire following the First

¹⁰ Naomi Shepherd, *Ploughing Sand: British Rule in Palestine, 1917-1948* (Rutgers University Press, 2000). 215.

¹¹ Zadka, *Blood in Zion*. 36.

World War, the victorious British and French forces proceeded to carve up the former Ottoman lands into a system of protectorates known as Mandates. These were designed to be administered by the British and French until such time as they were deemed able to govern their own affairs. Naturally, this system tended to be somewhat exploitative in reality. With England's intent to establish a national homeland for the Jews made obvious by the Balfour Declaration, Palestine was to become the battleground between the indigenous populations of the Middle East and a massive influx of refugees from around the world, predominantly Europe.

As Jewish immigrants began streaming into Palestine, this process began to upset the populations of Arabs already living there. Tensions rose throughout Palestine during the interwar years, with the Arab Revolt in Palestine becoming one of the pivotal movements. The revolt came to a head in early 1939 over the issue of increased Jewish immigration to Palestine. The rise of Hitler's anti-Semitic Nazi party in Germany drove many thousands of European Jews to seek refuge in this new homeland. Following the proclamation of the White Paper in 1939 which limited Jewish immigration and land sales, the British succeeded in trading one antagonist for another.

While the White Paper calmed the Arab insurgents and for the most part ended their violence, it directly led to the establishment of a more effective Jewish insurgency. Following the defeat of Hitler and the revealing of the terror of the Holocaust, the Irgun and others stepped up their efforts to end the British rule of Palestine. Throughout the postwar years from 1944 to 1947, insurgency groups bombed military and administrative targets throughout Palestine; most notable of these was the bombing of the King David Hotel in July 1946. Realizing their situation was becoming more and more desperate, the British began pulling its forces out of Palestine until its final withdrawal in 1948. Although the British had withdrawn from Palestine, it still sought to mediate the growing conflict between Arabs and Jews by referring the problem to the United Nations. The U.N. plan called for the partition of Palestine into an Arab and a Jewish state. The Arabs, not willing to cede any land to the Jewish population, rejected the measure. As the last British soldier left Palestine in May 1948, the region exploded into violence and the Jewish fighters quickly succeeded in establishing the state of Israel. It is with this context in mind that we can begin to examine the multifaceted insurgent/counter-insurgent relationship during the British Mandate in Palestine.

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First, this analysis will consider the Jewish insurgency situation in Palestine. It will look primarily at the organization, strategy, and tactics of the Irgun, the primary insurgent group during this time. It will also outline the indigenous support for the Jewish insurgents as well as any external support which these groups received. However a quick note should be made regarding the evidence of this first section. Despite the fact that this section will focus on the Jewish groups themselves and not necessarily the British view of them, primary sources from members of the Irgun themselves are few and far between. Instead, this analysis will utilize primarily British documents discussing the Irgun and other insurgent groups. Although their analysis may at times be biased or flawed, these documents are of sufficient quality to outline the basics of organization, strategy, and support.

Beginning with the Irgun's primary leadership, the group had roughly fourteen senior members who were in charge of all aspects of Irgun operations. These included intelligence, propaganda, recruitment, training, fundraising, communications, arms procurement, and activities abroad.¹² Furthermore, the Irgun was divided into four main units. The combat unit, responsible for operations, the Revolutionary Propaganda unit, in charge of the psychological warfare mounted on the Yishuv (community of Jews living in Palestine), the Revolutionary Army, acting as a reserve force for the combat unit, and the special assault unit, which was designed to attack Arab fighters, but was dismantled on August 17, 1944.¹³

In addition to the literature already on the subject, we can obtain a good look at the insurgency organization by looking at a British command paper which outlined the situation in Palestine as of July 1946. It lists the largest groups to be the Haganah and the Palmach which were divided into a static force and a field army. The paper then describes the Irgun Zvai Leumi as "formed in 1935 from dissident members of the Haganah. (It) operates under its secret command, with a strength estimated between 3,000 and 5,000."¹⁴ Finally, its estimates of the Stern Group are as follows. "(It) originated as a dissident faction within the Irgun Zvai Leumi when the latter decided temporarily to suspend activities in 1939. Its strength is said to be between 200 and 300 dangerous fanatics. They have been for some time fully co-operating with the IZL, since both are equally

¹² Ibid., 66.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ "British Command paper, July 1946, detailing activities of a collusion among the three Jewish underground movements" in Michael Joseph Cohen, ed. *Jewish Resistance to British Rule in Palestine, 1944-1947*, vol. 34, *The Rise of Israel* (Garland Pub., 1987), 156.

committed to a policy of unrestrained extremism.”¹⁵ Although these groups in no way fully cooperated with each other at all times, there existed a certain level of collusion between them. They each played a different part in the insurgent process with the Haganah playing the role of the standing army and the Irgun and Stern Group launching covert attacks against the British. Furthermore, the IZL was carefully structured and divided into sections and cells. Thus, its strongest advantage was the ability of its members to be insurgents, but still remain part of the community.¹⁶

The strategy and tactics of these groups were similar to those used by insurgent groups throughout the century. In regards to the tactics of insurgencies, Mumford states, “Broadly speaking, all insurgencies share the same overarching strategic imperative: to repel or overthrow an occupying or ruling military and political order in a particular country or territory and replace it with a system constructed in their own ideological or religious image.”¹⁷ They typically do so by disrupting the daily life of the administration by attacking carefully selected military targets. This later became the hallmark of the Irgun.¹⁸ Such tactics can be observed in a telegram sent from Lieutenant General Sir Allen Cunningham to the Secretary of State for the Colonies. This telegram, sent on December 27, 1945, describes an attack on the police headquarters in Jerusalem:

*“At about 19.15 hours this evening Police Headquarters in Jerusalem were attacked by armed Jews. A series of heavy explosions occurred and extensive damage was caused to the building. Four soldiers are dead and six seriously injured. District Police Headquarters on Jaffa Tel Aviv border were similarly attacked. Ground and first floor and telephone exchange were wrecked. Arab telephone operator was killed. At 19.50 hours an attempt was made to enter arms stores in Tel Aviv.”*¹⁹

Numerous such attacks occurred throughout the insurgency and followed a clear pattern of targeting the British military and administration. The

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Zadka, *Blood in Zion*: 65.

¹⁷ Mumford, *Puncturing the Counterinsurgency Myth*: 17.

¹⁸ Zadka, *Blood in Zion*: 32.

¹⁹ “High Commissioner Alan Cunningham to Colonial Secretary G.H. Hall, 28-31 December 1945, reporting on further terrorist attacks and the reaction of the Jewish Agency leaders” in Cohen, *Jewish Resistance to British Rule*, 87.

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Irgun and Stern Group were notorious for bombing railways and telegraph lines. Furthermore the bombing of the King David Hotel and the public hanging of two British officers in July 1947 show the Irgun's desire to see an end to the British influence in Palestine.²⁰

The other aspect of insurgent tactics and strategy is in the establishment of their own political system. This sentiment was already starting to show itself during the early years of the Irgun following the White Paper of 1939. Shortly before the beginning of the Second World War, some members of the Irgun stated that if the British maintained their policies of restricting Jewish immigration, they would have no choice but to take military action against the government to force them out of Palestine.²¹ As the situation in Palestine deteriorated, this sentiment became even more pronounced. A manifesto by prisoner Menachem Shiff titled, "I am a Hebrew and a Soldier" stated the following: "You see therefore, that the Hebrew army is not a private army as your Prime Minister says, but it is an army created by the sovereign will of the people of Israel, which does not want the lands of foreigners... but to obtain the right to self-determination."²² Additionally, an official manifesto of the Irgun states that, "There is no way to free our Homeland and redeem our Nation except the way of the Liberation War. A national liberation war is a just war, which is conducted by an oppressed people against a foreign power that has enslaved it and its country."²³ Throughout the insurgency, groups such as the Irgun and the Haganah used this sort of rhetoric as one of their tactics to persuade the Jews in Palestine to support their cause. As the fighting dragged on however, more and more immigrants would be convinced that the British had to leave.

Considering the indigenous support for the insurgency within Palestine is a complicated matter. Although by the end of the Mandate there was widespread support for the Irgun, there was never a large and conscious effort to join its ranks.²⁴ For the most part this sympathy was passive, but it nevertheless helped achieve the insurgency's aims. As Mumford puts it, "The beating heart of an insurgency is the level of domestic support received for the insurgent's cause."²⁵ In this instance, the insurgency's

²⁰ Zadka, *Blood in Zion*: 183.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 16.

²² "I am a Hebrew and a Prisoner" in Tavin and Alexander, *Psychological warfare and propaganda*, 106.

²³ "The Aims of the Irgun" in *Psychological Warfare and Propaganda*, 5.

²⁴ Zadka, *Blood in Zion*: 5.

²⁵ Mumford, *Puncturing the Counterinsurgency Myth*: 19.

beating heart grew stronger following the continued existence of the White Paper despite the horrors of the Holocaust. Chaim Weizmann, who would later go on to become the first president of Israel, provides an important insight into this aspect.

In a letter from Weizmann to the Chief Rabbi of Palestine, Weizmann laments the situation of Jews in the Mandate during the summer of 1946. As one of the leaders of the Jewish Agency, a governing body which held out longer than most others in maintaining its ties with the British, his reversal of policy towards Britain is a clear indicator of general Jewish feeling towards the British. Speaking after the arrest of over 2,700 Jews suspected of terrorism during the June 29th raid called Operation Agatha, he voices his disgust with British rule:

“Palestine today is not merely a police state: it is the worst form of military dictatorship... But I am afraid that since the events of Saturday, June 29th, the situation has changed fundamentally. Something has definitely snapped in the relationship between Jews and British in Palestine, and I, as a firm believer in, and champion of, that relationship, am forced to realise that what has been destroyed is so deep, so vital, and of such moral significance, that it cannot be restored by projects, resolutions, and kind words. I feel, therefore, that the only thing is to revert now to the Peel Report, which admitted that the British could not rule over the Jews, and that the only way to establish normal relations between the two peoples is to partition Palestine.”²⁶

Losing the support of the Jewish Agency dealt a critical blow to the British in Palestine. Although this statement by Weizmann obviously does not translate into outright support for the Irgun and other insurgency groups, apathy for the occupying force can often hinder a counter-insurgency operation, especially in intelligence gathering. Furthermore, the above statement shows a clear level of support for the insurgency’s cause of driving out the British, even if outright support for the means of achieving this is not explicitly mentioned.

Turning now to the external support offered to the insurgency, it is clear that the Jewish insurgency received widespread verbal support from Zionist groups throughout the world, especially in Europe and the United

²⁶ “Chaim Weizmann to Chief Rabbi Herzog, 21 July 1946, condemning British actions in Palestine” in Cohen, *Jewish Resistance to British Rule*, 136 – 45.

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States.²⁷ In describing the importance of this support Mumford says, “The external support received by insurgent groups can be critical in enabling their uprising to succeed and sets the tone for the achievements of their strategic goals. In a similar vein, it is important that the counter-insurgent state receive favorable international consensus in order to ground the strategy in international moral and legal legitimacy.”²⁸ Although international pressure on the British will be discussed in detail later in this analysis, it is necessary now to take a quick look at how the insurgency received outside help.

Due to the lack of availability of sources, it would be difficult to conclusively trace monetary contributions to these groups. However, given the unique nature of the Palestinian situation, we find that ironically it was the British who unintentionally supplied the insurgents with weapons. During the Second World War, the British recruited both the Haganah and the Irgun into the army and supplied them with weapons.²⁹ These groups were able to hold on to some of the weapons given to them during this time and in turn use them against the British later. Despite this, the Irgun hardly received enough weapons to take on the British in a prolonged insurgency campaign and it was only in 1946 when they were finally able to launch more potent attacks against the British.³⁰

Overall, the Irgun and other insurgent groups benefitted most from the international pressure on the British to withdraw from Palestine and the internal situation at home. These are factors which will be examined later in this article, but these groups enjoyed significant success in disrupting the government apparatus in Palestine to help render it ungovernable. Furthermore, they developed an organizational structure of multiple cells working independently to continue functioning in the event of one person’s capture. Now we will look at the British counter-insurgency efforts and how these ultimately failed to find an effective way to put down the insurgency.

Counter-insurgency is a complex game which the British have had sometimes hard time mastering. At the heart of counter-insurgency analysis is the consideration which examines the military effectiveness, intelligence gathering, and political management of the counter-insurgent

²⁷ Michael Joseph Cohen, ed. *The British Decision to Evacuate Palestine, 1947-1948*, vol. 36, *The Rise of Israel* (Garland Pub., 1987), Introduction.

²⁸ Mumford, *Puncturing the Counterinsurgency Myth*: 22.

²⁹ Zadka, *Blood in Zion*: 19.

³⁰ *Ibid.*

force.³¹ Unfortunately for the British, the recent military drain caused by the Second World War and the financial difficulties which followed prevented the British from acting more directly to the insurgency threat. This forced them to use less expensive, but ultimately ineffective means of quelling the uprisings as their efforts were directed more at the general population than the specific insurgents. Looking first at the military aspect of the counter-insurgency game, there appears to be several problems the British encountered.

The British used a number of widespread and ineffective tactics against the insurgency before their withdrawal from Palestine. The transcript of a meeting of the Chief Secretary's Office in April 1945 lists several of the considered options for fighting the insurgents. Among these options are the demolition of buildings where murders of British troops occurred, a collective fine on Tel Aviv for the insurgent operations, closing of all cafes, bars, and other forms of entertainment, and a general curfew throughout the city.³² These wide-ranged tactics did little to put down the insurgency and turned some of the population against them. Such measures can undermine the process known today in counter-insurgency as winning "hearts and minds." "Hearts and minds is an adherence to military and political principles that imbibe confidence in the indigenous population as to the counter-insurgent's strength and competence while concomitantly delegitimizing the insurgent's appeal."³³ The British have historically had a difficult time in winning hearts and minds, a point which Andrew Mumford emphasizes throughout his book, but this difficulty was also evident in Palestine. When the British decided to utilize these broad measures against the insurgents, the insurgents in turn would embrace these tactics and use them to portray themselves as victimized freedom fighters attempting to resist a repressive regime.³⁴ It was finally with the imposition of general martial law that this tactic irreparably damaged the British attempt to win indigenous support in Palestine.

The British fully admit the failures of these efforts in a memorandum of the Joint Planning Staff in Palestine in March 1947. "It was the general view of the Cabinet that the results achieved by this imposition of martial law were disappointing. Some arrests had been made, but terrorism had not been brought to an end. Serious outrages had continued, both during

³¹ Mumford, *Puncturing the Counterinsurgency Myth*: 2.

³² "Meeting of top officials of the Palestine administration, 26 April 1946, to consider reaction to recent terrorist attacks" in Cohen, *Jewish Resistance to British Rule*, 106.

³³ Mumford, *Puncturing the Counterinsurgency Myth*: 7.

³⁴ Zadka, *Blood in Zion*: 25.

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the period of martial law and afterwards.” The paper continues on to admit: “The system of martial law which had been imposed seemed needlessly drastic, its effect had been as damaging to the Administration as to the Jewish community.”³⁵ The imposition of martial law towards the end of the Palestinian Mandate, rather than deal a decisive blow to the insurgents, instead dealt a final blow to the image and prestige of the British administration.

Another important reason for the British counter-insurgency failure was the lack of adequate resources with which to stop insurgents. A discussion by the Defense Committee of the Cabinet in 1946 described the situation as such:

*“Since the 1st October, 76 men of the Army and 23 Police had been killed or wounded. Incidents of murder and sabotage were increasing, and rail communication was at a standstill. The Army had gained initiative against terrorism when they had been permitted to attack the illegal armed organizations in Palestine, but had since been forced to adopt a defensive role, which had seriously increased the strain on their morale. The Palestine Police Force was fifty percent below strength, and they needed 3000 recruits to reach full strength. The strain imposed on the Police resulted in an incident in Tel Aviv. If outbreaks of this kind were repeated, they might spread to the Army.”*³⁶

With a police force operating at half force and resigned to acting defensively rather than offensively against the insurgents, it is little surprise that the British were unable to stop the violence and uprisings of the Irgun.

In addition to the military battle against the insurgents, the British also failed to win the political battle. Counter-insurgency operations and by extension the insurgency itself are inescapably political.³⁷ Both in the colony and in the metropole, political considerations permeate almost every decision made. For the Irgun and Jewish immigrants, the main political factor was the restrictions set in place by the White Paper of 1939. Insurgents caught and detained by the British would often use the

³⁵ “Meetings and memoranda on effectiveness of martial law in Palestine” in Cohen, *Jewish Resistance to British Rule*, 236.

³⁶ “Discussion by the Defense Committee of the Cabinet, 20 November 1946, on the deteriorating security situation in Palestine” in *Jewish Resistance to British Rule*, 194.

³⁷ Mumford, *Puncturing the Counterinsurgency Myth*: 3.

spectacle of the public trial to push forward their political ideas. One such instance was in the case of suspected insurgent Baruch Shindler. Shindler makes numerous wild accusations against the British for their continued support of the White Paper and their actions against the insurgents. His testimony lays out the following perceived crimes: “We accuse England of the crime of the breach of confidence...of the crime of the violation of international law...of instigation to anti-Jewish massacres...of being an accomplice to mass murder...of the murder of defenseless people...of violation of the Rights of Man and Citizen...of the crime of economic exploitation...of depriving a whole people the right to live.”³⁸ It was the accusation of Britain’s indifference to the suffering of the Jews of the Holocaust which the insurgents most exploited. Though Shindler’s accusations are likely an exaggeration and misrepresentation of Britain’s actual policy during the Second World War, the continuation of British immigration policy in the wake of the Holocaust certainly turned many away from supporting Britain’s counter-insurgency efforts.

The battle for the continued support of Palestine at home was likewise not going well. One of the key problems faced by the British was the financial and human costs of maintaining their military and police force. “Although the mounting toll of British casualties worried many, they still remained more concerned with the cost of maintaining 100,000 soldiers in the country. According to Churchill, Britain had to spend up to forty million pounds in Palestine a year.”³⁹ The financial situation of Britain was already in dire shape following the Second World War, and the continuing crisis in Palestine only made things worse. Furthermore, the British had been losing control of other colonial obligations across their empire and throughout 1946 and 1947, while it became more and more apparent that the financial strain caused by both the reconstruction of post-war Britain and Palestine would not be worth the effort.

The other main consideration in the metropole caused by the problems in Palestine was the increasing death toll of British troops. However, it was not until the brutal hanging of two British officers in 1947 that these deaths suddenly took the spotlight. A long debate in the House of Commons on August 12, 1947 highlights this concern. Here Brigadier Mackeson voices his objections: “The immediate problem is that of our troops in Palestine. The Goldsmith’s Officers Club was attacked during

³⁸ “Indictment of the Tortured Jewish People against Treacherous England” in Tavin and Alexander, *Psychological warfare and propaganda*, 110 – 12.

³⁹ Zadka, *Blood in Zion*: 6.

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the past six months, and that was about the most serious episode; 18 were killed and 85 were injured. There was also, of course, the attack on Acre.”⁴⁰ He also chastises the administration for their lack of protection in areas which the British had deemed “controlled areas.” “There two British sergeants were kidnapped, and Nathanya was declared a controlled area on 13th July. That control was taken off on 26th July... On 31st July these two soldiers were found hanged near Nathanya. Why put on these controls and then take them off before those two soldiers were found hanged?”⁴¹ These obvious missteps by the counter-insurgency administration were made clear in the wake of these events and quickly turned public support away from maintaining the Mandate in Palestine. Here we have seen the failure of the British counter-insurgency administration to win the political war. As the United States ultimately lost the war in Vietnam in part because it failed to maintain support for the operations both abroad and in the metropole, so too did the British find difficulty in justifying keeping the Mandate once popular support diminished.

The last area of counter-insurgency analysis to identify is the intelligence factor. In regards to intelligence, Mumford argues, “Intelligence is therefore used not only to tap into the ethos and motivations of the aggrieved community in order to develop a greater understanding of the nature of the threat for political means, but also in order to accurately assess the insurgent’s operational capabilities and organization for practical military means.”⁴² A critical part of this intelligence gathering mechanism is the cooperation and participation of indigenous people in area. A notable pattern in British counter-insurgency tactics was the utilization of turned insurgents for intelligence.⁴³ David Charters comments on the failure of this mechanism. “The armed forces in Palestine failed to eradicate Jewish terror for two main reasons. The first was the almost total lack of intelligence. The dual military and administrative presence, and the need for liaison between the two, meant that throughout the insurgency, Jewish colleagues were often forewarned about British plans.”⁴⁴ The British were dependent on Jewish cooperation

⁴⁰ “Extracts from the House of Commons debate, 12 August 1947, on the number of two British sergeants and the security situation in Palestine” in Cohen, *British Decision to Evacuate Palestine*, 175.

⁴¹ “House of Commons debate, 12 August 1947” in *The British Decision to Evacuate Palestine*, 175.

⁴² Mumford, *Puncturing the Counterinsurgency Myth*: 14.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 8.

⁴⁴ Charters, *British Army and Jewish Insurgency* 228.

in their intelligence gathering mechanism and it was this misplaced trust which largely prevented the British from coordinating an effective response to the insurgents.⁴⁵

The British administration was certainly not unaware of this intelligence failure. A memorandum from General Barker in June 1946 admits the failure of British intelligence. "I do not propose to deal with them (Irgun and the Stern Group) here since our intelligence regarding them is insufficient to permit of any pre-conceived plan for their extermination. We are forced, therefore, to take action only when situations relating to them occur or whenever relevant information comes into our hands. The fact that the whereabouts of the five officers, who were kidnapped five days ago, is still unknown shows how negative is our intelligence on which to be able to act."⁴⁶ Such an admission from a senior member of the administrative unit of Palestine is a clear indicator that the British were paralyzed by a lack of good intelligence on the insurgent situation. This problem extends even before the end of the Second World War. Lord Moyne, who was assassinated in November 1944, also commented on these problems. "I do not know what detailed measures may have been taken in Palestine to capture the assailants and penalize their inciters, but lack of any information as to effective action on our part is causing comment in the Middle East."⁴⁷ By this time, the failure of British intelligence was becoming more and more known throughout the Middle East, and insurgent groups were keen to use this to their advantage in their struggle in Palestine.

Overall, the British counter-insurgency effort failed on numerous fronts. They were unable to defeat the insurgents because the policies they used were too broad and affected too many civilians to win the hearts and minds of the Jewish and Arab people. Mass arrests, public hangings, and the imposition of martial law instead pushed civilians away from supporting the administration rather than supporting the insurgency. On the political side, the main issue in Palestine was the Jewish immigration limits continued by the White Paper of 1939. Even after the events of the Holocaust, the British maintained this policy, and insurgents used this to sway many people away from supporting the British. At home, both the

⁴⁵ Zadka, *Blood in Zion*: 2.

⁴⁶ "Memorandum by General Barker, 22 June 1946, explaining the goals of the operation to be mounted against the Haganah, the military arm of the Jewish Agency" in *Jewish Resistance to British Rule*, 116.

⁴⁷ "Chaim Weizman to Prime Minister Churchill, 7 December 1944, on the Zionist campaign against terrorism" in *Jewish Resistance to British Rule*, 40.

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financial and eventually the human costs of maintaining the Mandate were adding up and public support for continued operations in Palestine plummeted. Finally in the intelligence sphere, the British had to rely on collaborators to help gather intelligence and execute operations. However, many of the collaborators were more inclined to help the insurgents and the British lamented their lack of reliable intelligence throughout the end of the Mandate years. These are some of the main reasons for the failure of British counter-insurgency efforts in Palestine, but they do not fully explain why the British ultimately had to leave. For that, it is necessary to examine the role of international and regional politics in the post-war years.

In the final section of Andrew Mumford's "Tri-Partite Counter-Insurgency Model," he emphasizes the importance of international and regional politics in determining the success or failure of a counter-insurgency campaign. Looking specifically at the situation following the end of the Second World War, he says that, "First, the tacit or explicit support of the superpowers is always crucial. For Britain after the Second World War, as their global power waned dramatically in the new nuclear era, this meant gaining American backing for counter-insurgency operations."⁴⁸ Given the ascendancy of the United States in international affairs, the lack of American support for continued operations against insurgents in Palestine helped alienate the British. As we will see, much of this was due in part to a concentrated effort by the Irgun and the larger world Zionist movement to turn the international community away from British support. Without any significant assistance from other nations, the British would eventually become resigned to withdrawing from Palestine and ultimately turned the Mandate over to the United Nations for final consideration.

The Irgun played an important role in shaping the international pressures which ultimately helped drive the British out of Palestine. Throughout the United States, the Irgun was launching an aggressive propaganda campaign to sway the public away from supporting the British.⁴⁹ The Irgun had primarily been launching attacks in Palestine, but hoped to take the fight directly to the British. "The Irgun wanted to extend its activities overseas, but its relative failure to hit British targets abroad was overshadowed by its success in conducting an effective and efficient

⁴⁸ Mumford, *Puncturing the Counterinsurgency Myth*: 22.

⁴⁹ Zadka, *Blood in Zion*: 37.

propaganda war in Europe and particularly in the USA.”⁵⁰ The Irgun invoked a number of episodes from American colonial history, particularly the independence movement from the British, in order to fight their propaganda campaign. In “A Message to the American People from the Commander-in-Chief of the Irgun” the insurgent group recites the beginning of the Declaration of Independence and several of their grievances against the British:

*“In the name of our tormented people and for the sake of its freedom-loving sons, we have unfurled the banner of revolt. We are in revolt in order to liberate Palestine from British rule; the despotic rule of oppression which arrogantly tramples international obligations underfoot; the rule which seeks to crush the fundamental rights of men and nations... Embattled Palestine needs help. It needs your help in men, guns, and money. Help us and the tempo of our fight for freedom will be increased, its scope widened. Help us so that the fight for freedom and the dignity of man will not be in vain.”*⁵¹

Few sources have been found to suggest that such statements rallied Americans to enlist their arms or services to aid the Irgun. Instead, support typically took the form of monetary contributions made to numerous groups seeking to establish the state of Israel. Furthermore, the statements were successful in swaying public opinion and in putting some public pressure on the American government to be more supportive of Jewish independence.⁵² This public pressure, coupled with president Truman’s increasing favorability toward the Jewish independence movement, turned up the pressure on the British to withdraw.

The Irgun also used the horrifying events of the Holocaust to rally the international community to support independence. A broadcast from the Irgun radio station Voice of Fighting Zion would often state, “What the German Nazis did to our brothers in Europe the British Nazis shall not do to us. We shall fight them as fiercely as freedom loving peoples have always fought tyranny. We shall not be enslaved.”⁵³ They even go so far as to accuse the British of being sympathetic to Hitler and the Nazi party in Germany. A public document by imprisoned Irgun member Dvora Kalfus titled “Our Hope is not Yet Lost” makes this clear. “You identify

⁵⁰ Ibid., 25.

⁵¹ “A Message to the American People from the Commander-in-Chief of the Irgun” in *Psychological Warfare and Propaganda*, 122-123.

⁵² Zadka, *Blood in Zion*: 25.

⁵³ “Irgun Battle Communiques” in Tavin and Alexander, *Psychological warfare and propaganda*, 130.

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yourselves with Adolf Hitler. He too argued that the Jewish people are not a people but a conglomerate of inferior creatures. His conclusion was: to exterminate us. You, Gentlemen, accept Hitler's basic assumptions; during the war you even assisted him in carrying out his conclusions. Now you are ready to transform eleven million Jews...into candidates for extermination camps."⁵⁴ The assertion of the British aiding the Germans in the Holocaust was obviously an exaggeration, but it certainly shed light on the problem of continuing the policies of the White Paper in light of the plight of European Jews.

The Irgun were also aided in this effort to sway public opinion by the larger movement of world Zionism, which had gained considerable influence following the Holocaust. This also had an effect on the British withdrawal. "By the end of 1946 the British were convinced they could never reach a consensus with the Americans on Palestine... The obvious thing to do in those circumstances was to pull out of Palestine."⁵⁵ These organizations tended to target powerful individuals rather than the American public. One example of this is seen in a correspondence between Weizmann and United States Supreme Court Justice Felix Frankfurter. He appealed to Frankfurter over the issue of immigration restrictions in a letter written in December 1944. "All of which leads me to one inescapable conclusion: quite apart from all other considerations Palestine is a country which cannot live without immigration...It is perhaps the central problem which will face us in the post-war period. I am saying this not only because of the ruined and devastated condition of European Jewry, but primarily because of the positive and stabilizing influence American Jewish man-power can play in the expanding economy as well as the political equilibrium of Jewish Palestine."⁵⁶ Justice Frankfurter had already demonstrated a history of lobbying U.S. presidents for such causes years earlier, as evidence by his appeals to President Wilson to support the Balfour Declaration. Appealing to Truman in favor of increased support for an independent Jewish State proved similarly effective. Weizmann and other leaders of what became the World Zionist Organization appealed to numerous American and European leaders to gain support for their cause, further increasing the international pressure on the British to withdraw from the Palestinian Mandate.

⁵⁴ "Our Hope is not Yet Lost" in *Psychological Warfare and Propaganda*, 117-118.

⁵⁵ "Introduction" in Cohen, *British Decision to Evacuate Palestine*, 1.

⁵⁶ "Chaim Weizmann to U.S. Supreme Court Justice Felix Frankfurter, 20 December 1944, reporting his impression of the situation in Palestine" in *Jewish Resistance to British Rule*, 43.

Many of the problems in combating the insurgents outlined earlier in this essay were the result of a lack of British commitment to stronger counter-insurgency methods in Palestine. In many ways, they were unable to act with a heavier hand because of international pressure and the recent events of the Holocaust. "Despite the political blunders, the British could militarily crack down on the insurgents at any given time. Politically however, the struggle was unwinnable. Tough measures were also resisted on the grounds that some of their victims would have been Holocaust survivors, thus provoking an outcry outside as well as inside Palestine."⁵⁷ Pressure from the American administration played an important role in preventing the British from hitting the insurgents hard. A telegram from the British Ambassador to the United States in August 1946 highlights the critical discussion of British methods:

"Blame for the outrage at the King David Hotel is put on the whole of the people of Palestine, if not the entire Jewish race. The whole farrago, with its sneers and its intimidation, was written in bile and malice and was the work of a weak rather than a strong man. Yet the British Government still stands by this theory of mass responsibility and the High Commissioner is not rebuked for upholding it. The measures taken will only create more terrorists and alienate the Jews of the world who gave unstintingly of their services in the war to the Allied cause."⁵⁸

The British would have a difficult time rallying the international community to their side without American support. But the circumstances of the Holocaust cast a long shadow on the British as they attempted to salvage the situation in Palestine.

The British Parliamentary debates about Palestine are filled with discussions of the political ramifications of limiting Jewish immigration. One such debate occurred on December 10, 1945. Viscount Samuel argued for a rethinking of the White Paper in light of the terrifying events throughout Europe. "You will be able to understand, therefore, the bitterness which prevails today among the Jewish population in Palestine, and indeed among Jewish people throughout the world, when they remember that, but for the White Paper, at the time of the effort to exterminate the Jews in Europe, tens of thousands, and probably

⁵⁷ Zadka, *Blood in Zion*: 3.

⁵⁸ "Lord Inverchapel, British ambassador to Washington, to the Foreign Office, 3 August 1946, on the harmful effect on public opinion of General Barker's order for retaliatory measures for the King David Hotel attack" in *Jewish Resistance to British Rule*, 165.

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hundreds of thousands, might have found their way into Palestine and so saved their lives, but in fact were kept where they were for the gas chambers or for death from starvation. These people are the relatives of the Palestinian Jews.”⁵⁹ These debates divided the Parliament on this issue and hindered efforts to bring the British to a united consensus on the Palestinian issue.

The British also encountered significant pressure from the Arab communities throughout the Middle East in dealing with Palestine. The unfortunate reality for the British was that with equal hostility towards them from both Arabs and Jews, they found themselves in a no-win situation.⁶⁰ A memorandum by the Joint Planning Staff of the Chiefs of Staff during the month of January 1947 explains this problem. In this report Lord Tedder states, “Even if a solution to the Palestine problem satisfied out strategic needs there, it could at the same time alienate Arab goodwill. Such a solution would be unacceptable as it would endanger our wider interests in the Middle East. Loss of Arab goodwill would deny us the freedom of movement throughout the Middle East, which was so essential.”⁶¹ The problems inherent in balancing Jewish and Arab considerations would prove impossible for the British to overcome.

The Arabs were in no mood to accept any sort of partition or two-state solution and thus blocked every attempt at establishing one. By mid-January of 1947, the British could only see three options in dealing with Palestine, and none of them were acceptable to both parties. With the Arab-Zionist conference arriving soon, the British sought to define their options in a cabinet memorandum by Foreign Secretary Bevin. “The many suggestions which have been put forward resolve themselves into three main proposals: (1) the plan for provincial autonomy drafted last July by the conference of British and American officials (2) a unitary independent State, as proposed by the Arabs at Lancaster House (3) partition, which the Zionists want. It is quite clear that proposal (1) in its present form is unacceptable to either Arabs or Jews. Proposal (2) is unacceptable to the Jews and proposal (3) is unacceptable to the Arabs.”⁶²

⁵⁹ *Parliamentary Debates*, Lords, 5th Series (1909–) December 1945, vol 138 col. 482 – 518

⁶⁰ Zadka, *Blood in Zion*: 10.

⁶¹ “Memorandum by the Joint Planning Staff of the Chiefs of Staff, 5 January 1947, on Britain’s strategic requirements in Palestine” in *The British Decision to Evacuate Palestine*, 55.

⁶² “Cabinet memorandum by Foreign Secretary Bevin, 14 January 1947, on alternatives before the government at the forthcoming Arab-Zionist conference, proposing a solution based on the provincial autonomy scheme, so as to avoid a reference to the United Nations” in *The British Decision to Evacuate Palestine*, 64.

Ultimately, the Arab-Zionist conference proved about as effective in solving the problem of Palestine as the British. No agreement could be reached as the violence only intensified in Palestine. It was with all of this in mind that the government finally decided to terminate the Mandate.

It was clear that by early 1947 the British could not maintain control of Palestine or mediate the growing conflict between Jews and Arabs. The final decision came on February 14, 1947 in a memorandum of a cabinet meeting with the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs and the Secretary of State for the Colonies. The summary of the decision was as follows:

“Further discussion showed that it was the general view of the Cabinet that the right course was now to submit the whole problem to the United Nations. This submission would not involve an immediate surrender of the Mandate; but His Majesty’s Government would not be under an obligation themselves to enforce whatever solution the United Nations might approve. If the settlement suggested by the United Nations were not acceptable to us, we should be at liberty then to surrender the Mandate and leave the United Nations to make other arrangements for the future administration of Palestine.”⁶³

With that, the British administration committed to terminating the Palestinian Mandate. The United Nations took up the task and formulated U.N. Resolution 181, which partitioned Palestine into a Jewish and an Arab state. However the Arab population, emboldened by the Arab Higher Committee and the recently formed League of Arab States, rejected this measure. Although the U.N. had formally adopted this plan, there would be no attempt to implement it. With the departure of the last British personnel on May 15, 1948, regional war ignited throughout the former Mandate.⁶⁴ Following the Jewish victory and declaration of the state of Israel, the British defeat was assured. The insurgent goal of ending British influence in Palestine had finally been realized.

Unlike traditional conflicts of the past, victory in battling insurgency is not so easy to quantify. There usually are no treaties, formal surrenders, or admissions of defeat by the insurgent group. Instead, victory usually comes with an end to insurgent attacks or the elimination of the primary insurgent group. Defeat is often realized by the counter-insurgent force

⁶³ “Cabinet meeting, 14 February 1947, at which it is decided to refer the Palestine question to the U.N.” in *The British Decision to Evacuate Palestine*, 136.

⁶⁴ Shepherd, *Ploughing Sand*: 240.

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departing the region and the insurgents or their supporters setting up their own government. Israel was one such case. Many figures of the insurgency and its leaders would go on to become prominent players in the history of Israel. Menachem Begin, commander of the Irgun became Prime Minister in 1977 and led the country's peace effort with Egypt. The Haganah became the core of the Israeli Defense Force following its independence in 1948. Finally the Palmach, which served as the primary assault group of the Haganah, was also incorporated into the Israeli Army in November 1948.⁶⁵ With their independence assured, these groups ceased their campaign against the British and instead turned to consolidating power in their newly established state. Although relations with the British would remain shaky in the aftermath of the insurgency, outright attacks on British influence in the region subsided.

In summary, part of the insurgent's success was due to its organization and tactics. Their disconnected structure of multiple independent cells ensured that if a member was captured, he or she would not be able to reveal critical information about the rest of the organization, thus preventing the British from gaining enough viable intelligence. Their tactics of targeting British military and administrative outposts worked to ensure that the British colonial administration could not effectively govern Palestine. As increased attacks prompted increased response by the British, public opinion inside Palestine turned away from the counter-insurgent force. The counter-insurgent's failure was due in part to its heavy-handed strategy against the whole population, its failure to win hearts and minds, and its lack of good intelligence. The strategies of mass arrests, public executions, and eventually martial law only further destroyed their standing with the people of Palestine and generated more support for the goals of the insurgents. Furthermore, the prolonged conflict spent significant financial resources and British military lives which eroded public support for the counter-insurgency at home. Finally, the international pressure on the British made the conflict all but unwinnable. The growing support for the independence movement in the United States and Europe meant that the British could not count on other nations to assist its continued occupation of Palestine. With the United State criticizing the British for their actions in Palestine, the colonial administration was running out of options. Additionally, the concerns of the Holocaust prevented the British from taking a tougher stance on the insurgents and limited their actions to blanket measures which affected the entire population. Ultimately, all of these factors coalesced to facilitate

⁶⁵ Zadka, *Blood in Zion*: Introduction.

the British withdrawal from Palestine in 1948. As with the British counter-insurgency in Malaya, Kenya, and Ireland, Palestine showed the British that they had a lot to learn about counter-insurgency warfare.

Today, the situation in Israel and the Palestinian Territories is far from resolved. Many nations in the League of Arab States still do not recognize the state of Israel and the election of Hamas in the Gaza Strip has divided the Palestinians by providing two competing governing groups. Though nations continue to put pressure on both sides to resolve the conflict, prospects for lasting peace seem fleeting. The fighting between the Israelis and the Palestinians continues sporadically on both sides with little end in sight. Ironically, it seems in a way that Israel now has to contend with its own brand of insurgency. In this regard the insurgent, counter-insurgent, and international factors will continue to play a critical role in the outcome of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. To this day, such resolution remains impossible to determine.

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