



Ressort: Special interest

The Ideological and Geopolitical Currents

Tel Aviv, 20.09.2025 [ENA]

The history of the Middle East conflict is far more than a regional dispute. It is a web of international alliances, ideological movements, and personal networks that span continents and decades. The connection runs from the Grand Mufti of Jerusalem to Yasser Arafat.

One of the most striking lines of connection runs from the Grand Mufti of Jerusalem, Amin al-Husseini, through the Berlin–Moscow axis, and ultimately to Yasser Arafat, the long-time chairman of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO). Appointed Mufti of Jerusalem by British mandate authorities in 1921, Amin al-Husseini quickly emerged as a leading voice of Arab nationalism in Palestine. His political stance was defined by uncompromising anti-Zionism and overt antisemitism. During the Arab Revolt (1936–1939) against British rule and Jewish immigration, he became a symbol of resistance.

With the outbreak of World War II, al-Husseini actively sought alignment with Nazi Germany. In 1941, he fled to Berlin and met Adolf Hitler personally. He supported Nazi propaganda in the Arab world, recruited Muslims for the Waffen-SS, and lobbied to prevent Jewish refugees from reaching the British Mandate of Palestine.

After the war, al-Husseini avoided prosecution for war crimes and found refuge in Egypt.

There, he worked to build a pan-Arab front against the newly established State of Israel. During the early Cold War, he began cultivating ties with the Soviet Union. Although Moscow initially supported Israel's creation in 1947–48, it soon shifted to an anti-Israel stance as the country aligned itself with the West. For the Soviet Union, Arab nationalist movements became strategic tools in its global rivalry with the United States. Anti-colonial and anti-Western forces fit neatly into the Kremlin's ideological framework. Through allies such as Syria, Egypt under Nasser, and East Germany, Soviet support — political, military, and covert — flowed to Palestinian organizations.

A young Yasser Arafat maintained personal contact with al-Husseini and regarded him as a mentor. When Arafat assumed leadership of the PLO in 1969, he continued the armed struggle against Israel and deepened ties with the Eastern Bloc.

East Germany served as a key bridgehead: Arafat visited East Berlin multiple times, and PLO cadres received military training in both East Germany and the Soviet Union. Soviet weapons and equipment

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reached the PLO via Syria and other Arab states. Moscow also backed Arafat's diplomatic efforts — in 1974, he was invited to address the UN General Assembly, a move actively supported by the USSR. The PLO was granted observer status at the United Nations, boosting its international legitimacy.

By the 1980s, the geopolitical landscape began to shift.

With Gorbachev's reforms and the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991, the PLO lost its most important strategic backer. Arafat was forced to seek new alliances, eventually leading to the Oslo Peace Process of the 1990s.

His goal was not peace, but the destruction of Israel. He left behind nothing but violence and corruption.

The connection from al-Husseini through Nazi Germany to the Soviet Union and Arafat is not a straight line, but rather a complex network of ideological continuities, geopolitical interests, and personal relationships.

It reveals how the Middle East conflict repeatedly became entangled in the currents of global power politics — and how individual actors managed to bridge seemingly opposing camps when it served their goals.

Bericht online lesen:

https://italynews.en-a.eu/special_interest/_the_ideological_and_geopolitical_currents-92133/

Redaktion und Verantwortlichkeit:

V.i.S.d.P. und gem. § 6 MDSStV: Sharon Oppenheimer

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