Command and Irregular Indigenous Combat Forces in the Middle East and Africa
A Historical Perspective on a Current Reality

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Abstract: From the beginning of European involvement in Africa and the Middle East to the present, working with indigenous irregular forces has been, and remains, an integral part of engagement in these regions. This article examines one aspect of this relationship: the command pathways that allowed these relationships to function. By comparing the command pathways of cases in Palestine Mandate and the Horn of Africa during the Second World War, the author explores the structures that led to success and shows the importance of such cooperation. He then applies the lessons gained to suggest a way forward for contemporary operations.

From the entry of imperial European forces into Africa and the Middle East to contemporary interventions, working with indigenous irregular forces historically has been, and remains, an integral part of foreign engagement in these regions. These forces differ from institutional forces in many

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regards and therefore merit special study. To date, little scholarly work has been undertaken to examine the pathways of the relationships between indigenous forces and foreign actors in the Middle East and Africa. Although at times individual indigenous forces have received narrative attention, there has been no study of the nature, structure, function, or experience of these types of forces. This article examines one important aspect of indigenous forces: the command pathways that allowed these relationships to function. The phrase *command pathways* is an amalgamation of two terms. According to the Department of Defense, *command* is the authority that an individual lawfully exercises over subordinates and "the responsibility for effectively using available resources and for planning the employment of, organizing, directing, coordinating, and controlling military forces for the accomplishment of assigned missions."[1] In this case, *pathways* refers to relationship pathways—those structures, norms, and practices created to allow the relationship to function. This article suggests that, based on the historical cases considered, successfully fulfilling the responsibilities of command in the case of irregular indigenous forces requires a radical alteration of the way command is understood and moving from a system in which command comes from authority to one that stems from pathways of influence.

Through the First World War, the British Empire had a tradition of working with indigenous forces. With the consolidation of the colonial system in the interwar period, that tradition of working with indigenous forces in an irregular or locally traditional structure had all but ceased in the Middle East and East Africa in favor of standing colonial forces, such as the Transjordan Frontier Force, the Arab Legion, the Somaliland Camel Corps, and the Sudan Defense Force, among many others. In the Second World War, the British Empire reinvented this tradition based on the experience of trying to contain insurgencies in Ireland, Palestine, and India.[2] Having realized the level of resources the empire had to expend in controlling these situations, a number of British political and military leaders wished to harness the power of insurgencies, guerrilla fighters, and irregulars against its Axis enemies.[3] In many cases, the value of indigenous forces was hotly debated, but two cases of cooperation with this type of force were seen as successful by those who took part: Ethiopia and the Palestine Mandate. This article compares the pathways of command in these two successful collaborations to determine whether there were central commonalities that contributed to success.

Regions for Comparison and Contrast

The two cases examined have enough points in common to be comparable, yet have enough differences that any commonalities observed are not likely to have resulted from accidents of geography or the tactical natures of the areas.

Chief among the similarities are that many of the participants viewed cooperation with indigenous forces in Ethiopia and Palestine Mandate as successful. In addition, the foreign force in both cases was the British Empire, both areas were at least loosely under Middle East Command, and both were at their most active during the early phases of the Second World War.[4] Moreover, the campaigns form separate axes within a broader arc of operations protecting the supply routes and flanks of North Africa and the Suez Canal. This study also maintains temporal consistency. To account for the different variables inherent in conducting a study across time periods would be beyond the scope possible in the limited space of this article and is left for a future study.

There were more differences than similarities between the two campaigns. The Ethiopian case involved tens, if not hundreds, of thousands of indigenous fighters who had been engaged in guerrilla warfare against the Italians for years before the Second World War and who had been spread over a large area. In Palestine, cooperation primarily took place between a well-organized, highly ideological paramilitary within a British colony in a very concentrated area. Other key differences were a result of the societies and organizations from which local forces were drawn and the character of the combat operations. The use of these two widely different case studies in effect controls for the majority of the possible variables that could obfuscate the line between simple correlation and causality. Thus, the cases selected and the comparative method employed renders it likely that any findings are independent rather than dependent variables and inherent to the phenomenon of indigenous force cooperation. It is impossible to conduct an exhaustive examination of both cases here. Therefore, this article deals with several examples that reflect the topic as a whole.

Contested Landscapes and Language

Both case studies exist in regions marked by contested language and narratives. Nomenclature, especially when it comes to place names and names of peoples, carries significance in the struggle over historical narrative. To avoid becoming overly involved in the regional politics of narrative, ownership, and belonging, this article employs the nomenclature (though not always the spelling choices) of the British records in most cases. In Ethiopia, this means on the whole employing the Ge'ez, or Amharic, terminology. The choice to use the Ge'ez terminology should neither be taken to imply either an affirmation or denial of any claims on the territory or attachment to the location, nor does it stem from a lack of recognition of the existence of an alternative nomenclature. Rather, it comes from the necessity to maintain consistency and clarity. When dealing with Palestine Mandate, British records are again the guide. Throughout, the author refers to the territory in question as Palestine. This does not imply any legitimacy to any given claim or historical attachment to the territory.

It is shorthand for the British Mandate for Palestine, which was the full, legal description of the territory at the time. This article employs a similar logic for other, more specific place names, referring to such places as Lydda instead of Lod or Sarafand instead of Tzrifin.

When referring to peoples, this article attempts to achieve as much clarity and consistency as possible. The term *Palestinian* is a highly contentious one. In the British records, the designation Palestinian refers almost exclusively to the Jewish population residing in the Mandate. Usually, the Arab population in the same area was referred to as *Arab*. While a distinction was made between Bedouin and Arab, no distinction was made ascribing a particular peoplehood to those Arabs residing in Palestine. This study does not endorse or deny the narrative of Arab or Jewish peoplehood within the territory that was Palestine Mandate. To refer to the Arab communities of Palestine as Palestinians would be anachronistic and unnecessarily, for our purposes, bring this discussion into scholarly debates on the topic. Except in direct quotations from sources, this article refers to the Arab population of Palestine as the British records do and the Jewish population as the *Yishuv*. In a similar manner, the use of the term *indigenous* does not imply or deny the authenticity of any claims of autochthony. Rather, it refers to the manner in which the British viewed and interacted with the forces that the populations provided as well as with the populations themselves.

Sourcing

One significant reason there has not yet been sufficient examination of this subject stems from the difficulties in obtaining trustworthy sources. Many documents employed in this examination were classified and only recently became available; though much is still missing. The lack of resources also has affected understandings of the campaign as they appear in secondary literature.[5] Additionally, given the secrecy and organizational complexity of the British special services, many events, decisions, and discussions went unrecorded, and many records were lost, misplaced, or not logically filed.[6] The organizational culture in the special services also apparently discouraged the maintenance of detailed records, and at various times, officers received orders to "destroy all incriminating documents," which meant that many documents and details were forever lost.[7] There are particular difficulties with regard to documentary evidence in the Middle East, where the empire guaranteed that it would not reveal its cooperation with certain groups. Finally, even where documents exist, there is a question as to their veracity. The politics of special operations and internecine bureaucratic warfare within the special operations and intelligence community were such that there is evidence that personnel were willing to falsify the war diary, which indicates a general willingness to write misleading official documents

and reports.[8] This necessitates handling any official documents with care and a healthy dose of skepticism unless confirmed, at least in principle, by other external sources, including personal documents and oral histories.[9]

Indigenous Forces
Palestine and the Haganah

The background and nature of the forces involved in each of the theaters influenced the relationships that evolved and the pathways thereof. In Mandatory Palestine, the primary organization with whom the British Empire cooperated was the Haganah, by far the dominant Zionist paramilitary in the territory. The Haganah had a small standing element and a much larger reserve element, as well as its own intelligence and propaganda sections. It had training and recruitment structures and provided for some of its own logistical needs through clandestine manufacturing and smuggling. Perhaps most important for cooperation with the British, it had a centrally organized hierarchical command structure and decision-making process. This is not to say the Haganah did not have rivals, such as the Irgun Zvai Le'umi, with whom it competed for resources and personnel. The Haganah also had some subfactions. Such rivals and factions, however, did not pose a serious threat to the unity of its command structure or its freedom of operation. The Haganah also had a well-established history of cooperation with various imperial security forces during times of crisis. The Haganah proved its ability to cooperate with British authorities during the Arab Revolt of 1936–39 and many of the pathways for cooperation established during this period were reestablished or reinforced during the Second World War.

In Palestine, there existed a bewildering array of imperial and allied organizations, each with their own goals and their own relationships and pathways of cooperation with indigenous forces. Within this pantheon, however, three organizations were dominant: Palestine government, with its security forces such as the Palestine Police Force; the various imperial armed forces best referred to as the British army; and the various special services, including Section D (a direct action section of the of the Secret Intelligence Service) and Military Intelligence (Research) that amalgamated into the Special Operations Executive (SOE). Although there were differences among the various special services, for the purpose of clarity in this article, it is best to refer to them collectively under the moniker SOE. One of the many differences between the case of Palestine and that of Ethiopia is that, whereas in Palestine there was some degree of unity among the indigenous forces and little unity among the British, in Ethiopia the situation was the reverse.

Ethiopia and the Arbegnoch

In Ethiopia, the British Empire cooperated with forces known as the Patriots, or *arbegnoch*. Formed from many different groups, including the Ethiopian army, feudally mobilized retainers, bandits, and spontaneous guerrillas, the arbegnoch were the resistance against the Italians in Ethiopia. Their primary structure was roughly feudal. Yet, as economist Gene Ellis noted in his work on understanding Ethiopian society, to use the term *feudal* when referring to the structure of Ethiopian society is a misnomer in that the society was not akin to a classically European feudal system, especially considering this took place during a period of modernization and a world war.[10] If these key differences, however, are kept in mind, feudal is still useful to refer to the system of patronage, rank, mobilization, and service that was so important to the structure of the arbegnoch movement. The Patriots themselves were divided along many lines, including ethnic, feudal, political, and linguistic.

Minor and midlevel arbegnoch commanders chose to serve major leaders who cooperated, in part, because of the provision of resources. These also had to keep their fighters loyal and used guns and resources to do so. Additionally, a major leader could appoint a subordinate to a position resembling something in between a governor and tax farmer able to draw resources directly from the local population.[11] While resources may have been a motivation for loyalty, there were other motivations embedded within the structure of Ethiopian society. The feudal structure also helped determine choices when selecting major leaders. The choice as to whom to follow centered on the power. Interviewees reported that minor leaders did not always choose to follow a major leader; rather, major leaders exercised their strength and enforced their leadership on their subordinates. In other instances, groups simply picked the most powerful regional commander to follow.[12]

In a fragmented regional situation, a group of arbegnoch without the succor of a major leader could find themselves raided by more powerful rivals or without a line of retreat when faced with Italian offensives. This created something of a stereotypical feudal relationship where, in exchange for shelter and protection, the subordinate contributed loyalty and service. This exchange was a recognized part of the feudal system that led to cooperation. Minor and midlevel commanders chose, then, to serve major leaders who were the highest regional feudal authorities—generally either a *dejazmach* or *ras* (the second highest and highest nonroyal ranks of the *mesafint* or Ethiopian hereditary nobility).[13] In all cases, the minor and midlevel commanders served major leaders of superior feudal ranks.

Various groups of arbegnoch tended to coalesce around the remaining free members of the royal family, the military, or the rases, including leaders who previously fought against the emperor for power.[14] This led to a divided com-

mand structure and competition among the various groups for personnel and resources.[15] The arbegnoch were divided into two categories: *daraq tor* (standing arbegnoch) and *madade tor* (reserve arbegnoch, who went back to farming when pressure on their immediate area subsided).[16] Each faction of the arbegnoch had its own intelligence sources consisting of *qafirs* (scouts) and *ya west arbegnoch* (those in enemy-occupied areas who supported the arbegnoch).[17]

For the arbegnoch, logistics were a constant problem. They relied heavily on hunting and scavenging, looting "collaborators," and taxing the local populations.[18] In some cases, the population willingly supported the Patriots and in other areas, especially where the arbegnoch were *Amhara* (one of the ruling ethnicities of Ethiopia) and the primary population was not, a somewhat traditional system of banditry (*shifta*) prevailed. In these areas, the local shifta leader would prevent raids by other shifta, the Italians, and local Italian allies in exchange for the ability to tax the local population.[19] In some cases, where these shifta left to fight with the British forces, the local population was less than pleased as they were then vulnerable to raids by other marauding shifta.[20] Ya west arbegnoch also secured supplies, while the standing Patriots were able to produce some ammunition and had their own cattle.[21] The arbegnoch either used previously held arms or captured weapons from Italians.[22]

On the British side in Ethiopia, the situation was less complicated. Effectively, there were only the British army, the special services, and the civilian organizations of Foreign Office, Colonial Office, and the government of Sudan. Despite the diverse, imperial nature of forces and organizations of the British Empire (including South Africans, Indians, Australians, Canadians, and many others), it is best, for the sake of clarity and to avoid confusion with the forces of the Ethiopian Empire, to refer to them collectively as British. Thus, the combined army of the British Empire can be referred to as the British army.

Differences between the Haganah and the Arbegnoch

In general, the employment of indigenous forces in both these areas was to some extent necessitated by the lack of regular forces available, yet there were different specific purposes. Whereas, on the whole, the employment of indigenous forces in the Palestine Mandate was intended as a defensive measure; in Ethiopia, the cooperation with indigenous forces stemmed from the belief that the "best means of preventing the Italian forces in Abyssinia from being able to take external action might be by fomenting rebellion within their territory."[23] The differing objectives also account for some of the differences between the pathways of the two cases. Despite these purposes, the employment of indigenous forces was not without its detractors, especially in the Colonial Office and the various local governments under its auspices. In the case of Palestine, Palestine government saw working with the Haganah as at best dangerous and

possibly quite destabilizing.[24] The need to overcome opposition led to adjustments in the pathways of cooperation in Palestine. In Ethiopia, the opposition to cooperation within the British administration led to problems in the historical narrative. The basis of much of the secondary source material, especially concerning southern Ethiopia, is the narrative as constructed by opponents of mobilizing Ethiopian indigenous forces.

Operational Employment

The command pathways both affected and were affected by the ways in which the British employed indigenous forces. Thus, the British and indigenous forces established pathways to support those operations that the British undertook in conjunction with the indigenous forces. The pathways reinforced the specific set of operational activities in which the indigenous forces engaged and concretized them. There is not enough space here for an exhaustive discussion of all the specific sets of operations carried out by indigenous forces in the two cases. To understand the nature of the pathways of cooperation, however, it is useful to consider several in a general sense; moreover, it is important to examine what effect they had on cooperation as well as what they say about the nature of that cooperation and the pathways.

In both Palestine and Ethiopia, most of the operational actions were either autonomous or semiautonomous but followed the general lines of British plans. In Palestine, there were several primary operational employments of indigenous forces in multiple categories, roughly termed the Jewish Settlement Police (JSP) Scheme, intelligence operations, the guides scheme, the Palestine Scheme, and the *Saison de Chasse* (Hunting Season). In the JSP Scheme, Palestine government employed members of the Haganah as a paramilitary auxiliary to the Palestine Police Force. As such, they were not only able to provide security around isolated Jewish settlements but also replaced regular military forces in many security operations, such as guarding military facilities, critical infrastructure, and transportation routes, as well as preparing to provide defenses against airborne or infiltration operations.[25] The intelligence operations were under the auspices of SOE and included a wide range of activities in the early years of World War II, from gathering intelligence on the Vichy order of battle in Syria to sabotage, arranging for the escape of Free French prisoners of war from Vichy custody, and screening new arrivals in Palestine for Axis links.[26] The guides scheme involved units from the Haganah scouting on behalf of imperial forces and guiding them across the border to the start line of Operation Exporter (the invasion of Syria and Lebanon, 1941) and acting as reconnaissance units to help in the seizure of the first operational objectives.[27] In the Palestine Scheme (1941–43), sections of the Haganah trained in preparation for sabotaging Palestine in the event of an Axis invasion and engaging in guerrilla warfare

afterward.[28] During the Saison (1944–45), the Haganah curtailed the uprising of the Irgun Zvai Le'umi and the more militant Lohamei Herut Yisrael (Fighters for the Freedom of Israel) in conjunction with the Imperial authorities.[29]

One of the ways that Ethiopia was similar to Palestine was that, in Ethiopia, the indigenous forces were operationally active in unconventional ways that best suited their preexistent structure. As Lieutenant General Alan Cunningham, the commander of East Africa Force in southern Ethiopia and eventually commander for the entirety of Ethiopia, noted that "the Patriots proved most successful in harassing enemy lines of communication and in besieging isolated enemy garrisons. By carrying out these tasks, these Ethiopian forces caused the Italians considerable alarm and anxiety and lowered their morale. By this means they contained large numbers of the enemy away from the main scene of operations."[30] These forces represented the main thrust of arbegnoch operational activity. At various times, the arbegnoch, however, also were involved in capturing territory independent of British activity, assaulting enemy forces in conjunction with British forces, reducing the ability of the Italians to reinforce or retreat garrisons, providing reconnaissance and scouting forces to British conventional forces, providing screening forces to cover British movements, and bringing British forces intelligence.[31] One key aspect that all of these operational activities had in common was their autonomous nature, which in no case necessitated a direct hierarchical integration with the British forces. This was as true in Palestine as it was in Ethiopia. Such autonomy was a symptom of the nature of the balance of agency in the relationships between the indigenous forces and the British. This balance of agency also was manifest in the command pathways and may be one of the central reasons why both these cooperative arrangements were seen, at least during the war, as successful.

Command Pathways and Palestine

One of the key pathways in cooperation with indigenous forces is the way in which the foreign power transmits its intentions and desires to the indigenous forces and coordinates activity with them. In the classic hierarchical model, the expeditionary officer transmits instructions to the indigenous forces who then follow the orders. This can be termed a *structure of command*. Despite the differences in structure, however, the pathways established in both campaigns did not constitute a structure of command. These processes instead centered on the successful use of influence. In both cases, the indigenous forces retained a high degree of agency in relation to this pathway, and the pathway operated in such a way as to preserve this agency. The rationale behind this agency and the way it played out differed in the two cases.

At first glance, Palestine Mandate would seem a likely place for the establishment of a command structure rather than a *pathway of influence*. After all, it

was a British-controlled territory, and many of the indigenous forces served in British uniform and received pay directly from the government. Moreover, the Jewish population had a stake in the stability of the Mandate during the war and its protection from Axis invasion, yet such a surface understanding hides a far more complicated reality. British policies in the years leading up to the Second World War had alienated the majority of the Jewish population of Palestine. Even those who were very much pro-British found that, by the end of the Second World War, their primary identity and loyalty lay with the Yishuv, and the Haganah specifically. This loyalty and sense of communal identity gave the Haganah more ways to mobilize the population efficiently. When coupled with the significant percentage of the population who were members of the Haganah, this meant that the Haganah was able to take advantage of a deep pool of talent and bring more communal pressure to bear to achieve its objectives than the imperial authorities could possibly exercise. Moreover, throughout the Arab Revolt, the imperial authorities had allowed the Haganah to develop ever-increasing capabilities and autonomy in exchange for the Haganah's undeniably critical contribution to the security of the territory. It was only in 1939 that the Palestine government felt confident enough to reverse this trend. The experience of the Arab Revolt also meant that the Haganah, as an institution, was intimately familiar with combat operations in the Mandate territory. The clandestine nature of the Haganah, especially its involvement in arms acquisition and illegal immigration, meant that it maintained an excellent regional contact network beyond the Mandate's borders. Both these factors, as well as its ability to mobilize the Yishuv, meant that the Haganah had assets, abilities, and knowledge essential to any effort by the beleaguered forces of the British Empire to defend the territory or engage in special operations in the region. To make best use of these assets, the British needed the Haganah's willing cooperation, which in turn necessitated collaboration, not coercion. The pathways of command reflected this necessity.

The Jewish Settlement Police command pathway demonstrates this. The JSP was organized into regional battalions spread across the territory, and each unit in the battalion was widely dispersed.[32] This dispersal allowed for a remote command structure; each company had a British commanding officer and deputy commander, often stationed many miles from the operational posts.[33] Members of the Haganah filled almost all subordinate positions.[34] The JSP primarily received its orders from the Haganah. The JSP members interviewed in the course of this research all stated that their only contact with imperial command came during training and on payday; and some even indicated that when orders came from the imperial chain of command, JSP units would not act on them until they received approval from the Haganah.[35]

As early as 1940, the Haganah carried out the recruitment, deployment,

and much of the training of individual JSP members.[36] It is relatively clear that the British commanders of the JSP knew this to be the case.[37] This granted the JSP a high degree of autonomy within the command structure and allowed them to integrate with clandestine forces, which meant that if necessary, as during the Arab Revolt, the JSP could take part in larger Haganah operations, some of which had objectives concurrent with those of the Palestine government.[38] This allowed the Palestine government to make use of the Haganah's resources and provide a legal front to some of the Haganah's illegal cadres while maintaining the fiction that the Haganah was an illegal militant group with whom the empire would not cooperate or negotiate.

The command pathway between SOE and the Haganah began with Section D. Section D and the Haganah worked together to construct the pathway to preserve the separation between them. The memorandum of the first meeting between the SOE and the Haganah set out the guiding principles of this arrangement: "the D/H organisation [*sic*] is to be regarded as an entirely separate entity from Friends [the Haganah] and while each is at liberty to make the maximum use of the corresponding organization, they should in principle be separate, particularly in order to protect the interests of Friends organization."[39] The separation between the two organizations was a cornerstone of the structure. Liaison, at least initially, only took place at the highest levels and Section D had no specific knowledge of the Haganah's capabilities. Rather, the Haganah suggested projects that were within its capabilities.[40] On the other hand, when Section D received operational requirements from the army, it was to consider the Haganah's capabilities.[41]

The Haganah and the SOE also established a joint planning structure, which consisted of David Hacohen, an extremely influential and well-connected officer in the Haganah, and a senior field officer from Section D/SOE.[42] The SOE field commander in Palestine retained the ultimate authority to approve operations, but delegated in most cases.[43] The parties also agreed that equal input from the Yishuv leadership and the field commander for Palestine (i.e., Hacohen) would be the method of arriving at all future policy decisions.[44] This was the pattern for the command pathways that were to develop; the parties were separate, but roughly equal, at least for as long as the SOE needed the Haganah.

Given this arrangement, it is clear that rather than a pathway of command, what existed was a pathway of cooperation during this period. In practice, this meant that, in many operations, Haganah operatives acted independently of the SOE. In the operation to liberate Free French prisoners of war, for example, the communication channel that updated the SOE on the progress of the operation and the resources required and expended only took place at the level of the SOE field commander.[45] The field commander had no authority to do more than request information and sanction or refuse requests.[46] This level

of autonomy formed part of the context in which imperial authorities had to achieve their operational objectives. To succeed in this, they had to develop influence, favor, and trust with the Haganah. For their part, the Haganah wanted the resources and legal sanction that the SOE could offer and therefore also had to develop influence, favor, and trust with the SOE. As the relationship evolved, the SOE eventually felt that it could not function in the region without the Haganah and was worried that the Haganah might abandon the SOE if the SOE attempted to employ much coercion toward its own goals.[47]

During the period of the Friends Scheme and Palestine Scheme (1941–43), the two organizations developed much closer cooperation. They established joint training camps and Haganah units became part of formal SOE plans for the defense of Palestine. Yet despite this, there was no great alteration in the command structure. The records of the camps were in Hebrew, and the units they trained dispersed. The SOE had little to no ability to exercise oversight over them.[48] Other than a couple of inspection tours of the training camps and providing instructors, the SOE had nothing to do with the command and control of the scheme itself. Rather, it relied on the Haganah to see that it was a success.

The command structure of the scouts provided to the army for Operation Exporter had a similarly collaborative structure. The Palmach, an elite branch of the Haganah, recruited the scouts under order from the Haganah after a request for assistance from the imperial forces.[49] The structure of the arrangement was such that the scouts came into the command structure as fully formed units.[50] The scouting units of the Palmach recruited their own personnel from among Arab, Circassian, and Druse residents of the border regions.[51] In this process, the Palmach did not liaise with the imperial divisions. Instead, they operated under Haganah command in Haifa, which coordinated with the overall imperial command.[52] Once the campaign commenced, the Haganah units integrated with the divisional reconnaissance elements before demobilizing upon gaining the initial objectives.[53] During the short period they integrated, the command structure was at best hazy and seemed to have been rather ad hoc with regard to who was in overall command. Again, in this process, it was evident that the pathway established was not one of command; rather, it was one of collaboration, where the imperial authorities requested and the Haganah assented.

The command structure of the Saison similarly was not a case of the Haganah acting either as a local auxiliary or as a pseudogang working at the behest of an imperial master. One might argue that, in fact, the reverse was true. The complete structure of the relationship was difficult to clarify fully. However, local cooperation with the British seemed to have taken place at a high level; rarely does it seem there was any direct coordination between Brit-

ish and Haganah operational units.[54] This situation is perhaps best exemplified through an incident related by Hayim Miller, an officer in one of the units of the Saison. According to Miller, a suspect was located in Tel Aviv, at which point Miller contacted Ephraim Dekel, a senior Haganah intelligence officer who was Miller's commanding officer.[55] Imperial forces quickly surrounded the cinema and detained all patrons who matched the description that Miller had given to Dekel.[56] This case demonstrates the regular operating structure of the cooperation. The Haganah provided forces to augment British capabilities. The forces were, however, entirely independent of the British command and logistics structure. Despite the separate structures, the units of the Saison could coordinate at a lower level when necessary, though this was primarily to provide time-sensitive information regarding particular unfolding operations.[57] In these cases, it is questionable whether the imperial forces involved recognized the joint nature of the Saison units or simply acted on intelligence presented to them.[58] The one most consistent and notable feature of all the command pathways established between the British Empire and the Haganah in Palestine Mandate was that they relied on collaboration as opposed to coercion, influence instead of command.

Command Pathways and Ethiopia

In Ethiopia, even more than Palestine, instead of a command structure, the pathway centered on the currency of influence. One of the key determinants of success or failure in any given area was the ability to make use of the preexisting local military or paramilitary structures. In most areas of Ethiopia, this meant recognizing the important local leaders, often members of the nobility, and bringing them onside. Attempts to order arbegnoch directly to undertake particular activities often failed for a variety of reasons, including the lack of Europeans who could speak enough of the local languages for direct communication.[59] Instead, according to the official postcampaign reports, it was found "that patriot activities proved most successful under the general direction, and in some cases, the personal leadership, of selected British Officers, though the men remained under the immediate control of their own leaders."[60] While the personnel leadership role of the British officers was undeniably important, the instructions for engagement with the arbegnoch insisted that this leadership should take the form of selecting objectives, prioritizing tasks, and exercising control through advice, supplies, and general encouragement.[61] If, according to Avraham Akavia, who served as Major General Orde C. Wingate's deputy in Ethiopia, this was done well, then the Ethiopians were easy to work with, but if not "you couldn't move them or tell them what to do . . . they knew best."[62] In other words, they were most certainly not under British command.

The system of command through influence was, by the start of British in-

volvement, common in Ethiopia, at least since the beginning of the arbegnoch. Ethiopian arbegnoch leaders also had to use influence to keep their forces intact. This attempt to guarantee influence manifested in the distribution of resources, in general, and money and rifles, in particular, to their followers. Even though the British were effectively using the distribution of rifles and supplies to gain the loyalty of the arbegnoch leaders and influence their behavior, they were less than impressed with how the arbegnoch leaders used the distribution of arms and supplies for a similar purpose. A report by Brigadier Daniel A. Sandford of Mission 101 (the first British mission to work with the arbegnoch), which stated that "the issue of rifles seems most unsatisfactory as there seems to be no proper organization, the leaders using them as bribes for their own personal ends. I have seen quite young boys stalking about with rifles which they are obviously unfit to use," is an excellent example.[63] Rifles, in particular, played an important role, however, in Ethiopian society and both the British (perhaps unintentionally) and the arbegnoch leaders were taking advantage of a long-established tradition of patronage within Ethiopia that hinged on the distribution of arms and supplies in exchange for service and influence.[64] In some areas, this practice defined the class structure.[65]

The organization of the British liaison with the arbegnoch changed through the campaign. Initially, the primary organization involved in cooperation was Mission 101. Mission 101 consisted of individuals and small teams dispersed around northern Ethiopia; they had the ability to distribute some funds and materials. In this, they acted with the authority of Emperor Haile Selassie, who was in exile in Sudan. This dual structure of influence, with one based in Sudan centered on the emperor and the despots in Sudan and one based in Ethiopia under Mission 101, meant that the influence of Mission 101 and its ability to achieve its objectives were undercut by the secondary pathway of command and influence.[66]

This changed with the introduction of the Operations Centres (Op-Centres) under Orde Wingate. In the first instance, the Op-Centres had some forces of their own to act as a means to stimulate activity. They also had logistics convoys of arms and finances flowing directly to their headquarters in Ethiopia, where the emperor and his court were resident.[67] This ended the dual command structure and allowed them to co-opt the emperor's authority as their own. These factors greatly increased British influence and their ability to achieve objectives.

Initially, the distribution of weaponry for influence by the British met with less than satisfactory results. Weapons were distributed, but there appeared to be no noticeable upswing in the effectiveness of the insurgency or in their cooperation with the specific objectives set by British authorities. As the cooperation evolved into the Op-Centre system, the British developed a new meth-

od of arms distribution in which they issued better quality arms to individual forces of arbegnoch but only after the arbegnoch demonstrated the ability to achieve results.[68]

Haile Selassie's influence was an invaluable asset to the British attempts to achieve their objectives through the arbegnoch, especially when brokering peace among rival arbegnoch. Influence necessitated cooperation with local leaders, but also persuading local leaders to cooperate with each other. One major feature of the pathway by which the British Empire exerted influence on the arbegnoch was the need to overcome the divided nature of the Ethiopian resistance. The case of Iasu Zaleka illustrates how this process worked. Zaleka was an important local leader whose land had recently been raided by other arbegnoch already cooperating with the British. He was therefore disinclined to cooperate with the British.[69] It was not until the British were able to invoke "the Emperor's pleasure when he knew of the Tumha's loyalty and on the rich rewards which would be forthcoming when he was reinstated in his capital" that they were able to convince Zaleka to join the British with his forces.[70] Major leaders such as Zaleka then brought with them the influence and control they had over the lesser leaders in the regions. Thus, by making use of the influence of the emperor and their ability to provide resources, the British were able to establish influence, and therefore some degree of control, over the major arbegnoch leaders and subsequently over minor ones. This, in turn, meant that the British were reliant on the emperor and the major arbegnoch to achieve campaign objectives. As a result, both the emperor and the arbegnoch leadership had a large amount of agency in the relationship.

To influence the arbegnoch, the British fell back to established Ethiopian traditions, offering the leadership promises to help them fulfill local goals relative to their peers, such as the emperor's favor and largess, especially in terms of rifles and money. This helped arbegnoch leaders gain influence over their region and the loyalty of their followers, and thus increase their relative power. While this was an effective method of gaining more control and, once made contingent on the attainment of objectives, an effective means of stimulating desired activities, it was a pathway of influence and not by any means a pathway of command.

Conclusions

Palestine Mandate and Ethiopia during the Second World War were dissimilar in most regards, yet both were examples of successful cooperation between indigenous forces and the forces of the British Empire. They were successful in that, in both cases, the British forces were able to rely on the indigenous forces to achieve, and sometimes exceed, the strategic and operational objectives set for them. It is axiomatic that, in any military endeavor, a properly constructed

pathway is critical to success; in this respect, the pathways established in these two areas of operation were not exceptional. The pathways established for the transmission of objectives, goals, and instructions were critical to their success but these were not pathways of command. Rather, they were pathways of influence. The natures of the pathways in both cases had several commonalities. In these relationships, the indigenous actors had significant agency. This, in and of itself, is an important lesson to the study of relationships between indigenous actors and expeditionary powers.

In both cases, the British took advantage of preexisting indigenous structures and did not attempt to subordinate or supplant them. The British established a relationship built on some degree of mutual trust through the provision of resources that allowed the indigenous actors to better attain local goals in addition to the broader aligned goals of winning the war. For the Haganah, these resources took the form of training, materials, and legal sanction, which allowed them to better prepare for the future. The British provided arbegnoch leadership with weaponry, money, and status, which allowed the leadership to solidify and expand their local power bases and to elevate themselves above their rivals. It is worth noting that, when the Palestine Mandate trust broke down, the British were no longer able to effectively secure the territory. The pathways of influence established in both these cases demonstrate that the story of the successful operation of indigenous forces was, at least in these two instances, one of aligned motivation and mutual benefit and of agency, influence, cooperation, and collaboration. Above all, it was not a story of command.

The successes of these pathways of influence are not without lessons for contemporary engagements. These pathways of influence thrived for a number of reasons that current practitioners might do well to heed. In each case, the foreign forces made use of preexisting local structures and elites, paramilitary, and feudal—they did not seek to replace or supplant them. The British forces built mutual trust with the indigenous forces through the distribution of largess in exchange for effective activity; activity that such distribution also helped to stimulate. The largess provided also helped the indigenous forces achieve their local objectives: be they preparation for a future conflict, the ability to secure the loyalty of followers, or an increase in power and standing relative to their rivals. This, in turn, further secured the cooperation of the local elites who received the largess.

Finally, by using pathways of influence instead of command, the British allowed the indigenous forces to engage in operations with a degree of autonomy and through means which best suited their experiences, structures, and capabilities. It is worth noting that this is distinct from a pure mission command model. Without Britain's ability to exert influence, the indigenous forces would not necessarily have been inclined to fulfill Britain's objectives—instructions to

fulfill objectives had to be accompanied with inducement to do so. Therefore, one of the key lessons to be drawn from British success with indigenous forces in Palestine Mandate and the Horn of Africa is to build influence rather than command and to engage with the indigenous forces as they are, allowing them to achieve their own objectives and maintain their agency and autonomy rather than trying to force them into a conventional military model.

Notes

1. *Department of Defense Dictionary of Military and Associated Terms*, Joint Publication 1-02 (Washington, DC: Department of Defense, 2016), http://www.dtic.mil/doctrine/new _pubs/jp1_02.pdf.
2. "Foreign Office Telegram on Abyssinian Revolt: Obstruction from Local Authorities," 11 July 1940, HS3/5, The National Archives (TNA), Kew Gardens, London.
3. Ibid.
4. James Barr, *A Line in the Sand: Britain, France and the Struggle for the Mastery of the Middle East* (London: Simon & Schuster, 2011).
5. M. R. D. Foot, *SOE: An Outline History of the Special Operations Executive 1940−46* (London: British Broadcasting Corporation, 1984), 176.
6. Ibid., 8. For the purposes of this discussion, special services is a catchall that includes the action arms of MI2, MI2a, MIR, MI9, SOE, Section D, SIS, etc.
7. "Telegram from AW/100 to RWW, On SOE History, 09 September 1945," HS7/86, TNA.
8. Leo Marks, *Between Silk and Cyanide: A Codemaker's War, 1941–1945* (London: Harper Collins, 1998), 588.
9. Oral history is, of course, an imperfect medium and there are problems concerning memory. To counteract these weaknesses, methods employed here are those recommended for the critical analysis of any source, written or oral, including independent cross corroboration as verification and close critical analysis.
10. Gene Ellis, "The Feudal Paradigm as a Hindrance to Understanding Ethiopia," *Journal of African Studies* 14, no. 2 (1976): 275−95.
11. Author interview with Agafari Ayabe Ayelle, 3 December 2013, Gondar, Ethiopia, hereafter Ayelle interview.
12. Author interview with Alemno Ayalo, 28 February 2013, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia; and author interview with Asmaro Wolde Selassie, 13 March 2013, Gondar, Ethiopia.
13. William Platt, "The Campaign Against Italian East Africa 1940/1941" (lecture, Lees Knowles Lectures, Cambridge University, London, 1951), 17; and Ayelle interview.
14. Anthony Mockler, *Haile Selassie's War* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1984), 144.
15. Bahru Zewde, *A History of Modern Ethiopia, 1855–1974* (London: James Currey, 1991), 174.
16. Ibid., 172.
17. Ibid.
18. Ibid.
19. Maj R. D. Neville, "Patriot Activities in Southern Abyssinia 1941 Part II," WO 201/291, TNA.
20. Ibid.
21. Zewde, *A History of Modern Ethiopia*, 172.
22. Andrew Hilton, *The Ethiopian Patriots: Forgotten Voices of the Italo-Abyssinian War, 1935–41* (Gloucestershire, UK: History Press, 2007), 125.
23. "Cypher Telegram to Sir M. Lampson, Foreign Office," 26 April 1939, CO323/1670/4, TNA.
24. "Directive for Field Commander Palestine," SOE Palestine 2, Policy and Directives, 5.1940–3.1943, HS3/207, TNA.
25. Author interview with Hayim Kravi, 8 November 2010, Haifa, Israel; and Edward

Horne, *A Job Well Done: Being a History of the Palestine Police Force, 1920–1948* (Tiptree, UK: Anchor Press, 1982), 251.

26. "Report on Escape of Free Frenchmen from Syria to D/HB," 3 February 1941, SOE/Palestine 5, Miscellaneous and Palestinian Personnel, 1.1941–3.1943, D/H19, HS3/210, TNA.

27. Moshe Dayan, *Story of My Life* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1976), 47; and author interview with Uri Horowitz, 1 October 2010, Kibbutz Kfar Gilladi, Israel.

28. "Telegram Local 305," 10 June 1942, SOE Palestine 2, Policy and Directives, May 1940–March 1943, HS3/207, TNA.

29. Author interview with Hayim Miller, 14 January 2010, Kibbutz Kfar Menahem, Israel, hereafter Miller interview.

30. LtGen Cunningham, "East Africa Force Campaign Supplementary Report," 6 April–11 July 1941, WO 201/295, TNA.

31. Ibid.; Abraham Acabia, "Private War Diary of G(R) Branch in Abyssinia," 9 December 1941, WO 217/37, TNA; "Cipher Telegram from GOC in Command East Africa to War Office," 23 October 1941, CO 847/22/19, TNA; "OETA Abyssinia," WO 178/36, TNA; El Miralai and Cave Bey, "Account of the Events Concerning the Equatorial Corps in Abyssinia," 6.1940–7.1941, WO 201/309, TNA; "12th (African) Division Intelligence Summary," WO 201/313A, TNA.

32. Mentioned in most interviews of JSP members.

33. Author interview with Avraham Rabinov, 21 September 2010, Haifa, Israel, hereafter Rabinov interview.

34. Ibid.

35. Mentioned in most interviews of JSP members; see Rabinov interview.

36. Author interview with Oreon Yoseph, 15 September 2010, Hod HaSharon, Israel.

37. Mentioned in most interviews with JSP members.

38. Dayan, *Story of My Life*, 27.

39. "Memoranda on meeting in Haifa," 13 July 1940, 80/563(ה)/12, Archives of the Haganah, Tel Aviv, Israel (AHTA).

40. Ibid.

41. Ibid.

42. Ibid.

43. Ibid.

44. D/L, "Document to D/H including Draft Letter," 21.3.40, SOE Middle East, Zionists, 2.1940–9.1940, HS3/201, TNA.

45. D/H19, "Report on Escape of Free Frenchmen from Syria to D/HB," 3 February 1941, SOE/Palestine 5, Miscellaneous and Palestinian Personnel, January 1941–March 1943, HS3/210, TNA.

46. Ibid.

47. "Telegram from Jerusalem to Cairo and London to AD/H from D/H271," 12 July 1942, SOE Palestine 2, Policy and Directives, May 1940–March 1943, HS3/207, TNA.

48. "Revised Palestine Scheme," 15 July 1942, SOE Palestine 2, Policy and Directives, May 1940–March 1943, HS3/207, TNA; "Telegram from Cairo," 28 September 1942, SOE Palestine 2, Policy and Directives, May 1940–March 1943, HS3/207, TNA; and "Situation Report for September 1942," From: Jerusalem To: Cairo and London, 6 October 1942, SOE Palestine 2, Policy and Directives, May 1940–March 1943, HS3/207, TNA.

49. Author interview with Uri Horowitz, 10 January 2010, Kibbutz Kfar Gilladi, Israel, hereafter Horowitz interview; and Dayan, *Story of My Life*, 45–47.

50. Dayan, *Story of My Life*, 45–46.

51. Ibid.

52. Ibid., 47.

53. Ibid.; and Horowitz interview.

54. Miller interview.

55. Ibid.

56. Ibid.

57. Ibid.

58. Ibid.
59. "War History of No. 3 Idara, Eastern Arab Corps, Sudan Defence Force from 17 May to 2 December 1940," WO 201/207, TNA.
60. LtGen Cunningham, "East Africa Force Campaign Supplementary Report," 6 April–11 July 1941, WO 201/295, TNA.
61. "GHQ Middle East Operations Instruction No. 1," 10 June 1940, HS 8/261, TNA.
62. Author interview with Avraham Akavia, 29 December 2009, Haifa, Israel, hereafter Akavia interview.
63. "OETA Abyssinia."
64. Richard Pankhurst, "Guns in Ethiopia," *Transition*, no. 20 (1965): 26–33, doi:10.2307 /2934388.
65. Hilton, *The Ethiopian Patriots*, 73.
66. "OETA Abyssinia."
67. Akavia interview.
68. Mockler, *Haile Selassie's War*, 285–86.
69. Maj W. A. B. Harris, "Guerilla War in Gojjam," WO 201/308, TNA; and "OETA Abyssinia."
70. Harris, "Guerilla War in Gojjam."