

**SURVIVING THE WAR: AMERICAN ASSISTANCE TO THE JEWISH
COMMUNITY OF PALESTINE, 1914 – 1917**

A Master's Thesis

by

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To my parents...

SURVIVING THE WAR: AMERICAN ASSISTANCE TO THE JEWISH COMMUNITY
OF PALESTINE, 1914 – 1917

Graduate School of Economics and Social Sciences
Of
İhsan Dođramacı Bilkent University

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ABSTRACT

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During the nineteenth century, in hope of finding a solution to the eternal “Jewish Question”, a movement that envisioned a Jewish homeland in Ottoman Palestine took root among European Jewry. The Ottoman Empire had no intention of harboring another nationalist movement within its territories and thus took measures to prevent the colonization of Palestine. However, Jewish immigrants made use of the capitulations, which provided foreigners with extraterritorial privileges, to curb Ottoman measures and go forward with immigration into Palestine. With the outbreak of World War I, the Ottomans abolished the capitulatory system and left the movement without the capitulations which was vital for the continuation of immigration. Additionally the difficulties of the war created unfavorable conditions for the Jewish community of Palestine. The disruption of the traditional way of life, accompanied by the difficulties of war rendered the future of the community

questionable. At this point, the United States of America took on the duty of protecting and assisting the community. This thesis attempts to deal with how the United States assisted the community from the beginning of the war up till the rupture of Ottoman-American relations in 1917. How the United States helped the community and through what channels, will be explained.

Keywords: Jewish immigration, Zionism, American Zionism, Morgenthau, Palestine, Ottoman Palestine, Capitulations.

ÖZET

FİLİSTİN'DEKİ YAHUDİ TOPLUMUNA AMERİKAN YARDIMI, 1914 – 1917

Duru, Nur

Yüksek Lisans, Tarih Bölümü

Tez Yöneticisi: Yrd. Doç. Edward P. Kohn

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On dokuzuncu yüzyılda, daimi olan “Yahudi Sorunu”na çözüm bulmak umuduyla, Osmanlı hâkimiyetindeki Filistin’de bir Yahudi yurdu öngören bir hareket, Avrupa Yahudileri arasında kök salmıştır. Yeni bir milliyetçi akımı bünyesinde barındırma niyetinde olmayan Osmanlı İmparatorluğu, Filistin’in kolonizasyonunu önlemek için gerekli olan tedbirleri almıştır. Fakat Yahudi göçmenler, yabancılara verilen imtiyazlardan oluşan kapitülasyonlar sayesinde, Osmanlı Hükümeti’nin aldığı önlemleri geçersiz kılarak Filistin’e göç etmeye devam etmişlerdir. Birinci Dünya Savaşı’nın çıkmasıyla, Osmanlı Hükümeti kapitülasyonlar sistemini kaldırmış ve bu hareketi, göç için hayati önem taşıyan kapitülasyonlardan mahrum bırakmıştır. Ek olarak savaş, Filistin’deki Yahudi toplumunu zor koşullar içerisinde bırakmıştır. Alışagelmiş düzenin bozulması ve savaşın zorlukları, Yahudi toplumunun geleceğini tehlikeye düşürmüştür. Bu noktada, Amerika Birleşik Devletleri, Yahudi toplumuna yardım etme ve Yahudi toplumu koruma görevini

üstlenmiştir. Bu tez, Amerika Birleşik Devletleri'nin savaşın başından Osmanlı-Amerikan ilişkilerinin 1917 yılında kopmasına kadar olan süreçte, Yahudi toplumuna nasıl yardım ettiğini araştırmaktadır. Amerika Birleşik Devletleri'nin, Yahudi toplumuna nasıl ve hangi kanallar aracılığıyla yardım ettiği ele alınmıştır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Yahudi Göçü, Siyonizm, Amerikan Siyonist Hareketi, Morgenthau, Filistin, Osmanlı Hâkimiyetinde Filistin, Kapitülasyonlar.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The failure of the Age of Enlightenment to generate a viable solution to the “Jewish Question” caused many European Jews in the nineteenth century to look for answers elsewhere. While some immigrated to the new world in search of salvation, others advocated assimilation into the societies they lived in. However, a significant portion sought a collective solution and in the spirit of the century turned to nationalism. They believed that their problems could be overcome only if the Jewish people became a nation with a homeland. This notion, which took root among European Jewry, stimulated the Zionist movement that would eventually lead to the creation of a Jewish state in the twentieth century.

As Jewish aspirations for a homeland burgeoned in the second half of the nineteenth century, the name Palestine was pronounced more and more in Jewish circles. In fact many Eastern European Jews, generally for religious reasons, had already begun settling in Palestine. Though other places were considered for a Jewish homeland, Palestine seemed to be the only place everyone agreed upon. So by the

First Zionist Congress held in 1897, it was declared that Zionism sought “to create for the Jewish people a home in Palestine secured by public law.”¹ However, Palestine was not an empty land up for grabs; it was a part of the Ottoman Empire and was predominantly populated by Arabs. Taking this into account, Zionists initially strove to reach an understanding with the Sublime Porte in which a Jewish home in some form could be legally established in Palestine. Various proposals, including Theodor Herzl’s famous offer to alleviate the Empire’s debt with Jewish capital in return for a charter for the Jewish colonization of Palestine, were made only to be turned down. When the Porte made it clear that it was not willing to make such concessions; Zionists then resorted to colonizing Palestine in the hope of forming a community that would eventually obtain some sort of legal recognition in the future. As a result of this, the continuation of Jewish immigration into Palestine became crucial for the Zionist movement.

The Porte that was dealing with its own nationalist movements had no intention of allowing an additional one take root in its lands. Thus, the Ottomans objected to the Jewish colonization of Palestine right from the beginning and took measures to prevent its advancement. However, the capitulatory system, which provided extra-territorial rights and privileges for foreigners in the Empire, prevented the Porte from exercising sufficient measures. Furthermore, foreign powers that believed Zionist aspirations were harmonious with their own interests supported the movement unconditionally and pressured the Porte to rectify any Ottoman policy that sought to end or limit the Jewish colonization of Palestine.

¹ Itamar Rabinovich and Jehuda Reinharz, *Israel in the Middle East: Documents and Readings on Society, Politics, and Foreign Relations, pre-1948 to the Present* (New York, N.Y.: Oxford University Press, 1984), 21.

Benefitting from the capitulations and the support of foreign powers, Jewish immigration into Palestine continued up till the outbreak of World War I. As the European powers were engaged in the war, the Ottomans seized the opportunity and abolished the capitulatory system in September, 1914 and shortly after joined the war on the side of the Central Powers. The abolition of the capitulations meant that the Ottomans could generate and implement policies without the drawback of capitulations. This however, meant uncertainty for the Jewish immigrants of Palestine for their future was now, solely in the hands of the Ottoman authorities. However, the lack of comfort the capitulations provided was not the only challenge that awaited them; with the Ottoman Empire joining the war on the side of the Central Powers, many Jewish immigrants faced exile or expulsion as they were nationals of belligerent powers. In addition, the diplomatic missions of belligerent powers were shut down, leaving many Jewish immigrants without the consular protection to which they were accustomed. The Jewish community of Palestine now had to deal with all these problems while bearing the hardships of the war which affected everyone in Palestine. Surrounded by such difficulties, the fate of the Jewish settlements were now in question. For the Zionist project to proceed, the settlements needed to outlive the war and as of October 1914 (the date the Ottoman Empire joined the war), it was unpredictable if they could.

At this crucial point, the United States of America, via its diplomatic missions to the Empire, took on the task of assisting and protecting the Jewish community of Palestine. During the war the United States held friendly relations with the Porte; the United States' approach to the Middle Eastern theatre and Ottoman concerns for the post-war years made it easy for both countries to enjoy cordial relations. The

Department of State and the American diplomatic agencies in the Empire engaged in a long battle of helping the Jews of Palestine endure many of the problems they encountered through the years of war. This thesis attempts to deal with just how the United States helped the Jewish community of Palestine survive the Great War. What the major problems the community encountered were and how the United States was able to deliver relief and mediate with Ottoman authorities in order to alleviate or end the community's problems will be explained.

Numerous books and articles have been written on Palestine during the Great War. The focus point for many of them is in relation to the Arab-Jewish conflict which emerged after the collapse of the Ottoman Empire. As this thesis concentrates on the coming together of many elements (American, Jewish and Ottoman) at a certain point in time, studies concentrating strictly on the American assistance to the Jewish community in Ottoman Palestine during this time period are not plentiful. The most comprehensive work on the topic is *The Realities of American-Palestine Relations*, by historian Frank E. Manuel. This book covers American activity in Palestine starting from the beginning of modern Jewish immigration into Palestine, till the interwar period. The title of the book may be misleading; as the book focuses on American activity in relation with the Jewish community, not the general population. American involvement during the war is explained in detail. However, the Sublime Porte's willingness to comply with American requests is often overlooked and any positive development stemming from Istanbul is attributed to Henry Morgenthau, the Central Powers, Ottoman Jews or the crypto-Jews within the Committee of Union and Progress. Manuel asserts that the Jewish community survived the war only because the Ottomans feared "reprisals from what they

considered powerful Jewish elements in the United States and throughout the rest of the world.”² Without explaining why or providing further information, he leaves it at that. Manuel also claims that American intervention on behalf of Jewish communities abroad “annoyed” members of the Department of State.³ Nonetheless, it is the only work that examines the United States involvement with the Jewish community of Palestine so thoroughly.

Melvin I. Urofsky’s *American Zionism: From Herzl to the Holocaust*, examines American Zionism from its birth. Its chapter covering the war period, explains how American Zionism transformed into a popular movement among American Jewry under the leadership of Louis D. Brandeis and how it organized relief efforts for Jews in war zones. The book indicates that the movement adopted policies in conformity with American foreign policy concerning Palestine, which was adopting neutrality regarding Middle Eastern affairs. While this allowed American Zionists to deliver relief to the Jewish community in Palestine during the war, it restrained them from supporting Zionist ventures in Europe. Urofsky explains that Brandeis had expected Woodrow Wilson to support the British plan to grant the Jewish people a homeland (which would later be known as the Balfour Declaration), “but not until every path toward a separate peace with Turkey had been explored.”⁴ The State Department’s desire to avoid tension with the Porte is underlined as one of the aspects that hindered official endorsement of the Balfour Declaration.

² Frank E. Manuel, *The Realities of American – Palestine Relations* (Washington, D.C.; Public Affairs Press, 1949), 120.

³ Ibid, 112.

⁴ Melvin I. Urofsky, *American Zionism: From Herzl to the Holocaust* (Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press, 1975), 210.

The article “Ottoman Perspectives on American Interests in the Holy Land” which was co-written by Jacob M. Landau and Mim Kemal Öke is one of a kind in the field, as it is the only article under the chapter “The Ottoman Dimension” in *With Eyes Toward Zion-II: Themes and Sources in the Archives of the United States, Great Britain, Turkey and Israel*. The article remarks that towards the end of the nineteenth century the Ottoman government instructed its diplomats in the United States to “keep an eye on the growing Zionist movement.”⁵ It also provides information on what was reported back. The last part of the article entitled “Cemal Pasha and the Last Years of the Empire (1914-19)” focuses on Morgenthau’s efforts to reverse Cemal Paşa’s anti-Zionist measures through the Porte. The article argues that “during the war, the United States, because of its political and financial position, emerged as the only country (with the exception of Germany) able to exert any kind of pressure on the Porte.”⁶ How it was able to exert pressure is not explained in the article.

Abigail Jacobson’s *From Empire to Empire: Jerusalem Between Ottoman and British Rule* which was published in 2011, dedicates a chapter to Jerusalem during the war. Alongside painting a vivid picture of how life in Jerusalem was during the war, Jacobson discusses American relief efforts and the distribution of relief among the various groups of Jerusalem. Jacobson argues that the *Vulcan* shipment “demonstrates the deep American involvement and investment in Palestine,

⁵ Jacob M. Landau and Mim Kemal Öke, “Ottoman Perspectives on American Interests in the Holy Land”, *With Eyes Toward Zion II: Themes and Sources in the Archives of United States, Great Britain, Turkey and Israel*, edited by Moshe Davis (New York, NY: Praeger Publishers, 1986), 264.

⁶ *Ibid*, 277.

and mainly the influence of the Jewish American community, which collected and organized the aid.”⁷

Historians are in agreement that the United States played a significant part in the survival of the Jewish community. However, how it did so has not been examined thoroughly.

After explaining the Ottoman approach towards Jewish immigration into Palestine and the capitulatory system which had ensured the continuation of immigration, Ottoman-American relations will be examined. Ottoman-American relations during the war played a crucial role in the fate of the Jewish community of Palestine. After the Ottomans joined the war, the diplomatic agencies of the Allies, which had traditionally protected the Jewish residents of Palestine, were closed down in the Empire. In addition, Allied Powers could not appeal or pressure the Porte as they were accustomed to. The consulates of the United States and the Central Powers became the Jewish community’s protectors in Palestine, the United States and Germany in general. However, Germany’s relation with the community was restrained by the fact that it was the Ottoman Empire’s ally in the war. So the community’s faith was entrusted to the United States. It was only due to the good nature of Ottoman-American relations that the United States could assist and protect the community through the war. If relations had turned hostile at any point, the outcome for the community may have been different. Therefore, it is important to discuss the nature of Ottoman-American relations during the war and the factors that

⁷ Abigail Jacobson, *From Empire to Empire: Jerusalem Between Ottoman and British Rule* (Syracuse, New York: Syracuse University Press, 2011), 47.

contributed to the execution of policies on both sides. This will be covered in the third chapter.

After taking a look at the key figures that had a deep impact on the fate of the community; starting with the outbreak of war in Europe, the general conditions in Palestine and the major problems the Jewish community faced will be covered in chapter four. Then, American assistance and protection of the community will be discussed; how the United States assisted and protected the community, through what channels and the outcome of American involvement. The critical roles played by the American Embassy in Istanbul and the Department of State will be demonstrated, alongside how the United States benefitted from its good relations with the Sublime Porte.

The primary sources used in this thesis are the United States' diplomatic records with a focus on the consular records for Jerusalem covering the years of the war up till the rupture of relations between the Ottoman Empire and the United States in April, 1917. American newspapers and journals have also been used to portray a better understanding of the times. This work has been supplemented with Ottoman sources, alongside diaries and memoirs.

CHAPTER II

JEWISH IMMIGRATION INTO OTTOMAN PALESTINE

Palestine had become a part of the Ottoman Empire in 1516 and remained so till 1917. It had joined the Empire at a time that, due to the discovery of an alternative trade route to India, the Mediterranean was leaving its prime days behind. Although the Ottoman Sultans had earned the right to add the name “governor of Jerusalem” to their title,⁸ Palestine was not a land that made a significant contribution to the revenues or to the military of the Empire.⁹ The importance of Palestine for the Empire was the holy sites that were sacred for Judaism, Christianity and Islam. Upon capturing Jerusalem, the Ottoman Sultan Selim entered the city and thanked God for becoming the “possessor of the first Qiblah (the direction of prayer).”¹⁰ The Sultans also took on the duty of safeguarding and assisting the pilgrims who visited the holy sites of Palestine on their way to and from Mecca and

⁸ Jacob De Haas, *History of Palestine: the Last Two Thousand Years* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1934), 330.

⁹ Moshe Ma'oz, *Studies on Palestine During the Ottoman Period* (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1975), xv.

¹⁰ Mehmet Tütüncü, *Turkish Jerusalem (1516-1917): Ottoman Inscriptions from Jerusalem and Other Palestinian Cities* (Harlem: SOTA, 2006), 13.

Medina.¹¹ Palestine was a sacred yet remote Ottoman land and would stay so till European interests brought it back under the spotlight in the nineteenth century.

Palestine under Ottoman rule opened a new chapter for Jewish life in the land. The native Jews, who were dissatisfied with the Mamluk regime, hailed Palestine's incorporation into the Ottoman Empire. They believed that the Empire, which was experiencing its golden age, would "open new vistas."¹² To their satisfaction, the Ottoman Sultans "allowed the Jews to move freely into the Holy Land and settle wherever they liked."¹³ Thus new waves of Jewish immigrants, mainly Sephardic Jews who had sought refuge in the Empire after their expulsion from Spain, settled into Palestine. With a growing population and good relations with the Sultans, the Jewish community of Palestine advanced and prospered.

However, the Ottoman Empire reached the peak of its political power in the sixteenth century and entered a period of decentralization. The loss of territories in Europe and the rise of European imperialism accompanied by internal turmoil created unfavorable conditions for the Empire and its people. Corruption crept into all areas of the Empire; the government and society gradually "began to come apart."¹⁴ The Jewish community in Palestine was also affected by the ongoing changes. No matter how the community's relation with the central administration was, the fate of the community "became subject to the authority of the local pashas whose attitude varied according to temperament and personality."¹⁵ The Jewish

¹¹ Ma'oz, *Studies on Palestine During the Ottoman Period*, xv.

¹² Isaiah Friedman, *Germany, Turkey and Zionism, 1897-1918* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Transaction Publishers, 1998), 21.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Stanford J. Shaw, *History of the Ottoman Empire and Modern Turkey*, vol. 1 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1976), 169.

¹⁵ Friedman, *Germany, Turkey and Zionism*, 23.

community also faced other challenges such as the decline of the Levant trade, natural disasters and communal tensions. The Jews of Palestine, sharing the fate of all the people of the Empire, had their good and bad days.

Modern Jewish immigration into Palestine which began in the late nineteenth century was fundamentally different from the previous Jewish immigrations as it was larger in number and it comprised of mainly Europeans, who kept their citizenship after immigrating to Palestine. The Sublime Porte was well aware of the groups of Jews turning up at its doors; its approach towards the phenomenon was complicated and versatile. The Ottoman Empire had traditionally been a haven for Jews fleeing European oppression so when anti-semitism escalated in the Russian Empire during the 1880s, the Ottomans welcomed Jewish immigrants, who were willing to become Ottoman citizens and submit to Ottoman laws, to settle within the Empire with the sole exception of Palestine.¹⁶ The exclusion of Palestine was unexpected and “hard to believe” for the Jews who were accustomed to Ottoman hospitality.¹⁷ The Porte which was up to date on Jewish affairs, via its diplomatic representatives, had valid reasons to adopt such a policy. Neville J. Mandel argues that the Porte, which was dealing with nationalist movements in the Balkans, “feared the possibility of nurturing another national problem in the Empire” and that “it did not want to increase the number of foreign subjects, particularly Europeans, in its domains.”¹⁸ As the Ottoman Minister of the Interior had explained, in addition to the Greek, Armenian, Serbian and Bulgarian problems, the Porte did not desire a “Jewish

¹⁶ Neville J. Mandel, “Ottoman Policy and Restrictions on Jewish Settlement in Palestine: 1881 – 1908: Part I” *Middle Eastern Studies*, vol. 10, no. 3 (Oct., 1974), 313; Kemal H. Karpat, “Jewish Population Movements in the Ottoman Empire, 1862-1914”, *The Jews of the Ottoman Empire*, edited by Avigdor Levy (Princeton: Darwin Press, 1994), 406.

¹⁷ Mandel, *Ibid*.

¹⁸ *Ibid*, 314.

Question.”¹⁹ However, the Porte’s decision did not have the desired effect as Jews continued to settle in Palestine after entering as visitors.²⁰ Jewish circumvention of the Porte’s policies, forced the Ottomans to launch a bureaucratic battle that would go on to no avail.

As Jews continued to settle into Palestine after the Porte had prohibited it, the Porte had to find new ways to tackle Jewish immigration. Various measures, from forbidding Jews to disembark at Palestinian ports to closing down the Empire to all foreign Jews, were taken over time.²¹ However none of these measures proved fruitful as Jewish immigration into Palestine was not curtailed. The main reason behind the Porte’s failure was due to the capitulatory system, which will be explained. The Porte could not implement decisions that violated or limited the rights and privileges provided by the capitulations. Taking this into account, many Jewish immigrants took advantage of the capitulations to settle or remain settled in Palestine. Hence, the capitulatory system complicated an already complex situation.

2.1. Capitulations

During its golden age, the Ottoman Empire had granted concessions which were generally commercial privileges in the form of business contracts to foreign states. These came to be known as capitulations. Alongside conforming to the prescriptions of *fikh*, there were other "determining factors" that instigated the Ottomans to pursue capitulations which Halil İnalçık explains as:

¹⁹ Manuel, *The Realities of American – Palestine Relations*, 58.

²⁰ Mim Kemal Öke, *Osmanlı İmparatorluğu, Siyonizm ve Filistin Sorunu (1880 – 1914)* (İstanbul: Üçdal Neşriyat, 1982), 84.

²¹ Mandel, “Ottoman Policy”, 322.

the opportunity of acquiring a political ally within Christendom, of obtaining scarce goods and raw materials such as cloth, tin and steel, and especially of increasing custom revenues, the principal source of hard cash for the Treasury.²²

Capitulations, which comprised of privileges for foreign individuals and communities, can be categorized under three main headings: personal, economic and juridical.²³ Personal privileges included: freedom of worship, freedom to travel and reside in all parts of the Empire (the holy cities of Mecca and Medina were excluded), and inviolability of the domicile. Foreigners were also protected by the capitulations from possible molestation by Ottoman officials concerning religious affairs. Economic privileges, which constituted the backbone of the capitulations, were more significant in character. Foreigners under the capitulatory system were exempt from direct taxation and were also protected against arbitrary taxation. Import and export duties were regulated by the capitulations and no additional tax was required for the transfer of goods into the interior. The other group of privileges to be mentioned is the juridical privileges. According to the capitulations, ambassadors and consuls were invested with both civil and criminal jurisdiction in affairs regarding their nationals. In affairs between foreign nationals and Ottoman subjects however; Ottoman courts had jurisdiction, on the condition that a consular representative was present. To sum it up, the capitulations ensured for foreign merchants the comfort, if not more, of conducting business in the manner they were accustomed to in their own countries.

²² Halil İnalçık, "İmtiyazat" in *Encyclopaedia of Islam* (Leiden: Brill, 1986), vol. 3, 1179.

²³ Nasim Sousa, *The Capitulatory Regime of Turkey: It's History, Origin, and Nature* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins Press, 1933)

By the nineteenth century the capitulatory system had degenerated and digressed from its initial purpose. It had become an instrument for foreigners within the Empire to avoid Ottoman laws and for foreign states to meddle with the internal affairs of the Empire. There was also the fact that the capitulations had become a "fiscal burden" for the people of the Empire.²⁴ The capitulatory powers prevented the Ottomans from raising their tariff rates and going further, forced the Ottomans to adopt regulations that were clearly detrimental for the Ottoman economy.²⁵ During the final years of the Empire, foreigners had reached the point, in which they were exempt from paying for services most Ottoman subjects were charged.²⁶ Juridical privileges were not any different; they were abused just as much. Though Ottoman courts held jurisdiction in cases between Ottoman subjects and foreigners, the courts were not always free in the decision-making process. Foreign powers insisted that decisions made without the consent of the consular dragoman were void and at times refused the courts jurisdiction all together. Capitulations had transferred into a mechanism that provided foreigners with more rights and privileges then they were entitled to in their own countries.

However, the abuse which became most problematic for the Sublime Porte was the extension of the capitulations to Ottoman subjects. This phenomenon occurred in various forms. Foreign diplomatic agencies in the Empire had started to incorporate Ottoman subjects, who were not in fact genuine interpreters, as dragomans into their agencies in order to extend to these Ottoman subjects the

²⁴ Timur Kuran, *The Long Divergence: How Islamic Law Held Back the Middle East* (Princeton, N.J. : Princeton University Press, 2011), 209.

²⁵ Ibid, 213.

²⁶ Ibid, 221.

capitulatory privileges and immunities to which dragomans were entitled. Another prevalent form of extending capitulatory privileges to Ottoman subjects arose in the eighteenth century; foreign powers had obtained the right to extend their capitulatory privileges to those who were not their own nationals.²⁷ By the end of the eighteenth century, Austria had more than 200,000 protégés (protected persons) in just Moldova and at the beginning of the nineteenth century Russia had 120,000 Greek protégés within the Empire.²⁸ In fact in some areas of the Empire, the number of protégés exceeded the number of Turks.²⁹ The system was so abused that, capitulatory powers claimed protection over entire communities.³⁰ Another popular method of extending capitulatory powers to Ottoman subjects was through naturalization; Ottoman subjects who became naturalized citizens of foreign countries could benefit from the capitulations. At one point the number of "naturalized" persons exceeded those of genuine foreigners.³¹

2.2. The Capitulatory System and Jewish Immigration

The Ottomans who did not want another national problem on their hand, understandably, objected to Jewish colonization in Palestine. In a naïve attempt to halt masses of Jews entering Palestine, the Porte forbade Russian, Romanian and

²⁷ İnalçık, "İmtiyazat", 1187.

²⁸ Ibid; Sousa, *The Capitulatory Regime of Turkey*, 98.

²⁹ Leland J. Gordon, "The Turkish American Controversy Over Nationality", *The American Journal of International Law*, vol. 25, no. 4 (1931), 659.

³⁰ Salahi R. Sonyel, "The Protégé System in the Ottoman Empire", *Journal of Islamic Studies*, vol. 2, no. 1 (1991), 58.

³¹ Gordon, "The Turkish American Controversy", 659

Bulgarian Jews from landing in Jaffa and Haifa in 1882.³² They were instructed to enter the Empire from some other port. As this order was a clear violation of the capitulatory freedom to travel, the capitulatory powers objected. Going further, they obtained from the Porte, the right for Jews to settle in Palestine, as long as they arrived singly and not in groups.³³ The Ottoman attempt to bring Jewish colonization to an end resulted with the Ottomans granting permission for Jews to settle in Palestine.

In another futile attempt in 1892, the Porte forbade the sale of *miri* (crown) lands to Jews.³⁴ As they could not prevent the Jews from entering Palestine, the Ottomans sought to prevent Jewish colonization by denying them access to Palestinian lands. The restriction targeted both foreign and Ottoman Jews, as Ottoman Jews were buying land on behalf of foreign Jews. Similar to the previous restrictions, this was also a violation of the capitulations and thus embassies lost no time to appeal to the Porte. Succumbing to the pressure of foreign powers, the Porte had to back down and accept that foreign Jews could buy land as long as they were legal residents and did not plan on setting up colonies.³⁵

The protégé system was the most troublesome aspect of the capitulatory system in Palestine. The British had assumed protection over the Protestants; the French over the Catholics; the Russians over the Orthodox and the Germans over the Templar Order. They would often compete with each other to increase their sphere of

³² Neville J. Mandel, *The Arabs and Zionism before World War I* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1976), 5.

³³ *Ibid*, 7.

³⁴ *Ibid*, 8.

³⁵ *Ibid*, 9; Mim Kemal Öke, *Kutsal Topraklarda Siyonistler ve Masonlar: İhanetler, Komplolar, Aldanmalar* (Çağ Yayınlar: İstanbul, 1990), 97.

influence. Foreign powers also shared the protection of Jews. As Jews immigrating into Palestine were not obtaining Ottoman citizenship, they contributed to this already intricate network. When Russia withdrew protection from its Jewish subjects in Palestine, they sought British protection rather than adopting Ottoman citizenship.³⁶ This was possible as British diplomats extended their protection to “Jewish residents who had no birth, familial or legal connection to the United Kingdom.”³⁷

As mentioned before, the benefits provided by the capitulatory system were immense. However, the significance of the capitulations for foreign Jews in Palestine was the protection it provided against Ottoman authorities. In Palestine, capitulations provided foreign Jews protection from local authorities via consulates. Engin Akarlı, states that consuls had great influence in local matters:

The consuls’ involvement in provincial matters significantly undermined the near-absolute authority of the governors. Consuls took the local disputes to the Ambassadors in Istanbul. The Ambassadors not only laid the individual incidents before the central government, but they also demanded regulation of the governors’ authority.³⁸

Similarly, Isaiah Friedman claims that “in most cases a warning from a consul had a sobering effect on the local authorities.”³⁹ To underline how the capitulations operated in Palestine, Manuel explains an incident in which two American Jews had

³⁶ Friedman, *Germany, Turkey and Zionism*, 32.

³⁷ Mordecai Lee, “Governing the Holy Land: Public Administration in Ottoman Palestine, 1516-1918”, *Digest of Middle East Studies*, vol. 9, no. 1 (2000), 17.

³⁸ Engin Deniz Akarlı, “The Problems of External Pressures, Power Struggles, and Budgetary Deficits in Ottoman Politics Under Abdulhamid II (1876-1909): Origins and Solutions”, unpublished PhD thesis, Princeton University, 1976, 90.

³⁹ Isaiah Friedman, “The System of Capitulations and its Effects on Turco-Jewish Relations in Palestine, 1856-1897”, *Palestine in the Late Ottoman Period: Political, Social and Economic Transformation*, edited by David Kushner (Jerusalem: Yad Izhak Ben-Zvi Press, 1986), 280.

argued with a tax-collector over real estate taxes.⁴⁰ The American Consul intervened before the Governor of Jerusalem and the incident was resolved with the Governor paying the taxes out of his own pocket.⁴¹ This incident is a good example of how the capitulations were abused and where powerless local authorities stood in relation to foreign consuls. Further, the two foreigners managed to evade paying real estate tax, which was not waived by the capitulations. Regarding the situation of immovable property, David Kushner states that although “there was no legal distinction between Ottomans and foreigners, it was impossible to conclude transactions except through consuls.”⁴² Kushner also mentions an incident similar to that of Manuel’s in which the Governor of Jerusalem had captured two members of a gang which engaged in counterfeiting Ottoman coins. As they were American citizens, the American Consul objected to their trial before an Ottoman court and the matter was left unresolved. The Governor explained that he felt ashamed regarding how impotent Ottoman authorities were against foreigners.⁴³ Consuls, who prevented their own citizens from appearing in Ottoman courts, had no problem demanding Ottoman citizens to appear as witnesses in their own consular courts.⁴⁴ As it had elsewhere in the Empire, the capitulatory system had created a state within a state in Palestine.

Local matters were not the only area capitulations provided protection; they also provided protection from the central government’s policies that sought to

⁴⁰ Foreigners were granted the right to own real estate, with foreign powers accepting that Ottoman law would apply in all matters related. See Shaw, Stanford J. Shaw, *History of the Ottoman Empire and Modern Turkey*, vol. 2 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977), 119.

⁴¹ Manuel, *The Realities of American – Palestine Relations*, 91.

⁴² David Kushner, “The District of Jerusalem in the Eyes of Three Ottoman Governors at the End of the Hamidian Period”, *Middle Eastern Studies*, vol. 35, no. 2 (1999), 87.

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

terminate Jewish immigration into Palestine. As long as Jews were under the protection of the Great Powers, the Porte was not free in dealing with foreign Jews. Even when foreign powers considered withdrawing their protection from the Jewish residents of Palestine, it was not an option as they were so entangled in the matter. Mim Kemal Öke asserts that “because they did not desire to forego the reservoir of power and influence they had established over the affairs of the Ottoman Empire, the Powers had no choice but, willingly or reluctantly, to become the promoters of Jewish colonization in Palestine.”⁴⁵

Friedman put forward Ottoman objectives for Palestine in this period as making foreign Jews adopt Ottoman nationality and denying foreign powers the right of protection.⁴⁶ The Ottomans did indeed push for Ottomanization and provided incentives. When over four hundred Russian Jews applied for Ottoman citizenship in 1891, the Porte allowed them to stay in Haifa after their naturalization was completed.⁴⁷ Similarly, local Ottoman authorities promised not to interfere with Jewish colonists in Safed if they became Ottoman citizens.⁴⁸ However, the benefits provided by the capitulations outweighed those promised by the Ottomans and thus the majority of Jewish immigrants refused to adopt Ottoman nationality. Kemal H. Karpat claims that a large number of Russian Jews preferred to keep their citizenship simply to avoid taxes.⁴⁹ Another factor that caused foreign Jews to remain distant to the thought of Ottomanization was the fear that it “would undermine the unique

⁴⁵ Mim Kemal Öke, “The Ottoman Empire, Zionism, and the Question of Palestine (1880 – 1908)”, *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, vol. 14, no. 3 (1982), 337.

⁴⁶ Friedman, “The System of Capitulations”, 283.

⁴⁷ Kemal H. Karpat, *Osmanlı'dan Günümüze Etnik Yapılanma ve Göçler* (İstanbul: Timaş Yayınları, 2010), 295 – 296.

⁴⁸ Friedman, *Germany, Turkey and Zionism*, 43.

⁴⁹ Karpat, “Jewish Population Movements in the Ottoman Empire”, 400- 401.

character of the Jewish community, especially the status of the Hebrew language.”⁵⁰ For all the reasons stated above and more, Ottomans did not succeed in incorporating the Jewish immigrants in Palestine into the *millet* system.

Similarly, the Ottoman attempts to oust foreign involvement failed miserably. Although the Ottomans fought simultaneously, to abrogate the capitulations and convince foreign powers to end their protection over minorities in the Empire, their efforts produced no result. Aside from the desire to broaden their influence in the Empire, some foreign powers supported Jewish colonization in Palestine for genuine reasons. By supporting Zionism, Germany and Russia hoped of divert the attention of their own Jewish communities from socialism to Zionism; alongside finding an answer to their everlasting “Jewish Question.”⁵¹ For whatever reason, foreign support for the Zionist cause never ceased to exist.

When the Ottoman government made it clear that it was not going to assent to a Jewish state or political entity of any kind, Zionists turned their focus on colonizing Palestine. Masses of persecuted Jews left Europe in hope of reaching the promised lands. In fear of harboring another nationalist movement which would attract international attention, the Ottoman government objected to such mass immigration on its lands. However, the capitulatory system, which provided extra-territorial privileges for foreigners, prevented the Ottomans from carrying out policies as they desired. Furthermore, it provided Jewish colonists the opportunity to facilitate their colonization efforts. For the most part, they could avoid Ottoman authorities all

⁵⁰ Ruth Kark and Nadav Solomonovich, “The Young Turk Revolution of 1908 as Reflected in the Media of the Jewish Community in Palestine”, *Late Ottoman Palestine: The Period of Young Turk Rule*, edited by Yuval Ben-Bassat and Eyal Gino (New York: I.B. Tauris, 2011), 200 – 201.

⁵¹ Öke, “The Ottoman Empire”, 336.

together. All Ottoman endeavors to curb the movement failed blatantly. The Jewish colonization continued slowly but firmly all the way till the First World War. After the war began in Europe, the Ottoman Empire notified capitulatory powers its final say on the capitulations:

I have the honor to inform you that by the Imperial Iradé the Ottoman Government has abrogated as from the first of October next the conventions known as the Capitulations restricting the sovereignty of Turkey in her relations with certain Powers. All privileges and immunities accessory to these conventions or issuing therefore are equally repealed. Having thus freed itself from what was an intolerable obstacle to all progress in the Empire, the Imperial Government has adopted as basis of its relations with the other Powers the general principles of law.⁵²

Shortly after the Ottoman Empire joined the war and the Jewish community of Palestine was in the middle of war without the safety net provided by the capitulations.

⁵² The Turkish Ambassador to the Secretary of State, 10 Sep, 1914, *Papers Relating to the Foreign Relations of the United States* (FRUS) 1914, 1090.

CHAPTER III

TRENDS IN OTTOMAN-AMERICAN RELATIONS DURING THE WAR

Up till the Great War Ottoman-American relations were centered on trade and American missionary work in the Ottoman Empire. Shortly after the independence of the United States, trade between the two countries had started and expanded through the nineteenth century.⁵³ As for missionary work, although American missionaries had attempted to reach the Muslim population, its main area of interest was the Christian population of the Empire.⁵⁴ Unlike the European powers, the United States had no territorial ambition over the Empire; however, it had sought and obtained capitulatory privileges for its citizens. The United States was also interested in the general status of the Christian and Jewish communities. Former Ottoman subjects in the United States were influential in the shaping of American policies towards the Empire while American tourists and travelers to the Empire formed the basis of the American opinion regarding the Empire and its people. On the other hand, Ottoman interest towards the United States was limited. However, J.C. Hurewitz claims that

⁵³ Çağrı Erhan, "Main Trends in Ottoman-American Relations", *Turkish-American Relations: Past, Present and Future*, edited by Mustafa Aydın and Çağrı Erhan (London: Routledge, 2004), 5.

⁵⁴ Hans - Lukas Keiser, *Near East: American Millennialism and the Mission to the Middle East* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2010), 35.

because of its non-aggressive diplomacy and its distance to the Eastern Mediterranean, the United States had a unique status before the Ottomans.⁵⁵

Through the war, the United States kept a close eye on its interests in the Empire, as well as the situation of the Christian and Jewish communities. The United States appealed to the Porte whenever it believed its interests were at stake or when it deemed necessary on behalf of the Christian and Jewish communities of the Empire. For the most part, the Ottomans complied with American requests. Although Ottoman-American relations were minimal till the war, through the war it transformed in a unique manner. The Ottoman Empire and the United States shared friendly relations through the war and even when the United States joined the war on the side of the Allies it did not declare war on the Empire and so Ottoman-American relations were concluded with the fall of the Empire without experiencing any overt hostility.

When evaluating Ottoman-American relations during the Great War, there are some aspects that should be considered which contributed to the shaping of relations. There were many reasons for both countries to maintain cordial relations. For the Americans, the Middle Eastern theatre was not a primary concern and they feared that any unfriendly move on their behalf could have a negative effect on the non-Muslim population of the Empire, alongside the American missionary societies in the Empire. On the other hand, the Ottomans considered maintaining good relations with the United States important for the future of the Empire. First the reasons that contributed to the formation of American policies towards the Empire will be

⁵⁵ J.C. Hurewitz, "Türk-American İlişkileri ve Atatürk", *Çağdaş Düşüncenin Işığında Atatürk* (İstanbul: Dr. Nejat F. Eczacıbaşı Vakfı, 1983), 493

discussed and then the reasons that contributed to the formation of Ottoman policies towards the United States will be discussed.

3.1. American Approach

Laurence Evans asserts that by the time the war broke out in Europe in 1914, the Middle East “was the most remote of the regions of the world with which the United States maintained diplomatic relations.”⁵⁶ As the Middle East was not a matter of grave importance for the Americans, the United States maintained impartiality regarding the Middle Eastern theatre. When the Ottomans abrogated the capitulations, the United States refused to recognize it. However, when the British declared a protectorate over Egypt, which ended the de jure Ottoman sovereignty over Egypt, the United States also refused to recognize it.⁵⁷ The fact that the Empire and its future was not of vital importance for the United States made it all the more easy for Washington to continue its traditional approach to the Porte. Nevertheless, when American interests were threatened, the United States stood firm. The greatest American interest in the Empire was the American missionary societies. The Secretary of State had explained the importance of the institution:

It will be sufficient to say that during the past hundred years the American missionary societies have expended over \$20,000,000 in Turkey, and that the present value of the American missionary property in Turkey amounts to several millions of dollars.⁵⁸

⁵⁶ Laurence Evans, *United States Policy and the Partition of Turkey, 1914 – 1924* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1965), 21.

⁵⁷ *Ibid*, 27 – 28.

⁵⁸ The Secretary of State to the Chairman of the Committee on Foreign Relations of the Senate (Stone), 6 Dec, 1917, *FRUS* 1917, Supplement 2, 448 – 449.

Money was not the only investment that had been made:

In the development of this work hundreds of educated American men and women have devoted the best years of their lives resulting in the building up of a strong American influence which still remains potent.⁵⁹

Thus when Henry Morgenthau, the American ambassador to the Ottoman Empire, was informed that the capitulations were going to be abrogated, to secure the status of American educational institutions within the Empire, he suggested to Enver Paşa that he visited Robert College the day the capitulations were abrogated. Morgenthau explains that such a visit would be significant as “the Turks would interpret it as meaning that one of the two most powerful men in Turkey had taken this and other American institutions under his patronage.”⁶⁰ Indeed, Enver Paşa, who had assured Morgenthau that the Ottomans had no hostile intention towards Americans, corroborated his sentiment by visiting Robert College on the day of the abrogation of the capitulations.⁶¹ Similarly, Washington had a strong reaction to the abrogation of the capitulations, which caused the Ottoman consulate in New York to explain that even though the capitulations were abolished, Americans had no reason to be worried.⁶² He was right as Morgenthau stated that American educational institutions experienced no difficulty through the war.⁶³ When the Secretary of State was making his case in front of the Committee of Foreign Relations of the Senate on why the United States should not declare war on the Ottoman Empire, he had stated that

⁵⁹ Ibid, 451.

⁶⁰ Henry Morgenthau, *Ambassador Morgenthau's Story* (New York: Doubleday, Page & Company, 1918), 117.

⁶¹ Ibid.

⁶² Mine Erol, *Birinci Dünya Savaşı Arifesinde Amerika'nın Türkiye'ye Karşı Tutumu* (Ankara: Bilgi Basımevi, 1976), 52-53.

⁶³ Morgenthau, *Ambassador Morgenthau's Story*, 120.

American schools in the Empire continued “as in normal times with largely increased attendance.”⁶⁴ The Americans expected affairs to continue as normal as it could during the war.

The situation of the non-Muslim communities of the Empire had a profound effect on American policies towards the Porte during this period. News regarding their treatment and possible treatment by Ottoman authorities was not uncommon in the American media. Such news intensified during the war. When the capitulations were abrogated, news regarding the disastrous outcome it could have on the non-Muslim communities that were managed by American missionaries had started to generate.⁶⁵ The Ottoman ambassador in the United States, Ahmet (Alfred) Rüstem Bey, was compelled to explain that the people of the Empire had no ill-intention but all the reference to such actions may cause the ignorant population to act in such a manner.⁶⁶ American concern for the communities had started even before the Ottomans had joined the war and continued all the way till the end of the war. This reflected upon American policies in two ways. The first way was that the United States confronted the Porte regarding its treatment of non-Muslims, mainly Armenians. At times, the United States directly requested the Ottomans to protect the non-Muslim civilian population.⁶⁷ While other times, it chose to remind the Ottomans that ill-treatment towards minorities was harmful to the relation between

⁶⁴ The Secretary of State to the Chairman of the Committee on Foreign Relations of the Senate (Stone), 6 Dec, 1917, *FRUS* 1917, Supplement 2, 452.

⁶⁵ Erol, *Birinci Dünya Savaşı Arifesinde*, 55.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*

⁶⁷ The Secretary of State to the Ambassador in Turkey (Morgenthau), 18 Feb, 1915, *FRUS* 1915, Supplement, 979; The Secretary of State to the Ambassador in Turkey (Morgenthau), 27 Apr, 1915, *FRUS* 1915, Supplement, 980.

the two countries.⁶⁸ The United States did not hold back from transmitting Allied threats to hold the Ottoman Empire responsible for crimes against minorities either.⁶⁹ Acting upon American directions, Morgenthau made numerous appeals to the Porte regarding the situation of the Armenians.⁷⁰ The United States and Morgenthau have been credited in the West for being outspoken regarding the situation of minorities in the Empire during the war. The United States also assisted minorities through the American Committee for Armenian and Syrian Relief.

The second way in which American concerns for the non-Muslim minorities of the Empire influenced American policies was a bit more complicated. In fear of giving the Ottomans any excuse that could lead to events ranging from the Ottomans refusing cooperation to maltreatment of non-Muslims; the United States was careful not to provide the Ottomans with such an excuse. Morgenthau had cautioned American Zionists that their actions could have consequences for the Jews in the Empire.⁷¹ Ironically it was his own statements claiming that the Ottomans were willing to sell Palestine that led the Ottomans to delay authorization for American citizens who were to leave the Empire on an American cruiser in late 1916.⁷² Although minor slips occurred, Americans generally preferred to play it safe with the Ottomans. After the United States had joined the war and was discussing whether or not to declare war on the Ottoman Empire, the effect such a declaration may have on

⁶⁸ The Secretary of State to the Ambassador in Turkey (Morgenthau), 4 Oct, 1915, *FRUS* 1915, Supplement, 988.

⁶⁹ The Ambassador in France (Sharp) to the Secretary of State, 28 May, 1915, *FRUS* 1915, Supplement, 981. There is a footnote that indicates the dispatch was repeated to the ambassador in the Ottoman Empire.

⁷⁰ *FRUS* 1915, Supplement, 979 – 990.

⁷¹ Urofsky, *American Zionism: From Herzl to the Holocaust*, 200.

⁷² The Ambassador in Turkey (Elkus) to the Secretary of State, 17 Nov, 1916, *Papers Relating to the Foreign Relations of the United States: Lansing Papers* (FRUS: Lansing) 1, 784 – 785.

Ottoman Christians was considered by the government. The Secretary of State asserted that a declaration of war “might cost the lives of many thousands of Christians in Turkey.”⁷³ Whether or not American actions could have such grave impact on the non-Muslim population, the United States always considered the possibility of it in its relations with the Empire.

As the Ottoman Empire was not a point of focus for the United States, Washington preferred that relations continued in the usual manner as much as it possibly could. As long as American interests were intact, the main concern was the situation of the Christian and Jewish communities of the Empire. The Jewish sphere of American concern will be examined in the forth chapter. Overall the United States had limited objectives in its relations with the Ottoman Empire which enabled it to continue on reasonable terms.

3.2. Ottoman Approach

As mentioned before the Ottomans opted to maintain cordial relations with the United States as it believed it was beneficial for Ottoman interests then and in the future. In order to understand why the Ottomans thought the United States could be a positive factor for the Empire, we must understand the reasons and under what circumstances the Ottomans entered the war and how the war failed to progress as expected. First, the Ottoman state of mind and what they expected from the war will be explained and then the driving forces that pushed the Ottomans to consider maintaining good relations with the United States to be beneficial for the Empire will

⁷³ The Secretary of State to the Chairman of the Committee on Foreign Relations of the Senate (Stone), 6 Dec, 1917, *FRUS* 1917, Supplement 2, 452.

be explored. After that it will be demonstrated how the Ottomans went out of their way to maintain good relations with the United States.

3.2.1. Ottoman State of Mind

On the eve of the war, the “sick man of Europe” had one thing on its mind; recovery. It was not a new phenomenon as the Ottomans had spent much of the nineteenth century trying to reform their institutions in order to adapt to what they perceived as a new world order. The Ottomans had failed as they could not revive their economy, prevent the loss of their territories or defy foreign powers that were lurking over the Empire. The decline of the Empire had continued as European encroachment had increased. When the Empire failed to pay off its debts in the 1880s, which had accumulated to a great sum over the years, a council comprising of representatives of creditor nations was established. The council controlled over a quarter of Ottoman government revenues. Similarly the capitulatory system, which was discussed in the previous chapter, had turned the Empire into a semi-colony. Loss of land was inevitable as communities within the Empire sought independence after ensuring the protection of one or more major European power. Even when the Ottomans won on the battlefield, European pressure could render it void. According to William Hale, the Empire “had apparently been locked in a no-win situation.”⁷⁴ However, all the hardships the Ottomans endured caused them to excel in exploiting the power struggles between the European states, which subsequently allowed the Empire to survive into the twentieth century.

⁷⁴ William Hale, *Turkish Foreign Policy, 1774 – 2000* (London: Frank Cass Publishers, 2000), 38.

By the twentieth century, not much had changed for the Ottomans as the decline of the Empire continued. Although it seemed impossible, with the Balkan Wars (1912 – 1913), things had got worse for the Ottomans; during the war, the Empire lost most of its territory in Europe. Differing from previous defeats, it was not because of a major European power but at the hands of Balkan nations that were previously Ottoman subjects. Only by making use of the commotion among the Balkan states did the Ottomans succeed in recapturing Edirne in the second phase of the war. Nevertheless, the Balkan Wars had a tremendous effect on the Ottoman state and society. As the very existence of the Empire was threatened by the invading forces, who had reached the outskirts of the capital, disorientation and despair prevailed among all parts of society.⁷⁵ Feroz Ahmad explains that during this period some political factions were convinced that “the Empire could survive only under Western tutelage” while others believed that “the Empire could be saved through a program of radical reform.”⁷⁶ The second option was embraced by the leadership of the ruling party; Committee of Union and Progress (CUP). Not only did they contemplate reconstructing the state but also transforming the society. Of course, the leaders were well aware of the obstacles; with the gravest one being the capitulations, which stood in the way of such fundamental change. Alike the old regime, the Young Turks had approached European powers with the hope of abolishing the capitulatory system and alike their predecessors they were turned down. Thus CUP leaders believed the only way they could break free from the chains of foreign control that was holding the Empire back was by acquiring a strong ally.

⁷⁵ Feroz Ahmad, “War and Society under the Young Turks, 1908 – 18”, *Review (Fernand Braudel Center)*, vol. 11, no. 2 (1988), 266.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*

The Ottomans made their first appeal to the British, only to be rejected. Next the Austrians turned down the Ottomans in February 1914, as did the Russians in May and the French in July.⁷⁷ Then the Ottomans knocked on the door of Germany. Although Germany had adopted the policy of “peaceful penetration” into the Empire, it was the only Great Power that had never laid claim on any part of the Empire.⁷⁸ Enver Paşa, who had served as a military attaché in Berlin, openly explained his vision of reforming the Empire once it secured the protection of one of the Great Powers.⁷⁹ He also emphasized that if Germany refused an alliance with the Ottoman Empire, the Ottomans would have no choice but to approach the Allies.⁸⁰ In the shadow of the July crisis and after negotiations on August 2, 1914, the Ottomans managed to persuade Germany to sign an alliance with the Empire. Mustafa Aksakal claims that the Ottomans had seized an opportunity to “break out of the prolonged diplomatic isolation that had seemed like the mournful prelude to the empire’s dismemberment.”⁸¹ Cemal Paşa, who had advocated an alliance with France, was even accepting of the Ottoman–German alliance as he preferred “any alliance which rescued Turkey from her present position of isolation.”⁸² The Germans, who had reluctantly accepted an alliance with the Ottomans, immediately began to pressure the Ottomans to join the war once it broke out. The pressure mounted when two

⁷⁷ M. Şükrü Hanioğlu, *A Brief History of the Late Ottoman Empire* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2008), 175.

⁷⁸ Z. A. B. Zeman, *The Gentlemen Negotiators: A Diplomatic History of the First World War* (New York: Macmillan, 1971), 53.

⁷⁹ Mustafa Aksakal, *The Ottoman Road to War: The Ottoman Empire and the First World War* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 96.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 98.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 99.

⁸² Cemal Paşa, *Memories of a Turkish Statesman, 1913 – 1919* (London: Hutchinson & Co., 1922), 108.

German ships evaded the British fleet in the Mediterranean and continued on to Istanbul in early August. The Ottomans sought concessions from Germany in order to save the ships from the British and authorize their passage. Having no other choice, the Germans accepted to grant Ottoman demands, which included commitment not to conclude peace until all Ottoman territory was freed from occupation that may occur in the war, guarantee of any territorial gains on behalf of the Ottomans, incorporation of the ships into the Ottoman navy, and support for the abrogation of the capitulations.⁸³ The Ottomans resisted German pressure to join the war for as long as they could and while they did, they also initialized their program to free themselves from the chains of foreign control. On 8 September, the Sublime Porte notified all embassies of the unilateral abrogation of the capitulations. Shortly after, the Porte raised customs duties, which had been determined by foreigners till this point, and closed all foreign post offices in the Empire. Succumbing to German pressure, the Ottoman Empire joined the war on 29 October, 1914.

The Ottomans perceived the Great War as an opportunity to turn around the fate of the Empire. For this purpose, their alliance with Germany could provide the conditions they had long hoped for. Aksakal asserts that:

With the support and guidance of the German Empire, Ottoman leaders hoped to carry through the kind of radical transformation of the Ottoman state and its people necessary for the creation of a modern, sustainable state.⁸⁴

⁸³ Aksakal, *The Ottoman Road to War*, 115; Hanioglu, *A Brief History of the Late Ottoman Empire*, 178.

⁸⁴Mustafa Aksakal, "Not 'by those old books of international law, but only by war': Ottoman Intellectuals on the Eve of the Great War", *Diplomacy and Statecraft*, vol. 15, no. 3 (2010), 511.

However, the war did not provide the Ottomans with the opportunity to rejuvenate the Empire. On the contrary, it brought the Empire to an end. Of course Ottoman leaders could not have foreseen this during the war. After securing an alliance with a Great Power and initiating the process of freeing themselves from foreign control, all the Ottomans needed was a short lived war which resulted in the victory of the Central Powers. That was the prevalent feeling among the Ottoman leaders who had led their nation into war.

3.2.2. The German Factor

The war was far from being the opportunity the Ottomans had waited for to actualize their plans. The hardship of the war accompanied by economic difficulties was disastrous for the Ottomans and the war did not seem like it would be a short one. Although the Ottomans envisioned a future free of foreign control, during the war they found themselves in the presence of another foreign power penetrating into the Empire: Germany. The Ottomans were aware of the nature of their alliance with Germany as Enver Paşa had explained that:

If Germany supports Turkey materially and financially, it does so for its own advantage. If Turkey accepts [German aid] and thereby ties its fate to that of Germany, then it, too, does so exclusively to its own advantage. There can be no illusion about that.⁸⁵

However, Germany's military and economic influence over the Empire grew significantly with the alliance. Some scholars argue that Germany had long sought

⁸⁵ Ibid, 514.

control over the Empire and its resources and tried to achieve it during the war.⁸⁶ While other scholars claim that “German business interests made very little progress” during the war and that Germany was not successful “in harnessing the natural resources” of the Empire.⁸⁷ Whatever the case may be, Ottoman statesmen were uncomfortable with the level of power Germany had acquired since the start of the war. Rifat Paşa, the Ottoman ambassador in Paris had clearly stated his discomfort with the German infiltration in the Empire even before the Ottomans had joined the war:

German interferences must promptly be brought to an end...Germany has no interest in saving us. She considers us a mere tool. In case of defeat she will use us as a means of satisfying the appetite of the victors; in case of victory she will turn us into a protectorate.⁸⁸

Through the war, Germany strengthened her position in the Empire. Regarding the German influence in the army, an Ottoman officer explained that it seemed as if Ottoman soldiers had lost their control and independence in their own country.⁸⁹ In a speech in June 1917, the American President Woodrow Wilson stated that:

The Turkish armies, which Germans trained, are serving Germany, certainly not themselves, and the guns of German warships lying in

⁸⁶ James L. Barton, “The Ottoman Empire and the War”, *The Journal of Race Development*, vol. 9, no. 1 (1918) 1 – 8; Ahmed Emin Yalman, *Turkey in the World War* (New Haven; Yale University Press, 1930), 114. Ahmed Emin Yalman states that circles within German hoped to exploit Ottoman resources while others suggested colonizing Anatolia.

⁸⁷ Ulrich Trupener, *Germany and the Ottoman Empire, 1914 – 1918* (Delmar, New York: Caravan Books, 1989), 317.

⁸⁸ Yalman, *Turkey in the World War*, 74.

⁸⁹ Ahmet Sedat Doğruer, *Filistin’e Veda: Yıldırım Ordularının Bozgunu* (İstanbul: Yeditepe Yayınevi, 2009), 82 – 83.

the harbour at Constantinople remind Turkish statesmen every day that they have no choice but to take their orders from Berlin.⁹⁰

Yusuf Hikmet Bayur asserts that during the war instead of assisting reform within the Empire, Germany had tried to replace the influence of the other Great Powers with that of its own.⁹¹

The Ottomans who had entered an alliance with the hope of finding an environment that would permit them to reform their state and society were bitterly disappointed with the turns of events during the war. Germany had gained a foothold in the Empire and attempted to consolidate its influence over the Empire. As the Ottomans had burned all bridges behind them by entering the war, if the Central Powers won the war, the Empire was left in the hands of Germany; if the Allies won the war, the Empire was left to their mercy. There was no scenario in which the Ottomans could actually “win.” Additionally, the human loss and economic breakdown within the Empire was beyond comprehension.⁹² For reconstruction, it was unlikely that the Ottomans could approach their traditional creditors as they had pursued an extended war against them. The Ottomans were forced to broaden their horizon regarding international relations. This was the setting in which Ottoman-American relations progressed through the war.

⁹⁰ The Secretary of State to the Ambassador and Ministers in All Countries except Persia, Siam, Liberia, Egypt, Venezuela, Haiti, and the Dominic Republic, 14 June, 1917, *FRUS* 1917, Supplement 2, 98.

⁹¹ Yusuf Hikmet Bayur, *Türk İnkılabı Tarihi: 1914 – 1918 Genel Savaş*, vol. 3, part 2 (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu, 1991), 376.

⁹² Hanioglu, *A Brief History of the Late Ottoman Empire*, 181 – 182.

3.2.3. The United States Enters the Picture

The Ottomans, much like the United States, had limited expectations from Ottoman-American relations during the war. As the Empire was going through a struggle over life and death on three continents, Ottoman leaders could not have had a well thought-over plan concerning what they expected from their relationship with the United States. Nevertheless there is strong evidence that the Ottomans pushed to maintain good relations with the United States.

Before the Empire joined the war, Ottomans had exhibited good will to the Americans concerning the problems stemming from the abrogation of the capitulations as covered before. On the status of American schools, the Grand Vizier, Sait Halim Paşa had expressed that: “We propose to give these institutions the status enjoyed by them in the United States, the management continuing to be independent.”⁹³ When the Ottoman desire for absolute control over their own country is taken into account, allowing American schools to function as always, and even making public appearances there was against everything for which the Ottomans had aspired. Such inconsistency can be attributed to the facts that the Ottomans desired the continuation of good relations between the two countries, did not perceive the United States as an aggressive power, and there was no clear policy regarding the situation of foreigners once the capitulatory system was terminated. Hurewitz asserts that during the years of war, Americans and American institutions received better treatment in the Empire than that of the allies of the Ottomans.⁹⁴

⁹³ “Gives Turkey’s Hopes” *The Washington Post*, Feb 22, 1915.

⁹⁴ Hurewitz, “Türk-American İlişkileri ve Atatürk”, 496.

The sale of arms to the Allies by the United States was a sensitive matter for the Central Powers. An article in an Istanbul newspaper had reported on American sales to the British Empire and France and stated Ottoman grievances regarding the matter.⁹⁵ In his first interview in the American press, Enver Paşa had commented on the matter:

Since the elimination of the capitulations this was the first situation in which the Turkish people might express resentment in a drastic way, but our people realize that this traffic in favor of a few manufacturers is not the fault of those Americans living here, and, therefore, our good old relations continue...The export of arms and ammunition from the United States to the entente powers can have but one result—useless killing.⁹⁶

Although the matter was of critical importance for the Ottomans, as American ammunition was being used by the Allies in Gallipoli, Enver Paşa, who was pro-German, had refrained from saying anything negative towards the United States.⁹⁷ Feroz Ahmad states that the Ottomans “had hoped that the election of Charles Evan Hughes might provide a neutral administration that would prohibit sales of arms and ammunition to England.”⁹⁸ However, in late 1916 Wilson was re-elected.

In April, 1916 the Porte had instructed provincial authorities to “avoid in all matters friction with Americans.”⁹⁹ In case of dispute, authorities were instructed to “suspend all action” and refer the case to Istanbul to be settled between the Porte and the American embassy.¹⁰⁰ The capitulatory system continued to exist de facto for

⁹⁵ “Amerika – Türkiye Münasebeti” *İkdam*, 17 Mart 1331 [Mar 30, 1915]

⁹⁶ “Turks War for Life” *The Washington Post*, Apr 20, 1915.

⁹⁷ “Amerika – Türkiye Münasebeti”

⁹⁸ Feroz Ahmad, “Young Turk Relations with the United States, 1908 – 1918”, *American Turkish Encounters: Politics and Culture, 1830 – 1989*, edited by Nur Bilge Criss, Selçuk Esenbel, Tony Greenwood and Louis Mazzari (Cambridge: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2011), 88.

⁹⁹ Chargé Philip to the Secretary of State, 24 Apr, 1916, *FRUS* 1916, 964.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid*, 964 – 965.

Americans. Ahmad claims that this was part of the Porte's plan to avoid further dependency on Germany.¹⁰¹ By the end of the year, Talat Paşa had approached the American ambassador, Abram Elkus, regarding the possibility of an American loan, to which the ambassador responded positively.¹⁰² Although the venture was not pursued, the Ottomans continued to emphasize their expectation from the United States; Cavid Bey, the Minister of Finance, had told the American ambassador that for the post-war reconstruction of the Empire, their "only hope" was the United States.¹⁰³

At the beginning of April 1917, the United States joined the war; however, it did not declare war on the Empire. Although the United States had pursued the continuation of relations, giving in to German pressure, the Ottoman Empire severed its relations on April 20, 1917. The Porte informed the American embassy that the rupture of diplomatic relations "was not a state of war and therefore that American citizens, as well as American institutions, should be treated exactly as before."¹⁰⁴ Hostilities between the two nations never broke out and the United States continued to respect Ottoman territorial integrity till the end of the war.

It is not hard to understand why the Ottomans would want to maintain good relations with the United States. A declining Empire, with an enemy inside dictating its own policies forced the Ottomans to broaden their options on the international platform. The United States was a rising power and had no expansionist intention

¹⁰¹ Ahmad, "Young Turk Relations with the United States", 88.

¹⁰² Landau and Öke, "Ottoman Perspectives on American Interests", 280.

¹⁰³ The Ambassador in Turkey (Elkus) to the Secretary of State, 2 Mar, 1917, *FRUS: Lansing* 1914 – 1920, vol 1, 787.

¹⁰⁴ The Ambassador in Turkey (Elkus) to the Secretary of State. June, 10, 1917, *FRUS* 1917, Supplement 1, 605.

over the Empire. By 1914, it was almost as if that was all the Ottomans needed to pursue friendly relations with a foreign power, not to mention that the Ottomans were aware of the United States' rising status among world powers. Ottoman leaders feared for the post-war period and believed in investing in Ottoman-American relations during the war. Although the Ottomans did not have clear objectives regarding their relation with the United States, they made sure that it continued on a good path.

Overall, both countries had valid reasons to pursue cordial relations and the fact that both countries had limited interests for one another, enabled Ottoman-American relations to continue in a friendly manner. How Americans benefitted from the good nature of Ottoman-American relations in favor of the Jewish community of Palestine during the war will be discussed in the next chapter.

CHAPTER IV

THE JEWISH COMMUNITY OF PALESTINE DURING THE GREAT WAR AND AMERICAN ASSISTANCE

4.1. Key Figures

4.1.1. Henry Morgenthau

Although it was a collective effort, there were key figures that without their contribution American assistance may not have been as significant. The name that that became synonymous with American support to the Jewish community of Palestine was Henry Morgenthau's. He had reluctantly accepted ambassadorship to the Ottoman Empire as it seemed that it was the only diplomatic post a Jew could aspire for in the United States.¹⁰⁵ However, he accepted the position as he was told by many, including President Woodrow Wilson, that he could do much for his co-religionists in Istanbul and that was exactly what he did.¹⁰⁶ Morgenthau shared good relations with the highest echelons in the Sublime Porte and more importantly he made use of the Porte's high regards of the United States. After stepping down from

¹⁰⁵ Henry Morgenthau, *All In A Life-Time* (New York: Doubleday, Page & Company, 1922), 160.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid*, 161 – 162.

ambassadorship, he was appointed by the Department of State with the mission of concluding a separate peace with the Ottoman Empire. Morgenthau had explained to the Secretary of State Robert Lansing that he believed he could bring around the triumvirate ruling the Empire to make a separate peace with the Allies. Lansing conveyed Morgenthau's message to Wilson who then approved of the mission.¹⁰⁷ The mission never did go through; but it demonstrated just how confident Morgenthau was in his dealings with the Porte. Even though Morgenthau was later on discredited and dispraised by Ottoman leaders;¹⁰⁸ as it will be explained in this chapter, he was in fact an influential name during his time in Istanbul and had done much for the Jews of Palestine.

The Jerusalem branch of the American Jewish Relief Committee had praised Morgenthau and his efforts on behalf of the community stating:

When the present crisis began and the Jewish settlement was entirely cut off from those countries in Europe, with whom it was in close connection, and all sources of income were stopped, Mr. Morgenthau took the initiative steps in stirring up the charitable work of keeping the settlement afloat...

Mr. Morgenthau appeared like a planet on our sky when darkness was over it, and he dug a path between the dark clouds above our heads to bring light thru our darkness. Therefore his name is blessed in our mouth, and his memory will remain engraved in the history of the settlement and will never disappear from our midst.¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁷ William Yale, "Ambassador Henry Morgenthau's Special Mission of 1917", *World Politics*, vol 1, no. 3 (1949), 309 – 310.

¹⁰⁸ Mehmet Talat Paşa, edited by Alpay Kabacalı, *Talat Paşa'nın Anıları* (Istanbul: Türkiye İş Bankası Kültür Yayınları, 2009), 27. In his memoirs Talat Paşa explains his ethnic origins just to "put forth Mr Morgenthau's lies."; see also Cemal Paşa, edited by Alpay Kabacalı, *Hatıralar*, (Istanbul: Türkiye İş Bankası Yayınları, 2010), 87. Cemal Paşa explains that Morgenthau's intention was to "belittle Turks, no matter what."

¹⁰⁹ American Jewish Relief Committee to Henry Morgenthau (Constantinople), Jan 14. 1916, in the Papers of Henry Morgenthau, Sr., Manuscript Division, Library of Congress (LOC), Container 7.

The Committee was not exaggerating since Morgenthau never failed to provide assistance even if it was for a single person. When Cemal Paşa notified British national Annie Landau, who was the headmistress of the Evelina de Rothschild School, to either become an Ottoman citizen or leave Palestine; Morgenthau instructed Glazebrook to ask Cemal Paşa for the continuation of Landau’s present status as a “personal favor.”¹¹⁰ When Glazebrook conveyed Morgenthau’s request, Cemal Paşa turned him down and wished for no further effort to be made.¹¹¹ Morgenthau appealed in Istanbul to no avail as the government considered it “a local matter” and refused to interfere.¹¹² He then contacted Claude Montefiore, the nephew of Moses Montefiore, to sort out the future status of Landau.¹¹³ All this diplomatic traffic could not prevent the departure of Landau as she left for Alexandria in May, 1915; however, it is a clear indication of Morgenthau’s commitment to the community.¹¹⁴ His dedication was exceptional and ensured the safety, well-being, and above all the survival of the community through the war.

4.1.2. Otis A. Glazebrook

The American Consul in Jerusalem, Otis Glazebrook, was another prominent figure who exhibited crucial support to the Jewish community. Glazebrook who was

¹¹⁰ Henry Morgenthau to American Consul (Jerusalem), May 21, 1915, consular correspondence, American Consulate in Jerusalem, record group 84, vol. 71A, National Archives at College Park, College Park, Md. (NACP).

¹¹¹ Otis Glazebrook to American Embassy, May 23, 1915, consular correspondence, American Consulate in Jerusalem, record group 84, vol. 71A, NACP.

¹¹² Henry Morgenthau to American Consul (Jerusalem), May 20, 1915, consular correspondence, American Consulate in Jerusalem, record group 84, vol. 71A, NACP.

¹¹³ Ibid.

¹¹⁴ Otis Glazebrook to American Consulate (Jaffa), May 26, 1915, consular correspondence, American Consulate in Jerusalem, record group 84, vol. 71A, NACP.

a Pastor was said to always have a Bible on his desk.¹¹⁵ He was appointed to the post by his personal friend President Wilson.¹¹⁶ As the Department of State had made the Consulate in Jerusalem responsible for supervising the relief committees and distributing the provisions sent from the United States, Glazebrook presided over the relief efforts. Throughout the war Glazebrook reported the situation of the community to the American Embassy and never held back in appealing to the Embassy to intervene on behalf of the community when deemed necessary. On many occasions he appealed to local Ottoman authorities himself in the name of the community. At the beginning of the war, Morgenthau had expressed his gratitude to Glazebrook stating:

I want to express to you my personal appreciation of the splendid work that you have been doing on behalf of the Jews and Jewish cause in Jerusalem. I feel very happy in receiving such hearty cooperation from you and in realizing that you are putting your full heart into the work.¹¹⁷

Similarly, Arthur Ruppin had described Glazebrook as a decent man that was always ready to listen to the requests and complaints of the Jewish community and “do everything possible to help.”¹¹⁸ A Jerusalem based Hebrew newspaper had vividly explained what Glazebrook meant for the community:

Dr. Glazebrook is a sincere friend of the Jews...In this time of universal butchery, when Europe has become a great hospital and lunatic asylum, America has proved to be the careful father of Palestine through the great work of Dr. Glazebrook. We are indeed fortunate to have on the spot a

¹¹⁵ Extract from the Daily Hebrew Paper of Jerusalem: Glazebrook and the American Consulate, Morgenthau Papers, LOC, Container 34.

¹¹⁶ Ruth Kark, *American Consuls in the Holy Land, 1832 – 1914* (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1994), 333.

¹¹⁷ Henry Morgenthau to American Consul, Nov 27, 1914, consular correspondence, American Consulate in Jerusalem, record group 84, vol. 69, NACP.

¹¹⁸ Arthur Ruppin, *Arthur Ruppin: Memoirs, Diaries, Letters* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1971), 158 – 159.

man of such high quality and courage. We want our brethren in the States to know all this, to appreciate the same fully and to express it publicly. The Consul has under most trying circumstances, opened his heart and home to all of us, affording us abundant and fearless protection.¹¹⁹

Upon returning to the United States, Glazebrook was honored by various American Jewish organizations for his “self-sacrifice and devotion” regarding the relief of the Jewish community of Palestine.¹²⁰ Glazebrook’s work in Palestine was recognized and appreciated by all.

4.1.3. Louis D. Brandeis

There is another name that must be mentioned when looking into the American involvement in Palestine during the Great War; Louis D. Brandeis. Brandeis, who was one of Wilson’s key advisors, was nominated by the President to the U.S. Supreme Court and consequently became an Associate Justice of the Court. As a Zionist leader, Brandeis was not only influential in generating sympathy among American leaders for the cause but also the American Jewish community. Melvin I. Urofsky asserts that Brandeis was effective in transferring American Zionism from a marginal movement to a mainstream one which subsequently meant more power politically and economically for Zionism.¹²¹ Until he was elected Associate Justice, Brandeis led the Provisional Executive Committee for General Zionist Affairs, which had embraced the mission of preventing the “economic breakdown of the new

¹¹⁹ Extract from the Daily Hebrew Paper of Jerusalem, Morgenthau Papers.

¹²⁰ “Pay Honor to Glazebrooks” *New York Times*, Dec 24, 1917.

¹²¹ Urofsky, *American Zionism*, 163.

settlement in Palestine.”¹²² Alongside immediate relief, the Committee provided Jewish institutions funds for their maintenance. Brandeis had also organized so relief could be sent to Palestine via American diplomatic channels.¹²³ American Zionism took over the duty of supporting the Zionist enterprise from where European Zionism had left upon the outbreak of war.

Brandeis directed American Zionism towards a neutral stance during the war. One of the reasons was that the United States was neutral for most of the war and even when it joined did not declare war on the Ottoman Empire. Another reason was because; as Morgenthau had explained the Ottomans were keeping “a close eye on American affairs.”¹²⁴ American Zionists believed that contesting Ottoman rule over Palestine could result in the Ottomans taking a strong stance towards the Jewish community of Palestine, thus they chose to adopt neutrality. To make his position clear, Brandeis explained that:

Zionism is not a movement to wrest from the Ottoman the sovereignty of Palestine. Zionism merely seeks to establish in Palestine, as part of the Turkish Empire, for such Jews as choose to go and remain there, and for their descendants, a legally secured home, where they may live together and lead a Jewish life.¹²⁵

Adopting neutrality was a smart move as Ottoman government officials and diplomatic representatives were indeed monitoring the American press and Zionist movement. When Morgenthau returned to the United States and made public

¹²² Friedman, *Germany, Turkey and Zionism*, 195.

¹²³ Oded Neumann, “A Battle for Survival: The Struggle of the Jewish Yishuv for Existence in Palestine During World War I, 1914 – 1918”, unpublished PhD thesis, the University of California, 1993, 152-153.

¹²⁴ Urofsky, *American Zionism*, 200.

¹²⁵ Louis D. Brandeis, “Zionism and Patriotism”, Morgenthau Papers, LOC, Container 35; Urofsky, *American Zionism*, 197.

statements asserting that the Ottomans were willing to sell Palestine, the Porte was troubled. Ottoman diplomatic representatives were reporting his speeches and statements to Istanbul. The Ottoman Embassy in Bern advised the government to make a declaration with the *Hahambaşı* (Chief Rabbi) to end speculation over Morgenthau's statement.¹²⁶ Distressed by Morgenthau's statement, the Ottoman government was compelled to publicly deny it.¹²⁷ Although it was unlikely that any move or statement by American Zionists would have had an effect on the Ottoman government's attitude towards its own subjects, it may have well forced the Ottomans to adopt a stricter attitude regarding the arrival of relief. Brandeis and American Zionism maintained neutrality for most part of the war which in return provided Ottoman cooperation in their relief efforts. Only in May 1917, after the United States had joined the war and seven months before the British invasion of Palestine, did the Provisional Executive Committee drop neutrality to support a British endorsed Jewish homeland in Palestine.¹²⁸ However, the Committee continued to pursue policies in coherence with government policies. Even in August 1918, almost a year after the British had seized Palestine, when Rabbi Stephen Wise wrote a letter to Wilson asking for support in favor of the Balfour Declaration, he underlined the fact that Zionism still did not challenge Ottoman suzerainty over Palestine as the United States was not at war with the Empire.¹²⁹

¹²⁶ Başbakanlık Osmanlı Arşivi (BOA), HR.SYS. 2334/21, 27 July 1916.

¹²⁷ BOA, HR.SYS. 2334/22, 11 Aug 1916.

¹²⁸ Richard Ned Lebow, "Woodrow Wilson and the Balfour Declaration", *The Journal of Modern History*, vol. 40, no. 4 (1968), 504.

¹²⁹ Manuel, *The Realities of American – Palestine Relations*, 176.

4.2. Difficulties of the War

When World War I broke out in the summer of 1914, the official Ottoman reaction was a declaration of neutrality. However, as the Ottoman government had secretly signed an alliance treaty with the Germans, it had ordered general mobilization in the Empire. Even before the Empire had joined the war, the difficulties of war had encroached upon the Empire: the price of commodities had increased, fear of shortages had emerged, war profiteering had become widespread, and the situation of the treasury had turned critical.¹³⁰ So, when the Ottomans joined the war in October 1914, it was far from prepared for a major military effort.

The situation of the Jewish community of Palestine was not any different; the economy of the community was crippled by the war. The majority of the community had lived off of *halukah* or other funds, which were sent from abroad to support the community.¹³¹ With the outbreak of the war, the flow of these funds, which mainly originated from belligerent countries, ceased.¹³² Moreover, the Empire had become economically isolated as navigation companies had suspended their services to and from Ottoman ports and the naval blockade imposed by the Allies had disrupted commercial relations with the outside world.¹³³ For the Jewish community, this meant that they could not export their products, the two main products being wine and citrus.¹³⁴ This was especially detrimental for the Jewish agricultural colonies that used to export their surplus and import petroleum, which was vital for the use of

¹³⁰ Feroz Ahmad, "Ottoman Armed Neutrality and Intervention, August – November 1914", *Studies on Diplomatic History*, vol. 4, edited by Sinan Kunalp (Istanbul, 1990), 41 – 43.

¹³¹ Neumann, "A Battle for Survival", 48.

¹³² Ibid.

¹³³ Ahmad, "Ottoman Armed Neutrality", 41.

¹³⁴ Neumann, "A Battle for Survival", 49.

irrigation pumps. So, shortly after the war had started, the Jewish community of Palestine was left without two of its main sources of income, accompanied by the uncertainty of the future.

As panic-stricken people had rushed to the banks, the government was forced to declare a moratorium on payments and credit. Banks could no longer provide credit or sell gold to their customers.¹³⁵ Eventually many banks had to close their doors which resulted in account holders losing access to their money.¹³⁶ The restrictions on the operation of banks and their ultimate closing down were another setback for the Jewish community as banking was an integral part of their economic life. An American Jew living in Jaffa explained that during the war people had to “adjust” and that his business took on “Arabian clients whose custom is to keep their money with them and not at the Bank.”¹³⁷ Alongside enduring the difficulties of trying to function under new circumstances, the community was left without its fundamental channels of which it communicated with international Jewry that was responsible for financing the Jewish colonization of Palestine.

The economic difficulties created by the war were naturally accompanied by a shortage of basic supplies and an increase in the price of commodities. The military requisition and conscription had created shortages all over the Empire. The region also suffered from widespread droughts and in addition, Palestine was plagued by hordes of locust in the summer of 1915, which would have disastrous effects on the

¹³⁵ Jacobson, *From Empire to Empire*, 23.

¹³⁶ Ilan Pappé, *A History of Modern Palestine* (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 62.

¹³⁷ “How the Declaration of War Effected the People of Palestine” *The Maccabaeon*, XXVIII, Feb, 1916, 41.

population of Palestine. Conde de Ballobar, the Spanish consul at Jerusalem had referred to the invasion of the locusts in his diary:

Locusts! As I'm reading the Bible it serves as an illustration to see the millions and millions of little locusts that one sees everywhere in the country and in the city, and that will wind up leaving not a blade of grass in this country. The olive trees, the vineyards, the sown fields and the orchards, they have eaten everything and I ask myself what we will be able to eat this summer.¹³⁸

The locust plague had unfortunate effects on the Jewish agricultural colonies, in which some 15 000 Jews lived.¹³⁹ To give an example the production of oranges fell from the usual two million cases to 200,000 cases due to the locust plague.¹⁴⁰ The Ottoman authorities took various measures to fight the locust plague, including ordering men aged between nineteen and sixty to either collect kilos of locust or to pay a fine.¹⁴¹ However, it was not sufficient to prevent the destruction of many crops which consequently created a produce shortage that year. Due to the naval blockade, Palestine was not able to import to make up for the shortage and as the government had seized all means of transport, acquiring goods from other provinces was not always a possibility either.¹⁴² Three kilos of wheat, which cost a franc before the war, was sold for three francs during the war and that was if it could be found on the

¹³⁸ Conde de Ballobar, *Jerusalem in World War I: The Palestine Diary of a European Diplomat*, edited by Eduardo Manzano Moreno and Roberto Mazza (London, England; New York, NY: I.B. Tauris, 2011), 67.

¹³⁹ Friedman, *Germany, Turkey and Zionism*, 192.

¹⁴⁰ "New from Palestine" *The Maccabean*, XXVIII, Apr, 1916, 93.

¹⁴¹ "Remarkable Details from American Consul on Palestine Locust Plague" *New York Times*, Nov 21, 1915.

¹⁴² Yalman, *Turkey in the World War*, 120.

market.¹⁴³ The war combined with the calamity caused by the locust plague had created a shortage of food and an increase in food prices.

The natural consequence of shortages and the increase in prices was famine and disease. A great famine struck the Greater Syria region during the war years and diseases such as malaria, cholera and typhus became widespread.¹⁴⁴ Rabbis were compelled to issue a call to the Jewish community in 1916, forbidding them to fast on Yom Kippur “on account of the prevalence of typhus in Palestine.”¹⁴⁵ A young Ottoman soldier had vividly described the desperation that the war and nature had inflicted upon the people of Palestine in his diary (October 20, 1915):

People are dying of hunger. All essential foodstuffs are missing, including material produced in other Ottoman provinces. Citizens can no longer bear this situation. A pound of flour costs 8 piasters. And this is from locally grown wheat. You can imagine the cost of buying imported sugar, where a pound of sugar costs 60 piasters (Jerusalem mint). Rice is 30 piasters.¹⁴⁶

Almost two months later, he wrote:

I haven't seen darker days in my life. Flour and bread have basically disappeared since last Saturday. Many people have not eaten bread for days now...We have so far tolerated living without rice, sugar, and kerosene. But how can we live without bread?¹⁴⁷

The Jewish community, like the rest of the population of Greater Syria was exposed to famine and disease, which was effective throughout the war.

¹⁴³ Ballobar, *Jerusalem in World War I*, 106.

¹⁴⁴ Salim Tamari, *Year of the Locust: A Soldier's Diary and the Erasure of Palestine's Ottoman Past* (Berkeley, California: University of California Press, 2011), 59.

¹⁴⁵ “News from Palestine” *The Maccabean*, XXIX, Sept, 1916, 66.

¹⁴⁶ Tamari, *Year of the Locust*, 141.

¹⁴⁷ *Ibid*, 142 – 143.

The Jewish community also encountered problems that were not prevalent in the other communities of Palestine. As the majority of the Jewish community comprised of foreigners, with the abrogation of the capitulations, many were left without the foreign protection on which they so heavily relied. The entire Jewish community became subject to Ottoman laws. Foreign consulates could no longer act as mediators between the Jewish community and Ottoman authorities and the privileges many were accustomed to ceased to exist. Alexander Aaronsohn, a Jewish resident of Palestine and the brother of the famous British spy Aaron Aaronsohn, had considered the abrogation of the capitulations as “a terrible blow to all the Europeans” for it allowed “every boot-black or boatmen” to feel equal to the European, who now “had no consul to protect him.”¹⁴⁸ As celebrations and demonstrations against Europeans had started to take place after the abrogation of the capitulations, Otis Glazebrook, the American Consul at Jerusalem, had asked Morgenthau to appeal to the Porte to cancel the parades and religious services on the anniversary of the coronation of Süleyman the Magnificent in fear of “excited local conditions and in view of the abrogation of the capitulations.”¹⁴⁹ Whether there were valid reasons or not, the cancellation of the capitulations had created distress among foreigners. However, it was also welcomed by many among the Jewish community.¹⁵⁰ Whatever the reactions may have been, the Jewish community had to function without the comfort of appealing to another power in its dealings with the Ottoman authorities.

¹⁴⁸ Alexander Aaronsohn, *With the Turks in Palestine* (Boston, New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1916), 21.

¹⁴⁹ Otis Glazebrook to the American Embassy in Constantinople, Sept. 29, 1914; translation of cipher telegram, American Consulate in Jerusalem, record group 84, vol. 68, NACP.

¹⁵⁰ Abigail Jacobson, “A City Living Through Crisis: Jerusalem During World War I”, *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies*, vol. 36, no. 1 (2009), 79.

Another significant problem the Jewish community of Palestine had to deal with arose right after the Ottoman Empire joined the war. As the Ottomans had entered the war on the side of the Central Powers, many of the Jews became belligerent nationals. Half of the 100,000 population of the Jewish community were Russian nationals, with many others being nationals of the other Allied countries.¹⁵¹ Upon entering the war, the Ottoman government, in fear of unrest, had ordered all male subjects of belligerent countries to be expelled.¹⁵² Through the war, many foreign nationals residing in Palestine were in fact exiled internally or expelled from the Empire. So the Jewish community of Palestine faced losing a portion of its population right at the beginning of the war.

On the other hand, the Jews who were not foreign nationals but Ottoman subjects had problems of their own. Ottoman men between the ages of seventeen and forty were obliged to serve in the army during the war.¹⁵³ However, non-Muslims could avoid serving in the army by paying an exemption tax (*bedel-i askeri*), for which many Jews opted. Glazebrook had reported to the American Embassy before the Ottomans had joined the war that the number of mobilized Jews was insignificant and that most had “purchased exemption” thereby had exhausted their resources.¹⁵⁴ Exemption was granted to those who were able to pay a sum of 1000 francs and that was not an amount that everyone could easily afford to pay.¹⁵⁵ The exemption tax

¹⁵¹ Friedman, *Germany, Turkey and Zionism*, 191.

¹⁵² Landau and Öke, “Ottoman Perspectives on American Interests”, 279.

¹⁵³ Jacobson, *From Empire to Empire*, 26.

¹⁵⁴ Otis Glazebrook to the American Embassy in Constantinople, Sept. 14, 1914; translation of cipher telegram, American Consulate in Jerusalem, record group 84, vol. 68, NACP.

¹⁵⁵ “News from the Homeland” *The Maccabean*, XXX, Jan, 1917, 138.

contributed to the economic challenges the Jewish community experienced during the war.

One of the greatest challenges the Jewish community of Palestine faced during the war was the notorious Cemal Paşa. He was the Minister of the Navy and the commander of the Fourth Army based in Syria. He was one of the three men that ruled over the Empire during the war. After being appointed governor of Syria, he was granted “full powers in military and civilian affairs” and “all cabinet decrees that pertained to Syria became subject to his approval.”¹⁵⁶ Cemal Paşa was the sole ruler of Greater Syria. Falih Rıfkı Atay, a young Ottoman officer who served under Cemal Paşa during the war, wrote in his book *Zeytindağı* that in Palestine “the name Cemal seemed like a holy name from the Torah or Gospels.”¹⁵⁷ When the military court sentenced to death less than a quarter of the twenty Arab nationalists, who were accused of treason in April, 1916, Cemal Paşa was not pleased with the verdict. So, he took the official verdict and wrote “sentenced to death” across all the names and thus overruled the court’s decision.¹⁵⁸ Cemal Paşa defied all pleas from Istanbul asking for their release and less than a month later half of the men were hanged in Damascus and the other half in Beirut.¹⁵⁹ Cemal Paşa felt no obligation to listen to the Porte or his comrades if he did not want to. The Spanish consul noted an event in his diary in which the *mutasarrif* of Jerusalem could not implement an order from the

¹⁵⁶ Hasan Kayalı, *Arabs and Young Turks: Ottomanism, Arabism, and Islamism in the Ottoman Empire, 1908 – 1918* (Berkeley, California: University of California Press, 1997), 192.

¹⁵⁷ Falih Rıfkı Atay, *Zeytindağı* (İstanbul: Pozitif Yayınları, 2010), 15.

¹⁵⁸ Bayur, *Türk İnkılabı Tarihi*, 221.

¹⁵⁹ Ibid; Atay, *Zeytindağı*, 55.

Porte for fear of Cemal Paşa.¹⁶⁰ It is clear that Cemal Paşa had the final say in all matters in the Greater Syria region.

Cemal Paşa, like many Ottoman statesmen had witnessed separatist movements in the Balkans and knew exactly what the outcome meant for the Empire. Sharing the Ottoman state of mind, which was mentioned before, he too sought a unified and independent Ottoman Empire. He was dedicated to making sure that nothing similar to the nationalist movements of the Balkans would emerge in Palestine and Syria under his watch. He had no tolerance for the Arab and Jewish national aspirations that were burgeoning at the time. The extent he went to curb such movements can be considered excessive.

During the war, Cemal Paşa marked his place in the memory of all the communities of Palestine and Syria. Remembered by his ruthless governorship of the Arab provinces of the Empire, he began to symbolize the tragic era of the war in the region. He was described as an intelligent and hard-working man; however, it was his rigor that made him stand out.¹⁶¹ He regarded mercy as a weakness and abhorred complaining.¹⁶² He had once stated that: “I have never complained in my life. I do like being complained about.”¹⁶³ The brutality associated with Cemal Paşa had generated tales about him across the region; Atay gives an example of one of these tales in his book:

In Syria they used to say, when speaking to someone, if Cemal Paşa scratched his nose, he was thinking of sending them to exile; if he

¹⁶⁰ Ballobar, *Jerusalem in World War I*, 78.

¹⁶¹ Ali Fuad Eren, *Birinci Dünya Savaşı'nda Suriye Hatıraları* (İstanbul: Türkiye İş Bankası Kültür Yayınları, 2006), 102.

¹⁶² *Ibid*, 103.

¹⁶³ *Ibid*.

stroked his beard, he was thinking of whether or not to forgive them. However, if he twirled his moustache, be afraid for the conversation was on a path that may lead to death.¹⁶⁴

The fate of the people of Greater Syria was left in the hands of a man of such character.

So when the war broke out, the Jewish community of Palestine was amidst a sea of uncertainty. The traditional way of life had been destroyed by the war. The economy of the community was deteriorating with the loss of two of its main income sources. As the war and natural disasters had created a shortage of food, the community also faced the danger of famine and disease. In addition to these challenges, the majority of the community was left without the foreign protection, which they had benefitted from for so long in their dealings with Ottoman authorities. Similarly, the community could not turn to the Porte as the local authorities did not always conform to the decisions made in Istanbul. The community was forced to endure the hardships of the war as well as adapt to the momentous changes occurring in the region.

The war years in Ottoman Palestine seemed unfavorable for the Jewish community for the many reasons stated above. The war could have easily constituted a breaking point for the community as all odds seemed against it. Nevertheless, at such a critical point in time, the community managed to survive and the Jewish colonization of Palestine continued with minor setbacks. The community went on to expand and consolidate its status in Palestine during the British mandate, which was created after the Ottomans left the region. The greatest factor that contributed to the

¹⁶⁴ Atay, *Zeytindağı*, 62 – 63.

community's survival was the American protection and assistance to the community. Other contributing factors include but are not limited to Germany, the Porte and the shifting tides of the political sphere in Palestine and the region during the war. The American part played in protecting and assisting the community, which is the focus point of this thesis, will be discussed in the next subchapter. How did the American foreign missions in the Empire help the community? What channels did they use? How did they benefit from the United States' good relations with the Porte?

4.3. Surviving the War

The outbreak of World War I had immediate effects on the Jewish community of Palestine, as mentioned before. Within the first weeks of the war, the flow of funds to Palestine ceased. When this was accompanied by the disruption of imports and exports, the leaders of the Jewish community sought to alleviate the effects of the war. Calls for help were sent out in all directions and one call in particular received a response; the call to the American ambassador in Istanbul, Henry Morgenthau.¹⁶⁵ Morgenthau, who had visited Palestine in April, 1914, was familiar with the Jewish community and the region. In fact, it is believed that he was responsible for the suspension of the Jaffa based anti-Zionist newspaper *Filastin*,¹⁶⁶ which was shut down by the Ottoman authorities a month after Morgenthau's visit.¹⁶⁷ Upon receiving the community's plea in August 1914, Morgenthau conveyed it to Jacob Schiff, who was an influential member of the Jewish community in the United

¹⁶⁵ Ruppin, *Arthur Ruppin*, 150.

¹⁶⁶ Landau and Öke, "Ottoman Perspectives on American Interests", 278.

¹⁶⁷ BOA, DH.ŞFR. 40/39, dated 22 Cemaziyelevvel 1332 [18 April 1914]

States, stating that the “thriving colonies” were threatened by destruction.¹⁶⁸ Schiff replied by promising Morgenthau to remit the \$50 000, which the ambassador had asked.¹⁶⁹ Morgenthau then appointed his son-in-law to travel to Palestine on board the American cruiser *North Carolina* to distribute the funds, which reached Jaffa port in early October.¹⁷⁰ *The Maccabean*, an American Jewish periodical, had reported the deliverance of the relief funds:

Not only has the money served to give food to thousands of hungry people; the fact that it was brought here by Mr. Morgenthau’s son-in-law, Mr. Wertheim, on board an American cruiser, has also proved to the non-Jewish population that the Jewish community, although small in numbers, is strongly assisted by the huge masses of Jews in other parts of the world. The spectacle of Mr. Wertheim escorted by the leader of the Zionist Palestine Bureau and followed by sailors carrying the sacks of money to the safe-rooms of the Anglo Palestine Company, created a sensation among the Arabs and inspired the Jews with fresh hopes and confidence.¹⁷¹

The distribution of the funds was carried out by notable Zionists such as Arthur Ruppin and Aaron Aaronsohn and was presided over by the American consul in Jerusalem, Otis Glazebrook. The relief fund ameliorated the conditions of the Jewish community and made it possible for people to equip themselves with food supplies and medicine to prepare for the difficult times ahead.¹⁷² Maurice Wertheim also made arrangements with Ottoman authorities in the provinces to protect the Jewish

¹⁶⁸ “Henry Morgenthau to Jacob Schiff,” 1914, http://cojs.org/cojswiki/Cablegram_from_Morgenthau_to_Jacob_Schiff%2C_1914. (May 2012)

¹⁶⁹ “Copy of cable sent from Jacob Schiff to Henry Morgenthau,” August 31, 1914, http://cojs.org/cojswiki/Copy_of_a_Cable_Sent_to_the_American_Ambassador%2C_Constantinople%2C_from_Jacob_Schiff%2C_Aug._31%2C_1914. (May 2012)

¹⁷⁰ “Palestine and the War” *The Maccabean*, XXV (1914), 191.

¹⁷¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁷² Neumann, “A Battle for Survival”, 98.

community's food depots and inventories from possible confiscation.¹⁷³ Before the Ottoman Empire had joined the war, American efforts had ensured the community with funds that would be sufficient for a period of time and had also provided political leverage, exhibiting that the community could exert influence when required. This was the first of many occasions, in which the American diplomatic mission in the Ottoman Empire would step up to help the Jewish community during the war.

The next major crisis for the Jewish community of Palestine emerged after the Ottoman Empire joined the war. As the Ottomans had ordered the expulsion of all male subjects of belligerent countries, the community needed a miracle to avert the expulsion of its many members that fell under the category. That miracle was delivered by Morgenthau, whose appeals in Istanbul persuaded the Ottoman government to allow foreign Jews to stay in Palestine by obtaining Ottoman citizenship.¹⁷⁴ Ottomanization committees were immediately established to ease the process for foreign nationals, who opted to go through with naturalization. Leaders of the community such as David Ben-Gurion (who went on to become Israel's first prime minister), Yitzhak Ben-Zvi and the *hahambaşı* (Grand Rabbi) of Palestine Moshe Franko supported the process.¹⁷⁵ Some foreign Jews, who wanted to become Ottoman citizens, could not afford to pay the required fee and expected a time extension from the Ottoman government in order to gather the money from the United States and Europe but by December 1914, Morgenthau reported that the Porte

¹⁷³ American Jewish Committee, *The American Jewish Year Book*, vol. 17. (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society of America, 1915), 363.

¹⁷⁴ Landau and Öke, "Ottoman Perspectives on American Interests", 279.

¹⁷⁵ Neumann, "A Battle for Survival", 52.

had agreed to waive the naturalization fee for all indignant Jews.¹⁷⁶ Additionally those who became Ottoman citizens were to be exempt from military service and all government taxes for a year.¹⁷⁷ However, despite the incentives, many foreign Jews refrained from taking on Ottoman citizenship; some due to the traditional reasons mentioned before and some due to conditions that had recently emerged. As citizens of Allied powers, many feared of being held accountable for treason by the laws of their country once the Allies won the war.¹⁷⁸ On the other hand many Russian Jews, who had capital invested and families living in Russia, could not risk violating Russian laws therefore declined to renounce their Russian citizenship to take on Ottoman citizenship.¹⁷⁹ Although many foreign Jews had become Ottomans, the majority of them did not go through with the process.¹⁸⁰

On December 17, the expulsion of all Jews who were belligerent nationals was ordered; hundreds were immediately expelled.¹⁸¹ Although the order targeted all belligerent nationals, the expulsions that were carried out centered on Russian Jews.¹⁸² Upon receiving the news, Glazebrook appealed to Cemal Paşa for the delay of the expulsions in order to gain time for those who wanted to but had not yet become Ottoman citizens.¹⁸³ On the other hand, Morgenthau and his German

¹⁷⁶ Manuel, *The Realities of American – Palestine Relations*, 123 – 124; Landau and Öke, “Ottoman Perspectives on American Interests”, 279.

¹⁷⁷ Communication Addressed to the Office of the Governor of Jerusalem to the Rabbinate of this City (Jerusalem), Dec. 7, 1914, Morgenthau Papers, LOC, Container 34.

¹⁷⁸ Ruppin, *Arthur Ruppin*, 152.

¹⁷⁹ Arthur Ruppin to Dr. Glazebrook, Nov. 3, 1914, consular correspondence, American Consulate in Jerusalem, record group 84, vol. 68, NACP.

¹⁸⁰ Neumann, “A Battle for Survival”, 53.

¹⁸¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁸² *Ibid.*

¹⁸³ Otis Glazebrook to the American Embassy in Constantinople, Dec. 31, 1914, consular correspondence, American Consulate in Jerusalem, record group 84, vol. 68, NACP.

counterpart in Istanbul sought to end the expulsions altogether.¹⁸⁴ As a result of the American and German diplomatic pressure in Istanbul, the expulsions were put on hold by the end of December.¹⁸⁵ They also managed to get the Porte to remove Bahattin Bey, the notorious anti-Zionist *kaymakam* of Jaffa, from his post.¹⁸⁶

The Jewish community was relieved for the time being; however, it was clear that the situation of foreign Jews was not going to be resolved any time soon. The expulsions prompted many foreign Jews to take on Ottoman citizenship, while many others chose to leave Palestine voluntarily.¹⁸⁷ This led to the creation of Jewish exile communities in Egypt, which would be effective in aiding the British propaganda machine throughout the war.¹⁸⁸ American cruisers made numerous trips to and from Jaffa to transfer Jews who were to leave Palestine.¹⁸⁹

The next major crisis for the Jewish community began with the arrival of Cemal Paşa in Palestine. Upon his arrival, Cemal Paşa made a declaration to the people of Palestine stating that:

...The people of the land of Palestine are responsible for the duties of defending the homeland and holy war more than anywhere else. One of these duties is the continuation of harmony, without any occasion that could disrupt the important and sincere bond between all Ottoman elements. Any minor motion that could violate this bond will be severely punished. Therefore, I request Muslims, who constitute the majority, to treat Jews and Christians with utmost gentleness and friendly feelings.

¹⁸⁴ Neumann, "A Battle for Survival", 156.

¹⁸⁵ Ibid, 53.

¹⁸⁶ Friedman, *Germany, Turkey and Zionism*, 214.

¹⁸⁷ Neumann, "A Battle for Survival", 54.

¹⁸⁸ Justin McCarthy, *The Turk in America: the Creation of an Enduring Prejudice* (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 2010), 229 – 231; Isaiah Friedman, *The Question of Palestine: British, Jewish, Arab Relations, 1914 – 1918* (New Brunswick and London: Transaction Publishers, 1992), 187.

¹⁸⁹ "Jews in Flight from Palestine" *New York Times*, Jan 19, 1915.

Dwellers of allied, friendly and neutral countries in the land of Palestine are our valuable guests. At this point in time when we are giving a battle of life and death, it is necessary to treat them better than ever. During these serious and difficult times our moral values will become apparent and as increasing the friendship and fondness of foreign elements towards us is a necessity of our national interests, we can only achieve that in this fashion.

The life, property, honor, and order, including the personal rights of subjects of enemy countries is under the guarantee of our nation. Therefore, I will not allow even the smallest assault against them...¹⁹⁰

Cemal Paşa seemed determined to prevent social unrest in Palestine. Cemal Paşa's arrival accompanied by his proclamation to protect the Jewish community would have been considered a beneficial development for the community, if he had left it at that. But the actions of Muslims, who were now unfettered by the capitulations, were not his only concern: Cemal Paşa was also determined to crush any nationalist movement that would lead to more than social unrest. Cemal Paşa regarded Zionism as a movement that was "very obnoxious to the interests of the Turkish state" and with the assistance of his newly appointed political advisor Bahattin Bey, was determined to eradicate it once and for all.¹⁹¹ Shortly after his arrival, he summoned up notable Zionists and ordered their exile into the interior. This was followed by the arrest of many other Zionists. Next, the use of Zionist symbols was prohibited and finally the Anglo-Palestine Bank was shut down.¹⁹² The Jewish community once again, in need of help turned to Morgenthau and once again Morgenthau and his German counterpart in Istanbul promised to help the community.¹⁹³ Together the two pressured the Porte for the rectification of the developments in Palestine.

¹⁹⁰ Öke, *Kutsal Topraklarda Siyonistler ve Masonlar*, 344 – 345.

¹⁹¹The Zionist Review, May, 1918, Morgenthau Papers, LOC, Container 35.

¹⁹² Ruppin, *Arthur Ruppin*, 154.

¹⁹³ Friedman, *Germany, Turkey and Zionism*, 220.

Morgenthau protested before the Porte and even after he found Talat Paşa, the Minister of the Interior, willing to comply with his demands, he did not settle there and went all the way up to Enver Paşa.¹⁹⁴ Also in compliance with Morgenthau's demands, Enver Paşa sent a cable to Palestine demanding proper treatment for the Jews of Palestine.¹⁹⁵ As Cemal Paşa was receiving bad news from the front and as the Arab nationalist movement was gaining momentum, he did not have much choice but to succumb to the demands of Istanbul and shortly after the Anglo-Palestine Bank was reopened; Bahattin Bey, once again was removed from his post and most of the Zionist detainees were released.¹⁹⁶ Additionally, the Porte had ordered the authorities in Palestine to refrain from "oppressive measures against the Jews."¹⁹⁷ Going further, Cemal Paşa made public visits to Jewish facilities expressing his goodwill to the Jewish people and promising them protection.¹⁹⁸ American and German diplomatic intervention managed to prevent Cemal Paşa from executing measures that could have been detrimental for the Jewish community and devastating for the Zionist enterprise. The extent Cemal Paşa went to curb Arab nationalist aspirations, which was advancing simultaneously with Zionism, demonstrated that without any holdback Cemal Paşa was capable of great destruction.

All the commotion of January and February 1915 caused great concern across the western world regarding the situation of the Jewish community of Palestine. Distorted information on the war in the Near East, which was being distributed by

¹⁹⁴ Landau and Öke, "Ottoman Perspectives on American Interests", 280.

¹⁹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁹⁶ Neumann, "A Battle for Survival", 58; Landau and Öke, "Ottoman Perspectives on American Interests", 280.

¹⁹⁷ Friedman, *Germany, Turkey and Zionism*, 221.

¹⁹⁸ Ruppin, *Arthur Ruppin*, 156.

the British to the international press, only aggravated the situation.¹⁹⁹ While the Ottomans kept their area of interest limited to Zionists and Zionism, which it acknowledged as a separatist movement; this was not of any value for the British. The British instead chose to portray anti-Zionist measures as a prelude to the destruction of the entire Jewish community. As the United States had traditionally been concerned with the well-being of the Jewish and Christian subjects of the Ottoman Empire, many Americans were rightfully worried for the fate of the Jewish community. Thus, the vast amount of stories emerging in the press and the pleas of American Jewish leaders compelled the State Department to look into the matter. Captain Decker of the U.S.S. *Tennessee*, which was in the region travelling between Jaffa and Alexandria, was appointed for the job. After consulting Jewish leaders and American diplomats in Alexandria and Palestine, he concluded that “the sentiment of the people in Syria and Palestine is very strong against Jews” and that Zionism was in danger.²⁰⁰ Captain Decker had reached this conclusion, not because the Jewish community was actually under threat but because he assumed the Jewish and Christian communities would be so if the Ottoman Suez offensive failed.²⁰¹ Based on Decker’s report, the State Department cabled Morgenthau on February 18, stating:

You are instructed to attempt to secure from Turkish Government order to civil and military officials throughout Palestine and Syria that they will be held responsible for lives and property of Jews and Christians in case of massacre or looting.²⁰²

¹⁹⁹ McCarthy, *The Turk in America*, 229.

²⁰⁰ The Secretary of State to the Ambassador in Turkey (Morgenthau), 18 Feb, 1915, *FRUS* 1915, Supplement, 979; Manuel, *The Realities of American – Palestine Relations*, 127.

²⁰¹ Neumann, “A Battle for Survival”, 160.

²⁰² The Secretary of State to the Ambassador in Turkey (Morgenthau), 18 Feb, 1915, *FRUS* 1915, Supplement, 979

Upon consulting Talat Paşa, Morgenthau responded transmitting Talat Paşa's message that there was "no reason for apprehension" and that Jews and Christians were "properly protected."²⁰³ Morgenthau did not leave it at that and in compliance with the State Department's instructions, he also requested the Porte to send instructions to the authorities in Palestine. The Porte did indeed send instructions to provincial officials ordering them to protect "all innocent people" from molestation and warned that any official that disobeyed orders would be punished.²⁰⁴ Morgenthau must have been satisfied with his efforts before the Porte as he reported back to Washington declaring that "we have succeeded in suspending movement against Zionism."²⁰⁵ Whether there actually was any immediate danger threatening the Jewish community or not, the United States government took the necessary measures within its power to secure the welfare of the community which it perceived to be under threat.

As the conditions in Palestine deteriorated due to the war, American Jewish organizations hastened their relief efforts. When the American Jewish Relief Committee could not find commercial ships to carry supplies, Josephus Daniels, the Secretary of the Navy, suggested that they be transferred on a Navy collier.²⁰⁶ Next, negotiations were made for the passage of a relief ship through the Allied blockade of Ottoman ports.²⁰⁷ The American Jewish Relief Committee, the Central Relief Committee and the Provisional Executive Committee for General Zionist Affairs sent

²⁰³ The Ambassador in Turkey (Morgenthau) to the Secretary of State, 20 Feb, 1915, *FRUS* 1915, Supplement, 979 – 980.

²⁰⁴ The Ambassador in Turkey (Morgenthau) to the Secretary of State, May 2, 1915, *FRUS* 1915, Supplement, 981.

²⁰⁵ *Ibid.*

²⁰⁶ Urofsky, *American Zionism*, 205.

²⁰⁷ Manuel, *The Realities of American – Palestine Relations*, 141.

a shipment of food, medicine and clothing to Palestine in March on the U.S.S. *Vulcan*. The United States government had obtained permission from the Sublime Porte for the safe landing of the goods and the Porte also waived import duties on the condition that the distribution took place under the supervision of the municipality.²⁰⁸ The food delivery was intended for the entire population of Palestine: the Jewish community received fifty-five percent of the products, the Muslim community received 26 percent and the Christian community received 19 percent.²⁰⁹ The majority of the food supply comprised of flour with smaller amounts of sugar, rice, coffee and tea.²¹⁰ Most of the portion that was for the Jewish community was allotted for Jerusalem, of which twenty-three thousand people and thirty-five institutions benefitted from.²¹¹ The shipment immediately ameliorated the condition of the Jewish community and that of Palestine, as the price of food began to go down.²¹² All this was possible due to the United States government, which made use of all means to organize and execute the difficult task of delivering supplies beyond a military blockade and doing so by acquiring the consent of two warring parties.

American ships continued their trips to and from Ottoman ports, transferring Jews who were to leave Palestine. As subjects of hostile nations were required to leave the Empire, Jews who had failed to adopt Ottoman citizenship despite the time extension were obligated to leave Palestine. The American consuls in the region were undertaking extra work to obtain permission from local authorities for their

²⁰⁸ BOA, DH.ID. 59/88, dated 12 Cemaziyelevvel 1333 [28 March 1915]

²⁰⁹ “The Situation in Palestine” *The Maccabaeon*, XXVII, Sept, 1915, 78.

²¹⁰ Felix M. Warburg, *Reports Received by the Joint Distribution Committee of Funds for Jewish War Sufferers* (New York: Press of C. S. Nathan, 1916), 137.

²¹¹ Jacobson, *From Empire to Empire*, 46.

²¹² “The Situation in Palestine” *The Maccabaeon*, XXVII, Sept, 1915, 78.

departure, while American vessels were going out of their way to secure the transportation of the refugees. Morgenthau had once again used his influence in Istanbul to obtain permission for American vessels to enter Ottoman ports, which had been declared closed to neutral navigation.²¹³ As Morgenthau and his staff had organized the logistics of the departure of Jewish and other refugees, he had reported back to Washington on the services of American cruisers that:

The use of our cruisers for this purpose has meant much extra work and inconvenience for their officers and crews. But they have satisfied an urgent need, and in their ready and gracious help to those in anxiety and distress will long be remembered by their grateful beneficiaries.²¹⁴

Morgenthau was also responsible for obtaining permission for the landing of the refugees in Alexandria, Egypt which at times was challenging.²¹⁵ The coordination of all these factors was troublesome and was not always successful. Occasions in which passengers failed to embark because the arrival date of the cruiser was unknown or incidents in which cruisers were left without passengers because permission for their departure had not been obtained was not uncommon. Overall, American diplomatic agencies in the Ottoman Empire had done everything possible to keep Jews, who were foreign nationals in Palestine and when they did not succeed, they organized and secured their safe exit.

The frequent trips made by American ships also ensured the continuation of funds sent from the United States to Palestine which was crucial for the survival of

²¹³ The Ambassador in Turkey (Morgenthau) to the Secretary of State, July 27, 1915, *FRUS* 1915, Supplement, 955.

²¹⁴ *Ibid*, 958.

²¹⁵ Otis Glazebrook to American Consulate in Jaffa, Aug. 11, 1915, consular correspondence, American Consulate in Jerusalem, record group 84, vol. 72, NACP. Refugees were not allowed to land in Alexandria.

the Jewish community. When the Ottoman authorities objected to the transfer of funds on grounds that it gave the Jewish community an advantage over the Arab community and because they believed it could be used for purposes other than relief, Morgenthau managed to persuade the Ottomans to settle the matter favorably.²¹⁶ However, by the end of 1915, the British prohibited remittances from Egypt to the Ottoman Empire which had grave effects on the community and Palestine in general.²¹⁷ The amount of gold in Palestine decreased and caused the Ottomans to transfer their own gold reserves to the capital which subsequently caused paper money to lose value.²¹⁸ This naturally brought about an increase in food prices. Nevertheless, the most troublesome outcome for the community was the suspension of funds via the Mediterranean. In January, 1916 Ruppin contacted Morgenthau describing the situation of the community:

Although I am always trying not to exaggerate in depicting the situation, still I must tell you that the misery of our Jewish population has reached a most fearful degree in the last months. A large part of them is no longer able to procure the necessary means of subsistence and as a consequence cases of illness and death from underfeeding and starvation occur now in numbers which were unseen up till now and they show a constant increase.²¹⁹

²¹⁶ American Jewish Committee, *The American Jewish Year Book*, Vol. 18. (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society of America, 1916), 209; Manuel, *The Realities of American – Palestine Relations*, 144.

²¹⁷ *Ibid*, 145.

²¹⁸ Neumann, “A Battle for Survival”, 105.

²¹⁹ Arthur Ruppin to Henry Morgenthau (Constantinople), Jan 5, 1916, Morgenthau Papers, LOC, Container 7.

He concluded by requesting Morgenthau to ensure the continuation of relief sent from the United States.²²⁰ Morgenthau was compelled to send money by mail from Istanbul, which Manuel explains:

This became the set method for the dispatch of moneys to Palestine during the next eighteen months. From then on there were regular orders to Morgenthau from the United States to make remittances to Glazebrook for the Zionists and for general relief...By March, 1916 the Jewish organizations in the United States had put relief remittances on a definite monthly basis.²²¹

Even though this method was inconvenient as only paper money could be sent, in comparison with the gold bullions that were being shipped into Palestine beforehand, it was a solution and it did ensure the continuance of funds for the Jewish community.

As famine and disease swept through the Greater Syria region, American Jewish organizations concentrated their efforts on delivering medical supplies to the Jewish community of Palestine. In February 1916, an American cruiser loaded with 87 cases of medical supplies valued at \$18 000 set sail for Palestine.²²² There were many obstacles that stood in the way of this relief mission. England and France were not willing to allow any ship through their naval blockade in the Eastern Mediterranean, while on the other hand, the cruiser needed permission from the Ottoman authorities to enter and unload in Ottoman ports. In early 1916, Morgenthau had resigned as ambassador and left Istanbul to assist Wilson in his reelection

²²⁰ Ibid.

²²¹ Manuel, *The Realities of American – Palestine Relations*, 145.

²²² Sandy Sufian and Shifra Shvarts, "Mission of Mercy: American Jewish Medical Relief to Palestine during World War I", *Proceedings of European Association for Jewish Studies Conference, Toledo 1998: Jewish Studies at the Turn of the 20th Century. Volume II: Judaism from the Renaissance to Modern Times*, edited by Judit Targarona Borrás and Angel Saenz-Badillos (New York: E.J. Brill, 1999), 389.

campaign and thus was no longer available to use his ways to influence the Porte's decisions. As the supplies were stored in Alexandria, the situation was put on hold till Morgenthau's successor, Abram Elkus, took over in October 1916. Elkus, who was also dedicated to assisting the Jewish community of Palestine, seized the opportunity to meet up with Cemal Paşa during his visit to Istanbul. He managed to get Cemal Paşa's consent for the American cruiser *Des Moines* to unload the medical supplies at Jaffa and to have them transferred to Jerusalem by train.²²³ When it came to persuading the English and French governments for the passage of the cruiser, Secretary of State, Robert Lansing, asked the American ambassadors in London and Paris to find out whether the British and French governments would relinquish the blockade for the passage of the American cruiser. When both governments declined, Lansing persisted in his demand which resulted in the French government agreeing to allow the cruiser to pass through under conditions to be formulated by the Admiral in command of the blockading squadron.²²⁴ However, the supplies never reached Ottoman Palestine. First, the trip was delayed because of extended correspondence between the United States and the Central Powers regarding the safe passage of the ships: Austrian pledge guaranteeing the safety of the ships was not obtained on time.²²⁵ Then, authorization was not permitted for American citizens who were to leave Palestine on the cruiser delivering the medical supplies. The cruiser was

²²³ Neumann, "A Battle for Survival", 177.

²²⁴ Cyrus Adler and Aaron M. Margalith, *American Intercession on Behalf of Jews in the Diplomatic Correspondence of the United States 1840 – 1938* (New York: American Jewish Historical Society, 1943), 68.

²²⁵ The Secretary of State to the Ambassador in Turkey (Elkus), February 27, 1917, *FRUS* 1918, Supplement 2, 541; The Ambassador in Turkey (Elkus) to the Secretary of State, March 23, 1917, *FRUS* 1918, Supplement 2, 542 – 544. The State Department refused to allow the ships to sail without positive guarantee of their safety by Germany and Austria in relation to submarine warfare.

interned at Alexandria waiting for permission to be granted.²²⁶ Shortly after the United States joined the war on the side of the Allies, which made it impossible to deliver the supplies to the Ottoman Empire. Only after Palestine fell under British occupation in December, 1917, did the supplies reach Palestine. It took almost two years for the medical supplies to reach Palestine but American officials on all levels had pushed for its actualization throughout its long journey.

On April 20, 1917, the Ottoman Empire severed its relations with the United States. Abram Elkus, left Istanbul as Otis Glazebrook left Jerusalem shortly after. The representation of American interests was transferred to the Swedish legation in Istanbul and the Spanish legation in Jerusalem. The Jewish community had lost its greatest protector and supporter. Financially not all was bad since, before the rupture of relations, Elkus had obtained permission from Cavid Bey, the Minister of Finance, and Talat Paşa to send enough gold to Palestine that would be sufficient for a couple of months.²²⁷ Additionally, American relief continued to reach Palestine even after the break of relations.²²⁸ The task of distributing relief was assigned to the Spanish consul and continued this way till the British invasion.²²⁹ The rupture of relations did not end the United States' diplomatic involvement with the community. The American Jewish community and the American government continued to follow the developments in the region. When the news of the evacuation of Jaffa reached American Jewry in the middle of May, which was again distributed by the British and Nili (pro-British Jewish espionage ring) to the international community, it was

²²⁶ Sufian and Shvarts, "Mission of Mercy", 392.

²²⁷ American Embassy in Constantinople to Otis Glazebrook, Feb. 23, 1917, consular correspondence, American Consulate in Jerusalem, record group 84, vol. 83, NACP.

²²⁸ Manuel, *The Realities of American – Palestine Relations*, 152.

²²⁹ Ballobar, *Jerusalem in World War I*, 19.

portrayed as an anti-Jewish measure, of which there was more to come. Acting upon the news, Louis Marshall, the president of the American Jewish Committee, appealed to the Secretary of State requesting the intervention of neutral countries.²³⁰ The American government appealed to neutral countries to look into the events and offer their assistance if required. The Swedish and Norwegian governments replied explaining that there was no situation that required protection for the Jewish community.²³¹ When Elkus was asked to comment on the news of the persecution of the Jewish community, he stated that “the reports received in this country of wholesale massacre and maltreatment of the Jews in Turkey and Palestine were entirely unfounded.” He added that the situation of the Jewish community was “as favorable as could be expected.”²³² Similarly, Glazebrook stated that the news of massacre and persecution were “much exaggerated” and that Ottoman authorities “were disposed to treat the Jews as fairly and kindly as circumstances permitted.”²³³ The United States, for one last time had sought to protect the Jewish community of Ottoman Palestine, which it thought may have been in danger.

In December, 1917, Jerusalem fell to the British forces and Ottoman Palestine ceased to exist. Palestine was now under the control of an American ally. A new era had started in the relationship between the United States and the Holy Lands, one that did not pass through Istanbul. Jewish refugees who had left during the war returned and the British Mandate, which was established shortly after the end of the war, opened new doors to the community.

²³⁰ Neumann, “A Battle for Survival”, 186.

²³¹ Ibid, 188.

²³² “Found Turks Fair to Jews” *New York Times*, July 18, 1917.

²³³ “Urges Quick Relief for Jews in Palestine” *New York Times*, Dec 10, 1917.

Traditionally, the United States had been interested in the Christian and Jewish subjects of the Ottoman Empire. American assistance to the community during the war can be considered a continuation of this interest. Through the war, the United States was also involved with the Armenian community and the Christian communities of the Levant. Although the United States had occasionally intervened on behalf of the Christian and Jewish communities before the war, during the war it formulated and executed stronger policies. Alongside the humanitarian aspect, carrying out such policies fit in well with the United States' desire to assume a greater presence on the international platform which was consolidated through the war. American Jewry was also effective on the shaping of American policy. American Jewry had become a well-organized and powerful group by the beginning of the twentieth century. In response to the anti-Jewish policies of the Russian Empire, in 1911, American Jewry had pressured and succeeded in getting President William Howard Taft to abrogate the American-Russian treaty of 1832. American Jewry had the ability to influence American foreign policy and during the war did so in favor of the community. An article published during the war, in *the Maccabean*, had discussed the possibility of the United States becoming involved in the solution of "the Jewish problem in Palestine" and believed it was possible, because:

Under present conditions, the relations of the United States and Turkey are such as to make possible an amicable arrangement by which such an interest could be exercised. The traditional friendship between the Ottomans and the United States, and the traditional good-will shown to the Jewish people by the Ottoman government and its people present conditions favorable to the participation of the United States on behalf of Jewish interests in Palestine.²³⁴

²³⁴ "America in Palestine" *The Maccabean*, XXX (1917), 169.

This was a clear demonstration that the community was satisfied with the government's efforts and aware of the good relations between the United States and the Ottoman Empire, which led many American Jews to expect the United States to assume a greater political role regarding the Jewish Question and Palestine. Besides all the political and humanitarian reasons the United States helped the community, the fact that the United States had no vital interest in the region made it all the more possible for the United States to act as it did. The United States refused to endorse any movement or action that would jeopardize the status quo in Ottoman-American relations or its business interests in the Empire but provided all services as long as it did not.

German assistance and protection of the Jewish community was another determining factor in the fate of the community. The subject is examined in detail in the third chapter of Friedman's *Germany, Turkey, Zionism: 1897 – 1918*. On many occasions, Morgenthau combined forces with his German counterpart, Hans von Wangenheim, while dealing with the Porte. Nevertheless, Germany was the Ottoman Empire's ally and could not afford to antagonize the Porte; German officials made it clear that although they were sympathetic to Zionism, they could not interfere in the internal affairs of the Empire.²³⁵ There was also the fact that the growing German penetration into the Empire had turned many Ottoman officials reluctant to comply with German requests. Friedman puts forward that Cemal Paşa resented German influence and "denied their consuls the right to interfere" and that he did not hesitate to underline that the capitulatory system was abolished.²³⁶ German officials turned to

²³⁵ Friedman, *Germany, Turkey and Zionism*, 346.

²³⁶ *Ibid*, 212.

continually underlining the importance of international Jewry and how maintaining good relations with them would be beneficial for their common cause. However, the Germans managed to convince the Ottomans to adopt a pro-Zionist attitude only after Palestine fell to the British.²³⁷

As demonstrated in this chapter, American assistance to the Jewish community through the war was incessant and immense. The financial aspect of it was decisive on the fate of the community. During the war, over \$ 2,000,000 was raised in the United States and delivered to Palestine.²³⁸ Glazebrook had reported that out of the 82 000 population of the Jewish community of Palestine, only 18 000 managed to maintain themselves without applying for relief sent from the United States.²³⁹ The funds sent from the United States were used for various purposes. Generally the funds were used to purchase food for the needy which were distributed either free of charge or at reduced prices. Weekly financial support and grants based on need were also prevalent. The funds were also pivotal in the maintenance of institutions in Palestine. Schools, hospitals, orphanages, retirement homes, soup kitchens, and many other institutions continued to operate because of the financial support sent from the United States.²⁴⁰ The funds not only fed the poor and assisted the needy; they also ensured the continuation of the Zionist enterprise. Although Zionist notables often denied it in the presence of Ottoman officials, the Zionist

²³⁷ Ibid, 392.

²³⁸ Jacob Rader Marcus, *United States Jewry, 1776 – 1985: The Sephardic Period* (Detroit, Michigan; Wayne State University Press, 1993), 620.

²³⁹ American Jewish Committee, *The American Jewish Year Book*, vol. 19. (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society of America, 1917), 220.

²⁴⁰ Ibid, 221.

enterprise did continue to function as a semi-autonomous entity with its population, institutions, and government-like network.

The diplomatic aspect of the American assistance was just as significant as the financial aspect. The abrogation of the capitulations was followed by the closure of the consulates that had traditionally undertaken the duty of protecting the Jewish community. The majority of the Jewish community should have left the Empire as they were nationals of enemy countries but Morgenthau managed to annul the deportation order and work out a solution that would keep the foreign Jews in Palestine. Regarding the small portion of the population that was forced to leave Palestine, Morgenthau commented that they suffered from their own choice.²⁴¹ Even the Jews who refused to become Ottoman citizens and were forced to leave were provided with living expenses by the Ottoman authorities, which Stanford J. Shaw explains as a “more favorable treatment than that provided for Christians in the same situation, who were simply deported without any assistance whatsoever.”²⁴² The American influence on the Ottoman Empire’s dealings with the community was visible. Furthermore, American influence was revealed from the documents whereby Ottoman officials in Palestine requested through the American consulate for Morgenthau to intervene on local matters.²⁴³ The work of the American diplomatic agencies in the Empire combined with that of the Department of State’s, safeguarded the community and its interests.

²⁴¹ Manuel, *The Realities of American – Palestine Relations*, 125.

²⁴² Stanford J. Shaw, *The Ottoman Empire in World War I*, vol. 2 (Ankara: Turkish Historical Society, 2008), 1033.

²⁴³ American Consulate to American Embassy, Sep. 28, 1914, consular correspondence, American Consulate in Jerusalem, record group 84, vol. 69, NACP.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

The Spanish consul Ballobar in his diary vividly described the entrance of the British forces into Jerusalem on December 9, 1917:

I have never seen a popular enthusiasm so spontaneous and great. Every British soldier that passed by was followed and escorted by a throng of admirers that touched his uniform, caressed his horse, talked to him in all the languages of the Orient and admired him like a hero. In this admiration were men and women, small and large, Christians and Jews. Through the streets there circled an enormous multitude, overwhelmed by a limitless satisfaction and understandable and excusable enthusiasm.²⁴⁴

The British were indeed credited as the heroes who saved the Jewish community of Palestine. Not just in 1917 but also in the years that followed. The Balfour Declaration and the British Mandate established after the end of the war played a big part in the creation of this sentiment. Through World War I, the British adopted pro-Zionist policies which resulted in the promise of a Jewish homeland in Palestine. The Zionist aspect of the war outshined the situation of the Jewish community of

²⁴⁴ Ballobar, *Jerusalem in World War I*, 186.

Palestine. Therefore the crucial contribution the United States made to the community has not received the attention it deserves. The United States did not support or disapprove of political Zionism during the war; it remained rather indifferent to the movement. At the time when the British and Germans were engaged in another conflict of trying to take Zionism under their own wing, the United States did nothing of the kind. However, what the United States did was provide assistance and protection to the Jewish community of Palestine. Although it is overlooked, without a significant Jewish community it would have been impossible for Britain to implement its policies concerning Zionism. Of course, the United States never was concerned with the political aspect of Zionism and offered help to the community in accordance with its traditional policy of caring for the Jewish and Christian communities of the Ottoman Empire, as it was simultaneously assisting Christian communities within the Empire. Of course, the role played by American Jewry was just as important in the United States' involvement. Britain may have been the savior of Zionism but it was the United States that was the savior of the Jewish community of Palestine during the war as it ensured the survival of the community.

This thesis attempted to deal with just how the United States assisted and protected the Jewish community of Palestine during the Great War. The main reason it could was due to the good relations between the United States and the Ottoman Empire. Without it the United States could not have provided financial or diplomatic assistance. As explained in chapter four, the Ottoman authorities almost always complied with American requests on behalf of the Jewish community. Since the United States depended on Ottoman cooperation in all fields relating to deliverance

of aid and assistance, the significance of cordial relations between the two states is a factor that cannot be overlooked. The United States on the other hand, respected Ottoman territorial integrity and sovereignty through the war. American Zionists were also careful not to attract unnecessary attention and avoided creating tension for the most part.

The financial aspect of American assistance was immense and reached the majority of the Jewish population of Palestine. With the war, the Jewish community was left without its main income sources and burdened by the difficulties of the war. Not only did American funds directly save lives but they also allowed vital institutions such as schools, hospitals and orphanages to continue functioning. Moreover, American funds continued through the war and provided economic stability for the community.

Through the war, the Jewish community turned to American diplomatic agencies in the Empire for help. Either Jewish leaders appealed to the consulates or sent a message to the Embassy in Istanbul via the consulates. The consuls or ambassadors would take it up with Ottoman authorities and try to find a solution for the community's problem. This is similar if not identical to the arrangement that existed under the capitulatory system. Considering the Ottoman view on capitulations, we can attribute its tolerance by the Ottomans to the fact that the Ottomans did not feel that the United States was abusing it and also to the fact that the United States did not request anything that was contrary to Ottoman interests.

Cemal Paşa, who had a hostile attitude towards Zionism, never took grave steps towards the movement.²⁴⁵ This is interesting considering his firm stance against Arab nationalist movements in the region. Hasan Kayalı asserts that during the war, Cemal Paşa “instituted a reign of terror in Syria against Arab opponents.”²⁴⁶ He deported some 5,000 Syrian families to Anatolia, alongside executing many Arab notables.²⁴⁷ Although Cemal Paşa attempted to crack down on Zionism, many of his measures were overruled due to American and to a smaller extent German intervention. As demonstrated in chapter four, Morgenthau managed to persuade the Porte to rectify anti-Zionist measures on several occasions. The discrepancy regarding Cemal Paşa’s treatment of the two nationalist movements, Arab and Jewish, is a clear indication of the impact the United States had on the fate of the Jewish community.

When the war broke out in 1914, the future of the Jewish community of Palestine was uncertain. As no one could have assumed the British would have invaded Palestine by 1917 and established a mandate shortly after, everything the United States done on behalf of the community during the war was significant. Even if the outcome of the war had been different in the Middle East, the fact that the United States convinced the Ottomans to allow the majority of the Jewish community who were foreign nationals to stay within Palestine, would still have allowed the dream of a Jewish homeland, under Ottoman sovereignty or not, to continue. Overall, the United States concentrated on the needs of the Jewish

²⁴⁵ İlber Ortaylı, “Ottomanism and Zionism During the Second Constitutional Period, 1908 – 1915”, *The Jews of the Ottoman Empire*, edited by Avigdor Levy (Princeton: Darwin Press, 1994), 534.

²⁴⁶ Kayalı, *Arabs and Young Turks*, 193.

²⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

community of Palestine and did all it could to assist and protect the community through the war. To do this the United States made use of its friendly relations with the Ottoman Empire. All efforts resulted with the survival of the Jewish community with minor injuries.

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